

GAO

Report to the Chairman, Committee on  
Veterans' Affairs, U.S. Senate

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January 1994

# MILITARY DOWNSIZING

## Persons Returning to Civilian Life Need More Help from DOD



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**Notice:** This is a reprint of a GAO report.

Health, Education, and  
Human Services Division

B-251370

January 21, 1994

The Honorable John D. Rockefeller IV  
Chairman, Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Since 1990, about 300,000 service members have left the Armed Forces every year due to the downsizing of the military. Recognizing that the prospect of returning to civilian life may be overwhelming to many of these individuals who may not be prepared to leave the military, the Congress, in 1990, established a transition services program to help those leaving the military and their spouses make the readjustment to civilian life. This program is generally directed toward providing these separatees and their spouses with services that enhance their opportunities for finding employment after leaving the military.

The Departments of Defense (DOD), Labor (DOL), and Veterans Affairs (VA) spent about \$93 million and \$90 million in fiscal years 1992 and 1993, respectively, to provide transition services. DOD spent the most—about \$83 million in each year; DOL spent about \$6 million in fiscal year 1992 and about \$3 million in fiscal year 1993; and VA spent about \$4 million in each of these years.

This report, prepared at your request, examines the extent to which the program is achieving its overall objective.

## Results in Brief

Many separatees and their spouses are not getting timely transition services as required by law. This has happened because the program has not received adequate support from DOD, military service headquarters, and from individual military unit commanders. As a result of this lack of support

- officials responsible for providing transition services did not know who was separating,
- separating service members were not being provided information translating their military experience and training into marketable civilian skills,
- members were either not being provided individual pre-separation counseling or were not receiving it timely, and

- many service members and their spouses did not have the opportunity to attend transition seminars and use employment assistance centers.

Service members and their spouses who received transition services told us that they found them helpful in readjusting to civilian life.

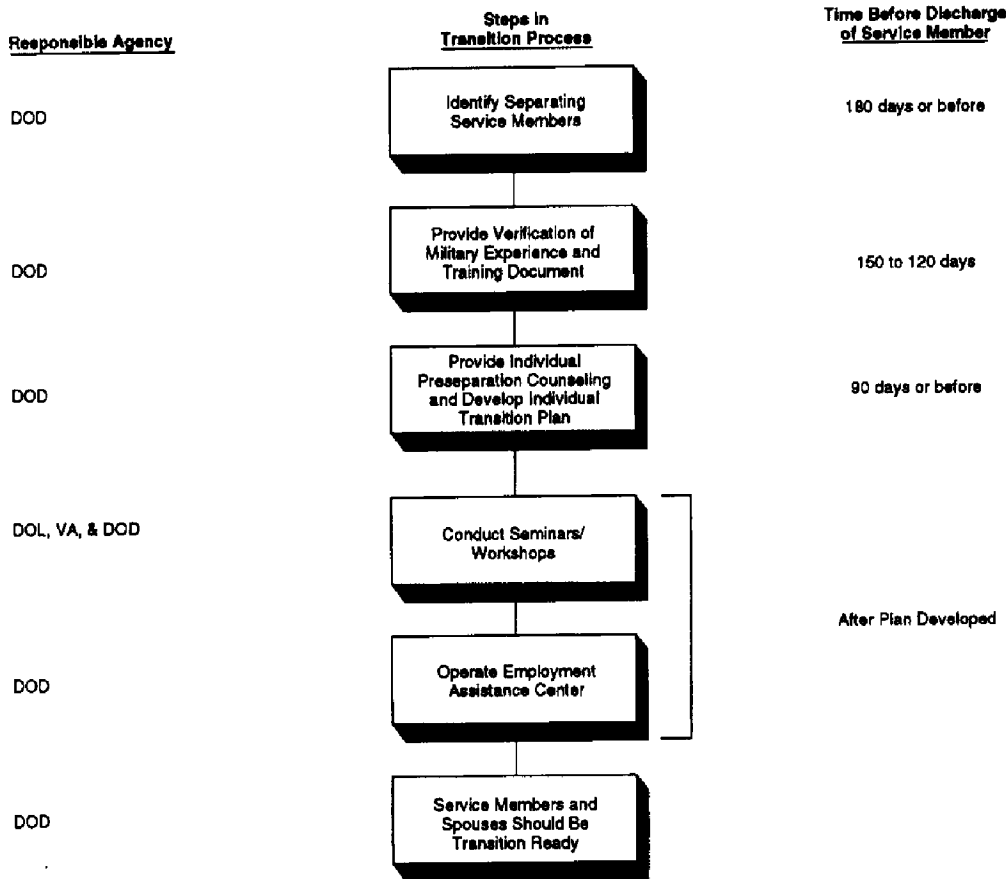
We briefed the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Manpower and Personnel Policy in June 1993 on the results of our evaluation of the transition assistance program. On September 30, 1993, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum to the Secretaries of the military departments and other key DOD officials emphasizing the need for commander support of the program. (See app. III.)

## Background

DOD, DOL, and VA play a role in helping separating service members and their spouses readjust to civilian life. After identifying separating personnel 180 days before discharge, DOD is required by Public Law 101-510, approved November 5, 1990, to (1) provide separatees with a skills verification document that translates their military experience and training into marketable job skills, (2) provide individual preseparation counseling to separatees, (3) operate employment assistance centers for separatees and spouses, and (4) assist DOL and VA in conducting seminars that separating personnel and their spouses can attend to help find civilian jobs. Public Law 102-484, approved October 23, 1992, specified that individual preseparation counseling should be provided not later than 90 days before separation and added the requirement for an individual transition plan for each separating service member.

Figure 1 shows the steps in the 180-day transition process that should be administered by DOD, DOL, and VA.

Figure 1: Six-Month Transition Countdown



## Scope and Methodology

To examine transition assistance services provided for separating service members and their spouses, we sent a questionnaire to each of the 266 Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps installations that provide transition services; 248 installations responded. The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine what transition services were available, the extent to which they were used, and reasons why they might not be used. Appendix I shows the responses to our questionnaire.

To examine transition assistance operations, we visited 16 military installations in the United States and Europe (see app. II for a listing of the

installations). We judgmentally selected for site visits Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps installations that covered a wide geographic area and served as separation centers for service members returning from overseas, had large numbers of separating service members, or both.

At the installations we discussed the strengths and weaknesses of transition operations with installation officials, reviewed pertinent transition assistance files when available, and observed installation transition activities and facilities. At some of these installations we met with service members and spouses, observed counseling sessions and transition seminars, and visited employment assistance centers. We conducted our review between April 1992 and September 1993 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

## Transition Office Officials Do Not Know Who Is Scheduled to Separate

To adequately market, plan, and evaluate transition assistance, transition managers need to know who is separating. However, transition managers at 9 of the 16 installations we visited did not know who was separating from their installations. The other seven transition managers had this information, but only five were using it to help them operate a more effective transition assistance program.

Transition managers did not know who was scheduled for discharge because personnel offices, which have the information, and the installations's transition office did not coordinate to ensure that this information was shared. One transition office, for example, did not obtain a list of service members being discharged within 180 days because it assumed that the military commands were referring all separating service members to the transition office. We found, however, that many separating service members were not being referred for transition services. The Director of the transition assistance program in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) said that as of August 1993, DOD had not issued a directive nor had the military services issued regulations requiring military personnel offices to provide transition offices with the names of separatees.

Identifying and contacting service members who are leaving the military and their spouses early is important so that they have the entire 180 days to take advantage of transition services. Transition managers at four installations that obtain the 180-day list use it to send the separatees letters encouraging them to use transition services. These officials told us

that this direct marketing strategy increased the number of separatees using the services.

Conversely, separatees who do not learn of transition services until just before discharge are less likely to use them. For example, at one installation, we randomly selected and reviewed files of 15 service members who had recently returned from overseas for discharge. Twelve of the files indicated that the service member desired some transition services, but it was unlikely they were able to obtain assistance since all would be discharged in 7 days or less. In fact, two of the separatees wanted to attend a transition seminar but this installation conducted only one seminar a month and none were scheduled until after these two service members were discharged.

Furthermore, transition managers cannot adequately plan or evaluate the services that should be provided without knowing the number of service members scheduled to separate. For example, one installation was turning service members away from seminars because the classes were full. The transition manager told us that had she known the number of service members scheduled for discharge, she could have planned enough seminars to accommodate all service members and spouses who wanted to attend. Moreover, the program cannot be effectively evaluated if transition offices do not know how many separatees there are. Transition officials at the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness), headquarters of the four military services, and the 16 installations we visited did not know what percentage of separating service members and their spouses attended seminars or used employment assistance centers.

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## Service Members Are Not Receiving Skills Verification Document

Nearly half a million service members separated before the military services began producing a skills verification document. Thousands of others continue to be discharged before receiving the document or receive it just before separation. Without this document, service members are limited in their ability to prepare resumes and perform other job search activities.

The skills verification document contains a service member's military work experience and training that has application to employment in the civilian sector. For example, a bomb assembler in the military may qualify for civilian sector employment in the chemical and safety fields. The Director of the transition assistance program in the Office of the Assistant

Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) and transition managers at the 16 locations visited said that the document is needed early in the service member's transition process because of its importance. In fact, the Director said, with the exception of discharge papers, the skills verification document is probably the most important document a separating service member can receive because it contains vital information that can be used in current and future job search activities. Many service members told us that the skills verification document would have been very beneficial if they had received it before preparing their resumes and searching for a job.

The military services took between 1-1/2 and 2 years after the transition program became operational in 1990 to begin producing the document. This delay was due to the relocation of the agency responsible for translating the service members' experience and training into civilian skills, computer data problems, and inadequate attention to this effort. For example, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) and the four military services took about a year to decide how the computer-generated data should be formatted and the Army waited a year before assigning a person to oversee this effort. By the time the systems to produce the document became operational, about 476,000 service members had separated without receiving it.

Although the military services are now producing the document, transition managers told us that many separating service members are not receiving it and others are receiving it in their last month before separation. For example, managers at 10 of the 16 installations we visited estimated that fewer than 10 percent of service members receive the document before they are discharged. Service members with whom we talked confirmed that they had not received the document. At one installation, we interviewed 14 service members who were within their last week of active duty and not one had received a skills verification document. At another installation, the personnel office was receiving some documents but not distributing them to the service members. A personnel official at this installation told us that all documents received are placed in the service members' files and are given to service members when they visit the personnel office, which in many cases is during their last 30 days of active duty.

According to transition officials at the military services' headquarters, the military services are taking different approaches in providing the skills verification document to service members who separated before the



systems that generate the document became operational. The Army is retroactively sending the document to all affected service members; as of September 1993, it had sent the document to about 127,000 of the more than 200,000 separated members who had not received it. The Navy sent a letter to about 104,000 service members who separated before its system became operational that informed them of the opportunity to request their skills verification document; as of September 1993, about 35,000 Navy members had requested one. The Air Force and Marine Corps will provide the document upon request, but are not attempting to contact affected service members. The chief of the Air Force's transition assistance program said that the effort and expense associated with sending the document outweighed its perceived demand and value. The Marine Corps' chief of the transition assistance program said that the document is not being sent because of limited staff and the difficulty of contacting separated service members.

## No System in Place to Ensure Preseparation Counseling Is Provided

Many separatees were not receiving any preseparation counseling at the installations we visited. In addition, most of the counseling that was provided did not meet the requirement that it be provided at least 90 days before separation.

Preseparation counseling, according to the law, shall include information about:

- education and vocational rehabilitation benefits,
- selective reserve options,
- job counseling and job search and placement information,
- relocation assistance services,
- medical and dental benefits,
- counseling (for the service member and dependents) on the effects of career change, and
- financial planning.

In addition, the law provides that preseparation counseling include development of an individual transition plan for the service member.

Service members who do not receive preseparation counseling or receive it just before separation may not be aware of important benefits to which they are entitled and may not have an opportunity to utilize other transition services before they are discharged. For example, one service member we interviewed had just returned from overseas and was awaiting

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discharge later the same day. He had not received preseparation counseling overseas. He told us that he was planning to go to school using his VA education benefits. However, he was not aware that he needed to contribute \$1,200 to a college fund before being discharged to become eligible for educational benefits of about \$12,600. He hurriedly set out to arrange to pay the required contribution.

Our work at the 16 installations showed that timely, individual, preseparation counseling was not provided to separatees. None of them had a system in place to ensure that this required counseling was being provided. At nine installations, we reviewed 122 randomly selected files of service members who were being or who recently had been discharged. We found 29 files that contained no evidence that the service members had received preseparation counseling. Of the remaining 93 files, 17 indicated that the service member received counseling in the last 31 to 90 days of service, while 63 files indicated that the service member received counseling in the last 30 days of service.

At one installation, we attended a group preseparation counseling session and found that 43 of 124 service members had fewer than 30 days remaining before discharge. At a second installation, all 30 service members at a counseling session had 90 days or fewer remaining; 9 had fewer than 30 days. At a third installation, our review of 23 randomly selected files of service members showed that 21 service members received counseling in their last 30 days of military service. Ten of the 21 indicated that they desired additional transition services but given the short time until discharge they had limited opportunity to receive these services.

Many installations use group sessions and these can have limitations because service members may be reluctant to discuss their personal needs at the sessions. At one installation we visited, five group counseling sessions were held between January and March 1993 and the average class size was 180. The transition manager told us that a counselor's ability to adequately assess each service member's transitional needs is greatly diminished in such large group settings. We also talked with several service members at this installation who confirmed that group counseling limited their ability to ask questions and obtain transition information pertinent to their specific needs. Although individual preseparation counseling is available upon request, it is doubtful many have the time to pursue individual sessions if they are nearing discharge. About 28 percent

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of the installations responding to our questionnaire were providing preseparation counseling exclusively on an individual basis (see app. I).

The law provides that preseparation counseling include the preparation of an individual transition plan for each service member. The Army, however, was the only service that had begun to assist service members with such a plan as part of their transition program. However, in those cases where preseparation counseling was not received or received just before discharge, an individual transition plan may not have been prepared. Transition officials at the headquarters of the other three services said that an individual plan would be developed if requested by the service member. Again, however, service members are not likely to request an individual transition plan if they do not receive preseparation counseling or receive it just before discharge.

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### Separatees From Overseas Have Little Time to Receive Services Upon Return to the United States

The lack of a system for ensuring that preseparation counseling takes place has a detrimental effect on military members who are stationed overseas and aboard ships. The Director of DOD's transition assistance program told us that military personnel returning from overseas for separation face a more difficult transition than those stationed in the United States. He said that they are disadvantaged because while overseas they are far away from future job markets, have limited access to state-of-the-art job information systems, and have little or no contact with DOL and VA representatives who could provide them with information on the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

Seven installations we visited in the United States serve as separation centers for service members returning from overseas (see app. II). Transition officials at all seven installations told us that many service members are arriving in the United States for discharge without having received preseparation counseling. For example, the transition manager at an Army installation told us that 6,000 service members (about 25 percent of all overseas separatees at that installation) returned from Europe in fiscal year 1992 without receiving preseparation counseling at their overseas installation. He said that these separatees only have about 24 hours upon their return to the United States before leaving the military, which does not allow sufficient time to provide counseling. An official at the separation unit at an Air Force installation told us that about one-third of all service members returning from Europe do not have evidence in their files of having received counseling at their overseas installation. He said that from July 1992 through March 1993 from 50 to 600 service

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members returned each month. These separatees only had 24 hours before discharge and they were not referred to the transition office for services. An official at a Marine Corps separation unit told us that about 30 to 40 percent of the 200 marines returning from the Far East each month did not receive pre-separation counseling overseas. He said that although these marines were counseled during the 4 days that they spent being processed for discharge, they did not have time to receive other transition services.

The Navy has assigned the responsibility for pre-separation counseling to its military career counselors. Transition officials and military command career counselors at the three Navy installations in the United States that we visited told us that military career counselors had not been trained to give pre-separation counseling to separatees. Thus, many military counselors were not providing separatees with needed transition information. For example, the command career counselor for an aircraft carrier told us that although many service members were scheduled to separate upon returning from deployment, not one separatee received pre-separation counseling during 6 months at sea that ended in November 1992.

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### **Service Members' and Spouses' Opportunities to Attend Seminars and Use Employment Assistance Centers Are Often Limited**

Service members and spouses who attended seminars and used employment assistance centers told us that they found these services beneficial in readjusting to civilian life. However, many separating service members and their spouses do not use transition services because military commanders and supervisors are reluctant to give them time off, they are not aware of the services available, and seminar classes are full.

Our work at the installations showed that service members and spouses benefitted by attending seminars and using employment assistance centers. They said that they learned how to deal with stress, about individualized job search techniques, about benefits available to them, how to use center resources, and where to receive counseling and other transition services. Many separatees indicated that their confidence had increased as a result of receiving these services, especially in the areas of resume preparation and job search and interview techniques. Program evaluations completed by seminar participants that we reviewed also showed that they believed the seminars were beneficial.

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### **Lack of Command Support**

One of the most frequently cited reasons for not using the services was a lack of support from military commanders and supervisors. For example,

42 percent of transition managers responding to our questionnaire believed to a moderate, great, or very great extent that supervisors' or commanders' reluctance to give time off to attend a seminar was a reason for service members not attending. (See app. I.) Over 39 percent of the transition managers similarly believed that this was a reason why spouses did not attend. One service member attending a seminar during her final week of duty told us that she had attempted to attend a month sooner but her supervisor would not let her attend because she was scheduled for mess hall head-count duty. Thirty-nine percent of the transition managers believed to a moderate, great, or very great extent that service members do not use employment assistance centers because supervisors and commanders are reluctant to give them time off.

Our work at the 16 installations showed that military commanders and supervisors were reluctant to allow time off for separatees to receive transition services because they viewed transition assistance as a separation from service process that should be accomplished just before discharge. For example, a Navy Captain told us that unit commanders do not want service members to think about getting out of the military until they are being processed for discharge. He told us that the commanders believe that participation in the transition program several months before discharge hampers the unit's ability to accomplish its mission. He said that strong action is needed to reverse this attitude.

Senior officials at DOD and military service headquarters told us that allowing service members time off to receive transition services several months or weeks before discharge is inconsistent with the training and philosophy of many unit commanders. These officials told us that a greater effort should be made by the top of the chain of command to gain command support for the program and that planned issuance of a DOD directive and military service regulations on the program should be helpful in gaining this support.

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### Other Reasons Why Transition Services Are Not Used

Many service members and spouses do not know that transition services are available. For example, 59 percent of transition managers responding to our survey reported that service members do not attend seminars because they do not know that these services are available. Eighty-three percent responded that this was a reason why spouses do not attend seminars. Most of the installations that we visited had not targeted the spouses for specific outreach. Instead, they depended on service members to tell their spouses about transition services. Transition officials told us,

however, that many service members do not learn about the services in time to take advantage of them or to tell their spouses.

Use of seminars is also limited because classes are full. For example, at one installation, a command career counselor told us that during a 3-month period, only 13 of 75 separatees who wanted to attend were successful because the classes were full. The transition manager at this installation said that she was unaware of this situation. She told us that additional seminars would be added to accommodate everyone desiring to attend. In commenting on a draft of this report, the DOL's Assistant Secretary for Veteran's Employment and Training stated that additional workshops could be arranged dependent on sufficient advance planning and resources. Another installation had a 2-month waiting list of people wishing to attend a seminar. Because this installation was conducting only one seminar a month, service members who are not scheduled at least 3 months in advance probably do not get to attend.

In addition, seminar classes are too large. DOL recommends that seminars not exceed 35 participants, as large classes reduce the use of role playing, group participation, and class discussion. Our survey results showed that 62 installations averaged 50 or more individuals per seminar. One installation reported having 271 in a class.

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## Conclusions

Separating service members and their spouses generally have a favorable impression of transition services when they receive them in time to be of use before separation. However, many are not receiving the services required by law primarily because the program has not received high enough priority within DOD. Strong program support is needed from the Secretary of Defense and the military chain of command if separating service members and their spouses are to maximize their benefits from this program. The September 30, 1993, memorandum from the Secretary of Defense is a good first step in achieving this support.

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## Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the military departments to

- implement the transition assistance program required by law;
- get skills verification documents to those personnel they missed and ensure that all future separatees have the document to use in the individual pre-separation counseling sessions; and

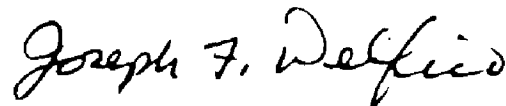
- evaluate transition assistance at the installation level until the Secretaries are certain the programs are operating effectively and make periodic evaluations thereafter.

## Agency Comments

DOD, DOL, and VA were provided copies of a draft of this report for comment. The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) concurred with our findings and recommendations. (See app. IV.) DOL's Assistant Secretary for Veteran's Employment and Training suggested some changes, which we incorporated. With regard to seminar class sizes, he said that while the average class size had been reduced from 48 participants in fiscal year 1992 to 43 in fiscal year 1993, DOL still believes that the ideal class should have 35 participants. (See app. V.) The Secretary of Veterans Affairs said that he was in full agreement with our finding regarding transition services to service members returning from overseas for separation. He said that VA and DOD have agreed to temporarily assign VA counselors to overseas locations to conduct briefings on VA benefits and services and provide individual counseling sessions. (See app. VI.)

We are sending copies of this report to interested congressional committees; the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs; and other interested parties. If you have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-7215. Other major contributors to this report are listed in appendix VII.

Sincerely yours,



Joseph F. Delfico  
Director, Income Security Issues

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Figure 1: Six-Month Transition Countdown

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**Abbreviations**

DOD	Department of Defense
DOL	Department of Labor
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs

# Summary of Responses to GAO Questionnaire

U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
SURVEY OF TRANSITION ASSISTANCE SERVICES

### INTRODUCTION

The Congress has asked the U. S. General Accounting Office (GAO) to conduct a study to determine what types of transition assistance services are being provided to separating military personnel and their spouses.

We are sending this questionnaire to military installations to obtain information about transition assistance services. In order to obtain an accurate picture of transition assistance services we need information from every installation receiving this questionnaire. Please complete and return this questionnaire, even if these services are not provided at your installation.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Please provide the following information concerning the person completing this questionnaire.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of  
Installation: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Note 1: The questionnaire was sent out to 266 military installations; 248 of these installation responded. Not all responded to every item however. The "N" shown for each item denotes the number of installations that responded to that item.

Note 2: Unless otherwise noted, all responses are expressed as percentages of the number of installations answering the question.

Note 3: All footnotes to the responses are shown on p. 19.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire, please call Jeff Pounds or Steve Morris at (404) 332-1900.

Please return this questionnaire in the accompanying postage paid envelope within 10 days of receipt to:

Jeff Pounds  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Suite 2000  
101 Marietta Tower  
Atlanta, GA 30323

1. Currently, how many military personnel are stationed at this installation? (ENTER NUMBER) N=234

Range = 134-89,000 military personnel  
Median = 4404

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**PRE-SEPARATION COUNSELING**

2. Is pre-separation counseling provided at this installation to separating military personnel? (CHECK ONE) N=248

99% Yes

1 No--> If no, do separating military personnel assigned to your installation receive pre-separation counseling at another installation? (CHECK ONE)

67% Yes-->(GO TO QUESTION 10, PAGE 4)

33 No--->(GO TO QUESTION 10, PAGE 4)

3. How is pre-separation counseling usually conducted at your installation? (CHECK ONE) N=236

28% Individual counseling

4 Group counseling

47 Both group and individual counseling

11 Group counseling in conjunction with transition assistance seminars

11 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)

4. Please indicate if each of the following topics is included in the pre-separation counseling of separating military personnel at your installation. (CHECK YES OR NO FOR EACH TOPIC INCLUDED)

TOPICS	(1) Yes	(2) No
1. VA benefits (compensation, vocational rehabilitation, housing and other benefits) N=237	100%	<1%
2. Education assistance benefits (provided through the Montgomery GI Bill) N=237	100	0
3. Affiliation with the Selected Reserve N=236	98	3
4. Government and private sector programs for job search and job placement assistance N=236	100	<1
5. Job placement counseling for spouses of separatees N=235	97	3
6. Psychological counseling N=233	69	31
7. Career change counseling N=237	98	2
8. Relocation assistance N=238	99	1
9. Financial planning assistance N=238	96	4
10. Medical and dental coverage N=237	98	2
11. Other (N=90) <sub>A</sub>	93	7

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**Evaluations of Pre-separation Counseling**

5. Has this installation ever evaluated its pre-separation counseling? (CHECK ONE) N=237

74% Yes

26 No (GO TO QUESTION 10)

6. How has your installation's pre-separation counseling been evaluated? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=184

76% Participants completed pre-separation counseling evaluation forms (PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THE EVALUATION FORM)

27 Installation followed up to determine whether the pre-separation counseling was beneficial in helping the separatee readjust to civilian life

25 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. How, if at all, were evaluations used to adjust or modify this installation's pre-separation counseling? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=184

33% Scheduled pre-separation counseling in conjunction with transition assistance seminar

53 Added counseling topics

20 Dropped counseling topics

69 Placed greater emphasis on selected topics

34 Placed less emphasis on selected topics

18 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8 No adjustments or modifications were made

8. In your opinion, can this installation's pre-separation counseling be improved? (CHECK ONE) N=167

74% Yes

26 No (GO TO QUESTION 10)

9. In your opinion, how, if at all, can this installation's pre-separation counseling be improved? (PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWER IN BELOW) N=118

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**JOB/EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE CENTER**

10. Does this installation operate a job/employment assistance center? (CHECK ONE) N=248

96% Yes

4 No --> If no, do separating military personnel assigned to your installation have access to a job/employment assistance center at another installation? (CHECK ONE)

55% Yes--> (GO TO QUESTION 24, PAGE 9)

46 No--> (GO TO QUESTION 24, PAGE 9)

11. On what date did this installation begin operating a job/employment assistance center? (ENTER DATE) N=233

Range=> 1/83 to 12/92  
Month Year

12. Which of the following groups are eligible to use the job/employment assistance center? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=237

- 99% Separating military personnel
- 99 Spouses of separating military personnel
- 99 Other family members of separating military personnel
- 85 Separating DOD civilian employees
- 78 Spouses of DOD civilian employees
- 65 Other family members of separating DOD civilian employees
- 39 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

13. Please check whether or not each of the following services is provided at this installation's job/employment assistance center.  
(CHECK YES OR NO FOR EACH SERVICE LISTED)

SERVICES PROVIDED	(1)	(2)
	Yes	No
1. Help with resume preparation (N=234)	100%	0%
2. Career counseling (N=234)	97	3
3. Training in job interview skills (N=234)	99	1
4. Access to a transition assistance library (N=234)	100	<1
5. Sponsor self-help and networking groups (N=221)	59	41
6. Stress management training (N=228)	86	14
7. Job fairs (N=229)	69	31
8. Federal Career Opportunities (N=232)	98	2
9. Daily papers (N=223)	60	40
10. Provide access to automated job listings:		
a. Army Employer Network (AEN) (N=189)	31	69
b. Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS) (N=234)	99	1
c. Transition Bulletin Board (TBB) (N=232)	96	4
d. State Employment Service Interstate Job Bank (N=217)	65	36
f. Other automated job listings: (PLEASE SPECIFY) (N=134) <sub>c</sub>	90	10
_____		
_____		
11. Other services provided: (PLEASE SPECIFY) (N=144) <sub>b</sub>	97	4
_____		
_____		

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

14. How many military personnel assigned to this installation have separated from military service from the time the job/employment assistance center began operating, through October 31, 1992? (ENTER NUMBER; IF NONE, ENTER '0')

Range= 4-92,350 Military personnel N=188  
Median= 710

15. In your opinion, about what percentage, if any, of separating military personnel at this installation have used the job/employment assistance center? (ENTER PERCENT; IF NONE, ENTER '0')

Range= 1-100% separating military personnel  
N=213

Median= 68%

(IF 100%, GO TO QUESTION 17)

16. Listed below are reasons why some separating military personnel might not use job/employment assistance centers. In your opinion, to what extent is each a reason, if at all, why separating military personnel have not used your job/employment assistance center. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH REASON)

REASON	Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent	Don't Know
1. Separating military personnel did not know about the center N=224	32%	38%	18%	8%	4%	0%
2. Separating military personnel did not think services provided at the center were beneficial N=223	48	35	9	2	<1	5
3. Separating military personnel already had educational/career plans N=223	10	34	26	17	9	4
4. Supervisors/commanders of separating military personnel were reluctant to release them to use the center N=222	29	29	19	12	8	3
5. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=51 <sub>B</sub>	2	26	10	37	24	2
_____						
_____						
_____						

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

17. In your opinion, about what percentage, if any, of spouses of separating military personnel at this installation have used the job/employment assistance center? (ENTER PERCENT; IF NONE, ENTER '0')

Range= 1-80% spouses of separating military personnel N=216  
Median= 10%

(IF 100%, GO TO QUESTION 19)

18. Listed below are reasons why some spouses of separating military personnel might not use job/employment assistance centers. In your opinion, to what extent is each a reason, if at all, why spouses of separating military personnel have not used your job/employment assistance center. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH REASON)

REASON	Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent	Don't Know
1. Spouses of separating military personnel did not know about the center N=228	14%	23%	30%	22%	9%	3%
2. Spouses of separating military personnel did not think services provided at the center were beneficial N=227	38	36	10	3	0	13
3. Spouses of separating military personnel already had educational/career plans N=227	15	37	23	8	7	10
4. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=79 <sub>p</sub>	1	11	19	42	27	0
_____						
_____						



**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**Evaluations of Job/Employment Assistance Center**

19. Has this installation ever evaluated its job/employment assistance center? (CHECK ONE) N=231

- 69% Yes
- 31 No (GO TO QUESTION 22)

20. How has your installation's job/employment assistance center been evaluated? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=166

- 72% Participants completed job/employment assistance center evaluation forms (PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THE EVALUATION FORM)
- 46 Installation followed up to determine whether the job/employment assistance center was beneficial in helping the separatee readjust to civilian life
- 27 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. How, if at all, were evaluations used to adjust or modify the services offered by your job/employment assistance center? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=166

- 17% Added a transition assistance library
- 56 Expanded existing transition assistance library
- 27 Initiated self-help and networking groups
- 42 Placed greater emphasis on career counseling
- 33 Added automated job listings: (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 37 Other adjustments or modifications: (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 10 No adjustments or modifications were made

22. In your opinion, to what extent, if any, has the base commander encouraged separating military personnel to use the job/employment assistance center? (CHECK ONE) N=218

- 5% Little or no extent
- 11 Some extent
- 21 Moderate extent
- 34 Great extent
- 29 Very great extent

23. In your opinion, how, if at all, can this installation's job/employment assistance center be improved? (PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWER BELOW)

N=155<sub>0</sub>

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**TRANSITION ASSISTANCE SEMINAR**

24. Does this installation offer some type of transition assistance seminar? (CHECK ONE) N=248

- 72% Yes, Transition Assistance Program (TAP) seminar
- 9 Yes, Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) seminar/workshop
- 10 Yes, an integrated TAP and ACAP program seminar
- 6 Yes, Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4 No--> If no, do separating military personnel assigned to this installation have access to a transition assistance seminar at another installation?

80% Yes--> (GO TO QUESTION 49, PAGE 18)

20% No--> (GO TO QUESTION 49, PAGE 18)

25. On what date did this installation begin its first transition assistance seminar? (ENTER DATE) N=236

DATE--> Range= 3/77 To 12/92  
Month Year

26. Which of the following groups are eligible to attend the transition assistance seminar? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=238

- 98% Separating military personnel
- 98 Spouses of separating military personnel
- 69 Other family members of separating military personnel
- 72 Separating DOD civilian employees
- 68 Spouses of separating DOD civilian employees
- 49 Other family members of separating DOD personnel
- 32 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY )

\_\_\_\_\_

27. Typically, about how many individuals attend each transition assistance seminar? (ENTER NUMBER; IF NONE, ENTER '0') N=232

Range= 6-271 individuals  
Median= 30

28. Typically, about what percentage of individuals who attend a transition assistance seminar, attend the entire transition assistance seminar? (ENTER PERCENT, IF NONE, ENTER '0') N=233

Range= 9-100%  
Median= 95%

29. On average, about how many transition assistance (TAP/ACAP) seminars does this installation offer in a month? (ENTER NUMBER; IF NONE, ENTER '0') N=230

Range= 1-27 seminars/month  
Median= 1

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

30. Below is a list of ways that separating military personnel might be informed about the transition assistance seminars. Please check (1) if your installation uses each method, and if it did, (2) in your opinion, how effective, if at all, the method is for increasing the level of participation in the transition assistance seminar. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH METHOD)

METHOD	No	Yes (If yes-->)	Slightly or Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Moderately Effective	Considerably Effective	Very Effective
1. Informed through pre-separation counseling N=229	1%	99% N=225	<1%	11%	16%	28%	45%
2. Informed through assemblies N=224	13	87 N=190	1	28	36	21	14
3. Word of mouth N=230	<1	99 N=223	<1	7	12	24	57
4. Flyers N=231	6	94 N=216	4	23	32	29	13
5. Newspapers N=228	5	95 N=215	4	21	37	23	15
6. TV/radio N=208	35	65 N=132	14	27	33	13	13
7. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=115 <sub>H</sub>	2	98 N=103	0	8	22	32	38
_____							
_____							
_____							

31. Consider all of the methods listed in question 30. Overall, which of these is the most, second most, and third most effective method for increasing the level of participation of military personnel in the transition assistance seminars? (ENTER METHOD NUMBER FROM QUESTION 30 FOR EACH)

- 1. Most effective     #3, Word of mouth
- 2. Second most effective   #1, Informed through pre-separation counseling
- 3. Third most effective   #7, Other

We took the distribution of the first ranking and multiplied the number of responses by 3, the distribution of the second ranking was multiplied by two, the distribution of the third ranking was multiplied by one. Each category was summed across the three ranks to achieve a weighted ranking.

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

32. Below is a list of ways that spouses of separating military personnel might be informed about the transition assistance seminars. Please check (1) if your installation uses each method, and if it did, (2) in your opinion, how effective, if at all, the method is for increasing the level of participation of spouses of military personnel in the transition assistance seminar. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH METHOD)

METHOD	No	Yes (If yes-->)	Slightly or Not Effective	Somewhat Effective	Moderately Effective	Considerably Effective	Very Effective
1. Informed through spouse in the military N=229	2%	98% N=223	21%	35%	16%	16%	12%
2. Word of mouth N=224	1	99 N=219	13	32	23	15	18
3. Flyers N=223	10	90 N=197	21	38	27	9	5
4. Newspapers N=222	6	94 N=203	20	32	29	13	6
5. TV/radio N=199	33	67 N=130	29	29	23	13	7
6. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=94, _____ _____ _____	3	97 N=86	12	23	21	22	22

33. Consider all of the methods listed in question 32. Overall, which of these is the most, second most, and third most effective method for increasing the participation of spouses of military personnel in the transition assistance seminars? (ENTER METHOD NUMBER FROM QUESTION 32 FOR EACH)

- 1. Most effective      #1, Informed through spouse in military
- 2. Second most effective      #2, Word of mouth
- 3. Third most effective      #4, Newspapers

We took the distribution of the first ranking and multiplied the number of responses by 3, the distribution of the second ranking was multiplied by two, the distribution of the third ranking was multiplied by one. Each category was summed across the three ranks to achieve a weighted ranking.

34. Typically, how long does the transition assistance seminar last? (CHECK ONE) N=233

- 8% One day or less
- 6 One and a half to two days
- 51 Two and a half to three days
- 28 Three and a half to four days
- 7 More than four days (PLEASE SPECIFY THE NUMBER OF DAYS 5)

35. How many military personnel assigned to this installation have separated from military service from the time it began its first transition assistance seminar, through October 31, 1992? (ENTER NUMBER; IF NONE, ENTER '0') N=188

Range= 1-33,290 Military personnel  
Median= 795

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

36. In your opinion, what percent of these separating military personnel at this installation have attended a transition assistance seminar? (ENTER PERCENT; IF NONE, ENTER '0') n=210

Range= 5-100% separating military personnel  
Median= 70%

(IF 100%, GO TO QUESTION 38)

37. Listed below are reasons why separating military personnel might not attend a transition assistance seminar. In your opinion, to what extent, if at all, is each a reason why separating military personnel at your installation did not attend a transition assistance seminar. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH REASON)

REASON	Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent	Don't Know
1. Separating military personnel did not know about the seminar N=221	40%	37%	15%	5%	2%	1%
2. Supervisors/commanders were reluctant to release separating military personnel to attend the seminar N=224	21	34	21	15	6	2
3. Separating military personnel did not think the transition assistance seminar was worthwhile N=223	35	39	17	5	1	4
4. Military personnel already had educational/career plans N=222	13	37	22	13	10	5
5. This installation did not provide the transition assistance seminar often enough N=216	84	8	3	1	1	3
6. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=41, _____ _____	5	20	29	20	24	2

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

38. In your opinion, what percent of spouses of separating military personnel at this installation have attended a transition seminar? (ENTER PERCENT; IF NONE, ENTER '0') N=212

Range= 1-45% spouses of separating military personnel  
Median= 5%

(IF 100%, GO TO QUESTION 40)

39. Listed below are reasons why spouses of separating military personnel might not attend a transition assistance seminar. In your opinion, to what extent, if at all, is each a reason why spouses of separating military personnel at your installation did not attend a transition assistance seminar. (CHECK ONE FOR EACH REASON)

REASON	Little or No Extent	Some Extent	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Very Great Extent	Don't Know
1. Spouses of separating military personnel did not know about the seminar N=227	13%	28%	22%	21%	12%	4%
2. Civilian supervisors were reluctant to release the spouses of separating military personnel to attend the seminar N=228	28	18	16	12	11	15
3. Spouses of separating military personnel did not think the transition assistance seminar was worthwhile N=227	37	34	14	5	1	10
4. Spouses of military personnel already had educational/career plans N=227	13	35	23	9	8	12
5. This installation did not provide the transition assistance seminar often enough N=219	85	8	1	0	1	5
6. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=66 <sub>x</sub>	3	11	26	29	30	2

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

40. Consider the organizations listed below. Please indicate (A) if each of the following organizations usually provides facilitators for the transition assistance seminar and if yes, (B) the type of training these facilitators received. (CHECK YES OR NO FOR EACH FACILITATOR LISTED AND IF YES, CHECK THE TYPE OF TRAINING, IF ANY)

ORGANIZATION: SEMINAR FACILITATOR	(A) Did organization provide facilitator?		(B) Type of Facilitator Training Received				
	(1) No	(2) Yes (If yes --->)	National Veterans Training Institute TAP Course	Resource Consultant Incorporated ACAP Course	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	None	Don't Know
<b>1. Department of Labor (Dol):</b>							
A. Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) N=221	36%	64% N=142	85%	1%	4%	0%	8%
B. Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist (DVOP) N=216	36	64 N=139	81	1	4	1	8
C. Conwall contractor N=204	61	39 N=79	87	1	1	1	4
D. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=66	58	42 N=28	43	0	18	4	32
<b>2. Department of Defense (DOD):</b>							
A. Civilian personnel N=217	20	80 N=173	60	5	12	5	15
B. Military personnel N=185	49	51 N=94	13	1	20	10	34
C. Resource Consultant Incorporated (RCI) contractor N=180	68	32 N=57	7	68	2	0	9
D. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=73	37	63 N=46	20	7	17	4	33

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

41. Consider the organizations listed below. Please indicate if each of the following organizations provides each type of personnel listed below to present information in your transition assistance (TAP/ACAP) seminars. (CHECK YES OR NO FOR EACH PRESENTER LISTED)

ORGANIZATION: SEMINAR PRESENTER	(1) Yes	(2) No
<b>1. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):</b>		
A. Veterans employment specialist N=216	67%	33%
B. Counseling psychologist N=214	38	62
C. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=83 <sub>n</sub>	75	25
<b>2. Veterans Service Organizations (VSO):</b>		
A. Disabled American Veterans (DAV) representative N=215	30	70
B. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) representative N=210	8	92
C. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=72 <sub>o</sub>	51	49



**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

42. Below is a list of topics that are sometimes included in a transition assistance seminar. Please indicate whether or not each of these topics is included in your installation's transition assistance (TAP/ACAP) seminar. (CHECK YES OR NO FOR EACH TOPIC)

SEMINAR TOPICS	(1) Yes	(2) No
1. Assessing job skills N=232	98%	2%
2. Resume instruction N=231	99	1
3. Training in job interview skills N=232	99	1
4. Dress/grooming for interviews N=233	99	1
5. Labor market information N=230	94	6
6. Job search techniques N=233	99	1
7. Job Fairs-promotion/marketing N=230	85	15
8. Availability of veterans benefits N=233	98	2
9. Identification of veteran service organizations N=232	94	6
10. Certification of education or training acquired while on active duty N=223	85	15
11. Relocation assistance or information N=229	87	13
12. Availability of psychological counseling N=228	81	19
13. Loan/grant information from Small Business Administration or other federal, state, and local agencies N=227	74	26
14. Information on veterans' preference in federal, state and local agencies N=225	97	3
15. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY) N=101, _____ _____ _____	96	4

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**Evaluations of Transition Assistance Seminars  
(TAP/ACAP)**

43. Has this installation ever evaluated its transition assistance seminar? (CHECK ONE) N=230

- 97% Yes
- 3% No (GO TO QUESTION 46)

44. How have the transition assistance seminars been evaluated? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=231

- 94% Participants completed seminar evaluation forms (PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THE EVALUATION FORM)
- 27 Installation followed up to determine whether the seminar was beneficial in helping the separatee readjust to civilian life
- 18 The state director for Disabled Veterans Education and Training provided feedback to seminar facilitators
- 17 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

45. How were evaluations used to adjust or modify this installation's transition assistance seminar? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY) N=231

- 80% Greater emphasis was added to a seminar topic
- 58 Less emphasis was added to a seminar topic
- 45 Different seminar topics were substituted for existing topics
- 36 Seminar topics were removed
- 63 Seminar topics were added
- 65 More time was allowed to present seminar topics
- 42 Additional seminars were scheduled
- 50 Different instructors were sought
- 15 Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)  
\_\_\_\_\_

1 No adjustments or modifications were made

46. To what extent, if any, has the base commander encouraged separating military personnel to attend the transition assistance (TAP/ACAP) seminar? (CHECK ONE) N=228

- 1. 4 Little or no extent
- 2. 11 Some extent
- 3. 17 Moderate extent
- 4. 31 Great extent
- 5. 36 Very great extent

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

47. In your opinion, can this installation's transition assistance seminar be improved? (CHECK ONE N=226)

81% Yes

20 No (GO TO QUESTION 49)

48. In your opinion, how, if at all, can this installation's transition assistance seminar be improved? (PLEASE WRITE YOUR ANSWER BELOW) N=160<sub>2</sub>

49. Reminder: Please send a copy of your pre-separation counseling, job/employment assistance center, and/or transition assistance seminar evaluation form(s) with this questionnaire if you indicated that you use them.

50. Thank you for participating in this study. If you have any comments about this questionnaire or about the issues raised in the questionnaire, please write them in the space below. N=45

HRD/JGS/11/4/92

**Appendix I  
Summary of Responses to GAO  
Questionnaire**

**Questionnaire Footnotes**

- A. These responses include additional topics discussed in pre-separation counseling that are not required by the law.
- B. The four ways most often cited by transition managers for improving pre-separation counseling are the following: schedule it earlier, improve/update information, respond to program evaluations/feedback, and increase staff.
- C. Other automated job listings include various federal, state and local job listings.
- D. Other services provided include information on small businesses, federal employment applications, and access to electronic equipment.
- E. Other reasons most often cited by transition managers are: mission requirements, inadequate facilities/personnel, not enough time to use the center.
- F. Other reasons most often cited by transition managers are: lack of child care, no perceived need/no plans to work, and poor marketing/didn't realize they were eligible to use the job center.
- G. The four ways most often cited by transition managers for improving their job/employment assistance centers are the following: improve/add equipment, improve/increase size of physical facility, improve/increase marketing/publicity, and increase staffing.
- H. Other ways cited by transition managers that personnel might be informed about the transition assistance seminar include: newsletters/bulletins, commanders' briefings, and posters.
- I. Other ways cited by transition managers that spouses might be informed about the transition assistance seminars include: newsletters/bulletins, posters, and briefings at spouses' clubs and organizations.
- J. Other reasons most often cited by transition managers are mission requirements, procrastination, and not enough time to attend the seminar.
- K. Other reasons most often cited by transition managers are: lack of child care, not interested/no plans to work, and operating hours are inconvenient.
- L. Other personnel presenting information at the transition seminars represent various government, private, and veterans service organizations.
- M. See footnote L.
- N. See footnote L.
- O. See footnote L.
- P. These responses include additional topics discussed in the transition assistance seminars, such as stress management and volunteer opportunities.
- Q. The four ways most often cited by transition managers for improving their transition assistance seminar are the following: additional classes/topics/time, more staff/presenters, improve/increase size of physical facility, and improve staff training/qualifications.

# Military Installations Visited by GAO

Installation	Separation center for returning overseas personnel
<b>Air Force</b>	
McGuire Air Force Base, New Jersey	X
Ramstein Air Base, Germany	
Rhein Main Air Base, Germany	
Travis Air Force Base, California	X
Eglin Air Force Base, Florida	
<b>Army</b>	
Fort Benning, Georgia	
Fort Dix, New Jersey	X
Fort Ord, California	
104th Area Support Group, Hanau, Germany	
26th Area Support Group, Heidelberg, Germany	
<b>Marines</b>	
Camp Pendleton, California	X
Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina	
<b>Navy</b>	
Mayport Naval Station, Florida	X
Naval Support Activity, Naples, Italy	
Philadelphia Naval Station, Pennsylvania	X
San Diego Naval Station, California	X

# Memorandum From the Secretary of Defense, September 30, 1993



THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON, THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



30 SEP 1993

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS  
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF  
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE  
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING  
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE  
COMPTROLLER  
GENERAL COUNSEL  
INSPECTOR GENERAL  
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION  
ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT  
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Command Support For Transition Assistance Programs

People are our greatest asset. We need to make sure that those leaving the Department of Defense are treated fairly in return for the sacrifices they made while serving our country. No one should leave, military or civilian, without knowing the benefits to which he or she is entitled, or without having time to prepare for a new career.

Public Law 102-484, "The National Defense Authorization Act For Fiscal Year 1993", directs that pre-separation counseling of military personnel be available at least 90 days before separation. Your personal support is required to ensure that commanders understand this requirement as well as the overall importance of Transition Assistance Programs.

President Clinton stated in his March 11 speech on Defense Conversion that "Our first priority has to be investing in our people." Transferring the skills of our military and civilian work force is vital to the economic recovery and well-being of our communities.

I appreciate your continued personal support for these programs and direct widest dissemination of this memorandum to ensure that the Department of Defense personnel are provided the opportunity to take full advantage of available transition programs.

94185

# Comments From the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness)



PERSONNEL AND  
READINESS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON DC 20301-4000

DEC 17 1993



Mr. Joseph F. Delfico  
Director, Income Security Issues  
Human Resources Division  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Delfico:

This is the Department of Defense (DoD) response to the General Accounting Office (GAO) draft report, "MILITARY DOWNSIZING: Service Members Leaving the Military Need More DoD Help Before Returning to Civilian Life," dated November 2, 1993, (GAO Code 105727), OSD Case 9560. The DoD concurs with the report.

Transition assistance is a new mission for DoD; however, it is extremely important for separating personnel and their families. The DoD will continue to support the transition program to ensure it is fully implemented. While much remains to be done, significant progress has been made. For example, on September 30, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum directing increased command support for the transition program. The Military Departments are now working to ensure that the direction is carried out.

DoD has also initiated efforts to formalize transition policy in DoD Directives and Instructions. In addition to formalizing the program, the DoD Directive will tell the Military Services to use their respective Inspectors General to evaluate Operation Transition. The DoD issued a policy memorandum detailing pre-separation requirements—a DoD Instruction will replace it during the second quarter of FY 1994. Both require the DD Form 2586, "Verification of Military Experience and Training" to be delivered to separating Service members no later than 120 days before separation.

The DoD is working on other initiatives as well. A revised pre-separation guide and video series have been designed to assist members separating from remote sites. A new publicity effort is being aimed at separating Service members, spouses, and civilian employers. Counselors from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are providing information on veterans benefits in overseas locations, a result of cooperative efforts between the DoD and the VA. Finally, the DoD sponsors job fairs in overseas theaters.

The detailed DoD comments on the report findings and recommendations are provided in the enclosure. The DoD appreciates the opportunity to comment on the GAO draft report.

Sincerely,

Edwin Dorn

Enclosure:  
As stated

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GAO DRAFT REPORT - DATED NOVEMBER 2, 1993  
(GAO CODE 105727) OSD CASE 9560

"MILITARY DOWNSIZING: SERVICE MEMBERS LEAVING THE MILITARY  
NEED MORE DOD HELP BEFORE RETURNING TO CIVILIAN LIFE"

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE COMMENTS

\*\*\*\*\*

FINDINGS

- **FINDING A: Transition Services.** The GAO explained that the DoD, the Department of Labor, and the Department of Veterans Affairs play a role in helping separating Service members and their spouses readjust to civilian life. The GAO further explained that, after identifying separating service members 180 days before discharge, the DoD is required by Public Law 101-510 to (1) provide separatees with a skills verification document, which translates their military experience and training into marketable job skills, (2) provide individual pre-separation counseling to separatees, (3) operate employment assistance centers for separatees and spouses, and (4) assist the Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs in conducting seminars that separating personnel and their spouses can attend to help find civilian jobs. The GAO pointed out that Public Law 102-484 specified that individual pre-separation counseling be provided not later than 90 days prior to separation and added the requirement for an individual transition plan for each separating Service member. (pp. 2-3/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur.

- **FINDING B: Transition Office Officials Do Not Know Who is Scheduled to Separate.** The GAO observed that managers need to know who is separating to adequately market, plan, and evaluate transition assistance. The GAO found, however, that transition managers at nine of the 16 installations it visited did not know who was separating. The GAO further found that, although the other seven transition managers had the information, only five were using it to operate a more effective transition assistance program.

The GAO concluded that transition managers did not know who was scheduled for discharge because personnel offices, which have such information, and the installation's transition office did not coordinate to ensure the information was shared. The GAO pointed out that one transition office did not obtain a list of Service members being discharged within 180 days, because it assumed that the military commands were referring all separating Service members to the transition office. The GAO found, however, that many separating Service members were not being referred for transition services. The GAO further pointed out that neither the DoD, nor the Military Services,

Enclosure

Now on p. 2.



**Appendix IV  
Comments From the Assistant Secretary of  
Defense (Personnel and Readiness)**

had issued a directive and/or issued regulations that required military personnel offices to provide transition offices with the names of separatees.

The GAO pointed out that it is important to identify and contact Service members and their spouses early so they have the entire 180 days to take advantage of transition services. The GAO noted the transition managers at four installations that did obtain the 180 day list used a direct marketing strategy, which has increased the number of separatees using the services. The GAO further noted that, conversely, separatees who did not learn of transition services until just prior to discharge, are less likely to use the services. The GAO concluded transition managers cannot adequately plan or evaluate the services that should be provided without knowing the number of Service members scheduled to separate. (pp. 5-7/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Personnel and Readiness) issued a DoD policy memorandum on November 5, 1993, on pre-separation counseling which in part directs Military personnel offices to provide names of separating Service members to transition offices. Those monthly listings identify separating Service members six months prior to separation. The DoD plans to replace the policy memorandum with a DoD Instruction during the second quarter of FY 1994.

- **FINDING C: Service Members Are Not Receiving Skills Verification Document.** The GAO found that nearly half a million Service members separated before the Military Services began producing a skills verification document--and thousands of others continue to be discharged before receiving the document, or only receive it just prior to separation. The GAO noted that, without the skills verification document, Service members are limited in their ability to prepare resumes and perform other job search activities, because the skills verification document contains a Service member's military work experience and training that has application to employment in the civilian sector. The GAO cited, as an example, a bomb assembler in the Military may qualify for civilian sector employment in the chemical and safety fields. The GAO concluded that, because of its importance, the document is needed early in the Service member's transition process. The GAO pointed out that, with the exception of discharge papers, the skills verification document is probably the most important document a separating Service member can receive, because it contains vital information that can be used in current and future job search activities.

The GAO further found that the Military Services took between 18 and 24 months after the transition program became operational in 1990 to begin producing the skills verification document. The GAO noted that, although the Military Services are now producing the document, many separating Service members are not receiving it--and others are receiving it in their last month before separation. The GAO noted that the Military Services are taking different approaches in providing the skills verification document to Service members who separated before the systems to generate the document became operational. The GAO found that:

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Defense (Personnel and Readiness)

- the Army is retroactively sending the document to all affected Service members-- as of September 1993, the Army had sent it to about 127,000 of the more than 200,000 separated members who did not receive it;
- the Navy sent a letter to about 104,000 Service members who separated before its system became operational that informed them of the opportunity to request their skills verification document (as of September 1993, about 35,000 Navy members had requested the document); and
- the Air Force and Marine Corps will provide the document upon request, but are not attempting to contact affected Service members.

The GAO reported that, according to the Chief of the Air Force transition assistance program, the effort and expense associated with sending the document outweighed the perceived demand and value. The GAO further reported that, according to the Marine Corps Chief of the transition assistance program, the document is not being sent because of limited staff and the difficulty of contacting separated Service members. (pp. 7-10/ GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. The DoD issued a policy memorandum on November 5, 1993, requiring the DD Form 2586, "Verification of Military Experience and Training," to be provided to separating Service members 120 days prior to separation. The DoD will replace the policy memorandum with a DoD Instruction during the second quarter of FY 1994. The Army and Navy provided the documents to Service members who already separated. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) has asked the Air Force and Marine Corps to review their efforts to contact Service members who separated and offer them the document.

- **FINDING D: No System In Place To Ensure Pre-separation Counseling Is Provided.** The GAO found that many separatees were not receiving any pre-separation counseling at the installations visited--and most of the counseling that was being provided did not meet the 90-day requirement. The GAO pointed out that pre-separation counseling should provide the Service member with information about:
  - education and vocational rehabilitation benefits;
  - selective reserve options;
  - job counseling, and job search and placement information;
  - relocation assistance services;
  - medical and dental benefits;

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- counseling (for both the Service member and dependents) on the effects of career change; and
- financial planning.

The GAO concluded that Service members who do not receive pre-separation counseling or receive it just prior to separation (1) may not be aware of important benefits to which they are entitled and (2) may not have an opportunity to utilize other transition services before they are discharged. The GAO cited an example of a Service member unaware that he needed to contribute \$1,200 to a college fund before being discharged to become eligible for Veteran Administration educational benefits of about \$12,600.

The GAO concluded that timely, individual, pre-separation counseling was not provided to separatees at the 16 installations it visited. The GAO further concluded that none of the installations had a system in place to ensure that the requirement was met. (pp. 10-13/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. As mentioned in the DoD response to FINDING B, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) issued a policy memorandum and is in the process of issuing a DoD Instruction on pre-separation counseling. The policy states when counseling shall be provided and directs that DoD Form 2648, "Preseparation Counseling Checklist," be used to record counseling. On November 2, 1993, the OSD initiated a quarterly report system to monitor the program more closely.

- **FINDING E: Separatees From Overseas Have Little Time To Receive Services Upon Return to the United States.** The GAO reported that the lack of a system for ensuring that pre-separation counseling takes place has a particularly detrimental effect on Military members who are stationed overseas and aboard ships. The GAO explained that Military personnel returning from overseas for separation face a more difficult transition than those stationed in the United States, because they are disadvantaged while overseas by (1) being far away from future job markets, (2) having limited access to state-of-the-art job information systems, and (3) having little or no contact with the Department of Labor and the Department of Veterans Affairs representatives who could provide information on the benefits and services.

The GAO reported that officials at all seven installations, which serve as separation centers for Service members returning from overseas, confirmed that many Service members are arriving in the United States for discharge without having received pre-separation counseling. The GAO pointed out that the separatees only have about 24 hours before leaving the Military, which does not allow sufficient time to provide counseling. The GAO cited as an example the 6,000 Service members at an Army installation (about 25 percent of all overseas separatees at that installation) who returned from Europe in FY 1992, without receiving pre-separation counseling at their overseas installation. The GAO cited another example at an Air Force installation where nearly one third of all Service members returning from Europe do not have evidence in their

Now on pp. 7-10.

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Now on pp. 10-11.

files of having received counseling at their overseas installation. The GAO cited a third example at a Marine Corps separation unit where 30 to 40 percent of the 200 Marines returning from the Far East each month do not receive pre-separation counseling overseas. The GAO further reported that the Navy had assigned the responsibility for pre-separation counseling to Military career counselors; however, Military career counselors had not been trained to give pre-separation counseling to separatees. The GAO concluded that many Service members are not receiving the transition services required by law, primarily because the program had not received high enough priority within the DoD. (pp. 13-15/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. On September 30, 1993, the Secretary of Defense issued a memorandum directing increased command support for transition programs. The Military Departments are forwarding the memorandum to their commands for implementation. As the GAO noted, pre-separation counseling is the key to informing separating Service members of their separation entitlements and the services available to them. During FY 1992, the Military Departments were still implementing transition programs overseas. Now, there are over 100 transition sites overseas and the Military Departments are committed to providing pre-separation counseling and other transition services to Service members stationed overseas. Those actions in conjunction with the DoD Instruction on pre-separation counseling, and the follow-up reporting requirements levied on the Military Departments discussed in the DoD response to Finding D, will work in concert to improve separating Service members and spouse knowledge of and opportunity to use transition service and benefits, no matter if they are assigned overseas or in the United States. As a final "safety net," the DoD is issuing a DoD Directive which, among other policies, gives overseas returnees priority in attending transition programs in the United States for up to 90 days after they are discharged.

- **FINDING F: Service Members' and Spouses' Opportunities To Attend Seminars and Use Employment Assistance Centers Are Often Limited.** The GAO reported that separating Service members and their spouses generally have a favorable impression of transition services when they receive them in time to be of use before separation. According to the GAO, however, many separating Service members and their spouses do not use transition services because (1) Military commanders and supervisors are reluctant to give them time off, (2) Service members are not aware of the services available, and (3) seminar classes are full.

The GAO reported that one of the most cited reasons for not using the services was lack of support from Military commanders and supervisors. The GAO pointed out that 76 percent of transition managers responding to the questionnaire indicated that Service members did not attend a seminar because their supervisors/commanders were reluctant to give them time off--and over 57 percent of the transition managers indicated that was a reason why spouses did not attend. The GAO further reported that at those installations, the Military commanders and supervisors were reluctant to release separatees to receive transition services, because they viewed transition assistance as a separation from service process that should be accomplished just prior to discharge. The GAO concluded that

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strong program support is needed from the Secretary of Defense and the military chain of command if separating Service members and their spouses are to maximize their benefits from the program. (pp. 15-19/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. As stated in the DoD response to Finding E, the Secretary of Defense directed increased command support for transition programs in a September 30, 1993, memorandum to the Military Departments. The DoD is also working with the Department of Labor to ensure adequate resources are available for additional transition assistance program workshops.

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#### RECOMMENDATIONS

Now on p. 12.

- **RECOMMENDATION 1.** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments to implement the transition assistance program as required by law. (p. 19/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. The DoD is finalizing a DoD Directive and two DoD Instructions relative to transition programs. Those issuances should be published during the second quarter of FY 1994. Those documents will direct the Military Department Secretaries to implement the transition assistance program in accordance with the law.

Now on p. 12.

- **RECOMMENDATION 2.** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments to get skill conversion documents to those personnel they missed and ensure that all future separatees have the document to use in the individual pre-separation counseling sessions. (p. 19/GAO Draft Report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. As discussed in the DoD response to Finding C, the DoD issued a policy memorandum on November 5, 1993, requiring the skill verification document to be provided to Service members 120 days prior to separation. That memorandum will be replaced with a DoD Instruction that is planned for issuance during the second quarter of FY 1994. OSD has asked the Air Force and Marine Corps to review their efforts to contact former Service members and offer them the document.

Now on p. 13.

- **RECOMMENDATION 3.** The GAO recommended that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretaries of the Military Departments evaluate transition assistance programs at the installation level until they are certain the programs are operating effectively and make periodic evaluations thereafter. (pp. 19-20/GAO draft report)

**DOD RESPONSE:** Concur. As discussed in the DoD response to Recommendation 1, the DoD Directive will instruct the Secretaries of the Military Departments to use their Inspectors General to evaluate transition programs and to provide the OSD an annual

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Defense (Personnel and Readiness)**

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report of their evaluations. That Directive will be published during the second quarter of FY 1994. That is one part of a four part evaluation process. In August 1993, the OSD provided to the Military Departments an evaluation template which Installation transition program managers can use to conduct self-assessments of their program. The third evaluation tool is the quarterly report mentioned in the DoD response to Finding D, which will provide the OSD timely nominal updates of the Military Departments' efforts. Finally, the OSD and the Military Services will continue to randomly spot check transition efforts in conjunction with other visits to local installations.

# Comments From the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Labor

Assistant Secretary for  
Veterans' Employment and Training  
Washington, D.C. 20210



DEC 1 1993

Mr. Joseph F. Delfico  
Director,  
Income Security Issues  
U.S. General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Delfico:

We have reviewed the draft report on Military Downsizing referenced as GAO/HRD-94-39 dated October 1993. We found the subject report useful and informative.

Our review of the subject draft report did raise some concerns. Our comments regarding the draft report are as follows:

On Page 1, reference is made to a combined total Transition Assistance expenditure for the Departments of Defense (DOD) and Labor (DOL) of \$89 and \$86 million for fiscal years 1992 and 1993. We are concerned that the combined figure may be misleading since the focus of the study is on DOD's implementation of its transition assistance mandates. We ask that the Department of Labor's funding for its Transition Assistance Program be noted separately, as is now shown for the Department of Veterans Affairs. The spending level for DOL's Transition Assistance Program in FY 1992 was \$5.649 million, and it was \$3.170 million in FY 1993.

Also, references are made to class size on pages 12, 18 and 19. We are concerned that no baseline is identified from which to establish a basis for comparison to the norm. During fiscal year 1993, the average class size nationwide for Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshops was 42. This was a decrease from fiscal year 1992, in which participation at TAP workshops averaged 48 participants. DOL still believes the ideal class should have 35 participants.

Finally, at the end of the first paragraph on page 19, we would appreciate the addition of a statement noting: "DOL also indicated that with sufficient advance planning, arrangements could be made, within reason and resource limitations, for additional workshops."

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Comments From the Assistant Secretary for  
Veterans' Employment and Training,  
Department of Labor

Should any questions arise regarding the above comments, feel  
free to contact Mr. Hary Puente-Duany from my staff at 219-9110.

Sincerely,

  
PRESTON M. TAYLOR, JR.



# Comments From the Secretary of Veterans Affairs



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON

DEC 7 1993

Mr. Joseph F. Delfico  
Director, Income Security Issues  
U. S. General Accounting Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Delfico:

This is in response to your draft report, MILITARY DOWNSIZING: Service Members Leaving the Military Need More DOD Help Before Returning to Civilian Life (GAO/HRD-94-39). This report examines transition assistance services, whether utilized or not utilized, provided to separating service members and their spouses. The report also examines the strengths and weaknesses of transition service operations. Although the recommendations were directed to the Secretary of Defense and not to VA, I agree with the finding relating to transition services for service members returning from overseas installations for separation. These members are often in the U.S. for only a few days before being discharged, and they generally have less opportunity than their U.S. counterparts to receive transition services. However, since early 1992, through cooperative efforts of the VA, Department of Defense, and the military services, VA counselors have been assigned temporary duty to installations in Europe, the Far East, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and most recently Panama, to conduct briefings on VA benefits and services and provide individual counseling sessions.

I believe that the efforts undertaken and planned by VA in the transition process have been warmly received by installation officials in the continental United States. We have provided VA benefits counselors opportunities to participate in different types of transition assistance program briefings and seminars, such as preparation and preretirement programs for transitioning service members. We will continue our efforts to provide veterans the necessary information they need to take full advantage of all available transition programs. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this report.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jesse Brown".

Jesse Brown

JB/mab

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