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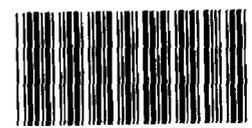
United States General Accounting Office
Washington, DC 20548

Logistics and
Communications
Division

B-197546

APRIL 17, 1980

The Honorable Philip M. Klutznick
The Secretary of Commerce



112085

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Subject: [Emergency Plan of MARAD] (LCD-80-52)

In the event of a major conventional war, the Maritime Administration (MARAD) is responsible for insuring that sufficient merchant ships are available to satisfy the shipping needs of the Department of Defense and the civilian sector. To fulfill this responsibility, MARAD must have a comprehensive emergency plan detailing procedures for obtaining, deploying, and operating merchant ships. Executive Order 11490, dated October 28, 1969, directs MARAD to develop such an emergency plan.

At the time of our review, MARAD lacked the emergency plan required by the Executive order. It had established an Emergency Planning Program which identified the specific jobs to be done, target dates to be completed, and the sequence of the tasks to be completed. However, MARAD's progress toward publishing a comprehensive emergency plan was proceeding slowly.

As a result of our inquiry into the matter, MARAD did publish an operational plan. The plan appears well structured and prescribes operating concepts, general organization, and initial procedures for sealift operations. However, the plan lacks detailed emergency procedures at the working level--an element we consider essential if MARAD is to effectively perform its emergency functions. The roles and responsibilities of individuals should be set forth clearly, either in the plan or in some supplemental document.

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BACKGROUND

MARAD's national security mission and emergency preparedness and planning responsibilities are established by law, Executive order, and international treaty.

The role of the merchant marine in national security is set forth in the Merchant Marine Act of 1936, as amended. The act provides that the United States shall have a merchant marine "capable of serving as a naval and military auxiliary in time of war or national emergency" and "sufficient to carry its domestic waterborne commerce and a substantial portion of the waterborne export and import foreign commerce of the United States * * * at all times."

MARAD is also responsible for providing merchant marine support for U.S. and allied war efforts. Executive Order 11490 stipulates that MARAD shall develop an emergency plan to assure that it will be able to fulfill its responsibilities. The order further provides that the head of the agency shall be prepared to implement such a plan.

Under the North Atlantic Treaty, the United States is committed to the support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). MARAD is the U.S. representative to the Planning Board for Ocean Shipping--a NATO civil emergency planning body--and in wartime is the U.S. member of the NATO Defense Shipping Council.

DEVELOPMENT OF EMERGENCY
PLAN PROCEEDING SLOWLY

MARAD's Emergency Planning Program, published in July 1974, established tasks and objectives for the various MARAD offices and divisions which would enable them to prepare an overall emergency plan of operation. The program outlined critical areas which would be a part of an overall plan and established target dates for their completion. The program, which was updated periodically, reported the progress being made toward the completion of these various tasks and objectives. However, the program was not intended, nor could it be considered, to be a comprehensive emergency plan as envisioned by the Executive order.

When we inquired into the matter in June 1979, some 10 years after the issuance of the Executive order, it was clear that MARAD's progress toward publishing a comprehensive emergency plan was slow.

In August 1979, we discussed with top-level MARAD officials this lack of a written plan for emergency situations as required by the Executive order. They immediately charged the various MARAD organizations to submit a written plan and they assured us that the plan would be published by October 1, 1979.

On September 28, 1979, MARAD published its Operations Plan. It consolidated many of the procedures and much of the thinking and objectives outlined in the original Emergency Planning Program into a more concise form. The plan is designed to support a major conventional war of indefinite duration, but is applicable to other emergencies depending upon the situation. It prescribes the operating concepts, general organization, and initial procedures for sealift operations in time of war or defense related national emergencies. This plan is a well structured basic document which describes general procedures to be followed by MARAD, as well as commercial industry, in an emergency environment. It states the responsibilities of various MARAD offices during such time and delineates the major responsibilities of these offices.

PLAN PUBLISHED--BUT NEEDS DETAILED
PROCEDURES AT OPERATING LEVELS

The MARAD Operations Plan is designed to insure a quick and orderly transition from a peacetime environment to an emergency situation. Although it is a comprehensive planning document, it does not include detailed implementation and operating plans and procedures that would be required at the office working level. For example, the Office of Ports and Intermodal Development is responsible for establishing and executing adequate control over marine containers, chassis, and shipborne barges to insure that their placement for loading conforms with specialized vessel allocations and shipping service requirements. To accomplish this task, personnel at the working level need information which will identify specific points of contact within the Department of Defense and the commercial industry. From these sources, personnel can immediately determine detailed information, such as availability of specific ships, terminal availability, sizes of marshalling areas, and sizes, types, and numbers of containers to be shipped. The plan directs all MARAD offices to "prepare to issue emergency orders and regulations" and to "prepare standard operating procedures for war and emergency operations." However, MARAD has yet to prepare standard operating procedures.

We believe that key organizational personnel from each office should be identified and that those individuals should possess a thorough knowledge of their roles and responsibilities during an emergency. The Operations Plan includes a structural outline of the emergency organization. The plan needs to be completed by defining specific positions, designating individuals to fill the positions, and training these individuals in their emergency duties. The roles and responsibilities of personnel in the emergency organization should be stated in sufficient detail to enable other staffmembers to perform the assigned functions if the designees are not available.

To achieve these objectives, we believe that MARAD should institute training programs at the office level to highlight the duties and responsibilities of these designees. The programs would enlighten the personnel as to what their actual duties would be in a particular situation, what would be expected of them, and how these objectives could be accomplished in a timely and effective manner.

In addition, to alleviate any confusion in implementing the overall Operations Plan, MARAD should place more emphasis on interface among those MARAD personnel responsible for specific functions and procedures during emergencies. For example, the Operations Plan mentions that control of seavan containers will be the responsibility of the individual carriers with which MARAD has negotiated agreements. The agreements, as drafted, rely on normal commercial procedures to control containers, including those which are carried on ships of carriers other than the owners of the containers. Commercial interchange agreements might not be sufficient to cover the wartime operational requirement. To address and possibly solve this problem, more coordination should exist between the two MARAD offices which are responsible for seavan containers, namely the Office of Ports and the Office of Domestic Shipping.

The need for detailed specific plans and procedures at the working level is, in our opinion, vitally necessary for the success of the overall plan. This detail can be a part of the plan or it can be set up in a separate document.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE
SECRETARY OF COMMERCE

We recommend that you have MARAD

- write and publish detailed implementation procedures at the working level to insure an orderly transition from a peacetime to an emergency environment,
- identify individual personnel responsible for specific emergency functions and procedures, and
- institute training programs that concentrate on the duties and responsibilities of individual members of MARAD's various offices which are involved in emergency operations.

AGENCY COMMENTS

We furnished MARAD officials a draft of our report for their review. We subsequently met and discussed the contents of the report with the Assistant Administrator for Policy and Administration; the Director, Office of Policy and Plans; and the Chief, Division of National Security Plans. These officials generally agreed with the information in the report and offered suggested changes which were incorporated into the final report. One of the changes involved the addition of language to show that MARAD, in addition to its military role, is also responsible for supporting the civil economy.

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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 would appreciate receiving a copy of these statements.

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We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget, and to the above-mentioned Committees.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "R. W. Gutmann". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

R. W. Gutmann
Director