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REPORT BY THE U.S.

# General Accounting Office

9126

## Improvements Can Be Made In The Management Of Naval Recruit Training

### San Diego Naval Training Center

The length, content, and effectiveness of Navy's recruit training program has been the subject of frequent debate in recent years.

GAO believes that these debates will not be resolved until the Navy better defines its recruit training goals in measurable terms and relates the contribution of each aspect of its program to these goals. This will require more systematic feedback from the fleet on the required and actual performance of recruit training graduates.

This report discusses these and other issues related to the management of Navy recruit training.



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*Report*  
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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND  
COMPENSATION DIVISION

B-175773

The Honorable Thomas J. Downey  
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Downey:

Your letter dated January 9, 1978, asked us to review the efficiency and effectiveness of naval recruit training at the San Diego Naval Training Center. The results of our review are contained in the appendix. They relate to the

*involved in the following problem areas:*

- lack of recruit training effectiveness assessment (see p. 2);
- opportunities to reduce training length (see p. 5);
- need for greater curriculum standardization (see p. 6);
- opportunities to use skill training to reinforce recruit training goals (see p. 8);
- use of special recruit units, such as drum and bugle corps, drill teams, etc. (see p. 10); and
- unexplained differences in recruit training time (see p. 12).

[ Our review was done predominately at the Naval Recruit Training Center in San Diego, California; however, we did visit the other two centers at Great Lakes, Illinois, and Orlando, Florida. Studies were examined and recruits were observed during the training cycle from inprocessing through graduation. We also held discussions with officials at the recruit centers; the skill training schools in San Diego; the Naval Technical Training Command, Millington, Tennessee; and the Naval Training and Education Command, Pensacola, Florida. ]

Based on our review results, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Navy to move expeditiously to

- restate recruit training goals in terms which can be measured, with input from the fleet;
- establish a more systematic feedback system from the fleet on the required and actual performance of recruit graduates;
- reevaluate, using the restated training goals and fleet input, the length and content of the Navy's recruit training program;
- provide greater management oversight to assure optimum standardization of the training program curriculum and testing procedures or provide more centralized management of the program;
- review the need for special recruit units and the reasons for variances in recruit training delay times among the three training centers; and
- find out the reason and justification for the differences in average training time among the three training centers.

We also recommend that the Secretary of Defense review the applicability of these issues to the other services, particularly the need for more explicit training goals and an improved feedback system from operational units on the requirements for and performance of recruit graduates.

As requested by your office, we did not obtain formal comments from Navy officials. However, at the completion of our review, we did discuss our findings with the Commander, San Diego Recruit Training Center, and Navy Headquarters officials and have incorporated their views where appropriate. Because this report contains recommendations to the Secretary of Defense, we are forwarding a copy of this report to him and to the Secretary of the Navy.

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 pursuant to our recommendations to the House Committee on Government Operations and the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs not

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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.

As arranged with your office, we are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Chairmen, House and Senate Committees on Appropriations and Armed Services; the Chairmen, House Committee on Government Operations and Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs; and the Secretaries of Defense and the Navy. Copies will also be made available to other parties upon request, beginning on the report date.

Sincerely yours,

*H. L. Krieger*

H. L. Krieger  
Director



INTRODUCTION

The Navy Recruit Training program is the largest single-purpose training program in the Navy, costing an estimated \$150 million in fiscal year 1979, with approximately 80,000 individuals receiving basic introductory and indoctrination training.

The Navy's recruit training program goals, as stated by the three centers, are to (1) effect a smooth transition from civilian to Navy life, (2) promote the dignity of the individual, (3) inculcate an understanding and appreciation of the fundamental workings of democracy and the Navy's place in the Democracy, (4) develop a desire for self-improvement and advancement, (5) promote high standards of responsibility, (6) provide knowledge and skills to enable the recruit to be of early usefulness to the Navy, (7) develop an understanding and observation of naval customs and traditions, (8) stress pride in self and in the Navy, and (9) provide the Navy with personnel possessing an effective level of physical fitness.

Recruit training is also a very critical period in which the Navy has a chance to observe the performance of recruits and decide whether they will be retained. During fiscal year 1978, the number of recruits entering and leaving from each of the centers was as follows:

<u>Training center</u>	<u>Number entering training</u>	<u>Number leaving</u>	<u>Percentage attrition</u>
Great Lakes	29,700	3,700	11.98
Orlando (note a)	29,300	3,300	11.17
San Diego	<u>24,600</u>	<u>3,000</u>	11.45
Total	<u>83,600</u>	<u>10,000</u>	11.54

a/Includes 5,900 females entering training and 600 leaving.

The Chief of Naval Education and Training has overall responsibility for naval training, including recruit training, and is primarily involved with the formulation of training policy. The Chief of Naval Technical Training reports to the Chief of Naval Education and Training and is charged with the day-to-day operation of Navy schools, including the development and implementation of the recruit training curriculum. The Naval Training Centers, although not directly involved in the training of recruits, exercise administrative and

fiscal authority over the recruit training centers. The recruit training centers are directly responsible for the day-to-day training of recruits.

LACK OF RECRUIT TRAINING  
EFFECTIVENESS ASSESSMENT

Vital to an efficient and effective training program are clear and measurable training goals based on user needs and a systematic feedback system from users on the performance of training program graduates. If measurable training goals are established, the interrelationships of training subject matter material and goals can be defined and appropriate levels of training determined. Systematic feedback on performance of graduates provides a measurement of the program's effectiveness.

Because the Navy's recruit training goals are not stated in measurable terms and because of the lack of systematic feedback from the fleet on their needs and on the performance of recruit graduates, we were unable to assess the overall effectiveness of the Navy's current program or the effect of curriculum changes on the quality of the output. It is also this difficulty in objectively relating what is being taught to clearly defined and measurable training goals and to the performance of graduates in the fleet which has prevented the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Navy from objectively evaluating and justifying their program. This has been the primary factor leading to the frequent debates among the services, DOD, and the Congress over the appropriate length, content, and effectiveness of recruit training and has contributed to the instability of the Navy recruit training program over the years; it has been modified 14 times in the last 13 years, as shown on the following page.



Changes to Length of Recruit Training

	Course length (weeks)	Amount of change (weeks)
Before August 1965	9.0	
August 1965	7.0	-2.0
January 1966	8.0	+1.0
February 1966	9.5	+1.5
December 1968	8.0	-1.5
May 1969	9.0	+1.0
September 1969	10.0	+1.0
July 1970	11.0	+1.0
March 1971	9.0	-2.0
June 1972	7.0	-2.0
October 1972	7.4	+.4
January 1973	7.6	+.2
September 1973	9.0	+1.4
February 1977	8.0	-1.0
October 1978	7.7	-.3

Until the Navy can better define its training goals in measurable terms and develops a systematic process to relate each aspect of its training program, individually and collectively, to these goals and fleet needs, the length, content, and effectiveness of recruit training will continue to be subject to debate, changes will be expected, and budgets will be approved on less than adequately objective bases.

This issue is not a new one. In May 1976, a Navy study group reported that the Navy's training goals

"\* \* \* are not explicit enough to provide the necessary guidance to the training community for understanding and conducting recruit training. They do not provide sufficient specification of desired behaviors to permit management to determine priorities to be accomplished or to measure the degree of accomplishment."

The report also found that

"\* \* \* discrepancies exist between fleet-stated requirements and the perceived capability of the recruit graduates,"

in terms of

"\* \* \*lack of discipline, poor personal hygiene, lack of responsibility, and being dangerous to self and others from a safety standpoint."

The study report stated that the present training system would not provide an adequately prepared sailor for the future Navy.

The ability to relate, to the maximum degree possible, the recruit training program to explicit, measurable training goals which are based on an accurate reflection of fleet needs is particularly important in an environment where fleet needs are changing. The advances in technology, as well as changing social values which have taken place and are expected over the next decade, will likely have a major effect on the individuals and skills required by the Navy and, consequently, greatly influence training. The training system must be responsive to these changes. The recent Navy study seems to sum up the point well. It stated that "traditional recruit training, valid during the post-World War II era, will not meet the changing environment." As a result,

"Both content and methods of instruction must be redesigned, updated, and modified in order to integrate the changes in technology and attitudes occurring in both the civilian society and in the Navy."

Navy training officials have stated that a systematic and structured feedback system has not been developed because of the difficulty in obtaining substantive feedback from operational units on both recruit training objectives and on recruit performance. We recognize that these requirements will impose some additional administrative burden on the fleet, but, without it, a valid assessment of recruit training effectiveness cannot be made.

Therefore, we believe that a major concern of DOD and the Navy should be to achieve, to the maximum degree possible, objective measurements of how each aspect of its recruit training programs contribute to its training goals and to fleet needs. This will require a more continuous and systematic feedback from the fleet on the required and actual performance of graduate recruits, and it will require the statement of training goals in terms which can be measured.

REDUCED TRAINING LENGTH

Last year DOD again proposed reductions in the length and content of recruit training for all the services. For the Navy, the proposed reduction was from 8.0 weeks to 6.7 weeks by eliminating ship service week and 2 days of other recruit training time. The Navy and congressional committees, however, were opposed to the reduction in ship service week because it would result in

- a shorter time to observe trainees to identify marginal recruits for remedial action or separation,
- insufficient time for the recruit to make a smooth transition from civilian to military life, and
- increased on-the-job training in operational units already underdermanned.

The Navy retained the ship service week and accepted a reduction of 2 days to 7.7 weeks. While one can debate how much the retention of ship service week (1) contributes to a smoother transition to military life, (2) provides needed training relating to recruit training goals, or (3) provides needed time to observe recruits, we are not convinced that this additional time is needed for all recruits. There already is provision for providing more than the minimum 7.7 weeks to those who need it. In fact, most recruits take longer to go through training. Eighty percent receive more than 8 weeks, 32 percent more than 9 weeks. This is because of additional time for (1) in and out processing, (2) remedial reading, (3) motivational programs, and (4) medical and legal problems. However, there is no procedure for recruits who do not require the full 7.7 weeks of training to move through the system faster. This seems to be an area where recruit training costs could be reduced.

One alternative which might provide reduced training time is that of group-paced training. Under this concept, recruit units would be established based on the group's similar training needs.

The group-paced concept, currently under study by the Navy, appears to provide the Navy with an opportunity to provide for the group of individuals who do not need the full 7.7 weeks to move through training at a more rapid pace. We therefore, believe that the Navy should, in studying this concept, fully consider this opportunity. Some of the issues to be resolved are (1) whether this group is sufficiently

large to provide a separate unit, (2) what criteria to use to establish appropriate groups, and (3) how to measure the effect of the alternative programs on the Navy's training goals.

In terms of specific subject areas in the curriculum, including service week, which might be reduced or eliminated for all recruits, thereby reducing the cost of training, this is an area which is debatable and will remain so until the Navy more clearly defines its training goals in measurable terms and assesses the contribution of each aspect of its curriculum to these goals. It is important to keep in mind that the cost of Navy recruit training is currently running about \$150 million annually. If the length of recruit training could be reduced by even 1 day, it would reduce annual training costs by about \$1.6 million in recruit salaries alone. At the same time, the benefits of reduced training time must be weighed against its effect on training goals, which cannot be adequately done yet.

#### CURRICULUM STANDARDIZATION

Another aspect of recruit training where improvements can be made is that of curriculum standardization. While the recruit training system should not discourage innovation among those who design and teach it, it must be sufficiently standardized to assure that the products coming out of the system meet an acceptable level of quality. This assurance is doubtful, however, to the extent that there is wide diversity in the program within or among the three training centers.

We found that each training center is allowed to alter its training lesson guides and to develop its own tests and test procedures for measuring recruit attainment of curriculum objectives. As a result, each center has somewhat different curriculums and uses different indicators of recruit achievement of training objectives. For example, at one training center, 15 lesson guides have been revised as part of an effort to revise all the lesson topic guides. The commanding officer at this center, at the time the original lesson guides were issued, estimated that 30 percent were inadequate. Although lesson guide changes made by one training center are submitted to the other centers and the Naval Technical Training Command for review, each of the centers is free to implement the changes as it sees fit. The Chief of Naval Technical Training does not normally comment on the revised guides unless some of the minimum material included in the original guide is omitted.

This issue of curriculum standardization was also pointed out in a May 1976 Navy study of recruit training. The study concluded that the lack of standardization among the training centers permitted three different training programs to exist, which in turn leads to the development of different student products. It also pointed out that the mobility of military personnel and the limited training experience of many instructors made centralized management an attractive option. According to the Chief of Naval Education and Training, the Navy has made progress in providing more curriculum standardization since the 1976 report, but he acknowledged that it could go further.

The lack of standardization exists because of the wide latitude given the individual recruit training commanders for training program implementation and evaluation, with minimal oversight at higher levels. At the Chief of Naval Education and Training level, which establishes policy, there is basically one individual who devotes full-time to recruit training and one individual who spends less than full-time. At the Chief of Naval Technical Training level, which is responsible for the day-to-day operation of Navy schools and courses, there are essentially two individuals who devote full-time to recruit training, and two other individuals who devote less than full-time. In addition to being responsible for the technical direction of the recruit training centers, the Chief of Naval Technical Training also develops the recruit training curriculum and is responsible for the development of lesson topic guides used to instruct students in the classroom. The Recruit Indoctrination and Apprenticeship Training Branch of the Naval Technical Training Command performs these tasks without a professional education specialist.

A great deal of responsibility and program discretion is given to each of the three training centers in implementing and evaluating the recruit program, but only one of these centers has an educational specialist.

The lack of standardization in the curriculum can be related to the lack of explicit training goals; it is difficult to develop standardized training around ambiguous training goals. It would appear, therefore, that optimum standardization will have to wait on a more definitive goal definition. However, the Navy can and should improve its oversight to assure greater standardization or provide more centralized program management. Navy headquarters

officials told us that procedural changes have been initiated to achieve recruit training standardization by April 1, 1979. They stated that recruit training commands are now participating in standardized lesson guide development and that once approved and promulgated recruit commands will be bound to their implementation without deviation.

Standard tests are a natural follow-on to standardized lesson guides; and a Navy official stated that the Navy plans to initiate the use of these tests by July 1979. He pointed out, however, that standardization becomes most difficult when the curriculum length is changed each year by external decisions.

#### USE OF SKILL TRAINING TO REINFORCE RECRUIT TRAINING GOALS

In addition to the opportunities to improve Navy recruit training as previously discussed, opportunities exist to further reinforce many of the recruit training goals in subsequent skill training. An increased emphasis on basic military duties and discipline during subsequent skill training, which is now relatively unstructured outside the classroom environment, would provide greater consistency in the level of control and discipline across recruit training, initial skill training, and the fleet. This, in turn, could have a stabilizing effect on morale while maintaining and reinforcing desirable habits initiated during recruit training.

The effects of inconsistent discipline and training on the attitudes and performance of sailors transitioning from recruit training to skills training to the fleet have been a subject of discussion among Navy officials for a number of years. To illustrate:

--The Chief of Naval Technical Training stated in his opening remarks during a training conference held during September 1976 that

"\* \* \* Fleet Commanders, \* \* \*, in general, are of the opinion that the product from the recruit training commands/boot camps is excellent while the 'A' (initial skill) schools product is not as well motivated."

--The Navy's training analysis and evaluation group report, dated May 1976, points out the differences in the level of discipline among recruit training,

initial skill schools, and the fleet. According to the report, it is reasonable to assume that greater consistency in the level of control and discipline would have a stabilizing effect on morale and reinforce desirable habits initiated during recruit training.

--In a memorandum dated December 1977, the Vice Chief of Naval Operations stated that his recent visits to the fleet gave him concern over the quality and motivation of new sailors reporting to their first duty. It appears the recruits are well motivated when they leave boot camp. Sometime subsequent to boot camp they suffer a major drop in motivation.

In recognition of the importance of basic military duties and discipline in follow-on initial skill schools, the Chief of Naval Technical Training, in November 1977, directed initial skill schools to require students to perform basic military duties while attending initial skill schools. The purpose of this program is to further develop students' self-discipline and motivation by requiring the continued use of the knowledge of basic military duties, responsibilities, and military bearing learned in recruit training. In March 1978, the Chief of Naval Technical Training further directed the initial skill schools to implement a program of remedial military training. The purpose of this program is basically the same as for the increased emphasis on basic military duties, although the program is generally designed for those individuals identified as needing additional training and closer supervision.

While we believe these changes should have positive results, the environment in the initial skill schools outside the classroom is still relatively unsupervised when compared to recruit training and operational units. Officials at the San Diego initial skill schools told us that they had implemented most of the elements of the basic military duties program which included such things as marching, inspections, chain of command, and military watches. However, they stated that insufficient staff and physical surroundings prevented full implementation of the program. For example, traffic flow patterns, according to these officials, make it impractical to march to class as a unit. These officials further stated that the program could not be fully implemented without affecting the skills portion of the course and that there was some question as to the appropriateness of implementing the program, particularly in view of cuts being made in the number of instructors at the school. The Navy could

use sailors in training with leadership qualities to provide the degree of supervision required to increase the emphasis in military training. Navy officials stated they currently have a program using experienced fleet personnel returning to initial skill training to provide supervision and training to other initial skill students.

#### SPECIAL RECRUIT UNITS

At each of the three recruit training centers, special units of recruits are formed to perform at recruit graduations and civic ceremonies. These special units include (1) drum and bugle corps, (2) drill teams, (3) choirs, (4) State flag carriers and color guards, and (5) honor guards and staff. As of September 30, 1978, the special recruit units at the three centers were as follows:

<u>Unit</u>	<u>San Diego</u>	<u>Orlando</u>	<u>Great Lakes</u>
Drum and Bugle Corp	X		X
Drill team(s)	X	X	X
Choir		X	X
State flag carriers and color guard	X	X	X
Honor guards and staff		X	X

At San Diego, recruits are selected for each of the special units weekly. Orlando and Great Lakes form most units on a 3-week cycle. At San Diego and Great Lakes, the units are formed and proceed through training as a distinct entity, while at Orlando recruits continue training with the regular training units. About 13,000 to 14,000 individuals are annually involved in special recruit units at the three centers.

According to Navy officials, these special units serve three important, but difficult to measure, objectives. The Navy claims that they (1) provide motivation to the recruits, (2) improve community relations, and (3) aid the Navy's recruiting efforts.

The units at each training center perform a variety of civic activities. For example, special recruit units at San Diego participated in 165 off-center events during calendar year 1977. These appearances included the Fourth of July and other parades, Scout-o-ramas, little league activities, yacht clubs, and a frog-jumping jamboree. In addition,



they perform for parents and families of recruits at the Recruit Training Center Headquarters building before the actual graduation.

A Navy band is stationed at each of the naval training centers of which the recruit training center is a part. These bands perform a similar function as the recruit special units, i.e., performing at recruit graduation ceremonies and civic events. For example, the band at San Diego performed at 1,022 events during fiscal year 1978, including the weekly recruit graduations.

Costs associated with these special units are twofold. The administration of these units at the three centers requires 29 full-time Navy personnel at a cost of about \$325,000 annually. In addition, the recruits associated with the units are delayed in the training pipeline an average of 4 days at San Diego and 7 days at Great Lakes. These delays amount to about 27,500 days annually at a cost of about \$442,000. At Orlando, there is no delay because the recruits remain with their training units and practice during free time. They do, however, miss ship service week.

At San Diego, recruits are asked to volunteer for special training units before beginning training. Recruits volunteering are held in a nontraining status for an average of 4 days pending receipt of sufficient volunteers to form the special unit. At Great Lakes, recruits are selected from regular training units on their third day of training. Those selected are separated from the regular training unit and held in a nontraining status for an average of 7 days. Recruits in a nontraining status normally spend their time learning special training unit routines and basics of barracks living, such as bunkmaking and clothes folding.

The existence of the special units increases to some extent the administrative work at each of the training centers. To provide sufficient time for these units to become reasonably proficient, the normal training schedule is modified to allow practice and performance during regular training hours. According to center officials, training missed while rehearsing or performing must be made up. The only exception is military drill and ships workweek functions, which involve such duties as mail runners and mess cooking.

Are the units worth the costs? Like many other issues in this report, the stated benefits are related to objectives which are difficult to measure. In the final analysis, their value is, to a considerable degree, a judgment call. Certainly the issue is one that should be discussed, not only in terms of its overall value, but also in terms of the reasons for the differences among the three training centers in recruit training delay times.

#### DIFFERENCES IN RECRUIT TRAINING TIME

The Navy provided an analysis we requested showing the length of time to train recruits among the three training centers. The data below shows that the Navy's Great Lakes Recruit Training Center took an average of 4 days longer than the other two centers to graduate a recruit. From February 1977 through May 1978, this amounted to 110,000 training days at an additional cost of about \$1.8 million.

#### Recruits Completing Training

<u>Days in training</u>	<u>San Diego</u>	<u>Great Lakes</u>	<u>Orlando</u>	<u>Total</u>
58 or less	5,819	2,098	7,927	15,844
59 to 63	12,360	12,435	12,855	37,650
64 to 70	2,418	7,526	3,166	13,110
71 to 77	1,458	2,216	2,270	5,944
78 to 84	943	1,464	853	3,260
85 to 91	267	585	289	1,141
92 to 98	182	325	211	718
99 to 105	75	244	188	507
106 to 112	37	181	125	343
113 and up	40	374	239	653
Total recruits	<u>23,599</u>	<u>27,448</u>	<u>28,123</u>	<u>79,170</u>
Total days	<u>1,480,925</u>	<u>1,833,610</u>	<u>1,779,844</u>	<u>5,094,379</u>
Average length	63	67	63	64

A Navy official also told us that the Navy does not know the specific reasons for the difference. Because of the cost significance, the Navy should find out the reason for the longer training time at Great Lakes and its justifications.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense direct the Secretary of the Navy to move expeditiously to

- restate recruit training goals in terms which can be measured, with input from the fleet;
- establish a more systematic feedback system from the fleet on the required and actual performance of recruit graduates;
- reevaluate, using the restated training goals and fleet input, the length and content of the Navy's recruit training program;
- provide greater management oversight to assure optimum standardization of the training program curriculum and testing procedures, or provide more centralized management of the program;
- review the need for special recruit units and the reason for the differences in recruit training delay times among the three training centers; and
- find out the reason and justification for the differences in average training time among the three training centers.

We also recommend that the Secretary of Defense review the applicability of these issues to the other services, particularly the need for more explicit training goals and an improved feedback system from operational units on the requirements for and performance of recruit graduates.

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