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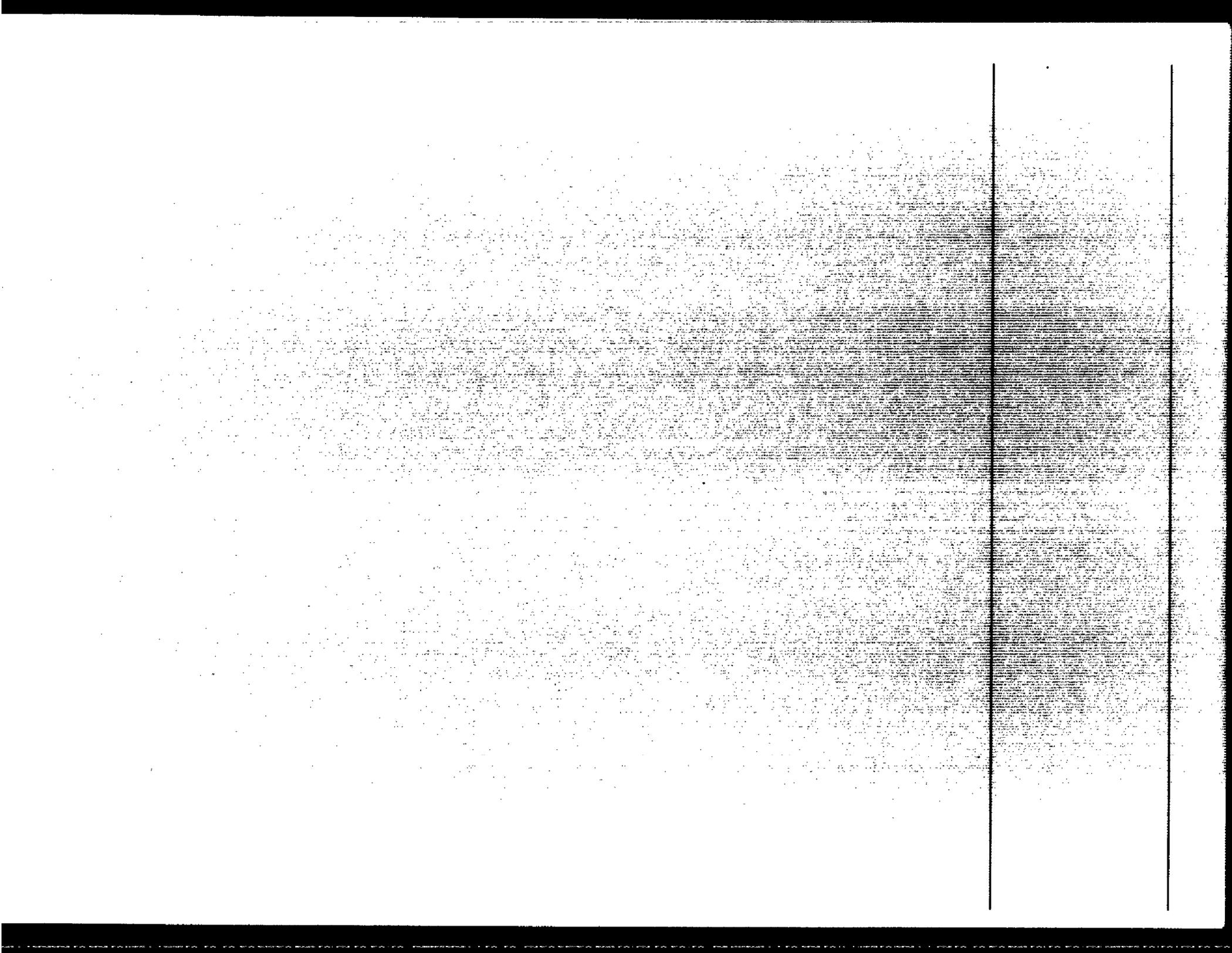
Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee
on Military Personnel and
Compensation, Committee on Armed
Services, House of Representatives

December 1991

ARMY RESERVE COMPONENTS

Accurate and Complete Data Is Needed to Monitor Full-Time Support Program





**National Security and
International Affairs Division**

B-236144

December 30, 1991

The Honorable Beverly B. Byron
Chairman, Subcommittee on Military
Personnel and Compensation
Committee on Armed Services
House of Representatives

Dear Madam Chairman:

Several hundred Army Reserve and National Guard units were activated for Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm,¹ yet some full-time support (FTS) personnel occupying key positions in these units reportedly did not serve with them. Because of your concern about the deployability and effectiveness of FTS personnel, you requested that we conduct this review to determine (1) the adequacy of the Army's system for monitoring the FTS program and (2) the effectiveness of FTS personnel in helping their units make the transition from peacetime to wartime operations.

Results in Brief

The Army cannot effectively monitor the FTS program because it does not have an accurate, complete data base of FTS personnel and it has not adequately defined the information that is needed for effective program oversight and analyses. For example, neither the state Guard organizations nor the Army Reserve Commands we reviewed collected all of the data needed to monitor the deployability or job qualifications of their FTS personnel.

As a result, the Army does not know how many FTS personnel served with their units during Operation Desert Storm. Some FTS personnel did not serve with their units during Desert Storm, primarily because of medical conditions or personal hardships. The seriousness of this shortage may have been masked by the fact that the Army, because Desert Storm was only a partial mobilization, was able to replace them with FTS personnel from other units that had not been activated. Because the Army did not track data on the replacements, it is not able to develop meaningful "lessons learned" from the operation.

Although an objective of the FTS program is to help Army reserve units shift from peacetime to wartime operations, FTS personnel are not sufficiently trained on the active Army's personnel and supply systems to

¹Hereafter referred to as "Desert Storm."

provide that essential assistance. In a previous review, we reported that this lack of knowledge had hampered units' transition to wartime operations.²

Background

The Army views its approximately 83,000 FTS personnel, maintained at an annual cost of about \$3 billion, as "force multipliers." That is, their assignment to reserve units during peacetime is intended to improve the units' readiness and deployability. They help with the day-to-day administration, recruitment, maintenance, and training required to support their units' peacetime operations and are intended to ensure successful mobilization. In addition, their use is intended to enable reservists to spend the maximum amount of time in training. National Guard Bureau and state Guard organization officials told us that FTS personnel generally hold key wartime positions in their units and are expected to mobilize and deploy with them.

The FTS force consists of four categories of personnel.

- Active Guard/Reserve personnel: Guard or Reserve members on full-time active duty for 180 days or more a year. They receive the same pay and benefits as active-duty personnel and must meet the same military standards. They make up the largest element (about one-half) of FTS personnel.
- Military technicians: Federal civilian employees who are generally required, as a condition of employment, to maintain membership in a National Guard or Reserve unit. Collectively, Active Guard/Reserve personnel and military technicians account for 93 percent of FTS personnel.
- Active-component personnel: Military personnel on active duty who directly support the reserve components.
- Department of the Army civilians: Federal civilian employees who support the reserve components but have no military obligation.

The responsibilities of the various Army organizations for collecting FTS program data vary. Office of the Chief, Army Reserve (OCAR) and National Guard Bureau officials told us that neither Army, Army Reserve, nor National Guard regulations specify what data is to be collected for FTS program management. Data collection is left to the discretion of OCAR and the National Guard Bureau. Officials also stated that the data collected

²National Guard: Peacetime Training Did Not Adequately Prepare Combat Brigades for Gulf War (GAO/NSIAD-91-263, Sept. 24, 1991).

largely depends on the data fields available in the personnel management information system. At the state Guard organization and Army Reserve Command levels, the FTS data collected from the units is based on regulatory guidance, available data fields in the management information system, and National Guard Adjutant General requirements that may vary significantly by state.

FTS Data Is Inaccurate and Incomplete

The Army does not have accurate and complete data on the mobilization and deployability of its FTS personnel. As a result, the Army does not know how many FTS personnel (1) served with their units during Operation Desert Storm or (2) are currently ready to deploy with their units.

The data provided to us by OCAR and the National Guard Bureau on the mobilization, job qualifications, and medical condition of FTS soldiers for the four state Guard organizations and two Army Reserve Commands that we visited was inaccurate and incomplete when compared against data maintained by the state Guard organizations and Army Reserve Commands.

- Sixteen percent of the FTS soldiers listed by the National Guard Bureau as activated were not activated, while the records of the state Guard organizations listed another 9 percent of FTS soldiers as activated for which the National Guard Bureau had no record.
- For almost 80 percent of the Army Reserve's FTS soldiers, information on their military education was missing or unknown. For one Army Reserve Command, 91 percent of the military education data was inaccurate or incomplete.
- For 66 percent of the FTS soldiers in one Army Reserve Command, information on the latest physical examination date was in error.
- For about 15 percent of the mobilized FTS soldiers in one Army Reserve Command, OCAR's data showing the unit to which the soldier had belonged before mobilization or their current unit was inaccurate.

According to state Guard and Army Reserve Command officials, the information in the active Army's Standard Installation/Division Personnel System data base, from which much of this data had been extracted, was at least 30 to 90 days old. Given this time lag, some of the soldiers who had left the FTS program were still listed as current FTS personnel by OCAR and the National Guard Bureau. In at least one instance, a soldier who had not been active in the FTS program for 2 years was still listed as active.

Effective Program Oversight Is Hindered by Incomplete Data

The Army has not adequately defined the information needed to monitor the FTS program. As a result, the Army Reserve Commands and state Guard organizations have not developed systems that consistently collect all the data needed for effective program oversight and analyses.

OCAR and National Guard Bureau officials told us that to obtain reliable and complete data on the FTS program, we would have to go to each state Guard organization and Army Reserve Command. Although the state Guard organizations and Army Reserve Commands generally had more reliable data on their programs, they did not collect or monitor all the data needed for effective program oversight. Consequently, the quality and accessibility of this data varied greatly. For example, to provide us the data we requested, one state Guard organization called all its FTS personnel in to one location and had them fill out a form created specifically to meet our request.

At the state level, visibility of medical problems that could affect deployment was limited, according to the Army Reserve Commands and three of the four state Guard organizations we visited. They did not centrally monitor which of their FTS soldiers would be medically nondeployable. Moreover, according to National Guard Bureau and OCAR data, 3 percent of the National Guard's and 43 percent of the Army Reserve's FTS soldiers did not have current physicals, which could have identified nondeployable conditions.

Visibility on general physical fitness was also weak at several levels. Neither OCAR, the National Guard Bureau, the Army Reserve Commands, nor the state Guard organizations monitored the annual physical-fitness test scores of military technicians. Three of the four state Guard organizations did not monitor the scores of its Active Guard/Reserve personnel, even though failure to pass the test might indicate a nondeployable condition.

The Army Cannot Derive Meaningful Lessons From the FTS Program's Wartime Operation

To compensate for nondeployable FTS personnel during Operation Desert Storm, the Army transferred, or cross-leveled, FTS soldiers from lower-priority or nondeploying units. However, neither OCAR, the National Guard Bureau, Army Reserve Commands, nor state Guard organizations tracked data on the cross-leveling. Analyzing the extent of and reasons for cross-leveling would be the cornerstone to evaluating the effectiveness of the program, since the data would identify which units and military

occupational specialties had shortages or needed personnel to improve readiness. It would also indicate why shortages occurred and how to prevent them in the future.

Data provided by OCAR and the National Guard Bureau only shows the unit to which an FTS soldier belonged on August 1, 1990, and on August 1, 1991. Data was not gathered on which unit a soldier supported during the interim or why the soldier was transferred. Cross-leveling information was available at the state Guard organizations, but Guard officials said their systems could identify only those units in which a soldier served at the mobilization station or before reaching the mobilization station. They had no information on transfers that occurred after this point. And although the state Guard organizations generally had some information on the reason for a soldier's transfer, records were not routinely maintained on the reason for the transfer.

For the state Guard organizations and Army Reserve Commands we reviewed, the primary reasons for FTS soldiers' nondeployability were failure to meet medical standards and personal hardships. Indeed, some state Guard organizations had a significant number of nondeployable FTS soldiers due to medical reasons; in one of the states, 10 percent of its FTS soldiers were nondeployable, all due to medical reasons. Personal hardships included cases in which FTS soldiers were responsible to provide care for their dependent children or parents who were in ill health.

Some FTS soldiers were not deployable due to lack of qualifications for their positions. One state Guard organization official told us that it was common practice to assign FTS personnel to positions for which they had not yet been formally trained, in order to provide upward mobility in peacetime.

State Guard organization officials told us that compensating for these problems by cross-leveling would only work in a partial mobilization, such as Operation Desert Storm. Transferring soldiers from other units into the vacancies created by nondeployable personnel might not be viable in a larger mobilization because there would be few if any nondeploying units from which to obtain qualified soldiers. In Operation Desert Storm, the Army had several months to mobilize and thus could provide the mobilizing reserve component units assistance that might not be available in a larger mobilization.

FTS Soldiers Have Not Been Fully Trained for Their Wartime Role

According to officials at OCAR and the National Guard Bureau, FTS personnel in theory should be fully capable of providing the expertise units need in supply and personnel administration. In reality, however, these officials believe that unit-level commanders should expect FTS personnel to provide only limited help during mobilization because they are not fully trained in the active Army's supply and personnel systems—that is, the systems that would be used in wartime.³ At the four state Guard organizations, officials said that, despite program objectives, FTS personnel either lacked training or received minimal training on the Unit Level Logistics System, a computerized supply system. Likewise, officials at three state Guard organizations told us that FTS soldiers were not fully trained on the Standard Installation/Division Personnel System, as well as on the Tactical Army Combat Service Support Computer System, a personnel system to be used to transition to the Standard Installation/Division Personnel System. According to Department of Defense and Army officials, the adoption of uniform supply and personnel systems for use by active and reserve components alike is the solution to these problems. We agree; however, until the Army decides this issue, FTS soldiers will continue to require training on active Army systems.

The skepticism of National Guard Bureau, Army Reserve Command, and state Guard organization officials regarding the ability of FTS personnel responsible for personnel and supply systems was demonstrated during training for the roundout brigades during Desert Storm. We reported in September 1991 that this training revealed FTS personnel's lack of familiarity with the active Army's personnel and supply systems. For example, FTS personnel serving in the three roundout combat brigades had not been trained to use the Tactical Army Combat Service Support Computer System. That lack of training was demonstrated in one brigade when FTS supply personnel ordered M-60 tank parts for its newer M-1 tanks.

According to National Guard Bureau and OCAR officials, FTS personnel have not been fully trained in active Army systems largely because the FTS program has not been fully funded. Since funds have not been provided for the full number of FTS personnel needed, they said, those who are assigned must spend all their time on peacetime requirements. We have two objections to this position. First, as we stated in a 1990 report, the Army justified some FTS personnel requirements without any work load analyses

³We plan to examine in a future report the rationale for maintaining separate National Guard systems.

or similar studies.⁴ The Department of Defense agreed that work load analyses were necessary to determine FTS personnel requirements. Although the determination of FTS requirements has been based, to a limited extent, on work load analyses, the Army has not yet validated the models used for this purpose. This situation raises doubts as to whether the Army can accurately determine the number of FTS personnel it needs to accomplish both peacetime administration and readiness improvement. Second, as we pointed out in an earlier report on the training of reserve components, administrative requirements consumed about 50 percent of available training time and needed to be reduced.⁵ Responding to that report, the Army announced that initiatives were under way to improve training in the reserves, including reductions of administrative requirements. When completed, this initiative should provide FTS personnel more time to learn the wartime supply and personnel systems.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Secretary of the Army take the following actions:

- Define the data needed for effective oversight of the FTS program and require its periodic collection and monitoring. At a minimum, this data should enable the state Guard organizations and Army Reserve Commands to monitor FTS personnel's job qualifications and deployability.
- Require that peacetime training is provided to FTS personnel who are responsible for assisting in the wartime transition to active Army systems for personnel and supply.

Scope and Methodology

To obtain Army policies and procedures concerning FTS personnel, we interviewed officials at several headquarters offices in Washington, D.C.—the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Department of the Army, the National Guard Bureau and OCAR. We also discussed the oversight and management of the FTS program with these offices. We obtained statistical information on FTS personnel activated during Operation Desert Storm from the National Guard Bureau and OCAR.

To develop our assessment, we obtained personnel information from National Guard headquarters in the District of Columbia, Kentucky, New Mexico, and Virginia and from the headquarters of the 79th and 81st Army Reserve Commands. We selected these commands because they had been

⁴Army Reserve Components: Opportunities to Improve Management of the Full-Time Support Program (GAO/NSIAD-90-43, Feb. 8, 1990).

⁵Army Training: Management Initiatives Needed to Enhance Reservists' Training (GAO/NSIAD-89-140, June 30, 1989).

among those having the largest number of FTS soldiers activated during Operation Desert Storm and reportedly had the largest number of nondeployable FTS personnel. We compared and analyzed state Guard and Army Reserve Command personnel data with that provided by the National Guard Bureau and OCAR, relying on the expert knowledge of personnel managers at the state Guard organizations and Army Reserve Commands to resolve differences.

As requested, we did not obtain written agency comments on this report, but we discussed our findings with Department of Defense and Army officials and incorporated their comments where appropriate.

We conducted our review from September to November 1991 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

As you requested, unless you announce this report's contents earlier, we plan no further distribution until 10 days after its issue date. At that time we will send copies to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on Armed Services and on Appropriations; to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; and to the Secretaries of Defense and the Army. Copies will also be made available to other interested parties upon request.

Please call me at (202) 275-4141 if you or your staff have any questions about this report. Major contributors to this report are listed in appendix I.

Sincerely yours,



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