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[Greater Emphasis Needed on Military Fish and Wildlife and Public Outdoor Recreation Planning and Management Activities]. CED-77-106; B-146771. August 3, 1977. 17 pp.

Report to Secretary, Department of Defense; by Baltas E. Birkle (for Henry Eschwege, Director, Community and Economic Development Div.).

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Contact: Community and Economic Development Div.

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Congressional Relevance: House Committee on Armed Services; Senate Committee on Armed Services.

Authority: Sikes Act of 1960, as amended (P.L. 86-797; 74 Stat. 1052). (P.L. 90-465; 82 Stat. 661). (P.L. 93-452; 88 Stat. 1369). Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 892). DOD Directive 5500.5.

Although about 19 million of the 26 million acres of land administered by the Department of Defense (DOD) are now managed for fish and wildlife purposes, programs at some military installations have not reached their full potential. Findings/Conclusions: Some installations have strong and aggressive fish and wildlife programs, but some installations have fish and wildlife plans that are outdated or inadequate because of a lack of necessary planning data. Many installations have plans that have not been fully implemented because of a lack of funds and technical assistance. Other installations have potential for fish and wildlife conservation, but have no programs because of a lack of start-up funds. Recommendations: To make installation fish and wildlife programs more effective and to insure that such programs reach their full potential, the Secretary of Defense should require the individual military services to: update and upgrade existing installation plans; identify installations with potential for such programs and initiate them; and request an extension of the funding authorization for these programs and request appropriation of authorized funds. The Secretary of the Interior should request an extension of the funding authorization for technical assistance and request appropriation of authorized funds. The Secretaries of Defense and the Interior should place increased emphasis on efforts to enter into a cooperative agreement for the development of public outdoor recreation resources at Defense installations and should request extension of their respective funding authorization for such activities and

appropriation of authorized funds. (SC)

3294



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

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

03086

B-146771

AUG 3 1977

The Honorable  
The Secretary of Defense

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We recently completed a survey of the manner in which Federal agencies plan for the future use of their land holdings. We studied the land and natural resource planning activities of the Departments of the Army, Air Force, and Navy. The purpose of our survey was to obtain an understanding of military land and natural resource planning activities. At the time we conducted our fieldwork we did not anticipate issuing a report, but we later identified two matters that we believe warrant your attention. These matters include the need for placing greater emphasis on

- fish and wildlife programs and
- development of public outdoor recreation potential.

We interviewed officials of the Departments of Defense, Army, Air Force, and Navy in Washington, D.C., and Fort Lewis, Washington; the Redstone Arsenal, Alabama; Vandenberg Air Force Base and Camp Pendleton Marine Corps Base, California; and Cecil Naval Air Station and Eglin Air Force Base, Florida. We also surveyed legislation, regulations, policies, procedures, and practices pertaining to Defense land and natural resource planning.

FISH AND WILDLIFE ACTIVITIES  
NEED GREATER EMPHASIS

According to a Department of the Interior official, about 19 of the 26 million acres of Defense land are now managed for fish and wildlife purposes, including threatened and endangered species. Although some Defense installations have aggressive fish and wildlife programs, the programs at other installations have not reached their full potential because

- fish and wildlife plans are outdated or inadequate due to a lack of necessary planning data,

- fish and wildlife plans have not been fully implemented because of a lack of funds and technical assistance, and
- start-up costs have not been provided to develop fish and wildlife programs on installations capable of supporting such programs.

We believe fish and wildlife programs should

- be based on current detailed planning data on wildlife populations and habitat improvement needs (particularly with respect to endangered species),
- receive sufficient technical assistance to obtain and use planning data to develop a plan of action for fish and wildlife conservation, and
- receive adequate funds and staff to implement the plan.

Authority for Defense fish and wildlife programs

The Sikes Act of September 15, 1960 (74 Stat. 1052 Public Law 86-797), authorizes the Secretary of Defense to carry out fish and wildlife programs in accordance with cooperative plans jointly agreed to by the Secretary of the Interior and the appropriate State agency in which the installations are located. The act also authorizes the collection of hunting and fishing fees to be used to conserve and manage fish and wildlife resources. Public Law 90-465 (82 Stat. 661, Aug. 8, 1968) amended the Sikes Act to authorize annual appropriations not to exceed \$500,000 through 1972 for fish and wildlife and public outdoor recreation programs. Public Law 93-452 (88 Stat. 1369, Oct. 18, 1974) increased the annual appropriation authorization to \$1.5 million through fiscal

year 1978. In addition, a \$2 million annual appropriation was authorized for the Department of the Interior to assist Defense installations in carrying out fish and wildlife and public outdoor recreation programs.

The Endangered Species Act of 1973 (87 Stat. 892) requires all Federal departments and agencies, including Defense, to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened fish and wildlife species. It further stipulates that actions authorized or funded by Federal departments and agencies should not jeopardize the continued existence of such species.

The May 24, 1965, Department of Defense Directive 5500.5 implements the requirements of the Sikes Act. The Directive states that:

--"A continuing program of fish and wildlife habitat management, complying with accepted scientific practices integrated and consistent with the total natural resources will be the objective of the Defense Fish and Wildlife Management program."

--"Cooperative management plans with the State and Federal Fish and Wildlife Conservation Agencies are required by \* \* \* [Public Law 797, 86th Congress]."

An overall agreement between the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of the Interior for fish and wildlife conservation at military installations has been in effect since 1960. A new agreement has been recently negotiated but was not signed at the time we made our survey. A Defense official told us that individual agreements exist for most military installations having fish and wildlife programs.

Individual military service regulations are more specific and require fish and wildlife management plans although requirements vary for implementing the plans and reporting proposed fish and wildlife projects and accomplishments.

Program weaknesses

A Defense official told us that the three military services have about 237 fish and wildlife cooperative agreements covering about 19 of the 26 million acres of Defense land. During our survey we observed a wide range in the amount of effort expended to develop and implement military fish and wildlife management plans.

Department of the Army

The two Army installations visited had fish and wildlife cooperative agreements with the Department of the Interior and the States in which they are located, but one installation did not have a current fish and wildlife management plan as required by Army regulation. An installation official told us that the existing plan was obsolete and too general to be applicable to his work, but because of a lack of staff there was no immediate plan to update it. At the same installation, a 263,000 acre firing range supports numerous species of wildlife, including several endangered or threatened species, but the range is not included in the overall installation fish and wildlife management plan. The official told us that a request for a contractor to provide needed planning data on wildlife populations, vegetation types, and their interrelationships was not approved because of a lack of funds.

The second Army installation visited had no inventory of wildlife resources. The fish and wildlife manager relied on the number of fish and wildlife taken and casual observances for planning purposes. There may be endangered wildlife species on the installation, but no surveys have been conducted to ascertain the extent of their existence.

Department of the Air Force

The two Air Force installations visited had fish and wildlife cooperative agreements and management plans, but both installations needed planning data such as wildlife populations and endangered and threatened species of fish and wildlife

habitat data. One base identified habitat improvements to be done in the fiscal years 1974 to 1976 fish and wildlife management plan, but only a small portion of the projects had been undertaken. Of an estimated \$98,000 in project costs for such improvements as deer and quail habitat improvement and construction of ponds, only about \$5,500 had been provided in fiscal year 1974. No funds were provided in fiscal years 1975 or 1976. An installation official told us that the installation's natural resource program depends mainly on appropriated funds, but there is great reluctance to use such funds for this purpose. The Department of the Interior did assist with fish stocking at this installation.

The other Air Force installation's fish and wildlife program was well funded through hunting and fishing fees. An installation official told us that \$87,000 in fees was received in fiscal year 1976. Although this amount of receipts was available, a survey and inventory of endangered species habitat was lacking at this base.

#### Navy Department

The naval installation visited had a fish and wildlife cooperative agreement and a management plan; but many actions identified by the plan, such as population surveys and habitat improvements, had not been carried out or programmed. In 1977 installation funds available to operate its fish and wildlife program will total about \$1,200. Base officials told us that from \$25,000 and \$30,000 a year would be needed to operate the installation fish and wildlife program properly. The installation commander told us that funding is a problem because hunting and fishing fees are not adequate. An official of Navy's Southern Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command, told us fish and wildlife programs at most naval installations are weak due to shortages of funds and staff.

On the other hand, the Marine installation visited appeared to have an aggressive and well-funded fish and wildlife program. The fish and wildlife populations, including endangered species, and actions recommended by the plan had been translated into annual work plans. The availability of funds and staff appears

to be the major difference between this installation and some others visited. The base has relatively high hunting and fishing fee collections. In addition, 1 civilian and 16 marines have been assigned to its wildlife operations branch. Compensation for these individuals is paid from appropriated funds.

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Officials at the military service's headquarters and at the Departments of Defense and the Interior told us that fish and wildlife programs at many installations are inadequate. They said that major contributing factors to this problem are the lack of funds and technical assistance.

#### Need for funds

Headquarters planners identified the following sources of funds which could aid fish and wildlife programs.

- Hunting and fishing fees (an estimated \$840,000 Defense total in fiscal year 1978).
- Appropriate funds for other installation projects, such as lawn care and drainage projects, which may help fish and wildlife management.
- Self-sufficient forestry programs, such as prescribed burning, which may aid fish and wildlife management.
- Volunteer help from community, civic, and other organizations.
- Operations and maintenance funds used for fish and wildlife management purposes.

Although there are examples where the available sources of funds have produced very good results, a Defense official told us much more could be done at many installations. He specifically identified the following problems related to the lack of funds for fish and wildlife programs.



- A recent Defense survey indicates that 135 installations cannot support their fish and wildlife program on hunting and fishing fee collections alone.
- Funds generated at one installation having extensive hunting and fishing fee collections may not be transferred to other installations.
- Even if fee collections could be transferred from one installation to another, \$840,000 would be insufficient to fund all fish and wildlife programs. The various services have identified about \$2 million in specific fish and wildlife related projects that should be undertaken, but are not programed because of funding constraints.
- Some States by agreement do not allow the collection of hunting and fishing fees at military installations.
- "Start-up" funds are needed to establish fish and wildlife programs where they do not now exist. Such money could be used to build dams and ponds, improve wildlife habitat, and purchase fertilizer and feed. Some of these programs could be self-sufficient after initial start-up funds are provided and the programs are underway. A recent Defense survey identified 18 installations which need start-up funds to establish fish and wildlife programs.
- Although the Endangered Species Act requires all Federal departments and agencies to carry out programs for the conservation of endangered and threatened species, many installations do not have adequate funds to identify and manage such species.

Since 1968 the Sikes Act, as amended, has provided authority for the Congress to appropriate funds for Defense fish and wildlife management purposes, but Defense has not requested the funds. A Defense official told us that the military services have identified the need for such funds, and that Defense did initiate one request for funds under the authority, but the request was deleted by the Office of Management and Budget. He stated the reason for not requesting the funds in other years was the need to constrain the Defense budget, but he agreed the \$1.5 million authorization is small compared to the potential benefits it could provide in fish and wildlife conservation.

Need for technical assistance

Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, and installation officials told us that fish and wildlife programs suffer because of a lack of technical assistance. They said that in some cases neither the States nor Interior have provided adequate technical assistance.

In a 1968 letter to the Chairman, House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, the Secretary of the Army indicated that the 1968 funding authorization under the Sikes Act would afford the opportunity to supplement the existing nonappropriated funds available to discharge these and other program obligations. The letter further stated,

"Such authorization \* \* \* would not only contribute to the availability of the required technical personnel but also permit planning and development on a scale more commensurate with the intent of Congress."

During hearings before the Subcommittee on Fisheries and Wildlife Conservation, House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, on the 1974 Defense increase of funding authority under the Sikes Act, both Department of the Interior and Defense officials indicated that such funds were needed for Defense fish and wildlife programs. They said that technical assistance was grossly inadequate.

In a letter to the Chairman, House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, supporting the 1974 amendment, an Assistant Secretary of the Interior stated that only minimal assistance had been provided to Defense installations. He indicated that only 86 of 241 installations having cooperative fish and wildlife management plans had been provided assistance. The letter further stated:

"Many opportunities for fishing and hunting which should be utilized by military personnel and the general public are being bypassed because of the lack of funds to provide technical assistance and to implement plans prepared cooperatively."

Our discussions with Department of Defense and Department of the Interior officials indicate the situation has not changed since the hearings for the 1974 amendment. As with Defense, an Interior official told us that Interior has never requested the \$2 million annual appropriation under the 1974 authorization. In addition to being unable to adequately assist ongoing military installation fish and wildlife programs, Interior officials indicate they are unable to comply with special requests, such as an Air Force request to help identify endangered and threatened species of fish and wildlife. The Interior officials stated they regret not being able to provide more technical assistance to Defense, but cited Defense's refusal to request authorized funds as one reason for not requesting appropriation of Interior's funding authorization. Defense and Interior officials believe the amount of money authorized by the Sikes Act is small relative to the potential benefits in fish and wildlife conservation.

#### CONCLUSION

Although some Defense installations have strong and aggressive fish and wildlife programs, more needs to be done to improve the overall program. Some installations have fish and wildlife plans that are outdated or inadequate due to the lack of necessary planning data. Many installations have plans that have not been fully implemented because of a lack of funds and technical assistance. Other installations have potential for fish and wildlife conservation but have no programs because of a lack of start-up funds.

Neither the Department of Defense nor the Department of the Interior have requested the funds authorized under the Sikes Act, as amended, to aid existing installation fish and wildlife programs or start new programs where potential exists.

The cost involved in starting or improving fish and wildlife conservation programs at most military installations is relatively small compared to the potential benefits in fish and wildlife conservation and protection of endangered and threatened species. The Departments of Defense and Interior have not taken full advantage of their authorities to help military fish and wildlife programs reach their full potential.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

To make installation fish and wildlife programs more effective and to insure that such programs reach their full potential, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense:

- Require the individual military services to update and upgrade existing installation fish and wildlife plans.
- Identify installations with potential for fish and wildlife programs and initiate such programs.
- Request an extension of the funding authorization for fish and wildlife programs beyond fiscal year 1978 and request appropriation of authorized funds.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

To assist the Department of Defense in carrying out its fish and wildlife programs, we recommend that the Secretary of the Interior request an extension of the funding authorization for technical assistance beyond fiscal year 1978 and request appropriation of authorized funds.

AGENCY COMMENTS

We discussed these matters with Defense and Interior officials. They agreed with our observations, conclusions, and recommendations. Both Departments are considering including a request for extension of funding authorization in their fiscal year 1979 budget requests.

NEED TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC  
OUTDOOR RECREATION AT DEFENSE INSTALLATIONS

Although it has been authorized to do so, Defense has placed little emphasis on increasing public outdoor recreation opportunities at Defense installations. Defense and Interior officials believe significant potential exists for increasing public outdoor recreation opportunities, but neither Department has systematically identified where such potential exists or where the demand or need for such opportunities is greatest. As a result, available and needed public recreation opportunities may be lost.

Authority for Defense public  
outdoor recreation programs

In a 1965 message to the Congress on natural beauty, President Lyndon Johnson indicated that much of the 28 million acres of land then held by the military services was an important part of the public estate. The message stated that the potential of this land must be recognized through the fullest application of multiple uses. The 1968 amendment of the Sikes Act authorized Defense to develop cooperative plans with Interior and applicable States for the development, enhancement, operation, and maintenance of public outdoor recreation resources on Defense installations. Defense officials indicate such resources would include hunting, fishing, biking, hiking, nature study, and beach use, but generally would not include the use of facilities such as gyms, golf courses, tennis courts, bowling lanes, and theaters reserved for military personnel.

In considering inclusion of the authorization for public outdoor recreation planning in the 1968 Sikes Act Amendment, the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries recognized a

Department of the Army concern that public lands used for military purposes must be used primarily for those purposes. A Committee report on the legislation made it clear, however, that public recreation and military uses could be made compatible, particularly in those instances where a slight administrative burden or slight interference with military activities or security would be overwhelmingly outweighed by the gain to the public. In responding to the Committee on the draft legislation, an Assistant Secretary, Department of the Interior, indicated that there were substantial recreational potentials for Defense properties. He stated,

"The Department of Defense has identified 226 military installations which have conservation possibilities in addition to fish and wildlife potential. Such public outdoor recreation resources could be enhanced at relatively low cost through additional assistance."

A broad study of public recreation opportunities at installations was conducted in 1974 by a committee of the American Park and Recreation Society in cooperation with the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Department of the Interior. Some of the committee's observations, based on a nationwide survey of 34 military installations and 35 neighboring civilian communities, included the following:

- There was a need for funds for the development of public recreational facilities at military installations.
- There was a need for recruitment and training of recreation professionals.
- There was a need for more communication and cooperative planning between the military and civilian communities.

In commenting on individual public access to military recreational facilities by individuals, the report indicates that where public use was allowed, the dominant practice was to allow only guests.

In 1973 the Department of the Interior issued its first Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan entitled "Outdoor Recreation - A Legacy for America." The report states that federally owned and managed land and water resources are national assets, and that the public should be allowed to use these assets, including military land and water resources, for outdoor recreational pursuits when such use does not directly conflict with the primary purpose of the managing agency. The report further states that all Federal land holding agencies should seek new ways of making underutilized lands, neither designated for recreation use nor available for disposal under surplus property programs, available for public recreation.

Despite the nationwide recreation plan and a congressional authorization since 1968, Defense and Interior officials told us that neither Department had aggressively pursued cooperative planning for the public recreational facilities. They also told us neither Department has requested the funds authorized since 1968 for public outdoor recreation development. A Defense official told us that although some installations have extensive public recreation use, others have extensive potential which has not been developed. In addition, he believes savings could be possible through elimination of duplicative recreation planning and recreational development at military installations and neighboring communities. Officials of both Departments said that there has been no effort to systematically identify where public outdoor recreation opportunities exist on military lands or where such opportunities are most needed.

A Defense official told us that the Department of Defense and individual military service regulations do not require public outdoor recreation plans and cooperative public outdoor recreation agreements with the Department of the Interior and States. However, he said the Air Force has been developing, under a policy directive, public outdoor recreation agreements for some installations. He told us that the military services have been slow to develop cooperative outdoor public recreation agreements and plans because

--many bases are providing public outdoor recreation without such plans,

--many installation officials fear that public outdoor recreation will lead to demands for public use of facilities reserved for military personnel, and

--funds have not been made available to develop cooperative public outdoor recreation plans.

### Program observations

Although public outdoor recreation planning is undertaken at some Defense installations, these efforts are directed primarily to the needs of military personnel. Our observations on public outdoor recreation matters at the various military installations are discussed below.

#### Department of the Army

Neither of the Army installations visited had cooperative agreements or plans for public outdoor recreation. An official at one installation told us that the installation declined to enter into any agreement with the Department of the Interior for public recreation because the installation was providing as much public recreation as possible.

The other Army installation provided a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities to military personnel, dependents, civilian employees, and guests, but not to the general public.

#### Department of the Air Force

Both Air Force installations visited had recreation plans included as part of their natural resource conservation programs, but neither had a cooperative agreement with Interior and the State. One installation was very restricted to public recreation use for security reasons. The other base provided for public recreation in its planning, but few of the planning proposals, such as development of boat access sites, campsites, and hiking trails, had been funded. This installation's plan states:

"At the present time there are no Air Force funds for use in developing public outdoor recreation facilities \* \* \* Unless some funding procedure is provided, such as charging fees to defray costs, outdoor recreation development and management \* \* \* will be severely restricted \* \* \*."



Department of the Navy

The Navy installation visited neither had a public outdoor recreation plan nor encouraged public recreation opportunities other than hunting and fishing. The Marine installation visited did not have a public outdoor recreation plan or agreement, but it did provide, mostly on a permit basis, for public recreation activities, such as camping, hiking, hunting, and fishing. A bike trail is open to the general public, and two sections of the installation are leased to the State for recreation purposes.

Recent efforts to increase public outdoor recreation on Defense lands

Since April 1976 Defense and Interior have been negotiating an overall cooperative agreement for the development of public outdoor recreation resources at military installations. The agreement had not been signed at the time we made our study. A Defense official told us the Air Force is pioneering an effort to develop agreements with Interior and States for selected installations. He said that development of public outdoor recreation plans will follow the agreements. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Department of the Interior, has been providing staff to visit various military installations for the purpose of analyzing installation recreation resources and making recommendations to the commanders of such installations on the public recreation potential.

CONCLUSION

Defense has been very slow to use the authority granted to it by the Congress in 1968 to develop cooperative plans with Interior and States for the development, enhancement, operation, and maintenance of public outdoor recreation resources at military installations. Although some installations plan for and provide public outdoor recreation opportunities, significant recreation opportunities may be lost because neither Defense nor Interior have systematically attempted to identify where such recreational opportunities exist or where the need for such opportunities is greatest. In addition, the potential may exist to eliminate duplicative effort on the part of military installations and neighboring communities to plan and develop similar recreation opportunities.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

To make sure that adequate consideration is given to development of public outdoor recreation opportunities at Defense installations, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense:

- Place increased emphasis on the efforts of the Departments of Defense and the Interior to enter into a cooperative agreement for the development of public outdoor recreation resources at Defense installations.
- Direct the individual military services to identify the potential for public outdoor recreational opportunities, set forth criteria for the development of such opportunities, develop plans in cooperation with the Department of the Interior and the States, and implement such plans.
- Request an extension beyond fiscal year 1978 of the funding authorization for public outdoor recreation activities and request appropriation of authorized funds.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

To assist Defense in carrying out its responsibilities for the development of public outdoor recreation opportunities, we recommend that the Secretary of the Interior:

- Place increased emphasis on the efforts of the Departments of Defense and the Interior to enter into a cooperative agreement for the development of public outdoor recreation resources at Defense installations.
- Request an extension beyond fiscal year 1978 of the funding authorization to provide technical assistance to Defense for public outdoor recreation activities and request appropriation of the funds.

AGENCY COMMENTS

We discussed these matters with Department of Defense and Bureau of Outdoor Recreation officials. They agreed with our observations, conclusions, and recommendations. A Bureau of Outdoor Recreation official stressed that even under very restrictive installation security measures, there are usually some compatible public outdoor recreation opportunities that could be developed. He also said that where installation

commanders have developed public outdoor recreation opportunities, they have enjoyed better public relations as a result.

As noted on page 11, both Departments are considering including a request for extension of funding authorization in their fiscal year 1979 budget requests.

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This report contains recommendations to you, which are set forth on pages 10 and 16. As you know, section 236 of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970 requires the head of a Federal agency to submit a written statement on actions taken on our recommendations to the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not later than 60 days after the date of the report and to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations with the agency's first request for appropriations made more than 60 days after the date of the report.

We are sending copies of this report to the Secretary of the Interior; Director, Office of Management and Budget; the House Committee on Government Operations; the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries; the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs; the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation; the House Committee on Appropriations; the Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Defense; and the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services. Copies are also being sent to the Secretaries of the Army, Navy, and Air Force; and the Directors, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Department of the Interior.

Sincerely yours,



for

Henry Eschwege  
Director