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BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

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AWOL In The Military: A Serious And Costly Problem

Absence without leave is a breach of discipline which the military says cannot be tolerated in developing and maintaining an effective fighting force. But, during the 4 years ended June 30, 1977, the military services reported 608,000 AWOLs exceeding 24 hours which GAO estimates cost the Government over \$1 billion. The problem is likely to get worse.

Present practices lack credibility and damage the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime. The system permits severe punishment and no punishment and there is no guidance between these two extremes. AWOL over 30 days--the most serious AWOL offense--is most frequently dealt with administratively by a discharge to avoid court-martial. The broad discretion given to those who deal with the problem results in wide differences in punishments imposed and types of discharges issued to people with similar AWOL records.

GAO's recommendations to the Congress and to the Secretary of Defense are directed at developing a more credible approach for dealing with AWOL encompassing recruit quality, military justice training, jobs, punishment for the offense, and separation of offenders.



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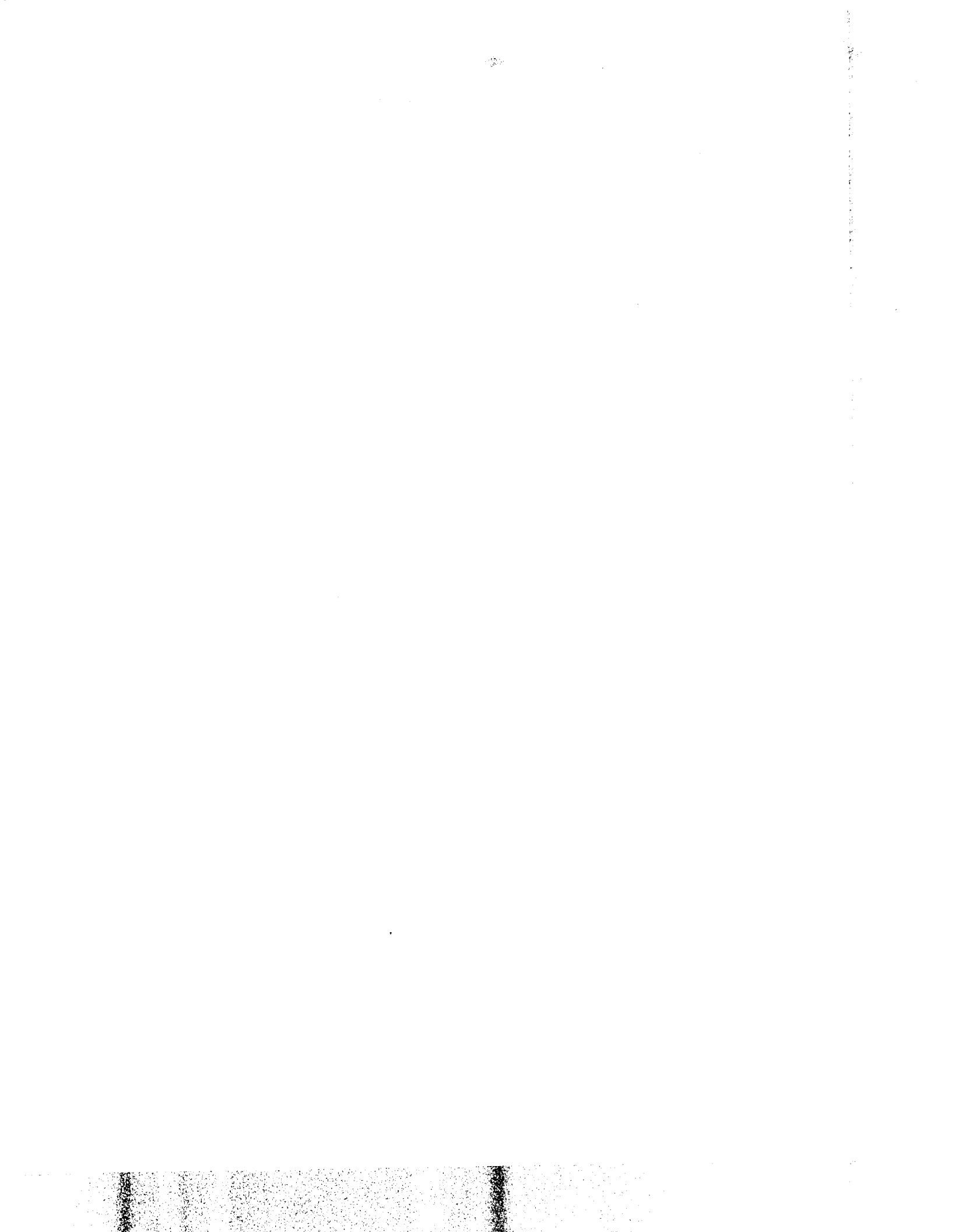
To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

This report discusses the problem of absence without leave (AWOL) which is the most frequently committed crime in the military and can seriously affect military effectiveness. We estimate AWOL cost the Government over \$1 billion during the 4 years ended June 30, 1977. We found that present approaches for dealing with the problem lack credibility. Since AWOL is concentrated in lower quality recruits, this problem could become more serious in the years ahead based on pessimistic forecasts concerning the availability of quality recruits combined with attrition goals recently established by the Department of Defense.

Our recommendations to the Congress and the Secretary of Defense are directed at developing a more credible system for dealing with AWOL that considers all factors in the life cycle of the AWOL problem--recruit quality, military justice training, jobs, punishment for the offense, and separation of offenders.

We are sending copies of this report to the President; the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Attorney General of the United States; the Secretaries of Defense, Transportation, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; the Director, Office of Personnel Management; and other interested parties.


Comptroller General
of the United States



D I G E S T

Absence without leave (AWOL), a crime unique to the military, is the offense most frequently committed by service members. Over the 4-year period ended June 30, 1977, the military reported 608,000 AWOL incidents exceeding 24 hours. These AWOLs cost the Government \$1.1 billion. (See pp. 1 and 3.)

Military representatives say that AWOL is an act of disobedience which cannot be tolerated in developing and maintaining a disciplined and effective fighting force. (See p. 3.) Military studies have characterized the typical AWOL offender as an 18- to 19-year old male non-high school graduate with a history of disciplinary and family problems. (See p. 7.)

When an individual goes AWOL, morale, discipline, and unit effectiveness are diminished because others must perform the absentee's duties or such duties go undone. Dealing with people who go AWOL reduces the amount of time commanders have to lead and train their people. (See p. 3.)

AWOL can also entail severe consequences for the individual which can carry over to civilian life. A person who is AWOL over 30 days--the most serious AWOL offense--can receive (1) a prison sentence of 1 year, (2) reduction in grade to E-1, (3) forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and (4) a dishonorable discharge. (See p. 4.)

PUNISHMENTS FOR AWOL NEED TO BE MADE
MORE PROBABLE AND PREDICTABLE

Although the military justice system authorizes severe punishment for AWOL, it also permits no punishment. Further, there is no guidance on normal ranges of punishment

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between these two extremes. When an individual returns from AWOL, his commander must decide whether to excuse it, impose relatively minor punishment nonjudicially, or recommend court-martial. One of three types of court-martial can be convened depending on the seriousness of the offense. Additionally, for AWOL over 30 days, the individual may request an administrative discharge in lieu of court-martial. While such a discharge can have serious consequences, it is not designed as punishment. (See pp. 17, 18, and 28.)

Given this broad discretion, it is not surprising that GAO found wide variation in the way the services dealt with AWOLs of similar length in

- the level of disposition selected and
- the quantity of punishment imposed.

On the average, the quantities of punishments imposed were substantially less than the maximum authorized and did not increase significantly regardless of the number of prior convictions. (See pp. 22 to 27.)

GAO's analysis of AWOL over 30 days showed it was dealt with by administrative discharge in lieu of court-martial in 42 percent of the cases examined; in the remaining cases it was dealt with as a minor offense as often as a serious offense. In fact, it was dealt with about 70 times more often by an administrative discharge in lieu of court-martial than by general court-martial which can impose the maximum punishments authorized. Thus, military members can discern from the services' practices that the likelihood of severe punishment is low and the chances for an administrative discharge is rather high. (See p. 17.)

Services' practices in dealing with AWOL lack credibility and compromise the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime.

GAO found that over 80 percent of the people in its study group went AWOL a second time and about 65 percent three or more times. (See p. 29.)

It would be possible to decriminalize AWOL and deal with the problem entirely through administrative sanctions. Military representatives told GAO, however, that this was not a viable option. Yet the present range of options for dealing with AWOL are too broad to ensure that the crime is dealt with consistently and firmly so that people perceive it as a serious offense. (See pp. 17 to 19, 31, and 32.)

The Department of Defense and the services must settle on more methodical and coherent methods for dealing with AWOL. A credible approach requires that punishment be probable and reasonably predictable. Therefore, disposition level and punishment norms should be established for various lengths of AWOL and conviction records. This would also make the system fairer by helping to ensure that people with similar AWOL records receive similar punishments. (See p. 17.)

Recommendation to the Congress

The Congress should revise article 56 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to authorize the President to provide guidance for determining disposition levels and punishments for AWOL offenses. (See p. 33.)

Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense

The Secretary should:

- Propose to the President changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial to establish norms for (1) level of disposition (nonjudicial or summary, special, or general court-martial) and (2) quantity of punishment for the different lengths of AWOL (3 days or less, 4 to 30 days,

and over 30 days). The level of disposition and punishment quantity should vary based on such factors as the length of the AWOL and the number of prior convictions. Deviations from the norms should be permitted where justified by aggravating, mitigating, or extenuating circumstances. Acting on this recommendation would first require the Congress to revise article 56 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice as recommended above. (See p. 33.)

--Direct the services to evaluate periodically the consistency and effectiveness of the quantity and type of punishments imposed to determine whether changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial should be recommended to the President. Definitive guidance should be issued to ensure that these evaluations are done uniformly. (See p. 33.)

--Revise the Department of Defense directive on administrative discharges to eliminate the discharge in lieu of court-martial. This same recommendation was made in a recent GAO report (FPCD-77-47, Apr. 28, 1978) directed at insuring that criminal offenses are dealt with under the safeguards and protections of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. In this report, the recommendation is directed at helping the services achieve the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime. (See pp. 33 and 34.)

SEPARATION OF AWOL OFFENDERS SHOULD
BE MORE COST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT

After AWOL offenders are punished, commanders lack criteria to make cost-effective decisions as to whether these individuals should be retained or separated. Such criteria are needed because, as a group, AWOL-prone individuals are not successful. Over 70 percent of the people in GAO's AWOL study group were separated as unsuccessful, the majority within 18 months after entering

on duty. Additionally, two out of three of these individuals were separated during the Government's peak period of unrecouped investment. (See pp. 37 to 42.)

Separation criteria would be particularly useful in dealing with people who go AWOL early in their enlistment since they are least likely to succeed. About 40 percent of GAO's AWOL study group went AWOL the first time within 6 months, but only 15 percent were separated during this period. (See p. 42.)

GAO's study shows that it is feasible to develop criteria for making cost-effective decisions regarding the separation of people based on their AWOL records. (See pp. 42 to 44.)

The characterization of service is a barrier to the efficient separation of people who persist in going AWOL. One important reason for this is that veterans' benefits are tied to the characterization of service. Commanders can quickly rid their units of AWOL offenders for reasons which only allow an honorable or general discharge, but individuals serving over 6 months are automatically eligible for many veterans' benefits. On the other hand, it takes longer to separate an AWOL offender for a reason which authorizes a discharge under other than honorable conditions which does not routinely result in veterans' benefits. (See pp. 45 and 49 to 50.)

Inadequate policy guidance combined with differing attitudes among the services and commanders within a service have resulted in wide disparities in the reasons for separation and the types of discharges imposed. The probability of people with similar AWOL and conviction records receiving an honorable discharge in the Air Force is about 13 times greater than in the Marine Corps. (See pp. 46 to 49.)

Recommendations to the
Secretary of Defense

The Secretary should:

- Develop criteria for separating people with a record of AWOL. Such criteria could provide a framework for making cost-effective separation decisions based on such factors as months served and the number of AWOL convictions. (See pp. 52 and 53.)

- Require a discharge with no characterization for people who do not serve a minimum number of months, regardless of the reason for separation, except when a court-martial directs or for medical or hardship reasons. This period should be the number of months needed to identify and separate people who lack the potential to succeed. This change would require amendment of laws and regulations governing veterans' benefits, which largely base eligibility on the administrative characterization of service. (See p. 53.)

AWOL COULD BE GREATLY
REDUCED BY RECRUITING MORE
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Although the AWOL problem exists to varying degrees with people of all backgrounds, educational levels, and intelligence, it is concentrated in non-high school graduates. GAO found that better educated and more intelligent people are, on the whole, better able to adjust to military life and are far less likely to go AWOL. The services divide applicants into five mental categories. In GAO's study group, AWOL rates for service members with less than 30 months' service ranged from a low of 1 percent for Air Force high school graduates in the highest mental category to a high of 60 percent for Marine Corps non-high school graduates in the lowest mental category. (See pp. 55 to 57.)

Overall, those not completing high school

- go AWOL about five times as often as high school graduates (see pp. 11 and 56),
- account for much of the cost to operate military courts and confinement facilities, (see p. 44),
- have a proficiency rate which develops at a much slower pace than high school graduates (see pp. 11, 59, and 60), and
- have a low probability of completing their enlistment with most being discharged at about the time the Government has maximized its investment in them. (See pp. 11 and 58.)

Because high school graduates are more cost effective than non-high school graduates, GAO's study shows that considerably more could be spent to recruit them. (See pp. 64 and 67.)

Recommendation to the Secretary of Defense

The Secretary should determine the relative cost effectiveness of the groups (high school and non-high school graduates for the various mental categories) recruited in each service based on their attrition and proficiency rates. This assessment should be used to determine the extent to which more could be spent to attract cost-effective people. (See p. 67.)

JOBS AFFECT AWOL RATES

GAO found that jobs affect AWOL rates regardless of education level and mental ability. People assigned to low-skill or undesirable jobs have much higher AWOL rates than people assigned to higher skill jobs which are generally viewed as more desirable and challenging. Although better educated and more intelligent people go

AWOL less often than others in the same jobs, their AWOL rates increase as the skill level of their job decreases. (See p. 73.) Also, recent research in the Navy shows that such factors as leadership support, work group cooperation, professional esprit de corps, and job challenge affect AWOL. (See pp. 76 and 77.)

The Department of Defense told GAO that each of the services has ongoing efforts in this area ranging from job enrichment programs to expanded training programs and increased attention to initiatives aimed at reducing early attrition. (See p. 78.)

AWOL IS A COMPLEX PROBLEM NEEDING
INCREASED MANAGEMENT ATTENTION

In dealing with AWOL, the services are faced with a complex problem because of the variety of factors impacting on it. AWOL rates by themselves are not necessarily reliable indicators of how effectively the services are in persuading people not to go AWOL.

A low AWOL rate may reflect sound personnel leadership, good management, and an effective system of punishments which deters and rehabilitates. On the other hand, a low rate may reflect success in recruiting high school graduates and the quick separation of AWOL-prone people. (See pp. 9 and 10.)

The services have, with the exception of the Navy, enjoyed decreases in their AWOL rates in recent years. But these decreases generally have been accompanied by increases in the number of high school graduates recruited and personnel with an AWOL record separated before the end of their enlistment. (See pp. 8 and 9.) Forecasts are pessimistic concerning the number of high school graduates the services will be able to recruit in the years ahead. Should these forecasts prove accurate and the recently instituted attrition goals remain, GAO believes that

AWOL is likely to become more serious and could reduce overall military effectiveness. (See pp. 12 and 60 to 63.)

Recommendations to the Secretary of Defense

Because AWOL is a serious, costly, and complex problem, GAO recommends that the Secretary exercise leadership and oversight in developing and maintaining a methodical and coherent approach for dealing with AWOL encompassing the life cycle of the problem--recruit quality, military justice training, jobs, punishment for the offense, and separation of offenders--and the interrelationships between these components. (See p. 15.)

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Department of Defense was given an opportunity to study GAO's preliminary report, verify the accuracy of the data presented, and discuss it with GAO. Its comments and observations have been considered in the report's final preparation. (See app. XIII.)

The Department of Defense stated that the report presented a broad review of many aspects of the AWOL problem. However, it also stated that the report was misleading because GAO did not compare the costs of AWOL between the draft and All-Volunteer Force eras. GAO disagrees that the report is misleading. The review was intentionally designed to exclude any service members who had been conscripted to serve so that GAO could provide an accurate analysis of the costs and seriousness of AWOL under the present force structure.

The Department of Defense agreed with many of GAO's recommendations, including the fact that the current program is not totally effective in preventing AWOL and repeat offenses. The Department of Defense stated that a number of recommendations would require further evaluation. However, it did not agree

with the recommendations to establish guidance for levels of disposition and quantities of punishment for various lengths of AWOL, to eliminate the administrative discharges in lieu of court-martial, or to issue discharges without service characterization to individuals not serving a minimum number of months.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AWOL	absence without leave
DOD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
GAO	General Accounting Office

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM

Absence without leave (AWOL) is the most frequently committed crime in the military. During the 4-year period ended June 30, 1977, the services reported 608,000 AWOL incidents exceeding 24 hours.

AWOL, a crime unique to the military, is defined by articles 85, 86, and 87 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. 1/ Initially, each unauthorized absence is classified as AWOL. When people are AWOL for 30 days, and in certain circumstances for less than 30 days, the military administratively classifies them as deserters. Legally, a person is not a deserter until charged with and found guilty of desertion. In this report, "AWOL" refers to all unauthorized absences exceeding 24 hours.

WHY AWOL IS A CRIME

Although not explained in any military publication, service representatives we talked with generally stated that AWOL is an act of disobedience which cannot be tolerated in developing and maintaining a disciplined and effective fighting force. Thus, AWOL was made a crime to deter people from committing this breach of discipline.

There is considerable support for this rationale. The Supreme Court 2/ has stated that the law of the military is obedience.

"This Court has long recognized that the military is, by necessity, a specialized society separate from civilian society. * * * The differences between the military and civilian communities result from the fact that 'it is the primary business of armies and navies to fight or be ready to fight wars should the occasion arise.' * * * 'An army is not a deliberative body. It is an executive arm. Its law is that of obedience. No question can be left open as to the right to command in the officer, or the duty of obedience in the soldier.' More recently we noted that 'the military constitutes a specialized community governed by a separate discipline from

1/10 U.S.C. 885, 886, and 887. (See app. II.)

2/Parker, Warden, et al. v. Levy, 417 U.S.C. 733 (1974).

that of the civilian,' * * * and that 'the rights of men in the armed forces must perforce be conditioned to meet certain overriding demands of discipline and duty * * *.'

Maintaining discipline is a key factor in developing an effective and obedient force. This is explained in an Army study 1/ as follows:

"The mission of the Armed Forces is to maintain a state of readiness during periods of peace, and when the occasion arises, to engage in armed combat. In this milieu, the question of morale and discipline is crucial. '* * * To the military man discipline * * * means an attitude of respect for authority developed by precept and by training. Discipline--a state of mind which leads to a willingness to obey an order no matter how unpleasant the task to be performed * * *. Development of this state of mind among soldiers is a command responsibility and a necessity. In the development of discipline, correction of individuals is indispensable; in correction, fairness or justice is indispensable.'"

One researcher 2/ explained why it is important for military members to be where they are supposed to be and when they are supposed to be there, as follows:

"When military organizations are established, the first requisite of their functioning at all is that they have personnel. And it is essential to the accomplishment of their mission that those personnel not only be assigned, but that they also actually be where they are supposed to be at the time they are supposed to be there. If each member of a military organization decided for himself where he would be and when, any attempt to carry on any of the organization's functions must invariably break down from the ensuing chaos. If each member came

1/The Committee for Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Administration of Military Justice, "Report to General William C. Westmoreland," Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, June 1, 1971.

2/Alfred Avins, "The Law of AWOL," (New York: Oceana Publications, 1957).

and went as he pleased, no one could rely on the performance by anyone else of his duties, and the first essentials of organization could not be carried on. To deter personnel from abandoning their duties, absence therefrom without authority is an offense, for without such a deterrent, the strength of such organizations must inevitably disintegrate and disappear. Hence the law requires every member of a military organization to be where he is supposed to be at the time he is supposed to be there."

THE COST OF AWOL

We estimate that AWOL cost the Government \$1.1 billion during the 4-year period ended June 30, 1977. More significant, however, is the potential effect of AWOL on military effectiveness. Individual excellence and the overall quality of the service is determined by training, discipline, morale, and motivation. Collectively they establish combat capability--the ultimate measure of military effectiveness. AWOL seriously damages this capability by adversely affecting unit effectiveness and mission readiness.

Although the military has not quantified AWOL's effect, commanders we talked with said that it:

- Reduces the amount of training the individual would otherwise receive, thus weakening his ability to perform.
- Lowers the morale of those who are present for duty and must perform the tasks assigned to the AWOL individual as well as their own duties.
- Makes effective unit performance difficult to attain because of the unpredictable absence of personnel.
- Consumes an inordinate amount of the commander's time that would otherwise be devoted to providing leadership and supervision.

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the services do not routinely accumulate data needed to compute the dollar cost of AWOL. Our \$1.1 billion estimate, shown below, is based on detailed analysis of AWOL data in our 12-month study period ended in 1975 and adjusted for the other 3 years based on changes in pay and the number of AWOL incidents.

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>Cost</u> (millions)
1974	\$ 327.0
1975	308.9
1976	255.1
1977	<u>220.8</u>
Total	<u>\$1,111.8</u>

Most of this dollar cost is for recruitment and training lost. Other cost elements included in our estimate are the costs of reporting the offense and apprehending, processing, court-martialing, and confining AWOL offenders. In our 1975 base year, AWOL accounted for about 37 percent of 37,564 court-martial cases. Details of our estimates are shown in appendix III.

The individual also pays a price in terms of the punishment he receives for the offense. An even greater price is paid to the extent that there are inequities in that punishment. Even though AWOL is not a crime in the civilian sector, a person committing the offense in the military can establish a criminal record and suffer the stigma of a less-than-honorable discharge upon return to civilian life.

PUNISHMENTS AUTHORIZED
FOR AWOL ARE SEVERE

The Code delegated to the President authority to establish maximum punishments which he has done in the Manual for Courts-Martial (Executive Order 11476). The Manual provides that during peacetime, the maximum punishments for AWOL over 30 days are up to 1 year confinement, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and a dishonorable discharge. Many lesser forms of punishment are authorized for AWOL under 30 days, including confinement, correctional custody, restriction, extra duties, reduction in rank, fine, detention of pay, reprimand, and admonition. Penalties authorized during wartime are more severe. They were not changed when enlistment in the services became voluntary in 1973.

The Code authorizes the following levels of disposition for dealing with AWOL, each with increasing punishment authority.

- Nonjudicial punishment. Among the punishments authorized are admonition or reprimand, reduction in rank, and forfeiture of one-half pay for 2 months.

- Summary court-martial. The maximum punishments authorized are reduction in rank, confinement for 1 month, and forfeiture of two-thirds pay for 1 month.
- Special court-martial. The maximum punishments authorized are reduction in rank, confinement for 6 months, forfeiture of two-thirds pay for 6 months, and a bad conduct discharge.
- General court-martial. Any punishment up to the maximum authorized for the offense can be imposed, including a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE DISCHARGE SYSTEM TO CRIMINAL WRONGDOING

The military characterizes an individual's service through the discharge system. In descending order of desirability, service can be characterized as (1) honorable, (2) general, (3) under other than honorable conditions, (4) bad conduct, and (5) dishonorable. The first three types are determined administratively; the latter two are punitive and can only be imposed by a court-martial.

Criminal offenses can be dealt with under the administrative discharge system by a discharge in lieu of court-martial. Such a discharge can be requested by the accused after seeking advice from counsel. Service regulations call for individuals requesting a discharge in lieu of court-martial to receive a discharge under other than honorable conditions unless a less severe discharge can be justified. Since no judicial finding is made against alleged offenders, they do not establish a criminal record.

After the individual is convicted and punished for the crime of AWOL, the services may also administratively discharge him, where the total record justifies such action, for reasons of unsuitability or misconduct. Service members separated for unsuitability may receive either an honorable or general discharge. Those separated for misconduct may receive an honorable, general, or under other than honorable conditions discharge. To be separated for misconduct, an individual is entitled to an administrative discharge board hearing which must determine from the individual's military record that he is unqualified for further service based on patterns of conduct and certain acts or conditions, including convictions in civil or military courts.

REVIEW APPROACH

This review was undertaken to evaluate actions being taken to deal with AWOL, the most frequently committed crime in the military and one of the discipline-related crimes unique to the military. Our search of the literature showed that research had been carried out on various aspects of AWOL, such as causes, screening out of AWOL-prone individuals before enlistment, and the relationship between leadership and AWOL.

Early in our review, we found that little was known about the type and quantity of punishments being imposed for the offense, to what extent AWOL individuals become successful soldiers, and the overall cost of AWOL. In addition, there was an absence of comparative data among the services on the length of time people are AWOL and the differing rates of AWOL by quality of people recruited. Thus, we had to build an extensive data base to analyze the problem and determine how the services were dealing with it.

In each of the services, we selected a random sample of AWOL incidents terminated over a 12-month period ended in 1975, and later followed up to determine the punishment imposed and subsequent performance on return to duty. To determine what attributes distinguish people who are most apt to go AWOL, we compared a random sample of people who had not gone AWOL with the AWOL study group.

CHAPTER 2

WHY THE PROBLEM IS COMPLEX

AND REQUIRES INCREASED ATTENTION

Studies done by the military show that an individual's decision to go AWOL is influenced by factors such as personal problems, poor interpersonal relations, job dissatisfaction, poor leadership, alcohol/drug involvement, immaturity, and the inability to adjust to military life. These studies tend to characterize the typical AWOL offender as an 18- to 19-year old male with less than a high school education and a history of disciplinary problems and family instability. The typical offender has probably failed to successfully complete any major undertaking, and his performance in the military is an extension of that trend. He reacts to the demands of life by simply going "over the hill."

While individuals who fit this profile may be most likely to go AWOL, the problem exists to varying degrees with people of all backgrounds, education levels, and intelligence working in all types of jobs in every type of military organization. People recruited into the military come from all ethnic groups and economic levels of society and are affected by the same economic, societal, and psychological problems and attitudes that exist within the civilian community. They are recruited from an age group that is susceptible to disciplinary problems. But specific reasons why some individuals go AWOL and others do not are difficult to assess.

Our analysis of AWOL encompassed DOD and the services' recruit policies and practices relating to recruit quality, military justice training, jobs, punishment for the offense, and separation of AWOL offenders--the life cycle of the problem. In turn, each of these components is affected by

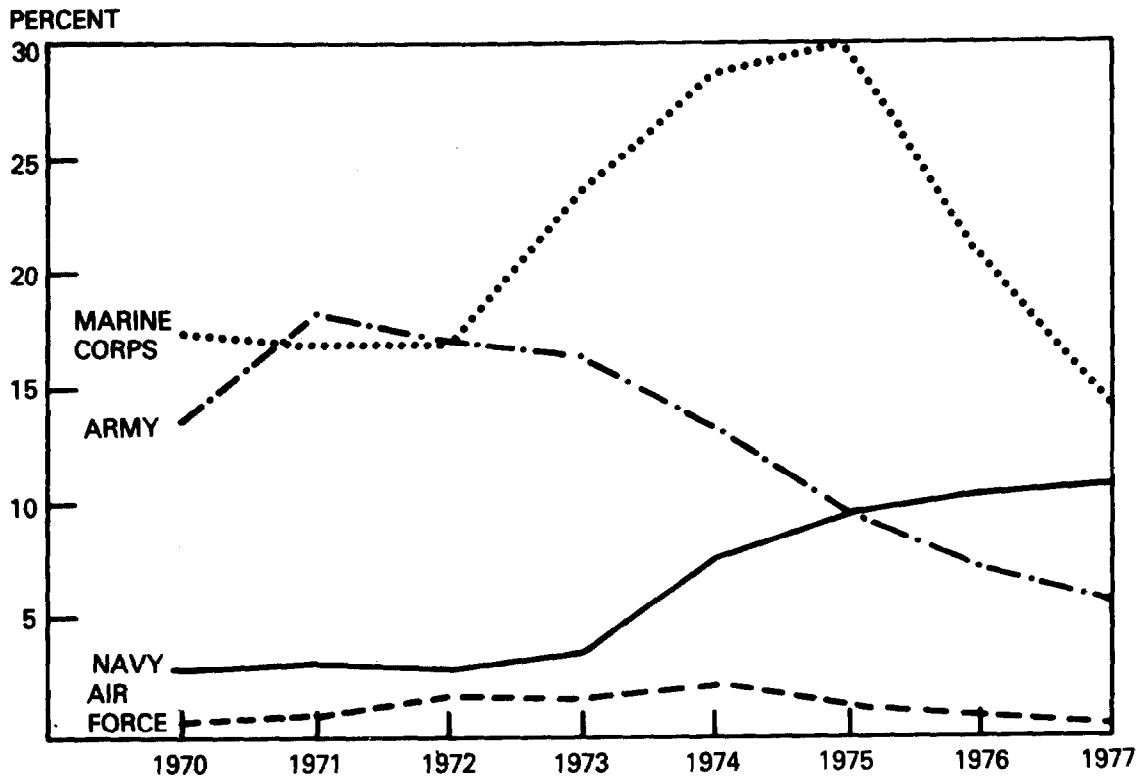
- service missions, organizations, policies, and types and composition of skills needed;
- organizational climate and overall quality of life which includes leadership support and personnel management practices; and
- institutional factors beyond the control of the services ranging from congressional actions to executive decisions within DOD.

We made no attempt to isolate the influence of any of the above items which affect the AWOL problem. The components of the problem addressed in our study are presented in order of importance rather than adhering to the life cycle of the problem.

AWOL TRENDS

Substantial differences exist in the AWOL rates ^{1/} of the four services. As the following chart shows, the Navy rate has steadily increased from a little under 3 percent in 1970 to almost 11 percent in 1977. During the same period, the Air Force experienced a relatively low rate of AWOL, but the Army showed a decline from 18 percent in 1971 to a little over 5 percent in 1977. The Marine Corps rate rose dramatically to 30 percent in 1975 and fell just as dramatically to 14 percent by 1977. However, the Marine Corps continues to experience the highest AWOL rates.

AWOL RATES BY FISCAL YEAR



^{1/}Total AWOLs during a year exceeding 24 hours expressed as a percentage of average monthly enlisted end-strength.

Further analysis shows that 72 percent of the AWOL incidents were for 4 days or more and 75 percent were committed by people with 24 months' service or less.

Since 1974, the services have, on the average, recruited more qualified people than in the preceding years. Also, aggressive action has been taken to separate substandard personnel before the end of their enlistment. This appears to account for much of the decline in the rate of AWOL. The one exception to this downward trend is the Navy which is experiencing the highest AWOL rate in its history.

FACTORS AFFECTING AWOL RATES

AWOL rates by themselves are not a reliable indicator of how effective the services are in persuading people not to go AWOL. Such rates reflect not one, but a mixture of several factors which affect AWOL. For example, a low AWOL rate may reflect sound personnel leadership, good management, and an effective system of punishments which deters and rehabilitates. On the other hand, a low AWOL rate may reflect success in recruiting high school graduates (who are not as likely to go AWOL as non-high school graduates) and the quick separation of people with an AWOL record who would likely go again if they were not discharged. Should the latter situation be the case, the basic problem of persuading people not to go AWOL has not been dealt with. Instead, the AWOL rate has been reduced by bringing in fewer AWOL-prone individuals and by separating those who do go AWOL.

Recruit quality and policies regarding the separation of people are interrelated, and changes made to either affect the AWOL rate. The most dramatic increase in the AWOL rate would occur if the services brought in a higher proportion of non-high school graduates and discontinued administrative separations before enlistments ended--the services' primary mechanism for removing people who persist in going AWOL. The larger the number of AWOL-prone people in the services and the longer they remain, the greater the AWOL rate. Conversely, enlisting only high school graduates and removing all barriers to the expeditious separation of people who go AWOL should greatly alleviate the problem. But swinging too far in either direction has serious drawbacks. Hasty separation of AWOL offenders with potential for adjusting to military life is costly in terms of recruiting and training lost. But keeping offenders who have demonstrated little chance of adjusting is disruptive in terms of unit morale and effectiveness, adds to the military

courts' workload, and increases the costs of operating confinement facilities.

Recent reductions in AWOL rates have been accompanied by increases in the number of high school graduates recruited and in the proportion of people separated before the end of their enlistment. To illustrate, in 1975 the Marine Corps acknowledged it had a personnel quality problem. Its AWOL and desertion rates were significantly higher than those of the other services. These and other problems were felt to stem from the past acceptance of excessive numbers of low-quality applicants. As a result, the Marine Corps:

- Reinstated quality recruiting goals and increased the required number of high school graduates to a level higher than it had been in several years; all enlistees were to have at least a 10th grade education.
- Introduced stiffer reenlistment standards which reduced the number of first-term Marines recommended for reenlistment.
- Abolished obstacles tending to inhibit commanders from administratively discharging problem people and initiated an expeditious discharge program for marginal performers.

Subsequently, the Marine Corps reported that its AWOL rate dropped 28 percent and its desertion rate 24 percent between the first 5 months of fiscal year 1975 and the corresponding period in 1976.

As illustrated by the chart on the following page, the marked decrease in the Marine Corps AWOL rate since 1975 corresponds with a sharp increase in the percent of high school graduates enlisting and Marines discharged before the end of their enlistment for reasons indicating lack of success.

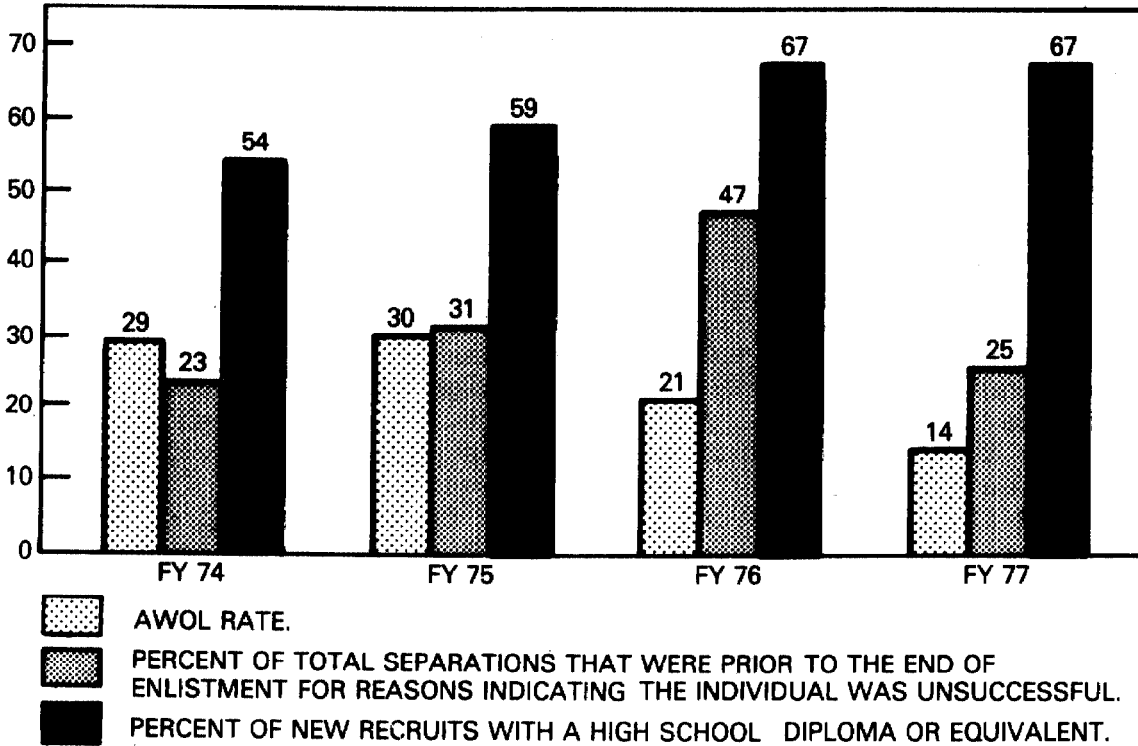
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PROBLEM

In analyzing our study group, certain features or characteristics of the AWOL problem discussed in the following chapters need to be highlighted:

- Most people who go AWOL do so early in their career; about two-thirds go within the first year.
- Most people who go AWOL do so more than once; about 83 percent in our study group went a second time and 65 percent went three or more times.

MARINE CORPS RECRUITING, SEPARATION AND AWOL TRENDS

PERCENT



--The AWOL rate among non-high school graduates is much higher than among high school graduates; during the first 24 months of service the rate for non-high school graduates was five times greater than for high school graduates and, on average, they committed their first AWOL offense earlier.

--On the average, the proficiency of non-high school graduates develops at a much slower pace than for high school graduates; non-high school graduates serve for significantly shorter periods and they are discharged at about the time the Government has maximized its investment in them. Additionally, non-high school graduates have a greater propensity for getting into trouble, which disrupts their training and detracts from the productivity of others. They account for much of the costs necessary to operate military courts and confinement facilities.

--Two out of every three AWOL offenders were separated during the Government's peak period of unrecouped investment.

The services seek high school graduates because they stay in the service longer and are more proficient; therefore, they are more cost effective than non-high school graduates. Since the services are in competition with civilian employers for high school graduates, success in recruiting adequate numbers of them is largely dependent on factors of supply and demand.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Since 1974, the services have generally been successful in recruiting increasing percentages of high school graduates; but recent recruiting results indicate a leveling of this trend. The Congressional Budget Office has forecasted that the number of male high school graduates which the services will be able to recruit will decline steadily if unemployment decreases as expected. Even at 7.5 percent unemployment, the Congressional Budget Office believes that the services will miss their recruiting objectives for high school graduates by about 20 percent; at 4-percent unemployment, the services will fall more than 40 percent short in achieving this objective by 1985.

In addition, DOD has introduced goals for the number of people who can be separated during their first enlistment to take effect in fiscal year 1978 and become progressively more restrictive. For fiscal years 1980 through 1983, the goal is to discharge no more than 23 percent of the high school graduates and 44 percent of the non-high school graduates during their first 3 years of service. In contrast, attrition rates recently experienced during the first 3 years of service averaged 28 percent for high school graduates and 54 percent for non-high school graduates. Accomplishing these goals could result in the retention of AWOL-prone personnel who, in the past, would have been separated before the end of their enlistment. Because most people who go AWOL become repeat offenders, such retention will surely increase AWOL.

OVERSIGHT BY THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

The need for the Secretary of Defense to take an active role in establishing policy and oversight in the area of AWOL was highlighted in the 1968 congressional hearings on military deserters. As a result, management oversight of AWOL and desertion problems was assigned to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) who was made responsible for:

- Developing procedures to accumulate information on service AWOL and desertion programs.

--Fostering the development of improved management practices and programs by the services to deter AWOL and desertion.

--Initiating and encouraging research on the causes of AWOL and desertion.

Responsibility for this work has been delegated to one official who has many other important responsibilities. At present, the work done by this official has been limited primarily to the collection of statistics from the services on the number of incidents and people involved.

Our study emphasizes the need for, among other things, collection of key data and analysis for the policymaking process. The lack of information in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and service headquarters led us to report 1/ to the Secretary of Defense that the military was spending about \$30 million a year to apprehend and process deserters, only to discharge most of them as unqualified for retention, in many cases shortly after their return to military jurisdiction. We concluded that it made "little sense" to incur the cost to apprehend deserters only to separate them, particularly when many returned voluntarily. Accordingly, we recommended that the Secretary of Defense "reexamine this policy and find less costly alternatives to present practices." We also set forth two alternatives he "could consider among others."

Based on that report, apprehension policies and practices were reevaluated. The Congress concluded that the services could more efficiently operate their apprehension program and reduced DOD's 1978 budget by 450 personnel spaces costing about \$6 million annually. Subsequently, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) told DOD and the Congress that it would no longer routinely apprehend deserters, which cost it about \$6 million annually. In letters to the Chairmen of the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations, dated May 27, 1978, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) stated that DOD and the services were reevaluating their apprehension practices and were planning a deserter apprehension program in which the FBI will play a limited role.

1/GAO Report to the Secretary of Defense, "Millions Being Spent to Apprehend Military Deserters Most of Whom are Discharged as Unqualified for Retention." (FPCD-77-16, Jan. 31, 1977)

The actions taken by the Congress, FBI, DOD, and the services to reevaluate the deserter apprehension program are in response to our principal recommendation in that report. The resulting restructuring of the program to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of available resources illustrates the benefits that can be realized when key data is available to decisionmakers.

CONCLUSIONS

AWOL is a complex problem because it is influenced by many factors. By themselves, AWOL rates are not a reliable indicator of the services' effectiveness in persuading people not to go AWOL. A major reason is that recruit quality and policies regarding separation are interrelated and changes made to either affect the AWOL rate. While there are many attributes that an effective and productive service member must have, DOD uses high school completion and mental aptitude scores as the best available measures of recruit quality.

Our study demonstrates that high school graduates, particularly those in the high mental categories, are far more cost effective than non-high school graduates. But the services are limited in the number of high school graduates they can recruit since, under the All-Volunteer Force, they must compete with civilian employers.

In recruiting sufficient numbers of people to meet end strength, the services may have to bring in increasing numbers of individuals who do not measure up to DOD's definition of a quality recruit. We believe that end strength should not be the dominate factor in establishing the quality of person the services are willing to accept since the ability to perform on the battlefield depends on quality as well as quantity of the force. Combat capability could actually be hurt by bringing in too many marginal performers in contrast to accepting some shortfall in troop population. We believe that AWOL is likely to become a more serious problem which could reduce overall military effectiveness in the years ahead should the pessimistic forecasts concerning the number of high school graduates the services will be able to recruit prove accurate and the recently instituted attrition goals remain.

DOD must exercise leadership and oversight in developing and maintaining a methodical and coherent approach for dealing with the life cycle of the AWOL problem--recruit quality, military justice training, jobs, punishment for the offense, and the separation of people with an

AWOL record. To be effective in carrying out this responsibility, it is essential that DOD obtain and analyze the information necessary to establish policy and for continuing policy reevaluation. Although DOD and the services routinely collect some of the data we used in our study, they do not use it as a basis for evaluating the seriousness of the problem or the effectiveness of present approaches. Other data critical to our study relating to punishments and cost is not now being collected. When sufficient information is developed in a proper format, it will be possible to (1) assess the seriousness of AWOL overall or for any organizational component and (2) make informed judgments concerning the effectiveness of the approaches to deal with AWOL.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Because AWOL is a serious, costly, and complex problem, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense:

- Give the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) the authority and resources necessary to exercise leadership and oversight in developing and maintaining a methodical and coherent approach for dealing with the AWOL problem. This approach should consider the life cycle of AWOL-- recruit quality, military justice training, jobs, punishment for the offense, and the separation of offenders, as well as the interrelationships between these components.
- Require data collection and reporting to provide information necessary to make informed policy judgments relating to the problem. This should enable the services to more accurately weigh the cost and benefits of present approaches as well as alternatives to existing policy.
- Require the services to develop criteria for determining the relative seriousness of AWOL, including the point at which it threatens combat capability.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

DOD stated that it generally concurs with our recommendations and will explore them more fully with the services. In our discussion with the services, we agreed that:

- To the extent possible, existing data systems and documentation should be used.

--It may be more cost effective to address AWOL as part of a larger study of attrition, productivity, or the administration of military justice. However, any such expanded study should be conducted expeditiously so as not to delay implementing our recommendations.

CHAPTER 3

PUNISHMENTS NEED TO BE MORE

PROBABLE AND PREDICTABLE

Although the military justice system authorizes severe punishment for dealing with AWOL, it also permits no punishment and provides no guidance on normal ranges of punishment between these two extremes. As a result, it is not surprising that we found wide differences in punishment imposed for AWOLs of similar length. For example, the most serious AWOL (over 30 days) was dealt with by administrative discharge in lieu of court-martial in 42 percent of the cases we examined; in the remaining cases it was dealt with as a minor offense as often as a serious offense. Thus, instead of being relatively sure that the most serious AWOL offense will result in severe punishment, military members can discern from the services' practices that the likelihood of severe punishment is low, and the chances for an administrative discharge are rather high. This approach lacks credibility and diminishes the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime. It also results in wide differences in dealing with similar cases of AWOL which is unfair to the individuals involved.

An important step in developing a fairer and more credible approach would be to establish norms for both the levels at which similar AWOL cases are disposed of and punishments imposed so that

--punishment is probable and the quantity reasonably predictable and

--people guilty of AWOLs of similar length would receive similar punishments.

We believe that deviations from the established norms must be permitted to deal with aggravating, mitigating, and extenuating circumstances incident to individual acts of AWOL. But such deviations should be the exception rather than the rule. Legislation would be needed to give the President the authority to provide guidance covering norms for disposition levels and punishments for various lengths of AWOL.

OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH AWOL, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON PUNISHMENTS

AWOL can be dealt with in a number of ways. Decisions on how to handle cases start with commanders who are responsible for investigating the circumstances. After considering such factors as the length of the AWOL, the past

record of the individual, and the state of morale and discipline in the unit, a commander must decide whether to excuse the individual, assess nonjudicial punishment (article 15), or recommend court-martial. If he refers the case up the chain of command with a recommendation to court-martial, his superior officers can convene one of three types of courts-martial (summary, special, or general). Sentencing is done in summary courts by the military officer appointed to hear the case and in special and general courts by either a judge or jury. An administrative discharge in lieu of court-martial may be approved for AWOL over 30 days.

The maximum quantity and type of punishment that can be imposed depends on two things. First, the Manual for Courts-Martial contains a table of maximum punishments authorized for each crime. Second, a specified maximum punishment authority is vested in each level of disposition--nonjudicial punishment and summary, special, and general courts-martial. Each level has increasing punishment authority with the general court-martial having the greatest authority, limited only by the maximum punishment established for each crime.

The Manual also authorizes various alternative punishments, such as confinement, restriction, and forfeiture of pay. It includes a table of equivalents for substituting one form of punishment for another. Using this table, we converted all punishments to a common base which we refer to as units of punishment. For example, the table shows that 2 days of restriction is equivalent to 1 day in confinement, each of which we converted to one unit of punishment. The table does not include equivalents for reduction in rank, bad conduct, or dishonorable discharges because other punishments cannot be substituted for them. Therefore, we developed equivalents. Our development of the equivalents and conversion of various punishments authorized to units of punishment are explained in appendix IX.

The maximum units of punishment authorized in the Manual for AWOL increases as the length of AWOL increases; that is, 3 days or less, 4 to 30 days, and more than 30 days. The level of court-martial authorized to impose the maximum punishment for these three categories of AWOL is shown on the following page.

<u>Length of AWOL in days</u>	<u>Maximum units of punishment authorized (note a)</u>	<u>Level of court- martial needed to impose the maximum punishment</u>
3 or less	66 to 80	Summary
4 to 30	309 to 327	Special
More than 30:		
--without discharge	745 to 755	General
--with bad conduct or dishonorable discharge	1,475 to 1,485	General

a/Units of punishment resulting from reductions in grade differ among the services because of variances in the average grade of people going AWOL. (See app. IX.)

As indicated in the above schedule, the maximum punishment which can be imposed for any particular AWOL is sometimes limited by the level of disposition selected. Thus, in selecting a level of disposition, a convening authority can ensure that the quantity of punishment imposed is less than the maximum authorized.

BROAD DISCRETION IN SELECTING DISPOSITION LEVELS

The Manual contains limited guidance to commanders and convening authorities for selecting an appropriate level of disposition for dealing with AWOL. For example, the Manual states the manner in which AWOL over 30 days is dealt with depends on how serious the commander and convening authority view the incident. They are to consider such factors as the length of the AWOL, the past record of the individual, and the state of morale and discipline of the unit. After considering these factors, the Manual suggests that the offense should ordinarily be dealt with at the lowest level having power to impose an appropriate and adequate punishment. If the convening authority concludes an AWOL is sufficiently serious to warrant separation from service with a punitive discharge, the Manual states that he must refer the case to a special or general court-martial which is empowered to impose such discharges. Thus, broad discretion is given in selecting an appropriate level of disposition.

GUIDANCE IS LACKING FOR DETERMINING APPROPRIATE PUNISHMENTS

The Manual does not provide any insights into the reasons for imposing punishment or what the punishment is supposed to

achieve. However, in 1968 the Senate Subcommittee on Treatment of Deserters from Military Service 1/ provided two principal considerations in imposing punishment. 2/

- The punishment must be sufficiently rigorous to help deter others from committing the crime.
- The punishment must be just to those who do not commit the crime which is an aspect of punishment too often overlooked or minimized. The overwhelming bulk of those who serve neither go AWOL nor desert. They do their duty. "Justice to this fighting man who does his duty without individual reward or recognition demands the firm and fair punishment of those who desert."

Although the Manual states that the maximum punishment authorized should be restricted to only those cases in which the aggravating circumstances justify imposition of the greatest permissible punishment, it provides no guidance to commanders, convening authorities, judges, and juries as to what punishments should be considered normal for AWOLs of specified lengths committed by service members with various numbers of prior convictions. Further, military representatives told us that issuance of such guidance would be unlawful command influence under article 37 of the Code which states:

"* * * No person subject to this chapter may attempt to coerce or * * * influence the action of a court-martial or any other military tribunal or any member thereof, in reaching the findings or sentence in any case, or the action of any convening, approving, or reviewing authority with respect to his judicial acts * * *."

The Code and Manual provide that determination of an appropriate and proper punishment rests within the discretion

1/Hearings before the Subcommittee on Treatment of Deserters From Military Service, Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, 90th Cong., 2d Sess., May 21 and 22, 1968.

2/"Treatment of Deserters from Military Service," Report of the Committee on Armed Services, U.S. Senate, by its Subcommittee on Treatment of Deserters From Military Service, 91st. Cong., 1st. Sess., March 11, 1969.

of a court-martial ^{1/} or, in the case of nonjudicial punishment, the commander. For example, paragraph 76 of the Manual requires that a sentence provide a legal, appropriate, and adequate punishment but it leaves such determination to the discretion of judges and juries. The Manual further states:

"Except for an offense for which a mandatory punishment is prescribed, the determination of a proper punishment for an offense rests within the discretion of the court. * * *" (Underscoring added.)

* * * * *

"Before a court-martial closes to deliberate and vote on the sentence, the military judge * * * must give appropriate instructions on the punishment, to include a statement of the maximum authorized punishment which may be imposed. * * * [The judge] should fully inform the members of the court-martial on their sole responsibility for selecting an appropriate sentence. * * *" (Underscoring added.)

The military services recognize that the discretion vested by the Code and Manual in commanders and courts-martial results in disparities in punishment for similar crimes. This is reflected in statements made by the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) in 1968 hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Treatment of Deserters from Military Service. He said:

"We have provided the subcommittee with information as to actions taken against those 40 absentees * * *. That information reveals a wide range of punishments, as might be expected in reviewing a group of sentences imposed in criminal proceedings over time and in many courts * * *.

"We have analyzed a random sampling of punishments administered in 375 so-called ordinary cases involving an absence of more than 30 days. These cases show the same [wide] range of punishments * * *.

^{1/}Such discretion also extends to convening and reviewing authorities responsible for approving sentences.

"We have no way of knowing the judgment factors that went into arriving at the punishment imposed in any of these cases. Under the independent judicial system established by law in the military services, free from unlawful command control, these matters are determined by military juries and officials administering military justice in accordance with their judicial prerogatives." (Underscoring added.)

The Subcommittee took the position that there should not be wide disparity in punishments for similar offenses. It recognized that punishments for individual offenses of desertion and prolonged AWOL must be determined on an individual basis considering the circumstances and nature of the crime. Nonetheless, the Subcommittee concluded that "due and sincere attention to the preservation of the rights" of each accused should not result in obvious and vast disparity in punishments for similar offenses. It observed that:

"* * * in order to adhere to the principle of 'equal justice before the law,' there should not be gross disparity in the severity of sentences for basically comparable offenses of desertion and prolonged unauthorized absence."

* * * * *

"* * * actual sentences should be generally in accord for comparable offenses. There should not be a discernable pattern of vastly different sentences for comparable offenses on the basis of geography or the military service concerned."

WIDE DIFFERENCES IN PUNISHMENTS IMPOSED FOR SIMILAR AWOLS

As could be expected given the broad discretion for dealing with AWOL, our analysis showed wide differences among and within the services in the level of disposition selected and punishments imposed for similar AWOLs. Some AWOLs were dealt with rather lightly while others in comparison were dealt with rather severely. However, on the average, punishments were substantially less than the maximum authorized. Therefore, AWOL overall was dealt with rather lightly when measured by the maximum punishment authorized--the only criteria available. To illustrate, the most serious cases--AWOL over 30 days--were dealt with about 70 times more often by administrative discharge in

lieu of court-martial, which is not designed as punishment, than by general court-martial which has authority to impose the maximum punishment. Contrary to what one might expect, punishment did not increase significantly as the number of convictions an individual has on his record increased.

Punishments imposed are substantially less than the maximum authorized

Analysis of AWOLs in our study group showed that, on the average, the punishment imposed is substantially less than the maximum authorized. As the length of single incidents of AWOL increases, punishment also increases, but not in proportion to the increase in the maximum punishment authorized. For example, the average units of punishment imposed for AWOL of 3 days or less ranged from 15 to 25 percent of the maximum authorized. But punishments imposed for AWOLs of 4 to 30 days ranged from about 7 to 11 percent of the maximum authorized. As shown on the following page, the average punishment did not exceed 25 percent of the maximum authorized in any service.

One reason punishments were substantially less than the maximum authorized is because commanders seldom referred cases to levels having authority to determine whether the maximum punishment should be imposed. Cases were referred to courts-martial having such authority less than 3 percent of the time. Maximum punishments were rarely imposed in these few cases. For example, out of the 987 cases of single incidents of AWOL over 30 days in our study group, only 2 were tried by general court-martial which can impose the maximum punishment of 1 year confinement, reduction in grade to E-1, total pay forfeitures, and a dishonorable discharge. As shown below, the maximum punishments were not imposed in either case.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Months confinement</u>	<u>Reduction in grade</u>	<u>Pay forfeitures</u>	<u>Type of discharge</u>
Army	8	E-2 to E-1	31% for 8 months	Bad conduct
Air Force	7	(a)	31% for 7 months	Bad conduct

a/Individual was an E-1.

**AVERAGE PERCENT OF MAXIMUM AUTHORIZED
PUNISHMENTS IMPOSED FOR SINGLE INCIDENTS OF AWOL**

LENGTH OF AWOL IN DAYS	UNITS OF PUNISHMENT		PERCENT OF MAXIMUM
	MAXIMUM AUTHORIZED	AVERAGE IMPOSED	
1 TO 3:			
AIR FORCE	80	18	23%
ARMY	67	17	25%
MARINE CORPS	66	10	15%
NAVY	67	14	21%
4 TO 30:			
AIR FORCE	327	29	9%
ARMY	312	33	11%
MARINE CORPS	312	23	7%
NAVY	309	29	9%
OVER 30: (EXCLUDING DISCHARGES)			
AIR FORCE	755	48	6%
ARMY	746	55	7%
MARINE CORPS	745	59	8%
NAVY	745	67	9%
OVER 30: (INCLUDING DISCHARGES)			
AIR FORCE	1,485	154	10%
ARMY	1,476	104	7%
MARINE CORPS	1,475	190	13%
NAVY	1,475	94	6%

a/ VARIES AMONG THE SERVICES DUE TO DIFFERENCES IN THE AVERAGE GRADE OF PEOPLE GOING AWOL RESULTING IN DIFFERING POSSIBLE DOLLAR LOSSES AND UNITS OF PUNISHMENT DUE TO REDUCTION IN GRADE (SEE APP. IX).

Differences in levels of disposition selected to deal with AWOLs of similar lengths

There were wide differences among and within the services in the level of disposition selected for dealing with AWOLs of similar length. Our analysis of the levels of disposition selected to deal with AWOLs over 30 days illustrates these differences. As shown in the following table, all levels of disposition were used but the discharge in lieu of court-martial was most frequently used. Less than 1 percent of the cases were referred to a general court-martial which has authority to determine whether the maximum punishment should be imposed.

Disposition of AWOL Offenses
Over 30 days (note a)

<u>Disposition</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Services combined</u>
	----- (percent) -----				
Discharge in lieu of court-martial	24.5	62.0	37.6	23.4	42.3
Nonjudicial punishment	35.1	11.0	15.0	27.7	17.3
Courts-martial:					
--Summary	0.0	5.5	6.3	7.3	6.3
--Special	39.5	13.6	26.9	31.4	23.4
--General	0.9	0.4	1.4	0.1	0.6
Other (note b)	0.0	7.5	12.8	10.1	10.1

a/Although most are single incidents of AWOL, some were combined for disposition with other AWOLs of varying lengths.

b/Includes instances where disposition (1) was not recorded in personnel records, (2) was not directly related to the incident (i.e., finalization of administrative or punitive discharge in process at time of the incident), or (3) may have been delayed pending return from subsequent absence. (The reason the Air Force is zero is due to difference in methodology as described on page 111.)

Differences in quantity and type of punishment imposed

The quantity of punishment imposed nonjudicially or by court-martial for AWOLs of similar length varied widely among and within the services. As shown below, for example, the vast majority of single incidents of AWOL over 30 days resulted in 50 or less units of punishment even though many received over 500 units of punishment and some received more than 1,000 units of punishment.

Units of Punishment Imposed for Single Incidents of AWOL Over 30 Days (note a)

Number of prior convictions	Service	Units of punishment					
		1 to 50	51 to 150	151 to 250	251 to 500	501 to 1,000	Over 1,000
----- (Percent of incidents) -----							
None	Air Force	66	22	2	2	8	-
	Army	54	39	5	-	-	2
	Marine Corps	46	24	7	3	17	3
	Navy	36	53	6	(b)	5	-
One	Air Force	31	31	-	-	31	7
	Army	65	24	8	-	3	-
	Marine Corps	32	48	-	-	20	-
	Navy	42	49	8	(b)	1	-
Two	Air Force	59	25	8	-	8	-
	Army	42	41	3	-	14	-
	Marine Corps	49	25	13	-	13	-
	Navy	26	61	6	2	4	1

a/Does not include instances where disposition (1) was not recorded in personnel records, (2) was not directly related to the incident (i.e., finalization of administrative or punitive discharge in process at time of the incident), or (3) may have been delayed pending return from subsequent absence.

b/Less than 0.5 percent.

The types of punishment imposed for AWOL also varied among the services. As previously shown, a discharge in

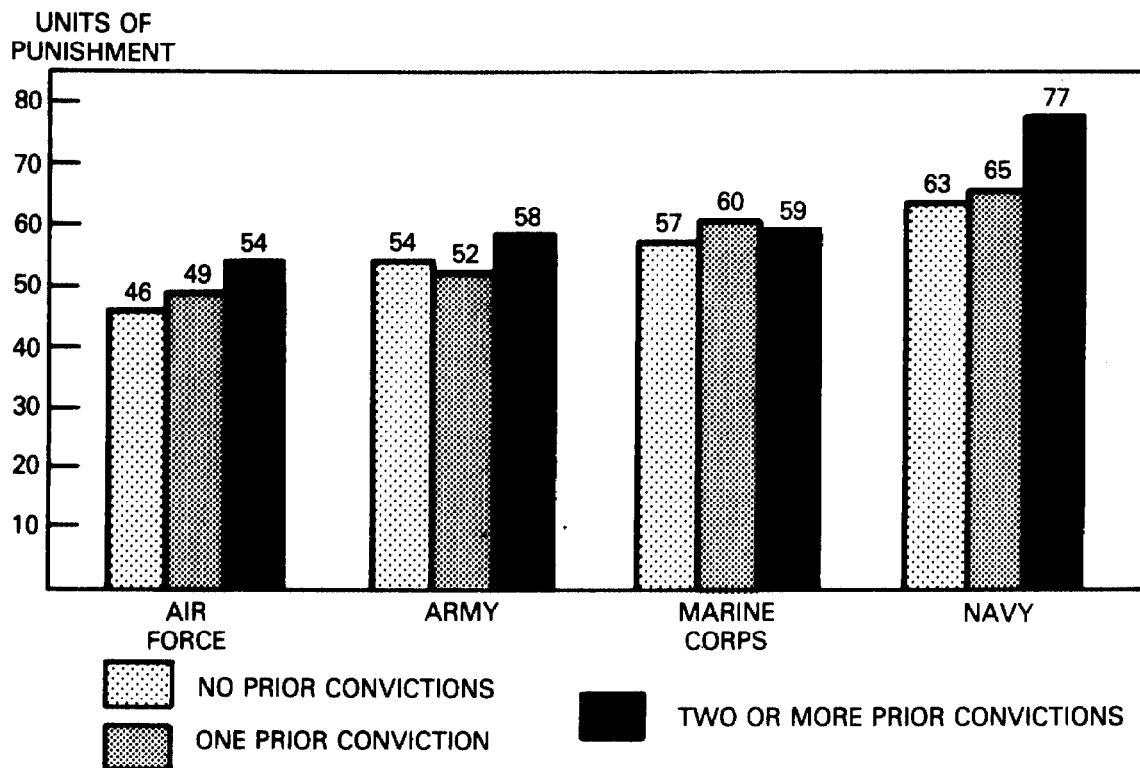
lieu of court-martial was frequently used to deal with incidents of AWOL over 30 days. However, the frequency varied widely among the services. Analysis of punishments for single incidents of AWOL over 30 days imposed nonjudicially or by summary, special, or general courts-martial showed that the type of punishment also varies among the services. For example, the Marine Corps most frequently imposed a bad conduct discharge and/or confinement whereas the Air Force, Army, and Navy most often imposed reduction in grade by itself or combined with lesser forms of punishment. (See app. X.)

Our analysis also disclosed that some punishments were seldom used. Detention of pay was used in only 17 of the 6,269 cases reviewed.

Punishments do not change significantly regardless of prior convictions

Although the Manual authorizes increasing punishments as the number of convictions increase, our analysis showed that the average units of punishment changed little regardless of the number of prior convictions (including nonjudicial punishments). These comparisons are shown in the following chart.

AVERAGE PUNISHMENTS IMPOSED FOR SINGLE INCIDENTS OF AWOL OVER 30 DAYS WHEN NO DISCHARGE IS IMPOSED



DEALING WITH AWOL OUTSIDE OF THE
CODE DAMAGES DETERRENT POTENTIAL

AWOL is a crime and the mechanism for dealing with it is set forth in law. However, DOD Directive 1332.14 authorizes an individual accused of AWOL over 30 days--the most serious AWOL offenses--to request an administrative discharge rather than risk the consequences of a court-martial. If a discharge is approved by the discharge authority, the individual is assured of (1) expeditious separation with no worse than a discharge under other than honorable conditions and (2) not receiving a Federal conviction, confinement, or a punitive discharge.

Since the intent of the administrative discharge system is to characterize an individual's service and not to punish, we believe that the use of an administrative discharge to deal with service members involved in criminal wrongdoing damages the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime. Nonetheless, administratively discharging service members to avoid court-martial is the most frequently used means of dealing with AWOL over 30 days.

While not designed as punishment, the services recognize the serious stigma that can result from a discharge in lieu of court-martial. Although such discharges can be honorable or general, about 90 percent result in a discharge under other than honorable conditions. Such a discharge can limit opportunities for civilian employment. It also adversely affects eligibility for veterans' benefits.

Administrative separation to avoid a court-martial would undoubtedly be a deterrent to those who want to avoid the stigma of a discharge under other than honorable conditions. But some may view any administrative separation as desirable regardless of the service characterization. For those people, the option of a discharge in lieu of court-martial could encourage AWOL rather than deter it.

As discussed in our prior report, 1/ we believe that such discharges are not in the best interests of the individual, the military, or society. The fact that similar AWOLs can be disposed of under the Code or by administrative separation means that people accused of the same crime can

1/Report to the Congress, "Eliminate Administrative Discharges in Lieu of Court-Martial: Guidance For Plea Agreements in Military Courts is Needed." (FPCD-77-47, Apr. 28, 1978)

receive vastly different treatment. We believe the discharge in lieu of court-martial is unfair to the recipient because it does not provide the safeguards the Congress intended in making AWOL a crime. It is also unfair to those whose request for such a discharge is not approved and are forced to face court-martial and its potential consequences.

THE APPROACH FOR DEALING WITH
AWOL HAS NOT BEEN EFFECTIVE
IN DETERRING REPEAT OFFENDERS

Our analysis shows that present practices have not been effective in deterring people from repeating the offense. As shown below, people who go AWOL once have a high probability of going again. 1/

--In the Marine Corps, 88 percent went AWOL a second time, 75 percent went 3 times, and 12 percent went 10 or more times.

--In the Navy, 84 percent went AWOL a second time, 67 percent went 3 times, and 8 percent went 10 or more times.

--In the Army, 80 percent went AWOL a second time, 56 percent went 3 times, and 4 percent went 10 or more times.

SERVICES DO NOT EVALUATE CONSISTENCY
AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PUNISHMENTS

None of the services analyze the quantity and types of punishment imposed for various categories of AWOL or other crimes to determine the extent that punishments are consistent or effective. The Air Force has an Automated Military Justice Analysis and Management System which records information on each alleged violation of the Code, including details on disposition and punishment. Although the system could provide data periodically to evaluate the consistency and effectiveness of punishments imposed, it is used primarily for managing caseloads and preparing workload reports. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps do not have a comparable system.

1/Data not developed for the Air Force.

OTHERS SUGGEST CHANGE IN
THE SENTENCING PROCESS

In a presentation to the American Bar Association in 1974, the Judge Advocate General of the Army discussed the state of the art in determining an appropriate punishment. ^{1/} He suggested that individuals responsible for sentencing should be provided with the appropriate alternatives and the "proper means to effect a sentence tailored to individual needs, as well as the needs of the military and those of society in general." He made the following overall observations calling for discussion and change.

"While the law surrounding the sentencing process has evolved greatly over the years, in many respects, to a point where there is little resemblance to what it was even 50 years ago, there is uncertainty as to how sentences should be determined."

* * * * *

"In this whole area of sentences and sentencing, we have for too long had little serious questioning, fewer answers, and even less action. What we need more than anything else right now is thought and discussion, with a view toward change."

The 95th Congress considered reform in sentencing in the civilian sector. Two bills--S.1437 and H.R. 13959--would have created an independent United States Sentencing Commission in the judicial branch. A principal responsibility of the Commission would be to establish sentencing ranges. A judge would be required to explain the reasons for the sentence imposed. The sentence could be appealed by the defendant if it exceeded the sentencing range or by the prosecution if it was below the range. Both bills are expected to be introduced for reconsideration in the 96th Congress.

CONCLUSIONS

There is a wide range of options for dealing with similar AWOL cases. The military justice system authorizes

^{1/}Major General George S. Prugh's presentation "Evolving Military Law: Sentences and Sentencing" was later printed in "The Army Lawyer," Department of the Army Pamphlet 27-50-24, Dec. 1974.

severe punishments and it permits no punishment. Further, there is no guidance on normal ranges of punishment between these two extremes. It is not surprising, given this broad discretion, that wide variances exist in the disposition of similar AWOL cases.

- There are wide differences in the level of disposition selected for similar AWOLs and the quantity of punishment imposed.
- Few cases are referred to a level with authority to determine whether the maximum punishment should be imposed.
- Average punishments imposed are substantially less than the maximum punishments authorized.
- The average quantity of punishment does not increase significantly regardless of the number of prior convictions.

Collectively, we found that the services have dealt with the crime of AWOL rather lightly when measured by the maximum punishments authorized--the only criteria available. Commanders have often elected to approve requests for administrative discharges in lieu of court-martial for the most serious AWOLs (over 30 days) rather than send the individual to a court-martial with authority to determine whether the maximum punishment should be imposed. Separation may be the objective some people are seeking and they may view such a discharge, at least in the short term, as a reward. This approach lacks credibility and damages the deterrent potential sought in making AWOL a crime.

Although we did not attempt to measure the extent that service members are deterred from going AWOL the first time, our review clearly shows that present practices have had little effect in deterring people from becoming repeat offenders. We believe a chief contributing factor is that service members can discern that the likelihood for severe punishment is low and the chance for an administrative discharge is rather high. We believe that greater deterrence would be gained by dealing with all AWOL offenses under the Code. But it is not possible to know until the services consistently use the system established by law to deal with criminal offenses.

It would be possible to decriminalize AWOL and deal with the problem entirely through administrative sanctions. Military representatives told us, however, that this was not a

viable option. Yet the present range of options is too broad to ensure that AWOL is dealt with consistently and firmly so that people perceive it as a serious offense. Also, because the most serious AWOL cases are most frequently dealt with by an administrative discharge to avoid court-martial, the services' practices have tended to decriminalize the offense.

DOD and the services must settle on a more methodical and coherent approach to effectively deal with AWOL offenses. A credible approach requires that punishment be probable and the quantity reasonably predictable. Therefore, norms should be established for levels of disposition and punishments. These should vary based on factors such as the length of AWOL and prior convictions. We recognize that deviations from these norms must be permitted to deal with unusual aggravating, mitigating, or extenuating circumstances incident to individual acts of AWOL. But such deviations should be the exception rather than the rule. A credible and fair approach for dealing with AWOL should require that people with similar AWOL records receive similar punishments. Establishing norms for levels of disposition and punishment is an important first step in achieving this objective. This action would require DOD to evaluate the validity of existing maximum authorized punishments for AWOL.

Norms for disposition levels and punishment would fill a void in guidance and be beneficial to those having responsibility for maintaining good order and discipline in the services--commanders, convening authorities, judges, and juries. Also, service members would know what punishment they could reasonably expect if they went AWOL. This feature is nonexistent in the present system where the authorized punishments range from zero to very severe, with the maximum having little meaning since it rarely, if ever, is imposed.

Currently, DOD and the services know little about how the crime of AWOL is dealt with and how those responsible for making these decisions are exercising the broad discretionary powers vested in them. To exercise its leadership role in setting personnel policy, we believe that DOD needs to know how the services are dealing with AWOL and the extent that punishments imposed are consistent and effective. Only then can the need for changes to achieve greater deterrence be recognized and dealt with on an informed basis. Achieving this objective requires that the services develop the means for collecting and evaluating data on punishments

imposed for AWOL. At present, only the Air Force has such a system but it is not used for evaluating punishments imposed or their effectiveness.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE CONGRESS

The Congress should revise article 56 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice to authorize the President to provide guidance for determining disposition levels and punishments for AWOL offenses.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

We recommend that the Secretary:

- Propose to the President changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial establishing norms for (1) level of disposition (nonjudicial or summary, special, or general court-martial) and (2) quantity of punishment for the different lengths of AWOL (3 days or less, 4 to 30 days, and over 30 days). The level of disposition and punishment quantity should vary based on such factors as the length of the AWOL and the number of prior convictions. Deviations from the norms should be permitted where justified by aggravating, mitigating, or extenuating circumstances. Acting on this recommendation would first require the Congress to revise article 56 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice as recommended above.
- Direct the services to evaluate periodically the consistency and effectiveness of the quantity and type of punishments imposed to determine whether changes to the Manual for Courts-Martial should be recommended to the President. Such evaluations should also be helpful to the Court of Military Appeals and the Judge Advocates General in preparing their annual report to the Congress, including recommendations on uniformity of policies in sentencing and other matters, as required by article 67(g) of the Code. Guidance should be sufficiently definitive to ensure that these evaluations are uniformly done by the services.
- Revise the DOD directive on administrative discharges to eliminate the discharge in lieu of court-martial. This same recommendation was made in a recent GAO report (FPCD-77-47, Apr. 28, 1978) directed at insuring that criminal offenses are dealt with under the safeguards and protections of the Code. In this

report, the recommendation is directed at helping the services achieve the deterrent potential intended in making AWOL a crime.

--Seek and propose to the President for inclusion in the Manual alternative types of punishment that might be more effective in dealing with AWOL. For example, although not now authorized, pay could be detained with provision for future return to the individual provided the individual stays out of trouble for a specified period of time.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

DOD, in its overall comments, stated that the report presented a broad review of many aspects of the AWOL problem. However, it also stated that the report was misleading because we did not compare the costs of AWOL between the draft and All-Volunteer Force eras. We disagree that the report is misleading. The review was intentionally designed to exclude any service members who had been conscripted to serve so that we could provide an accurate analysis of the costs and seriousness of AWOL under the present force structure.

DOD also stated our implication in the preliminary report that the current approach to AWOL lacks credibility appears unsupported. DOD agreed that the current program is not totally effective in preventing AWOL and repeat offenders. However, it stated that disciplinary rates have improved under the All-Volunteer Force and AWOL related costs have been decreasing yearly.

We agree that AWOL rates and their related costs have declined, but these factors need to be put in proper perspective. As discussed in chapter 2, the problem is complex because many factors influence it. For example, policy changes regarding recruit quality and the separation of people affect the AWOL rate. Therefore, AWOL rates by themselves do not provide a reliable indicator of how effectively the services are dealing with the problem and persuading people not to go AWOL. Since 1974, the services have, on the average, recruited more qualified people than they did in the preceding years. Also, aggressive action has been taken to separate, before the end of their enlistment, substandard recruits who account for much of the AWOL problem. We believe this has accounted for much of the decline in the AWOL rate. Therefore, we do not agree with DOD that the decline in AWOL rates necessarily has any direct connection with increased success on the part of the services in persuading people not to go AWOL.

Seek legislation authorizing the President to establish norms for levels of disposition and punishment quantities for various AWOLS

DOD did not take a position on this recommendation but noted that it has many potential ramifications that are contrary to the Code and current procedures and concepts. DOD also said that it represents a direct interference with the discretionary authority of the commander that would eventually be characterized as unlawful command influence.

We recognized that a change in law would be needed and recommended that the President be given authority, in addition to what he now has to set maximum punishments, for lawfully providing guidance for quantities of punishment for each crime. Issuance of such guidance would be helpful to commanders, convening authorities, judges, and juries in fulfilling their discretionary responsibilities.

Periodically review types and quantity of punishments imposed to determine consistency and effectiveness

DOD generally agrees with this recommendation and will more fully explore it with the services.

Eliminate the discharge in lieu of court-martial

DOD argues that this discharge is a valuable option for the services as well as the individual. It stated that the services are, however, considering a proposed change requiring that charges must be referred to trial by courts-martial before an individual can request such a discharge. DOD believes this change will require a more meaningful discussion between an accused and his defense counsel. The services told us that this discharge is beneficial to the individuals because it allows them to avoid a Federal conviction. Additionally, DOD stated that without the discharge in lieu of court-martial, an appreciable increase in staff and resources would be necessary.

We believe that the discharge in lieu of court-martial should be eliminated for the reasons previously stated. It damages the deterrent potential intended in making AWOL a crime by allowing the offense to be dealt with outside the judicial process. It may be unfair to an accused because it does not provide the safeguards the Congress established in

the Code. It may be unfair to those whose request for such a discharge is denied and are required to stand trial and its potentially severe consequences.

The proposed DOD procedural change will not have a significant effect on the use of the discharge in lieu of court-martial. While the Army's procedures are almost identical to the proposal, our study showed that 62 percent of those requesting such discharges in the Army received them.

We also believe that the overall implementation of our recommendations in this report will reduce total operating costs. Accepting that making AWOL a crime deters people from committing that act, then establishing a more credible system by eliminating the discharge in lieu of court-martial and establishing a fairer and more credible system for holding people accountable for that act should reduce AWOL and related costs. Additionally, implementation of our recommendations in the following chapters should also reduce costs.

Identify and authorize
alternative punishments
that might be more effective

DOD believes an adequate selection of punishments exists to allow military commanders the flexibility needed to administer punishments appropriate to each case.

DOD and the services should (1) periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the types and quantities of punishments being imposed and (2) identify new punishments that may be more effective and eliminating existing ones that are not effective. In our recommendation, we pointed out one alternative that is not currently authorized.

CHAPTER 4

NEED FOR MORE COST EFFECTIVE AND

EFFICIENT SEPARATIONS OF AWOL OFFENDERS

The previous chapter addresses how the crime of AWOL is dealt with and the improvements needed in that process. While we endorse the expeditious separation of people unfit for military service, we recommended that the discharge in lieu of court-martial be eliminated because

- it is not in the best interest of the individuals or society since it lacks the safeguards and protections guaranteed under the Code in dealing with criminal offenses and
- it compromises the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime.

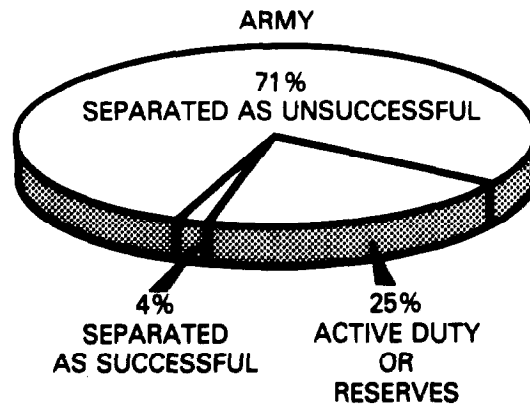
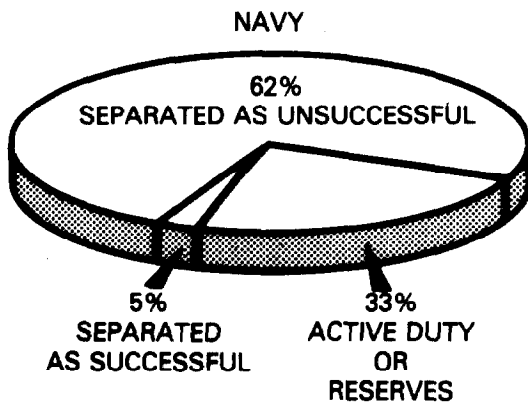
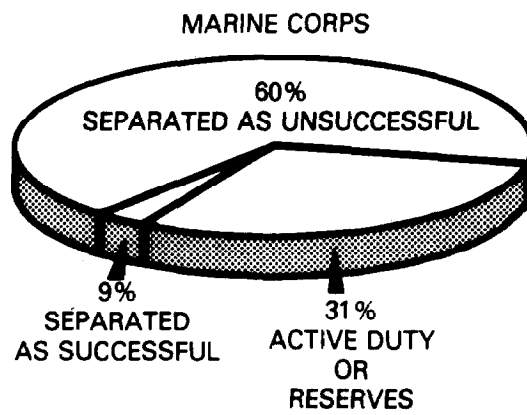
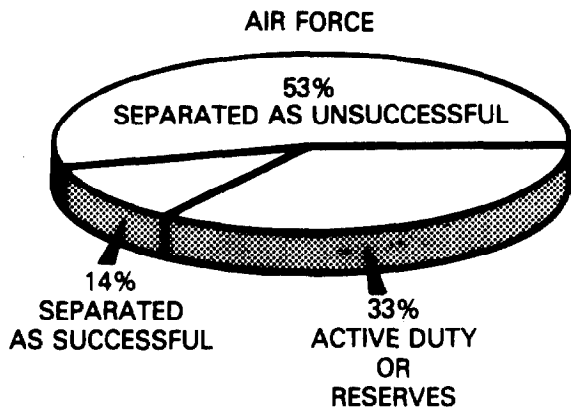
This chapter addresses improvements needed in the administrative separation process after individuals have been punished for AWOL under the provisions of the Code and the deterrent potential in making AWOL a crime is achieved. It is important that separation decisions based on an individual's AWOL record be cost effective since the military eventually judged the majority of the offenders in our study group to be unsuccessful and administratively separated most of them within 18 months after entering on duty.

There are presently no definitive criteria for commanders to use in deciding when or if AWOL-prone people should be separated after they have been punished for the crime. Illustrative of the need for such criteria is the fact that two of every three of the AWOL offenders in our study group were separated during the Government's peak period of unrecouped investment. Our study shows that criteria for making cost-effective decisions for separating these people can be developed. Furthermore, the processes for separating individuals with an AWOL record need to be made more efficient and equitable.

MOST AWOL PEOPLE ARE SEPARATED AS UNSUCCESSFUL

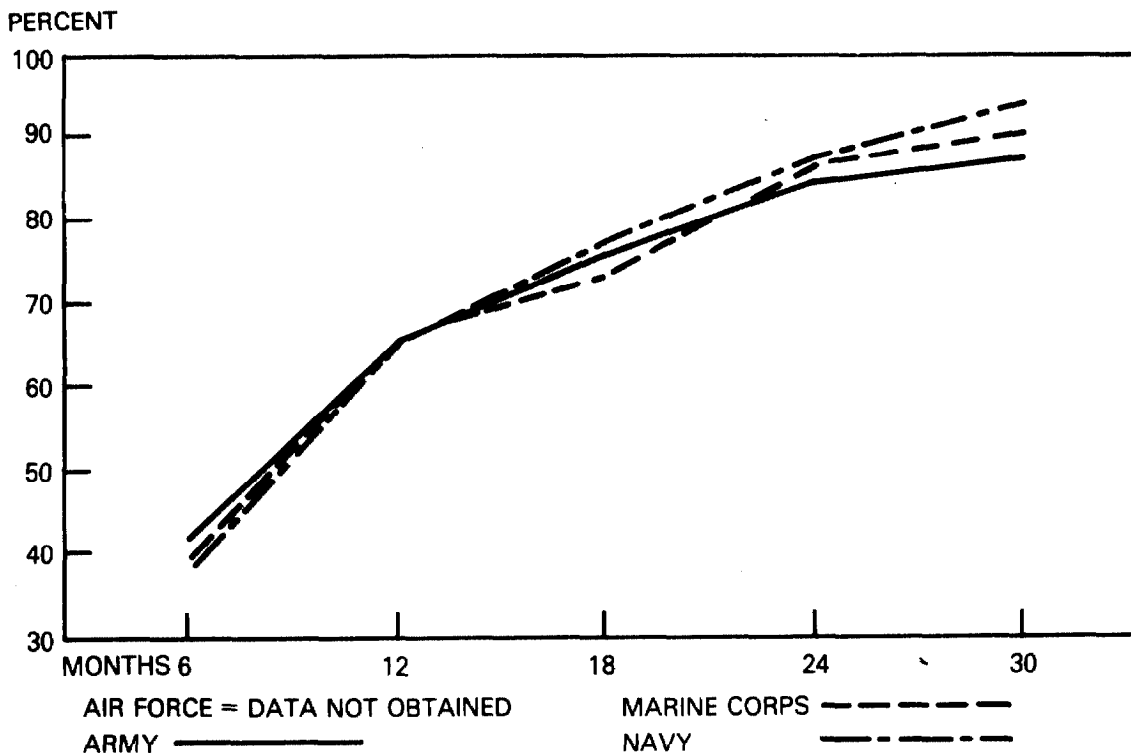
Most AWOL offenders in our study group were not successful based on the military's judgment; that is, the reason for separation. As shown in the chart on the following page, about 71 percent were separated at the time of our followup which was from 6 to 30 months after they returned from AWOL.

PERCENT OF AWOL OFFENDERS SEPARATED AS UNSUCCESSFUL AS UNSUCCESSFUL



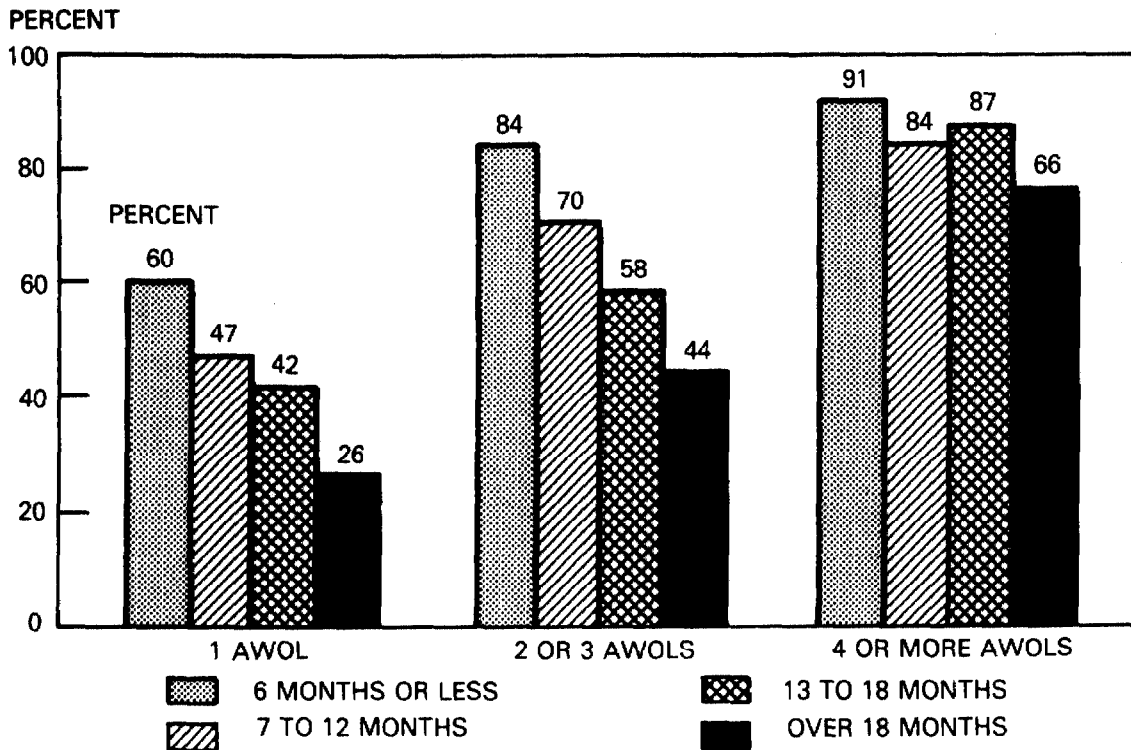
Most people going AWOL do so during the early part of their enlistment. As shown in the following chart, about 40 percent go AWOL within the first 6 months of their enlistment, 65 percent within 12 months, and 75 percent within 18 months.

**NUMBER OF MONTHS PRIOR SERVICE
OF PEOPLE IN SAMPLE AWOL GROUP
GOING AWOL THE FIRST TIME**



The number of months served and the individual's AWOL record were the most important factors distinguishing which individuals were unsuccessful. The fewer months the individual served before going AWOL, the more times he went, and the longer he was gone, the more likely he was to be separated as unsuccessful. This is illustrated in the chart on the following page which shows for the Navy that individuals going AWOL in the first 6 months of their enlistment had a 60 to 91 percent chance of being ultimately separated as unsuccessful, depending on the number of times they went AWOL. About 20 percent were separated during this period. On the average, however, these offenders were separated in the 12th month of their enlistment.

**PERCENT OF NAVY AWOL STUDY GROUP
SEPARATED AS UNSUCCESSFUL BY MONTHS
SERVED AND NUMBER OF AWOLS**



CRITERIA NEEDED TO ENSURE THAT
SEPARATION DECISIONS ARE COST EFFECTIVE

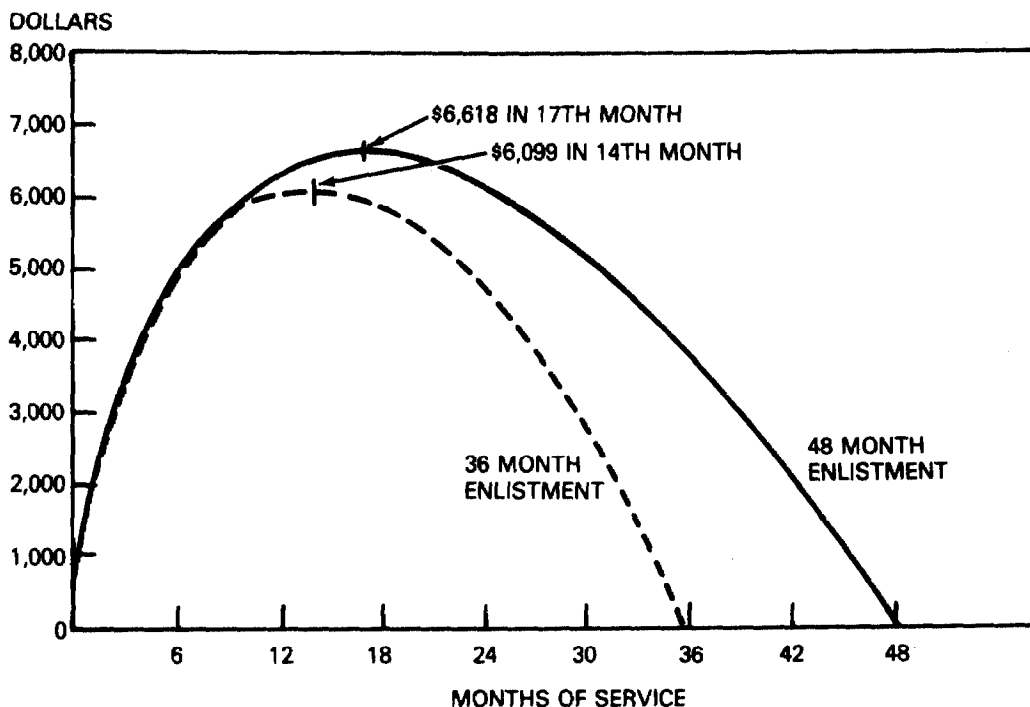
DOD and service guidance on administrative separation requires two principal decisions: (1) whether the conditions set forth under one of the reasons authorizing separation have been met and (2) which characterization is appropriate based on the individual's total service record, including behavior, criminal record, and performance. But the guidance on the reasons people may be separated and the characterization that should be imposed leave broad discretion to unit commanders, convening authorities, and separation boards as to when an individual should be separated, which reason for separation should be used, and what characterization is appropriate. This has resulted in wide disparity within and among the services in reasons cited for separation and types of discharges imposed.

Our study shows such criteria are needed because (1) 71 percent of our AWOL study group were separated before the end of their enlistment, the vast majority as unsuccessful, and (2) 67 percent of those separated as unsuccessful were discharged during the Government's peak period of unrecovered investment, which is between 7 and 30 months of service.

Investment in a service member begins with recruiting costs. This investment grows as he progresses through basic training and additional formal training. Once the member is assigned to an operational unit, the investment continues to grow because of supervision and on-the-job training during the early months of enlistment when he is learning the job. Until this investment peaks, the Government is spending more on the recruit than it is receiving in return. After the peak, the Government begins to recoup its past investment. But its investment will be fully recouped only if the individual serves the full term of enlistment.

To illustrate this, we plotted the unrecouped investment curve over 36-month and 48-month enlistments for the average AWOL offender in the Navy. ^{1/} As the curves below show, the unrecouped investment peaks at about \$6,100 in the 14th month of service during a 36-month enlistment and at about \$6,600 in the 17th month of service during a 48-month enlistment.

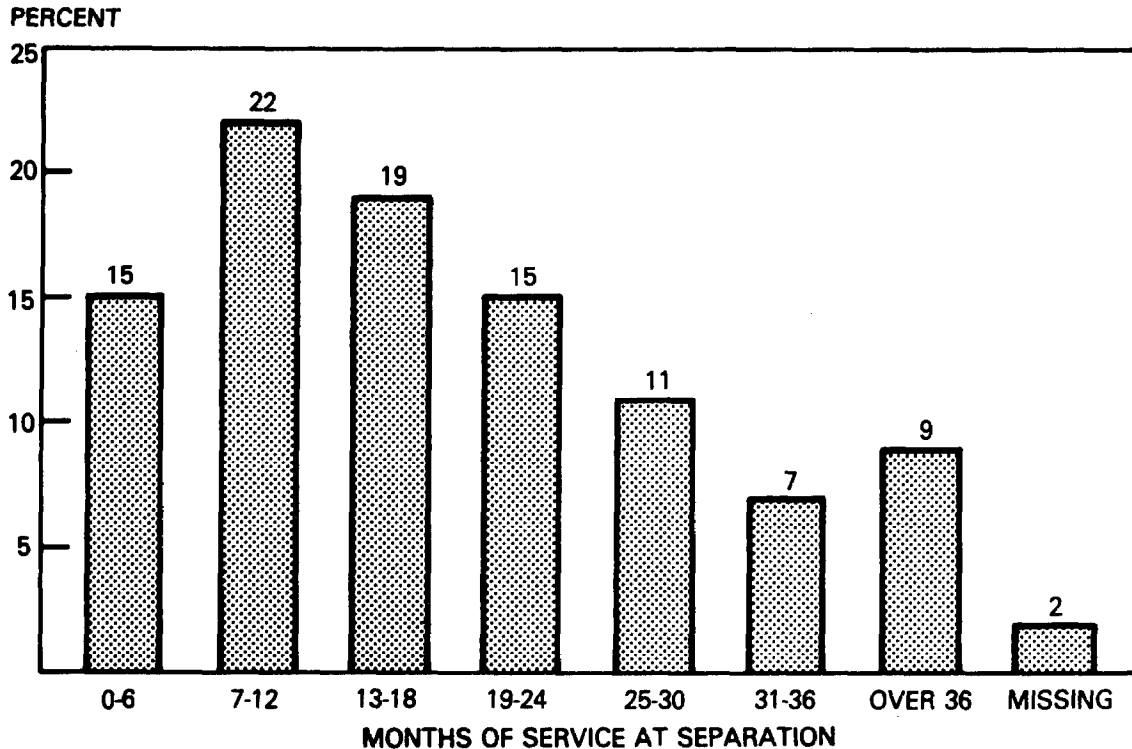
UNRECOUPED INVESTMENT CURVE



^{1/}Based on cost, attrition, and proficiency data developed for the Marine Corps and Navy by the General Research Corporation. The study results are presented in Report CR-197, "Development of Methods for Analysis of the Cost of Enlisted Attrition," September 1977, General Research Corporation.

The unrecouped investment curves clearly show that it is most cost effective to separate individuals who show little potential for success as early into their enlistments as possible. As shown in the following chart, however, only 15 percent of the AWOL individuals judged to be unsuccessful before the end of their enlistment were separated in the first 6 months. In contrast, a total of 67 percent were separated between 7 and 30 months--the Government's peak period of unrecouped investment.

**MONTHS OF SERVICE OF INDIVIDUALS
IN AWOL STUDY GROUP WHO WERE SEPARATED AS UNSUCCESSFUL**



One approach for developing
criteria to use in deciding
whether to separate AWOL people

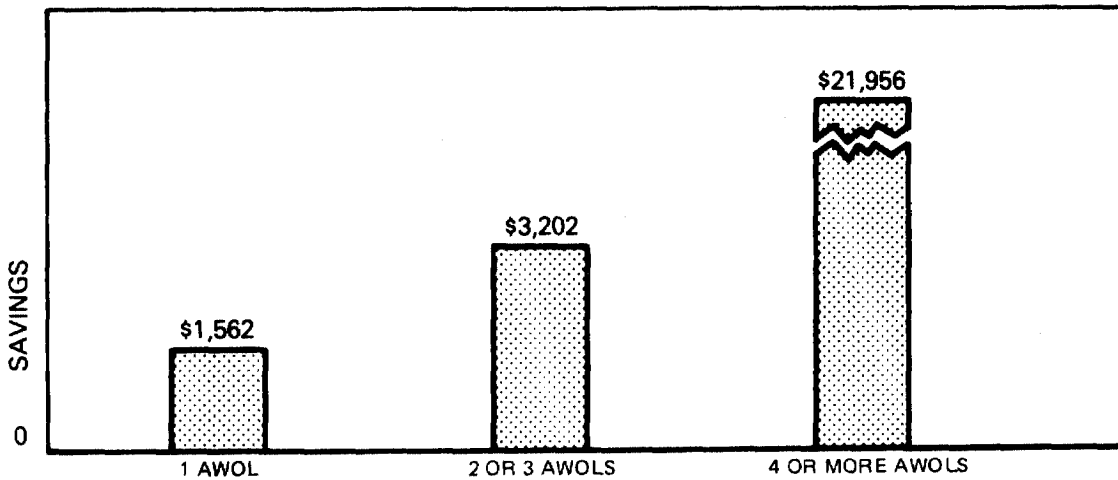
Our study shows that it is feasible to develop criteria to establish the point at which it would be most cost effective to separate an individual based solely on his AWOL record.

For illustrative purposes, we developed a model, based on an individual's AWOL record, to determine the point at which it would be more economical to separate an individual and replace him with a new recruit. In this model, we weighed the costs and benefits that would be expected if

the same costs were spent on a new recruit. We used Navy cost, attrition, and proficiency data from the 1977 General Research Corporation study ^{1/} and actual AWOL history and separation data from our Navy AWOL study group. (Our analysis is discussed in app. XII.)

As can be seen from the chart on page 41, the Government's investment in a new recruit increases rapidly during the initial period of the enlistment. Therefore, the early separation of people who establish a pattern of going AWOL in their enlistment offers great potential for cost savings. (See chart below.) These individuals have a low probability of completing their enlistment and will likely be separated before the Government recoups its investment in them.

**COST SAVINGS BY SEPARATING AN
INDIVIDUAL ON RETURN FROM AWOL
(WITH 6 MONTHS SERVICE OR LESS)
AND REPLACING WITH A NEW RECRUIT IN THE NAVY**



After 6 months, the Government has already made most of its investment in the individual that it will make over his enlistment period. Also, the time the Government begins to recoup its investment is much closer. After the Government's investment has reached its highest point (the 17th month in our model), each additional day served by the individual would theoretically reduce the amount of the Government's unrecouped investment.

^{1/}See note on p. 41.

As the individual's length of service approaches the 17th month, greater judgment is needed in deciding whether to retain or separate an AWOL offender during this period because the cost savings or loss from these decisions are not nearly as great. However, certain costs were not included in our model that would have a direct influence on deciding whether to separate AWOL people. Because a person who goes AWOL has a high probability of repeating the offense, future costs relating to apprehension efforts, judicial proceedings, and confinement are likely. In addition, a future AWOL would prove disruptive by consuming the time of commanders and others who must deal with it. A future AWOL would also lower the morale of the unit because others must perform the duties of the AWOL individual and would weaken the ability of the unit to perform its mission. In our model, should the value assigned these future costs and other inefficiencies exceed \$2,595, it would also be more economical to separate any individual going AWOL during their 7th to 12th month of service. This amount is about equal to the cost of confining an individual for 3 months.

We emphasize that our model is intended to demonstrate the feasibility of developing criteria for determining when it is cost effective to separate people who go AWOL. In actual practice, a number of models may be needed to establish such criteria in each service for various categories of recruits. Such criteria should be refined as more experience is gained as policy changes.

Separation criteria would be particularly useful in determining whether to separate people who go AWOL early in their enlistment since they are least likely to succeed. About 40 percent of the people going AWOL the first time do so within the first 6 months of service and 65 percent within 12 months. Furthermore, most who go AWOL once go AWOL again later. Thus, criteria for promptly separating AWOL people when their record shows little chance of success should reduce the AWOL rate and minimize the investment lost.

We are not suggesting that modeling would preclude the need to exercise considerable judgment in each case before separating an AWOL-prone individual. Rather, modeling should provide a framework for making cost-effective decisions. Developing and applying criteria for separating AWOL-prone individuals should ensure that the services' actions are in accordance with DOD policy.

WIDE DISPARITY IN DISCHARGES IMPOSED
ON PEOPLE WITH A RECORD OF AWOL

Although DOD and the services have issued guidance on the reasons people may be separated and the type of discharge that may be imposed, broad discretion is left to unit commanders, convening authorities, and separation boards. Therefore, the reasons for separation and types of discharges imposed on people with a record of AWOL varied extensively among the services.

The reason for separation and type of discharge are important because:

- The reason establishes the conditions under which commanders may separate individuals, the type of discharge that may be imposed, and the rights of the individual during the separation process. (See app. XI.)
- The type of discharge is based on the individual's service record with the honorable discharge reserved for those whose performance is deserving.
- In the case of a discharge under other than honorable conditions, the reason for separation is used by the Veterans Administration and other agencies in determining whether the individual is eligible for benefits. Individuals with honorable or general discharges are automatically considered eligible.
- A less than honorable discharge can affect an individual's job opportunities upon returning to civilian life.

Reasons used for separation

The reasons most often used for administrative separation of AWOL offenders after return to duty from AWOL range from expeditious and quick separation for marginal performance to the more time-consuming separations for unsuitability and misconduct. Separations for misconduct and, in some instances, unsuitability are an administrative burden to unit commanders because they must normally process these separations through administrative discharge boards. The procedures for expeditious separation are intended to relieve unit commanders of this administrative burden by providing a means to discharge personnel before board action is necessary. The reasons for separation and the discharges authorized are as follows:

- Marginal performance. 1/ An honorable or general discharge is authorized.
- Unsuitability. An honorable or general discharge is authorized.
- Misconduct. Although a discharge under other than honorable conditions is suggested, an honorable or general discharge is authorized, if warranted.

Wide disparity in reasons for separation used

Our analysis shows that the Air Force most often separates people with an AWOL record by the most expeditious process (marginal performance), whereas the Marine Corps uses the most time-consuming process (misconduct).

<u>Reason for separation</u>	<u>Percent of separations</u>			
	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>
Marginal performance	54	44	15	<u>a/8</u>
Unsuitability	16	30	52	30
Misconduct	30	26	33	62

a/The Marine Corps did not begin using this reason for separation until late 1975, which may account, in part, for the small percentage of separations for marginal performance.

Although there may be factors other than AWOL involved in deciding which reason for separation to use in individual cases, this chart illustrates the wide disparity in reasons used to separate people with an AWOL record.

Wide disparity in types of discharges imposed

To compare the types of discharge given people in our AWOL study group, we analyzed how many of those returned to duty had been administratively separated for reasons of marginal performance, unsuitability, and misconduct. As shown on the following page, the Air Force issued the most honorable discharges (73 percent) and the Marine Corps the

1/Includes separation under various programs, including the trainee discharge program during the first 6 months of service.

least (5 percent). The Marine Corps issued the most discharges under other than honorable conditions (45 percent) and the Navy the least (1 percent).

<u>Type of discharge</u>	<u>Percent of separations</u>			
	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>
Honorable	73	25	16	5
General	23	59	83	50
Under other than honorable conditions	4	16	1	45

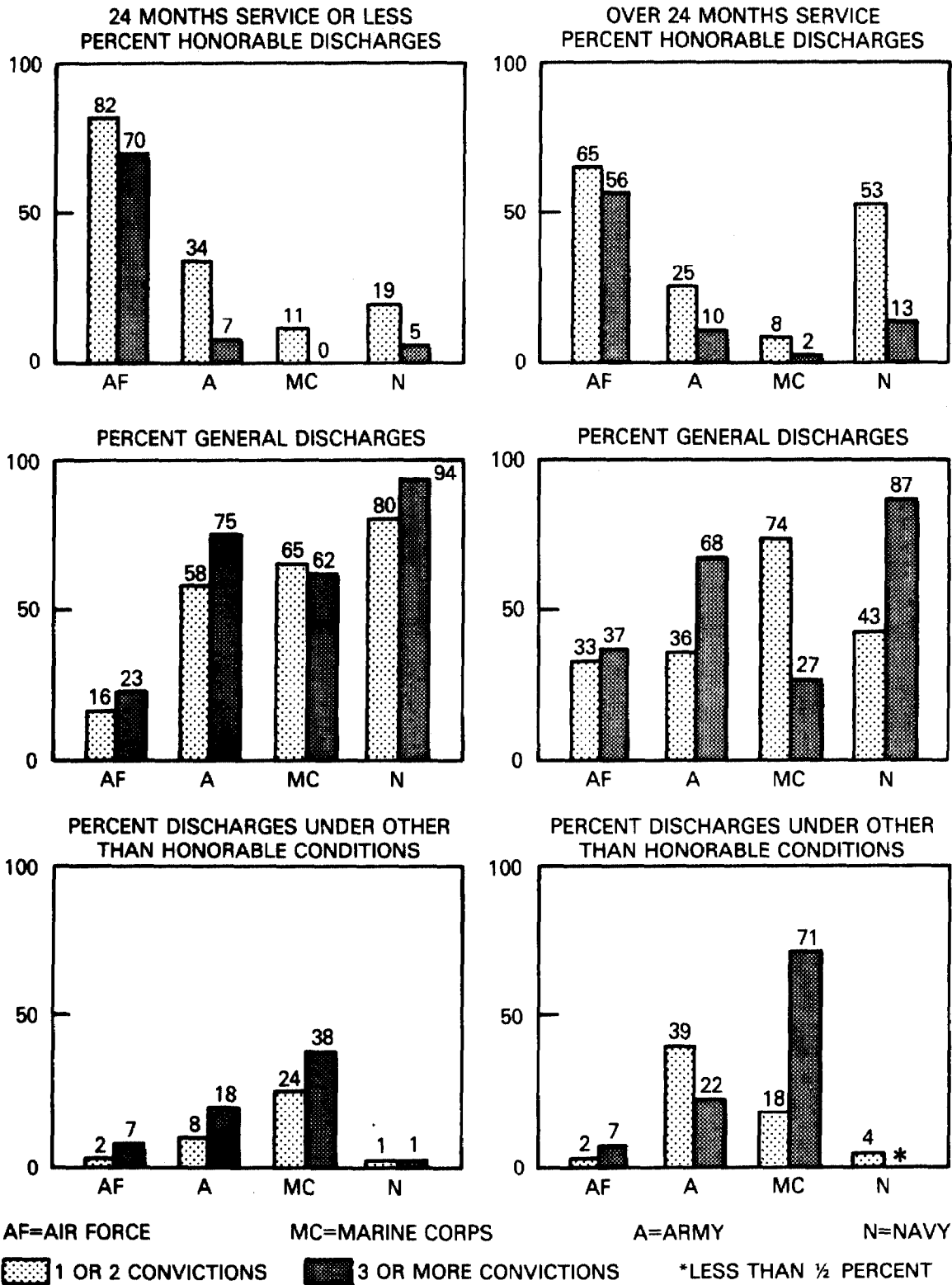
Our analysis showed that the most important factors influencing types of discharge for people with an AWOL record were the number of months served and the number of convictions. ^{1/} The influence of these factors is illustrated in the charts on the following page showing the frequency that people with similar months of service and number of convictions received each type of discharge. The Air Force was the most lenient and the Marine Corps the most harsh in issuing discharges. The charts show that, depending on the number of months served and the number of convictions,

- the rates of honorable discharges given by the Air Force ranged from 56 to 82 percent, compared to Marine Corps rates of 2 to 11 percent, and
- the Marine Corps rates for discharges under other than honorable conditions ranged from 18 to 71 percent, compared to Air Force rates of 2 to 7 percent.

Further analysis demonstrates the considerable disparity among the services in discharges imposed when examined on a comparative basis. To make this comparison, we distributed the Air Force, Army, and Navy sample of AWOL people by months of service and number of convictions in the same proportion as that experienced by the Marine Corps. We then computed the types of discharges for each service based on its practices during our study period. As indicated in the chart on page 49, if months of service and number of convictions were similar, the probability of receiving an honorable discharge in the Air Force was about 13 times greater than in the Marine Corps.

^{1/}Among the variables considered in this analysis were age, education, mental category, months served, number of prior convictions (including nonjudicial punishments), and number of times AWOL.

FREQUENCY OF TYPE OF DISCHARGE IMPOSED BY MONTHS OF SERVICE AND NUMBER OF CONVICTIONS



<u>Type of discharge</u>	<u>Percent of separations</u>			
	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>
Honorable	65	15	14	5
General	29	84	66	50
Under other than honorable conditions	6	1	20	45

A recent DOD study 1/ concluded that the services had not achieved a desired level of uniformity in imposing discharges. The lack of uniformity was attributed to insufficient definitions and policy guidance in DOD directives. In our study, we found that the attitudes of the commanders also contributed to this lack of uniformity.

Attitudes influencing reasons for separation and type of discharge

In discussing reasons for separation and types of discharges with military representatives, we found two diverse attitudes which, we believe, account for the wide disparities. Some commanders appear to discharge people with an AWOL record by the most expeditious reason, believing that it is in the best interests of everyone. Other commanders are reluctant to separate people with an AWOL record in the most expeditious manner because it results in an honorable or general discharge and many veterans' benefits for people serving more than 6 months. They believe that this diminishes the integrity of the honorable discharge and results in veterans' benefits being given to those whose service is not considered honorable. Thus they are more likely to separate people with an AWOL record for the reason of misconduct which has a high probability of resulting in a discharge under other than honorable conditions.

One Army commander said that he normally would not try to separate an individual for misconduct because it is too much trouble to build a case that an administrative review board would accept. All too often, he said, the board did not approve the discharge or it upgraded the reason to unsuitability. Similarly, a Navy headquarters official explained that separation for unsuitability is much easier and less time consuming than separation for misconduct and that the easiest way for a commander to get rid of an AWOL

1/"Report of the Joint-Service Administrative Discharge Study Group (1977-78)," DOD, August 1978.

person is to impose nonjudicial punishment for the AWOL and then administratively separate him for unsuitability. In his judgment, this is what most commanders are doing. Our analysis supports his belief. It shows that the Navy often imposed nonjudicial punishment for the most severe type of AWOL--AWOL over 30 days--and separated about 80 percent within 3 months after they returned to duty. As shown below, the vast majority were separated for reason of unsuitability which results in an honorable or general discharge.

<u>Months served after return to duty</u>	<u>Percent of separations by reason</u>		
	<u>Marginal performance</u>	<u>Unsuitability</u>	<u>Misconduct</u>
Less than 1	0	12	0
1 to 2	14	43	4
2 to 3	4	16	2
3 to 4	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>19</u>	<u>74</u>	<u>7</u>

The table shows that DOD and service guidance governing reasons for separation and for determining the type of discharge is too broad to ensure reasonable consistency in dealing with AWOL offenders.

CONCLUSIONS

The reasons for separation before the end of enlistment indicating lack of success--marginal performance, unsuitability, and misconduct--determine the type of discharge that can be imposed. Only separation for misconduct allows for the most severe form of administrative discharge--a discharge under other than honorable conditions. Because this discharge carries a serious stigma, safeguards have been established for its use. As a result, commanders face a dilemma whether to (1) take the time and effort to separate individuals for the correct reason and type of discharge or (2) separate them in the most expeditious manner without regard to the type of discharge. Since neither DOD nor the services have established criteria regarding the separation of AWOL offenders, commanders have no framework for making cost-effective decisions. Also, inadequate policy guidance combined with differing attitudes among the services and commanders within a service have resulted in wide disparities in the types of administrative discharges imposed in similar cases. The probability of people with similar AWOL and conviction records receiving an honorable discharge in the Air Force is about 13 times greater than in the Marine Corps.

Considering the serious stigma associated with the discharge under other than honorable conditions--which can affect both employment opportunities upon returning to civilian life and eligibility for veterans' benefits--such wide disparities in the type of discharges imposed under similar circumstances are unfair. Following present guidance and philosophy, the services can, in those cases where they so desire, exact retribution by the type of discharge imposed from those people unable or unwilling to adjust to military life, or the services can take the path of least resistance and separate the person with an honorable or general discharge.

The military's judgment on people who go AWOL is the same in all of the services; that is, as a group they are not successful. While improvements could be made in the present system of imposing discharges, it is unlikely that a high degree of uniformity will ever be achieved due to the subjective nature of the process. Even if the inequities in this process were reduced, the practice of characterizing military service would still present a barrier to the quick and efficient separation of people who persist in going AWOL. We are nearing completion of a study dealing with the system for imposing and reviewing discharges.

We see considerable benefit in quickly identifying and efficiently separating people with an AWOL record when history shows they have little chance of succeeding. Quick and efficient separation should result in reducing

--AWOL incidents,

--the disruptive influence of problem people on mission effectiveness and unit readiness, and

--investment in people with a high probability of being unsuccessful.

We believe that the services should reevaluate their efforts to early identify and separate AWOL-prone service members who have little chance of succeeding. Those who go AWOL tend to do so early in their enlistment and have a low probability for success. In our study group, many of the people who went AWOL did so within the first 6 months of their enlistment. Although most were eventually judged to be unsuccessful, few were separated during this period. In our Navy study group, depending on the number of AWOLs, individuals going AWOL in the first 6 months had a 60 to 91 percent chance of being ultimately separated as unsuccessful. However, only 20 percent were separated during this period.

Considering the forecasted recruiting environment in the years ahead where an increasing number of AWOL-prone individuals may have to be recruited if end-strength objectives are to be met, there will be more people going AWOL. This makes it all the more important that criteria be developed to quickly identify people who should be separated. Efficiently separating them requires removing the barrier caused by having to characterize service.

Our study shows that separation criteria can be developed by analyzing the probability of an individual's success based on his record of AWOL and length of service in relationship to expected cost and benefits. Such criteria needs to be definitive and provide specifically for separation for absenteeism. This would allow people to be separated solely on the basis of their AWOL record. Since it is possible that an individual might be eligible for separation for other reasons as well, the criteria should clearly set out the principles for determining which reasons should take precedence.

The barrier to the quick separation of people caused by having to characterize service could be removed by requiring that discharges without service characterization be issued to individuals not serving a specified number of months, except when a court-martial directs or for medical or hardship reasons. This criteria could be based on the time needed to identify and separate the majority of people who prove unsuccessful. Over 70 percent of the people in our study group were separated as unsuccessful, the majority within 18 months after entering on duty. Not characterizing the service of these individuals would require amendment of laws and regulations governing veterans' benefits which to a large extent base eligibility on the type of discharge issued.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

To quickly identify and expeditiously separate AWOL offenders who show little probability of succeeding and to reduce the probability that people with similar AWOL records will be treated differently in the type of discharge imposed during peacetime under an All-Volunteer Force, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense:

- Direct the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics) to develop criteria for separating people with a record of AWOL and incorporate absenteeism as a reason for separation. All relevant factors should be considered in developing this criteria, including the (1) financial

loss to the Government for early separation, (2) disruption to unit morale and effectiveness caused by retaining probable repeat offenders, and (3) future cost to apprehend and punish those who go AWOL again. Such criteria should greatly assist commanders in deciding whether it is more cost effective to retain or separate AWOL offenders based on such factors as months served and number of convictions for the crime. Separation criteria would be particularly useful in dealing with people who go AWOL early in their enlistment since they are least likely to succeed. The criteria should (1) allow the commander to retain the individual if he believes the individual's overall record indicates strong potential for rehabilitation and (2) provide for appropriate review of the case if the individual does not wish to be separated.

--Require a discharge with no characterization of service for those members not serving a minimum number of months, regardless of the reason for separation, except when a court-martial directs or for medical or hardship reasons. This period should be the number of months needed to identify and separate the majority of recruits who prove unsuccessful. This change would require amendment of laws and regulations governing veterans' benefits which to a large extent base eligibility on administrative characterization of service. Also, the administrative discharge system is implicitly recognized in some existing statutes which may require modification. For example, under title 37, section 501(e), United States Code, a member discharged under other than honorable conditions forfeits unused accrued leave. In modifying the laws and regulations, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of giving people separated with a discharge without service characterization veterans' benefits or unused accrued leave.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

Develop criteria for separating people with an AWOL record

DOD said that this would be further explored.

Issue a discharge with no service
characterization to people who do
not serve a minimum number of months

DOD is considering a proposal by its Administrative Discharge Study Group that would authorize a discharge without service characterization in circumstances where characterization would be inappropriate. Under this proposal, such a discharge may be issued to a member separated during recruit or basic training, except in the case of misconduct. The only other reason such a discharge could be issued is when the service secretary determines that service characterization would be inappropriate because of the unique circumstances involved.

Although we concur in the DOD proposal, we believe implementation of our recommendation is essential to correct the inefficiencies and inequities of the present discharge system. The basic problem is that the services recruit a large number of people who are separated before the end of their enlistment because the services conclude they are unable or unwilling to conform to the rigid disciplinary standards governing military life. We believe that the services need to quickly identify and efficiently separate people who will not be successful.

Our analysis shows that characterizing the service of these individuals can work against quick and efficient separation and results in wide disparity in the types of discharges issued to people with similar records of AWOL and convictions. Thus our recommendation will tighten the broad discretion that now permits a commander to either (1) quickly separate an individual by issuing an honorable discharge or (2) take the time to process the case so that it results in a discharge under other than honorable conditions. Implementing our recommendation will

- further reserve the honorable discharge as an incentive for people to strive for,
- be more equitable,
- save commanders' and others' time in separating people, and
- eliminate the need for many reviews by discharge review boards.

CHAPTER 5

AWOL COULD BE GREATLY REDUCED

BY RECRUITING MORE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Although service members of all descriptions can and do go AWOL, better educated and more intelligent people are less likely to commit the offense. As a group, high school graduates, particularly those with high intelligence, are better disciplined and able to successfully adapt to military life. They also have a much higher probability of completing their enlistment and are more proficient. Therefore, they are more cost effective.

HOW RECRUIT QUALITY IS DETERMINED

Motivation and capacity for leadership are important attributes of a quality recruit, and the services seek individuals with these attributes. But these characteristics are difficult to define and measure. DOD uses high school completion and mental aptitude scores as the best available measures of recruit quality. 1/

The mental aptitude score is derived from selection and classification tests given to all potential recruits. The aptitude scores indicate the recruit's ability to learn. On the basis of these scores, service applicants are divided into five mental categories, in order of decreasing scores. Category III is often divided into two groups (a and b) because of the broad range of scores it includes. Category V personnel are not accepted in the military. Thus, the people recruited can be divided into 10 groups: high school graduates, mental categories I, II, IIIa, IIIb, and IV; and non-high school graduates, mental categories I, II, IIIa, IIIb, and IV. Top-quality recruits are considered by DOD to be high school graduates in mental categories I through IIIa.

HOW RECRUIT QUALITY AFFECTS AWOL

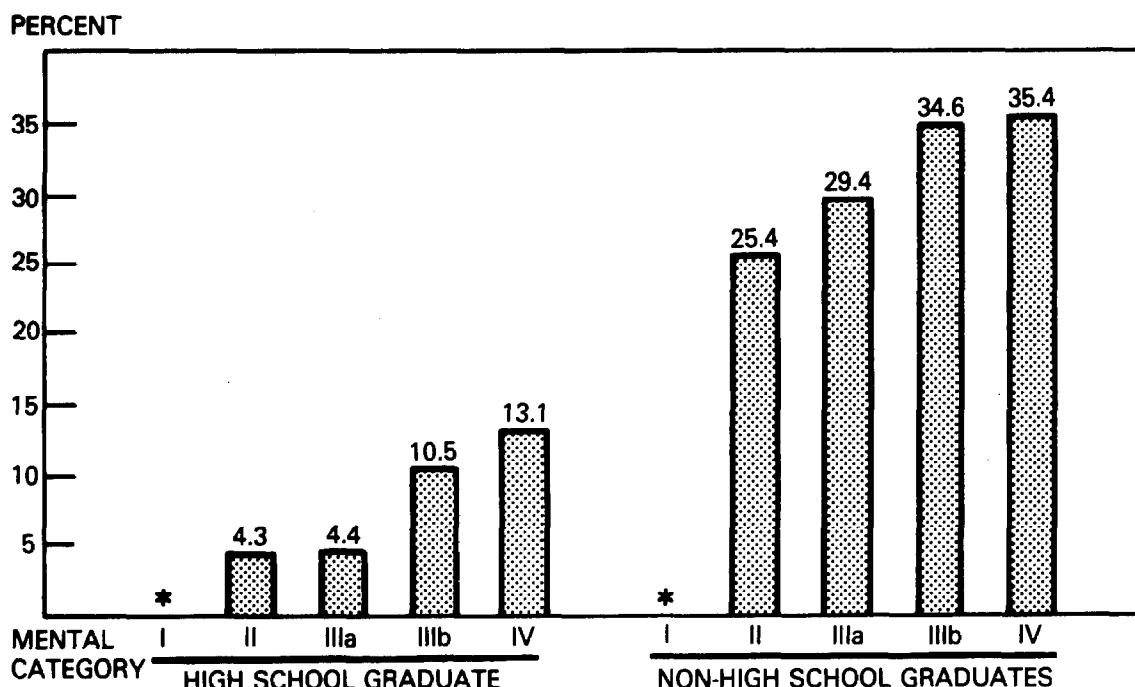
To determine the attributes of people who go AWOL, we compared AWOL and non-AWOL offenders on the basis of their race, sex, education, mental aptitude, number of dependents, and length of enlistment. Our analysis showed that the most important attributes by far in distinguishing between

1/As used in this report, recruit quality refers only to education level and mental category.

the two groups in all four services were education and mental aptitude. Education and mental aptitude will not specifically identify individuals who will go AWOL but they do provide a basis for estimating comparative AWOL rates for each of the 10 groups of people recruited.

As shown in the following chart, the estimated annual AWOL rates for all four services combined vary according to recruit category, ranging from about 4 percent for high school graduates in the higher mental categories to about 35 percent for non-high school graduates in the lowest mental category.

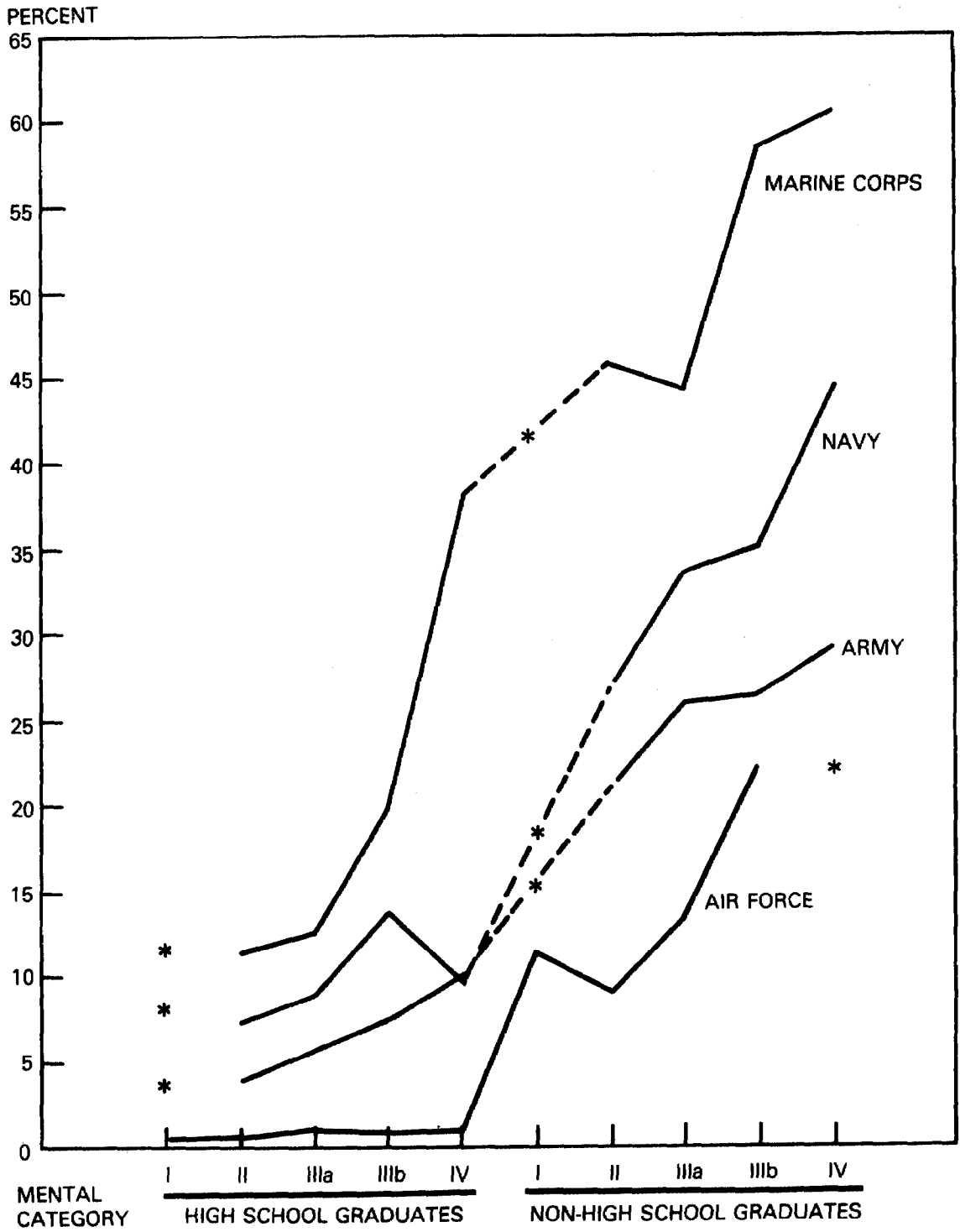
ESTIMATED AWOL RATES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH 30 MONTHS SERVICE OR LESS SHOWN BY QUALITY OF RECRUIT FOR ALL SERVICES COMBINED DURING GAO'S STUDY PERIOD



*INSUFFICIENT NUMBER OF CASES FOR AN ESTIMATE.

Further analysis of the AWOL rates shows the same trend in each service; that is, better educated and more intelligent people are less likely to go AWOL. As shown in the chart on the following page, the estimated rates range from less than 1 percent for Air Force high school graduates in the highest mental category to a high of 60 percent for Marine Corps non-high school graduates in the lowest mental category.

**ESTIMATED AWOL RATES OF INDIVIDUALS WITH
30 MONTHS SERVICE OR LESS SHOWN BY QUALITY OF
RECRUIT FOR EACH SERVICE DURING GAO'S STUDY PERIOD**

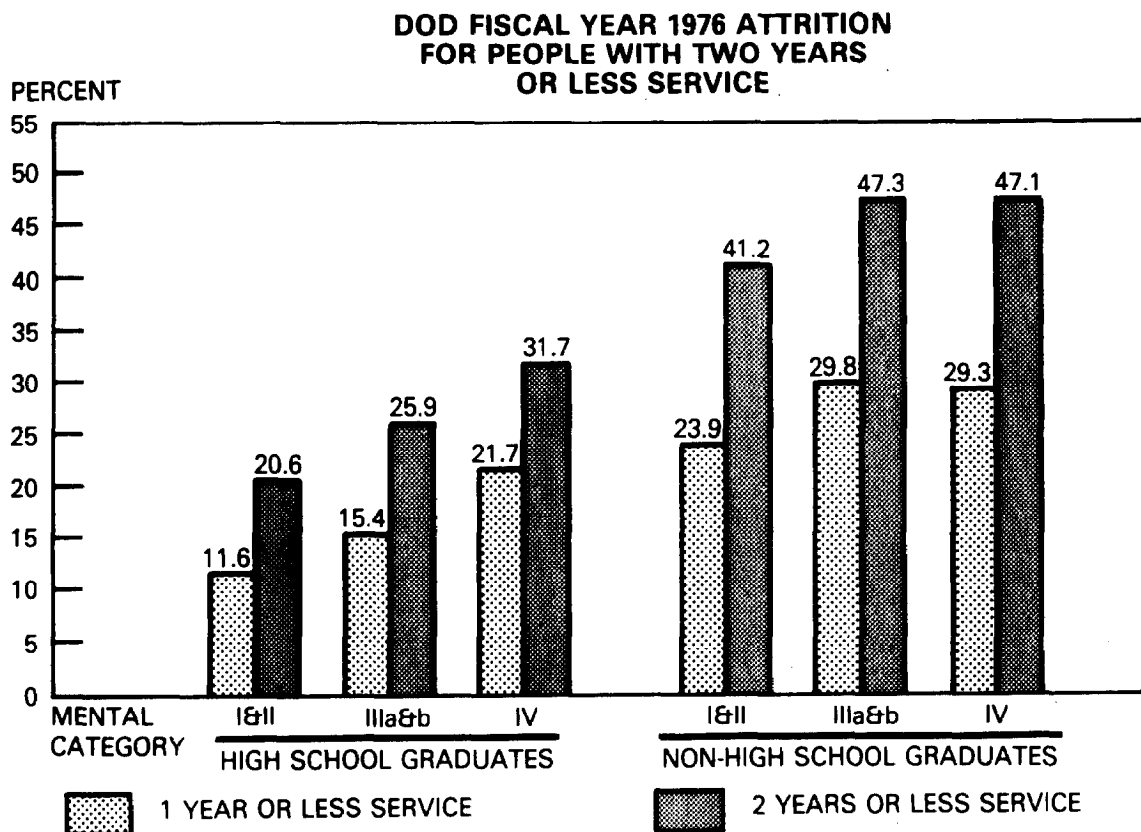


*INSUFFICIENT NUMBER OF CASES FOR AN ESTIMATE.

WHY QUALITY RECRUITS ARE
MORE COST EFFECTIVE

Simply stated, better educated and more intelligent people are more cost effective because they serve longer and are more proficient.

As shown in the following chart, non-high school graduates as a group experience greater attrition than high school graduates based on fiscal year 1976 attrition rates. About 41 to 47 percent of the non-high school graduates were separated at the end of 2 years (24 to 30 percent in the first year), compared to 21 to 32 percent of the high school graduates.



A 1977 study by the General Research Corporation ^{1/} developed measures of cost effectiveness for first-term enlisted personnel in the Marine Corps and Navy. The General

^{1/}Report CR-197, "Development of Methods for Analysis of the Cost of Enlisted Attrition," September 1977, General Research Corporation.

Research Corporation said it reviewed all available literature on the subject and integrated the various study results into its measures of productivity. Productivity used in the context of this study refers to comparative rates of attrition and proficiency between recruit categories. Although the General Research Corporation acknowledges its measures of productivity are crude and should be considered preliminary, it believes that these measures are better than any available.

The standard for measuring productivity was the performance expected of a fully qualified journeyman; that is, a top-quality male recruit during the final month of a 48-month enlistment. Productivity was estimated by month for each category of recruit.

The productivity for each month and months of service provided the basis for computing the average number of productive months for each category of recruit. The number of productive months was then divided into the average cost by category of recruit to obtain the cost for each productive month. These costs included recruiting, basic and advanced individual training, pay and allowances, deserter apprehension, judicial, health and medical, and travel.

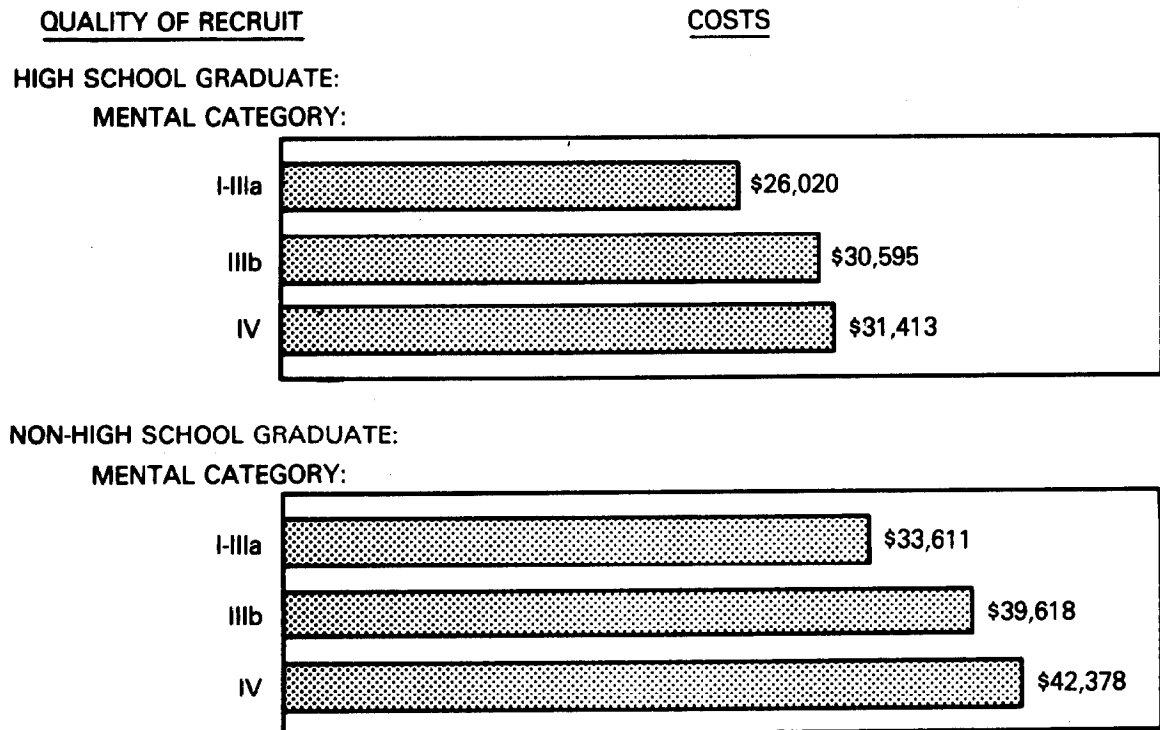
The General Research Corporation study concluded that male high school graduates in high mental categories are more cost effective because they have lower attrition rates and are more proficient.

Our computations, based on the General Research Corporation study, show that top-quality Marine Corps recruits, on the average, cost from \$4,575 to \$16,358 less to recruit and train than other male recruits even considering their higher recruiting costs. On the average, during a 48-month enlistment, top-quality recruits:

- Attain a proficiency level of 50 percent at the 11th month of service, compared to 22 months for the lowest quality recruit.
- Complete 38 months, compared to 24 months for the lowest quality recruit.
- Provide 25.6 productive months of service at an average cost of \$1,018 a month, compared to 9 productive months for the lowest quality recruit at an average cost of \$1,658 a month.

Comparative costs of getting the total amount of productivity from other recruits that is obtained from top-quality recruits is shown below.

COMPARITIVE COSTS TO PROVIDE PRODUCTION EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF TOP QUALITY RECRUITS OVER THEIR AVERAGE 38 MONTHS OF SERVICE



To the extent that education level and mental aptitude accurately reflect recruit quality, more low-quality recruits are needed to obtain the same amount of productivity provided by top-quality recruits. This is important when personnel authorizations are based on workload. But it is also important, in terms of overall unit readiness, even when workload is not a primary consideration because higher quality recruits should result in a higher quality force.

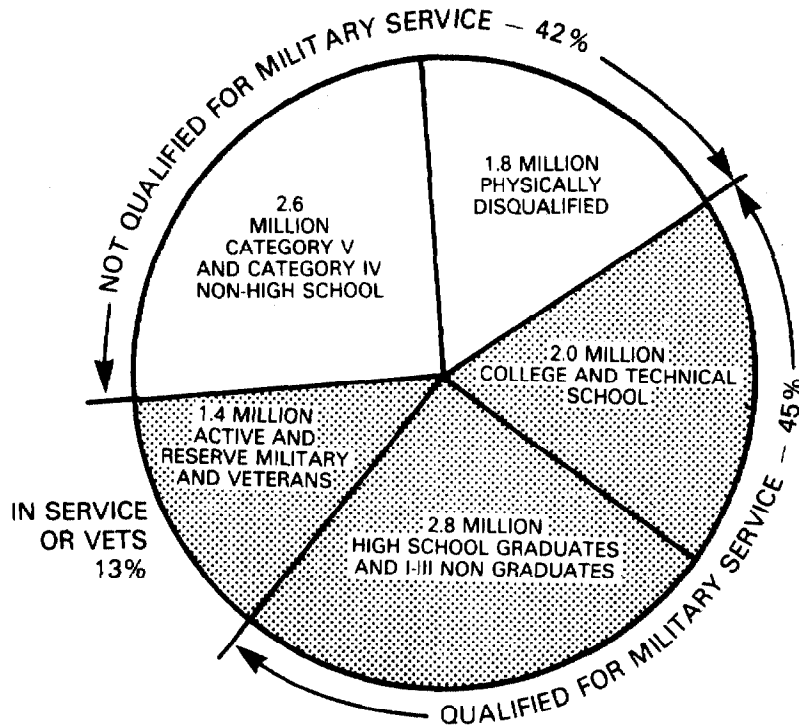
PROBLEMS IN OBTAINING QUALITY RECRUITS

Although the services have been generally successful in recruiting increasing percentages of high school graduates since 1974, when AWOL began to decline, recent results indicate a leveling of this trend.

Recruiting success depends largely on supply and demand. Current policies require that, to maintain desired end

strengths, the services recruit about 400,000 males each year from the 17- to 21-year-old age group out of a currently qualified population of about 4.8 million. Since 2 million of this number are in colleges and technical schools, the services must compete with civilian employers for one out of every six or seven of those in the labor market qualified for military service. By concentrating on male high school graduates in mental categories I through III, the percentage that the services would have to obtain of those available in the labor market would increase considerably as would competition with civilian employers for the same group. Illustrated below is the estimated fiscal year 1977 relationship between males qualified and available and those not qualified for military service.

**DISTRIBUTION OF 10.6 MILLION MALES, AGES 17-21
FISCAL YEAR 1977 ESTIMATES**



SOURCE: U.S. ARMY RECRUITING COMMAND

Several factors have contributed to the services' ability to recruit top-quality people in recent years. The Congressional Budget Office 1/ concluded "the more important

1/ Budget issue paper, "The Costs of Defense Manpower: Issues for 1977," January 1977, Congressional Budget Office.

causes may have been demographic and economic." During 1970-74, the population from which military people were recruited increased. At the same time, unemployment increased from 5.5 percent in mid-1974 to 9 percent a year later.

In evaluating military recruiting prospects for the 8-year period from 1978-85, the Congressional Budget Office concluded that a significant decline in the number of young people and reduced unemployment rates could reduce the population of top-quality males from which the services can recruit.

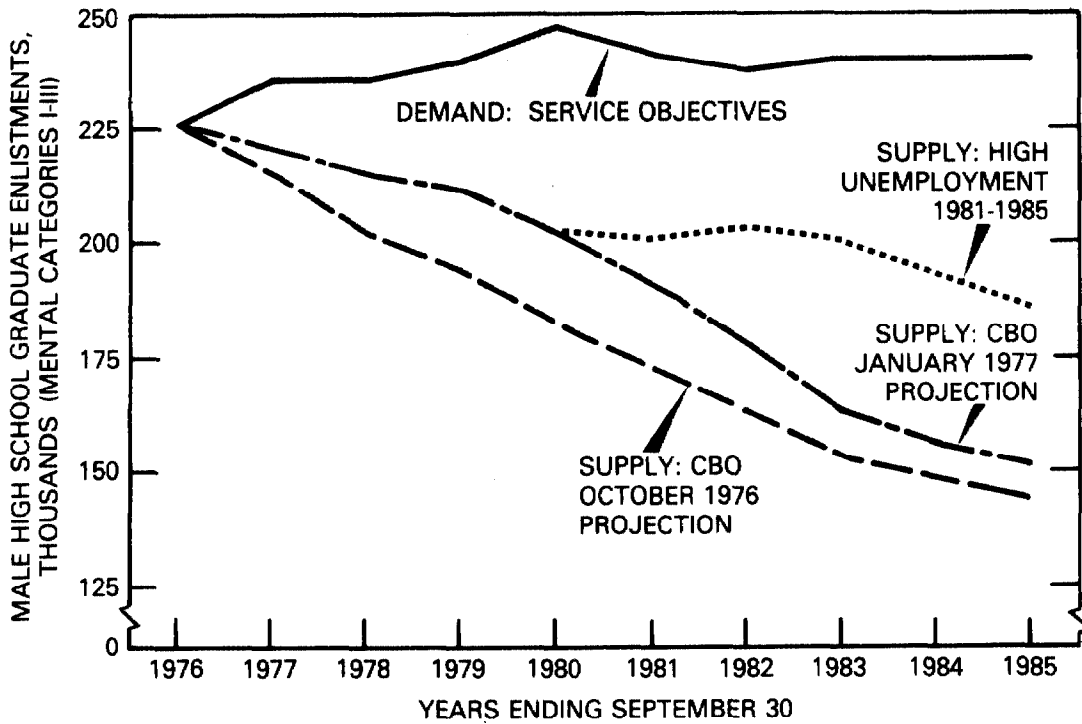
According to Congressional Budget Office projections, obtaining high school graduates in mental categories I through III will become increasingly difficult in the years ahead, and the services will not be able to meet their recruiting objectives through fiscal year 1985. If the unemployment rate declines as projected, the number of male high school graduates in categories I through III who would consider military careers is likely to decline steadily. It is projected that, even if unemployment remained at about 7.5 percent, the services would miss their recruiting objectives by about 20 percent; at 4 percent unemployment it is estimated that the services will fall more than 40 percent short of their recruiting goals by 1985. 1/ (See the chart on the following page.)

Recognizing the problems in recruiting quality people, in fiscal year 1977 Senate appropriation hearings, the Army Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel said that he would sacrifice quality to maintain quantity.

"* * * We simply cannot accept any combat arms shortfalls. In all candor we may be required to let quality drift downward to the degree necessary to offset shortfalls. If we are forced to accept lower quality, losses will increase, as will personnel turbulence and turnover, resulting in increased costs. Without a lowering of quality, a 7-10,000 shortfall can be expected * * *."

1/Long-term projections contain numerous opportunities for errors in economic projections, estimated effects of pay and unemployment factors omitted from the analysis, changing attitudes toward military service, and numerous other subjective factors.

**PROJECTED DEMAND AND SUPPLY FOR PRIME
RECRUITING CANDIDATES, 1976-1985
TOTAL DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**



- OCTOBER 1976 PROJECTION IS BASED ON A DECREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT FROM 7.9 TO 4 PERCENT.
- JANUARY 1977 PROJECTION IS BASED ON A DECREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT FROM 7.3 TO 4.6 PERCENT.
- SUPPLY PROJECTION WITH HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT IS BASED ON A CONTINUING RATE OF ABOUT 7.5 PERCENT.

SOURCE: CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE

TOP-QUALITY RECRUITS ARE
MORE COST EFFECTIVE DESPITE
THEIR HIGHER RECRUITING COST

As competition increases for top-quality recruits, the cost of recruiting also increases. However, because better educated and more intelligent people are more proficient and serve a longer enlistment period, the services can afford to spend more to recruit them.

In fiscal year 1976 the average recruiting cost of each enlisted person--the cost of recruiters, advertising, enlistment bonuses, and recruiting stations--was \$1,240. This average is misleading in that most recruiting efforts are devoted to obtaining high school graduates in mental categories I through III.

The estimated cost of recruiting additional top-quality people varies among the services and over time. This cost also varies from study to study because such estimates require considerable judgment. In its January 1977 study, the Congressional Budget Office estimated these costs at about \$5,500 in the Army, \$3,000 in the Marine Corps and Navy, and \$1,000 in the Air Force. In its September 1977 study, the General Research Corporation estimated the following costs for the Marine Corps and Navy by quality of recruit.

	<u>Recruiting costs</u>	
	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>
Male high school graduates:		
Mental categories I-IIIa	\$2,730	\$2,100
Mental category IIIb	1,830	1,700
All others	875	875

Although the above figures indicate that the cost of attracting more top-quality recruits remains absolute, in reality the cost of recruiting top quality people increases as more are recruited. On the average, each service recruiter enlists about 18 top-quality people a year. Various studies indicate that, because of the intensity of the current recruiting effort, each additional recruiter added would be able to bring in only from four to seven people in this category. Additional recruiters would be assigned to locations with limited recruiting potential and to areas where they would be competing with recruiters already at work.

Using data in the General Research Corporation study, we computed the benefits that the Marine Corps would realize,

on the average, from better educated and more intelligent people as determined by the incremental dollar value of their increased productivity relative to lower quality recruits. Unlike earlier cost comparisons relating to differences in productivity between recruit categories, recruiting costs were excluded in making this computation. This is because recruiting costs vary by quality of recruit and the recruiting cost applicable to the lower quality person must be added to benefits derived from the greater productivity of the higher quality person to arrive at the total that can be spent to recruit the higher quality person.

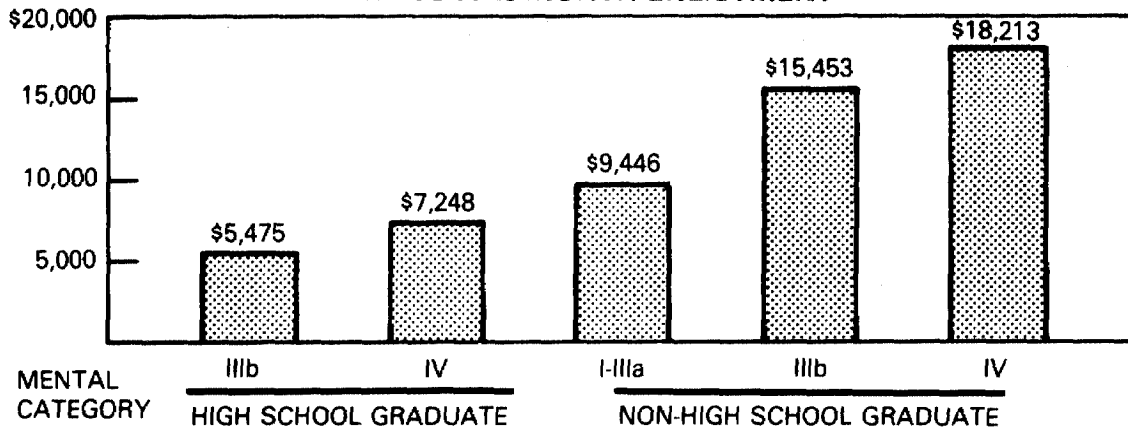
As explained earlier, high school graduates in mental categories I through IIIa serve an average of 38 months at a cost of \$26,020. According to the General Research Corporation study, it costs \$2,730 to recruit a person in this category. Therefore, the cost excluding recruiting is \$23,290. The same production from high school graduates in mental category IIIb would cost \$28,765 after deducting recruiting costs (\$30,595 minus \$1,830). Thus high school graduates in mental categories I through IIIa, on the average, provide \$5,475 more in benefits. But a total of \$7,305 can be spent to recruit such a person since recruiting a category IIIb person would require an investment of \$1,830.

As shown in the chart on the following page, the dollar benefit of recruiting better quality recruits is substantial.

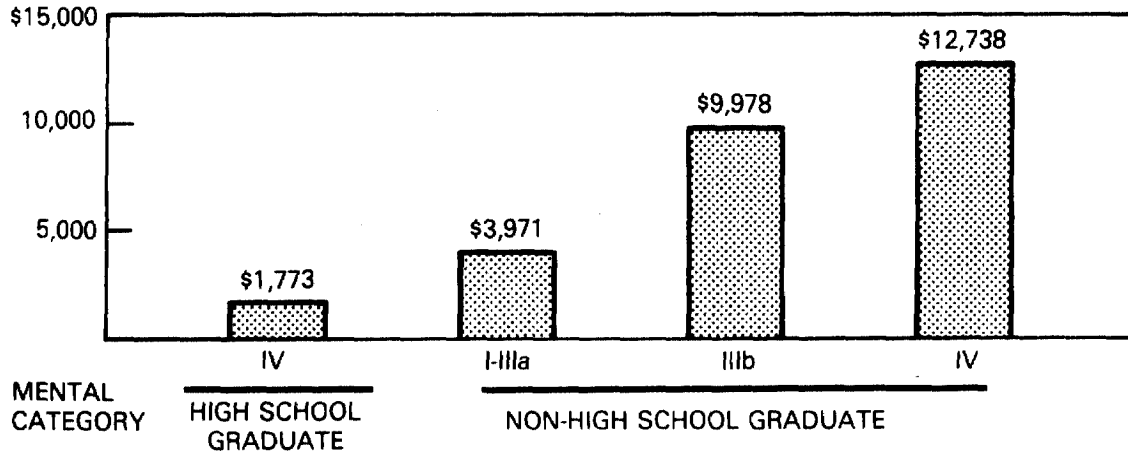
- High school graduates in mental categories I-IIIa produce, on the average, \$5,475 to \$18,213 more than others.
- High school graduates in mental category IIIb produce, on the average, \$1,773 to \$12,738 more than less qualified people.
- High school graduates in mental category IV produce, on the average, \$2,198 to \$10,965 more than non-high school graduates.

To arrive at the total amount that could be spent to recruit a higher quality person, it would be necessary to add to the dollar benefit of increased productivity the cost to recruit the lower quality person. For example, a high school graduate in a mental category I through IIIa produces, on the average, \$18,213 more than a category IV non-high school graduate. Since it costs \$875 to recruit a person in the latter category, a total of \$19,088 could be spent to recruit

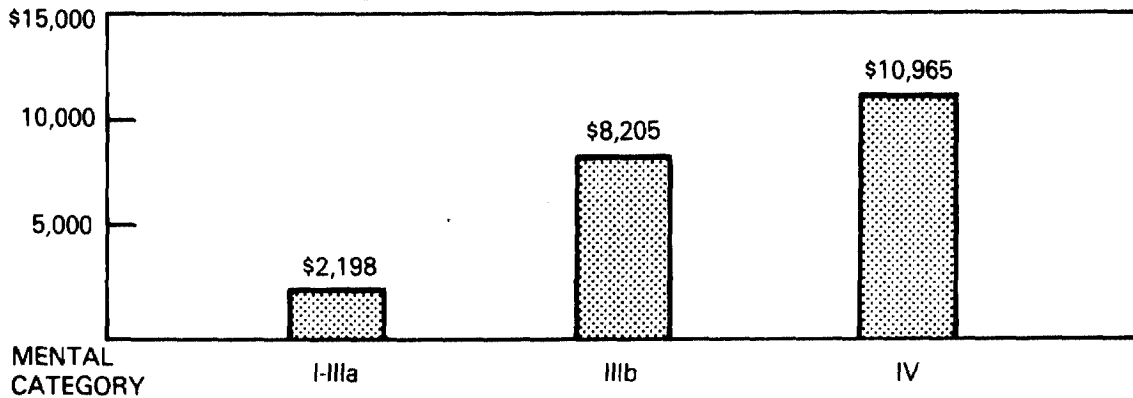
**RELATIVE COST ADVANTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
MENTAL CATEGORIES I THROUGH IIIa OVER OTHERS
DURING A 48-MONTH ENLISTMENT**



**RELATIVE COST ADVANTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
MENTAL CATEGORY IIIb OVER LESS QUALIFIED
PEOPLE DURING A 48-MONTH ENLISTMENT**



**RELATIVE COST ADVANTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
MENTAL CATEGORY IV OVER NON-HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES
DURING A 48-MONTH ENLISTMENT**



a person in the former category; this is equal to seven times the cost that the General Research Corporation study estimates is needed to recruit this individual.

The same analysis could be made for the Navy based on data in the General Research Corporation study. Similar analyses could be made for the Air Force and the Army once the necessary attrition, proficiency, and cost data is developed. The results of these other analyses would vary depending on the assumptions used and differences in enlistment periods. All such analyses would need to be periodically updated and refined as more reliable data becomes available.

CONCLUSIONS

Many successful soldiers, sailors, and airmen are not high school graduates, nor were they recruited from the higher mental categories. However, our study shows that better educated and more intelligent people are, on the whole, better able to adjust to military life and are far less likely to go AWOL. Because high school graduates of high intelligence have a greater likelihood of completing their enlistment and are more proficient, they are more cost effective than other recruits. As a result, more can be spent to recruit people of this caliber or make military service more enticing to them. The services do not have a mechanism for determining the relative cost effectiveness between recruit categories. This prevents informed judgments on the extent to which additional efforts and resources should be put into recruiting top-quality people.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

To reduce AWOL and enhance military effectiveness, we recommend that the Secretary of Defense determine the relative cost effectiveness of the groups (high school and non-high school graduates for the various mental categories) recruited in each service based on their attrition and proficiency rates. This assessment should be used to determine the extent to which more could be spent to attract cost effective people through more intense recruiting efforts and/or higher pay and bonuses.

AGENCY COMMENTS

DOD agrees. It said this recommendation has been receiving, and will continue to receive, close scrutiny.

CHAPTER 6

MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO IMPRESS

MILITARY PEOPLE THAT AWOL IS SERIOUS

To minimize the incidence of AWOL, the services must tell military people of the importance of placing the needs of the services above their own. To instill this commitment, military people must understand and appreciate why AWOL is a crime and its potential effect on the military, as well as on them personally. This requires an effective education program. But prospective recruits are not routinely told that AWOL is a crime and that it has potentially serious consequences. Further, the military justice training recruits receive upon entering the military needs to be improved.

WHY AWOL IS A CRIME IS NOT SET FORTH IN ANY MILITARY PUBLICATION

AWOL and other crimes unique to the military, such as insubordination, are identified in the Code, and maximum punishments are set forth in the Manual. However, neither source explains why, unlike in civilian society, these are crimes and have severe penalties. Nor has DOD or the services developed and set forth this rationale in any official publication.

PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS ARE NOT TOLD THAT AWOL IS A CRIME

The services recognize that prospective recruits do not have an adequate understanding of military law. After enlistment, the services advise new recruits that AWOL and desertion are crimes. However, in selling the military, recruiters do not routinely explain that, unlike working for a civilian employer, it is a crime in the military to be AWOL. In asking 12 recruiters in 3 states--1 recruiter from each service in each state--whether they discussed the subject of AWOL with prospective recruits, 11 said that they did not. The other recruiter said that he showed a 10-minute film to prospective recruits depicting a recruit receiving nonjudicial punishment during basic training for going AWOL.

OBSERVATIONS ON MILITARY JUSTICE TRAINING

The services are required by law to explain certain provisions of the Code to recruits. Article 137 of the Code requires that 78 of the 140 articles "shall be carefully explained to each enlisted member at the time of his entrance

on active duty, or within 6 days thereafter." On the basis of visits we made to one basic training base in each of the services, we found considerable variation in training programs. Only the Air Force met the requirements of article 137 by explaining all 78 articles during the first 6 days.

--The Navy explained all 78 articles during the first 3 weeks.

--The Marine Corps explained 59 of the articles during the first 8 weeks.

--The Army explained only a limited number of articles pertaining to nonjudicial punishment and court-martial. However, after our visit, the Army issued a training guide requiring that all 78 articles be covered.

There were also differences in the time devoted to military justice training and in the presentation of the material pertaining to AWOL and other crimes unique to the military.

--All the services inform new recruits of the crime of AWOL shortly after they arrive at basic training and cover it in more detail in subsequent formal class sessions. Also, all of the services inform recruits of the types of punishments that can be imposed. But only the Marine Corps informs them of the maximum punishments. However, none of the services inform recruits of the actual punishments that are imposed.

--Each of the services spend a different amount of time on military justice training. The total time spent ranged from 2 to about 5-1/2 hours, with individual sessions ranging in length from 40 minutes to 2-1/2 hours.

--The organization and presentation of the course material varies widely among the services. Only the Navy had sessions dealing solely with crimes unique to the military, including AWOL. In contrast, the Army new training guide allots only 4 minutes to focus attention on and explain the crimes unique to the military. However, such crimes may again be mentioned in the 20 minutes allotted for the explanation of all 63 punitive articles of the Code.

--Tests given on military justice training also varied. None of the tests result in remedial training if all questions pertaining to the crime of AWOL were

answered incorrectly. Only the Air Force test (which covered much more than military justice training) would result in remedial training if all the questions pertaining to military justice were answered incorrectly. The Army did no testing.

- Throughout one class session, the terms "compulsory," "apprehension," "self-incrimination," "imposition of restraint," and "maltreatment" were used. These terms do not appear to adhere to the rule of thumb that classes be presented on a fifth-grade reading level.
- We timed a scheduled 2-hour class session at 1 hour and 5 minutes. The instructor read very rapidly, word for word, from the lesson plan. In another briefing given to new arrivals, five articles of the Code, including the three articles about AWOL, were covered in 1 minute and 15 seconds. In both cases the instruction was difficult to understand and left us with the impression that they did not believe the subject to be important.
- The Air Force shows an informative 33-minute film illustrating, by example, most of the articles to be covered in training. (The film is dated, however, and the Air Force is making a new one.)

CONCLUSIONS

An important first step in getting military people to understand, respect, and appreciate the seriousness of AWOL would be to publish and distribute the rationale for the crime to all military personnel. Military representatives we talked with explained that AWOL is an act of disobedience which cannot be tolerated if a disciplined and effective fighting force is to be maintained. While there is much data developing the rationale for AWOL being a crime in the military, we believe that this is not an acceptable substitute for an officially developed and published explanation.

For the military to be credible and fair, prospective recruits should be told about AWOL and its potentially serious consequences before they enlist. Informing them early would help instill the idea that the military considers AWOL a serious matter. This may deter some from enlisting, but these may well be the same people who would go AWOL after enlistment and eventually be separated as unsuccessful. On the other hand, the military's forthrightness should result in a greater commitment and determination to succeed by those who do enlist.

While the observations and evidence in this chapter focus principally on AWOL, our conclusions are also applicable to other crimes unique to the military (i.e., acts of insubordination which in civilian life would affect only the employment relationship). Just as in the case of AWOL, understanding and acceptance of these differences between civilian and military life should result in greater commitment to the military by the recruit.

A standard must be established for the services to use in military justice training to ensure that it is effectively taught. Adequate attention to both the time spent and the structuring of the content is needed to give the recruit the best chance to understand the intent of the training and to believe that it is important. The services should develop a comprehensive testing program to determine the effectiveness of the instruction given.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

We recommend that the Secretary of Defense:

- Prepare and distribute to all military personnel a publication stating the rationale for AWOL being a crime and the maximum punishments authorized.
- Direct the service secretaries to require recruiters to explain to all prospective recruits before enlistment that AWOL is a crime for which they can be imprisoned. This could be done in recruiting brochures or the enlistment contract by pointing out this additional obligation imposed by military life and the possible consequences if one does not fulfill this obligation.
- Develop a standard format and structure for military justice training. The training should clearly focus on aspects of military justice that differ from the civilian society, including AWOL. Training should include presentation of the levels of disposition and quantities of punishment established for AWOL, as well as the maximum punishments authorized. Additionally, an appropriate testing program for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the training should be established.

AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

Prepare and distribute a publication explaining the rationale for making AWOL a crime

DOD said that this recommendation warranted further study.

Require recruiters to explain to all prospective recruits that AWOL is a crime

DOD disagrees. It took the position that a discussion of AWOL during the recruiting phrase is unpalatable and could be counterproductive to recruiting efforts. However, DOD said that it would encourage the services to review their efforts in this area, particularly the periods of counseling and training after an individual enlists.

On the basis of DOD's comments, we modified our recommendation so the services could implement it in a more positive manner by including it in present discussions and literature provided or other presentations made to prospective recruits about military duties and obligations. For example, the Army could include this information in its pamphlet "The Army Wants You To Know" which contains important information for individuals considering enlistment in the Army. It is given to all prospective recruits.

Develop a standard format and structure for military justice training, including AWOL

DOD agreed in concept with the need for improvement in military justice training involving AWOL and its consequences. DOD said that it would encourage the services to review their efforts in this area.

We believe that DOD must exercise greater leadership in military justice training as we recommended. Upon entering the military service, many recruits go through an initial cultural shock when faced with the rigors of basic training and, at the same time, are hurriedly introduced to a very different criminal code. It is essential, in our opinion, that they understand the differences in law between military and civilian society.

CHAPTER 7

JOBS AFFECT AWOL RATES

Regardless of education levels and mental aptitude, job assignments affect AWOL rates. People assigned to low-skill or undesirable jobs have much higher AWOL rates than those assigned to higher skill jobs which are generally viewed as more desirable and challenging. Better educated and more intelligent people go AWOL less often than others in the same jobs, but their AWOL rates increase as the skill level of their job decreases. Research in the Navy also shows that such job-related factors as leadership support, work group cooperation, professional esprit de corps, and job challenge also affect AWOL rates.

RELATIONSHIP OF JOBS TO AWOL RATES

Although there are considerable differences in AWOL rates within and among the services for major job groupings, overall the rates increase as the required level of job skills decreases. In the Air Force, Army, and Marine Corps, the highest AWOL rates were experienced among people holding low-skill jobs. We did not develop rates for the Navy because reliable job assignment information was not available at headquarters level for lower ranking enlisted personnel.

To separate the effects of education and mental aptitude from those of jobs, we estimated fiscal year 1975 AWOL rates for people with less than 30 months' service by job skill and recruit quality. For recruit quality, we grouped people in the following categories:

Top quality--high school graduates in mental categories I-IIIa.

Medium quality--high school graduates in mental categories IIIb and IV.

Low quality--non-high school graduates.

We grouped jobs by DOD occupational groups into the following skill categories: 1/

1/As used by Richard V. L. Cooper in "Military Manpower and the All-Volunteer Force," Report R-1450-ARPA, September 1977, Rand Corporation. Although Mr. Cooper grouped individuals in training status under low skilled, we excluded such individuals from our analysis.

High skill:

Electronic/Equipment Repairmen
Communication and Intelligence Specialists
Other Technical and Allied Specialists

Medium skill:

Medical and Dental Specialists
Administrative Specialists and Clerks
Electrical/Mechanical Equipment Repairmen
Craftsmen

Low skill:

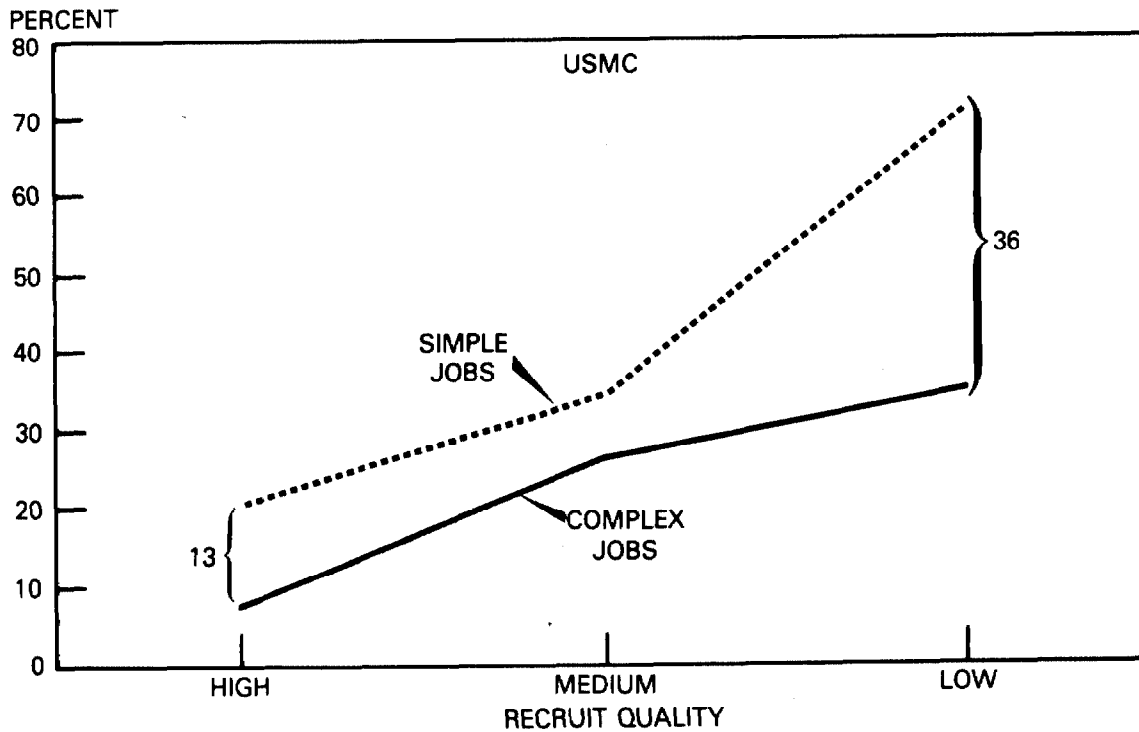
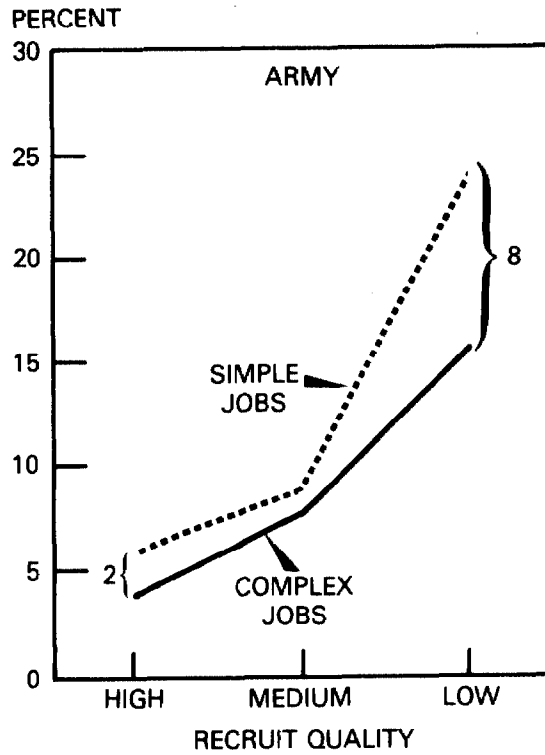
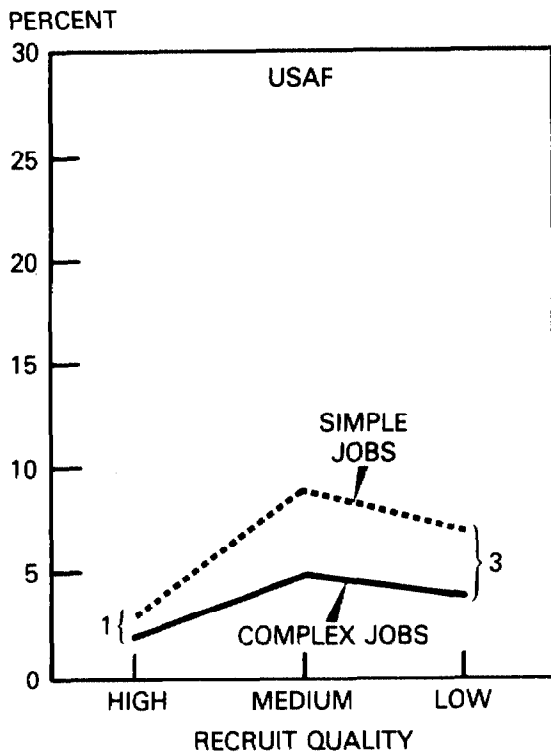
Infantry, Gun Crews, and Seamanship Specialists
Service and Supply Handlers

We further combined these groupings into two categories: (1) complex jobs, composed of both high- and medium-skill occupations, and (2) simple jobs, composed of low-skill occupations.

The charts on the following page show AWOL rates for the various levels of recruit quality and job complexity. They show that AWOL rates increase as the quality of the recruit drops regardless of service or whether the jobs are simple or complex. They also show that AWOL rates in the simple jobs were consistently higher than rates in the complex jobs.

The charts can be used to estimate the relative importance of job complexity and recruit quality to AWOL. For example, the AWOL rate for low-quality Marine Corps recruits in simple jobs is 71 percent; the rate in complex jobs is 35 percent. Therefore, the effect of simple jobs on low-quality Marines is to double their AWOL rate. Additionally, the 71-percent AWOL rate is two and one-half times the rate of top-quality Marines in these same jobs. A similar examination of Air Force and Army data shows the same trend. A comparison of the effects of recruit quality and job complexity in the Marine Corps is shown on page 76.

AWOL RATES BY RECRUIT QUALITY AND JOB COMPLEXITY (NOTE a)



a/ THE BRACKETED NUMBERS AT THE ENDS OF THE TREND LINES REPRESENT THE EFFECT OF JOB COMPLEXITY WHEN RECRUIT QUALITY IS HELD CONSTANT.

Effects of Recruit Quality and Job Complexity
on the AWOL Rate in the Marine Corps

	<u>Recruit quality</u>		<u>Difference</u>	<u>Effect of recruit</u>
	<u>Low</u>	<u>Top</u>	<u>in AWOL rate</u>	<u>quality (note a)</u>
	------(percent)-----			
Job complexity:				
Simple	71	20	51	255
Complex	<u>35</u>	<u>7</u>	28	400
 Difference in AWOL rate	<u>36</u>	<u>13</u>		
 Effect of job complexity b/	103	186		

a/The difference in percent between low- and top-quality recruits divided by the percent of AWOL in top-quality recruits.

b/The difference in percent between simple and complex jobs divided by the percent of AWOL in complex jobs.

IDENTIFICATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING
JOBS SHOULD REDUCE AWOL

Although our review did not include a review of specific organizational and job factors, a recent paper prepared by Gunderson and Hoiberg ^{1/} shows that such factors affect Navy AWOL rates, attrition, and personnel effectiveness. These factors also have an important effect on illness and injury rates. The findings indicate that the services should study jobs experiencing high AWOL rates to determine what changes in the job, physical environment, or leadership can be made to reduce AWOL rates and increase overall personnel effectiveness.

^{1/}"Personnel Effectiveness and Premature Attrition in the All-Volunteer Navy," E. K. Eric Gunderson and Anne Hoiberg, Report No. 77-16, as presented in "First Term Enlisted Attrition, Volume I: Papers," ed. H. Wallace Sinaiko, June 1977. The views are those of the authors. No endorsement has been given by the Navy or should be inferred.

In studying personnel effectiveness aboard ships, Gunderson and Hoiberg found that the Engineering Department experienced the highest AWOL and desertion rates of any departments. It also experienced the highest demotion rate and the highest overall ineffectiveness. Ineffectiveness was measured by the number of (1) separations from service because of unsuitability, misconduct, or by court-martial and (2) people not recommended for reenlistment. Additionally, engineering personnel perceived their work areas to be very unfavorable because they were noisy, hot, dirty, and unsafe.

The researchers also measured people's perceptions of the organizational climate in which they worked. The two groups experiencing the highest AWOL and desertion rates--the Engineering Department and Deck Department--reported poor perceptions of some elements of organizational climate. Specifically:

- Both groups perceived more conflict and ambiguity in their jobs than others and low levels of work group cooperation, friendliness, and warmth.
- One group reported low job challenge and had a poor perception of leader support.

Gunderson and Hoiberg suggest that, over the years, job stresses had increased for some engineering technicians. They further suggest that the hostile and hazardous nature of the technicians' working environment may help explain why some want to avoid their work situations so badly that they go AWOL.

CONCLUSIONS

Although recruit quality continues to reveal its influence on AWOL, our analysis shows that jobs also exert an influence. People assigned to low-skill or undesirable jobs have higher AWOL rates than those assigned to higher skill jobs which are generally considered more desirable and challenging.

The differences among the services' AWOL rates also indicate the importance of jobs. In a broad sense, a job includes not only specific tasks but also the total environment in which they must be performed. Our review did not cover the effect on AWOL of such factors as work environment, quality of leadership, or personnel management practices. The fact that AWOL in the Air Force is very low, however, indicates to us that Air Force members have a much more

favorable perception of their jobs than other service members. Differences in the jobs required in each service could account for some of the differences in the AWOL rates experienced.

In many cases it may be impracticable to improve the physical characteristics of low-skilled or undesirable jobs. For example, the engine room of a conventional warship at sea is hot, dirty, noisy, and hazardous and the infantryman's job is physically strenuous, dirty, and sometimes dangerous.

But ways should be explored to improve the factors affecting these jobs and the perceptions of individuals serving in them. Gunderson and Hoiberg point out how the individual's perception of such organizational factors as leadership and work environment contributes to AWOL. Thus the services should be studying jobs to see how particular jobs, organizational factors affecting these jobs, and the perception of those members serving in the jobs might be changed to reduce AWOL without compromising job performance or the discipline needed to accomplish the services' overall objectives.

For some jobs, the change needed might involve physical aspects of the jobs, such as restructuring low-skill jobs to make them more desirable or challenging. Others might require improved organizational factors, such as leadership. Some jobs might require changes of both kinds. For other jobs substantive change may not be practical.

It is important, however, that jobs with high AWOL rates be identified and a decision made as to whether or not improvements can reduce AWOL. Efforts should initially concentrate on those jobs with the highest AWOL rates and should serve as an effective first step in reducing the overall AWOL rate.

AGENCY COMMENTS

DOD said that each of the services has ongoing efforts in this area ranging from job enrichment programs to expanded training programs and increased attention to initiatives aimed at reducing early attrition. As a result, we are not offering any recommendations. The following discusses the Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy efforts.

The Air Force has started a job enrichment program and plans to expand it throughout the Air Force. The program will include analyzing high-turnover jobs with the aim of enriching such jobs, thereby reducing turnover. In addition,

the Air Force Leadership and Management Center, an internal management consultant firm, is available to assist Air Force commanders in improving their organizational environment.

The Marine Corps said that it had initiated a review of job structure, content, and satisfaction. This is being done with the expectation that improvements in job structure and content will result in increased job satisfaction and effectiveness, less attrition, and fewer AWOLs. The Marine Corps has also initiated efforts to reduce the gap between what people expect of Marine Corps recruit training and what it actually is. The Marine Corps plans to expand efforts on correcting the recruit's expectation on entering technical school and assignment to his first job.

The Navy said that it monitored AWOL statistics by job and paygrade and, as a result, many management initiatives had been taken in the past year to reverse AWOL trends in jobs identified as having problems. For example, the Engineering jobs--particularly Boiler Technicians--have high AWOL rates in proportion to their population. Initiatives to reduce attrition and AWOL in these jobs include:

- Improving the shipboard working environment, such as reductions in workload and inspections, increased logistical support, and increased use of labor-saving devices.
- Introducing an enlistment bonus for Boiler Technicians and increasing training to attract more high school graduates.
- Expanding apprenticeship training for Fireman Apprentices.

Additionally, the Navy is investigating the general detail jobs which have high AWOL and attrition rates. Individuals assigned these jobs are in lower mental categories and are either not qualified for or elected not to attend technical training at the completion of recruit training. Instead, they attend a short apprenticeship training program and then are assigned to the fleet. This study includes investigating (1) the effect of a shorter enlistment, (2) a school program for those who prove they are motivated, and (3) several forms of behavioral training for those who find it difficult to adjust to Navy life.

CHAPTER 8

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The objectives of our review were to determine how the military deals with the crime of AWOL and what actions could be taken to deal with it more effectively. In pursuing our objectives, we tried to answer the following principal questions:

- Why is AWOL a crime?
- What does AWOL cost the Government in dollars and mission effectiveness?
- What do services tell prospective recruits about the crime of AWOL?
- What do the services tell new recruits about AWOL during military justice training?
- What attributes distinguish military members who go AWOL from those who do not?
- What is the probability that AWOL offenders will eventually succeed in the military?
- What types and quantities of punishment are imposed for AWOL?
- Are there specific criteria for separating people with a record of AWOL when their record indicates they have little probability of successfully completing their military service?
- Are discharge criteria sufficiently definitive to ensure consistency in application to members with similar AWOL records?

At the outset of our review, we found that answers to most of the questions were not readily available. Thus it was necessary to develop much of this information by interviewing military representatives at DOD and service headquarters and at selected field locations (see app. I); obtaining cost data from the FBI and the services and developing estimates of other cost elements (see app. III); reviewing studies on AWOL, attrition, recruiting, and the All-Volunteer Force; reviewing the Uniform Code of Military Justice, the Manual for Courts-Martial, court cases, and

DOD and service directives, regulations, and manuals; and developing an extensive data base on AWOL and non-AWOL people.

The extensive data base was needed to provide a means for evaluating how the military deals with the crime of AWOL and what attributes distinguish people who go AWOL from those who do not. This involved obtaining and placing into a common format demographic information from military computer systems on about 28,000 AWOL and non-AWOL people. In addition, we had to extract a large amount of information from about 4,100 personnel files of AWOL people.

Our data base consists of two study groups from each service. The development of each study group is explained below.

1. AWOL group--To determine how the military deals with the crime of AWOL, we took a stratified random sample of AWOL incidents in the Army, the Marine Corps, and the Navy that were terminated during the 12-month period ended March 31, 1975. Our sample was taken from military computer records, but punishment data was not on the computer. Therefore, we extracted from each individual's personnel file data pertaining to their military criminal history, punishment imposed for the sample AWOL, and, in those cases where they had been separated, success on return to duty as indicated by the reason for separation and type of discharge. (See app. IV.)

In the Air Force, our AWOL study group consisted of those individuals terminating an AWOL during the 12-month period ended June 30, 1975, where the disposition and punishment data was recorded on the Air Force Automated Military Justice Analysis and Management System computer. (Complete data was not available for the 12-month period ended March 31, 1975.) Some of the military criminal history we obtained from the personnel files of the other services was not available on the Air Force automated system. Thus some of our analyses do not include the Air Force. (See app. V.)

2. Non-AWOL group--To determine what attributes distinguish people who are most likely to go AWOL, we compared a random sample of people who had not gone AWOL with the portion of the AWOL group who entered service after June 30, 1972. The non-AWOL group was selected from personnel who entered service after June 30, 1972, and were on duty December 31, 1974. (See apps. VI and VII.)

The variables obtained for each study group and the related analyses are explained in appendix VIII.

LOCATIONS VISITED

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE:

Office of Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics,
Washington, D.C.

Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Stations:

Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska

AIR FORCE:

Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Air Force Military Personnel Center, Randolph Air Force
Base, Texas

Air Force Accounting and Finance Center, Denver, Colorado

Air Force Recruiting Detachments: Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska

Air Force Recruiting Offices: Lawrence, Kansas
Independence, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska

Air Force Military Training Center, Lackland Air Force
Base, Texas

Headquarters Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force
Base, Nebraska

Headquarters 351st Strategic Missile Wing, Whiteman
Air Force Base, Missouri

ARMY:

Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Army Military Personnel Center, Alexandria, Virginia

Army Enlisted Record and Evaluation Center,
Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana

Army Reserve Component Personnel and Administration
Center, St. Louis, Missouri

Army District Recruiting Commands:

Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska

Army Recruiting Stations: Wichita, Kansas
Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska

Army Training Center Engineer, Fort Leonard Wood,
Missouri

Headquarters U.S. Army Field Artillery and Fort Sill,
Fort Sill, Oklahoma

MARINE CORPS:

Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Marine Corps Manpower Management Information Systems
Branch, Washington, D.C.

Manpower, Personnel Services Division, Arlington,
Virginia
Marine Corps Automated Services Center, Reserve Forces
Administration Activities, Kansas City, Missouri
Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California
Marine Corps Recruiting Stations: Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska

Marine Corps Recruiting Substations:
Topeka, Kansas
Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska
Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, California
Marine Corps Base, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
Force Troops, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
Second Marine Division, Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

NAVY:

Headquarters, Washington, D.C.
Navy Finance Center, Cleveland, Ohio
Bureau of Naval Personnel, Enlisted Service and Record
Division, Arlington, Virginia
Navy Recruiting District: Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska
Navy Recruiting Station: Wichita, Kansas
North Kansas City, Missouri
Omaha, Nebraska
Naval Training Center, San Diego, California
Naval Air Station, Memphis, Tennessee
Attack Squadron Forty-two, Naval Air Station, Oceana,
Virginia
Fighter Squadron Thirty-two, Naval Air Station, Oceana,
Virginia
U.S.S. John F. Kennedy, Norfolk, Virginia

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION:

Military Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, Missouri

AWOL AS DEFINED IN LAW

Articles 85, 86, and 87 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (10 U.S.C. 885-887) define "AWOL" in the military services as a crime. It describes the various forms of unauthorized absence:

"Art. 85. Desertion

"(a) Any member of the armed forces who--

- (1) without authority goes or remains absent from his unit, organization, or place of duty with intent to remain away therefrom permanently;
- (2) quits his unit, organization, or place of duty with intent to avoid hazardous duty or to shirk important service; or
- (3) without being regularly separated from one of the armed forces enlists or accepts an appointment in the same or another one of the armed forces without fully disclosing the fact that he has not been regularly separated, or enters any foreign armed service except when authorized by the United States;

is guilty of desertion.

"(b) Any commissioned officer of the armed forces who, after tender of his resignation and before notice of its acceptance, quits his post or proper duties without leave and with intent to remain away therefrom permanently is guilty of desertion.

"(c) Any person found guilty of desertion or attempt to desert shall be punished, if the offense is committed in time of war, by death or such other punishment as a court-martial may direct, but if the desertion or attempt to desert occurs at any other time, by such punishment, other than death, as a court-martial may direct.

"Art. 86. Absence without leave

"Any member of the armed forces who, without authority--

- (1) fails to go to his appointed place of duty at the time prescribed;
- (2) goes from that place; or
- (3) absents himself or remains absent from his unit, organization, or place of duty at which he is required to be at the time prescribed;

shall be punished as a court-martial may direct.

"Art. 87. Missing movement

"Any person subject to this chapter who through neglect or design misses the movement of a ship, aircraft, or unit with which he is required in the course of duty to move shall be punished as a court-martial may direct."

ESTIMATED COST OF AWOL TO THE GOVERNMENT

The actual cost of AWOL to the Government is unknown because DOD and the services do not accumulate data needed to compute such costs. We estimate that AWOL costs the Government \$1.1 billion for the 4-year period ended June 30, 1977.

<u>Fiscal year</u>	<u>Cost</u> (millions)
1974	\$ 327.0
1975	308.9
1976	255.1
1977	<u>220.8</u>
Total	<u>\$1,111.8</u>

The estimate is based on a detailed analysis of our sample of AWOLs terminated during our 12-month study period ended in 1975 and adjusted for other years based on changes in the number of AWOLs and changes in pay. Our estimate for 1975 is shown below.

Estimated Cost to the Government
for AWOL in Fiscal Year 1975

<u>Item</u>	<u>Cost</u> (millions)
Reporting	\$ 12.3
Apprehending	16.0
Processing after return	11.1
Courts-martial and nonjudicial punishments	7.8
Confinement	10.3
Recruiting and training cost lost due to early separation	<u>251.4</u>
Total	<u>\$308.9</u>

Our estimate includes the principal costs incident to AWOL, including about 13,900 court-martial cases representing about 37 percent of the total fiscal year 1975 court cases.

Our estimate does not include several items for which costs could not readily be developed. Although commanders said that AWOL affected unit training, discipline, and

morale, we did not develop costs of these adverse effects. Other factors not included are

- the pay to individuals while in pretrial confinement or other nonproductive status pending disposition of AWOL charges against them,
- costs of disposing of about 21 percent of the AWOL cases where disposition was unclear or involved such things as finalizing an administrative or punitive discharge in process at the time of the incident,
- the pay to individuals while in confinement as punishment for AWOL if the sentence did not include total forfeitures of pay,
- applicable costs of operating correctional custody facilities,
- review of courts-martial by the Court of Military Appeals,
- permanent change of station costs,
- processing out costs other than those associated with a discharge in lieu of court-martial,
- review (if requested) of other than honorable discharges by a discharge review board,
- review (if requested) of the case or discharge by a board for correction of military (or naval) records, and
- costs of any veterans' benefits granted to an AWOL offender.

In developing our estimate, we established two basic premises. First, unit costs developed in one service or installation for the various actions involved in dealing with AWOL are reasonably representative of such costs in all services. Second, AWOLs in fiscal years 1974, 1976, and 1977 were dealt with similarly to those in 1975. Major changes in either premise would affect our estimate.

Some of our estimate is based on unit costs which we developed at one Army base by obtaining the grades and average time each person spent on the particular action. In costing the people's time involved, we used the appropriate

cost schedules in DOD's "Economic Cost of Military and Civilian Personnel in the Department of Defense," dated March 1974, which we adjusted upward by 5.5 percent to reflect the subsequent 1974 pay raise. In our prior report, "Millions Being Spent to Apprehend Military Deserters Most of Whom Are Discharged as Unqualified for Retention," (FPCD-77-16, Jan. 31, 1977), we used the individual service's "Composite Standard Rates for Costing Military Personnel Services" effective January 1, 1975. We changed to DOD economic costs because they more nearly represent actual personnel costs to the Government. The economic costs consist of the average DOD and non-DOD costs by grade, including (1) permanent change of station travel, (2) quarters, (3) retirement, (4) training, (5) support costs excluding related salaries, (6) dependency and indemnity compensation, (7) unemployment compensation, (8) educational benefits, and (9) income tax adjustments.

The basis for our estimate is described below.

REPORTING

We estimate that, on the basis of detailed information developed at one Army base, the Government spent \$12.3 million for reporting AWOL and desertions in fiscal year 1975.

<u>Reporting on</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Total</u>
	----- (millions) -----				
AWOL	\$2.6	\$2.2	\$1.9	\$.3	\$ 7.0
Deserter (installation level)	3.9	.5	.3	(a)	4.7
Deserter (head-quarters level)	<u>.6</u>	(b)	(b)	(b)	<u>.6</u>
Total	<u>\$7.1</u>	<u>\$2.7</u>	<u>\$2.2</u>	<u>\$.3</u>	<u>\$12.3</u>

a/Reduced to zero when rounding.

b/Did not estimate.

Cost of reporting AWOL

After an individual has been absent without authorization for more than 24 hours, the unit must report the individual as AWOL. Reporting and recording the AWOL requires

action by many people in various organizations at the installation. For example, the actions include an inventory of the individual's belongings. For fiscal year 1975, we estimate that it cost \$41 to report, process, and record an AWOL incident.

During fiscal year 1975, the services reported 168,773 AWOL incidents.

<u>Services</u>	<u>AWOL incidents</u>
Army	64,018
Marine Corps	52,719
Navy	45,357
Air Force	<u>6,679</u>
Total	<u>168,773</u>

Thus we estimate it cost \$7 million to report AWOL incidents in fiscal year 1975 (\$41 x 168,773).

Cost of reporting a deserter (installation level)

Once an individual is AWOL for over 29 consecutive days, he is considered a deserter for administrative purposes. This requires additional actions. For fiscal year 1975, we estimate that the costs of the three functions involved in reporting a deserter are as follows:

<u>Action</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Reporting	\$ 28
Turn in of equipment	17
Establishing pecuniary liability	250

The latter two functions are applicable to the Army only.

We estimate that reporting deserters cost \$1.3 million for fiscal year 1975. This is derived by applying the \$28 reporting cost to the 47,997 deserters reported.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Deserters</u>
Army	17,966
Marine Corps	18,396
Navy	10,659
Air Force	<u>976</u>
Total	<u>47,997</u>

In connection with reporting deserters in the Army, we estimate that it costs \$305,000 for unit personnel to turn in clothing and equipment belonging to the Government that was left by the deserters (\$17 x 17,966 desertions).

Additionally, we estimate it costs \$3.1 million for the Army to establish pecuniary liability against deserters for any missing clothing and equipment issued to them. This action is required by law and Army regulation. Liability is established by processing a Report of Survey. An Army study estimated it had to process a Report of Survey in 69 percent of the fiscal year 1975 desertions at a cost of \$250 each. Our estimate is derived, therefore, by multiplying \$250 by 12,397 (69 percent of the 17,966 desertions).

Thus we estimate that it cost \$4.7 million to report deserters in fiscal year 1975.

Cost of reporting deserters
(headquarters level)

Before notifying the FBI and local law authorities that an individual is a deserter, offices established at each service headquarters level verify that the individual is actually AWOL and not present at some other military installation. In the Army, this function is performed by the Army Deserter Information Point.

Based on the number of employees at the Army Deserter Information Point in fiscal year 1975 and their grades, we estimate the cost of personnel at \$636,000. We did not develop an estimate for the other services. Due to differences in the Army and other service operations, we believed it was not appropriate to use Army costs for estimating the costs in other services.

APPREHENDING

We estimate that the Government spent \$16 million for apprehending deserters in fiscal year 1975.

	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Total</u>
----- (millions) -----					
Local law					
authorities	\$0.3	\$0.1	\$0.2	\$(a)	\$ 0.6
FBI (note b)	2.2	2.3	1.3	0.1	5.9
Military escort:					
Travel	0.9	0.2	0.8	0.2	2.1
Salaries	<u>5.5</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>0.7</u>	<u>0.1</u>	<u>7.4</u>
Total	<u>\$8.9</u>	<u>\$3.7</u>	<u>\$3.0</u>	<u>\$0.4</u>	<u>\$16.0</u>

a/Reduced to zero when rounding.

b/Our distribution among the services is based on each service's proportion of total deserters during fiscal year 1975.

Payments to law enforcement authorities

State and local law enforcement authorities in an individual's home area are advised when the military administratively declares him a deserter. DOD Directive 1325.2 authorizes payment to persons or agencies for apprehending, detaining, or delivering absentees and deserters to the military. A reward of \$15 is authorized for apprehending and detaining an individual until military authorities arrive or \$25 for apprehending and delivering an individual to the military. Agencies that are prohibited by local laws or regulations from accepting rewards may be reimbursed for actual expenses up to \$25 a case.

Each military service records the amount of these payments in a single account. For fiscal year 1975 the records show costs of \$645,000.

Costs incurred by FBI

When a deserter has been absent about 60 days, the military is supposed to notify the FBI, which then opens a case file on the individual. When the individual returns to the military, by whatever means, the case is closed.

In response to our request, the FBI stated that, in fiscal year 1975, it spent an estimated \$5.9 million apprehending deserters.

Military escort costs

When the FBI, State, or local law enforcement agencies apprehend deserters, the military sends guards to escort them back or has the individual return unescorted to a designated military facility. This involves costs for travel and guard salaries.

Travel costs

Each military service records guard travel costs in a single account. For fiscal year 1975 the records show costs of \$2.1 million.

Guard salaries

The services do not compile the cost of guard escorts for returning absentees. Using data provided by the Army and the Marine Corps, we estimate that, for fiscal year 1975, guard salaries and related staff cost \$7.4 million.

We requested that the Army provide us with the number and average grade of persons assigned in fiscal year 1975 to escort absentees apprehended by others. The Army told us that staffing of the 41 activities involved consists of 14 officers with an average grade of O-3, 385 enlisted persons with an average grade of E-5 and 2 GS-4 civilians. We estimate these staffing costs at \$5.5 million.

A Marine Corps representative said that the 25 activities involved in apprehending deserters in fiscal year 1975 used an estimated 12 officer-years at an average grade of O-2 and 77 enlisted-years at an average grade of E-4. We estimate these staffing costs at \$1.1 million.

Because the Air Force and Navy apprehension programs are similar to the Marine Corps', we used the average Marine Corps apprehension cost of \$63 to estimate Air Force and Navy costs. Applying the \$63 to the number of deserters returned, we estimate Air Force guard escort costs at \$69,000 and Navy costs at \$653,000.

Thus we estimate military guard escort costs at \$7.4 million.

PROCESSING COSTS AFTER RETURN

Processing deserters after return is done by the individual's unit in the Air Force and Marine Corps and by a confinement facility in the Navy. However, the Army has

established special units--called personnel control facilities--to process deserters upon return. These facilities may also process other absentees in certain circumstances.

At our request, the Army developed cost data for operating its 12 personnel control facilities and the number of deserters processed at these facilities. The Army's response showed operational costs to be \$11.9 million for processing 21,190 deserters and 5,757 people for AWOL. We adjusted these costs downward to \$11.1 million to eliminate duplication of the commander's and the staff's time for determining and processing punishments which is included in our estimate of the cost of punishing. Similarly, the cost to the unit of processing returned absentees in the other services is included in our estimated cost of punishing.

NONJUDICIAL PUNISHMENTS, COURTS-MARTIAL, AND DISCHARGES IN LIEU OF COURT-MARTIAL

When an individual returns from an AWOL or desertion, a decision must be made as to whether an individual should be punished and to what extent. For fiscal year 1975, we estimate that it cost the Government \$7.8 million to dispose of AWOL and desertion incidents.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Total</u>
----- (millions) -----					
Nonjudicial punishments	\$1.4	\$1.1	\$ 0.9	\$0.1	\$3.5
Courts-martial	.7	.9	.6	.1	2.3
Review of courts-martial	.1	(a)	(a)	(a)	.1
Discharges in lieu of court-martial	<u>1.3</u>	<u>.4</u>	<u>.2</u>	<u>(b)</u>	<u>1.9</u>
Total	<u>\$3.5</u>	<u>\$2.4</u>	<u>\$ 1.7</u>	<u>\$0.2</u>	<u>\$7.8</u>

a/Did not develop an estimate.

b/Reduced to zero when rounding.

Level of disposition

Based on detailed information developed at one Army base for fiscal year 1975, we estimate that it cost from \$47 to \$210 to dispose of an AWOL case, depending on the level of disposition selected.

<u>Level of disposition</u>	<u>Cost</u>
Nonjudicial punishment	\$ 47
Summary court-martial	105
Special and general court-martial (note a)	210
Discharge in lieu of court-martial	152

a/Due to the small number of general courts-martial, we did not develop a separate estimate.

On the basis of analysis of our sample AWOL incidents terminated during our 12-month study period, we estimate that the 168,773 AWOL incidents in fiscal year 1975 were disposed of by 127,391 separate actions.

<u>Action</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Total</u>
Nonjudicial punishments	30,236	22,495	18,574	2,545	73,850
Summary courts-martial	1,408	2,478	1,551	3	5,440
Special and general courts-martial	2,823	3,089	2,204	345	8,461
Discharges in lieu of court-martial	8,386	2,583	1,574	138	12,681
Other	<u>12,906</u>	<u>6,437</u>	<u>4,323</u>	<u>3,293</u>	<u>26,959</u>
Total	<u>55,759</u>	<u>37,082</u>	<u>28,226</u>	<u>6,324</u>	<u>127,391</u>

In the schedule above, other actions for the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps include instances where (1) no action was taken, (2) action may have been taken but was not recorded in personnel records, (3) action was not directly related to the incident (i.e., finalization of administrative or punitive discharge in process at time of the incident), and (4) action may have been delayed pending return from subsequent absence. In the Air Force, other actions represent the number of incidents not included in the Air Force Automated Military Justice Analysis and Management System or if included, incidents which were combined with non-AWOL offenses for disposition.

To arrive at an estimated cost for each level of disposition, we applied the estimated disposition costs to the related number of cases.

Review of court-martial

The Air Force, Army, and Navy Courts of Military Review must review all cases where the sentence imposed includes a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge and/or confinement for 1 year or more. We requested the Army Court of Military Review to estimate the cost of reviewing AWOL cases in fiscal year 1975. The court estimated the costs at \$98,000, which averages about \$200 a case. We did not develop an estimate for the other services.

CONFINEMENT

For fiscal year 1975, we estimate that it cost about \$30 per day to confine people in military correctional facilities. In the absence of such costs for each service, we used the average fiscal year 1975 daily cost per prisoner for operating the U.S. Disciplinary Barracks, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. This facility houses long-term Air Force, Army and Marine Corps prisoners.

On the basis of our analysis of punishments imposed for our random sample of AWOL incidents terminated during our 12-month study period, we estimate that people who were AWOL in fiscal year 1975 received unsuspended sentences to confinement of 411,354 days. From this, we deducted about 16 percent to allow for clemency and time off for good behavior, 1/ resulting in a net estimate of 343,892 days. At \$30 per day, we estimate confinement costs for fiscal year 1975 at \$10.3 million.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Confinement days</u>	<u>Cost</u> (millions)
Marine Corps	132,219	\$ 4.0
Navy	98,588	2.9
Army	96,334	2.9
Air Force	<u>16,751</u>	<u>.5</u>
Total	<u>343,892</u>	<u>\$10.3</u>

1/Allowance is based on information developed during an earlier GAO report to the Congress, "Uniform Treatment of Prisoners Under the Military Correctional Facilities Act Currently Not Being Achieved." (FPCD-75-125, May 30, 1975)

RECRUITING AND TRAINING COSTS
LOST DUE TO EARLY SEPARATIONS

We estimate that the Government lost \$251.4 million in unamortized recruiting and training costs in fiscal year 1975 because people with an AWOL record were separated as unsuccessful before the end of their enlistment. Our estimate, shown below, is based on Navy cost and productivity data developed by the General Research Corporation. ^{1/} Productivity used in the context of this study refers to comparative rate of attrition and proficiency between recruit categories.

	<u>Cost</u> (millions)
Army	\$ 95.4
Marine Corps	78.5
Navy	67.6
Air Force	<u>9.9</u>
Total	<u>\$251.4</u>

Approach

In developing this portion of our overall estimate, we established four premises.

1. Productivity for each month and months of service should be used as the basis for amortizing recruiting and training costs invested. We did not use the straight-line approach because it assumed an individual's productivity was constant throughout his enlistment when, in fact, it was very low in the early months and very high in the latter months.
2. Navy recruiting and training costs, proficiency, and attrition experience of people with an AWOL record are reasonably representative of the other services.
3. The cost estimate should be based on those people terminating an AWOL during our 12-month study period who did not go AWOL again and were separated as unsuccessful before the end of their enlistment. Attributing these costs

^{1/}Report CR-197, "Development of Methods for Analysis of the Cost of Enlisted Attrition," September 1977, General Research Corporation.

to the fiscal year during which the last AWOL occurred provides for consistent accounting.

4. The unamortized recruiting and training costs lost when people with an AWOL record are separated as unsuccessful should be considered a cost of AWOL regardless of the specific reason for separation. Although the extent to which AWOL influences the decision to separate an individual is not clear in all cases, it is reasonable to expect that AWOL incidents recorded in an individual's personnel record affect this decision to some degree.

Methodology

To determine the unamortized costs lost when people were separated as unsuccessful before the end of their enlistment, we used cost and productivity data developed by the General Research Corporation for the Navy. These costs include recruiting, basic and advanced training, pay and allowances, desertion, apprehension, judicial, health and medical, and travel.

Because productivity and cost vary according to the quality of individuals recruited, General Research Corporation developed separate schedules showing the monthly cost and productivity of six groups of individuals: high school graduates in mental categories I through IIIa, IIIb, and IV and non-high school graduates in the same three mental categories. We grouped the individuals in our AWOL sample in the same manner and applied the cost and productivity information appropriate to each group, after adjusting the costs to reflect the pay and benefits in effect during our study period.

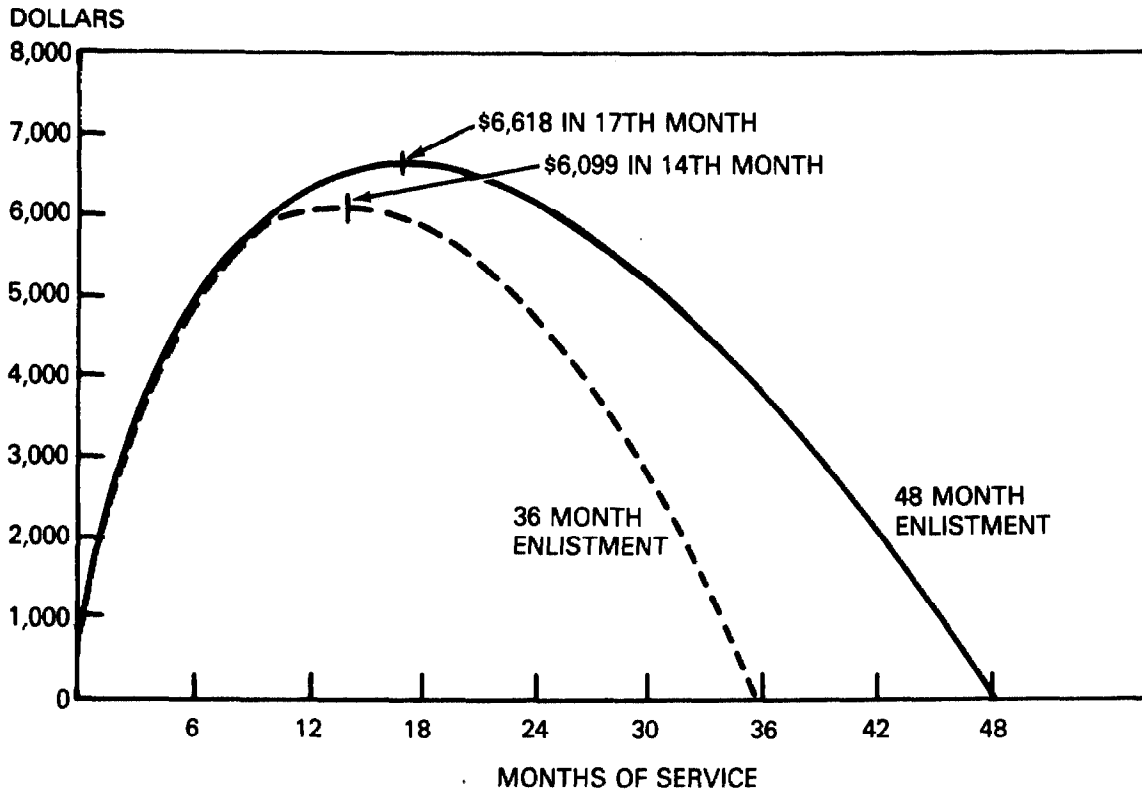
The recruiting and training costs invested in each individual was amortized in monthly increments over the length of each individual's enlistment. The amount invested each month--which is the difference between the cost incurred and the value of the individual's productivity $\frac{1}{}$ that month--was amortized on the basis of the individual's productivity during the remaining months of his enlistment.

1/An individual's productivity is expressed as a percentage of the productivity of a fully qualified journeyman. The value of this productivity is computed by multiplying this percentage times the cost of a fully qualified journeyman.

Investment is higher in the earlier months of an enlistment because of (1) recruiting costs, (2) initial formal training costs, and (3) low proficiency. Therefore, very little of the investment is amortized during each of these early months. During the latter months of an enlistment, a much larger portion of the investment is amortized each month based on the fact that the individual is proficient, stays in his job, and is cost affective. As a result, the total amount of unamortized investment decreases during the latter months.

The growth in the unamortized investment in the average AWOL offender (a male non-high school graduate in mental categories I through IIIa) is illustrated in the chart below. The chart shows that the Government would lose \$6,600 in unamortized recruiting and training costs if an individual serving a 48-month enlistment were separated at the end of 17 months.

UNRECOUPED INVESTMENT CURVE



Computation

We estimate that 27 percent of the people involved in the 45,152 Navy AWOLs terminated during our 12-month study period did not go AWOL again and were separated as unsuccessful before the end of their enlistment. We estimate that the Navy lost \$67,285,458 in unamortized recruiting and training costs because of these early separations. This averages \$1,490 per AWOL incident (\$67,285,458 divided by 45,152). We used the \$1,490 per AWOL as a basis for estimating the total recruiting and training costs lost in each service due to AWOL in fiscal year 1975.

SAMPLE OF ARMY, MARINE CORPS, AND NAVY AWOL INCIDENTS OFMORE THAN 24 HOURS TERMINATED DURING THE12-MONTH PERIOD ENDED MARCH 31, 1975Army

Length of AWOL (note a) (days)	Total number of AWOLs in computerized records	Sample size	Adjust- ments (note b)	Adjusted sample size	AWOLs recorded in personnel records (note c)
Less than 1	0	0	0	0	8
1 to 3	14,079	350	145	205	196
4 to 15	20,491	405	109	296	321
16 to 30	<u>8,094</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>111</u>
Total (30 or less)	<u>42,664</u>	<u>886</u>	<u>289</u>	<u>597</u>	<u>636</u>
31 to 60	5,425	138	26	112	108
61 to 90	3,254	134	18	116	113
91 to 180	4,917	141	16	125	126
over 180	<u>4,517</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>94</u>
Total (over 30)	<u>18,113</u>	<u>555</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>480</u>	<u>441</u>
Total	<u>60,777</u>	<u>1,441</u>	<u>364</u>	<u>1,077</u>	<u>1,077</u>

a/Amounts may differ slightly from those shown in the GAO Report to the Secretary of Defense, "Millions Being Spent to Apprehend Military Deserters Most of Whom are Discharged as Unqualified for Retention." (FPCD-77-16, Jan. 31, 1977) As stated in that report, our overall analysis was in process when the report was issued, and later adjustments of 1 day were necessary in the length of AWOLs computed from the computerized records we sampled.

b/Includes 239 sample incidents not found in the examination of personnel records, 77 personnel records not at review location, 41 incidents combined with non-AWOL offenses for disposition, and 7 incidents excluded for miscellaneous other reasons. These incidents were not included in the analyses.

c/The AWOLs are categorized by the length of absence recorded in the individual personnel records. In some instances, the length of the AWOL differed from that recorded in the computerized records.

Marine Corps

<u>Length of AWOL</u> (days)	Total number of AWOLs in computerized records	Sample size	Adjustments (note a)	Adjusted sample size	AWOLs recorded in personnel records (note b)
Less than 1	0	0	0	0	7
1 to 3	13,730	281	111	170	167
4 to 15	13,660	402	116	286	300
16 to 30	<u>5,259</u>	<u>141</u>	<u>51</u>	<u>90</u>	<u>86</u>
Total (30 or less)	<u>32,649</u>	<u>824</u>	<u>278</u>	<u>546</u>	<u>560</u>
31 to 60	4,551	130	40	90	92
61 to 90	2,126	125	20	105	94
1 to 180	3,712	132	31	101	89
Over 180	<u>4,007</u>	<u>144</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>107</u>
Total (over 30)	<u>14,396</u>	<u>531</u>	<u>135</u>	<u>396</u>	<u>382</u>
Total	<u>47,045</u>	<u>1,355</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>942</u>	<u>942</u>

a/Includes 106 sample incidents not found in the examination of personnel records, 140 personnel records not at the review location, 130 incidents combined with non-AWOL offenses for disposition, and 37 incidents excluded for miscellaneous other reasons. These incidents were not included in the analyses.

b/AWOLs are categorized by the length of absence recorded in the individual personnel records. In some instances, the length of the AWOL differed from that recorded in the computerized records.

Navy

<u>Length of AWOL</u>	<u>Total number of AWOLs in computerized records</u>	<u>Sample size</u>	<u>Adjustments (note a)</u>	<u>Adjusted sample size</u>	<u>AWOLs recorded in personnel records (note b)</u>
(days)					
1 to 3	12,264	307	106	201	203
4 to 15	14,756	410	145	265	271
16 to 30	<u>6,106</u>	<u>142</u>	<u>45</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>107</u>
Total (30 or less)	<u>33,126</u>	<u>859</u>	<u>296</u>	<u>563</u>	<u>581</u>
31 to 60	3,185	145	31	114	173
61 to 90	1,084	135	33	102	120
91 to 180	1,168	146	26	120	145
Over 180	<u>445</u>	<u>149</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>126</u>	<u>153</u>
Total (over 30)	<u>5,882</u>	<u>575</u>	<u>113</u>	<u>462</u>	<u>591</u>
Length of AWOL not known	<u>6,144</u>	<u>205</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>147</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	<u>45,152</u>	<u>1,639</u>	<u>467</u>	<u>1,172</u>	<u>1,172</u>

a/Includes 20 sample incidents not found in the examination of personnel records, 98 personnel records not at the review location, 238 incidents combined with non-AWOL offenses for disposition, and 111 incidents excluded for miscellaneous other reasons. These incidents were not included in the analyses.

b/AWOLs are categorized by the length of absence recorded in the individual personnel records. In some instances, the length of the AWOL differed from that recorded in the computerized records.

SAMPLE OF AIR FORCEAWOL INCIDENTS OF MORE THAN 24 HOURS TERMINATED DURING THE12-MONTH PERIOD ENDED JUNE 30, 1975

<u>Length of AWOL</u> (days)	<u>Number of AWOLs in computerized records</u>	<u>Number of AWOLs matched to computerized punishment data</u>	<u>Adjustments (note a)</u>	<u>Adjusted sample size</u>
1 to 3	2,191	966	39	927
4 to 15	2,558	1,353	51	1,302
16 to 30	<u>1,349</u>	<u>744</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>722</u>
Total (30 or less)	<u>6,098</u>	<u>3,063</u>	<u>112</u>	<u>2,951</u>
31 to 60	342	76	2	74
61 to 90	177	14	2	12
91 to 180	195	29	0	29
Over 180	<u>83</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>12</u>
Total (over 30)	<u>797</u>	<u>131</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>127</u>
Total	<u>6,895</u>	<u>3,194</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>3,078</u>

a/Includes 112 incidents combined with non-AWOL offenses for disposition and 4 incidents excluded for miscellaneous reasons. These incidents were not included in the analyses.

SAMPLE OF ENLISTED PERSONNEL
ON DUTY AT DECEMBER 31, 1974, WHO ENTERED ON
ACTIVE DUTY AFTER JUNE 30, 1972

	<u>Population</u>	<u>Sample</u>
Air Force	180,451	5,012
Army	356,460	5,484
Marine Corps	96,971	5,104
Navy	<u>197,202</u>	<u>5,057</u>
Total	<u>831,084</u>	<u>20,657</u>

COMBINED SAMPLES OF AWOL AND NON-AWOL PERSONNEL

	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>
1. AWOL sample (apps. IV and V)	3,078	1,077	942	1,172
2. Less members of AWOL sample who entered on duty before July 1, 1972	<u>658</u>	<u>286</u>	<u>261</u>	<u>263</u>
3. AWOL personnel in combined sample	<u>2,420</u>	<u>791</u>	<u>681</u>	<u>909</u>
4. Sample of enlisted population on active duty at December 31, 1974, who entered on duty after June 30, 1972 (app. VI)	5,012	5,484	5,105	5,057
5. Less those individuals with indication of AWOL in the records sampled (note a)	<u>105</u>	<u>843</u>	<u>2,139</u>	<u>279</u>
6. Non-AWOL personnel in combined sample	<u>4,907</u>	<u>4,641</u>	<u>2,965</u>	<u>4,778</u>
7. Total combined sample (line 3 + line 6)	<u>7,327</u>	<u>5,432</u>	<u>3,646</u>	<u>5,687</u>

a/ The Air Force and Army records sampled indicated whether the individuals had been AWOL. The Marine Corps and Navy records indicated whether the individuals had "lost time." Individuals with lost time were excluded, because the record did not indicate whether it was for AWOL.

ANALYZING SAMPLE DATA

Considerable information was obtained about the individuals included in the sample groups described in appendixes IV through VII. Regression and discriminate analysis were the principal techniques used in analyzing this data to identify those factors most important to the questions our review was designed to answer.

QUESTIONS WE WANTED TO ANSWER
IN ANALYZING THE SAMPLE DATA

The questions we wanted to answer in analyzing the sample data follow.

- What distinguishes the AWOL individual from the non-AWOL individual?
- What influences the quantity of punishment received by individuals who go AWOL?
- What distinguishes the AWOL individual who goes AWOL again from the one who does not?
- What distinguishes an AWOL individual who succeeds as a service member from one who fails?
- What influences the type of discharge received by the AWOL individual who fails as a service member?

SAMPLE DATA ANALYZED

The variables listed below comprise the sample data analyzed. Variables applicable to both the AWOL and control (non-AWOL) groups are listed separately from those applicable only to the AWOL groups. All of the variables were analyzed in each service, except (1) reliable job assignment information in the Navy was not available at a centralized location and (2) AWOL history data in the Air Force sample and dependent information in the Marine Corps control sample were not provided.

Variables applicable to both the
AWOL and control groups

Sex
Race
Marital status
Number of dependents
Years of education
Whether a high school graduate
Mental category
Age at enlistment
Length of enlistment
Pay grade
Job assignment
Job for which trained
Reason for separation if separated
Type of discharge received if separated

Variables applicable to the AWOL groups

Months of service at the time of AWOL
Months of service at the time of discharge and our
review
Total times AWOL, days AWOL, and convictions for all
reasons at the time of discharge and our review,
divided into
--those prior to the sample incident that were
not combined with the sample incident for
disposition,
--the sample incident and those combined with it
for disposition, and
--those subsequent to the sample incident that
were not combined with the sample incident for
disposition.
Punishments imposed after all reviews completed a/
Equivalent units of punishment (discussed in app. IX)
Percent of punishment suspended b/

a/Except for the analysis on p. 23 where the punish-
ments used are those imposed by general courts-
martial before any subsequent review.

b/In this report, all punishments presented and dis-
cussed are without regard to what portion, if any,
may have been suspended.

COMBINING AND GROUPING THE
SAMPLE DATA ANALYZED

Initial analyses indicated some variables should be combined, others grouped differently than in the manner we collected data, and others omitted. For example, we found we could replace information indicating an individual's marital status and number of dependents with a single variable indicating whether the individual had dependents. Other variables combined or grouped differently for analysis follow.

- An individual's education level and mental category was expressed as one of the following 10 categories: high school graduate in mental category I, II, IIIa, IIIb, or IV, or a non-high school graduate in mental category I, II, IIIa, IIIb, or IV.
- The number of days of AWOL was grouped as 1 to 3 days, 4 to 30 days, and over 30 days.
- The number of times an individual has been AWOL was grouped as one, two or three, or more than three.
- The number of times an individual has been convicted was grouped as one, two or three, or more than three.
- Indicators of race were designated minority or non-minority.
- Job assignment information was expressed as one of the nine standardized DOD occupational codes.
- Information on what job an individual was trained for and what job he was actually assigned to was expressed as a single variable indicating whether the individual was assigned to the job for which he was trained.

TECHNIQUES USED TO ANALYZE SAMPLE DATA

The principal techniques used to analyze sample data were stepwise multiple regression and discriminate analysis. Stepwise multiple regression determines the correlation between a dependent variable and any number of independent variables. It also ranks the independent variables according to the degree of correlation found. This allowed us to

establish the more important relationships. Discriminate analysis, on the other hand, enabled us to determine how accurate predictions about the dependent variable would be if the predictions were based only on the more important independent variables.

The stepwise multiple regression analysis identified several variables which were statistically significant at the 95-percent confidence level for each of the dependent variables considered. However, the discriminate analysis disclosed that the statistically significant independent variables did not explain the difference in the dependent variables sufficiently to make accurate predictions. This does not mean that the significant relationships identified by the regression analysis are not important, but it does mean other variables not considered in our analysis would have to be measured to make accurate predictions.

For example, the most important attributes in all services in distinguishing between AWOL and non-AWOL individuals are education and mental aptitude, but they are not sufficient predictors of AWOL to identify specifically which individuals will go AWOL. However, education and mental aptitude do provide a basis for estimating the probability that an individual will go AWOL based on the education and mental aptitude group to which he belongs.

PRESENTING THE RESULTS

With few exceptions, we used percentages in presenting sample results in the report. We believe this is easier for the reader to follow. We did not discuss the significant relationships found between the variables in the analyses discussed above in terms of correlation coefficients, coefficients of determination, beta weights, etc. Instead, we presented information illustrating the manner in which one (or more) variables affected another. For example, we noted previously that the most important variables in distinguishing between AWOL and non-AWOL individuals were education level and mental aptitude. To illustrate this relationship, we computed and presented the AWOL rate for each recruit category included in our analysis. (See pp. 58 to 60.)

WEIGHTING THE SAMPLE DATA ANALYZED

In computing the percentages used in the report for the AWOL samples, the actual sample results in the Army, Marine Corps, and Navy were weighted to reflect the fact that these samples were stratified random samples of

differing proportions. The weighting factor used was the number of sample incidents included in our analyses from each strata divided by the number of universe incidents in each strata. (Detailed information on these samples are shown in app. IV.)

In the Air Force, our AWOL sample included all the incidents in our universe for which punishment information was available in the Air Force Computerized Automated Military Justice Analysis System. (See p. 81.) This was about 45 percent of the AWOL universe. The percentages used in the report relating to punishment and dispositions of Air Force AWOL cases are based on this sample. Percentages relating to other information, where possible, were taken from the universe itself. When this was not possible, we used the sample results after weighting the results in the same manner as was done for the other services.

EQUIVALENT AND MAXIMUM PUNISHMENTSAUTHORIZED FOR AWOL

Following are explanations of how we (1) converted various punishments imposed on people in our AWOL sample to a common base of units of punishments and (2) computed maximum units of punishment for differing lengths of AWOL.

EQUIVALENT PUNISHMENTS

We used the Manual for Courts-Martial, the Army Military Judges Guide, and discussions with military representatives as a basis for establishing equivalent punishments. On the basis of the equivalents, we computed the units of punishment imposed on each person in our AWOL sample so that we could analyze punishments on a comparative basis.

Although the Manual contains a table of equivalent punishments for substituting one form of punishment for another, it does not contain equivalents for punishments that can not be substituted. Punishments appearing in the tables at paragraphs 127c(2) and 131d are shown below.

<u>Types of punishment</u>	<u>Units of punishment</u>
Confinement on diminished rations	0.5
Confinement at hard labor	1.0
Correctional custody	1.0
Fine	a/1.0
Forfeiture of pay	1.0
Hard labor without confinement	1.5
Extra duties	1.5
Detention of pay	1.5
Restriction	2.0

a/Although an equivalent is not shown for a fine in the Manual, the discussion at paragraph 126h(3) indicates it is the same as forfeiture of pay.

For punishments without an equivalent indicated in the Manual, we developed units of punishment as shown below which are keyed to footnotes explaining our basis for them.

<u>Types of punishment</u>	<u>Units of punishment</u>	<u>Basis</u>
Reprimand	1	(a)
Admonition	1	(a)
Reduction in grade	Variable	(b)
Bad conduct discharge	730	(c)
Dishonorable discharge	(d)	(d)

a/Military representatives considered these very minor, so we assigned a value of one to recognize them.

b/We determined the minimum time that would be needed to attain the prior grade held, computed the total pay that would be lost during this period, and converted this amount to the number of days of pay lost, with each day equivalent to one unit of punishment.

c/The Army Military Judge's Guide (Department of Army Pamphlet No. 27-9), at page 8-10 and 8-11, states that it has been established in law that a bad conduct discharge is more severe than confinement for 1 year and forfeiture of all pay and allowances. An Army representative said that it is based on 12 USCMA 640, 31CMR 226(1962). Each day of confinement is equal to one unit of punishment. Each day of pay forfeitures is equal to one unit of punishment. Thus two units of punishment multiplied by 365 days equal 730 units of punishment.

d/None imposed in our sample group.

MAXIMUM UNITS OF PUNISHMENT
AUTHORIZED FOR AWOL

The Manual for Courts-Martial at paragraph 127c(6), article 86, shows different maximum punishments for three different lengths of AWOL. On the basis of length of absence, we computed the maximum units of punishment authorized for single AWOL incidents as follows:

Length of <u>AWOL</u>	Maximum punishment <u>authorized</u>	<u>Maximum units authorized</u>			
		<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>
3 days or less	Reduction in grade (note a)	30	17	16	17
	Confinement for 1 month	30	30	30	30
	Forfeiture of 2/3ds' pay for 1 month	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>20</u>
	Total	<u>80</u>	<u>67</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>67</u>
4 to 30 days	Reduction in grade (note a)	27	12	12	9
	Confinement for 6 months	180	180	180	180
	Forfeiture of 2/3ds' pay for 6 months	<u>120</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>120</u>	<u>120</u>
	Total	<u>327</u>	<u>312</u>	<u>312</u>	<u>309</u>
Over 30 days	Reduction in grade (note a)	25	16	15	15
	Confinement for 1 year	365	365	365	365
	Forfeiture of pay for 1 year	365	365	365	365
	Dishonorable discharge (note b)	<u>730</u>	<u>730</u>	<u>730</u>	<u>730</u>
Total	<u>1,485</u>	<u>1,476</u>	<u>1,475</u>	<u>1,475</u>	

a/We determined the average grade before punishment of the people in our sample with a single absence of the length indicated, determined the minimum time that would be needed to attain this grade again if reduced to the lowest grade possible, computed the total pay that would be lost during this period, and converted this amount to the number of days of pay lost, with each day's pay equal to one unit of punishment. Because the average grade before punishment and the average time it would take to attain this grade varied among the services, the maximum units of punishment for reduction in grade also varied. This, in turn, accounts for the difference in the maximum units of punishments computed for each service for each of the above indicated length of absences.

b/In the absence of previously established units of punishment, we used the same number established for a bad conduct discharge.

FREQUENCY OF DIFFERENT PUNISHMENTS IMPOSED FOR
SINGLE INCIDENTS OF AWOL OVER 30 DAYS

The various combinations of punishments 1/ were grouped for analysis from most to least severe, according to its effect on an individual:

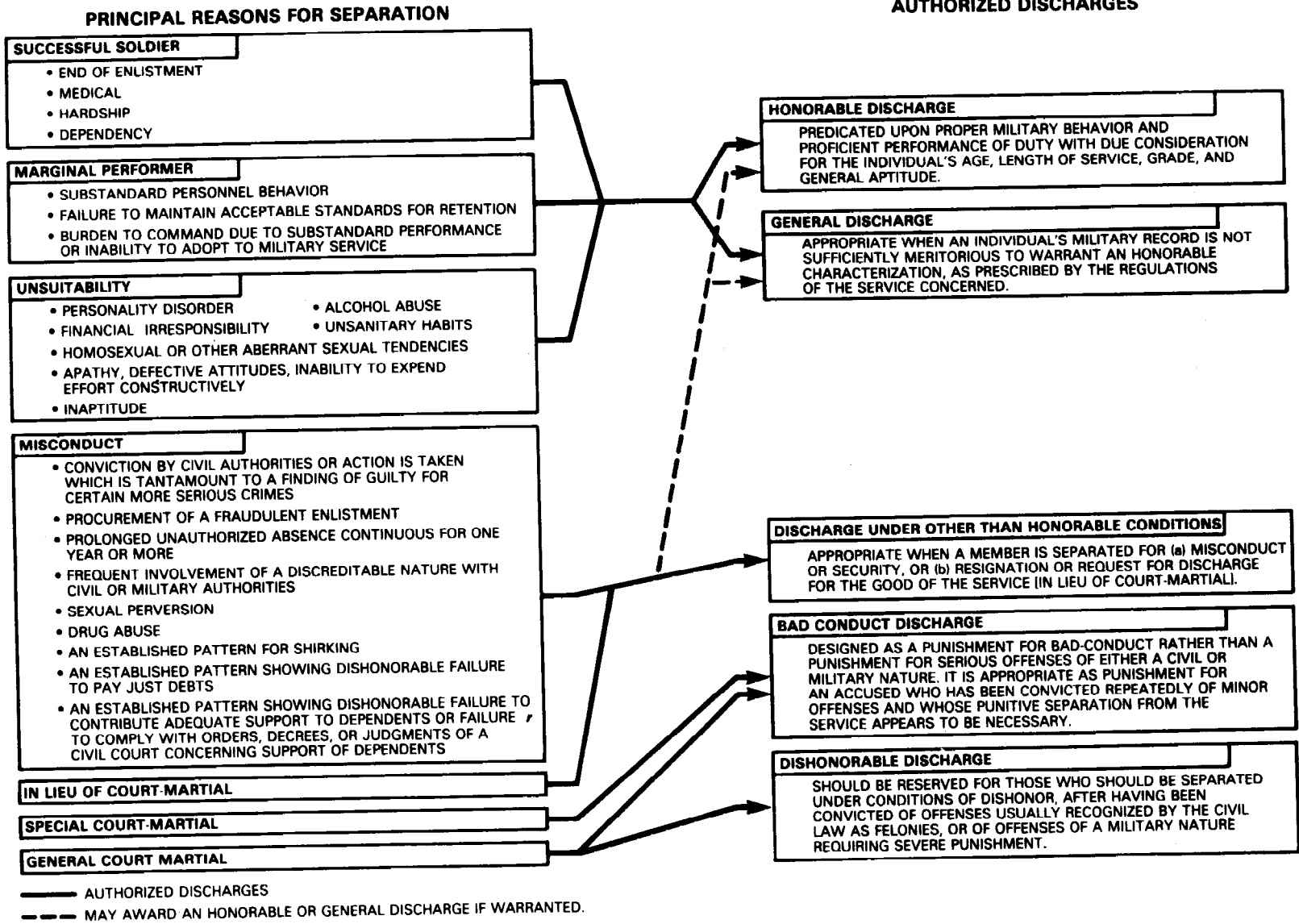
- All cases involving discharge by court-martial were grouped together since punitive discharges stigmatize the individual in civilian society.
- Punishments involving confinement or correctional custody because the individual is imprisoned or has other major constraints on his personal freedom.
- Punishments involving reduction in grade since this reduces an individual's status in the services.
- Financial punishments, that is, fines, forfeitures of pay, and detention of pay.
- Punishments involving hard labor without confinement or extra duties and/or restriction.

The frequency of punishments imposed is shown on the following page.

1/Excludes incidents disposed of by discharges in lieu of court-martial and instances where no action was taken, action may have been taken but was not recorded in personnel records, action was not directly related to the incident (i.e., finalization of administrative or punitive discharge in process at time of the incident), and action may have been delayed pending return from subsequent absence.

<u>Punishment</u>	<u>Percent of time used</u>			
	<u>Air Force</u>	<u>Army</u>	<u>Marine Corps</u>	<u>Navy</u>
Bad conduct discharge combined with other punishments	13	6	17	3
Confinement combined with other punishments	27	25	36	33
Reduction in grade combined with --financial, hard labor (without confinement) or extra duties, and restriction	0	5	2	19
--financial, and hard labor (without confinement) or extra duties	8	6	3	2
--financial and restriction	1	6	2	9
--financial	27	17	5	10
--other combinations	3	2	1	2
--no other punishment	15	4	2	1
Financial combined with --hard labor (without confinement) or extra duties and restriction	0	0	3	10
--hard labor (without confinement) or extra duties	1	4	3	1
--restriction	0	9	10	7
--no other punishment	5	15	14	2
Hard labor (without confinement) or extra duties and/or restriction	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>
Total	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

RELATIONSHIP OF REASONS FOR SEPARATION TO DISCHARGES AUTHORIZED



EXAMPLE SHOWING HOW SEPARATION CRITERIA
BASED ON AWOL HISTORY CAN BE DEVELOPED

We used cost-benefit analysis to illustrate that separation criteria based on AWOL history can be developed. Such criteria show when and under what circumstances AWOL individuals should be separated on the basis that it is more economical to separate them than to retain them. The analysis considers (1) the number of times an individual has been AWOL and his length of service at the last AWOL, two of the three characteristics 1/ which best explain the difference between those who succeed and those who fail, (2) cost-benefit information from the General Research Corporation's attrition study 2/ in the Navy and Marine Corps, and (3) information from our Navy AWOL study group.

The General Research Corporation study provides sufficient information to compare an AWOL individual in one education level (high school/non-high school) and mental category grouping 3/ with replacements from other groupings. As our analysis was for illustrative purposes only, we assumed that (1) each AWOL individual was a non-high school graduate in a mental category I through IIIa, since this group is most representative of the Navy AWOL study group and (2) the new recruit being considered as a replacement was a high school graduate in mental category IIIb, since this group is most representative of new recruits in the Navy.

Using cost and productivity data from the General Research Corporation study, we estimated the cost to retain an AWOL individual to the end of his enlistment and what

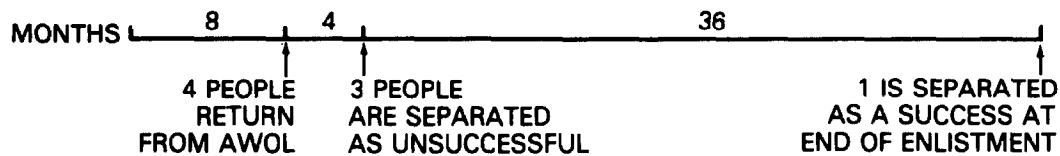
1/The third characteristic is the number of days of AWOL. It could have been used instead of the number of times AWOL as each has the same correlation to who succeeds and who fails (i.e., the probability an individual will fail increases as the number of times AWOL or the number of days AWOL increases).

2/Report CR-197, "Development of Methods for Analysis of the Cost of Enlisted Attrition," September 1977, General Research Corporation.

3/The study groups individuals into six groupings: high school graduates in mental categories I through IIIa, IIIb, and IV and non-high school graduates in mental categories I through IIIa, IIIb, and IV.

benefits were obtained. The benefits are expressed as the dollar value of his productivity. A determination was then made as to what benefits could be obtained if the AWOL individual had been separated and this same cost invested in a replacement. A percentage of cost returned as benefits, using the present value of both cost and benefits, was computed for each alternative. The alternative with the highest percentage of cost returned is considered the most economical. The present value of exercising the best alternative is expressed in dollars. This amount is the additional cost of obtaining the same benefits using the worst alternative.

As an example of the analysis, the computations just described are illustrated below for AWOL individuals who had served from 7 to 12 months before going AWOL for the second or third time. Individuals in this group, on the average, returned from the last AWOL in the 8th month of their enlistment, and, on the average, the Navy separated about 3 out of every 4 of them as unsuccessful 4 months after they returned.



	<u>Costs</u>	<u>Benefits</u>
Alternative 1--Retain AWOL offender:		
Four people for 4 months plus one person for an additional 36 months	\$25,678	\$21,816
Present value at time of return from AWOL (note a)	\$25,678	\$19,220
Percent of return (\$19,220/\$25,678)		74.85
Alternative 2--Replace AWOL offender:		
Recruit, train, and pay a new recruit for 38 months	\$28,577	\$14,212
Value of proficiency gained over remaining 10 months of enlistment	<u> </u>	b/\$ 6,531
	\$28,577	\$20,743
Present value (note a)	\$25,578	\$17,388
Percent of return (\$17,388/\$25,578)		67.98

a/We used a discount rate of 0.00625 a month which was the average yield on U.S. Government securities outstanding on Feb. 28, 1978, with at least 1 year but not more than 7 years until maturity.

b/The \$28,577 cost of insuring that one out of four AWOL offenders completes his enlistment would finance the cost of one replacement for 38 months using general attrition rates. Because the replacement would be more productive after 38 months of training, we assigned a value equal to the difference between that productivity and his productivity during his first 10 months of service.

Alternative 1 is the best alternative (75 percent v. 68 percent). The economic gain by retaining or loss by separating the individual, depending on how one wishes to express it, is \$2,595 (\$19,220/0.6798 - \$25,678).

The output in three different sets of circumstances using this method of analysis is shown on the following page.

ANALYSIS OUTPUT IN VARIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

Months of service and number of times AWOL	Costs to retain AWOL individual	<u>Retain AWOL individual</u>			<u>Replace AWOL individual</u>			Cost savings if AWOL individual is replaced
		<u>Present value of Cost</u>	<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Percent of cost returned</u>	<u>Present value of Cost</u>	<u>Benefit</u>	<u>Percent of cost returned</u>	
0 to 6 Months:								
1 AWOL	\$30,009	\$26,443	\$16,685	63.10	\$26,698	\$17,832	66.79	\$ 1,562
2 or 3	35,745	32,136	17,207	53.54	31,055	18,341	59.06	3,202
More than 3	49,608	45,670	17,827	39.03	41,003	24,573	59.93	21,956



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WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

20 NOV 1978

Mr. H. L. Krieger
Director, Federal Personnel
and Compensation Division
U.S. General Accounting Office
Washington, D. C. 20548

Dear Mr. Krieger:

This is in response to your letter to the Secretary of Defense regarding your draft report dated August 7, 1978, "Unauthorized Absence In The Military: A Serious and Costly Problem Which Demands A Credible Approach" (GAO Code 964065 and OSD Case 4537-A).

Your draft report presents a broad review of many aspects of the AWOL problem and contains a number of recommendations that require further evaluation. Our initial comments on these recommendations are attached. We will address them further upon receipt of the final report.

[14.15,
& 34]

The implication in your report that the current approach to AWOL lacks credibility appears to be unsupported. While we agree that the current program is not totally effective in preventing AWOL and repeat offenses, it should be noted that disciplinary rates have improved under the All-Volunteer Force (AVF). As a result, AWOL related costs have been lower than what we experienced under the draft environment.

One aspect we find particularly misleading in the report is the lumping together of four-year cost figures, rather than stating yearly costs; and making no comparison of costs between the draft and AVF eras.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your draft report.

Sincerely,

ROBERT B. PIRIE, JR.
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics)

Enclosure

DoD Summary Comments on GAO Recommendations

1. { Recommendations 1 through 3. DoD generally concurs with these suggestions and will explore more fully with the Services. (15& 16)
2. Recommendation 4. The proposal to establish suggested levels of disposition for offenses and appropriate target ranges of punishment constitutes a direct interference with the discretionary authority of the commander that would eventually be characterized as unlawful command influence. This recommendation presents many potential ramifications that are contrary to the current military justice statutes, procedures and concepts.
3. Recommendation 5. DoD generally concurs with these suggestions and will explore more fully with the Services.
4. Recommendation 6. The "Report of the Joint-Service Administrative Discharge Study Group (1977-78)," a copy of which was forwarded to your office on 19 September 1978, addresses the discharge in lieu of court-martial provision. The Study Group recommended that the current DoD directive be changed to require that court-martial charges against a member for an offense for which the imposition of a punitive discharge is authorized be referred to trial. This language is intended to promote uniformity among the Services by making "referred charges" rather than conduct "triable by court-martial" the standard. Additionally, it is believed that such a standard will require more meaningful discussion between an accused and his defense counsel and will serve to preclude future allegations of pro forma explanation of rights to a large group of accused. This provision is currently being reviewed by the Military Services in conjunction with the proposed revision of the DoD directive. We believe the discharge in lieu of court-martial provision is a valuable option for the Services, as well as an individual. Without it, an appreciable increase in manpower and other resources would occur. (33-36)
5. Recommendation 7. We believe an adequate selection of punishments currently exists to allow military commanders the flexibility needed to administer punishments appropriate to each case, based on its own individual merits. Additionally, there is no way under the present Uniform Code of Military Justice in which a military court can be directed to select or avoid selecting any particular type of punishment.
6. Recommendation 8. The incorporation of specific criteria for separating people with a record of AWOL will be explored during the staffing of the proposed revision of the DoD directive.
7. Recommendation 9. This issue was also addressed by the Administrative Discharge Study Group. The proposed revision of the DoD directive mentioned above would authorize an uncharacterized separation in certain very limited circumstances when characterization would be inappropriate. Under this proposal, an uncharacterized separation may be issued to a member who is separated during recruit or basic training except in the case of misconduct. The only other reason such a separation could be issued is on a case-by-case basis when determined by the Secretary concerned that characterization in such a case was inappropriate because of the unique circumstances involved. (52-54)

Encl 1

8. Recommendation 10. [See GAO note.]
9. Recommendation 11. [See GAO note.]
- (67) 10. Recommendation 12. This recommendation has been and will continue to receive close scrutiny.
11. Recommendation 13. [See GAO note.]
12. Recommendation 14. [See GAO note.]
13. Recommendation 15. This suggestion warrants further study.
14. Recommendation 16. We do not concur. A discussion of unauthorized absence during the recruiting phase is unpalatable and could be counterproductive to recruiting efforts. Each of the Services has varying periods for counseling and training in this area at a more appropriate time. We will encourage the Services to review their efforts in this area.
- (71 & 72) 15. Recommendation 17. We concur in concept with the need for improvement in military justice training involving AWOL and its consequence. We will encourage the Services to review their efforts in this area.
16. Recommendation 18. [See GAO note.]

GAO notes: The deleted comments relate to alternatives discussed in our draft report but deleted from this final report.

The numbers in brackets refer to pages in this report.

GAO REPORTS ON THE MILITARY JUSTICE SYSTEM

<u>Addressee</u>	<u>Report title, number and issue date</u>
The Congress	"Fundamental Changes Needed to Improve the Independence and Efficiency of the Military Justice System" (FPCD-78-16, Oct. 31, 1978)
The Congress	"Eliminate Administrative Discharges in Lieu of Court-Martial: Guidance for Plea Agreements in Military Courts is Needed" (FPCD-77-47, Apr. 18, 1978)
The Congress	"Military Jury System Needs Safeguards Found in Civilian Federal Courts" (FPCD-76-48, June 6, 1977)
The Secretary of Defense	"Millions Being Spent to Apprehend Military Deserters Most of Whom Are Discharged As Unqualified for Retention" (FPCD-77-16, Jan. 31, 1977)
The Congress	"The Clemency Program of 1974" (FPCD-76-64, Jan. 7, 1977)
The Secretary of Defense	"People Get Different Discharges in Apparently Similar Circumstances" (FPCD-76-46, Apr. 1, 1976)
The Secretary of Defense	"More Effective Criteria and Procedures Needed for Pretrial Confinement" (FPCD-76-3, July 30, 1975)
The Congress	"Uniform Treatment of Prisoners Under the Military Correctional Facilities Act Currently Not Being Achieved" (FPCD-75-125, May 30, 1975)
The Secretary of Defense	"Urgent Need for a Department of Defense Marginal Performer Discharge Program" (FPCD-75-152, Apr. 23, 1975)
Senate Committee on Armed Services	"Need for and Uses of Data Recorded on DD Form 214 Report of Separation From Active Duty" (FPCD-75-126, Jan. 23, 1975)
The Congress	"Improving Outreach and Effectiveness of DOD Reviews of Discharges Given Service Members Because of Drug Involvement" (B-173688, Nov. 30, 1973)

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