



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

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FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND  
COMPENSATION DIVISION

MAR 21 1974

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The Honorable Howard H. Callaway  
The Secretary of the Army 20

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We have completed a survey of selected officer and enlisted skills in the military services to identify the numbers of positions authorized in each skill and the numbers of trained personnel available for assignment to those positions. In the Army, we visited Fort Meade, Maryland, and Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to inquire into skill imbalances that personnel data showed existed. We also visited the Army Military Personnel Center (AMPC), Alexandria, Virginia, to discuss personnel management in the Army. The survey was identified by our assignment code 961002.

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At Fort Meade and Fort Belvoir we found that imbalances in some skills between the numbers of personnel authorized and the numbers available to fill the requirements had existed for several months. We feel that more effective action is needed to alleviate imbalances. Our observations are summarized below.

A. Classification and transfer of personnel

At the time of our visit in October 1973, officials at Fort Belvoir were reclassifying some enlisted personnel in skills that were overmanned into skills that were undermanned, or were transferring them to other Army posts. Headquarters, Continental Army Command, gave installation commanders authority to involuntarily reclassify individuals, but said that qualifications and desires of the individual concerned would be considered in every case of involuntary reclassification.

The directive under which the reclassification program was conducted did not provide for correcting imbalances by transferring personnel in excess of an installation's needs for specific skills to activities in another command or activity where the same skills were in short supply. Apparently because of this, 15 helicopter repairmen excess to Fort Belvoir's needs were reclassified or transferred to other Army posts at the same time a tenant Army unit at Fort Belvoir, the Davison U.S. Army Airfield which is not served by Belvoir's personnel center, was projecting a need for 19 helicopter repairmen over the next 7 months.

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AMPC officials told us that the procedure for selecting an individual to fill a vacancy described in a personnel requisition includes consideration of grade, skill level, special qualifications, and availability for assignment, but that the assignment manager does not consider the comparative costs of moving the various candidates, their dependents, and their possessions from the present duty station to the location of the vacancy.

We believe these costs should be considered in view of the concern of the Army and the Congress about reducing permanent change of station costs. It appears that much of Davison Airfield's need for helicopter repairmen might have been filled by personnel excess to Fort Belvoir's need without incurring additional training and permanent change of station costs and without affecting morale.

#### Reporting of surplus personnel

Fort Meade does not always report as surplus personnel in excess of the overall strength authorized a unit as required by Army Regulation 614-200. When personnel are reported surplus they become eligible for reassignment by the AMPC. Surplus personnel who are not reported remain as hidden resources of the installation where they are located and are not available to fill requirements elsewhere. In a report dated March 10, 1972, the Army Audit Agency noted that only about 13 percent of the personnel who met the criteria for surplus reporting at Army activities included in its review of this matter had been shown on surplus reports.

Correct reporting of surplus personnel available for reassignment is essential for effective personnel management, assignment and utilization of trained personnel, and preparing realistic estimates of recruiting and training needs and permanent change of station funds.

AMPC officials told us that the Army plans to resolve this problem by developing a system for assigning personnel that will be based entirely upon centralized personnel data maintained by the Center rather than on personnel requisitions and surplus reports submitted by the installations.

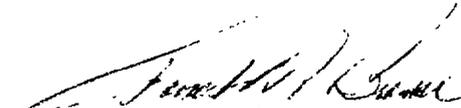
In discussing these matters with AMPC officials we learned the Army had adopted new reclassification procedures and eventually plans to simplify its personnel management procedures for reporting surplus skills. In view of this, we do not plan to make a detailed review of these matters at this time. However, we have advised you of our plans to study other aspects of the Army military personnel assignment system.

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We would appreciate receiving your comments on the matters discussed above and being advised of any further action taken or planned. We appreciate the cooperation and courtesy shown to us by Army officials during this survey. If you have any questions or desire further information, please contact Mr. Paul C. Newell, Assistant Director (Code 129, Extension 3417).

Sincerely yours,



Forrest R. Browne  
Director

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