



January 2018

NATIONAL SECURITY

Ongoing Review of the Military Selective Service Process Could Benefit from Additional Information

Accessible Version

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-226](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Military Selective Service Act established the Selective Service System whose mission, among other things, is to be prepared to provide trained and untrained manpower to DOD in the event of a national emergency when directed by the President and the Congress. In the NDAA for FY 2017, Congress included a provision requiring that DOD submit a report on the current and future need for a centralized registration system under the Military Selective Service Act. In addition, the act established a Commission to review, among other things, the military selective service process and report on it.

The act also included a provision for GAO to review DOD's procedures for evaluating selective service requirements. In this report, GAO compared the information DOD included in its report with the act's required elements and identified additional information that could benefit the Commission as it further reviews the military selective service process.

GAO reviewed DOD's report and the statutory elements and interviewed officials involved in the military selective service process to identify additional information that could benefit the Commission's ongoing review.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is not making any new recommendations. GAO believes its 2012 recommendation to DOD to periodically reevaluate its requirements for the Selective Service System, which DOD concurred with, is still valid. DOD had no additional comments on this report.

View [GAO-18-226](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

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What GAO Found

In its July 2017 report to Congress and the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (i.e., "the Commission"), the Department of Defense (DOD) provided information regarding each of the six required reporting elements contained in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017. Specifically, DOD provided information on:

1. the direct and indirect benefits of the military selective service system;
2. the functions performed by the Selective Service System that would be assumed by DOD in the absence of a national registration system;
3. the systems, manpower, and facilities needed by DOD to physically mobilize inductees in the absence of the Selective Service System;
4. the feasibility and the utility of eliminating the focus on the mass mobilization of primarily combat troops in favor of a system that focuses on the mobilization of military occupational specialties, and the extent to which such a change would impact the need for both male and female inductees;
5. DOD's personnel needs in the event of an emergency requiring mass mobilization; an analysis of any additional critical skills that would be needed in the event of a national emergency; and a timeline for when DOD would require the first inductees to report for service; and
6. a list of the assumptions used by DOD to conduct its analysis.

GAO identified additional information that may benefit the Commission's ongoing evaluation of the military selective service process. The fifth required reporting element required DOD to analyze its personnel needs in the event of an emergency requiring mass mobilization and a timeline for obtaining these inductees. In response, DOD provided the personnel requirements and timeline that were developed in 1994 and that have not been updated since. DOD officials stated that they did not conduct additional analysis to update these requirements because the all-volunteer force is of adequate size and composition to meet DOD's personnel needs. In 2012, GAO recommended that DOD establish a process to periodically reevaluate DOD's requirements for the Selective Service System. Although DOD concurred with this recommendation, it has not yet implemented it. GAO believes this recommendation is still valid. Having updated DOD Selective Service System requirements and timelines for a potential draft may be useful in supporting the ongoing evaluation of the military selective service process by the Commission.

Further, military service officials told GAO that their perspectives on how selective service processes that could affect them had not been solicited in the preparation of DOD's report. Since the military services are to receive, train and integrate the inductees; provide support to the Selective Service System during a national emergency; and could help identify critical skill sets needed to meet emerging demands and the impact a draft could have on meeting those demands, the military service officials' perspectives could be useful to the Commission. DOD officials stated that they are currently collecting these perspectives and plan to provide this information to the Commission.

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Abbreviations

DOD	Department of Defense
FY	Fiscal Year
NDA	National Defense Authorization Act

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January 10, 2018

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

The Military Selective Service Act established the Selective Service System whose mission, among other things, is to be prepared to provide trained and untrained manpower to the Department of Defense (DOD) in the event of a national emergency when directed by the President and the Congress.¹ The Selective Service System, an independent executive branch agency with a budget of about \$25 million, maintains a registration database of individuals who could be drafted into the service of our nation, if needed, in the event of a national emergency.

In 2012, we reported on the military necessity of the Selective Service System and examined alternatives to its current structure.² We found that because of DOD's reliance and emphasis on using the all-volunteer force, DOD had not reevaluated requirements for the Selective Service System since 1994, even though the national security environment had changed significantly since that time. In our report, we recommended that DOD (1) evaluate DOD's requirements for the Selective Service System in light of recent strategic guidance and report the results to Congress; and (2) establish a process of periodically reevaluating DOD's requirements for

¹Military Selective Service Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3801-3820. Since 1973, the United States has relied on an all-volunteer force comprising active duty, reserve, and National Guard personnel and has not used the draft to meet the nation's military manpower requirements.

²GAO, *National Security: DOD Should Reevaluate Requirements for the Selective Service System*, [GAO-12-623](#) (Washington, D.C.: June 7, 2012).

the Selective Service System in light of changing threats, operating environments, and strategic guidance. DOD concurred with these recommendations and in response implemented the first recommendation in February 2013. At that time, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management reported that it had reevaluated the mission and military necessity for the Selective Service System and concluded that the all-volunteer force was of adequate size and composition to meet the department's demands, and that there were no operational plans that envision mobilization at a level that would require conscription.³ Additionally, the reevaluation showed that although there was no longer an immediate "military" necessity for the Selective Service System, there continued to be a "national" necessity for it because it provides the structure that would allow the military services to more rapidly increase their size if that became necessary. As of November 2017, DOD had not implemented our second recommendation, as discussed later in this report.

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 established the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (the "Commission") to, among other things, review the military selective service process.⁴ Composed of 11 members, the Commission is to submit a report to the President and Congress no later than 30 months after its establishment date on its findings, conclusions, and recommendations regarding the need for a military selective service process and a means by which to foster a greater propensity to serve among U.S. youth, among other things. To inform the Commission's efforts, the NDAA for FY 2017 also included a provision that the Secretary of Defense report to Congress and the Commission on the current and future need for a centralized registration system under the Military Selective Service Act. Specifically, DOD's report was to address six elements related to the Selective Service System process. DOD submitted its report to Congress and the Commission in July 2017.⁵

The NDAA for FY 2017 also included a provision for us to review DOD's procedures for evaluating selective service requirements. Specifically, we compared the information that DOD included in its report with the act's six

³Conscription is mandatory military service and is also called "the draft."

⁴Pub. L. No. 114-328, §§ 551-557 (2016).

⁵DOD, *Report on the Purpose and Utility of a Registration System for Military Selective Service* (July 2017).

required reporting elements and identified additional information that could benefit the Commission in its ongoing review of the military selective service process.

To address our objective, we compared the six reporting elements required by the NDAA for FY 2017 with the report DOD produced to meet the congressional mandate. We also discussed with officials within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, who developed the report, what information they used and what analysis they performed to support their responses to each of the required reporting elements. Additionally, we examined documentary evidence cited in the report or that was provided by officials. Further, we interviewed officials with whom the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs consulted to prepare the report. Specifically, we met with officials from the Office of the Deputy General Counsel for Personnel and Health Policy, the Joint Advertising and Market Research Service, the Joint Staff, the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command, and the Selective Service System and discussed the extent and nature of the information they provided and their involvement in the development of the report. We also reviewed documents, such as selected instructions, regulations, and memorandums.

To identify any additional information that could benefit the Commission in its ongoing review of the military selective service process, we spoke with officials in organizations responsible for operating and maintaining the selective service process, as well as those that would be involved in any mass mobilization if a draft were utilized, to discuss topics that they thought the report had not addressed. Further, we spoke with personnel officials from the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Marine Corps to obtain their assessment of DOD's report and their insights into the selective service and mass mobilization processes. We also reviewed a previously issued GAO report regarding the Selective Service System and related documents to determine whether DOD had implemented all applicable recommendations.⁶ Finally, we interviewed the Chair and the two Vice-Chairs of the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service to obtain their perspectives on DOD's report.

⁶[GAO-12-623](#).

We conducted this performance audit from June 2017 to January 2018 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Background

The Military Selective Service Act established the Selective Service System whose mission is to be prepared to provide trained and untrained manpower to DOD in the event of a national emergency when directed by the President and the Congress. Additionally, the Selective Service System is to be prepared to implement an alternative service program within the civilian community for registrants classified as conscientious objectors during a draft. The Selective Service System is an independent agency, and it maintains a database that includes the names, birthdates, social security numbers, and mailing addresses of men ages 18 through 25 who could be drafted into the service of our nation, if needed, in the event of a national emergency. Further, the Selective Service System also is to conduct peacetime activities, such as public registration awareness and outreach; responding to public inquiries about registration requirements; and providing training and support to its workforce of career, non-career, full-time and part-time employees, uncompensated employees, and selected military personnel.

The Military Selective Service Act does not currently authorize the use of a draft for the induction of persons into the armed forces. In order to meet a national emergency requiring a mass mobilization, Congress and the President would be required to enact a law authorizing a draft to supplement the existing force with additional military manpower. In the event of a draft, the regulation governing the Military Entrance Processing Stations would have the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, with input from the military services, provide the Director of the Selective Service System with the number of personnel needed to be drafted.⁷ The Selective Service System would then conduct a lottery and

⁷Army Regulation 601-270, Chief Naval Operations Instruction 1100.4 CH 1, Marine Corps Order 1100.75F, and Coast Guard Commandant Instruction M 1100.2E, *Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS)* (Mar. 23, 2007) (incorporating Rapid Action Revision, Sept. 13, 2011).

send induction notices to selected draftees to supply the personnel requested by the Secretary of Defense. Each draftee would be required to report to one of DOD's 65 Military Entrance Processing Stations throughout the country at a specific time and date to undergo assessments of their aptitude, character, and medical qualifications in order to determine whether they are fit for military service based on standards set by each military service. Fully qualified draftees would receive induction orders and would be transported from one of the Military Entrance Processing Stations to the appropriate military service's entry-level training location. According to DOD, the Selective Service System must deliver the first inductees within 193 days from when the President and the Congress authorize a draft, and the military services then are to train, equip, and accommodate in other ways the new inductees.

The military services are generally smaller today than they have been in many years.⁸ In fiscal year 2003, for example, DOD's total active military end strength was approximately 1.5 million, while in fiscal year 2017 the number was 1.38 million. Additionally, DOD's total workforce mix has also changed. For example, in late 2003 DOD directed the military services to convert certain military positions to federal civilian or contract positions based on evaluations that showed that many military personnel were being used to accomplish work that was not military essential and that civilians could often perform these tasks in a more efficient and cost-effective manner than military personnel.⁹ In May 2013, we reported that DOD officials stated that about 50,000 military positions were converted to DOD federal civilian positions or to contractors since fiscal year 2004 in order to devote more military positions to the support of ongoing military operations.¹⁰

⁸Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)/ Chief Financial Officer, *Request for Additional FY 2017 Appropriations* (Mar. 16, 2017).

⁹The DOD civilian workforce completes tasks such as fixing DOD weapons, operating the department's training ranges, and managing DOD bases. DOD civilians provide health care for military personnel and teach their children. They also provide mission essential logistics support and maintenance, as well as serve as civilian experts in theaters of operations. GAO, *Human Capital: Additional Steps Needed to Help Determine the Right Size and Composition of DOD's Total Workforce*, [GAO-13-470](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 29, 2013) and *Military Personnel: Military Departments Need to Ensure that Full Costs for Converting Military Health Care Positions to Civilian Positions Are Reported to Congress*, [GAO-06-642](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 1, 2006).

¹⁰[GAO-13-470](#).

Under current law, women may serve voluntarily in the armed forces but are not required to register with the Selective Service System.¹¹ In the 1981 case of *Rostker v. Goldberg*, the Supreme Court of the United States upheld the constitutionality of our nation's practice of registering only men.¹² Recognizing the purpose of registration was to prepare for a draft of combat troops and since women were excluded from combat, the Supreme Court ruled that Congress could exclude women from registration. DOD gradually began to eliminate prohibitions on the assignment of women to direct ground combat positions and on January 24, 2013,¹³ the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff rescinded a 1994 rule preventing women from serving in direct ground-combat positions¹⁴ and directed the military services to open all closed positions and occupations to women by January 1, 2016. In December 2015, the Secretary of Defense announced that all military occupational specialties were open to women and removed all final restrictions on the service of women in combat. As part of the congressional notification process when DOD decided to open previously-closed positions and occupations to women, the department was required to provide a detailed legal analysis of the implications of the proposed change with respect to the constitutionality of the Military Selective Service Act to men only.¹⁵ DOD's July 2017 report on the purpose and utility of a registration system for military selective service stated that in December 2015, DOD advised Congress that the opening of all positions and occupations to women "further alters the factual backdrop" to the Supreme Court's ruling on a challenge to the exemption of women from selective service registration. However, the report stated that DOD took no further stance on the legal issues raised by the then-Secretary of

¹¹Military Selective Service Act, 50 U.S.C. §§ 3801-3820.

¹²*Rostker v. Goldberg*, 453 U.S. 57 (1981).

¹³Secretary of Defense and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Memorandum, *Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (Jan. 24, 2013). This memorandum requires that the integration of women into newly opened positions and units occur as expeditiously as possible, considering good order and judicious use of fiscal resources, but must be completed no later than January 1, 2016.

¹⁴Secretary of Defense Memorandum, *Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule* (Jan. 13, 1994) prohibited the assignment of women to positions in units below the brigade level whose primary mission is to engage in direct combat on the ground. The memorandum permitted additional restrictions on several additional bases, and allowed the services to propose further restrictions on the assignment of women, together with justification for those proposed restrictions.

¹⁵10 U.S.C. § 652.

Defense's decision to open all military positions to women. Further, DOD stated that it would consult with the Department of Justice as appropriate regarding these issues.¹⁶

DOD Included Information on the Six Required Reporting Elements but Additional Information May Benefit the Commission's Ongoing Review

DOD Included Information on the Six Required Reporting Elements in Its Report

DOD included information on each of the six required reporting elements in its July 2017 report to Congress and the Commission on the purpose and utility of a registration system for military selective service, as shown in table 1. In preparing the report, officials within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs stated that they coordinated and consulted with subject matter experts at the Selective Service System and the Joint Staff as well as with officials from selected organizations within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, including the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command. Further, the DOD report references internal DOD documents, a policy publication from the Congressional Research Service regarding Selective Service issues,¹⁷ statements from former DOD executives, and publications from contributing authors on web-based foreign policy and national security discussion sites for additional support.

¹⁶In July 2015, we reported that the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness had not developed plans for a mechanism or process to monitor long-term progress in the military services' efforts to integrate women into the newly opened positions and occupations. We recommended DOD establish such a plan to monitor the integration progress after January 2016. DOD concurred with our recommendation and required the Secretary of each military department and the Commander, United States Special Operations Command, to conduct an annual assessment on the full integration of women in their organizations. GAO, *Military Personnel: DOD Is Expanding Combat Service Opportunities for Women, but Should Monitor Long-Term Integration Progress*, [GAO-15-589](#) (Washington, D.C.: July 20, 2015).

¹⁷Congressional Research Service, *The Selective Service System and Draft Registration: Issues for Congress*, January 23, 2017.

Table 1: Information the Department of Defense (DOD) Provided in Its July 2017 Report on the Purpose and Utility of a Registration System for Military Selective Service

Element required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017	Selected information DOD provided regarding the required element
<p>1. A detailed analysis of the current benefits derived, both directly and indirectly, from the military selective service system, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the extent to which mandatory registration benefits military recruiting; b. the extent to which a national registration capability serves as a deterrent to potential enemies of the United States; and, c. the extent to which expanding registration to include women would impact these benefits. 	<p>DOD identified the following direct benefits based on its analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Selective Service System and the registration database provide the structure to support a mass mobilization of the nation's population that can rapidly increase the size of the nation's military forces. • Each month, the Selective Service System provides DOD with the names, addresses, and dates of birth of all new registrants that DOD uses for recruiting purposes. In addition, the Selective Service System sends every man who registers with the Selective Service System an acknowledgement letter that includes a card encouraging young men to consider joining the military. The report states that this card generates approximately 75,000-85,000 recruiting leads per year. • Expanding registration to include women doubles the size of the pool the Selective Service System could pull from in the event of an actual draft and the number of names, addresses, and dates of birth of new registrants that DOD uses to contact potential recruits. Further, the registration of women would promote fairness and equity in that no segment of the population from ages 18 through 25 would be exempt from the draft. <p>DOD identified the following indirect benefits based on its analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration reminds youth of the United States of the importance of military, national, and public service and the voluntary act of registration is an opportunity for young men to deliberately consider a future of military service. In addition, military selective service is a critical link between the all-volunteer force and society. • Maintaining military selective service sends a strong signal to potential adversaries that the United States is willing to draw on the full depth and breadth of its national resources if necessary to wage war. • Including women in the registration would expand emphasis on military, national, and public service to all of the youth of the United States, reminding both men and women that service is a key tenet of citizenship. In addition, since military selective service is a critical link between the all-volunteer force and society, registering all young people between the ages of 18 and 25 for selective service, without regard to gender, would further conjoin the interests of the U.S. citizens and the military. Finally, registering women would signal to allies and potential enemies, an enhanced resolve to defend the United States and its partners, through the commitment of all U.S. citizens.
<p>2. An analysis of the functions currently performed by the Selective Service System that would be assumed by DOD in the absence of a national registration capability.</p>	<p>DOD identified the following functions currently performed by the Selective Service System that the department would have to assume:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a multi-pronged public outreach and awareness effort to educate and inform young men about the importance of Selective Service registration and promote compliance with the legal registration requirement. • Administer and manage all means and methods of Selective Service registration. • Administer and manage the databases of all Selective Service registrants. • Respond to inquiries from registrants, the public, Congress, and the media about the Selective Service System registration process.

Element required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017	Selected information DOD provided regarding the required element
<p>3. An analysis of the systems, manpower, and facilities DOD would need to physically mobilize inductees in the absence of the Selective Service System.</p>	<p>DOD identified the following systems, manpower, and facilities currently used by the Selective Service System that the department would need to mobilize inductees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For systems, DOD would need to inherit or replicate the capabilities of existing Selective Service systems, inclusive of the current public website and specialized information technology systems and databases. • For manpower, DOD stated that it would follow the Selective Service System's plans and, in the event of a mass mobilization, DOD would recruit, train, and sustain more than 500 Reserve Force Officers, 1,500 military retirees recalled to duty, 700 state resource volunteers, and 6,500 newly hired federal employees to support the execution of the draft. • For facilities, DOD would assume responsibility for managing the facilities housing the Selective Service System's national headquarters and three regional headquarters, 56 state headquarters established at designated National Guard armories, 436 area offices that would operate from selected recruiting station offices across the United States, and 48 alternative service offices co-located with designated area offices to administer the Alternative Service Program for conscientious objectors. DOD would also need to provide facilities for each of the 2,069 local boards, the 96 District Appeals Boards, and the National Appeals Board.
<p>4. An analysis of the feasibility and the utility of eliminating the current focus on mass mobilization of primarily combat troops in favor of a system that focuses on the mobilization of all military occupational specialties, and the extent to which such a change would impact the need for both male and female inductees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOD stated that structuring a mobilization process to target and identify those with unique skills and capabilities relevant to the crisis at hand has merit. DOD acknowledged that a targeted draft focusing on specific skills would be feasible but would add significant complexity to the registration and mobilization process. • DOD stated that a targeted draft in a future war would presumptively focus on highly technical skills in short supply in the labor market as a whole. The percentage of individuals qualified in such skills is unlikely to vary as much by gender as they do for combat military occupation specialties. Accordingly, targeting a draft to only 50 percent of the available population (i.e., young men) would severely limit the success of a targeted draft to find the needed technical skills. • DOD stated that a targeted draft may prove an inefficient use of high-value labor, indiscriminately compelling employment in the military regardless of the fact that even in the context of a national emergency, the individual could have much greater value to our society elsewhere. • DOD listed several methods of how a targeted draft may be attempted including modeling it after the Health Care Professional Delivery System that was developed to be used to draft health care personnel in a crisis.

Element required by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017	Selected information DOD provided regarding the required element
<p>5. A detailed analysis of DOD’s personnel needs in the event of an emergency requiring mass mobilization, including:</p> <p>a. detailed timeline, along with the factors considered in arriving at the timeline, of when DOD would require</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. the first inductees to report for service; ii. the first 100,000 inductees to report for service; and iii. the first medical personnel to report for service; and <p>b. an analysis of any additional critical skills that would be needed in the event of a national emergency and a timeline for when DOD would require the first inductees to report for service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to DOD, there are no operational plans that envision mobilization at a level that would require a draft. DOD’s report states that in 2013 it found that the all-volunteer force is currently of adequate size to meet the department’s needs but stated that the Selective Service System’s registration database represents a vast pool of people with capabilities ready to be called on to meet the requirements of a future conflict, the demands of which they cannot predict. • DOD provides a timeline that requires the first inductees to report for service on day 193, the first 100,000 inductees to report for service by day 210, and the first medical personnel to report for service by day 222. • DOD identified some potential critical positions and skills it could possibly need such as cyber specialists, drone operators, technical and scientific experts, linguists, fuel distribution, road and rail logistics, water purification, policing, and physical security.
<p>6. A list of the assumptions used by the department when conducting its analysis in preparing the report.</p>	<p>DOD listed six assumptions used to prepare its report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DOD defined “mass mobilization” as the activation of a military draft. • Any mass mobilization would be properly authorized by law and appropriately resourced. • DOD would be able to receive and process 18,000 registrants per day through the various Military Entrance Processing Stations. • The Selective Service System would adjust its database of eligible draftees to exclude people who have already joined one of the military services and add those who were discharged from military service but still eligible to be drafted. • The individual military services would be responsible for reviewing the credentials of any health care personnel inducted. • Lead time permitting, the Selective Service System will first use a two-step examination and induction process for both general and health care registrants where only those deemed qualified for military service would be subsequently ordered for induction. Given insufficient lead time, however, the Selective Service System would employ the one-step process and then shift to a two-step process, as time and the number of inductees permit. With the “one-step” process, Selective Service System would deliver a fixed number of registrants daily to each Military Entrance Processing Station for a qualification assessment followed by their immediate departure to the military services for training.^a

Source: GAO analysis of section 552 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 and of Department of Defense (DOD) information. | GAO-18-226

^aAccording to DOD’s report, DOD’s past practice and current plans call for either a one-step process for processing Selective Service registrants or a two-step process. In the one-step process, the registrants report to the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Stations, are examined and tested, and those that meet qualifications are inducted into their respective military service and sent to military training. With the two-step process, the registrants return home after their examination and testing is completed to await induction into the military services at a later date, as determined by the Selective Service System and the respective military service.

Additional Information May Be Useful for the Commission's Ongoing Review of the Military Selective Service Process

While DOD included information on the six required reporting elements in its report, we identified additional information that may be useful in supporting the ongoing review of the military selective service process by the Commission. Specifically, based on our review of DOD's report and our prior work, the Commission could benefit from additional information on (1) DOD's requirements and timelines for the induction of individuals into the military services who are selected through a draft, and (2) the perspectives of the military services on the military selective service processes.

First, one of the six required reporting elements in the NDAA for FY 2017 required DOD to provide a detailed analysis of its personnel needs in the event of an emergency requiring a mass mobilization, along with a timeline for obtaining these inductees. In response, DOD provided the personnel requirements and a timeline that was developed in 1994 and that have not been updated since. These requirements state that, in the event of a draft, the first inductees are to report to a Military Entrance Processing Station in 193 days and the first 100,000 inductees would report for service in 210 days. DOD's report states that the all-volunteer force is of adequate size and composition to meet DOD's personnel needs and it has no operational plans that envision mobilization at a level that would require a draft. Officials stated that the personnel requirements and timeline developed in 1994 are still considered realistic. Thus, they did not conduct any additional analysis to update the plans, personnel requirements, or timelines for responding to an emergency requiring mass mobilization. Further, they said that they were limited in the amount of time that they were given to respond to the congressional mandate and that they believed it would be most helpful to produce a report that provided basic information that could serve as a starting point for the Commission to begin a more in-depth review of the military selective service process. As previously discussed, in 2012, we reported that changes in the national security environment require DOD and the services to reassess their force structure requirements, including how many and what types of units are necessary to carry out the national defense strategy.¹⁸ We reported that these changes represented

¹⁸[GAO-12-623](#).

junctions at which DOD could systematically reevaluate service personnel levels to determine whether they are consistent with strategic objectives. As such, we recommended that DOD establish a process of periodically reevaluating DOD's requirements for the Selective Service System in light of changing operating environments, threats, and strategic guidance. Since DOD did not perform additional analysis to reevaluate its requirements or timelines for obtaining inductees to respond to this mandate and the most recent requirements were determined based on assumptions developed in 1994, we continue to believe our 2012 recommendation is valid. An updated analysis would also benefit the Commission by informing their study and recommendations.

Second, the military service officials that we met with told us that their perspectives on the selective service processes that would affect them had not been solicited in the preparation of DOD's report. For example, while the military services are responsible for training inductees upon their mobilization and integrating them into the force, service officials expressed concerns to us regarding whether, for example, they would have the training facilities, uniforms or funding to receive, train, equip, and integrate a large influx of inductees in the event of a draft. Additionally, the services are expected to provide support to the Selective Service System during a national emergency. A 1997 memorandum of understanding between the Selective Service System and DOD indicates, among other things, that the Department of the Army will provide 1,500 enlisted Army retirees to augment the Selective Service System within 72 hours after a draft is initiated. According to officials within the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness-Military Personnel Policy, this memorandum of understanding was reviewed and revalidated in 2014. However, Army officials told us that they believed some of their service-specific procedures might require updates identifying individuals to augment the Selective Service System's staff, especially the retired personnel that would need to be recalled to duty. They thought it would be beneficial for officials within the Office of the Secretary of Defense to conduct a thorough, top-down review, and lead an update of service instructions related to supporting a draft to ensure the services are prepared to provide their share of personnel if needed. These Army officials said, however, that their higher Army headquarters saw no operational reason to review their policies and procedures related to mass mobilization given that DOD has no operational plans that envision mobilization at a level that would require a draft.

As discussed previously in this report, DOD's workforce mix has been changing. For example, over the last decade, the use of unmanned aerial

systems¹⁹ has emerged as an integral part of warfighting operations and the demand for their use has outpaced the Air Force's ability to produce pilots to operate them.²⁰ Additionally, each of the services has reported critical skill gaps in such areas as various military medical specialties. Further, challenges exist in identifying cyber capabilities of all National Guard units, as required by law, which could be used for the support of a cyber-related emergency.²¹ Officials from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness-Military Personnel Policy stated that critical skills identified as necessary today may not be the critical skills needed in future crises. Additionally, they said that creating and maintaining tools, such as databases of individuals with these needed critical skills, is costly and may become outdated quickly. We agree that the requirements for critical skills will evolve over time; however, any discussion of a draft using the selective service process—as presented in DOD's July 2017 report—that focuses on specific military occupational specialties would benefit from the perspectives and input of officials from the military services and the impact a draft may have on meeting those demands. Specifically, these officials would be helpful in identifying the needed critical skill sets for their emerging mission demands and the impact a draft may have on meeting those demands.

DOD officials within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs stated that they are currently collecting the perspectives of the military services on the selective service process and plan to provide this information to the Commission. DOD officials

¹⁹DOD defines "unmanned aircraft systems" as systems whose components include the necessary equipment, networks, and personnel to control unmanned aircraft—that is, aircraft that do not carry human operators and are capable of flight under remote control or autonomous programming. See Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub.3-30, *Command and Control of Joint Air Operations* (Feb.10, 2014).

²⁰GAO, *Unmanned Aerial Systems: Air Force and Army Should Improve Strategic Human Capital Planning for Pilot Workforces*, [GAO-17-53](#) (Washington, D.C., Jan. 31, 2017); *Unmanned Aerial Systems: Actions Needed to Improve DOD Pilot Training*, [GAO-15-461](#) (Washington, D.C.: May 14, 2015); and *Air Force: Actions Needed to Strengthen Management of Unmanned Aerial System Pilots*, [GAO-14-316](#) (Washington, D.C.: Apr. 10, 2014).

²¹DOD is required to maintain a database of emergency response capabilities that includes (1) the types of emergency response capabilities that each state's National Guard, as reported by the states, may be able to provide in response to a domestic natural or manmade disaster, both to their home states and under state-to-state mutual assistance agreements; and (2) the types of emergency response capabilities and an identification of the units that DOD may be able to provide during national emergencies. Pub. L. No. 109-364, §1406(1) (2006) 10 U.S.C. § 113 (note).

explained that they did not incorporate information from the military services into their report because DOD's involvement in any potential decision to initiate and implement a draft is mostly centralized within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, not within the individual military services. They further stated that information regarding the level of additional personnel that would be needed using a draft in the event of a national emergency comes from the war plans that are developed and maintained by the Joint Staff. Additionally, they said that they primarily produced a report that characterized the overall processes and was a factual account of how DOD interacts with various aspects of the Selective Service System.

Another provision within the NDAA for FY 2017 required the Secretary of Defense and other Cabinet-level government officials, along with any experts designated by the President, to submit to the Commission and Congress recommendations for the reform of the military selective service process not later than 7 months after the Commission's establishment date.²² To accomplish this, officials from the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs said that they initially developed a questionnaire on which the Commission provided feedback. These officials stated that they sent it to 18 organizations, including the Cabinet positions listed in the act and to additional organizations that were recommended by the National Security Council or that had some role or responsibility in the event of a draft. In order to produce the Secretary of Defense's submission, these officials further stated that they requested each of the military services and the Joint Staff to complete the questionnaire by November 2017. Further, these officials viewed the questionnaire as an opportunity for the respondents—the military services in the case of DOD—to provide their ideas regarding military selective service processes, both current and future.

²²Pub. L. No. 114-328, § 555(d) (2016) required the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Secretary of Labor, and such other Government officials, and such experts, as the President shall designate, to transmit to the Commission on Military, National, and Public Service and Congress their recommendations for the reform of the military selective service process and military, national, and public service in connection with that process.

Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DOD for review and comment. In an email, the Director of Accession Policy within the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy stated that the military services concurred with the report and DOD had no additional comments.

We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees; the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service; the Secretary of Defense; the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; the Commander, U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command; the Secretaries of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; the Commandant of the Marine Corps; and the Director, Selective Service System. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact me at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov. Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. GAO staff who made key contributions to this report are listed in appendix I.



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Appendix I: GAO Contact and Staff Acknowledgments

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Staff Acknowledgments

In addition to the contact named above, Kimberly Seay, Assistant Director; Rebecca Beale; Vincent Buquicchio; Mae Jones; Kevin Keith; Jordan Mettica; and Amber Sinclair made key contributions to this report.

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