

DOCUMENT RESUME

06297 - [B1666690] (Restricted)

[First-Term Department of Defense Attrition Goals]. PPCD-78-56; B-146890. June 8, 1976. 2 pp.

Report to Sen. Harry F. Byrd, Jr.; by H. L. Krieger, Director, Federal Personnel and Compensation Div.

Contact: Federal Personnel and Compensation Div.

Organization Concerned: Department of Defense; Department of the Navy; Department of the Army; Department of the Air Force.

Congressional Relevance: Sen. Harry F. Byrd, Jr.

Although the Department of Defense (DOD) and the services have taken actions to manage first-term attrition in the armed forces, three elements in their efforts need strengthening: attrition goals covering the full first-term enlistment period, coordinated programs designed to achieve those goals, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems. DOD has promulgated attrition goals which cover only part of the first-term enlistment period for male recruits and has not formulated attrition goals for females who historically have a higher attrition rate than do males. The goals established in 1975 and 1976 generally covered the 30-month period following recruitment and initial skill training. DOD officials felt that setting these goals was not the most effective way to manage attrition; they believed the services could control attrition rates by increasing training attrition not subject to goals. Coordination should be encouraged between DOD and the services, between service headquarters and individual commands, and among the services in order to effectively manage programs and achieve goals. DOD is planning, but has not as yet begun, to monitor program results for the new attrition goals. At present, only the Marine Corps has an operational and effective data collection and monitoring system. (BBS)



6690

UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548
~~RESTRICTED~~ -- Not to be released outside the General
Accounting Office except on the basis of specific approval
by the Office of Congressional Relations.

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

JUN 8 1978

B-146890

The Honorable Harry F. Byrd
United States Senate

Dear Senator Byrd:

This is an interim response to your March 23, 1978, request that we undertake a study of the costs associated with first-term attrition and the low rate of reenlistments in the armed forces. As you stated, a high rate of attrition is costly because greater numbers of individuals must be recruited and trained than would otherwise be necessary.

As requested by your staff, we are providing several observations based on limited work to date. We held discussions with and obtained data from officials at the Department of Defense (DoD) and service headquarters levels.

DoD and the Services have taken some actions to more effectively manage attrition. At the present time, however, three elements in their efforts appear to need strengthening. They are:

- Attrition goals covering the full first-term enlistment period,
- Coordinated programs designed to achieve those goals, and
- Effective monitoring and evaluation systems.

ATTRITION GOALS

DoD has promulgated attrition goals which cover only part of the first-term enlistment period for male recruits. The goals established in 1975 and 1976 generally covered the 30-month period following recruit and initial skill training. DoD officials told us that setting these goals was not the most effective way to manage attrition since the services could control the attrition rates by increasing training attrition not subject to goals in hopes of lowering the rates during the subsequent period. Consequently, in 1977, DoD issued new goals which covered the entire first three years of the enlistment period. However, with the exception of the Army most enlistments today are for four or more years. In addition, attrition goals have not been established for females who historically have a higher attrition rate and for other reasons than males. This is an important factor because female personnel are becoming an increasingly larger proportion of the enlisted force,

FPCD-78-56
(962113)

COORDINATED PROGRAMS

In view of the importance of this issue to both National defense and the individuals involved, we would encourage greater coordination between DoD and the Services, between service headquarters and individual commands, and among the Services in order to effectively manage their programs and achieve their goals. For example, while Defense officials testified that actions were being taken which they expected to result in reduced attrition, the Training Commands advised the Congress that increased recruit training attrition was planned for fiscal year 1979 in the Navy and Air Force. The Military Manpower Training Report sent to Congress in March 1978 stated that the Navy expects a 12 percent attrition rate for recruit training in 1979 compared to 10 percent for 1978. Likewise, the report shows that Air Force expects attrition to be 7.7 percent for 1979, compared to 7.3 percent for 1978.

MONITORING AND EVALUATING

A critical element of a coordinated program is an effective system for monitoring and evaluating services' actions and accomplishments. DoD is planning, but has not as yet begun, to monitor Services' attrition program results for the new attrition goals. Currently among the Services only the Marine Corps has an operational and effective data collection and monitoring system.

We are particularly impressed with Marine Corps efforts to monitor attrition and evaluate actions designed to achieve the DoD goals. For example, monthly sub-goals were established for the first six months during which a third of the total attrition usually occurs. Marine Corps officials, who monitored the actual attrition experienced thus far in fiscal year 1978, found that the sub-goals have been significantly exceeded. As a result, headquarters officials are meeting with training officials to determine causes for the higher rates and what further actions can be taken to achieve the goals.

As discussed with your staff, we are performing a comprehensive study of attrition costs and actions by DoD and the services to manage in ways to reduce attrition. We expect to have our final report available by next March.

Sincerely yours,

H. L. Krieger

H. L. Krieger
Director