



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

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NATIONAL SECURITY AND
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

10 AUG 1983

The Honorable Caspar W. Weinberger
The Secretary of Defense

Attention: DOD Office of the Inspector General
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for
GAO Report Analysis

Dear Mr. Secretary:

The U.S. General Accounting Office is discontinuing its survey of the Army's Manpower Staffing Standards System (MS-3) program, code 967113. This action is being taken because the program is still largely in its development stage and it is too early to evaluate its effectiveness. While we urge your attention to two issues, we found that the Army's actions to date have been very responsive to previous GAO recommendations.

The objective of the survey was to ascertain and evaluate the Army's progress in correcting deficiencies in its system for determining manpower requirements for Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) type units. GAO reported in 1979 (FPCD-79-32) that the Army did not have a credible system for determining TDA manpower requirements and recommended that the Army

- design and implement a manpower requirements system that includes staffing standards developed through work measurement techniques and methods studies conducted prior to standards development;
- adopt an organizational structure that combines manpower-related responsibilities into one organization at all levels, with centralized policy and direction;
- assure that staffing standards can be developed at a summary level and that the standards enable tying manpower requirements to budget requests; and
- have a management information system that uses a common data base for manpower requirements, costs, budgets, and management.

In other reports, GAO pointed out the Army's need to (1) develop more reliable, worker availability factors (FPCD-78-21), (2) use civilians to develop staffing standards (FPCD-77-72), and (3) establish an officer career field in manpower management (FPCD-80-9).

Our survey showed that the Army has initiated or plans to take actions to address all the above recommendations and is in the process of putting its new manpower requirements system together. Overall, we found the Army's actions and plans with regard to manpower requirements determination for TDA units to be highly responsive to the recommendations we have made in past reviews. While it is too early to render a definitive assessment of the new MS-3 program, we believe the Army is headed in the right direction. Nonetheless, we expect to reexamine this area in a couple of years.

While we were pleased with most of what we found during this survey, we are concerned about two issues--potential duplication of training and lower worker availability factors.

During our survey we noted that Army plans to establish a 7-week MS-3 program training course that will duplicate much of the content of both an existing 5-week course and a planned 3-week course related to staffing standards.

The Army's 5-week Defense Work Methods and Standards course provides training in reviewing production and performance efficiency and in setting production and performance standards. The course is oriented towards a Comptroller of the Army efficiency review program, and the course content includes developing staffing standards by using work measurement techniques. The Army plans to add a 3-week, follow-on efficiency review course on methods and standards. The 7-week MS-3 course and the other two courses all cover making efficiency reviews and establishing staffing standards, although the efficiency program's courses go beyond manpower efficiency and standards.

The field people conducting the efficiency reviews will do so from the perspective of both the efficiency review program and the MS-3 program. As a result, many reviewers will likely attend both programs' training courses and receive significant duplicative training. Officials at the Army Material Development and Readiness Command, which is responsible for the efficiency program courses, commented on the planned MS-3 course by noting that it duplicates existing courses and recommended not establishing the MS-3 course if existing courses could meet MS-3 needs. In its report to the Army, the contractor that developed the MS-3 course program of instruction noted that course development for the two programs needs to be closely coordinated, if not integrated. MS-3 program officials consider the new course necessary for adequate MS-3 training and in January 1984, plan to go ahead with it. They said they would avoid redundant

training by establishing training tracks and sending people to the appropriate tracks based on their prior training and experience.

For these reasons, we believe that your decision to establish the 7-week MS-3 training program merits reconsideration. If you agree, you may wish to consider the development of other, non-duplicative means of assuring that adequate training is available for both the efficiency review and the MS-3 programs. For example, one viable solution may be a modularized course that satisfies the needs of both programs. For a given class of students, the instructor at the training school could teach only the modules needed by that group.

The second issue that concerns us involves the Army's worker availability factors. A study of TDA worker availability has recently been completed by a contractor. The data indicated a lower time availability than the Army had been using. The contractor also noted that the Army's military availability factors were 6 to 8 percent lower than the Air Force's factors and suggested that the Army allow less time for organizational duties and training activities than what TDA units were presently using. Because of the large impact which worker availability has on manpower requirements, we would also urge the Army to examine the necessity for those activities which lower worker availability.

We thank the Army for its cooperation and assistance in helping carry out this survey and for the courtesies extended to our staff. If you have any further questions, please contact Dr. William E. Beusse at 275-5140.

Sincerely yours,


Frank C. Conahan
Director

cc: The Secretary of the Army

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