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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND
COMPENSATION DIVISION

B-199870

AUGUST 15, 1980

The Honorable Hans M. Mark
The Secretary of the Air Force

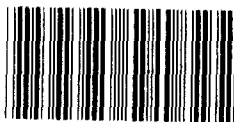
Dear Mr. Secretary:

Subject: [Recruiting Management in the United States
Air Force Recruiting Service] (FPCD-80-62)

We recently reviewed recruiting management in the United States Air Force Recruiting Service at the request of the Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel, Senate Armed Services Committee. We also reviewed recruiting management in the other services and in the National Guard and have issued separate reports to each of the other service Secretaries, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, and the Chief of the National Guard Bureau.

We are also preparing two reports to the Congress addressing (1) the recruiting decisionmaking processes in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the service headquarters (including the Air National Guard and the Army National Guard) and (2) the extent and causes of, and potential for, correcting recruiter malpractice. At the same time, we are sending a summary of our work to the Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel.

We reviewed selected Air Force recruiting activities at Headquarters; the 03rd Group at Warner Robbins, Georgia; the 3551st, 3553rd, and the 3567th squadrons at Elwood, Illinois, Cleveland, Ohio, and Denver, Colorado; the Recruit Training Facility at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas; various recruiting offices; and the Air Force Reserves in Macon, Georgia. We interviewed officials, supervisors, and recruiters.



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We reviewed the management of selected recruiting offices and their commands. We found some situations that, if left unaddressed, could hamper effective recruiting operations.

Our comments are limited to the following two areas:

- Goal (quota) and recruiting management.
- Various recruiting management practices.

GOAL (QUOTA) AND RECRUITING MANAGEMENT

The Air Force has been successful in recruiting the numbers of people needed for their active duty force since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). With the exception of fiscal year 1979, the Active Air Force has met its needs for new enlistees under the AVF concept. In addition, the Air Force appears to be more successful than any of the other services in meeting its recruiting goals. There are several reasons for this, but quantifying or assessing the impact of each of these reasons is difficult, if not impossible. The foremost of these reasons, however, is that the Air Force has a positive image which attracts applicants to the service. Another reason may be that the Air Force recruiting force is composed entirely of volunteers, which perhaps makes it more motivated than a force staffed with both volunteers and involuntarily assigned personnel. Additionally, the Air Force recruiting and basic training functions are both components of the Air Training Command, an organizational relationship which in our view tends to control and manage the recruiting programs better.

We did not observe any significant goal (quota) management functions that caused us concern. We feel that the system is quite equitable and fairly applied and managed.

In our opinion, the Air Forces' controls over its recruiting program are sufficient to insure that quality recruits are procured in a timely fashion. The intense use of automated control systems, such as PROMIS and other feedback programs that minimally involve the recruiter, provides good screening controls that eliminate a significant number of applicants and maintain the quality of recruits. This type of control system may be one of the reasons for the low incidence of malpractice in the Air Force Recruiting Service.

RECRUITER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

We did note some potential problems in our observation of recruiter management practices. In some of the flights, there are too few supervisors for the number of recruiters dispersed over large geographical areas.

The "typical" squadron, according to the Air Force, has a staff of about 100 and operates 29 recruiting offices covering an area of 90,000 square miles. The number of recruiters assigned to flights in our sample squadrons ranged from 7 to 13. The Air Force flight supervisors are responsible for an average of 10 recruiters. At one squadron we visited, the supervisor was responsible for 13 recruiters. When the recruiters are working out of widely dispersed offices, the amount of available time diminishes the likelihood of the close and frequent contact necessary to supervise daily operations. A smaller and much more manageable span of control would permit closer and more frequent contact with the production recruiters.

According to the Air Force, the Recruiting Service has undertaken work to eliminate problems with span of control at the flight level. It is conducting an onsite survey at each recruiting squadron to analyze the squadron's market data. It has already analyzed 81 percent of the squadrons (26 of 32) and scheduled completion of all squadrons by November 1980. Span of control is a principal component specifically reviewed in each flight. As a result of onsite surveys, the Recruiting Service has recommended that eight new flights be created. Additionally, plans are currently underway to form four new squadrons to improve span of control and the management of increased goals for fiscal years 1981-82. In our opinion, the formation of these new organizations should help solve the identified span of control problems.

We also observed that production recruiters perceive the leased family housing program as a significant problem area. Few recruiters understand the policies and procedures of leased housing. An Air Force survey of more than 1,800 recruiters taken in 1979 showed that only about 45 percent claimed to understand the program and its benefits.

The objective of the leased housing program is to compensate recruiters for the high cost of living away from an Air Force base. Effective January 1980, the Air Force issued a

moratorium on leased housing due to budgetary constraints. At one squadron, four recruiters were waiting for approval of leases. Several recruiters at another squadron said they had known that leased housing would be unavailable. The moratorium was lifted on May 1, 1980, and the Recruiting Service is now advising prospective recruiters that the government can provide leased housing but that there are no guarantees. Before the moratorium was lifted, recruiters not residing in leased quarters absorbed the higher cost of living from their salaries. Many recruiters used their special duty assignment proficiency pay to compensate for the higher cost of living. This pay was originally intended to compensate recruiters for working outside their normal primary duty area.

An additional frustration for recruiters is that processing leased housing requests is very time consuming. The Air Force must undertake extensive work to insure that the lease is the cheapest available in the area. The service must also inspect and approve the site. While we understand that the Department of Defense is preparing a series of proposals for the Congress that address the shortcomings in the program, we believe that the Air Force can do more to address this problem.

We also found problems in the area of health care. The Air Force provides free health care to service personnel and their dependents when they are located near military installations with medical facilities. When such medical facilities are not available, the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS) provides insurance coverage. Recruiters generally believed that the CHAMPUS program is inadequate for their needs and that the program causes them significant financial and personal hardships. These hardships include:

- Extremely slow payments, causing recruiters to receive delinquent notices and threatening collection letters.
- Outdated allowable fee schedules, resulting in recruiters being charged a major portion of their medical care costs.
- Some hospitals and doctors who refuse to accept CHAMPUS patients unless the patients pay the bills and seek reimbursement from CHAMPUS themselves.

In its 1979 survey of the recruiter force, the Air Force identified another problem; namely, that only 24 percent of those surveyed believed they had received sufficient information from management about the CHAMPUS program.

On the basis of our review, the Recruiting Service has established an education program to improve the recruiters' understanding of the administration and operation of the CHAMPUS program. It has also assigned an officer to act as the focal point for disseminating information and as a clearinghouse to help resolve CHAMPUS-related problems. We believe that this approach will help alleviate recruiters' lack of information and understanding of the CHAMPUS program.

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We are pleased with the cooperation we received during our review from people in the various organizational levels associated with Air Force recruiting. Where we identified situations with a potential for problems, the Recruiting Service took immediate remedial action.

We look forward to a continued cooperative working relationship in the future.

Sincerely yours,



H. L. Krieger
Director