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Testimony



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Evaluation of the Army's
Civilian Marksmanship Program

Statement of
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Before the
Subcommittee on Readiness
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives



Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here today to discuss the results of our review of the Army's Civilian Marksmanship Program. You asked that we evaluate the program's mission, purpose, usefulness, and cost. Our evaluation included a review of pertinent program and congressional documents as well as interviews with a wide range of service and Department of Defense officials. Details on our objectives, scope, and methodology are included in appendix I to this document. We are in the process of preparing a final report on our work.

MISSION AND PURPOSE OF THE CIVILIAN
MARKSMANSHIP PROGRAM

The Civilian Marksmanship Program is a congressionally mandated program whose basic mission is to provide rifle marksmanship training to U.S. civilians. It was established in 1903 during a period in U.S. history when civilian training in marksmanship was viewed as essential to total military preparedness. Over the next three decades, the Congress increased the scope of the program through a series of legislative actions. While over the years legislation has authorized a program comprised of diverse shooting activities, we believe that the common theme throughout the program's legislative history is that training civilians in marksmanship will contribute to military preparedness.

The Secretary of the Army is responsible for implementing the program. He is advised by the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, which is comprised of 34 military members and civilians. A military officer, serving as the Director of Civilian Marksmanship, manages the program's day-to-day activities and is assisted by a staff of about 35 persons.

Civilian Marksmanship Program activities include (1) promoting and monitoring generalized rifle training through a system of affiliated clubs and other organizations and (2) sponsoring

marksmanship competitions. As part of these activities, the program .

-- sells obsolete weapons to affiliated club members,

-- loans obsolete weapons to affiliated clubs, and

-- donates and/or sells ammunition and other shooting supply items to affiliated clubs.

As of November 1989, approximately 165,000 individuals in over 1,900 clubs were affiliated with the Civilian Marksmanship Program. During fiscal year 1989, the program sold about 6,000 M1 Garand rifles to affiliated club members and issued over 37 million rounds or components of ammunition to affiliated clubs. As of September the program had on loan or in storage over 24,000 weapons.

PROGRAM COSTS

The Civilian Marksmanship Program spent \$4.2 million in fiscal year 1987, \$3.9 million in 1988, and \$4.3 million in 1989. The proposed budgets for fiscal years 1990 through 1994 are about \$5 million a year. An average of 93 percent of the budget for these years is planned for program staff, ammunition, and National Matches.

The National Matches are an annual competition conducted by the Director of Civilian Marksmanship. In 1989, approximately 3,650 competitors attended the 4-week long event at Camp Perry, Ohio. In fiscal year 1989, the National Matches accounted for about \$1.4 million, or 33 percent of the program's appropriated funds. This does not include the cost of 160 Army Reservists who helped conduct the competition.

PROGRAM IS OF LIMITED VALUE
IN MILITARY PREPAREDNESS

The Civilian Marksmanship Program has established two mobilization-related objectives. The first is to provide training in rifle marksmanship to civilians who would be subject to induction into the military. The second is to train and qualify program instructors so that they can augment the mobilization training base.

Army officials believe that achieving these objectives will benefit the Army in several ways. They expect that inductees who have program training will be better marksmen. These inductees would likely need less instructor time and could possibly act as peer instructors during marksmanship training. This would allow instructors to concentrate on recruits who need more attention. Finally, available and trained program instructors could be used to alleviate shortages of military marksmanship instructors.

If usefulness is defined as a measurement of whether or not this program contributes to the military preparedness of the United States today, then I would say that the Civilian Marksmanship Program is of limited value, primarily because (1) the program has remained essentially as it was in the 1920s, despite many changes in Army operations, and (2) the Army could not identify any training or mobilization reliance upon the program. If the program were justified on some other basis, maybe our assessment of its value would change.

Army Has Changed Significantly

At the turn of the century, the United States maintained a small standing Army of approximately 60,000 soldiers, and the rifle was the Army's primary weapon. After the Spanish American War, serious problems with mobilization, training, and combat

operations had become apparent. The adequacy of marksmanship training and the U.S. ability to expand the Army quickly were primary concerns.

Since then, Army doctrine, weaponry, and organization have changed considerably. Today the Army is a trained and ready strategic force capable of conducting combat operations worldwide. Over half of its soldiers belong to a greatly expanded reserve component system. The number, complexity, and lethality of weapons systems have greatly expanded beyond the rifle. Clearly, the U.S. Army has changed since 1903, but the program's mobilization objectives and other activities have remained essentially the same.

Requirements for the Program Do Not Exist

Army officials familiar with the program told us that there is some question about the requirements for the program during mobilization. Part of their rationale is as follows:

- The Civilian Marksmanship Program is not included in the Army's overall mobilization plans or training strategy.
- No Army requirements exist for either civilians trained in marksmanship or for program instructors to augment the mobilization training base.
- No system is in place to track program-trained personnel.
- No program has been developed to train, certify, and track program instructors who could be used to augment the mobilization training base.

Furthermore, there is no assurance that program-trained personnel will be available when needed.

Concerns About the Program's Mission and Purpose

Since the Civilian Marksmanship Program's inception, the program has been debated within the Congress many times. While there has been support for the program, there has been concern about the program's mission and utility. The 1924 Congressional Record clearly highlights the wide range of early concerns. During one debate in the House of Representatives, Members of Congress asked the following questions:

- Was the Civilian Marksmanship Program simply a means to promote marksmanship and to support gun clubs?
- Was marksmanship training in the military services inadequate?
- Should the government sponsor rifle competitions?

A consistent congressional concern is that the mission of the Civilian Marksmanship Program is to serve primarily the shooting community. For example, during a 1975 debate in the House of Representatives, one Member of Congress said that "There is absolutely no need for this program at all. It is purely an appropriation for the development of civilian rifle teams. . . . I think this is a program that has lost its utility."

Over the years there has, however, been steady support for the Civilian Marksmanship Program. During the same 1975 debate in the House, another Member of Congress stated that "I feel the continuation of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice and its work has been justified through the years. It has consistently received support from the public and Congress. It will be a mistake not to continue the program now."

In January 1986, the Army Audit Agency reported that (1) the program tasks contained in the program's legislation have remained

essentially unchanged since the program's inception (despite changes in the military and civilian environment), (2) some program objectives were not being accomplished, (3) detailed program operating goals and measurable standards for determining progress and success were generally lacking, and (4) interpretations differ on specific legislative authorities for the program. The Army Audit Agency recommended that (1) the program's basic objectives be reevaluated and (2) the historical basis for the program be reviewed and a clear program direction be established that meets the needs of the Army and the civilian population. While program objectives have been revised in response to the Army Audit Agency report, Army officials told us that the program direction has not changed.

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Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement today. I would be glad to answer any questions you or the Subcommittee Members might have.

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of our review was to evaluate the mission, purpose, usefulness, and cost of the Civilian Marksmanship Program. As agreed with the staff of the House Committee on Armed Services we focused our review primarily on evaluating program usefulness.

We reviewed pertinent Army and congressional documents to understand the legislative intent of the program and to determine how the program operates. We interviewed appropriate service and Department of Defense officials to (1) establish what Army requirements and plans exist for the program, (2) determine how the program is integrated into Army operations, and (3) understand the usefulness of the program. Personnel we interviewed included program officials, members of the National Board for the Promotion of Rifle Practice, and various Army officials at the following locations:

- Office of the Secretary of the Army, Washington, D.C.;
- Army Chief of Public Affairs, Washington, D.C.;
- Army Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (Training), Washington, D.C.;
- Army Office of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship Program, Washington, D.C.;
- Army Civilian Marksmanship Support Detachment, Camp Perry, Ohio;
- Army Materiel Command, Alexandria, Virginia;

- Army Forces Command, Atlanta, Georgia;
- Army Training and Doctrine Command, Hampton, Virginia;
- Coast Guard Headquarters, Washington, D.C.;
- Ohio National Guard Headquarters, Columbus, Ohio;
- Marine Corps Combat Development Center, Quantico, Virginia; and
- Defense Logistics Agency, Alexandria, Virginia.