

GAO

Briefing Report to Congressional Requesters

April 1988

MILITARY PERSONNEL

Proposals to Modify the Management of Officers Assigned to Joint Duty



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**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-229366

April 19, 1988

The Honorable Sam Nunn
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Bill Nichols
Chairman, Subcommittee on Investigations
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

In April 1987 you requested that we assess implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Your letters expressed particular interest in implementation of title IV—Joint Officer Personnel Policy—and Department of Defense (DOD) legislative proposals to modify title IV. This report covers our analysis of these proposals to modify title IV. We presented the information in this report to representatives of your committees prior to consideration of these proposals during the conference on the National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989. As you know, the conferees modified some joint officer personnel policies and deferred action on others awaiting (1) DOD's first report on implementation of the joint officer management policies, (2) this report, and (3) additional implementation experience.

Title IV of the Reorganization Act had several objectives. It sought to improve the quality of officers assigned to joint (multi-service) organizations, increase the experience and educational levels of such officers, and expand the exposure of officers to joint matters. To achieve these objectives, the Reorganization Act established a category of officers known as joint specialty officers, defined their qualifying education and experience requirements, and set promotion objectives for joint specialists and other officers assigned to joint duty. It established minimum tour lengths for joint duty assignments and required a joint duty assignment for promotion to general/flag officer.

On April 24, 1987, DOD submitted legislative proposals for modifying the joint officer personnel policies of the Reorganization Act. These proposals included changes in the provisions covering

- tour lengths for joint assignments,
- definition of promotion objectives,

- designation of positions within an officer’s military department as joint assignments,
- education and experience requirements for joint specialists, and
- delegation of authority for designating joint specialists.

The National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989 addressed some of these proposals. Specifically, the Authorization Act modified the joint officer policies to allow waivers of the requirements for joint specialists, permit authority for designating joint specialists to be delegated to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, and allow officers to accumulate credit towards the tour length requirements when tours have been terminated for specified reasons (one of several tour length proposals). The Authorization Act also included changes restricting specialties that could be designated critical occupational specialties involving combat operations and the availability of short tours for officers in these specialties. Other provisions of the Reorganization Act not directly addressed by the DOD proposals were modified as well. Selected joint officer personnel policies are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Selected Joint Officer Personnel Policies Established by Title IV of the Reorganization Act and Modified by the Fiscal Year 1988 DOD Authorization Act

	Requirement
Joint Specialists	Creates a category of officers known as joint specialty officers. Requires that joint specialists complete, in sequence 1. a program at a joint professional military education school (such as the National Defense University); and 2. a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment.
Tour Length	Establishes minimum and average tour lengths for joint duty assignments. Sets 3-1/2 years as the minimum tour length for officers in the grade of colonel (Navy captain) and below Sets 3 years as the minimum tour length for general/flag officers. Allows the Secretary of Defense to waive the established minimum but only so long as the average length of joint duty assignments is maintained at 3 years for general/flag officers and 3-1/2 years for other officers.

(continued)

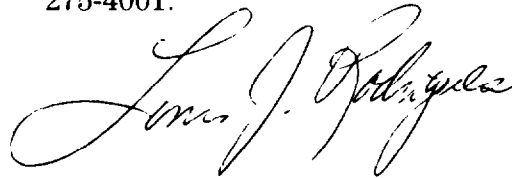
	Requirement
Exceptions for Combat Operations Officers	<p>Exempts officers from certain requirements if they have critical occupational specialties involving combat operations.</p> <p>Allows combat operations officers to qualify as joint specialists after completing a program of joint professional military education and a joint duty assignment without regard to sequence.</p> <p>Allows short tours—but not less than 2 years—for combat operations officers who are nominated for the joint specialty. Up to 10 percent of such assignments may be excluded in computing the average length of joint duty assignments.</p>
Joint Duty Assignments	<p>Requires publication of a list of joint duty positions.</p> <p>Requires that at least 1,000 joint duty positions be designated as critical. Only joint specialists can serve in critical joint duty positions.</p> <p>Mandates that approximately one-half of joint duty positions in grades above captain (Navy lieutenant) be filled by officers who have, or have been nominated for, the joint specialty.</p> <p>Defines joint duty assignments as ones in which the officer gains significant experience in joint matters</p> <p>Excludes in-service positions (positions within an officer's military department) from being designated as joint</p>
Promotion Policy Objectives	<p>Sets target promotion rates for officers assigned to joint duty.</p> <p>Sets the target rate for joint specialists and officers who are or have served on the Joint Staff^a as the rate achieved by officers assigned to the headquarters of their armed force</p> <p>Sets the target rate for other officers who are or have served in joint assignments as the average rate for officers in the same grade and competitive category.</p>
Prerequisite for Promotion to General or Flag Officer	<p>Officers may not be promoted to the grade of brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half) unless the officer has completed a full tour of duty in a joint duty assignment (or is granted waiver by the Secretary of Defense). A full tour of duty is 3-1/2 years or a minimum of 2 years for combat operations officers.</p>

^aThe Joint Staff is the staff of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)

Our analysis of the DOD proposals which the Authorization Act did not address is contained in appendix I. As requested, we are also including our analysis of proposals on which action was taken (see app. II).

Our objectives, scope, and methodology are described in appendix III. DOD commented on a draft of this report and their comments are discussed where appropriate in appendixes I and II and reprinted as appendix IV.

As arranged with your offices, unless you publicly announce its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this report until 30 days from the date of the report. At that time, we will send copies to interested parties and make copies available to others upon request. If you have any questions or we can be of further assistance, please contact me on 275-4001.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Louis J. Rodrigues".

Louis J. Rodrigues
Associate Director

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
GAO	General Accounting Office
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff

Proposals to Modify the Management of Joint Officers Which the Defense Authorization Act Did Not Address

In April 1987 DOD submitted several proposals to modify title IV of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. This appendix discusses the proposals that were not addressed in legislation; appendix II discusses the proposals that were addressed in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989. For each proposal, this appendix discusses (1) the current provision, (2) DOD's proposal and its rationale for the change, (3) our analysis of the proposal, and (4) our observations. DOD's comments on our analysis of these proposals are also discussed.

Tour Length for Field and Company Grade Officers

Current Provision

The minimum tour length of joint duty assignments for officers in the grade of colonel (Navy captain) and below is 3-1/2 years.¹ The Secretary of Defense may waive this minimum. An average of 3-1/2 years must also be maintained; however, tours waived for specified reasons may be excluded from the average.

Joint duty assignments of less than 3-1/2 years, but not less than 2 years, are authorized for officers with critical occupational specialties in combat operations who are nominated for the joint specialty.

By providing greater stability in joint assignments, the establishment of a minimum 3-1/2-year tour length was intended to increase the experience level on joint staffs.

DOD's Proposed Change

The minimum tour length will be set at 3 years. The average tour length will also be changed to 3 years.

DOD Rationale

DOD officials expressed concern that (1) there is limited time in an already crowded career path to spend 3-1/2 years in a joint assignment, (2) a longer tour length limits the number of colonels qualified for selection to general/flag officer by affording fewer officers an opportunity

¹While the law does not limit joint duty assignments to field grade (major, lieutenant colonel, colonel) and general officers, DOD decided to limit the joint duty assignment list to positions in these grades.

for a joint assignment, and (3) a 3-1/2-year tour forces disruptive mid-year moves.

Analysis of Proposal

Time in Career Path

DOD is concerned that there is limited time in officers' career paths at the field grade level to do all the things an officer needs to do to assume higher level commands as a general officer. DOD also argues that extended time away from operational duties erodes war-fighting skills.

In testimony before the Subcommittee on Investigations, House Committee on Armed Services, DOD officials stated that there were key positions which an officer needed to hold in order to assume higher level command positions. DOD officials expressed the view that time in joint assignments should not take officers away from war-fighting assignments, suggesting that it was expected to replace time spent in other staff positions.

Our analyses of the career paths of Air Force and Navy officers are presented below. Our analyses covering Army and Marine Corps officers have not yet been completed; they will be provided separately. Because the congressional debate centered on the career paths of officers from operational specialties, our analyses was limited to officers from these specialties.

Air Force

Table I.1 details our analysis of the career paths of Air Force officers from selected operational specialties (pilots, navigators, and missile operations) who were selected for promotion to general officer by the 1986 and 1987 promotion boards.

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Proposals to Modify the Management of Joint
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Table I.1: Field Grade Experience of Air Force Officers^a

	Officers who served in position		Average time for all officers
	Percent	Average time (in years)	(in years)
War-fighting assignments			
Key assignments			
Squadron Operations Officer	47	1.3	0.6
Commander, squadron	74	1.7	1.2
Commander, support group	12	0.9	0.1
Deputy for Operations, wing	40	1.2	0.5
Vice Commander, wing	72	1.1	0.8
Commander, wing	100	1.9	1.9
Total, key assignments			5.2
Other Assignments			
Other squadron	75	1.4	1.1
Other wing	65	1.6	1.0
Total, other assignments			2.1
Total war-fighting assignments			7.3
Non-war-fighting assignments			
Air division	7	0.8	0.1
Numbered Air Force	18	1.1	0.2
Major command (Strategic Air Command, Tactical Air Command, U.S. Air Forces Europe, Pacific Air Forces, Air Training Command, Military Airlift Command)	68	2.2	1.5
Air Force Headquarters	78	3.3	2.5
Unified and combined commands	12	1.5	0.2
JCS/Office of the Secretary of Defense	15	2.5	0.4
Other staff	34	2.1	0.7
Professional military education	100	1.3	1.3
Other education and training	25	0.8	0.2
Total, Non-war-fighting assignments			7.0
Total, all assignments			14.3

^aOfficers selected for brigadier general by the 1986 and 1987 selection boards from selected operational specialties (pilots, navigators, and missile operations). Our review covered all 68 officers selected from these specialties (out of a total of 97 line officers selected).

Note: numbers may not add due to rounding.

Air Force officials identified the key war-fighting assignments for field grade officers as squadron commander, deputy commander for operations of a wing, vice commander of a wing, and wing commander. In

addition, assignments as a squadron operations officer and commander of a combat support group were treated as key assignments since officials viewed these as offering desirable operational experience.

As shown in table I.1, there was significant variance in the assignments completed by recent selectees. All selectees served as wing commanders, close to three-quarters served as squadron commanders and vice wing commanders, while smaller proportions served in other key positions. Recent selectees for general officer spent, on average, about 5.2 years in key assignments. This represents 36 percent of the average of 14.3 years between promotion to the grade of major and selection for brigadier general. In total, officers spent 7.3 years (a little more than half their field grade years) in squadron and wing level assignments.

To examine the effects of a 3-1/2-year joint tour on erosion of war-fighting skills, we computed the amount of consecutive time officers spent in non-war-fighting assignments. Because war-fighting skills for pilots and navigators equate to flying duty and because most positions at the squadron and wing level are credited as flying duty, we equated war-fighting skills with assignments at the squadron and wing levels. For each officer we then identified the maximum period of consecutive non-war-fighting time. We found that the median period of consecutive non-war-fighting time totaled 3.8 years. This suggests that a 3-1/2-year tour (4 years to avoid mid-year moves) could be accommodated without adversely affecting war-fighting skills. However, a joint tour coupled with a year of professional military education may require a significant adjustment in career paths.

Long periods of non-war-fighting assignments were more likely to occur in the earlier part of officers' careers. Sixty-eight percent of the longest non-war-fighting assignments involved time at the grade of major, 65 percent at the grade of lieutenant colonel, but only 39 percent involved time at the grade of colonel. (Assignments often involved time at more than one grade.) Long tours may thus be more feasible at different points in officers' careers.

If limiting the time in war-fighting assignments at the squadron and wing level is undesirable, joint assignments will likely be increased by reducing the time high quality officers spend at Air Force headquarters and major commands—over three-quarters of officers selected for brigadier general had a headquarters assignment and two-thirds had an assignment at the major commands identified in table I.1. The time spent on these activities averaged (for all officers) 4 years. Time spent at air

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divisions and numbered air forces averaged only about 3 months. Time spent in other assignments, such as assignments on the faculty of a school, as commander of a nonoperational organization, or at organizations not specifically identified in table I.1, averaged (for all officers) less than 1 year (9 months). Professional military education and other education and training averaged 1.5 years. As shown in table I.2, a high proportion of officers attended intermediate- and senior-level professional military education. All officers attended at least one school while 62 percent attended both intermediate and senior schools.

Table I.2: Professional Military Education of Air Force Officers^a

	Percent of officers
Intermediate service school ^b	
Armed Forces Staff College	27
Air Command & Staff College	41
Other intermediate service school	6
Total	74
Senior service school ^c	
National War College	35
Industrial College of the Armed Forces	13
Air War College	34
Other senior service school	7
Total	88
Both intermediate and senior service school	62

^aOfficers selected for brigadier general by the 1986 and 1987 selection boards from selected operational specialties (pilots, navigators, and missile operations) Review covered 68 officers

^bIntermediate schools are 10 months, except for the Armed Forces Staff College which is 5 months

^cSenior schools are 10 months

Note: numbers may not add due to rounding

The analysis indicates that joint specialists who serve two joint tours during their field grade years would likely be unable to complete these assignments and intermediate and senior military education (about 9 years) without taking time away from squadron and wing level assignments. Moreover, the provision allowing a short initial tour is likely to be of limited value for Air Force officers since it would apply earlier in the career path when more consecutive time is available for a joint assignment.

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Navy

Our analysis of the field grade assignments (from promotion to lieutenant commander to selection for flag officer) of Navy flag officers is detailed in tables I.3 and I.4.

Table I.3: Analysis of Field Grade Assignments—Recent Navy Selections for Flag Officer (Fiscal Years 1987 and 1988 Selection Boards)^a

Community	Average years of service	Average years war-fighting assignments ^b	Maximum period of consecutive shore time ^c (median years)
Aviation	18.0	9.1	2.6
Surface	16.9	7.6	3.6
Submarine	17.3	8.9	2.6
Average	17.4	8.5	2.8

^aAnalysis covers 22 aviation officers, 18 surface warfare officers, and 8 submarine warfare officers. Our review covered all 48 officers selected from these specialties out of a total of 64 line officers selected.

^bIncludes sea assignments and major shore commands; the Navy views major shore commands as key assignments.

^cConsecutive shore time excluding shore commands.

Table I.4: Frequency and Duration of Key Navy Field Grade Assignments^a

	Officers serving in key positions				Average (years)	Average time for all officers (years)
	Percent					
	Aviation	Surface	Submarine	All communities		
Executive officer	100	94	100	98	1.5	1.5
Commander command ^b	100	100	100	100	1.8	1.8
Post-command command or executive officer tour	68	0	25	35	1.6	0.6
Major command ^c	100	100	100	100	1.7	1.7
Sequential command	64	6	0	31	1.6	0.5
Total						6.1

^aNavy officers from aviation, surface, and submarine warfare communities selected for rear admiral (lower half) by fiscal years 1987 and 1988 selection boards. Includes 22 aviation officers, 18 surface warfare officers, and 8 submarine warfare officers.

^bCommand assignments at the grade of commander are referred to as commander command.

^cPost-command tours refer to tours following commander command.

^dCommand assignments at the grade of captain are referred to as major commands.

^eSequential commands follow major commands at the grade of captain.

Navy officers spent close to 17-1/2 years from promotion to lieutenant commander to selection as a flag officer, with about half this time (8.9 years) spent in shore assignments (excluding shore commands).² The maximum period of consecutive shore time (excluding shore commands) varied by community from a median of 2.6 years for aviation and submarine officers to 3.6 years for surface warfare officers. Consecutive shore time provides some indication of the amount of time that could be made available for joint assignments without affecting operational sea duty assignments.

Key war-fighting assignments for Navy officers include an executive officer tour, a command assignment at the grade of commander, and a command assignment at the grade of captain. Essentially all officers selected for promotion to flag rank completed these key assignments. Some officers, particularly aviation officers, completed additional executive officer and command tours. In total, Navy selectees spent an average of 6.1 years in executive officer and command tours.

Navy officers were less likely to complete a program of professional military education than their Air Force counterparts. Only 14 of the 48 selectees (29 percent) graduated from an intermediate-level school and only 11 (23 percent) graduated from a senior-level school. Moreover, only 3 officers (6 percent) had completed both intermediate and senior schools.

**Timing of Promotion to General/
Flag Officer**

Increased time could be made available for a joint assignment by promoting officers to general/flag rank at a later time. Service officials believe this would be undesirable because delaying the promotion point would

- lead to an aging of the force since promotions to lower grades would also be delayed;
- create retention problems, particularly in such categories as pilots where shortages exist; and
- limit the ability to use officers at each grade since general and flag officers above the grade of brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half) normally retire when they reach 35 years of service.

²Several numbers differ from those presented in our testimony before the Subcommittee on Investigations, House Committee on Armed Services, on February 3, 1988. At that time, we had not completed our validation of data provided by the Navy. These corrections are not of sufficient magnitude to affect our conclusions.

Selectivity for General Officer

Because the Reorganization Act requires that officers promoted to general/flag officer have a joint assignment, longer tour lengths may reduce the number of officers who satisfy the criteria for selection to general/flag officer. We calculated that a reduction in average tour lengths from 3-1/2 years to 3 years would produce an increase of between 9 to 15 percent in the number of officers meeting the requirement for a joint assignment. (The higher figure assumes a 10-percent utilization of the short tour exception for combat operations officers; the lower figure assumes that overseas tours of 2 years or more are recognized as complete tours and a 10-percent utilization of the combat operations exception.)

Mid-Year Moves

DOD is concerned that 3-1/2-year tours force disruptive mid-year moves. According to DOD, most moves occur in the summer to facilitate school transfers and family relocations. Mid-year tours are seen as disrupting this pattern. Further, since most transfers occur in summer, jobs tend to become vacant in summer; mid-year tours could limit the opportunities available to officers coming out of the joint environment.

However, in addition to establishing a minimum of 3-1/2 years, the Reorganization Act established a required average of 3-1/2 years, allowing the minimum tour length to be waived on a case-by-case basis. The specification of a 3-1/2-year average suggests the need to manage to 4 years, thus avoiding mid-year moves.

Other Concerns

A longer tour length will tend to encourage consecutive joint tours in order to fill critical billets (that is, positions that require joint specialists). For example, to fill a critical billet at the grade of lieutenant colonel, the officer would have to complete joint professional military education and a 3-1/2-year joint assignment as a major. Depending on when the officer's initial joint assignment is completed, limited time may exist for an in-service assignment before the officer may be needed to fill a lieutenant-colonel-level critical billet.

Officials at the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Communications Agency saw this as a problem. These officials were concerned that if officers did not renew their operational perspective, their value to the joint world would be diminished.

Officials at Army and Air Force military personnel centers also saw 3-1/2 year tours as limiting the availability of officers for command tours.

Permanent Change-Of-Station
Costs

A longer tour is consistent with recent changes in Army and Air Force policies governing permanent changes-of-station. These changes in policy were motivated by budgetary limitations.

- The Army has extended the tour length of assignments in the continental United States to 4 years.
- The Air Force is encouraging voluntary extensions of tours to 4 years.

GAO Observations

DOD's desire for the increased flexibility offered by 3-year tours needs to be balanced against the Reorganization Act's objective of greater stability in joint organizations. To balance these two objectives, an alternative that could be considered is one that sets a minimum tour of 3 years but an average tour of 3-1/2 years. This would allow some officers to be reassigned after 3 years if needed for operational duties while encouraging other officers to extend to 4 years.

DOD Comments and Our
Evaluation

In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD stated that the suggested alternative (3 year minimum and 3-1/2 year average) was a constructive proposal that merits close examination. It stated that it is assessing alternative average tour length standards that may be feasible. Nevertheless, DOD disagreed with certain parts of our analysis and the absence of an overall assessment of the management difficulties imposed by a 3-1/2-year tour. Specifically, DOD strongly disagreed with the statement that data on a small number of Air Force officers suggests that a 3-1/2-year minimum tour might be accommodated without affecting war-fighting skills. It also expressed concern that the report does not address the impact of a 3-1/2-year tour on joint specialists.

We expanded our discussion of joint specialists to indicate the effects of a 3-1/2-year tour on war-fighting assignments. We believe the data on recent Air Force promotees to brigadier general provides valid insights to the issue of the crowdedness of the career path. The congressional debate centered on officers who were selected for command positions and would be competitive for promotion to general/flag officer because,

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according to DOD witnesses, the need to complete these assignments created an extremely crowded career path. Officers who are less promotable would likely have a less crowded career path and therefore more time for joint assignments. Thus, the officers whose career paths we analyzed represented those officers with the greatest difficulty in completing 3-1/2-year tours and, as the most promotable officers, those officers being targeted for joint assignments. It should also be noted that a joint duty assignment will not always be coupled with military education and in such cases would place less pressure on the career path. As stated in our report, a joint tour coupled with education may require a significant adjustment in career paths.

DOD also indicated that it does not believe slowing promotion phase points is an appropriate option to increase time for joint assignments since it would reduce advancement opportunities and retention among highly-capable mid-career officers. Further, DOD stated that the assumptions used in calculating the increase in selectivity for promotion to general/flag rank did not reflect changes made by the Authorization Act. We modified our calculation to reflect the 10-percent ceiling (on exclusions from the average tour length computation) contained in the Authorization Act. Because DOD continues to support recognizing overseas tours of 2 years or more as full tours, we retained this assumption in order to demonstrate the impact of this change on selectivity for promotion.

DOD also disagreed with our analysis of the problem of mid-year moves, saying that our suggestion of managing to 4 years is tantamount to establishing a minimum 4-year tour and would adversely affect operational requirements. Our discussion of and conclusions on the impact of joint tours on Air Force brigadier generals referred to the need to consider 4-year tours to avoid mid-year moves. Our analysis indicates that time in war-fighting assignments would likely be affected in the case of joint specialists. Our analysis also suggests that a significant adjustment in the amount of consecutive time officers spend away from operational duties would be required when joint assignments are coupled with professional military education.

DOD also stated that while the services are making strenuous efforts to stabilize tours and hold down permanent change-of-station costs, it does not follow that the services should be able to accommodate 3-1/2-year tours. We believe that the efforts to reduce permanent change-of-station

costs is one factor supporting longer tour lengths that needs to be considered, along with other factors, in assessing the need for changes in tour length.

Tour Lengths for General Officers

Current Provision

The minimum tour for general officers assigned to joint duty positions is set at 3 years. Waivers are permitted but only if a 3-year average is maintained.

DOD's Proposed Change

DOD proposes reducing the minimum and average tour length to 2 years.

DOD Rationale

DOD argues that a 2-year tour would

- allow for a greater breadth of experience among candidates for senior leadership positions;
- increase the number of qualified candidates for positions that require joint experience as a general or flag officer (combatant commanders, service chiefs of staff, chairman and vice chairman of JCS); and
- reduce turbulence among general and flag officers in non-joint assignments.

Analysis of Proposal

Breadth of Experience

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff testified before the Subcommittee on Investigations, House Committee on Armed Services, that officers generally spend 3 to 4 years at the 1-star rank and 3 to 4 years at the 2-star rank. According to the Chairman, an officer should have, in each of these 3- to 4-year blocks, an operational assignment and a staff assignment. The Chairman emphasized the need for recent operational experience for officers promoted to 3-star rank, citing the Navy fleet commander as an example where recent operational experience is essential.

Our analysis of the assignment pattern of 3- and 4-star general/flag officers will be provided separately.

Number of Candidates for Senior Positions

An Air Force model of general officer assignments compares the effects of 2- and 3-year assignments on selectivity for senior leadership positions.³ The model projects the number of fully qualified candidates that would be available to fill each vacancy as chairman and vice chairman of the JCS, service chiefs, and commanders of the combatant commands. (A candidate is considered fully qualified if he meets several criteria, including completion of a joint tour and the proper subspecialty.) The results of the Air Force model are summarized in table I.5.

Table I.5: Air Force Modeling of Impact of Changes to General Officer Tour Lengths

	3-year tour	2-year tour
Percent of time two or more fully qualified candidates available	13	42
Percent of time one or more fully qualified candidates available	33	66

The Air Force defines desired selectivity as two or more fully qualified candidates for each vacancy. With a 2-year tour, the model predicts that there would be two or more candidates 42 percent of the time, compared to 13 percent with a 3-year tour. When no candidate with a joint assignment is available, a presidential waiver of the requirement of a joint tour as a general officer would be needed. With a 2-year tour, the number of presidential waivers predicted decreases by 67 percent—from 37 percent to 12 percent of the vacancies.

The model also predicts that a 2-year tour would result in an average tour length of 27 months.

Stability of Non-Joint Tours

The Air Force model also examined the effects of a tour length change on stability in non-joint assignments—officials were concerned that longer tours in joint assignments would result in the need to more frequently move officers assigned to non-joint organizations. Instead, the model predicts that reducing the tour length to 2 years would not have a significant effect on the average tour length for non-joint assignments.

³We assessed the model's general credibility by reviewing the structure of the model and the methods it uses to make assignments and accumulate statistics. We did not verify the model's assumptions or its data. Based on this limited assessment, the model appears to represent a reasonable approach to the task of simulating the impact of the Reorganization Act.

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Impact on Stability

As shown in table I.6, a minimum tour length of either 2 or 3 years is likely to result in a significant improvement in stability. During the 6-month period preceding enactment of the Reorganization Act, a majority (56.5 percent) of officers left joint organizations after serving tours of less than 2 years.

Table I.6: Tour Lengths for General Officers Leaving Joint Assignments From April 1 to October 1, 1986

Rates shown in percent

	17 months or less	18 to 23 months	24 to 35 months	36 or more months	Total^a
Air Force ^b	43.7	6.3	43.8	6.2	100.0 (16)
Army	21.1	42.1	36.8	0.0	100.0 (19)
Navy	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	100.0 (5)
Marine Corps	33.3	16.7	50.0	0.0	100.0 (6)
All services	30.4	26.1	41.3	2.2	100.0 (46)

^a() indicates number of officers in each category

^bAir Force data covers all of fiscal year 1986 (Oct 1, 1985 to Oct 1, 1986)

GAO Observations

A 2-year tour would allow a greater number of officers to qualify for senior leadership positions. It would also result in greater stability than existed before the Reorganization Act, but significantly less stability than would result from a 3-year tour. Our analysis of the effects on officers' career paths is not yet complete and will be provided separately.

DOD Comments

DOD stated that a 2-year tour for general and flag officers would provide enhanced stability in joint assignments, permit the necessary breadth of experience among general/flag officers, and offer enhanced selectivity of candidates for promotion to senior military leadership positions.

Permanent Promotion Monitoring

Current Provision

The promotion objectives established by the Reorganization Act apply to officers who are joint specialists or who have ever served on the Joint Staff or in other joint duty assignments. Promotion objectives require that officers who have served in one of these categories of joint duty be promoted at a rate equal to or greater than officers in established comparison groups (see promotion comparisons, p. 22). Once an officer serves in a joint assignment, the promotion objectives apply to the officer for the remainder of the officer's career.

DOD's Proposed Change

For officers who are not joint specialists, DOD will track their promotion only to their next in-zone promotion consideration following completion of their joint assignment. (In-zone promotion refers to the normal period of time in which officers are promoted.)

DOD Rationale

DOD is concerned that permanent promotion monitoring sends the wrong signal to the officer corps. Instead of placing emphasis on current performance, it fosters perceptions that officers are given a preference in promotions for the remainder of their career once they complete a joint assignment. Further, DOD is concerned with the administrative burden created by permanent tracking.

Analysis of Proposal

Restricting promotion tracking would likely have only a limited effect on the composition of the groups to which promotion targets apply.

With the current joint duty assignment list limited to positions at the grade of major (Navy lieutenant commander) and above, this change would not alter the target group at the time of consideration for promotion to lieutenant colonel (Navy commander).

At the time of consideration for promotion to colonel, only officers who completed their joint tour as majors (that is, those assigned to joint duty as junior majors) would be dropped from the target group.

By the time of consideration for promotion to general or flag officer, nearly all officers competitive for promotion should have a joint assignment—title IV requires that officers complete a joint assignment prior to

being promoted to general or flag officer. Therefore, permanent monitoring should not affect selection to general/flag officer.

GAO Observations

At the time of consideration for general/flag officer, the proposed change would create the problem of tending to favor officers who were assigned to joint duty later in their careers, as senior lieutenant colonels or colonels, since only these officers would be subject to the promotion targets.

**DOD Comments and Our
 Evaluation**

DOD disagreed with our analysis but did not indicate how it was flawed. Instead DOD emphasized that promotion tracking is not intended to give preferential treatment to officers in joint assignments, and the most important measure of promotion potential is recent performance. We agree with DOD's emphasis on recent performance in promotion decisions; however, we do not see an inconsistency between this emphasis and attaining the promotion objectives established in the Reorganization Act.

**Promotion
 Comparisons**

Current Provision

The Reorganization Act established promotion target and comparison groups to assure that high quality officers are assigned to joint duty. The promotion comparisons are summarized in table I.7.

Table I.7: Promotion Comparisons

Target Group	Comparison Group
Joint Staff	Service headquarters
Joint specialists	Service headquarters
Other officers in joint assignments (excludes Joint Staff and joint specialists)	All officers (average) in grade and competitive category (includes headquarters staff)

DOD's Proposed Change

Compare all officers in joint assignments (including Joint Staff and joint specialists) against all officers in the same grade and competitive category.

**Appendix I
Proposals to Modify the Management of Joint
Officers Which the Defense Authorization
Act Did Not Address**

DOD Rationale

DOD expressed concern that the comparisons are inconsistent. Other officers in joint assignments, a group that excludes joint specialists and the Joint Staff (which the Reorganization Act presumed would represent the highest quality officers) are compared against all officers, a group which includes the highest quality officers (headquarters staff).

Analysis of Proposal

Since the promotion rate for the comparison group does not change, the inclusion of higher quality officers in the target group for other officers would allow more lower quality officers to be assigned to joint duty within the established promotion objectives.

GAO Observations

The basic issue is whether Congress intended the joint officer group to be an average or better than average group. Currently, the joint officer group (other officers in joint assignments) is compared against a group that includes the highest quality officers, suggesting that the joint officer group is intended to be better than average.

An average-to-average comparison could be accomplished by excluding headquarters staff from the comparison group. This would minimize the masking effect—inclusion of higher performing officers would mask the effect of lower performing officers.

DOD Comments

DOD concurred with our analysis and observations.

In-Service Positions

Current Provision

In-service positions (assignments within an officer's own military department) are excluded from the joint duty assignment list.

DOD's Proposed Change

DOD proposes designating 250 in-service positions as joint assignments. These positions must be certified by the Chairman, JCS, as providing significant experience in joint matters.

DOD Rationale

The change recognizes that certain service billets are primarily involved in the development of joint doctrine, planning, joint command and control, and other joint matters.

Analysis of Proposal

The exclusion reflects several concerns. First, in-service positions are seen as reinforcing officers' parochial, service view rather than developing a joint perspective. A basic objective of the Reorganization Act was to strengthen joint organizations and orientations.

Second, the exclusion reflects concern about past practices. Prior to the Reorganization Act, DOD regulation required officers to have a joint assignment prior to selection for general/flag officer. Officers were permitted to satisfy this requirement with in-service positions, designated as joint equivalent, that provided experience in joint matters. However, officers were given credit for in-service positions with minimal joint content.

The definition DOD used in designating the initial joint duty assignment list would permit such practices to continue—the definition placed emphasis on organizations' involvement in joint matters rather than on the responsibilities associated with individual positions. It defined a joint duty assignment as "an assignment to a designated position in a multi-service or multi-national command or activity that is involved in the integrated employment or support of land, sea, and air forces of at least two of the four Armed Services." However, the requirement that the Chairman, JCS, certify that in-service positions provide experience in joint matters is intended to limit in-service billets to positions which focus on joint matters.

GAO Observations

We plan further analysis of in-service positions as part of our planned review of the joint duty assignment list. This review will focus on whether positions that have been designated joint meet the legislative requirement that they provide significant experience in joint matters.

DOD Comments and Our
Evaluation

DOD disagreed with our statement that the current definition does not address individual position requirements since we omitted key words in quoting the DOD definition. While we have restated the full definition, individual positions were not required to satisfy the statutory requirement that they provide officers with significant experience in joint matters and there was no position-by-position review by the Office of the Secretary of Defense or JCS to assure that they met the definition.

Proposals to Modify the Management of Joint Officers That the Defense Authorization Act Addressed

This appendix discusses proposals that were acted on as part of the National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989. For each proposal this appendix discusses (1) the Reorganization Act provision, (2) DOD's proposal and rationale, (3) our analysis of the proposal presented to representatives of the Armed Services Committees during conference on the Authorization Act, and (4) changes made by the Authorization Act. DOD comments are also discussed.

Sequencing Requirement for Joint Specialists

Reorganization Act Provision

To qualify as a joint specialist, officers were required to complete a program of joint professional military education and a full joint duty assignment, in that sequence.

The sequencing requirement did not apply to combat operations officers.

DOD's Proposed Change

The Secretary of Defense would be authorized to waive the sequencing requirement on a case-by-case basis.

DOD Rationale

DOD officials were concerned that the sequencing requirement limited DOD's ability to use the senior joint schools as sources of joint specialists. Without using the senior schools as a source of specialists, DOD believed it would have trouble filling the 1,000 critical positions that the law mandates must be filled by specialists.

Senior professional military education occurs late in an officer's career—about the 18th to 20th year. There is insufficient time for an officer to complete school, serve in a joint assignment, and serve in a critical billet before the officer is selected for general/flag officer or retires.

As a result, DOD officials believed that the burden of producing joint specialists would fall largely on the intermediate joint schools. The Armed Forces Staff College, the only intermediate-level school currently recognized as joint, graduates about 470 line officers each year. This was

viewed as insufficient to meet the requirements for filling critical billets. Officers who are sent to the Armed Forces Staff College at the grade of major will not fill critical billets until they become lieutenant colonels and colonels. Because of the difficulties involved in projecting officers' availability, skill matches, and overall retention behavior, more than one specialist will need to be created for each critical billet that must be filled.

Analysis of Proposal

Our analysis indicated that this proposal conflicted with a key objective of the Reorganization Act—to better prepare officers before they are assigned to joint duty. An alternative for meeting the need for joint specialists that is more consistent with the objectives of the Reorganization Act is expansion of intermediate-level joint education. To the extent that the definition of a nominee was linked to completion of joint military education, expansion of intermediate-level education would have been needed to meet the Reorganization Act's requirement that approximately 50 percent of all joint duty assignments be filled by joint specialists or nominees.

To meet the 50-percent requirement, DOD projected it would need to fill about 1,200 positions with nominees each year. The National Defense University schools (which include, in addition to the intermediate-level Armed Forces Staff College, the senior-level National War College, and Industrial College of the Armed Forces) are the only schools currently recognized as joint, but they produce only about 750 graduates each year.

DOD currently plans to expand opportunities for joint education by establishing a joint specialist curriculum in the service schools. Standards for accreditation of the joint specialist curriculum are set by the Chairman of the JCS.

Advantages to Sequencing Waivers

Waivers of the sequencing requirement offer several advantages:

- Waivers will increase the flexibility to qualify an officer as a joint specialist later in the officer's career. It may be desirable to have this option to attract exceptional performers who had a joint assignment at the grade of major or lieutenant colonel, and are desirable candidates for critical billets. It would also create flexibility to qualify officers with specific skills if requirements change or attrition is higher than anticipated.

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- Officers who have a joint assignment as senior captains will be allowed to return to the joint world to fill lieutenant-colonel-level critical billets. The Air Force, with about 70 percent of its joint assignments in non-combat-operations fields, faces a shortage of field grade officers in these fields. As a result, although no captain-level positions have been included in the joint duty assignment list, the Air Force expects to assign captains to major-level positions.
- Consecutive tours may be reduced. Defense officials saw back-to-back tours as undesirable. Officers are expected to bring an operational perspective to bear; if officers do not renew their operational expertise, they lose their value to the joint world. Without exceptions to sequencing, there would be a greater need for officers to serve in consecutive tours in order to qualify for and then serve in lieutenant-colonel-level critical billets requiring joint specialists. With a sequencing waiver, some officers could serve in joint billets as senior captains, attend a joint school, and serve in an operational assignment before returning to a critical billet.

**Changes Made by the
Authorization Act**

Waivers of the sequencing requirement are permitted. However, the number of waivers are limited—waivers of sequencing and of joint education (see p. 28) may not exceed 5 percent of the total number of officers selected during a fiscal year for the joint specialty.

Nominees may include combat operations officers who have not completed joint education (up to a specified limit).

DOD Comments

DOD concurred with our assessment of the advantages of providing sequencing waivers.

Awarding Joint Specialty Based on Two Joint Assignments

Reorganization Act Provision

To qualify as a joint specialist, officers were required to complete a program of joint professional military education and a full joint duty assignment, in that sequence.

DOD's Proposed Change

Officers would be allowed to qualify as joint specialists if they completed two joint duty assignments (allowing a second assignment in place of a joint school).

DOD Rationale

According to DOD, its proposal recognized that a second joint assignment contributes at least as much as joint education to an officer's development. It would also avoid excluding highly experienced joint officers from the joint specialty based on school attendance decisions made relatively early in an officer's career. In particular, it would avoid excluding officers from senior leadership positions based on school attendance decisions made years earlier.

Analysis of Proposal

Our analysis of this proposal indicated that its main impact would be on general officers. It was intended to limit the number of officers who would be excluded from senior leadership positions—such as combatant commander or vice chairman of the JCS—which require a joint specialist.

Prior to promotion to general or flag officer, an officer is required to complete a joint duty assignment. To qualify for senior leadership positions, an officer must also complete a joint assignment as a general or flag officer. Under the proposal, an officer who meets both of these requirements could be awarded the joint specialty and thus qualify for senior leadership positions.

The change would also allow field grade officers to qualify as joint specialists without joint education. Under the Reorganization Act's provisions, the only means of qualifying officers as joint specialists later in

their careers is through senior joint schools. Because the selection rate for senior schools is low, this is not a realistic alternative for many officers. The proposed change would allow such officers with needed expertise or skills to return to the joint world and qualify for critical billets. Because there is pressure to use joint positions to qualify officers who will be competitive for selection to general officer, this option would likely be used only infrequently.

Having the option to qualify field grade officers as joint specialists later in their careers without joint schooling is probably in the interest of the joint world. However, the desirability of creating this option for general officers is related to the desirability of retaining the Reorganization Act's requirement that senior leadership positions be filled by joint specialists.

Changes Made by the
Authorization Act

Waivers are authorized in unusual circumstances and, in the case of general and flag officers, only under exceptional circumstances in which the waiver is necessary to meet a critical need of the armed forces. Waivers of military education and of sequencing together may not exceed 5 percent of the total number of officers selected during a fiscal year for the joint specialty.

DOD Comments

DOD concurred with our presentation but stated that it believed the real issue regarding general/flag officers will be selectivity of candidates for senior leadership positions. It stated that large numbers of highly qualified officers will not possess joint military education but that the new waiver authority should provide the flexibility to address this issue in individual cases.

Delegation of
Authority

Reorganization Act
Provision

The Secretary of Defense has the authority to (1) designate joint specialists and (2) approve waivers of the requirements for qualifying as a joint specialist (waivers are allowed during the 2-year transition period). There was no provision for delegation of the former authority and the latter could be delegated only to the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

DOD's Proposed Change	DOD proposed permitting delegation of these authorities to the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel.
DOD Rationale	The delegation would avoid burdening the Secretary of Defense with numerous, relatively routine personnel actions.
Analysis of Proposal	The basic issue raised by this proposal is whether the joint specialty was intended to be an administrative designation for tracking officers who have completed certain experience and educational prerequisites, or whether the joint specialty was intended to represent an elite group from which the services' senior leadership (chairman and vice chairman of the JCS, combatant commanders) will be chosen. Delegation of authority to the assistant secretary level is consistent with the first concept. Designation of joint specialists by the Secretary of Defense (or Deputy Secretary), which implies greater stature and prestige, supports the second concept.
Changes Made by the Authorization Act	Authority to designate joint specialists and to grant waivers of requirements for the joint specialty may be delegated to the Deputy Secretary of Defense.
DOD Comments	DOD stated it believes that the delegation authority in the Authorization Act should prove adequate.

Cumulative Credit for Joint Assignments

Reorganization Act Provision	To receive credit for a full tour of duty in a joint assignment, officers in the grades of colonel and below were required to serve 3-1/2 years without interruption (3 years for general/flag officers).
DOD's Proposed Change	DOD proposed awarding joint duty assignment credit on a cumulative basis for officers who could not, for specified reasons, serve a full tour

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in a single joint duty assignment. Specified reasons included overseas tours where the tour length prescribed by regulation is less than 2 years, extreme hardship, and other unusual circumstances.

DOD Rationale

DOD believed there was a need to recognize cases in which a job change is based on conditions beyond an officer's control. These include personal hardship, disestablishment or realignment of an organization, promotion of the officer, and overseas tours of less than 2 years.

Analysis of Proposal

The number of short tours due to personal hardship, medical conditions, realignment, or promotion could not be readily estimated.

There are about 2,748 overseas joint assignments, most of which have tours of less than 3-1/2 years.¹ Cumulative credit would thus apply to most of these tours, including tours of less than 3 years completed by general/flag officers. About 7 percent of the overseas joint assignments have tour lengths of less than 2 years.

**Changes Made by the
Authorization Act**

Cumulative credit towards the full joint duty tour lengths required by law is authorized for overseas joint tours and tours terminated for unusual personal reasons. Tours terminated due to promotion (when another joint assignment is not available within the same organization) or when the officer's position is eliminated in a reorganization also qualify for cumulative credit when the officer is immediately reassigned to another joint duty assignment. Tours to which cumulative credit provisions apply may be excluded when computing the average tour length.

DOD Comments

DOD suggested clarifications in the presentation and appropriate changes were made.

¹The Army has set the tour length for Hawaii tours at 4 years. Except for the 145 overseas joint positions affected by this policy, overseas joint duty assignments are less than 3-1/2 years.

Overseas Tour Lengths

Reorganization Act Provision

The tour length for joint assignments in overseas locations was the same as for other joint assignments (3 years for general and flag officers, and 3-1/2 years for all other officers).

DOD's Proposed Change

Joint assignments, including assignments in overseas locations, would follow the tour length set by regulation. Officers who completed tours of 2 years or more would be credited with a complete joint duty assignment. The change would also cover short tours, such as those in the National Military Command Center, that are set by regulation.

Analysis of Proposal

Overseas tour lengths are set based on an evaluation of the general desirability or arduousness of a location and range, according to DOD regulations, from 1 to 3 years. Such factors as housing availability, climate, social customs, medical support, and educational facilities are considered along with retention and tour extension rates in setting overseas tour lengths. Generally, service members have a choice between a tour in which they are accompanied by dependents and a shorter tour for which they are unaccompanied. In certain remote locations, only short (1-year) unaccompanied tours are permitted.

About one-third of the 8,222 joint duty assignments are overseas. Most—76 percent—are in locations with tour lengths of 3 years.² About 11 percent are in locations with 2-year tours and 7 percent with 1-year tours. Five percent are Hawaii tours set at 4 years.

DOD proposed a 2-year minimum for recognition as a complete joint duty assignment. There are two provisions in the Reorganization Act that allow for limited recognition of 2-year tours as complete joint duty assignments.

- Combat operations officers were authorized 2-year tours.
- Two years was set as the minimum experience level for qualifying as a joint specialist during the transition period. (During the 2 years following enactment of the Reorganization Act, officers can be designated joint

²Based on accompanied tour length except in locations which permit only unaccompanied tours.

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specialists without meeting all experience and educational requirements.)

The DOD proposal would recognize most of the approximately 2,600 overseas tours of less than 3-1/2 years as complete assignments. Without 2- and 3-year overseas tours being recognized as complete tours, DOD would need to assign officers serving in these overseas assignments to a second joint tour. Service officials expressed concern that this would strain the capacity of the assignment management system. It would require tracking officers for the remainder of their field grade years and matching the officer's availability for a joint assignment with the availability of a joint position in the appropriate specialty.

**Changes Made by the
Authorization Act**

The established tour lengths do not apply to overseas tours. However, tours of less than 3-1/2 years (3 years for general/flag officers) are not recognized as full tours. Officers must therefore use the cumulative credit provisions to meet the requirements for a tour of duty in a joint assignment.

DOD Comments

DOD concurred with our analysis.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The objective of this review was to evaluate DOD's proposals for modifying provisions of the Reorganization Act covering joint officer personnel policies. Our approach included assessing the impact of proposed changes on congressional intent, examining how current provisions and proposed changes affected officers' career paths, identifying unintended effects of the current provisions and proposed changes, and analyzing alternatives where appropriate. We interviewed service officials responsible for title IV implementation, assignment managers in service military personnel centers, Office of the Secretary of Defense and JCS officials overseeing title IV implementation, and officials at the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Communications Agency. We reviewed relevant service and DOD regulations, personnel policies and guidance, examined analyses undertaken to support the proposed changes, and obtained data (such as actual tour lengths) that would document current practices and conditions. Our review was conducted from March 1987 to February 1988 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

To analyze the impact of a 3-1/2 or 3-year tour on officers' career development, we analyzed the assignment history of (1) officers selected for brigadier general or rear admiral (lower half) by the two most recent selection boards and (2) the current inventory of 3- and 4-star general/flag officers. This review was limited to officers in operational specialties—Army combat arms officers, Navy unrestricted line officers, Marine Corps aviation and ground officers, and Air Force pilots, navigators, and missileers. Officers who held these specialties in the past but were clearly being utilized in support specialties such as acquisition or logistics were excluded from the sample.

We analyzed the assignment history from promotion to the grade of major to selection for brigadier general and, for current 3- and 4-star officers, the assignment history from promotion to brigadier general (and Navy equivalent) to promotion to 3- or 4-star general officers. The analysis of Navy rear admirals was performed by the Navy and subsequently validated by us. The analysis for Air Force brigadier generals and Navy rear admirals is presented in appendix I. The remainder of the analysis will be provided separately.

Comments From the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Principal Deputy)



FORCE MANAGEMENT
AND PERSONNEL

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

14 JAN 1988

Mr. Frank C. Conahan
Assistant Comptroller General
National Security and International
Affairs Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Conahan:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) Draft Report, "MILITARY PERSONNEL: Proposals to Modify the Management of Officers Assigned to Joint Duty," undated (GAO Code #391067/OSD Case #7507). Detailed comments on the report are enclosed.

The report provides an assessment of the proposed legislative initiatives DoD submitted to the Congress in April 1987 to modify the provisions of Title IV (Joint Officer Management) of the DoD Reorganization Act of 1986. Although the report does not provide detailed analyses or recommendations concerning many of the complex issues entailed in this legislation, the Department of Defense believes it represents a constructive effort to assess DoD officer management requirements, the legislative intent of the Congress, and some of the issues that must be addressed in implementing an effective joint officer management system. While the report is generally supportive of the legislative proposals, the DoD disagrees with some aspects of its contents.

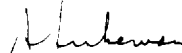
The report does not adequately summarize the impacts of the current 3 1/2 year minimum tour requirement for company and field grade officers. Different aspects of this problem--e.g., operational requirements, overseas tours, consecutive joint tour requirements, mid-year moves, selectivity for general/flag rank--are discussed on a piecemeal basis without an overall assessment of the interlocking management difficulties imposed by this requirement. In the absence of such a summary, certain aspects of the report are subject to erroneous interpretation out of context, despite GAO's caveats. For example, the DoD does not agree with the statement in the report that sample data on average non-operational tour lengths for a small number of Air Force officers suggest that an across-the-board 3 1/2 year minimum tour for all officers might be accommodated without adversely affecting warfighting skills.


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Comments From the Assistant Secretary of
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The DoD is also concerned that the report does not address adequately the impact of the 3 1/2 year tour requirement on the capability of the DoD to fill critical billet requirements, particularly for officers with critical occupational specialties. Joint duty and education requirements now dictate that such officers spend 6 1/2 to 9 years outside of Service operational billets. Even under the new cumulative tour provisions, officers departing 3 year overseas assignments will be required to complete 2 additional years of joint service before receiving credit for their initial joint tour. The GAO study should be expanded to consider the full impact of the new statutory changes and the capability of officers with critical occupational specialties to meet all of the joint service, joint education, and Service operational requirements necessary to assume senior military leadership positions.

The Department also takes issue with the GAO's suggestion that increased time could be made available for joint duty assignments by slowing promotion phase points for brigadier general/rear admiral (lower half). Current phase points are planned against a 35 year officer career, based on current retirement statutes. Slowing of promotion phase points would hamper retention of highly capable officers, reduce selectivity for general/flag ranks, and require accelerated promotions through the most senior grades--yielding lower experience levels and even greater rotation turbulence among senior military leaders. This would seem to be a self-defeating action. Barring overwhelming evidence to the contrary, the DoD believes that focusing on the assignment process and tour length alternatives are more prudent means of addressing joint service requirements.

Sincerely,



 David J. Armor
Principal Deputy

Enclosure:
As stated

Appendix IV
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GAO DRAFT REPORT - UNDATED
(GAO CODE #391067) OSD CASE 7507

"MILITARY PERSONNEL: PROPOSALS TO MODIFY THE
MANAGEMENT OF OFFICERS ASSIGNED TO JOINT DUTY"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT REPORT

* * * * *

DOD PROPOSALS TO MODIFY THE MANAGEMENT OF JOINT OFFICERS
WHICH WERE NOT ADDRESSED BY THE FY 1988/1989 AUTHORIZATION ACT

PROPOSAL A: Tour Length for Field Grade and Company Grade Officers. The DoD proposed that the minimum joint duty assignment tour length should be set at 3 years and that the average tour length also should be set at 3 years.

GAO Analysis/Comments: The GAO reviewed assignment histories of Air Force and Navy officers with combat operations specialties who were recently selected for promotion to brigadier general/rear admiral (lower half), and addressed numerous subissues, as follows:

- Air Force Officer Assignment Experience. The GAO found that, of the 14.3 years average time between promotion to major and promotion to brigadier general, the study population spent an average of 7.3 years in operational assignments at squadron and wing level, and that the median period of non-operational time totaled 3.8 years, suggesting that a 3 1/2 year tour could be accommodated without adversely affecting warfighting skills. However, the GAO noted that a joint tour coupled with a year of professional military education may pose problems. Citing previously expressed views of members of the House Armed Services Committee's Subcommittee on Investigations that time in joint duty assignments was expected to replace time spent in other staff positions rather than taking officers away from operational assignments, the GAO noted that 78 percent of the officers studied had been assigned to the Service headquarters (averaging 3.3 years) and 66 percent had been assigned to a Major Command headquarters (averaging 2.2 years). The GAO also found that longer non-operational assignments may be more feasible during the earlier part of officers' careers.

- Navy Officer Assignment Experience. The GAO analysis indicated that, of the 17.5 years from promotion to lieutenant commander to selection for flag rank, an average of 8.1 years was spent in shore assignments, and that the average maximum period of consecutive shore time (excluding shore commands) was 2.8 years. Navy officers were less likely to complete a program of professional military education than their Air Force counterparts, with only 46 percent of the study group having completed such schooling.

- Timing of Promotion to General/Flag Officer Rank. The GAO commented that increased time could be made available for joint duty assignments by promoting officers at a later time, but noted Service concerns that this would be undesirable because it would

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lead to an aging of the force; create retention problems, particularly in shortage categories; and limit the ability to utilize officers at each grade due to the normal 35-year retirement point for general and flag officers.

- Selectivity for General/Flag Officer Rank. The GAO calculated that a reduction in tour length from 3 1/2 years to 3 years would produce an increase of 8.4 percent to 13.3 percent in the population of officers who had completed a joint duty assignment (and thus would be eligible for promotion to general/flag rank without a waiver).

- Mid-year Moves. The GAO noted difficulties associated with mid-year moves--relocation of families during the school year and limited assignment opportunities for officers leaving the joint arena in mid-year, since most transfers occur in summer--and commented that the specification of a 3 1/2 year average tour requirement suggests the need to manage to 4 years, thus avoiding mid-year moves.

- Consecutive Joint Duty Assignments. The GAO commented that a longer tour length will tend to encourage consecutive joint tours in order to fill critical billets (requiring joint specialists). Depending on when a particular officer's initial joint assignment and joint professional military education are completed, limited time may exist for an in-Service assignment before the officer may be needed to fill a critical billet. Failure to renew their Service operational perspective could limit such officers' value to the joint world.

- Permanent Change-of-Station Costs. The GAO remarked that a longer tour is consistent with recent changes in Army and Air Force policy to seek longer tours of duty for reasons of budgetary savings.

- Alternative Tour Length Standard. The GAO observed that DoD's desire for increased tour length flexibility needs to be balanced against the Reorganization Act's objective of greater stability in joint organizations. To address this issue, the GAO offered for consideration an alternative entailing a minimum tour of 3 years and an average tour requirement of 3 1/2 years.

DoD Comments: Nonconcur in part.

- Air Force Officer Assignment Experience.

-- The DoD strongly disagrees with the implication that a 3 1/2 year tour could be accommodated for all Air Force officers without adversely affecting warfighting skills. The GAO data concerns average periods of non-operational time for a small sample of officers, whereas the 3 1/2 year tour requirement is a minimum standard that applies to nearly all officers. Although some officers with critical occupational specialties may, by statute, serve joint duty assignments of two to three years, the vast majority are expected to serve full tours. Further, substantial numbers of these assignments would have to occur in conjunction with a one-year school--in effect creating a 4 1/2

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year joint assignment. Additional time would be necessary for leave, travel and currency training prior to return to a combat-related assignment. Such protracted absences from operational duties, as noted in the GAO caveat, would in many cases entail significant degradation of aviation and other warfighting skills (particularly to the extent that they necessitated consecutive joint tours, as the GAO addressed elsewhere in the report).

-- As indicated on page 34 of the GAO report, the failure of the statute to provide full tour credit for 3 year overseas tours will necessitate assignment of many incumbents to follow-on joint tours (normally of at least 2 additional years) to accrue the necessary credit. For such officers, the 3 1/2 year standard effectively requires 5 years of joint service to fulfill joint tour prerequisites--2 more years than would be required under the DoD proposal.

-- The DoD agrees that longer joint duty assignments will come largely at the expense of other staff assignments. However, the GAO figures indicate that (after subtracting time for operational assignments and 1 1/2 to 2 years for professional military education schools) operations-oriented officers have approximately 5 years to serve in staff assignments. A 3 1/2 or 4 year joint tour standard leaves approximately 1 year for Service staff positions. The DoD believes that a well-rounded officer needs both kinds of staff experience. Major Command experience is desirable for an officer on a Unified Command staff, just as Service headquarters experience makes an officer a more effective member of the Joint Staff or OSD staff. A 3 year joint tour would enhance stability in the joint arena while permitting a better balance of Service and joint staff experience.

-- The GAO analysis does not address the requirement for many officers to perform two joint tours to meet statutory requirements for critical joint duty assignments (which can be filled only by officers with previous joint education and experience). Such officers must spend 6 1/2 to 9 years (considering school and extension requirements) away from their operational specialties under a 3 1/2 year tour concept vs. 5 1/2 to 7 years under a 3 year tour program. The difference is significant, and affects both the officers' ability to maintain warfighting skills and their availability to fill Service operational requirements.

-- The GAO analysis fails to point out that, except for squadron operations officers, the key operational positions addressed in the report cannot be filled by majors. To the extent that there are proportionately more key operational requirements for lieutenant colonels and colonels, high-quality officers in these grades will be less available to fill joint requirements. Thus, if an officer does not serve a joint tour as a major, he or she will have even less opportunity for joint service in a higher grade. The GAO recognizes that longer tours are more difficult for more senior officers, yet critical billets (all of which call for lieutenant colonels and higher grades) require full 3 1/2 year tours at times when the best officers have proportionately less time to serve in them. Reducing the minimum tour length would help alleviate this problem.

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-- In sum, the Department recognizes that more stability is needed in the joint arena and that longer joint tours will entail shorter Service staff tours. However, the Department believes that a 3-year standard for joint tours, with appropriate exceptions for some officers with critical occupational specialties, is important to provide an appropriate mix of Service and joint expertise while maintaining warfighting skills. The DoD requests the opportunity to review and comment on the GAO's analysis of Army and Marine Corps tour length data upon completion of this work.

- Navy Officer Assignment Experience. The DoD agrees with the GAO's assessment that consecutive shore time provides some indication of the amount of time which could be made available for joint assignments without impacting operational sea duty assignments. Although the GAO elected to allow the data to speak for itself, the DoD believes the conclusion is clear that the Navy will have significant difficulty achieving a 3 1/2 year tour for most joint duty assignments if operational requirements are to be maintained. Even 3 year tours will seriously strain the capabilities of the aviation and submarine communities. The GAO study indicated that these communities experienced average maximum shore times of 2.4 and 2.7 years, respectively. Even these figures overstate the availability of nuclear officers, whose shore assignments frequently entail operational nuclear duties involving shore-based reactors. The requirement for a substantial share of officers to attend joint professional military education in conjunction with their joint duty assignments will only add to the severe challenge for Navy operations communities. For these officers, in particular, the six-month difference in tour length will be important in planning to meet sea command requirements and maintaining the officers' warfighting skills. As noted in the comments concerning Air Force officers, reducing the tour length to 3 years will preclude the necessity of assigning officers with 3 year overseas joint tours to an additional 2 year tour in order to complete their minimum 3 1/2 year joint duty requirement under the current law.

- Timing of Promotion to General/Flag Officer Rank. The DoD does not agree that slowing promotion phase points is an appropriate option to increase time available for joint duty assignments. The 35 year career plan is based on statutory retirement limits and has proven to be an effective mechanism for planning leadership requirements. Slowing promotion points to brigadier general/rear admiral (lower half) would create a promotion bottleneck that would reduce advancement opportunities and retention among highly capable mid-career officers, and ultimately curtail selectivity for general/flag officer grades. The smaller pool of officers who did achieve general/flag eligibility would then have to be promoted at an accelerated pace in order to fill senior leadership requirements, yielding leaders who would be relatively inexperienced in senior positions compared to today's general/flag officer force. Barring overwhelming evidence that such drastic changes are necessary, the DoD believes that focusing on the assignment process and tour length alternatives are more prudent means of addressing joint service requirements.

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- Selectivity for General/Flag Officer Rank. Nonconcur. The GAO calculations understate the increase in selectivity that would occur as a result of reducing the standard joint duty assignment tour length from 3 1/2 to 3 years. The GAO's analysis in this area was performed prior to passage of the FY88 Authorization Act, and entailed assumptions that were obviated by the Act. Revised assumptions based on current law would yield an estimate that reducing the 3 1/2 year tour requirement to 3 years would increase the general/flag officer eligibility pool by approximately 15 percent. In reality, the increase would be substantially greater, considering that officers who complete normal 3 year oversea joint tours would have to either extend for 6-12 months or be reassigned to another (2 year) joint tour--thus serving 4 to 5 years before receiving full tour credit.

- Mid-Year Moves. Nonconcur. The GAO suggestion that this issue can be addressed by managing to 4 year tours fails to recognize operational requirements. Since the 3 1/2 year tour is a minimum standard, the GAO suggestion would be tantamount to establishing a minimum 4 year tour. In conjunction with professional military education requirements, this would require 5 year non-operational assignments. The Air Force and Navy data collected by the GAO show that such tours cannot be effected on a general basis without adverse effects on operational requirements. Even if they could be achieved, such protracted absences would significantly erode officers' combat skills and degrade their effectiveness for future operational assignments.

- Consecutive Joint Duty Assignments. Concur. With a 3 1/2 year minimum tour length, many critical billets probably will have to be filled by officers on consecutive joint duty assignments. This occurs because the 5 1/2 to 7 years required to complete two joint duty assignments would consume most of the time an officer would spend as a major/lieutenant commander and lieutenant colonel/commander. Since approximately half of the critical billets are for lieutenant colonels/commanders, and all critical billets require prior joint duty experience, many such positions will have to be filled by officers who have just completed a joint tour. The loss of operational currency experienced by such officers would limit their effectiveness both in the joint arena and for future operational assignments.

- Permanent Change-of-Station (PCS) Costs. Nonconcur. While it is true that all Services are making strenuous efforts to stabilize tours and hold down PCS costs, it does not follow that the Services should be able to accommodate a 3 1/2 year minimum tour requirement for all joint duty assignments. For example, the Army's 4 year tour length applies only to the United States and may be waived by the Secretary of the Army. The 3 1/2 year joint tour length requirement applies to all joint duty assignments except for limited numbers of officers with critical occupational specialties. While waivers may be granted to permit individual officers to depart early, they must return to another joint duty assignment in order to receive full tour credit. As previously mentioned, many officers completing 3 year overseas joint tours must later be reassigned to another 2 year joint tour to receive

full credit. In this way, the 3 1/2 year tour requirement may actually contribute to PCS turbulence. Further, enhancing stability of joint duty assignment cannot be achieved without cost. The GAO tour length analysis indicated that, to the extent officers spend longer in joint tours, they will spend less time in other tours--notably in-Service staff tours.

- Alternative Tour Length Standard. Concur in part. The DoD concurs with the GAO's general concept of a 3 year standard tour length for joint duty assignments, but is currently reviewing tour length data for FY 1987 to assess alternative average tour length standards that may be feasible. The practicality of alternative averaging methods is largely dependent on inclusion or exclusion of various types of tours in the computation. For example, the share of critical occupational specialty tours that can be excluded from the average tour computation has a significant bearing on the average tour length standard with which the Department can comply. The DoD plans to examine various possibilities in this area, and the GAO alternative is a constructive proposal that merits close examination.

PROPOSAL B: Tour Length for General/Flag Officers. The DoD proposed reducing the minimum and average tour length from three years to two years.

GAO Analysis/Comments: The GAO indicated that a minimum tour length of either 2 or 3 years is likely to result in a significant improvement in stability, and presented sample data (gathered prior to enactment of the Reorganization Act) indicating that 56 percent of the sample of 46 general/flag officers served in joint duty assignments for 23 months or less, 41 percent served between 24 and 35 months, and 2 percent served 36 months or more.

- Breadth of Experience. The GAO noted the testimony of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicating the desirability of a staff tour and an operational tour at each of the first two general/flag officer grades, as well as the importance of recent operational experience for officers promoted to 3-star rank. However, the report indicated the GAO's analysis of 3- and 4-star assignment patterns would be provided separately.

- Selectivity for Senior Leadership Positions. The GAO cited the results of an Air Force model that indicated a 2-year tour would provide significant increases in the number of fully qualified candidates for positions as Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Service Chiefs, and commanders of combatant commands. The model also predicted that requirements for presidential waivers for such selections would be reduced by about 50 percent.

- Stability of Non-Joint Tours. The GAO cited Air Force model results indicating that a reduction in tour length to 2 years would not have a significant effect on the average tour length for non-joint assignments.

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DoD Comments: The DoD concurs that a 2 year tour requirement for general and flag officers will provide enhanced stability in joint duty assignments, permit the necessary breadth of experience among general/flag officers, and offer enhanced selectivity of candidates for promotion to senior military leadership positions. In addition, the 2 year tour will permit the Services to significantly improve the overall match between Service-wide general officer requirements and individual officer experience profiles. The DoD desires to review and offer comments concerning the GAO's analysis of 3- and 4-star assignment patterns upon completion of this work.

PROPOSAL C: Permanent Promotion Monitoring. The DoD proposed that, for officers who are not joint specialists, the DoD will track promotion statistics only until the officers' next in-zone promotion consideration, following completion of their joint duty assignments.

GAO Comments/Analysis: The GAO concluded the limitation on promotion tracking is likely to have limited effect, since it would tend to alter the comparison group only for promotions to colonel/captain and higher grades. At the time of promotion to colonel/captain, only those officers who completed joint tours as majors/lieutenant commanders would be dropped from the comparison. By the time of consideration for promotion to general/flag rank, nearly all officers competitive for promotion should have a joint assignment. The GAO commented that the DoD proposal would tend to favor officers who were assigned to joint duty later in their careers.

DoD Comments: Nonconcur. The DoD is principally concerned with three issues. First, the purpose of promotion tracking is to ensure that highly-qualified officers are assigned to joint duty, not to give preferential treatment to officers who happen to have served in joint assignments. Second, it is essential for all officers to appreciate that the most important measure of current promotion potential is recent performance rather than the completion of any specific schooling or assignment in the past. Third, should high-quality officers who have served in joint duty assignments not be promoted at the same rate as their peers, the DoD wishes to be able to identify such occurrences and take appropriate action.

- The Department believes that tracking promotions beyond the next in-zone consideration fosters perceptions that past occupancy of a joint billet may be accorded disproportionate weight compared to recent performance. The GAO comment that the DoD proposal favors officers assigned to joint duty late in their careers exemplifies this misperception. The proposal favors no group of officers, but recognizes that, in considering officers for promotion to brigadier general, performance as a colonel--whether in joint duty or other assignments--is a more appropriate indicator of promotion potential than performance--in joint or other duties--as a major.

- GAO's assignment history analysis confirms that most successful officers have some Service headquarters experience. At the

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senior grades, many officers will have completed both a Service headquarters and a joint assignment, most likely at different grades. Including significant numbers of such officers on both sides of the comparison equation as currently required (i.e., comparing them to themselves) defeats the purpose of the comparison process. The DoD proposal would eliminate most of this double-counting and provide more meaningful comparison statistics.

PROPOSAL D: Promotion Comparisons. The DoD proposed to compare all officers in joint assignments (including Joint Staff and joint specialists) against all officers in the same grade and competitive category.

GAO Comments/Analysis: The GAO commented that the basic issue is whether Congress intended the joint officer group to be an average group or a better-than-average group. Currently, the joint officer group (excluding the top-performing joint specialist and Joint Staff groups) is compared against the overall Service average (including the top-performing Service headquarters group). The GAO notes that this suggests the overall joint group is intended to be better-than-average. The GAO suggests that an alternative average-to-average comparison could be accomplished by excluding the Service headquarters staff officers from the comparison group.

DoD Comments: Concur. The DoD believes that an average-to-average comparison methodology is appropriate to recognize that the overall joint group should be expected to be promoted at a rate at least equal to the overall Service average. The GAO's alternative option would accomplish this objective.

PROPOSAL E: In-Service Positions. The DoD proposed designating 250 in-Service positions as joint assignments. These positions must be certified by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, as providing significant experience in joint matters.

GAO Comments/Analysis: The GAO commented that the Reorganization Act's exclusion of in-Service billets from joint duty assignment consideration reflects (a) concerns that such designation reinforces incumbents' parochial, Service views rather than developing joint perspectives and (b) concern over past practices that allowed satisfaction of joint service requirements with in-Service joint equivalents that entailed minimal joint content. GAO stated that DoD's current definition of a joint duty assignment--by emphasizing assignments to organizations rather than responsibilities associated with individual positions--would permit such practices to continue, although the certification requirement by the Chairman, JCS, was intended to address this.

DoD Comments: Nonconcur. The DoD acknowledges the concerns that led to the initial exclusion, but the assertion that the current definition does not address individual position requirements is incorrect. In quoting the DoD definition, the GAO omitted key words concerning assignment "to a designated position." Certification of such billets by the Chairman, JCS, and subsequent

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designation by the Secretary of Defense would be contingent on a thorough review of individual position responsibilities.

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DOD PROPOSALS TO MODIFY THE MANAGEMENT OF JOINT OFFICERS
WHICH WERE ADDRESSED BY THE DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

PROPOSAL F: Sequencing Requirements for Joint Specialists. The DoD proposed that the Secretary of Defense would be authorized to waive the sequencing requirement (for officers without critical occupational specialties) on a case-by-case basis.

GAO Comments/Analysis: The GAO's analysis indicated that this proposal conflicted with a key objective of the Reorganization Act--to better prepare officers (through joint education programs) before they are assigned to joint duty. Recognizing that current joint school production is insufficient to meet requirements under the law, the GAO stated that an alternative more consistent with the objectives of the Reorganization Act is expansion of intermediate-level joint schools. Nevertheless, the GAO observed that providing sequencing waivers would: increase flexibility to place exceptional performers or officers with specific skills in critical billets; increase capabilities to fill lieutenant colonel/commander critical billets by with captains/lieutenants in non-operational specialties who completed a joint duty assignment in advance of school attendance; and help minimize requirements for consecutive joint tours that would limit officers' value to the joint world. The FY88 Authorization Act approved the DoD proposal, but limited its application to no more than 5 percent of joint specialists designated in any year.

DoD Comments: The DoD concurs with the GAO's assessment of the advantages of providing sequencing waivers. The Department will be studying the impact of the 5 percent cap, as well as alternative options to enhance joint school production capacity.

PROPOSAL G: Awarding Joint Specialty Based on Two Joint Assignments: The DoD proposed that officers would be allowed to qualify as joint specialists if they completed two joint duty assignments (considering the second joint assignment in lieu of completion of a joint school).

GAO Comments/Analysis: The GAO's analysis indicated that the main impact of this proposal would be on general officers, who would be able to qualify for senior leadership positions on the basis of two joint assignments if they had not been afforded the opportunity to attend a joint school. The GAO expressed the view that having the option to qualify field grade officers later in their careers without joint schooling is probably in the interest of the joint world, but the desirability of creating this option for general officers is related to the desirability of retaining the Reorganization Act's requirement that senior leadership positions be filled by joint specialists. The FY88 Authorization Act approved the DoD proposal, subject to a 5 percent designation

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cap, and added language permitting waivers for general/flag officers only under exceptional circumstances involving a critical need of the armed forces.

DoD Comments: The DoD generally concurs with the GAO assessment, but believes the real issue regarding general/flag officers will prove to be selectivity of candidates for senior leadership positions. The last opportunity to attend a joint professional military education school occurs when an officer is a junior colonel/captain, and relatively few officers have an opportunity to attend such schools. Because the Services must make school selections long before they can reliably predict which officers will ultimately achieve such senior grades, large numbers of highly-qualified senior officers will not possess this prerequisite for award of the joint specialty. The new waiver authority should provide the necessary flexibility to address this issue in individual cases.

PROPOSAL H: Delegation of Authority. The DoD proposed permitting delegation of the authorities to designate joint specialists and approve waivers of requirements for qualifying as a joint specialist to the Deputy Secretary of Defense and the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel.

GAO Comments: The GAO observed that the issue in question is whether the joint specialty was intended to be an administrative designation for identifying officers with certain experience and education prerequisites or whether it was intended to represent an elite group from which the Services' senior leadership will be chosen. The GAO viewed delegation to the Assistant Secretary level as being consistent with the former concept. The FY88 Authorization Act permitted delegation of the authorities only to the Deputy Secretary of Defense.

DoD Comments: The DoD believes that the delegation authority provided in the Act should prove adequate.

PROPOSAL I: Cumulative Credit for Joint Duty Assignments. The DoD proposed awarding joint duty assignment credit on a cumulative basis for officers who could not, for specified reasons, serve a full tour in a single joint duty assignment.

GAO Comments/Analysis: The GAO could not estimate the impact of the proposal except for overseas tours, of which there are roughly 3,200--all entailing tours of less than 3 1/2 years. The GAO commented that cumulative credit would apply to all of these tours except those filled by general/flag officers. The FY88 Authorization Act substantially approved DoD's proposal.

DoD Comments: The DoD believes the GAO's comment concerning applicability of cumulative credit for overseas general/flag officers is intended to indicate that general officers who complete 3-year overseas tours will be eligible for full joint tour credit. General/flag officers completing overseas tours of less than 3 years will be eligible for cumulative credit.

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PROPOSAL J: Overseas Tour Lengths. The DoD proposed that joint assignment credit should be predicated in part on tour lengths established by DoD regulations, particularly for assignments in overseas locations. Officers who completed joint duty assignments for which the tour length is established by DoD regulations as two years or more in length would be credited with a completed joint duty assignment.

GAO Comments: GAO noted that, unless 2 and 3 year overseas tours were recognized as complete tours, DoD would need to assign officers serving in the 3200 overseas assignments to a second joint tour, and that this could strain the capacity of the assignment management system. The GAO cited DoD's proposal to give full credit for designated 2 year tours as consistent with other provisions of the Reorganization Act that authorize 2 year tours for officers with critical occupational specialties and establish 2 years as the minimum experience level to qualify as a joint specialist during the transition period. The FY88 Authorization Act did not provide full credit for such tours, but permitted release of officers from such assignments without Secretarial waivers and provided cumulative joint duty credit toward completion of the normal joint duty tour length standard.

DoD Comments: Concur with the GAO assessment. Full joint duty credit for such tours is very important and consistent with other provisions of the Reorganization Act.

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