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

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND  
COMPENSATION DIVISION

B-199870

AUGUST 15, 1980

General Robert H. Barrow  
Commandant of the Marine Corps



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Dear General Barrow:

Subject: [Recruiting Management in the United States  
Marine Corps] (FPCD-80-59)

We recently reviewed recruiting management of the United States Marine Corps recruiting program at the request of the Chairman, 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 service Secretaries and to 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, correction of recruiter malpractice. At the same time, we are sending a summary of our work to the Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel.

We included in our review selected recruiting activities performed at USMC headquarters; the 1st, 4th, and 8th Marine Corps recruiting districts; and four selected subordinate stations in Baltimore, Maryland; Albany, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; and San Antonio, Texas. We also performed a limited amount of work at the Recruit Training Depot in Parris Island, South Carolina. At these offices, we examined documentation and interviewed officials, including recruiters, concerned with management and production.

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We found that the Marine Corps had taken positive steps to improve its recruiting operations, including establishing a systematic recruiting process and procedures for retesting enlistees at training depots to deter and prevent incidents of recruiter malpractice and fraudulent enlistments.

We found some areas which, if unaddressed, could hamper effective recruiting operations. Some of these areas were related to only one or more of the locations visited. The areas in which we noted problems were:

- Operational control practices.
- Goal inflation practices.
- Enlistment processing and recruit reporting systems.
- Training provided to recruiting personnel and adequacy of training records.
- Perceptions about awards and management support.
- Policy adherence by station commanders.

#### OPERATIONAL CONTROL PRACTICES

Operational control responsibilities for recruiting rests with the two recruit training depots. We noted, however, that the Personnel Procurement Division, which is responsible for providing administrative, logistical, and fiscal support to recruiting, in practice, was also performing operational functions. These functions included providing policy and guidance on quota allocations and reviewing recruiter reliefs. In addition, the division was planning to assign recruiters by name to recruiting stations. As a result, lower echelon recruiting commanders have been responding to both the Personnel Procurement Division and a training depot. Some confusion exists as to who was accountable for particular recruiting functions. This confusion also affects district commanders because both the training depot commander and the Director of Personnel Procurement evaluate them. This practice, in our opinion, does not create a conducive working environment and does not follow established lines of authority.

Although we did not detect instances of recruiter malpractice, we believe that the operational control practices have the potential for fostering malpractice. For example,

the Personnel Procurement Division is involved in establishing overall production quotas, whereas the training depots control actual shipping quotas. Thus, a situation could occur where training depots would cease enlistments into the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) to fill shipping needs. This action would prompt added pressure on the recruiters and could cause malpractice. The limited data we reviewed did not indicate that training depots were exercising this practice, but some officials we interviewed said that the practice of stopping DEP enlistments has occurred.

We believe the Marine Corps should insure that their clear cut lines of responsibility are followed. Also, the Marine Corps could consider having one organization control recruiting operations. Although the Personnel Procurement Division has exercised the control function, direct-line responsibility is with the two training depots. Each depot separately controls operations of three districts. Without proper oversight, each depot could be administering recruiting functions inconsistently.

#### GOAL INFLATION PRACTICES

At two of the three recruiting stations we visited, goal inflation practices were inconsistent with headquarters' recommendations. Marine Corps headquarters has recommended that stations not establish goals in excess of their assigned goals because doing so places unnecessary pressures on the recruiters, lowers morale, and increases the possibility of malpractice. In practice, however, several stations are increasing recruiters' goals by increasing either the assigned shipping goals or the assigned production goals. For example, one station commander determined that such a level of accession was needed to finish as the top recruiting station in the country (in terms of numbers shipped). This same station commander encountered difficulties later in the year and had to request relief from short-term shipping goals to replenish his DEP needs. Similarly, another station increased its recruiter production goals from the district average of 2.4 per recruiter to 4.0.

Some further isolated examples of unrealistic goal allocations follow.

- Black recruiters at one location received full goal allocations but were limited to recruiting in areas having heavy Black population density which could not support the goal expectations.

--Recruiters were given full goal allocations that were unrealistic because of additional supervisory responsibilities.

--New recruiters received full goal allocations rather than a lesser requirement. Management did not expect these recruiters to achieve their assigned goals, but recruiters were not aware of this expectation.

We believe the Marine Corps should insure that its headquarters' recommendation concerning goal inflation is carried out.

ENLISTMENT PROCESSING AND RECRUIT REPORTING SYSTEMS

The Marine Corps has established enlistment processing and recruit reporting systems to aid management in its decisionmaking to (1) help long-range planning, (2) insure quality recruits, and (3) show management how recruiters are performing. At the locations we visited, some controls of the systems were repetitive, excessive, and not well integrated. We also noted that the manual reporting procedures used by the Marine Corps were time-consuming, and the information they generate is not used consistently. In addition, Marine Corps evaluations of recruiting stations and substations did not always provide feedback on management decisionmaking and problems.

Excessive and repetitive controls

One procedure used to insure quality enlistment is a 100 percent recruit retesting program. This program requires that each recruit take an alternative form of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test at the training depot. Wide discrepancies between test scores are investigated to determine whether the recruit was coached by the recruiter to qualify for the Marines. Although this procedure has resulted in detecting unqualified recruits, we believe the same results could be achieved at a lower cost through sampling techniques. A retesting on a sample basis could give adequate assurance of recruit quality and still deter recruiter coaching, since no recruiter will know which candidates would be retested.

Another control procedure is related to the recruiter verifying whether the potential enlistee has had a police

record. While the initial control is necessary, we noted that the verification is often repeated at five different management levels.

At one recruiting station, personnel were verifying police records for 100 percent of candidates. Marine Corps policy requires the station to verify with police departments 20 percent of all candidates with or without indications of a record.

The waiver process also entails progressive levels of review, depending on the seriousness of the situation and the amount of time and documentation increases with the level of approval needed. Waivers for less serious types of offenses had to be obtained at levels where waivers for serious offenses were also obtained.

For example, a waiver for a recruit who is one-fourth inch too tall requires approval from headquarters. In contrast, the recruit requiring a waiver because he was convicted of a felony and served time in jail would also need an approval from headquarters. More of the less serious types of waivers could be delegated to the district or recruiting station levels, resulting in less paperwork (because of less stringent documentation requirements at the local levels) and quicker processing.

Also, the Marine Corps should determine whether waivers are needed for other common, minor offenses, such as parking tickets and traffic violations. It does not appear reasonable to require a waiver to enlist a person who has received a parking ticket and paid a \$10 fine, which is now the case.

#### Lack of integrated reports

Management at various levels requires detailed reports of recruiter activities. The districts, for example, require as many as 40 reports from the recruiting station on a recurring basis. To provide these reports, stations require 20 reports from their individual substations. Some of these required reports are merely compilations of information from other reports. For example, recruiter activity reports are required from substations daily, weekly, and monthly.

Although there are numerous reports at many levels, they generally are not integrated with other reports. For example, information from situation reports received by substations from the recruit depots showing recruit performance and

discharges do not establish trends for individual recruiters; cumulative reports of recruiter performance must then be maintained separately to establish trends.

Stations differed in how they used the situation reports provided to them by the recruit depots. Some of the stations had no rules of thumb as to when a situation highlighted by these reports warranted action.

The Marine Corps is installing a computerized system to integrate reports throughout the Corps' recruiting program. The Corps plans to have the computerized system on line sometime late in 1980.

Marine Corps recruiting stations and substations are evaluated by headquarters, districts, and training depots. Generally, the resulting evaluation reports show the condition of the record system and do not highlight management practices which hamper effective recruiting.

For example, several district evaluations showed that recruiting substations are complying in their recordkeeping systems and standards of operations and are including such information as identifying which recruiters are overweight and which offices have peeling paint. Some management issues, such as placement of recruiters, identification of enlistment trends, or motivational techniques employed, were not documented. Districts were, however, aware of station problems, such as failing to use the DEP or placing new recruiters with only 1 month's experience in supervisory positions.

Evaluations should identify areas where change is needed, the steps necessary to accomplish the change, and the time needed to effectively implement transitions. This information would help recruiting stations change their management style of reacting to crisis situations to one of devising plans to deal with and prevent such crises from occurring.

#### TRAINING PROVIDED AND ADEQUACY OF RECRUITING PERSONNEL TRAINING

Marine Corps' policy requires continuous training of its officers and recruiters to perform at peak efficiency. Certain types of training, however, were not being given in the frequency required or were not given on time. Following are some examples:

--Block training is a continuing 16 hour per month program required for all people. At one recruiting station, this training averaged from 4 to 6 hours a month. Some recruiters missed the training altogether.

--At one recruiting station, officers and noncommissioned officers-in-charge were not always receiving the management training required for their new jobs before filling the positions. The training was sometimes provided long after the assignment or not at all. We noted cases in which untrained noncommissioned officers in charge were removed for failure to manage and were sent back to production recruiting.

The recruiter instructor has the primary responsibility for continually providing training and assistance to the recruiting force. At two locations we visited, training records had not been maintained. This limited the recruiter instructor's effectiveness as he had no way of knowing the extent of training given or counseling that was needed. At one location, the recruiter instructor had not reviewed recruiter performance and production records to plan needed training and assistance visits.

The Marine Corps should insure that recruiters receive required training before assignment to recruiting duty and that records are maintained and used to improve the quality of training given.

#### PERCEPTIONS ABOUT AWARDS AND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

We noted that recruiters at the locations visited were disenchanted with the awards program as an incentive tool. We also saw indications of a lack of management support which affected the recruiters' ability to do their jobs. Following are examples of areas needing management support:

--In fiscal year 1979, 1 station received as many as 149 awards with 2 recruiters getting as many as 18 each. Some recruiters believed the awards had become so common that their value had diminished.

--Recruiters at one location were forced to cancel visits or drive their own vehicles for an extended duration, causing financial hardships and personal inconvenience. One recruiter logged about 7,000 miles before being given a recruiting vehicle, and

a noncommissioned officer-in-charge had driven his own car, for which he received no compensation, nearly 2 months, thus burdening his family transportation needs.

--At one recruiting station, higher grade recruiters occupied leased housing, whereas three lower grade recruiters were unaware of how to obtain leased housing, not given cooperation in finding it, or unable to obtain it after previously being told they could.

--Recruiters at one location did not perceive meritorious promotions as attainable or fairly administered. One recruiter achieved better than a 4.0 production rate for 24 months and, once promoted, his productivity dropped to 0. This recruiter was promoted over others having outstanding production records. The recruiter was later removed for malpractice.

Recruiting management could have improved its support with little difficulty in each of the above examples. The recruiting station commanding officer has total flexibility to develop an equitable and meaningful awards program and recognition system. Management could also take several actions to furnish needed motor transportation, including leasing vehicles from commercial sources on a short-time basis to fill temporary deficiencies. Further, the commanding officer should make every effort to inform recruiters about subsidized housing and otherwise aid their efforts to find it. For instance, at one recruiting station, management was preparing to terminate a Government lease on one house rather than give it to another recruiter who could qualify.

#### POLICY ADHERENCE BY STATION COMMANDERS

Station commanders should follow official guidance; yet, in cases concerning probation of recruiters and recruiter assignment policies, we noted several instances where local commanders were not adhering to policy.

For example, Marine Corps guidance indicates recruiters should serve a 6-month trial period and then be placed on probation for 3 months, if their productivity is low but will likely improve to an acceptable level. The commander at one station, however, gave recruiters a 9-month trial period, with a possible 3-month probation afterwards. Thus, low producers were kept on probation for a year. The commanding officer at another recruiting station carried low productivity recruiters



on probation up to 2 years before initiating a removal action. At yet another station, the commander adhered to the 9-month probation period but removed a recruiter for cause in the 10th month for poor production when the recruiter clearly established his inability to produce during the probation period. This station retained at least 12 more recruiters past their probationary period, although their inability to produce was clearly established.

In another instance, we found that one new recruiter had been assigned to a station where he was the only recruiter. Marine Corps policy states that a new recruiter should not be assigned alone to any location during the first year. He was subsequently removed from recruiting duty.

At one recruiting station, 4 recruiters were relieved from a single substation over a 9-month period. These actions adversely affected the recruiting mission. New and inexperienced recruiters replaced the relieved recruiters but were unable to achieve the recruiting mission. In several cases, these new recruiters suffered mental and financial hardships. As a result, the substation's market potential, the fourth largest at this particular recruiting station, was virtually untapped; it had the lowest accession average in the entire station.

Concerning such cases, we believe that station commanders should be following official guidance. We urge you to take whatever actions necessary to insure adherence to policy in the future.

We appreciate the cooperation given us during our review. The Marine Corps is commended for the strides it has made in improving its recruiting operations. Correcting unique problems such as those highlighted in this report will further improve Marine Corps recruiting.

It has been a pleasure dealing with such a fine group of dedicated professionals.

Sincerely yours,



H. L. Krieger  
Director