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REPORT BY THE

110274

Comptroller General

OF THE UNITED STATES

Weaknesses In The Selective Service System's Emergency Registration Plan

AG, C00278

The Selective Service System has been developing an emergency plan to meet DOD's manpower requirements without the use of continuous registration of America's youth. The Selective Service System agrees with GAO that having continuous registration would strengthen its operation but says its emergency plan will work, given the necessary funds and people.

However, GAO concludes that the emergency plan has shortcomings which make it doubtful that the plan will ever be implemented. A National peacetime registration program, in GAO's view, will best meet DOD's current mobilization requirements. Mobilization requires the delivery of 100,000 people to the military services by the end of 60 days. It will provide the least risk to the Nation in the event of war or a national emergency.



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FPCD 79 89
AUGUST 29, 1979



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON D.C. 20548

B-162111

The Honorable Gillespie V. Montgomery
House of Representatives

Dear Congressman Montgomery:

This is our report in response to your request on July 19, 1979. Since our report on the Capabilities of Selective Service (FPCD-79-4, Dec. 14, 1978) and our testimony in February 1979 before the House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Military Personnel, we have surveyed the claims of the Selective Service System with respect to alleged improvements to the System. As arranged with your office, we are making copies of this report available to other parties.

Because of the short time frame in which you needed this report and agreements with your office, we did not obtain written comments from the Selective Service System but discussed our findings with its officials. The acting Deputy Director, Selective Service System, said that having peacetime registration would significantly enhance the System's operations. He said that, since registration is not in place, he has had to develop alternative plans to meet the manpower delivery requirements of the Department of Defense (DOD). He believes that the emergency plan they have developed will work if he is given the necessary funds and staff resources. Regarding the emergency plan, he also realizes that several arrangements have not been formalized, such as agreements with States, identification of sites, and logistical arrangements for forms.

At the time of our prior report and testimony the System said it could not meet DOD's manpower requirements (deliver first inductees at mobilization plus (M+) 30 days and 100,000 people at M+60 days) with its existing personnel and \$7 million budget.

In recent testimony the System stated that if it were provided the \$9.8 million budget requested, it could meet DOD's requirements without returning to peacetime registration. To meet these requirements, the System

said it would use the State election machinery in combination with a system of highly automated data processing equipment to conduct a mass 1-day registration. The System stated in the testimony that it had made considerable progress in developing the rapid registration and input concept but has some distance to go before considering its emergency registration plan as fully ready for implementation.

In addition to using the State election machinery and data processing, the System has to take numerous other actions before and after mobilization day to meet DOD's requirements. These include such things as prepositioning supplies and equipment, recruiting and training local and appeal board members, identifying sites for registration, and arranging the delivery of induction notices. Time frames established under this emergency registration plan to meet DOD's requirements of 100,000 inductees at M+60 days call for (1) having a mass registration at M+10 days, (2) processing registrant data between M+11 and M+15 days, and (3) delivering induction notices at M+20 days.

We have examined the procedures being developed for implementing the emergency registration plan and have serious reservations about whether it can be fully implemented. For example, we found that (1) formal arrangements had not been made with the States for using their election machinery, nor had the States been formally asked if they could begin registration by M+10 days, (2) the data processing equipment tested by the System was not representative of the equipment necessary to handle the workload in an actual situation, (3) equipment had not been tested to insure delivery of induction notices by M+20 days, and (4) logistical arrangements for distributing prepositioned supplies and equipment had not been developed. (See appendix.)

In addition to our specific concerns about implementing the emergency plan, an overriding issue centers around the concept of equity. Should any one of the planned procedures fail, serious legal questions could arise concerning fair and equitable treatment of those involved. For example, if one county did not hold the mass 1-day registration, it would be impossible to have an equitable lottery.

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In view of all of the uncertainty, the lack of complete staff work, the assumptions that everything will work as conceived, and that all barriers are surmountable, we still believe that reinstating some form of national registration will best meet DOD's manpower requirements of 100,000 by M+60 days and carries with it the least amount of risk for the Nation in the event of war or national emergency.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert B. Atwater". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "R".

Comptroller General
of the United States

BACKGROUND

In October 1977 the Department of Defense (DOD) required that the Selective Service System begin induction at mobilization plus (M+) 30 days and provide 100,000 inductees at M+60 days. Before then, the System planned to have a mass registration at M+60 days and provide the 100,000 inductees at M+150 days. System officials stated in February 1979 that they could not meet DOD's requirements with current budgetary levels and staff resources. They later stated they had developed an emergency registration plan which they believed would meet DOD's requirements if adequately funded.

The new plan calls for using the State election machinery and personnel with a mass registration of potential inductees at M+10 days, followed by induction at M+20 days, and reporting to the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Stations (AFEES) by M+30 days.

Because of time constraints we concentrated our efforts on the day of mobilization to the M+20 day time frame.

USE OF STATE ELECTION MACHINERY

Before developing its emergency plan the Selective Service System in December 1978 contacted five of its provisional State directors regarding the feasibility of using their States' election machinery to conduct a 1-day mass registration. The System asked each of the five directors:

- How much advance notice is required to set the State election machinery in motion?
- How much and what types of planning and training are needed to insure the proper execution of a registration?
- What cost might be involved?
- What is the estimated workload involved in establishing and maintaining the registration plans within the State?
- Would a registration manual or registrar's handbook be helpful or necessary?

- Would distribution and stockpiling of registration forms and supplies be practical and feasible?

The System later requested similar information from 43 additional States. After analyzing the information, it developed a model emergency plan--tailored after an emergency plan established for the District of Columbia--and provided this to each State National Guard section chief. These section chiefs were to use the plan as a guideline in developing their own State emergency plan to use with their existing State registration plan.

Our survey disclosed the following.

- Forty-eight of the 50 States were contacted regarding the use of the election machinery--Alaska and Hawaii were excluded.
- None of the U.S. territories or possessions were contacted (Guam, Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Samoa).
- The States responding indicated a wide range of time frames (from 2 to 30 days) as to when they could get their election machinery in motion.
- Of the 48 State directors contacted, 7 did not formerly respond to the System's inquiry.
- Several States indicated a need to be reimbursed for their services.
- The specific polling places to be used for a mass registration were not identified by each State.
- The System in April 1979 requested the National Guard section chiefs to develop their emergency plans and submit them by June 18, 1979. As of August 1979 the section chiefs had submitted plans for 33 States which were basically the same time frames provided in the System's guidelines.
- The responsible State election officials were not formally requested to determine whether they could meet the established time frames, including registration at M+10 days.

- Some National Guard section chiefs had developed plans for States whose provisional State directors had not responded to the System's initial inquiry on the feasibility of using election machinery.
- The System considered 5 of the 33 State emergency plans adequate and is returning the others for further work.
- The System's files had a memorandum for the record indicating that the Office of Management and Budget told the System not to contact the Governors concerning written agreements for using their election machinery.

PREPOSITIONING PROGRAM

Part of the System's plan for responding to an emergency registration calls for having forms and supplies prepositioned in the field before mobilization day. The System now has forms and supplies prepositioned in three of its six regions and plans to have the forms and supplies prepositioned in the other three regions by the end of September 1979. We were also informed that the decision on what forms are needed at the local areas had not been made. As a result, all types of forms have been shipped to the regions. The System had not identified specific sites at the State and local level to be used in an emergency registration. Therefore, no formal arrangements had been made on distributing prepositioned forms and supplies to local areas.

RECRUITING OF LOCAL AND APPEAL BOARD MEMBERS

In an emergency the System will be involved in reinstating its formal draft operations and, at the same time, conducting a mass 1-day registration using the State election machinery. Local and appeal board members will be needed to handle classification and review appeals of those seeking exemption from military service. The System has indicated that it could get 50 percent of the local and appeal board members it needs from its list of volunteers who worked in this capacity before registration ended in 1975. The System says the other 50 percent will come from volunteer organizations such as the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the Moose Lodge. We were told that, in order to meet the specified time frames, the arrangements for recruiting these volunteers should be made before mobilization day.

We found the following regarding the recruitment of these volunteers.

- The System had about 15,000 volunteer local and appeal board members when registration ended in 1975.
- The System last purged its list (for age 60 and/or 20 years service) of volunteers in November 1977, at which time about 12,000 were still eligible.
- The System had not tried to contact any of these volunteers to determine if they (1) were willing to serve again, (2) had changed their phone numbers or addresses, or (3) were physically able to work.
- The 50-percent retention figure was a "guesstimate" based upon discussions with some provisional State directors.
- The last formal inquiries of the organizations identified for providing the other 50 percent (those who had not previously served) were made during the 1975-1976 period. These organizations have about 6 million people Nation-wide.
- All new members will have to be trained on the System's policies, practices, and procedures before mobilization day to insure equitable treatment of all registrants.

OFFICE SPACE AND FURNITURE REQUIREMENTS

The System will need to obtain office space to reinstitute its operations and has entered into a formal written agreement with the General Services Administration to procure its own space if the General Services Administration does not do so in 5 days. Also, the System is discussing with DOD the feasibility of using recruiting offices. However, they have not decided which offices will be available or when they can be occupied.

PROCESSING REGISTRANT INFORMATION AND INDUCTION NOTICES

The System's emergency plan calls for the use of computer equipment to process registrant data and provide a list of inductees on the basis of a random selection assured by a special lottery. This list of names and addresses, contained on an output tape, is to be transmitted to Western Union. Western Union will in turn transmit mailgrams

(induction notices) and an AFEES list to 141 post offices in metropolitan areas. These post offices are to insert this information and a request-for-deferment form into envelopes and distribute them to the local post offices for delivery to the potential inductees.

This will take place within specific time frames:

- M+11 days to M+15 days, process registrant data for 2 million people.
- M+16 days, assign random sequence numbers and randomly select by special lottery.
- M+17 days, select random sequence number and enter other data such as AFEES and the System's area office addresses.
- M+18 days, process for transmittal first batch for induction orders.
- M+19 days, prepare output tape for Western Union which will transmit mailgrams to 141 post offices.
- M+20 days, post offices to deliver first induction notices.

Between November 1978 and May 1979 the System ran a feasibility test to determine whether registrant data could be processed in the volume (about 2 million) needed within the 5-day time frame (M+11 days to M+15 days). The test was conducted using the IBM Series/I minicomputer at three locations. On the basis of this test, the System determined that this equipment could handle the volume within the 5-day time frame.

We determined the following from this feasibility study and emergency time frame:

- Major parts of the test situation were not like the planned situation; that is, key punch operators were used at 3 terminals at 3 locations instead of the planned 485 terminals at 332 locations, and the operators worked half days instead of full days on the system.
- Problems detected in the test, such as zip code errors, have been corrected but not retested to assure accuracy.

- The System's feasibility study had not shown projections of the total number of people and terminals needed to handle the workload.
- The System assumed that the telecommunication lines would be available and operable when needed to transmit data. No alternatives have been formalized if the telecommunication lines are unavailable or inoperable.
- The System assumed that space would be available when needed to place terminals either at its own area of offices or DOD recruiting offices. It has contacted DOD about this, but no formal agreements have been made concerning available sites.
- The System assumed key punch operators would be available when needed to operate the terminals. It is considering using Kelly Services operators who will have to be trained on the equipment. No formal arrangements have been made.
- In a 5-year plan outline the System has identified alternative means of implementing its computer system. However, after one alternative is chosen there is no provision for backup support for all parts of the computer system in case equipment should fail.
- On the basis of information gathered from the test using the three terminals, the System concluded that a larger scale computer system could handle the workload. This conclusion assumes little or no degradation will occur in expanding from 3 to 485 terminals.
- The test used IBM equipment. As such, the compatibility and adequacy of the system cannot be fully evaluated because there is no guarantee this type of equipment will be available and procured for use. A contract proposal will have to be written and bids analyzed and accepted. This process could take 1 to 2 years. As of this date, no contract proposal has been written due to lack of funds.
- The equipment to be used for folding and inserting the mailgram, AFEEES list, and deferment form (three pieces of paper) into an envelope is to be tested on August 29, 1979. This equipment has never been tested for two pieces of paper, let alone three. The

acting Deputy Director said that these forms will have to be prepositioned if the equipment cannot do the job.

--The 1-day (24 hours) delivery of the induction notice is based on a postal official's statement that the post offices can do it in this time frame. There is no formal agreement with the post offices guaranteeing this fact, and the feasibility of it has not been tested. According to the System's acting Deputy Director, this is not a major concern because inductees will have to report 10 days from the date of the induction notice.

--A question of fairness is raised because there is less time under this plan for an inductee to appeal than there was under the System's previous plan.

PRIVACY ACT ISSUE

The System has considered using alternative sources for obtaining lists of registrants. It has contacted such organizations as the Internal Revenue Service and Social Security Administration as well as several States about obtaining their lists. The organizations usually replied that the Privacy Act restricted them from providing these lists. In addition, the lists would not include everyone who should register. As far as we can determine, the planned 1-day mass registration does not violate the Privacy Act.

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