THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1994

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING
AND EMPLOYMENT,
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 9 a.m., in room 334, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery (chairman of the subcommittee), presiding.

Present: Representatives Montgomery, Hutchinson, Penny, Quinn, and Stump.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY

Mr. MONTGOMERY. The Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment is meeting this morning to review and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the transition assistance programs for separating servicemembers contained in sections 1142, 1143, and 1144 of title 10, United States Code. The subcommittee will also review the implementation of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992, generally referred to as SMOCTA. This on-job training program for veterans was established under Public Law 102–484.

By way of background, the title 10 transition programs, which were contained in Public Law 101–510, were developed by Congress to ease the passage to civilian life, particularly the return to civilian employment, for military personnel affected by the drawdown of the Armed Forces. These men and women are a national resource whose skills and abilities must be absorbed by and integrated into the civilian workforce. Oversight visits to military facilities and ongoing discussions with the State and Federal officials responsible for the implementation of these programs show that things are generally going well. Additionally, interviews with servicemembers who have received transition services show that they found the services provided to be helpful in their readjustment to civilian life.

However, the General Accounting Office report entitled *MILITARY DOWNSIZING—Persons Returning to Civilian Life Need More Help from DOD,* states that there are areas of concern. This report was requested by Senator Rockefeller and released on January 21, 1994. We want to know what efforts have been made to correct the problems found by the GAO.

The other program we are focusing on this morning, SMOCTA, is a new on-job training program also designed to facilitate the re-

entry of former military personnel into the civilian job market. Under this program, the Secretary of Defense provides a significant incentive for employers to hire and train veterans for employment in a stable and permanent position. In order to defray the costs of training, an employer is reimbursed up to 50 percent of a participating veteran's starting wage, with a maximum reimbursement of $10,000. An employer who hires a veteran with a service-connected disability rated at 30 percent or more be reimbursed up to $12,000.

We think SMOCTA is an excellent program, but it hasn't taken off the way we expected. We're somewhat disappointed and surprised that so few veterans have been hired under SMOCTA. We want to know what the problems are and, if legislative changes are necessary, we want to know what they are.

Hundreds of thousands of servicemembers will be separating from the Armed Forces over the next few years. Many are trained in skills which are criticalk to the Nation's defense but not readily transferablke to the civilian workforce. All of these men and women will be seeking employment in a changing labor market. It is our shared responsibility to ensure that programs provided by Congress to assist in the transition from military service to civilian life are effective and useful.

Mr. Stump, Did you have any comments?

Mr. STUMP. No. Thank you.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Tim.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. TIM HUTCHINSON

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to first thank the chairman for calling this meeting of the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment to receive testimony on the implementation and effectiveness of our transition assistance programs as well as the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992.

As a member of the subcommittee, I certainly have a strong interest regarding our national efforts to assist our departing soldiers, civilians, and their families in their transition to civilian life.

I know as we hear testimony today through the various presentations that these programs have been a crucial factor in enabling our country to deal effectively with military downsizing. As a result of TAP and DTAP, our servicemembers preparing for separation or retirement are better informed than any of their predecessors and, therefore, better prepared to search for available employment opportunities and to determine their future civilian career options.

Earlier this year, Mr. Chairman, I had the opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the TAP during a trip that I took to Huesterburg Air Force Base in the Netherlands. And I was quite impressed there by both the quality and effectiveness of the program and was left with the overall feeling that separating servicemembers greatly benefitted from the information and the skills that were provided them.

The Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act has also played a very important role in assisting transitioning servicemembers to reintegrate into the civilian job market. This program addresses the needs of unemployed former

servicemembers, especially those whose military skills might not translate readily to civilian jobs.

My home State of Arkansas, in particular, has substantial numbers of veterans who have participated in and received job counseling and training through this particular program. With few exceptions, the training programs to date have provided a high-quality path to secure employment positions.

In light of recent and the ongoing downsizing, I think it is imperative that we continue to do all that we can to provide these newly separated servicemembers with the necessary guidance to make informed decisions and to transfer military training to quality civilian jobs.

So, again, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for bringing us together to evaluate TAP and DTAP, these programs that I think have been so critical. And I want to thank all of our witnesses who have come today to participate, look forward to hearing your views and your assessments of these important programs.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you.

Our first panel of witnesses will be the Honorable Preston Taylor, Jr., who's Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training;—he's a real general and officer—also Mr. Raymond Avent, Deputy Under Secretary for Benefits, Department of Veterans Affairs; Ms. Carolyn Becraft, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Personnel Support, Families, and Education.

I'll let Mr. Taylor start. He'll introduce those other persons with him if he would like. I'll leave that up to him.

STATEMENTS OF HON. PRESTON M. TAYLOR, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR VETERANS EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING, DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, ACCOMPANIED BY JEFFREY CRANDALL, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF FIELD OPERATIONS; HARY DUANY, DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF EMPLOYMENT, REEMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING; RAYMOND AVENT, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS; CELIA DOLLARHIDE, DIRECTOR, EDUCATION SERVICE; DAVID BRIGHAM, DIRECTOR, VETERANS ASSISTANCE SERVICE; DR. DENNIS R. WYANT, DIRECTOR, VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICE; AND CAROLYN BECRAFT, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY (PERSONNEL SUPPORT, FAMILIES, AND EDUCATION), DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

STATEMENT OF HON. PRESTON M. TAYLOR, JR.

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the two most exciting new partnership programs that we jointly administer: TAP and SMOCTA.

Mr. Chairman, I respectfully ask to be permitted to submit my full testimony for the record and just briefly summarize some of my observations and areas of concerns.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Without objection.

Mr. TAYLOR. As I see it, the transition assistance program, TAP, instills information-based confidence in soon-to-be-discharged men and women——

Mr. MONTGOMERY. General, pull that microphone a little closer to you, please.

Mr. TAYLOR [continuing]. Increases their successful transition into the civilian workforce, and adds value to their marketability, enabling them to obtain employment up to 3 weeks earlier than their nonparticipating counterparts. TAP has become the positive force that Congress envisioned for interagency service delivery.

In designing an impressive 3-day TAP workshop, the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs in conjunction with State employment security agencies create a road map showing how three Federal agencies and their grantees can forge the common bonds necessary to jointly administer a successful consolidated program of services.

TAP is a real model of how a seamless government should serve each customer. However, I have two concerns. All eligible servicemembers and their spouses are not yet participating in TAP. Some servicemembers are apparently electing not to attend sessions available to them. And although we support TAP overseas efforts, we cannot directly provide TAP services outside of the United States.

In this regard, I established a TAP ad hoc committee in cooperation with the three Federal TAP partners and the State job service agencies. On June 13, decision-makers from Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs will meet to reevaluate TAP and amend our joint memorandums of understanding.

I will be looking for better marketing practices to improve TAP participation rates and new ways to strengthen our role in the overseas transition program. I believe with the cooperation of my counterparts here before you TAP has proven to be successful.

This interagency relationship forged by TAP has also improved the conduct of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act, or SMOCTA. SMOCTA is another joint effort that Defense, Labor, and VA implemented through a memorandum of agreement signed on March 11, 1993 to facilitate efficient attainment of the basic program goal of securing long-term stable employment for eligible newly released veterans.

To achieve this goal and to ensure that quality services are provided to both eligible veterans and employers, in the first 3 months of implementation. VETS has: trained over 3,000 State job service, VA and VETS field staff between June and October of 1993 through the trainer modality; distributed a SMOCTA technical assistance guide developed by a joint VETS/VA team; and launched a multimedia public information campaign for SMOCTA.

There is an important concern about the SMOCTA design. We believe the number of high-paying jobs approved under SMOCTA can be increased. We need to approve those training programs that take longer than 18 months that help SMOCTA eligible veterans find higher-paying and better jobs.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge the good work of VETS and job service staff who work so hard with our partners in the VA and the Department of Defense to build a na-

tionwide program that has already created so many jobs since the first SMOCTA-certified veteran was matched with an approved employer in September of 1993.

Thank you for your interest and support for these two fine programs. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Taylor appears on p. 37.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much, Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Avent.

STATEMENT OF RAYMOND AVENT

Mr. AVENT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before this subcommittee to testify concerning the implementation and effectiveness of the transition assistance programs for separating servicemembers. I will also speak to the implementation of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992.

And with your approval, Mr. Chairman, I will speak briefly on these programs and submit my full testimony for your review.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Without objection. And all statements will be submitted in the record.

Mr. AVENT. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, also accompanying me this morning from the Veterans Benefits Administration are Ms. Celia Dollarhide, the Director of the Education Service; Mr. David Brigham, Director of the Veterans Assistance Service, and Dr. Dennis Wyant, the Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation Service.

Mr. Chairman, we are proud to participate in delivering the transition and disabled transition assistance programs cooperatively with the Departments of Labor and Defense. This partnership has been constructive and progressive.

The VA's specific mission in delivery of TAP services is to ensure that servicemembers are aware of their benefits and entitlements and to provide claims assistance to separating servicemembers. For those military personnel who are leaving the Service because of medical problems, whether through the formal physical disability process or not, the outreach effort is intensified to ensure a full understanding of the compensation program and to ensure that vocational rehabilitation services are offered and facilitated as appropriate.

It may perhaps be helpful to also explain that TAP and DTAP are the centerpiece of a broader program which we call the military services program. The broad emphasis on our military services program has assured that the VA message is being heard by a larger majority of military personnel, including the thousands who, for a variety of reasons, declined to participate in TAP or DTAP seminars.

Our energies are, thus, directed to not just TAP and DTAP, but also to separation and retirement briefings, benefit briefings to Reserve and National Guard units, and liaison and counseling services with various military or post activities, such as personal affairs, community affairs, education offices, and others.

Mr. Chairman, we are convinced that today's servicemembers preparing for separation or retirement are better informed than

any of their predecessors and, thus, better prepared to make the important transition to civilian life. We are equally convinced that TAP and DTAP have helped the country and its economy deal effectively with the impact of downsizing.

While numbers tell only part of the story, they do reflect the magnitude of the effort. In the two previous fiscal years, for example, veterans services staff conducted more than 13,000 briefings in the continental United States; Europe; the Far East; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; and Panama.

In that same period, our vocational rehabilitation and counseling staff conducted more than 6,200 seminars focused on reaching servicemembers who may be potentially eligible for VA's vocational rehabilitation program. These seminars were attended by thousands of servicemembers and generated follow-up contacts, which in many instances led to claims assistance and educational and vocational counseling.

Mr. Chairman, the introduction of our services overseas started with short assignments but has since expanded. Through the cooperation of DOD, for example, we now have six VA benefits counselors assigned to Europe, and we are providing regular shorter assignments to the Far East, Guantanamo Bay, and Panama.

We have always been concerned that military personnel assigned overseas were at some disadvantage in terms of information and service access. Our presence overseas helps to ensure that servicemembers who return stateside for only a few days before being separated or retired enjoy the same opportunity to learn about VA benefits.

We conducted nearly 300 briefings in Europe during the period from July to mid December 1993 attended by about 8,700 individuals. During that same period, we conducted more than 3,600 personal counseling sessions and responded to more than 3,000 telephone inquiries.

The Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992 is a new job training program to assist separated servicemembers with their integration into the civilian labor force. The program is jointly administered by the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Defense, with VA as the lead agency.

SMOCTA, as it is known, is up and running. Our most recent report indicates that more than 3,600 employers have been approved for participation. We have processed over 36,000 veterans' applications and found over 31,000 veterans eligible for job training.

More than 2,900 veterans have actually been placed in jobs. So far California and Pennsylvania have the highest number of veterans in training. We project some 8,000 trainees by the end of this fiscal year.

Programs approved to date are generally high-quality programs leading to stable positions. We appreciate the participation of many excellent companies and major public sector entities who have hired some marketing trainees.

For example, in New York, Rite-Aid Drugs, Kodak, and Xerox are involved. In Pennsylvania, Conrail is involved. And in Maryland, a training program with state troopers was introduced and approved. Negotiations are currently underway to develop similar training programs with troopers in New York and other States.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be happy to reply to any questions you or other members of the subcommittee might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Avent appears on p. 42.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much, David.

We would like to hear from the Deputy Assistant Secretary from the Defense Department, Ms. Becraft.

STATEMENT OF CAROLYN BECRAFT

Ms. BECRAFT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the subcommittee, I do appreciate the opportunity to appear here to discuss the implementation and effectiveness of our transition assistance program for our separating servicemembers. I also will submit my more lengthy statement for the record.

The Department of Defense remains steadfast in its commitment to offer separatees a wide range of transition services and benefits. During the 2 years since our last hearing before this subcommittee, the Department has made great strides in the institutionalization of the transition assistance program. We view the DOD Transition Assistance Program, or Operation Transition as we sometimes call it, as the final component of military service to which every separatee is entitled.

While the downsizing was a catalyst for this program, the Department has come to realize that even though transition benefits are a temporary tool to aid servicemembers through the downsizing, transition services must be a permanent part of the separation process. We owe these services to those who have volunteered a portion of their lives in service to their country. It is the right thing to do, and it is the smart thing to do. Men and women who leave active duty must be prepared for civilian life and continue to be productive citizens.

Operation Transition is an overwhelming success and we are especially appreciative of the extremely positive cooperation from the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, State and local employment offices, and our own military Services. Everyone associated with this program has been willing to go the extra mile.

We have established transition offices at virtually all of our major military installations worldwide and have transition staff permanently based at over 330 installations. This staff along with a vast number of people from other offices and agencies provides preseparation counseling, transition assistance seminars, TAP workshops, job fairs, employment assistance, veterans' and disabled veterans' benefits counseling, and generally make the separation process much more meaningful by providing needed and earned transition services.

As DOD policy has stressed, protecting the quality of life in our nation's Armed Forces is a vital element of our defense capability. It has allowed us to attract the best people to serve in our nation's Armed Forces. DOD transition support and services are vital to ensure that the quality of life remains high for military personnel, even as they prepare to leave military service and embark upon new civilian careers.

We believe we have the best quality workforce in the world and the benefits to the civilian community are great in hiring these

people. This common sense approach to military separation is the final phase of the military life cycle and essential to the well-being of our people.

There are many challenges that lie ahead for this program, but I am personally committed to meeting these challenges head on. I am especially concerned that we improve our ability to distribute the verification of military experience and training document, provide more emphasis to transition for those who are disabled while serving this Nation, develop and maintain an evaluation of our efforts, and continue to resource transition programs at a level consistent with its importance and value to our people.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for your continued interest and commitment to the men and women of the Armed forces who serve their country honorably and well. I, too, will be happy to address any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Becraft appears on p. 51.]

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you very much for your statements. It gives us time to ask some questions.

Mr. Secretary Taylor, I'm disappointed that so few veterans have been matched with employers under SMOCTA. What factors have contributed to this situation?

Mr. TAYLOR. Mr. Chairman, primarily two factors. I was officially nominated for the position I currently hold back in October of 1993.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Taylor, we're having a hard time hearing you up here for some reason.

Mr. TAYLOR. I was confirmed in November, and I actually started to work on the 1st of December. I think that the change of administration caused us to lose some time in moving out and strongly implementing this program. That's a factor.

I believe another factor is the fact that we had to design a training program for our staff at the National Veterans Training Institute in Denver. We put together a quality course, and it took us some time to get all of those SMOCTA trainers through the course.

So I believe that the change in administration, which caused a slowdown in the process, and the fact that we had to train so many folks at NVTI were factors in delaying getting the program really up and running the way we think it is now.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. How many actual participants do we have as of today?

Mr. TAYLOR. How many? When you say "participants," you mean how many——

Mr. MONTGOMERY. How many veterans are working for an employer where the Federal Government is paying part of the salary?

Mr. TAYLOR. We have approximately 4,000 matches.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Four thousand?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Okay. Let me move to Mr. Avent. How much of the funding that's been appropriated for SMOCTA has been obligated?

Mr. AVENT. Mr. Chairman, through April 30, we obligated about $24 million.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Is that obligated? That's obligated. It will be paid out.

Mr. AVENT. It will be paid out.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Right. Obligated.

Mr. AVENT. Yes.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. To the Assistant Secretary in Defense, moving to her, the subcommittee has been told that less than 50 percent of all the eligible servicemembers stationed in the United States participate in TAP, the transition assistance program. In other words, they don't come to the briefings, the 3-day briefings. I believe I've gone to about three of them. How can we get more people participating?

Ms. BECRAFT. Well, Mr. Chairman, we have recognized that problem. And on the 19th of April, the Secretary of Defense in a memorandum to the secretaries of the military departments requested their continued support to ensure commanders understand and support the efforts to disseminate information and assist servicemembers to avail themselves of this program.

Additionally, the DOL TAP seminar is specifically listed in our preseparation counseling checklist, and attendance is encouraged in our preseparation guidebook and video.

Finally, the current DOL VETS Reinvention Committee, consisting of the representatives from DOD, DOL, VA, and the State employment agencies, are looking to identify barriers to TAP participation and develop initiatives to overcome these barriers.

The final report is due the 8th of June. And then, as Mr. Taylor said, we also intend to get together ourselves and look at what we can do to further help this program.

I do have a copy of Secretary Perry's memorandum of 19 April and I would be glad to submit it for the record.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Without objection.

My time is up, but let me ask you this question. Military spouses are invited as TAP participants. Is that correct?

Ms. BECRAFT. Yes, they are.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. How many spouses participated in 1992 and 1993?

Ms. BECRAFT. Unfortunately, our participation rate has been very low, 2.5 percent in 1992, 3.4 percent in 1993. We have tried special programs to increase spouse participation, but that's an area that we need to look at again.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you.

Mr. Hutchinson.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me follow up on a question that you asked General Taylor, and let me give a little background to this as I lead into it.

Even though the Department of Labor has a media campaign, I think you alluded to it in place for SMOCTA, it appears, in fact, it's pretty obvious, that a lot of employers either don't know about the program or aren't very interested in the program.

I'm told that when the subcommittee staff was visiting the DOD job fair in Germany, that it learned that the McDonald's corporate headquarters recruiter had never heard of SMOCTA. Yet, McDonald's was actively seeking to hire veterans for management training to work in its headquarters.

You gave a figure a moment ago I think of 4,000. I'm not sure what that fits in, because what I've been told is that between July 1993 and May of 1994, only 1,923 veterans were placed with em-

ployers, while there were over 25,000 who were eligible. Now, can you help me out on making those numbers match up?

(Subsequently, the Department of Labor provided the following information:)

We rely on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data for some of our information, but we also have our own internal reports that provide us with additional information. The VA, as the implementing agency and disburser of funds, is tracking the funds available. Therefore, the number they use reflects the number of financial commitments made to employers. The VA number of 1,923 depicts financial obligations to employers based on the number of SMOCTA eligibles who are already working for an employer.

The 4,629 SMOCTA eligibles hired that I refer to in my testimony identified the number of SMOCTA eligibles who have been helped into jobs through the efforts of State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs) and our VETS-funded staff. This number includes both those SMOCTA eligibles who were placed in SMOCTA-funded on-the-job training programs, and those SMOCTA eligible veterans who through the efforts of our VETS-funded and SESA staff were helped into jobs that were not SMOCTA funded.

We also monitor data from the VA that is comparable to the information reported by the SESAs. This data, the number of VA approved Notices of Intent to Employ from employers closely approximates the work and performance of SESAs and our VETS-funded staff based on report comparisons

How much funding is being devoted to actually lining up employers to participate in SMOCTA? And how do you intend to improve the outreach of the program, which does not appear to be getting a lot of results for the amount of money that's being invested?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, sir, let me just go back to my previous response to Chairman Montgomery in regard to the start-up of this program. The program really got started fairly late.

When I came into office, we decided that we needed to pay a lot more attention to marketing SMOCTA. I just didn't believe—and others agreed with me—that the word was getting out. So we launched an intensive marketing campaign.

I have been on the road about 50 percent of the time since I have been in this job. And I have talked to literally hundreds and hundreds of employers. DVOPs now are being asked to go to rotary clubs, civic organizations, seek out potential employers and get that word spread.

I spoke to a group of 300 employers about 2 months ago about our programs. And one of the programs I covered was SMOCTA. After I finished speaking to those employers, one employee came up to me and he said, "I've hired seven veterans through the SMOCTA program, and I'm ready to hire more." I was in South Dakota recently. I met with an employer that has hired five veterans through the SMOCTA program.

So for the record I will provide you with accurate data at a later time, but I believe that we are finally reaching the point where the word is starting to spread.

And we're working very hard on this. I've done TV shows. I've done radio shows. And I've been touting the virtues and attributes of hiring veterans because of their work ethic, because they're team players, because they're trainable, they're well-educated. And employers are listening to me.

I'm confident that we're going to do much better in the future than we have in the past. I have to admit that we have been slow in getting the word out to employers.

(Subsequently, the Department of Labor provided the following information:)

In our efforts to publicize the SMOCTA program to employers, we developed, printed and distributed copies last summer of a brochure geared to employers, and a modified version for use by State Employment Security Agencies (SESA) and our VETS-funded staff for their employer information efforts (cost $117,500); we contracted for public information support through a Departmental task order (cost $150,000); and purchased mobile exhibits for VETS staff use at conferences or meetings (cost $24,991).

As I stated during my testimony, we have ongoing efforts to let employers know about SMOCTA. These efforts are taking place at all levels of the VETS organization and by our funded staff. On this month alone, we distributed information on SMOCTA to 65 business journals, and distributed a video press release. We are also working with the Department of Veterans Affairs to make sure we reach as many participating employers as possible to ensure that if they are thinking of hiring additional SMOCTA eligible veterans that they do so quickly. We also expect to issue an agency program letter to encourage our field staff, SESAs and VETS-funded staff to continue to increase their contacts with employers to inform them of SMOCTA between now and September.

As stated earlier, we were slow in getting the program launched. However, since September 1993, the number of employers forwarding commitments to employ a SMOCTA eligible veteran (Notices of Intent to Employ) for approval by the VA has been growing geometrically. In November 1993, the VA had received a monthly total of 255 Notices of Intent to Employ, followed by 377 for December 1993. For January 1994, VA received 421, followed by 484 in February, 599 in March, and 776 in April.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. If I calculate this correctly, we're doing about 8 percent or something like that of those who are eligible and have actually been placed. So what you're telling me is that there's a number of reasons: the change in administration, the training time, and the failure of the campaign to get the word out to employers.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir. And one of the reasons I highlighted during my opening remarks was the constraint in regard to the 18-month cap. The best-paying jobs require training beyond 18 months, but we can't find employers that are willing to provide this lengthy training without us asking for some type of a waiver. This has to be considered in the future.

The best-paying jobs require at least 2 years of training. You can't even become a highway patrolman in most States without at least 2 years of training. So that is one of the constraints that needs to be addressed.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Avent, before my time is up here, let me just follow up on that. I'm told that the old Emergency Veterans Job Training Act had considerable administrative start-up problems. We've been hearing some about the start-up problems in administration. What have you encountered? How smoothly do you think the start-up of SMOCTA has been? And what do you anticipate?

Mr. AVENT. Mr. Hutchinson, we had some beginning start-up problems, as you would expect, getting people trained and in the right place. However, the program has been running strong since, really, July of 1993. We have a very small number of applications pending. And we have also processed most of our paperwork very smoothly.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. Chairman, I have one other question if you'll indulge me.

Ms. Becraft, am I saying the name right?

Ms. BECRAFT. That's right.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. I thank you.

I think you acknowledged in your written testimony that getting the VMET to all the separating servicemembers has been a problem. Now, my understanding is that the Army and the Navy seem to be doing more about getting VMET to former servicemembers who have separated without it than have the Air Force or the Marines. At least that's what has been alleged according to the DAV testimony.

Why the disparity? Why can't the Air Force and the Marines do more, like the Army and Navy have been doing? Could you respond to that?

Ms. BECRAFT. Sure. We share your concern about this. Each of the Services are taking their own actions to assure better and more timely distribution of this document. And the panel of Service folks can reiterate how they have specifically done that. They are aware of it. They are working hard to do it and to correct it, specifically the two Services that have been somewhat behind.

It was a complicated process in the beginning to get this document together. We had hardware problems. We had problems with it. But I think that we're on the right course.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Mr. Penny.

Mr. PENNY. Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wanted to follow up on the military skills form that you have been developing. How is that handled? Is that sort of a part of a resumb that the servicemember then can carry with them to private sector employers? Is that the purpose of this form?

Ms. BECRAFT. Its purpose is to translate into civilian——

Mr. PENNY. Military skills to civilian language.

Ms. BECRAFT [continuing]. job skills. Some are easy to do. Some are more difficult to do.

Mr. PENNY. And the question that was being pursued was why two branches of the military don't seem to be as far along in that process as the others?

Ms. BECRAFT. Two branches of the military were further behind than the other two. They are working very hard to correct that discrepancy. It was pointed out in the GAO report. We've addressed it. And they're working hard to do that.

Mr. PENNY. Two years ago we had an oval table discussion, right where you sit now, in which all of the departments and agencies came together to talk about improving the transition assistance process.

At that time there was also discussion about a postcard of some sort that might be forwarded to local employment agencies in instances where a soon-to-be-discharged veteran was not aware of a job that they could walk right into and felt that they might want to have the employment office in their home area sort of preparing for their return and beginning a job search on their behalf. Has anything happened to implement that policy?

Ms. BECRAFT. I am not aware of the postcard, and I'll be glad to submit an answer for this.

[The information follows:]

The Quick Application form was developed as a result of your suggestion and is in use today However, we need to increase the awareness of this form and are working with DOL to ensure that is distributed to our overseas sites

Mr. PENNY. I think the State of Maryland implemented some program along those lines where discharged servicemembers were assigned to sort of local employment office. And before they even left the military, there was a file created on their behalf, a job search file.

Ms. BECRAFT. Since that period of time, we are far more automated than we ever were 2 years ago. And we have the State employment agencies job bank located on most of our installations. We really have increased our ability to do that, especially the technology.

The VA has also developed a quick application form.

Mr. PENNY. Yes. And is that generally applicable or is that quick ap form only used by bases overseas?

Ms. BECRAFT. It's my understanding it's used both at conus and overseas. However, that's my understanding.

Mr. PENNY. Okay. Well, it's just one of the initiatives that came out of our hearings——

Ms. BECRAFT. Sure.

Mr. PENNY [continuing]. Back in 1992. And it seemed to have some merit, especially for those servicemembers that were likely to lean on the employment service office for job assistance.

Together with Chairman Montgomery, we did a lot of work on this job partnership program or the on-the-job training program as part of the defense conversion legislation 2 years back.

Is the $75 million initially set aside for that program the only money that's been allocated or do we have a new appropriation that's also available?

Ms. BECRAFT. Well, you may be referring to the fiscal year 1994 earmark of $6.25 million.

Mr. PENNY. Initially it was $75 million.

Ms. BECRAFT. We've had some serious problems regarding that, the SMOCTA money, and it's a funding problem. The Defense Authorization Act stated that the funds were available to the end of the second fiscal year following the year it was appropriated. That would be September 30, 1995.

All of our collective plans were based on that premise. However, the Defense Appropriation Act of 1993 limited it to September 30, 1994.

This was discovered in the past 2 weeks. Our staffs met last Thursday to identify the problem. I've asked Secretary Taylor and Under Secretary Avent to meet with me at their earliest convenience—and we will do it by the end of the week—to determine how we can resolve this issue.

The problem is that the program terminates for lack of funding authority as of 30 September.

Mr. PENNY. And the only funding available is the original appropriation of 75 million, and the question that plays is whether the recently enacted expiration date of September 1994 is going to cut short the full utilization of the available funds?

Ms. BECRAFT. Well, obviously it will because our plans were made on——

Mr. PENNY. You've used about a third of the money so far or obligated about a third of it?

Ms. BECRAFT. We obligated the——

Mr. PENNY. And you don't believe you'll obligate the balance by the end of September?

Ms. BECRAFT. At this point we're working on how we're going to do that or if we can.

Mr. PENNY. Well, that would be an issue where this Committee would have a strong interest.

Ms. BECRAFT. Of course.

Mr. PENNY. And, as you know, we have been dealing with the Defense Authorization Bill on the House floor. And if, in fact, you need an extension, we're already becoming aware of this problem a bit late to deal with that in the context of the Defense Authorization Bill.

Ms. BECRAFT. Thank you.

Mr. PENNY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. Thank you, Tim Penny.

Let me just point out one point. The DVOPs and LVER, who work in the local areas around the country helping veterans work in the certain offices, employment security offices, have been helpful over the years. I just wanted to mention this.

Mr. Natcher always got the funding for those programs, and certainly we will miss him. We'll just have to work with Mr. Smith and the others on the Appropriation Committee to see if we can continue that funding.

If there are no further comments, we'd like to thank our witnesses for being here this morning.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. We would like to ask the second panel to move forward.

Mr. PENNY [presiding]. Our second panel includes Brigadier General Patricia Hickerson, the Adjutant General, U.S. Army; Rear Admiral Paul Tobin, Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personnel Readiness and Community Support, U.S. Navy; and Mr. John Graham, Director of Civilian Personnel Policy and Plans, U.S. Air Force; as well as Colonel Kenneth Hillman, Director, Human Resources Division, Manpower and Reserve Affairs Department, U.S. Marine Corps.

We thank you all for being with us, and we'll start with General Hickerson.

STATEMENTS OF BRIG. GEN. PATRICIA P. HICKERSON, THE ADJUTANT GENERAL, U.S. ARMY; REAR ADM. PAUL TOBIN, ASSISTANT CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL FOR PERSONNEL READINESS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT, U.S. NAVY; JOHN R. GRAHAM, DIRECTOR OF CIVILIAN PERSONNEL POLICY AND PLANS, U.S. AIR FORCE; AND COL. KENNETH W. HILLMAN, DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION, MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT, U.S. MARINE CORPS

STATEMENT OF BRIG. GEN. PATRICIA P. HICKERSON

General HICKERSON. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Army's transition program.

I would like to submit a statement that I ask to be included in the record, and I will provide a brief synopsis at this time.

Mr. PENNY. Without objection.

General HICKERSON. I would like to share with you today the Army's accomplishments in implementing our transition initiatives through the Army career and alumni program, ACAP. Our program continues to realize its objective in preparing members of the Army family to make effective and efficient transitions to their civilian communities.

The knowledge and assistance provided through this program has made a difference in soldiers' lives. The feedback we receive daily from Army alumni confirms this fact. Corporate America has also expressed gratitude to the Army.

The preparation of our transitioners has made it easier for growing companies to tap into this highly motivated and capable pool of America's human capital. We're confident that this investment will contribute to a stronger, more productive nation.

Two years ago I testified before this subcommittee that transition benefits counseling and job assistance services were provided to approximately 60,000 separating Service personnel. Today that number is over 330,000. We are as proud of those who have transitioned as we are of those who have assisted them.

Effective partnerships with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs and State and local employment offices have come together to reflect this Nation's gratitude and commitment to the Army's men and women. We must commit to providing quality transition programs for others when it is their turn to return to the civilian communities.

The care, dignity, and quality service that has been the hallmark of this program must be available to all future transitioners if we're to continue to attract and retain highly capable young men and women to fulfill the Army's future mission.

I would like to share a success story. This Committee has expressed a concern about the delay in transferring medical records to the Department of Veterans Affairs for soldiers that have separated from active duty. A memorandum of understanding between the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs was signed September 17, 1992 to institute new procedures for processing medical records.

Prior to its inception, the time associated with the transfer of medical records for the Army averaged 180 days from the date of separation to the date received by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Under the new procedures, the medical records are transferred to DVA within 14 workdays of the soldier's separation. And as of May 13, 1994, over 120,000 Army records have been processed by the DVA.

The Army is committed to providing quality transition services and programs to the men and women who have proudly served this Nation. As many of you who have seen our program in action can testify, the Army career and alumni program is solid evidence of our commitment to these fine young Americans.

Although there are many challenges ahead of us for this program, we are proud of what all the players, Department of Labor, Department of Veterans Affairs, DOD, the Congress, and the Army, have accomplished together.

In closing, I thank you for your support and commitment to our veterans and the opportunity to report on the Army's initiatives. I would be happy to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of General Hickerson appears on p. 62.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

Rear Admiral Tobin.

STATEMENT OF REAR ADM. PAUL TOBIN

Admiral TOBIN. Mr. Chairman, Subcommittee members, on behalf of the Navy, I thank you for this opportunity to testify before the subcommittee on the Navy's administration of the transition assistance management program.

With your permission, I will submit a statement for the record.

In November of 1993 the Navy reached a historic point. This was the first time that we were below a half a million men and women on active duty. It was also when we reached the halfway mark in our drawdown that began at fiscal year 1989.

Obviously this means a great number of people in the Navy are in a state of personal transition. And combined with our normal retirements and regular separations, approximately 80,000 people leave the Navy each year.

Congress has provided us the tools to make these personnel and career transitions as easy as possible for our active duty and reserve people. We consider this very important program as essential to our ability to take care of our people.

Thanks to your continuing leadership and support, the Navy's transition assistance program is in full operation, taking care of Navy people and their families at more than 80 sites worldwide, usually conveniently located with our family service centers.

Simply stated, our goal is to ensure that all active-duty and Reserve separating servicemembers and their spouses have an opportunity to use the transition resources. And in fiscal year 1993 the Navy coordinated 1,414 Department of Labor-sponsored workshops at 56 sites. We have also expended $1.25 million to purchase hardware and software so that all our family service centers are on line with DOD automated transition programs.

But for the Navy providing this crucial service represents a unique challenge, not only because some servicemembers have less than 90 days before their separation date is set, but because of the arduous nature of the Navy and life at sea. For example, on any given day, more than 40 percent of our ships are at sea away from their home ports in the traditional locations that provide transition assistance.

To meet this challenge in the reality of Navy life, we have become very creative. For example, in 1993 we began training Navy counselors and instructors and fleet and force master chiefs so we can incorporate timely and accurate transition assistance at the individual command and career counselor levels.

To assist commands in this process, we developed and distributed more than 200,000 preseparation guides to serve as ready reference tools. And TAP classes are now conducted on our larger combatants.

We have also provided a special video training program on how to go about job searches to all of our commands. And for personnel

at remote locations, we've trained 50 overseas TAP managers to conduct workshops.

Our efforts haven't stopped there. By June of this year, thanks to a new cooperative effort with the U.S. Army called the mobile job assistance teams, we can deploy teams to meet the needs of our people who are deployed or not served by family service centers.

As you know, the verification of military experience and training document, VMAT, is a much sought-after tool for our separating people. We have already distributed more than 250,000 of these documents since it was mandated in fiscal year 1999.

We have also sent the VMAT forms to 102,000 servicemembers who separated between 1 October 1990 and when the program began in August of 1992 for the Navy. Leaving the Navy on short notice, these documents can be requested by phone also.

This is just a thumbnail sketch of how the Navy is working to ensure all hands, active-duty and Reserve, get the TAP assistance they need and deserve. With your continuing support, this special people program, one of the best we have offered to our people, will continue to be offered, demonstrating the Navy's and the nation's commitment to treating well those who have served their nation.

Thank you for this opportunity to be here. And I will be happy to answer your questions.

[The prepared statement of Admiral Tobin appears on p. 68.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you, Admiral.

Mr. Graham.

STATEMENT OF JOHN R. GRAHAM

Mr. GRAHAM. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to have this opportunity to give you an update on the current state of the Air Force's transition assistance program. We appreciate your strong support that you have given us in the past and look forward to a continued partnership in the future.

I have prepared an additional and more detailed statement which I have submitted for the record.

The transition assistance program has come a long way since its formal beginning in 1991. We implemented the Air Force transition assistance program as a core program in our family support centers, hiring our initial staff members in 1991 and then expanding the transition staff in 1992.

We now have over 100 transition offices in family support centers worldwide located at installations where we have at least 500 people stationed. Those offices also provide transition assistance and support to smaller, remote, or isolated sites that do not have transition services available on site.

Our transition managers work closely with our personnel offices to ensure the no one is denied the opportunity to receive preseparation counseling and the full set of follow-on transition services, including the Department of Labor's 3-day transition assistance program seminar. As a result, our people are better prepared for civilian life than ever before, and our usage rates show a continually increasing awareness in the use of our programs.

After our program start-up in fiscal year 1991 we recorded over 168,000 customer visits to our transition offices in fiscal year 1992

and then a quantum leap to over 275,000 in fiscal year 1993. We expect this year's final total to meet or exceed last year's. Our volume of business continues to grow.

As a family support center core program, the transition assistance program is designed to help our members and their families better cope with this cycle of their military services, relocations, and transition back to the civilian economy.

Besides a full slate of direct transition services such as preseparation counseling, seminars, and workshops, resumb assistance, job search tools, and computer hardware and software to aid in job preparation and applications, our family support center offices offer immediate referrals to other family support center programs. These include relocation assistance, family life education, personal financial management counsel, spouse employment, and other information and referral services.

The total suite of transition services available at our family support centers emphasizes the importance of transitioning as a family with every family member involved in the preparation process. The goal is to prepare every military member and family leaving active duty for a successful transition to civilian life.

Word of mouth advertising has made a strong case for the credibility of our transition services. Customer satisfactions are uniformly high. Our Secretary of the Air Force and our Chief of Staff have endorsed transition assistance as an essential element in the treatment of our people, and command support continues to grow stronger at all levels. We have established a strong, viable program that provides the kind of preparation our people need to make a successful transition.

The quality of the services offered by our transition assistance program, counseling referrals, and job search assistance, is very high. We're working hard to fine-tune our system to ensure we identify and track every eligible member, and we are continually looking for other enhancements.

For example, we recently formed a quality-oriented process action team involving transition assistance program managers from bases throughout the Air Force. Their mission is to establish standards of program performance to ensure a maximum level of service delivery to our customers, the men, women, and families transitioning from military to civilian life. We're excited about this initiative and believe it will pay big dividends.

I've already noted our appreciation for this subcommittee's outstanding support of our program. I'd also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Department of Labor. With their support and cooperation, we have been able to ensure TAP seminars are offered at every Air Force installation, even overseas.

The DOL has continued to extend the assistance of the National Veterans Training Institute for training our transition assistance managers and specialists. The National Veterans Training Institute is an enormous asset to our program, and we thank the Department of Labor for making them available to us.

Our close partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs has also been fruitful. We've worked together to bring VA counselors to our people overseas in both the Pacific and European the-

atres, a first for military members separating from overseas locations. This service is tremendously appreciated.

Finally, our thanks to the many veterans groups who help our counselors at so many of our bases, providing advice on disability eligibility and screening the records at seminars and workshops. They've provided a valued volunteer service which is irreplaceable, and we thank them on behalf of every servicemember that they have helped.

Providing transition assistance for our servicemembers as they complete their active duty is something that we should have been doing long ago. We believe it is essential that transition assistance be institutionalized as an integral part of every member's career, making sure that he or she reenters civilian life as a capable, productive citizen, ready to take part in the economic and social fabric of American life. Converting swords to plowshares is as true of people as it is of equipment and is in the end far more rewarding for all concerned.

Again, thank you for this chance to discuss our program. I will be happy to address any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Graham appears on p. 72.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF COL. KENNETH W. HILLMAN

Colonel HILLMAN. Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, it's an honor to appear before you today to report the Marine Corps' status on the implementation and effectiveness of the transition assistance program. In particular, I would like to share with you just a couple of examples of our success in implementing the program and the critical part that it plays in the readjustment of our Marines to civilian life and in providing an important quality of life service.

The Marine Corps transition assistance program is fully implemented. Over 140,000 separating Marines have benefitted from transition services since October 1990. Timely preseparation counseling has been provided to 80 percent of our separating Marines through our Marine Corps career resource management centers, or CRMCs, while the other 20 percent who are assigned to either remote/isolated areas, aboard ship or at other Service military installations have been provided services through coordination with Navy, Army, and Air Force transition offices.

As our transition services have provided, their effectiveness can only be guaranteed if suitable facilities and competent, trained staff are made available. The Marine Corps has met this challenge be establishing 18 career resource management centers; that is, one at each Marine Corps installation.

These CRMCs, which are usually collocated at a family service center, are staffed with a total of 86 full-time employees trained to assist Marines and their families as well as other servicemembers with the hard decisions of transitioning to civilian life. They provide individual counseling, preseparation information, and seminars, key aspects of the transition program, and are dedicated to providing the best services possible to our separating Marines.

Based on statistical information available to us for the second quarter of this fiscal year, the Marine Corps provided

preseparation counseling to 97 percent of our Marines who received transition services from our CRMCs.

Additionally, although the TAP training sponsored by the Department of Labor is voluntary, 70 percent of our Marines who used our CRMC services also attended TAP training during the second quarter of this fiscal year. In both areas we will continue to work to increase participation.

We have also had great success with the automated resources available. The defense outplacement referral system, or DORS, and the transition bulletin board are regularly used by employers and our Marines, respectively, to find employees or employment. State job service programs and the American job bank also serve our Marines.

One example of our success with these automated services comes from the use of the Public and Community Service, or PACS, automated system. For example, one of our Marines in North Carolina without a teacher certification was able to obtain a job as a vocational education teacher through the PACS program after he found the job which was listed on the TBB. He is now certified to teach, thanks to the availability of PACS at our career resource management centers.

We also provider our Marines with a verification of skills, education, and training experience, or VMAT, document. Although not perfect, it helps most Marines by providing a summary of military training and work experience that they can use when preparing job resumbs, in determining future civilian career options, and when searching for available employment opportunities.

Today transition, whether through separation or retirement, is a major issue that all Marines must address at some time in their careers. For the foresight the Congress has shown in aiding in this issue through the transition assistance program's policy guidance and funding, on behalf of the Marine Corps, we offer our thanks.

Mr. Chairman, the military Services and thousands of servicemembers have benefitted form the programs provided by the transition assistance program. This quality of life program is essential to the Corps, and your continued support is appreciated.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear, and I would be pleased to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Colonel Hillman appears on p. 77.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you. Thank you all for your testimony.

General Hickerson, you indicated in your testimony that the—I'm not sure what we refer to this as—military skills verification form was not adequate for certain officers, noncommissioned officers perhaps. Could you elaborate a bit as to what the deficiencies were and how that's being corrected?

General HICKERSON. the VMAT document, verification of military skills, has worked very, very well for our enlisted soldiers and our warrant officers. For our officers, we found that it was very difficult to translate their very specific jobs into the generalizations that were on the VMAT.

We don't have that information in any type of automated form that we can translate. So what we have done is modify the form for our officers, and we will be providing them an analysis trans-

lation into civilian terminology of their military education and training.

This then will be supplemented with Army-unique documents of the officer evaluation and their officer record brief, which lists their assignments. And this information then will assist them in the provision of a resumb, which they can then do with ACAP.

So it provides the same information, but just in a supplemental form.

Mr. PENNY. Are we making this universally available in all the branches?

General HICKERSON. The VMAT is in all the branches, yes.

Mr. PENNY. I know you all testified to that this morning. I'm just curious to know whether that's something that every single servicemember now carries with them.

I have some questions about the implementation of particularly the TAP training programs at local bases. There's a sense that a lot of the TAP training occurs in the final few weeks before discharge.

Is there any set of instructions that the various branches have issued to their local base commanders about trying to move that forward a bit so that we're not crowding too much into the last month before servicemember separation? Admiral Tobin, do you want to begin the response?

Admiral TOBIN. We have very specifically urged that our commanders work hard to make sure that doesn't happen because in the last couple of weeks when someone is transitioning, that's the worst time to try and present any kind of formal training. So we have a comprehensive instruction which lays out to all of our commanding officers the need of breaking their people loose to allow them to participate in the program.

We also insist that they be counseled 90 days before they plan to transition, and they receive a checklist of all the benefits they're entitled to as well as all of the workshops they can attend.

It has been an education program. I think we've come a long way to not only educating the individuals on what they're entitled to with their commanding officers to the fact that they really need to release some of these people to do that, but we make good progress.

Mr. PENNY. Any others want to add comments? Mr. Graham?

Mr. GRAHAM. Our program is similar to the Navy's. We've recently had a letter signed by our Secretary of the Air Force and our Chief of Staff, two commanders, calling subordinate commanders' attention to the program and asking that they ensure that everyone is made available for this program.

The time lines are as indicated in the Navy. We try to get this as early as possible, and we achieve this for a large majority of our people.

General HICKERSON. For the Army, our goal is to start the transition 180 days prior to separation. And our indication are that at least 70 percent of our transitioners do start the process before 90 days prior to their separation. So we're very encouraged.

Mr. PENNY. What was that percentage again?

General HICKERSON. Seventy percent before 90 days.

Mr. PENNY. Before 90 days. Okay. Thank you.

Colonel Hillman?

Colonel HILLMAN. Sir, the commandants provide a guidance to commanders at all levels addressing the importance of the transition assistance program and preseparation counseling to everybody that's leaving the Marine Corps during the first 90 of their last 180 days on active duty.

We get reports from the field at headquarters, and the reports lately are very encouraging. The majority of Marines are attending TAP during that first 90 days of their last 180 days.

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

The first question is whether all of the branches are extending these programs to spouses of military personnel. And then the second half of that question is: What level of participation are we able to report on the availability or the degree to which spouses take advantage of the program?

Admiral TOBIN. We are making it available. Once again, it's been an education process. Our percentage is very low as the overall percentage is roughly in the 2-percent range.

This year it looks like it's running a little higher, but we can't quite figure out why we don't have more spouses attend. We think it might be commitments with family, commitments with other jobs, but we're working hard because we think it's a wonderful benefit and very worthwhile.

Mr. PENNY. Are these scheduled in such a way that they can be done in the evenings or weekends?

Admiral TOBIN. We try to schedule all these events to accommodate the people whenever we can. Perhaps we could do better, but, to the best of my knowledge, we try to accommodate any group.

Mr. PENNY. As far as you know, it's not because the families aren't aware that the information about the sessions and the eligibility of spouses to participate is finding its way into the home?

Admiral TOBIN. That's part of it. And we're trying to find better ways to make sure that the families know this, but that is part of the problem, I think.

Mr. PENNY. Mr. Graham?

Mr. GRAHAM. We are also disappointed with our spouse participation, even though it seems to be growing. That's one of the items that our process action team, our quality process action team, is working on, coming up with some better marketing ideas to market our programs to the spouses.

We have also tried evening and afternoon and child care and those other kinds of things that have worked in other programs. And, as I say, our spouse participation is improving, but it's certainly not what we'd like for it to be. We're continuing to work.

Mr. PENNY. Do you have any rough numbers on participation levels?

Mr. GRAHAM. About 5 percent. It's——

Mr. PENNY. Got a ways to go.

Mr. GRAHAM. It's pretty good, but we've got a long ways to go.

Mr. PENNY. General Hickerson?

General HICKERSON. Our entire ACAP program is available for spouse participation, and our initial indicators are that they're more apt to participate in initial counseling. So that is the opportunity for us to make them aware of the TAP workshop.

But our participation by spouses is also very low, about 2.5 percent for 1992 and 2.9 percent for 1993. And it may be simply a factor that it is a 2-day to 3-day workshop.

Mr. PENNY. Do spouses participate in the exact same program that the Service personnel participate in so it isn't an extra administrative cost for you, separate——

General HICKERSON. No, it is not.

Mr. PENNY [continuing]. Program for the spouses? Because I could see where participation rates would really become a cost-inefficient process if they weren't participating in the same program with the rest of the class.

That is disappointing, though, to find so few. And when you talked about Army's ACAP program, I don't think you gave comparative statistics between participation in ACAP and participation in TAP. At least I don't recall in reviewing your testimony that there was a percentage there.

General HICKERSON. I may not have. Our overall percentage—and this includes overseas—is 58 percent. And if you look at just conis, it would be——

Mr. PENNY. And that's the TAP?

General HICKERSON. That's the combination of the ACAP-TAP workshop. So the overall is 58 percent, but if you look simply at conis, we believe it's closer to 70 percent participation in the workshop.

Mr. PENNY. And I know that Admiral Tobin talked specifically about how they've tried to reach overseas personnel. And that's a particular concern for the Navy, not only overseas, but that seems to be a problem in every branch of the military that we're still having difficulty getting enrollments up in these overseas bases. And I assume you've got some sort of a game plan to improve those numbers.

Admiral TOBIN. Yes, we do. Our joint effort with the Army to send teams out to our remote sites——

Mr. PENNY. That's right. You mentioned the mobile teams that will——

Admiral TOBIN. And to ships. We have the Saratoga coming back next month with 500 people who were transitioning. In a heavy load like that, we can really use something like this mobile team. We hope we're going to be able to service that.

Mr. PENNY. I want to give Mr. Quinn time for his questions. So I'll just ask Colonel Hillman if he might respond to the question about spousal participation, and then we can move on to Mr. Quinn.

Colonel HILLMAN. Yes, sir. Spouse participation is certainly encouraged and welcomed. Our numbers are not any better; in fact, a little bit worse, than some of the other Services. We're at 2 percent.

Now, we have had within the Marine Corps an employment resource center for spouses within our career resource management centers since 1985. And while we do not get a lot of participation in the transition assistance program, we do get participation from spouses to use the DORS program and the other automated systems in our career resource management centers. So I think our

overall service to Marine Corps spouses is a little higher than indicated by the statistics.

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

Mr. Quinn.

General HICKERSON. Mr. Penny, I just wanted to add that the Army does have ACAP in 18 locations overseas. We are able to service our servicemembers there.

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

Mr. Quinn.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you, Tim.

I want to get back to the VMAT for just a minute if I can, but before that, touch on the recent conversation here about spousal participation. The 2 to 3-day workshop has to be the problem, it would seem to me, for people who work to try to commit that amount of time.

Must it be 2 to 3 days altogether? Can it be broken down? Have we talked about anything, any other way to get that information out other than a 2 to 3-day block of time?

Admiral TOBIN. We're looking at alternatives. We don't have a formal plan, but certainly any way we can bring the spouses in, we'd like to.

Mr. QUINN. Must they come in? We talked about video. We talked about——

Admiral TOBIN. We have outreach programs to families or family service centers where we could actually send people out into the family housing areas, and we do have videos that we could loan out for families to take home and view together.

Mr. QUINN. Okay. Thanks.

Rear Admiral Tobin, you talked about the VMAT and the numbers the Navy has been able to reach. We're going to receive some testimony later today from the DAV about needed efforts, particularly in the case of the Air Force and Marine Corps, to get to members who separated before the program went into effect.

I know that you're doing all that you can for those members as they separate. What kind of efforts are being made particularly for those servicemen and women who were separated before the program started? Mr. Graham, I'll start with you, if I may.

Mr. GRAHAM. We talked initially—I believe it was the first question—with the problem of data integrity and translating this information and data system into something useable.

We had that problem with the Air Force system early on. We have been making great improvements on that but early on the documents that we were producing weren't very useful. We made the decision of to go ahead and try to improve the usefulness of the data and then put a process together to get it to people who had gotten out of Service before 1992. Actually, as you say, people who are leaving now get one. It's readable, usable. It's a good document.

We now have the capability to do the same thing for the 87,000, roughly, people who left before we started doing that routinely. And as we speak, we have a mass mailing going out to our veterans, our people who were discharged before 1992, to tell them about the availability of this form and if they want it, if they need it, we will provide it for them.

Mr. QUINN. Any kind of timetable for those 87,000?

Mr. GRAHAM. We have the first 40,000 of them being sorted by zip code right now so that we can get the least possible postage. And those should go out in a week.

Mr. QUINN. Thank you.

Mr. GRAHAM. And as soon as we finish those, we'll start on the net——

Mr. QUINN. Thanks very much.

Colonel Hillman, any comment from the Marine Corps point of view?

Colonel HILLMAN. Sir, we had a similar problem with our database, and we have corrected that. And we have a document now which, while still not perfect, is a vast improvement over what we had.

We have attempted a couple of test mailings in samples of small numbers and have not had much success with getting the document to the Service person because they moved after they separated and their address is no longer the same. We had a very large return rate.

So our strategy is right now is by the end of this year, we will have in place a public service or public awareness campaign in the form of public service announcements and anything else that we can think of in developing our strategy to contact former Marines and have them call or write to us for their document.

Mr. QUINN. GAO, of course, calls this the most important document that a separating servicemember can receive. So I am encouraged by the effort both of you described a minute ago.

And another encouraging item for me is that you're all together at the table. And I would hope that anything that's working for the Army or the Navy, the Marine Corps and the others would be looking at, so that the needed dialogue is taking place. I appreciate your answers. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, that's all I have.

Mr. PENNY. Thank you, Mr. Quinn. And thank you for your participation in this morning's hearing.

Mr. PENNY. Our final panel will include Mr. Leslie Bruce representing AMVETS, Mr. Bob Manhan from the VFW, Mr. James Hubbard from the American Legion. And also just arriving will be Mr. Ronald Drach, representing the DAV, Mr. William Crandell from the Vietnam Veterans Of America.

I call all of the panelists forward, and we'll begin testimony with Mr. Bruce. I ask each of you to bear in mind that your entire written remarks or written testimony will be included in the committee record and would ask that you summarize your remarks and attempt to stay within the 5-minute time limit.

Mr. Bruce, we'll start with you.

STATEMENTS OF LESLIE BRUCE, NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER, AMVETS; BOB MANHAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE, VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS; JAMES B. HUBBARD, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL ECONOMICS COMMISSION, THE AMERICAN LEGION; RONALD W. DRACH, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS; AND WILLIAM CRANDELL, LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT, VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

STATEMENT OF LESLIE BRUCE

Mr. BRUCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for inviting me here.

I'm a National Service Officer for AMVETS. I work out of the VA Hospital in Hampton, VA. And I do transition assistance at the Naval Base, Norfolk, all the way from the North Carolina border, all the way to Richmond, VA.

In our transition assistance, we talk with first-termers all the way to the 30-year retirees, from E–1s through general officers. In our transition assistance program, we have come across great things that happened to the Naval Base.

The military hadn't prior to TAP done a competent job in preparing its personnel for transition. The failure to properly prepare those separating soldiers, sailors, Marines, and airmen was not, however, the fault of the military. Career military personnel were tasked to prepare their people for civilian community life. They were not adequately prepared to do this.

Transition assistance is administered by civilian contractors, who are vastly knowledgeable in the world of the civilian community, and convey this message extremely well to our troops and the personnel in that area.

In the area of veterans' benefits, information is provided also superior to the previous generation of separation counseling. As a naval counselor, I can verify this because I did it for 15 years. I taught veterans' benefits classes, but I taught about home loans. I taught about the GI educational bills, not about veterans' claims processing and transition assistance to the civilian community.

I can tell you this information is sorely needed by the individuals in the transition program. Many veterans have no idea of what sort of conditions are compensable in the VA system nor have any idea how to apply for veterans' benefits. This program has now been rectified for literally thousands of veterans through transition assistance.

This is not to say the program is without problems. There are several which are of an administrative nature vice that of a substantive one. Some areas in which TAP can be approved: TAP should be coordinated by a geographical area vice each base or Service administrating that program individually. This would allow for more expedient use of resources, simplify the acquisition of quotas for individual commands.

The Army now forwards medical records to the VA regional office in the State in which that soldier is separated. The Navy still forwards medical records to the archives in St. Louis unless the individual is being processed under a medical board. In both these instances, it does not address the needs of the veteran.

The Army procedure has inundated the regional office in my state, Virginia, and that the situation exists elsewhere, I'm sure. The regional office gets the individual's record and then must forward that record to the State or the individual who is separating and intends to reside. That State and the address is normally on the DD–214 and would be much simpler if that DD–214 and the medical record were forwarded to the area the individual was planning on residing.

There needs to be an accurate accounting system developed to ensure that each separating member attends transition assistance in a timely manner. It is our experience some veterans do not attend until the last possible moment. The accounting system should be utilized, in part, to hold commands accountable for timely attendance of both officers and enlisted personnel.

Current regulation states that an individual can attend TAP as early as one year prior to separation. That in most cases is the same time he takes his separation physical. One year affords the prospective veteran the time necessary to prepare for civilian life, both for employment and to ensure that their military records are in order for VA purposes. We often speak to people who attend TAP classes too late to do anything about their final physical examination. They've already had it. It's too late.

There should be more cooperation between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the veterans' organizations participating in TAP. There are, unfortunately, times when individuals view each other as the enemy vice allies.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, let me say that the transition assistance program is truly outstanding. The few problems listed above are minor in comparison with the great good the program provides to the current veterans. This program is much needed by our young men and women as they leave the Service.

DOD, I'm sure, will provide you with accurate statistics on numbers of personnel attending. In support of those statistics, I wish to say that I have personally spoken to hundreds, perhaps thousands of TAP attendees. The vast majority have got nothing but praise for the professionalism and the interests shown by those involved in TAP.

Thank you very much, sir.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Bruce appears on p. 81.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF BOB MANHAN

Mr. MANHAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to represent the Veterans of Foreign Wars this morning at this hearing. Our view of how effective TAP is will be presented to you from the point of view of those veterans who come in to seek help from the VFW network of service officers. As you recall we have service officers in all 50 of the States in addition to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

Generally speaking, we looked at about 4,000 records of veterans who were discharged since late 1992 through to at least early 1994. Therefore, they should have had some TAP knowledge or exposure.

About 800 veterans—that's roughly 2 percent—claim that they never received any information regarding TAP at time of separa-

tion or discharge from service. All the others said yes, they attended either many sessions, some sessions, or at least they did receive handouts of material dealing with TAP.

Of the 3,200 who did say they attended some TAP or were aware of TAP, their problem areas fell into three categories. The first area was their lack of knowledge about eligibility to file for an initial VA compensation claim. A great many of these 3,200 veterans thought that any disability that they may have sustained while on active duty must have been related to a combat theatre of operation or a combat injury and even said, "Well, I didn't serve in Somalia" or "I wasn't on active duty during the Persian Gulf conflict." As we all know a service-connected disability does not have to be related to a combat injury.

Another possible misunderstanding regarding a service-connected claim is that some thought disability compensation was a military retiree entitlement only.

We've asked, "Where did you get that impression?" Several veterans said it was printed on some pamphlets that showed only the very senior enlisted chevrons, such as command sergeant majors, and therefore they assumed without reading the content one had to be a military careerist to apply for VA disability.

A second major area of lack of knowledge or confusion on the part of veterans who did attend TAP was they were not knowledgeable of the fact that veterans' service organizations have their own service officers who can help anyone file an initial claim within the VA. Furthermore, these service officers are certified/approved by VA as being knowledgeable and competent to provide claims assistance.

Many of these veterans were waiting for an appointment to see a Veterans' Administration benefits counselor. Unfortunately, in many of the regional offices, they were backed up so deep the VA itself said, "Well, why don't you go over and see a veterans' service organization's service officer." The service officer wouldn't necessarily have to be from the VFW. It could be DAV or American Legion service officer too. The teaching point here is that those people who do run TAP should stress the fact that there is a large pool of other VA-certified people who can help newly minted veterans file initial claims.

The third general problem area, regards jobs/employment. Many, many of the veterans we saw were of lower enlisted ranks, and the vast majority of them were from the combat arms. Most of these veterans did not receive a skills verification document, something that could help them translate what they did on active duty to a potential civilian employer for a job.

Also also many of the combat arms veterans did not know what the Service Members' Occupational Conversion and Training Act program was all about. The acronym is SMOCTA. Those who did know—and there were very few—said, "Yes, we're entered into it, but we're waiting for the SMOCTA community officer to contact me, so that I can enter into the program."

This pretty much summarizes our early assessment of TAP. The most positive thing is the fact we are receiving medical service records much quicker than we were heretofore.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Manhan appears on p. 85.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF JAMES B. HUBBARD

Mr. HUBBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And if I might say something at the outset, without taking anything away from what Chairman Montgomery has done with this subcommittee, it's nice to have Tim Penny back in the subcommittee chair, again.

With respect to transition assistance, you have heard from a number of sources here the problem with attendance. Attendance is still low. Overseas separations and people at sea present probably the biggest challenges, but it's gratifying to hear the Services, each of the Services, committing to solving this problem in some fashion. The attendance level has to go up if we're going to do a better job than we're already doing with transition assistance.

We are still troubled over the use of DVOP and LVER people to do the TAP training. We still maintain that the DVOP/LVER program is understaffed, and it is. Positions are allocated to each State based on the number of veterans in each State. Active-duty people eligible for TAP are not counted in this number.

The formula is contained in Title 38, and the subcommittee knows that. The formula presumes that DVOPs and LVERs have a given number of veterans to serve. If these people are assigned to duties as TAP facilitators at a military base, no one is left to serve the veteran population which already exists in the State.

The answer to the problem, of course, is twofold. First of all, to serve the existing veteran population, the program must be fully funded and, therefore, staffed. Second, in order to do TAP at military installations without taking away from services provided to existing veterans, funding to allow the use of contractor personnel is necessary.

In general we are quite pleased with the way the Veterans' Employment Training Service is conducting TAP. They are doing an amazing amount of work with a shortage of people, and we commend them for that.

Turning now to the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act, this act initially took some 9 months for the agencies involved to decide who was going to have what role. That's a long delay. It's also over with, and we've begun with the program. Now each agency seems to find its role clear, and the problems have been somewhat cosmetic.

We are again impressed with the way VETS set about training those who would administer SMOCTA from the Labor Department perspective in the State employment security agencies. They used a train the trainer approach, and it brought meaningful training to the States very quickly. I attended the trainer sessions in Massachusetts and Iowa. They were both highly effective.

There are some aspects of the current statute which cause some difficulty when you apply it to the actual workplace. During this past year, the American Legion in cooperation with the Laborers International Union of North America has succeeded in placing veterans in entry-level jobs in the construction industry with the help of labor unions and their training network. These are good jobs for

veterans. They have solid career potential. They have good wages and benefits.

We're looking forward to continuing these placements, and it would be helpful to utilize SMOCTA as part of this program as an added incentive for employers.

There are several aspects of SMOCTA which make it difficult to apply the program in the construction industry. One of the questions that sometimes comes up is SMOCTA's requirement that eligible jobs not be seasonal. This restriction was included in the law because of abuses that occurred with the old Veterans' Job Training Act, most visibly jobs such as lawn-mowing services. We agree with the concept behind the limitation.

Several questions have been raised about whether construction jobs are seasonal since they often shut down for several weeks during cold weather. It would be helpful to make it clear that real career jobs, like construction work, are not regarded as seasonal for SMOCTA purposes, even if the work may be slowed down occasionally because of weather patterns.

There is a similar question which comes up regarding SMOCTA's exclusion of temporary jobs as it relates to construction work. As you know, construction workers often change employers when a job ends. And they're referred to a new employer from a union hiring hall. Even though an individual project may last only a short time, it is part of a lifetime construction career.

We agree completely that SMOCTA should not be used to place veterans in jobs that are merely temporary, but it would be helpful to make it clear that stable career employment in the unionized construction industry is, and should be, SMOCTA-eligible.

We are concerned that the program is restricted to veterans with a discharge date after August 2, 1990, thereby not covering veterans who were discharged prior to Operation Desert Storm. There are veterans with earlier discharge dates who still need employment assistance, and we would support extending the SMOCTA program to include them.

A further program with SMOCTA is that it is restricted to training programs with a maximum length of 18 months or less. There are a number of good entry-level career-training programs that last longer than 18 months. In fact, the shortest of the construction trades apprentice programs lasts 24 months. The 18-month upper limit is counterproductive because it prevents us from placing veterans in some of the better construction industry jobs under SMOCTA.

Further, the employment outside a State is also a problem because construction workers often travel on their jobs or contractors have to travel outside their State boundaries as a matter of economic necessity.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning. I'll be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hubbard appears on p. 88.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF RONALD W. DRACH

Mr. DRACH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I compliment my colleagues for their excellent testimony. And I certainly agree with things that have been said, particularly Mr. Hubbard's comments about the DVOP/LVER duties.

Somebody recently reported that in one State, 80 percent of all veterans' placements were done by DVOPs and LVERs, and they were very proud of that fact. Well, I would turn that around and say, "Well, what's the rest of the office doing if 80 percent of all veteran placements are being done by DVOPs and LVERs?" So it's very obvious that they're stretched too far.

I'd like to start out by actually making a recommendation that perhaps we could save some money by abolishing SMOCTA. If we would provide retraining to active-duty military members prior to their discharge, then maybe we wouldn't need private sector employers to provide that retraining.

I think it would be very telling if we could find out from DOD or the respective military branches how much they spend to take a civilian from the street, bring them into the military, and train them to be a soldier or whatever occupation they may pursue while in the military and then compare that to the amount of money that we're spending per capita on TAP to transition these people back out. If we could spend half to retrain as we do to train, perhaps they'd come out of the military with marketable skills.

And this should start at 180 days before discharge, not a day, not 3 days, not 3 months, because those that need retraining should be provided that retraining early on.

I was happy to hear the previous panel. Apparently, from what I heard, all of the problems identified in the GAO report have been addressed. And if that's the case, then that takes pretty much takes care of my testimony because it's predicated a lot on the GAO report. But I would like to emphasize a couple of things.

One, there has been very little discussion about DTAP, the Disabled Transition Assistance Program. That lack of discussion exacerbates my frustration with this whole thing. DTAP is viewed, at best, as a stand-alone program, and it's implemented almost primarily and exclusively by the VA's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling.

There are few sites where DTAP is part of TAP. And DTAP standing alone is not enough for those disabled servicemembers. When we were with Chairman Montgomery on a field trip about a year or so ago, we were at one military base. We were sitting in the auditorium where the TAP sessions were presented. And right across the street was the military hospital.

The question was asked about how much information is given to the hospitalized servicemembers. The response basically was that VA comes in and talks to them about vocational rehabilitation. But there was no TAP program going on at the hospital 500 yards across the street.

Section 1142 of Title 10 says that TAP will be provided within 90 days and DOD says in their own policies that servicemembers are to be identified within 180 days. GAO said this is not happening. I wonder how much of that has been corrected to the extent that it actually is happening within those confines.

Section 1143 of Title 10 talks about the certification, which has been mentioned several times this morning. Well, again, GAO—and their report is not old; it was only released in January—said that even today only about 10 percent of the active duty servicemembers are actually receiving that certification document. It took the military 2 years to develop it. And in that process, almost half a million servicemembers were discharged during that time period.

Mr. Chairman, at one of the earlier DTAP oversight hearings a year or so ago, I recall we talked about the recognition by the private sector of skills obtained in the military, such as some of the blue collar skills, bricklaying, carpentry, so forth.

And following that, we had a pretty good meeting with the Department of Labor to look at: How can we develop some format with the private sector and the military so that those skills are actually recognized?

All too often someone coming out of the military if they were not trained through a union apprenticeship program, can't get a job. Their skills are not recognized. They can come out and be the best electrician that the Army ever produced, they're not going to get a job because they can't get certified. They have to go through that apprenticeship program.

Getting back to the certification, to the credit of the Army, they're attempting to retroactively reach out to those veterans to provide that certification. The Navy has notified about 100,000 of their people. But the Air Force and the Marine Corps will provide it, as of the GAO report, only if requested. I think I heard the previous panel indicate that's no longer true, that they are actually attempting to do that.

One of the concerns I don't think comes from the top level. It's more at the command level. And the chief of the Air Force's transition assistance program said that the effort and expense associated with sending the document outweighed its perceived demand and value. I'm not sure who that individual is, but if that's job skill certification or something that he or she needed to transition into the civilian economy, I'm sure it would become a very, very important document.

I'll close with one other comment from the GAO report that I find just to be the ultimate irony in this whole thing and in my opinion the command attitude toward congressional intent. One of the things that GAO found was that many unit commanders perceived, "Allowing servicemembers time off to receive transition services several months or weeks before discharge is inconsistent with the training and philosophy with many unit commanders."

And consistent with that, Mr. Chairman, there was one female member of—I'm not sure which branch of the Service it was. She was unable to attend an earlier TAP session and was attending a session one week before her discharge. And the reason she was unable to attend the earlier one was, again from the GAO, "Her supervisor wouldn't let her attend because she was scheduled for mess hall head count duty."

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Drach appears on p. 91.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF WILLIAM CRANDELL

Mr. CRANDELL. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee. Vietnam Veterans of America appreciates the opportunity to present its views on the effectiveness of TAP and SMOCTA.

The theory behind TAP is solid. The program can be made a more effective tool if it reaches a larger segment of our servicemen and women. TAP reaches too few of them now.

It is VVA's recommendation that all DVOP and LVER positions mandated by law be filled and funded. We also recommend that the SESAs be included as full partners in the TAP programs, a minimum standard be established for all TAP workshops and seminars, and that the authorized funding be appropriated and distributed to the SESAs for the TAP program since they're the ones who are doing so much of the work.

VVA also recommends that the Departments of Defense, Labor, and Education, with input from the SESAs, develop a standardized test that all agencies can use to interpret skills and abilities of military personnel, provide job opportunity counseling based on the results of the standardized tests, and consider an in-service GI bill that would provide educational benefits to servicemembers while still in training.

SMOCTA, on the other hand, has a number of inherent deficiencies that we have been discussing today. VVA recommends that the National Veterans' Training Institute develop a training program on working with small businesses and marketing SMOCTA to them, that DOL develop and distribute brochures that are easily understood and geared to today's small business community, also to decentralize the administration of SMOCTA monies to fit the needs of varying regions, and to authorize State DVETS to approve customized training plans according to regional and individual veteran needs.

SMOCTA is a program that means well but has conceptual flaws. If these flaws are addressed forthrightly, the program would be much more productive and useful. Most of all, the Services and agencies need to be more imaginative in translating skills.

What most of us received from our military experience was not only specific skills, but more important things: the ability to perform well under stress, to make critical decisions, even when personal risk was involved. This needs to be translated into what goes to potential employers, particularly in the SMOCTA program.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes our testimony.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Crandell appears on p. 96.]

Mr. PENNY. Thank you.

I specifically want to follow up on the recommendation from Mr. Drach about the licensure. I would guess that this would be a concern shared by most of the other veterans' groups.

The thought occurs to me that one way of dealing with this is to set up a requirement that on all military bases, the base commander work with the State licensure agency, try to get these folks certified in the State where the military base is located, whether they're an electrician or carpenter, whatever their military training may entail. So that at the very least, when they come out, they're licensed in that State.

Oftentimes there's a reciprocal agreement with dozens of other States that will make it easy for them to transfer that certification to another location in the country without having to go through a new test or some other hoop or hurdle.

And that gets us to the point where we've actually got a certificate in hand, rather than simply a military service document showing that you were trained in this area or worked in this area for a given period of time because we all know that these certificates in a whole range of occupations are the gold card.

And a lot of that, we understand, is to restrict access to those professions. But it really is unfair to military personnel who are equally and capably trained because they just don't have that piece of paper that most private sector schools would provide upon graduation in a 2-year technical course or whatever.

It seems to me that might be an easier way of dealing with this than another approach.

Mr. DRACH. I think it's an excellent start, Mr. Chairman. To the credit of—actually, it was Dave Ritterpush when he was the Acting Assistant Secretary. Then Robin Higgins followed up on it, and it kind of has fallen through the cracks with the transition into the new administration. That's no one's fault necessarily, but we did have a very positive meeting to discuss some of the approaches that could be taken to solve that problem.

The biggest problem that I see—and Jim, working with the union, may have another comment or another thought on this or anybody else, obviously, also—is if we take that approach,—and I would certainly encourage us to try to do that—I think we need at some point in time to bring in the head of the unions also to find out: Do the unions really have a real problem with that kind of a system? And if so, what is that problem? And what can we do or what can be done to alleviate that problem so that everybody's in accord?

And I certainly agree the idea of going away with that State license would certainly go a long way toward doing that.

Mr. PENNY. Any other reaction?

Mr. HUBBARD. If I might add to that, Mr. Chairman, we ought not to confine our thinking here to those skills where apprenticeships are used as the training method.

Mr. PENNY. Frankly, I have talked when I was chairman of this subcommittee about the frustration I feel in that sort of a 2-year technical college equivalency or some other education certificate doesn't apply itself to all the training that someone receives in the military service.

And I know that, even between schools of higher learning, there's a transferability of credit sort of argument, "Do we want to accept what you learned at this school and apply that toward a higher degree at another school?" So this is a nightmarish sort of problem——

Mr. HUBBARD. It surely is. It's huge.

Mr. PENNY [continuing]. Particularly on the part of military personnel, where nothing you learn there is given much credit at any school outside the military. It's like you have to start from scratch all over again.

Mr. HUBBARD. Yes.

Mr. PENNY. And there's just something, unfortunately, that's magic about this degree from a school. And the same training in the military, even though it's well-documented, just doesn't carry that diploma or certificate that gives you the academic credit you deserve.

Mr. HUBBARD. There's a terrible amount of frustration out there over that very subject. Ironworkers, millwrights, steamfitters, painters, and carpenters all go through apprenticeship programs.

To my knowledge—and I have not studied all of these unions or looked at all of them. I know the carpenters at one point had a program for transitioning military personnel where they would cut short the normal apprenticeship training program for anybody leaving the Service who had had carpentry training while in the Service.

The thing we need to remember and the thing that needs to be conveyed to the unions and to other certifying agencies, whether it's State or local governments, is that the people who have served in the military have attended some of the finest training schools in the world.

If you walk into the control room of a nuclear power plant, I guarantee you you'll find Navy people in there running that power plant because they're graduates of the Navy nuclear power plant schools.

On the other hand, a medic who treated gunshot or shrapnel wounds in Desert Storm is not qualified according to the local certification agency to treat gunshot wounds in downtown Washington. The training is not applicable as far as the city is concerned. And that's absurd.

It's the same way with air frame mechanics or turbine engine mechanics who work on airplanes. A school-trained service, Air Force or Army, aviation mechanic ought to have an FAA certificate issued as part of their training, but they don't. The result is when they get out and go to work for an airline or for an aircraft assembly operation, they need to go to FAA school to get certified to work on air frames. And that's also absurd.

It's a huge problem. It exists in almost every single trade or profession other than perhaps engineering or something like that. It's crazy.

Mr. PENNY. At the Federal level you've just highlighted an example of where one agency isn't cooperating with another agency to recognize the training that's been offered while someone is on the Federal payroll. And so it seems that we've got this problem at various levels.

The Federal Government can't solve all of this because some of these professions and careers are certified under State law. But it seems to me that since these are military personnel, since this is Federal money that's providing not only their pay, but their training, that we ought to do more to protect their rights and their interests upon return to the private sector.

And I know there's been a lot of informal discussion that's occurred on this issue. Is anyone aware—because I am not—of sort of a high-level interagency task force that's attempted to recommend a series of Federal policies that might speak to this issue?

Mr. DRACH. As far as we go, Mr. Chairman, there was a meeting that DAV hosted. I can't remember whether it was last summer or longer ago. And there was, as I recall, a document produced in a draft format of what was discussed.

We brought to the table, as I recall, representatives from Labor, the veterans' service organizations. I believe military services were represented by DOD. There were some union representatives there.

And I'll be happy to dig that out and provide it to you.

Mr. PENNY. Yes. Please do and present that to the Committee. And I think I might urge Chairman Montgomery to join me in sending a letter to the President asking that they consider a high-level task force, an interagency task force that would also include representation from the various veterans' organization: to see what we can do to speak to these questions of providing better educational certification for the training that's accomplished during military service; to provide licensure for those that have all the training necessary; and, most specifically, to provide recognition on the part of one Federal agency, the FAA, for example, to the training that's secured in another agency, Department of Defense.

Mr. DRACH. Mr. Chairman, an alternative to that could be that that would be an excellent task for the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment and Training that you worked so hard to get established that has yet to meet.

Mr. PENNY. It's just an excellent recommendation, Ron. And with Chairman Montgomery's support, we will draft a letter on this matter and include specifically a recommendation that that task force be the vehicle for this review.

With that, I want to thank this panel for their testimony. As usual, it was excellent and to the point. Mr. Bruce, specifically from your own personal experience, it was helpful to have those observations. Mr. Manhan, the survey that VFW has conducted provided helpful insights for us this morning. Mr. Hubbard, your long list of particulars was duly noted, and we hope to follow up on much of that. Ron, especially the DTAP, I know with the previous panels, we didn't really get into that, and I appreciate your drawing to that. And, Mr. Crandell, for some of the specific concerns about SMOCTA and what we might want to do in that regard, I really do appreciate the testimony.

With that, our committee will stand adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

STATEMENT OF PRESTON M. TAYLOR JR.
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF LABOR FOR
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 25, 1994

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss two of the most exciting new veterans' employment programs I administer as Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training -- the transition assistance program, known as TAP, and the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act, known as SMOCTA.

TAP -- first enacted as a limited pilot program in December 1989, was given its current expanded status a year later. From my personal observation, I can report that TAP has become the positive force for inter-agency service delivery that Congress initially envisioned.

Through TAP, the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs, in conjunction with State Employment Security Agencies, provide soon-to-be-discharged men and women of the Armed Forces with the information-based confidence they need for making a successful transition to the civilian workforce. Studies show that the counseling, benefits information, and job-readiness training they receive in three-day TAP workshops enable participating servicemembers in TAP to obtain employment up to three weeks earlier than their counterparts who do not receive such training. For the Federal Government, expedited hiring reduces liability for ex-servicemembers' unemployment compensation. For ex-servicemembers themselves, it puts them to work sooner and significantly reduces individual and family stress.

An indirect benefit to the Federal government is that TAP produced a roadmap of how three Federal agencies can forge the common bonds necessary to administer their joint program. TAP, then, has become a very real model for how seamless government should serve a common client. This inter-agency relationship has also improved SMOCTA; I will address that program shortly.

TAP has been studied from different perspectives. In February 1994, Secretary of Labor Robert B. Reich sent to Congress the second part of a three-phased congressionally mandated report entitled, Transition Assistance Program: Initial Impact Evaluation. The report looked at the civilian labor market experiences of enlisted male separatees who left the military between July 1 and December 31, 1990. Although the study was based on a young and immature TAP, it was in combination with a more mature program model from California. The core findings of that study remain true: TAP training decreases the period of unemployment upon leaving active duty.

The third phase of the TAP impact evaluation will obtain more recent data by focusing on servicemembers who separated in 1992, a period when TAP was operationally more mature.

Other studies have also shown TAP to be appreciated by participants. For example, according to the General Accounting Office's January 1994 study entitled "Military Downsizing: Persons Returning to Civilian Life Need More Help from DOD," servicemembers and their spouses who received transition services have reported finding it helpful in readjusting to civilian life.

I am pleased with Labor's success to date in leading the inter-agency administration of TAP, the value that TAP has added to the marketability of servicemembers entering the civilian workforce, and the acceptance the program has received from servicemembers and their spouses. Every new program, however, has growing pains and needs a periodic course adjustment.

To this end, early in my tenure as Assistant Secretary I established a TAP ad hoc committee consisting of representatives from the three Federal TAP partners and the State Job Services. Because of the importance of TAP, I added this ad hoc committee to VETS's reinvention committee program. I asked the TAP ad hoc committee to (1) identify barriers to TAP participation, (2) develop initiatives to overcome these barriers, and (3) determine resources necessary to effectively conduct TAP activities and improve participation rates.

While VETS has tried to determine how many servicemembers throughout the world actually receive some type of transition assistance, we have learned that participant data collection is not standardized and can be misleading. We recently requested assistance from the Department of Defense on this data collection and hope to establish more accurate participation benchmarks soon. It is difficult to obtain precise TAP statistics because from 15 to 20 percent of all servicemembers discharged from the Armed Forces complete their last real active-duty assignment outside of the continental United States, but are actually separated shortly upon arrival in the continental United States.

The Department of Labor does not provide direct TAP services overseas. The influence of its indirect service, however, is significant. In point of fact, all Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps TAP classes overseas are taught by personnel trained by our National Veterans' Training Institute in Denver, Colorado. Our handbooks serve as the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps course material. The Navy, on its ships at sea, will soon be using our series of six, half-hour TAP video lessons complemented with our handbook -- a series also to be available to other branches of the service for personnel stationed in remote locations. The Army, throughout its world-wide system, has available and frequently uses our TAP handbook. America's Job Bank, a computerized listing of job openings offered through most State Employment Security Agencies, is also available to all branches of service in their programs around the globe.

Two weeks ago a member of my staff went to Germany with Majority and Minority staff members of this Committee where they learned that a high percentage of servicemembers of all branches -- perhaps as high as 80 to 90 percent -- are receiving some form of meaningful transition assistance training in Europe. Once I receive the recommendations of the TAP ad hoc committee, I intend to explore new ways of strengthening Labor's role in the overseas transition program. It is important that servicemembers stationed outside of the continental United States not be short-changed in the quality of employment assistance service they receive.

It is likely that not all of the eligible servicemembers and their spouses will participate in TAP. The TAP ad hoc committee's preliminary report found the number one barrier to TAP participation to be servicemembers electing not to attend sessions available to them. They simply think they do not need the information. They may already have a job waiting for them; they may be retiring and not planning to work, or they may be planning to go to school after service. They have a variety of reasons for not signing up for TAP. My concern with this category of nonparticipants is that they do not realize the value of the TAP information from a life-skill standpoint. I will be looking closely at how we can improve our marketing practices.

To continue the positive growth pattern that TAP has maintained over the last couple of years, the inter-agency Steering Committee, consisting of decision-makers from Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs will meet on June 13 for a full-day planning session. We will evaluate the TAP ad hoc committee report recommendations, as well as our 1991 inter-agency Memorandum of Understanding. TAP has proven to be successful. It deserves our every effort to make it better.

Now let me turn your attention to the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act -- SMOCTA -- program. SMOCTA is an employer reimbursement program, designed to meet the needs of recently separated veterans. Employers are reimbursed for up to half of the wages paid to eligibles hired into on-the-job training programs, but not more than $10,000 for recently separated, or $12,000 for disabled veterans. Eligibles are recently separated veterans who have been unemployed for eight out of the last 15 weeks, or with skills not readily transferable to civilian occupations, or disabled veterans. SMOCTA helps employers by reimbursing them for the time spent training eligible veterans and placing them in training programs that result in acquisition of skills and experience. This joint effort of Defense, Labor and VA was implemented under a Memorandum of Agreement signed on March 11, 1993. The Memorandum provides the basic framework of agency roles and responsibilities to facilitate efficient attainment of the basic program goal: to secure long term, stable employment for eligible veterans.

To achieve this goal and to ensure that quality customer services are provided to both veteran applicants and employers, VETS, with the assistance of the National Veterans' Training Institute, led an extensive two-stage training effort that began in June 1993. The first stage was to train the Job Service staff, VA, and VETS staff. Those trained would thereafter train and lead the local and regional staff responsible for providing the program's customer services. About 300 participants completed our "train-the-trainer" sessions by July 1993. The second stage, completed by October 1993, consisted of training over 3,000 staff that would be directly involved in SMOCTA. Upon completion of the training, all staff who attended were thoroughly familiar with the comprehensive SMOCTA program Technical Assistance Guide that was developed by a joint VETS-VA team.

VETS, through the National Veterans' Training Institute, is also in the process of developing case management training for Job Service staff. Case management training enables the State veterans' employment specialists providing veterans with direct employment and training services to facilitate the development and achievement of the veterans' employment goals. We just completed the training course development and testing process, and are looking forward to delivering the course to Job Service staff on a regular basis through the National Veterans' Training Institute.

Another event in implementing SMOCTA was VETS' public information campaign which was launched last July. Our efforts to date include:

--A news release directed to employers, announcing and describing the program, was issued on July 22, 1993. A second news release was issued on April 5, 1994, highlighting the program.

--A brochure was developed and sent by direct mailout to 250,000 employers. Supplies of the brochures were also distributed to VETS field staff and to the Job Service.

--Various prototype speeches describing SMOCTA for use by local spokespersons and by veterans' service organizations were developed and distributed.

We are continuing to aggressively promote SMOCTA through a nationwide public information campaign that includes:

--The creation and distribution of articles profiling veterans' and employers' successful participation in SMOCTA suitable for use by print media.

--The creation and distribution of media kits to support continued and enhanced efforts by our field staff to market SMOCTA locally to employers.

--The creation and distribution of descriptive material supporting the program, with selected testimonial references.

Congress initially appropriated $75 million for the program. This amount included administrative funds, limited to 6 percent of the total, to be shared by the three agencies. Thus, $70.5 million of the initial authorization was earmarked for payments to employers for Fiscal Years 1993 through 1995.

Data from the VA indicate that approximately $24 million has been obligated since the inception of the program. The average obligation per participant (through the end of April 1994) is estimated at $8,300.

We have a concern about SMOCTA. We believe that the number of high paying jobs approved under SMOCTA could be increased. Generally, occupations that require training programs lasting longer than 18 months normally bear higher wages. With few exceptions, these longer training programs cannot be approved by the VA using the SMOCTA criteria. A statutory change to allow approval of training programs longer than 18 months using SMOCTA criteria, while limiting reimbursement to 18 months, will help SMOCTA eligibles pursue higher paying jobs.

As we testified earlier, VETS is in the process of developing training through the National Veterans' Training Institute for Job Service and VETS' staff in case management, and in the successful management and oversight of the case management process. Case management enables the State veterans' employment specialist staff providing veterans with direct employment and training services to facilitate the development and achievement of the veterans' employment goals. The two case management training courses being developed will improve skills in this function, which is so critical to effective client service in SMOCTA and other VETS programs. We just completed our pilot training course and are looking forward to approval of our case management courses this month. Upon approval, NVTI will begin delivery of the case management training this summer.

The most recent data available from the Job Services, covering from July 1 to December 31, 1993, show that over 69,000 veterans presumptively eligible for SMOCTA had been identified; over 10,000 of those veterans had been referred to jobs through SMOCTA and other programs, and 4,629 had entered employment. This number reflecting the first three or four months of program activity includes the 931 eligible veterans that comparable VA data shows.

The VA will address the number of applicants certified for program participation and actual matches of employers to SMOCTA program participants to date.

I would like to conclude my comments on SMOCTA by noting that the Federal and State agencies involved have shown an extremely high degree of cooperation. I regard the successful implementation of the SMOCTA program as one of the major accomplishments of the first year of this Administration, from both the customer service perspective and from the inter-agency cooperation perspective. I am pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge the good work of the VETS and Job Service staff who worked so hard with our partners in the VA and Department of Defense to build a nationwide program that has already created jobs for more than 2,900 veterans in its first year.

I will now be happy to answer any questions you may have. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF

RAYMOND H. AVENT

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR BENEFITS

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING

AND EMPLOYMENT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 25, 1994

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before this Subcommittee to testify concerning the implementation and effectiveness of the transition assistance programs for separating servicemembers contained in sections 1142, 1143, and 1144 of title 10, United States Code. I will also speak to the implementation of the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992 (SMOCTA).

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP) and

DISABLED TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (DTAP)

We are pleased to have the opportunity to discuss the work that the Department of Veterans Affairs has accomplished in providing Transition Assistance Program services to men and women preparing to separate from active duty in the Armed Forces.

We deliver this program cooperatively with the Departments of Defense and Labor. This partnership, at the national and local levels, has been constructive and progressive. There were some anticipated start-up challenges, but the program operates smoothly. Each of the agencies, at all levels, understands its role and works with a cooperative spirit.

It is an honor to participate in delivering both the Transition and Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (TAP and DTAP). The men and women who decide to participate in the seminars and counseling are extremely capable individuals who understand the value of preparing well for employment opportunities. They also have high interest in any Defense-administered benefits and programs which may help them in a smooth transition to civilian life. And, of great importance to you and us, they are anxious to understand the VA benefits to which they may be entitled, how the benefits work and what assistance the benefits will provide now and in the future.

We are convinced that today's servicemembers preparing for separation or retirement are better informed than any of their predecessors and, thus, better prepared to make the important transition ahead. We are equally convinced that TAP and DTAP have enabled the country and its economy to deal effectively with the impact of downsizing of military strength.

As you may be aware, before the enactment of the initial TAP pilot, we had declared a renewed sense of importance in our outreach programs. The efforts of our Veterans Services Program have been successful in pumping new energy into this important part of our mission. As part of that process, we had declared three major outreach priorities: outreach to military members pending separation and to our newest veterans; outreach to homeless veterans; and outreach to older veterans and dependents. These groups, and the individuals within them, appeared to us to deserve the greatest emphasis, given need and, to some degree, their "at risk" status. We declared these priorities, not to exclude other groups, but to help our staff most prudently use their available resources.

As a result, when TAP was enacted and implemented, it was wholly consistent with our declared emphasis and viewed with

great importance by our organization at all levels. From the inception of TAP, we have applied a broader program definition which we entitle the Military Services Program. Many of our Veterans Benefits Counselors performing outreach services have been redesignated as Military Services Coordinators. Our energies in this regard have been directed to TAP, and the support of DTAP, but also to separation and retirement services briefings, outreach to Reserve and National Guard units, and liaison and counseling services with various military post activities such as personal affairs, community affairs, education offices and others.

We have also enjoyed close working relationships with the transition assistance and transition management programs conducted by each of the military service departments. There has been a regular exchange of information, services, training and support.

TAP and DTAP have obviously been major components, centerpieces in fact, of our military services efforts. But the broader emphasis has assured that the VA message has been heard by a large majority of separating servicemembers, including thousands who, for whatever reason, may have declined direct participation in a TAP/DTAP seminar. The dividends for all over the short and long course will be evident.

Our specific mission in delivery of TAP services is to ensure that servicemembers are aware of their benefits and entitlements, and to provide claims assistance as needed. For those servicemembers leaving active duty due to medical problems -- whether through the formal physical disability evaluation process or not -- the outreach effort is intensified to ensure a full understanding of the compensation program and to also ensure that vocational rehabilitation services are offered and facilitated, as appropriate. For example, we

estimate we successfully reduced the time a disabled servicemember must wait to enter a vocational rehabilitation program from a year to a matter of months. This significantly enhances the servicemember's ability to successfully complete their vocational rehabilitation program.

The aggressive work of our staff in the field and the high interest of servicemembers have worked together to stimulate the claims activity being handled in our regional offices.

While numbers tell only part of the story, they do reflect the magnitude of the effort. In Fiscal Year 1992, for example, Veterans Services staff conducted or participated in 6,162 TAP seminars or other forums to explain VA benefits to servicemembers. During that year, 323,932 servicemembers attended briefings with us. We provided personal interviews to 116,026.

Similarly, Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling staff conducted 2,621 DTAP seminars presenting personalized information to more than 65,000 servicemembers. More than 15,000 of these servicemembers applied for vocational rehabilitation benefits. During the year, 9,737 servicemembers and veterans requested and received educational and vocational counseling from Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling staff or private counselors under contract to VA.

Fiscal Year 1993 was an equally strong year for military services outreach as we conducted 6,995 briefings, and these were attended by 311,628 persons. Personal interviews on military posts were provided to 114,913. More than 3,600 DTAP seminars, attended by 94,250 servicemembers, were conducted during the year. These seminars resulted in an additional 17,000 claims for vocational rehabilitation benefits. We provided educational and vocational counseling to 23,832 separating servicemembers or recently separated veterans.

Overall, we have found particularly high interest among servicemembers soon to separate from duty in the areas of education benefits, compensation for service-connected disabilities, eligibility to medical care, life insurance options, and loan guaranty benefits.

In the early stages of upgrading our military services outreach program, we knew that our primary weakness was our lack of access to servicemembers overseas. This was particularly critical when men and women serving outside the U.S. returned only briefly to separate from active duty, thus precluding any substantive VA service and preventing any TAP program participation. We began in 1991 to look for ways to improve that situation.

In Fiscal Year 1992, through the support of the military service departments, the VBA military services program was expanded to Europe and the Far East. This was accomplished through temporary duty assignments of VA employees overseas ranging from 10 to 90 days. These assignments included two 90-day tours of duty at the Army Continuing Education System headquarters in Heidelberg, two 30-day assignments to the Army Community Services headquarters in Heidelberg, two 90-day assignments to the Air Force Family Services Center at Ramstein Air Base, quarterly visits to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base and to Marine Corps and Naval facilities throughout the Far East, and a 30-day tour of Navy bases in the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, and Iceland.

The 90-day assignments to Europe, quarterly visits to the Far East and quarterly visits to Guantanamo Bay Naval Base continued in Fiscal Year 1993. Support is also being provided to military personnel stationed in Panama on a semi-annual basis.

Beginning in July 1993, VBA transition activities in the European theater were expanded to six counselors assigned on 6-month details. Three of the 6 counselors are assigned to military installations in Germany, two are in Italy, and one in England. These counselors also provide support to military personnel in Belgium, the Netherlands, Iceland, the Azores, Turkey and Scotland.

The cost for these assignments is being shared by DOD and VA. VA is paying employee salaries and some smaller costs associated with the assignments. VA Central Office is also providing administrative support (e.g., furnishing applications/forms). DOD is providing office space, housing and transportation, including cost for travel to and from Europe.

Workload statistics show that the program has been effective. From July through mid-December 1993, the six counselors in Europe participated in 287 briefings, attended by about 8,700 individuals, conducted 3,600 personal and 3,168 telephone interviews. These figures do not include the numerous media interviews, training sessions, et cetera, given by the counselors. The counselors presently assigned to Europe have, through the end of March 1994, participated in 122 briefings attended by over 3,000 personnel. They have also conducted 1,287 personal interviews and over 1,700 telephone interviews. We anticipate that expanded assignments of VA counselors to the Far East will be implemented in early July. In the interim, we are continuing our quarterly visits to major facilities in the Far East. Quarterly visits are also scheduled for Guantanamo Bay and semi-annual visits are planned for Panama.

Our program delivery efforts continue. While the numbers leaving active duty are not as high as during the past few years, the importance of effective military services is as great as ever.

Transition Assistance can be a very significant benefit to servicemembers and their families. We have extremely positive feedback from participants. The relationships among VA, DOD and DOL -- at all levels -- are good and continue their steady improvement. The TAP legislation was well timed. Its positive intent is being carried out in the lives of the people who have served us well and now ask some assistance as they prepare to further contribute to society during civilian life.

THE SERVICEMEMBERS OCCUPATIONAL CONVERSION AND TRAINING ACT OF 1992 (SMOCTA)

Mr. Chairman, I would now like to discuss the job training program established by the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act of 1992 (SMOCTA). More than $21 million has been committed to this program designed to assist separated servicemembers with their integration into the civilian labor force.

After numerous organizational meetings, VA signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Labor and the Department of Defense on March 11, 1993, making VA the primary implementing agency for this program. VA is responsible for outreach to veterans, veteran eligibility determinations, payments to veterans, and employer program approvals; DOL is responsible for outreach efforts to prospective employers, job matching, case management, and employer screening; and, finally, DOD funds and coordinates the program.

ADMINISTRATION

To assure a successful startup of the new program, we considered staff training critical and, therefore, worked closely with DOL to develop an appropriate training package.

Three comprehensive training sessions were held for some 300 employees which included our Education Liaison Representatives, DOL and Job Service personnel. In addition to preparing our respective staffs for immediate implementation of the program, these sessions provided a foundation for closer coordination at the local level.

VA has centralized processing of veteran eligibility claims and payment to employers in our Muskogee regional office where 16 FTE currently are devoted to issuing Certificates of Eligibility and authorizing reimbursement payments. This centralization has proved quite effective in enabling us to timely process SMOCTA claims. For example, during the last 2 months we completed 98 percent of claims in 30 days or less. Prior to that, our completion rate averaged 95 percent in 30 days or less.

Other areas of our SMOCTA processing necessarily are decentralized. Thus, employer requests for approval of job training programs are processed by each of our regional offices where close coordination is maintained with the local job service.

PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

As of April 15, 1994, 3,381 employers had been approved for participation in SMOCTA. By the same date, 29,000 veterans had applied for SMOCTA training, of whom 23,152 were found eligible for job training and 2,602 were actually placed in jobs. Few requests for counseling were received, though eligibles were fully informed of this valuable service available through our Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Divisions.

California and Pennsylvania have the highest numbers of veterans who have initiated training. Other states with

substantial participation levels include Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Tennessee, and Washington. We project that there will be some 8,000 trainees by the end of Fiscal Year 1994.

To date, the training programs we approved have in practice, with only slight exception, met expectations of being high quality programs leading to stable positions. We appreciate the participation of numerous excellent companies and major public sector entities who have hired SMOCTA trainees. For example, in New York, Rite Aid, Kodak, and Xerox are involved.

Conrail is on board as a program participant in Pennsylvania. In Maryland, a training program with state troopers was introduced and approved. Negotiations are currently underway to develop similar training programs for troopers in New York and other states.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you or the members of the Subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT

OF THE

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY

FOR

PERSONNEL SUPPORT, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

HONORABLE CAROLYN H. BECRAFT

HEARING BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING

AND EMPLOYMENT

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE

MAY 25, 1994

Mr. Chairman, members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you to discuss the implementation and effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program for separating Service members.

The Department of Defense remains steadfast in its commitment to offer separatees a wide range of transition services and benefits. During the two years since our last hearing before this Subcommittee, the Department has made great strides in the institutionalization of the DoD Transition Assistance Program. We view the DoD Transition Assistance Program, or Operation Transition as we sometimes call it, as the final component of military service to which every separatee is entitled. To quote President Clinton ". . . we must help the people who won the Cold War. . . "

While the downsizing was a catalyst for this program, the Department has come to realize that even though some transition benefits are a temporary tool to aid Service members through the downsizing, transition services must be a permanent part of the separation process. We owe these services to those who have volunteered a portion of their lives in service to their country. It is the right thing to do and it is the smart thing to do. Men and women who leave active duty must be prepared for civilian life and continue to be productive citizens.

Operation Transition is an overwhelming success and we are especially appreciative of the extremely positive cooperation from the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, State Employment Security Agencies, and our own military Services. Everyone associated with this program has been willing to go the extra mile.

We have established transition offices at virtually all of our major military bases worldwide and now have transition staff permanently based at 330 installations. This staff serves not only the separatees from their installation, but also family members, Service members from remote and isolated locations, members of other military Services who are stationed in the region, and newly-separated veterans who perhaps did not have the opportunity to take full advantage of transition services prior to leaving active duty. In addition, transition offices on closing bases routinely serve DoD civilian employees who, like their military colleagues are impacted by the draw down. At other installations, civilians are served on a space available basis.

The DoD transition staff along with a vast number of people from other offices and agencies provide preseparation counseling, transition assistance seminars, TAP workshops, job fairs, employment assistance, veterans and disabled veterans benefits

counseling, and generally make the separation process much more meaningful by providing needed and earned transition services.

I would like to discuss and update you on several important aspects of our programs.

Preseparation Counseling. Department of Defense Transition Assistance Policy Directive (DoDD 1332.35) and a Preseparation Counseling Instruction (DoDI 1332.36) were implemented on December 9, 1993, and February 14, 1994, respectively. In accordance with law, Service members must be offered preseparation counseling not later than 90 days prior to discharge. As you know, prior to the change in legislation which previously required preseparation counseling within 180 days of separation, many Service members were not being offered preseparation counseling in a timely manner. We have made vast improvements in this arena, but recognize the need to continue to get better.

All separating Service members must be afforded the opportunity to create an individual transition plan to achieve their educational, training, and employment objectives. Information on effects of career change; employment, relocation, education (particularly the Montgomery G.I. Bill), and training assistance; health and life insurance; finances; reserve affiliation; and veterans benefits are available. Spouses are encouraged to participate.

In cooperation with the Military Departments, we have a standard Preseparation Counseling Checklist, DD Form 2648 covering the items identified in Section 1142 of title 10, United States Code. The Checklist is briefed to and signed by all separating Service members and retained in their permanent personnel file.

In addition, we have recently completed and are in the process of printing a "Preseparation Guide". This guidebook will serve as a ready reference to answer basic questions and to keep the Service member focused on the transition process. We also recently completed a video titled "Transitioning"; This video is a broad overview of the transition process and is meant to serve as a catalyst to make Service members aware of the steps that need to be taken to have a successful transition and to get separating Service members into the transition offices. We think these products, along with individualized counseling and the option to create an Individual Transition Plan to achieve his or her educational, training, and employment objectives are a meaningful introduction to the transition process. They also help us reach those individuals serving aboard ships and in isolated areas.

Employment Assistance. A wide variety of materials are available at military installations to provide employment assistance to separating Service members. These include, but are not limited to, information concerning resume writing, job search, job interviewing, and job training.

Employment Skills Verification. A standard DoD document (DD Form 2586), Verification of Military Experience and Training, is provided to all departees to verify their military experience, training history, associated civilian equivalent job title(s), and recommended educational credit information. The Verification of Military Experience and Training document serves as a review tool and reference document in preparing resumes and applications; it assists Service members to verify previous experience and training to potential employers; and it helps Service members negotiate credits at schools and to obtain certificates or licenses. Under normal separation procedures, Service members should receive this document not later 180 days

prior to separation. Nearly 700,000 documents have been produced and electronically distributed to the Services.

We know there have been difficulties with Service members receiving their DD Form 2586 in a timely manner and that the Committee is concerned with this issue. We are also concerned, as are the Services. The Services are each investigating ways to ensure that DD Form 2586 is delivered to the Service member on time and in time to be of use to them in their transition process. We pledge to make significant improvements in this area or tell you why we can not.

The Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS). DORS is the automated registry and referral system that provides mini-resumes for military and civilian personnel and their spouses to potential employers. Resumes are provided to employers based on individual geographic and occupational preferences. Applicant participation is on a voluntary basis via personal computers available in approximately 330 local transition offices worldwide. The mini-resume does not substitute for a full-scale resume, but provides employers with enough information for follow-up. Employers may request mini-resumes by fax or mail. Operation Transition staff utilize an aggressive marketing campaign to encourage employers to participate in DORS and the TBB. Nearly 7,000 employers are currently registered with Operation Transition. Employers make an average of 100 calls and request about 7,500 resumes each week. Since implementation in December 1991, over a half million resumes have been sent to employers. In addition, we provide the DORS data base to the America's Job Bank office in Albany, New York for distribution to the states as they deem appropriate. Information from this data base is available to employers and organizations for the purpose of assisting members locate employment and training opportunities.

Transition Bulletin Board (TBB). Once registered for Operation Transition, employers may place short-term or long-term job ads on this electronic bulletin board. The jobs are available the next business day to transition offices worldwide. Employers with proper computer equipment can place their ads electronically via a 1-800 telephone number; others may mail or fax their ads to be entered on the TBB by Operation Transition personnel. Transitioning personnel are encouraged to respond directly to employers with their resumes. In addition, the TBB contains business opportunities; the public and community service organizational registry, a calendar of transition seminars and events; information on military and veterans associations, transition products and services, training and educational opportunities; as well as other announcements pertinent to transitioning personnel. There are over 5,300 job ads (many ads represent multiple job opportunities), and 900 business opportunities currently listed on the TBB.

Overseas Job Fairs. The distance between separating Service members in Europe and Asia from their chosen final destinations in the United States places these members and their families at a distinct disadvantage in the job search process. Since we can not get the Service members to employers, DoD takes the employers to the Service member. With the strong support of the military Services overseas, DoD sponsors job fairs in Europe and the Far East. These job fairs are tremendous morale boosters for our people overseas and give employers access to a group of outstanding potential employees.

Recently we completed our fifth overseas job fair--at Kitzingen and Kaiserslautern, Germany. Over 3,300 Service members, family members, and DoD civilians attended the event. Seventy-six employers representing 39 companies conducted 8,546 job interviews and made 284 firm and 897 conditional job offers. These numbers will continue to increase over time.

Transition Assistance Program Workshops. TAP workshops are an integral part of the DoD Transition Program. These workshops take place on a regular basis at 204 installations in the United States and provide an excellent preparational experience for Service members. TAP-like courses are also offered at overseas sites by DoD personnel. Last year over 40,000 Service members participated in this training overseas. For the most part, the instructors overseas are DoD personnel many of whom were trained by the National Veterans Training Institute using the same instructional materials that are used to train Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program representatives (DVOP) and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVER) in the United States. Additionally, we worked with DoL to assist in creating the TAP videos and workbooks. We will use these videos and workbooks at places where TAP instruction is not available such as on ships and in isolated areas. The Services are currently assessing their numerical requirements for the videos and workbooks. We also plan to include this resource in our "TAP in a Box, " a collection of transition resource materials for remote and isolated sites.

TAP Steering Committee. As a part of the TAP Steering Committee, the Department is appreciative of the on-going constructive opportunity to participate with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs in the continuation and improvement of TAP. We look forward to continuing an extremely positive relationship and making it even better.

America's Job Bank. America's Job Bank (AJB), a consolidated, automated listing of not-readily-filled jobs from various state employment security offices, is another valuable transition resource available at transition sites worldwide . Under FY93 legislation, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) established a program with the Department of Labor (DoL) to expand the services of and provide access to the AJB for

separating Service members, DoD employees, and displaced defense contractor employees. The Department provided $4,000,000 to the Department of Labor for this purpose. Our transition offices receive the AJB on a weekly basis and have access to AJB personnel in Albany, New York by phone or through our Transition Bulletin Board. The AJB personnel interface with the state and local employment offices to verify whether jobs listed are still available. We are pleased to say the number of states actively participating in the AJB is increasing steadily. From our perspective the value of the AJB depends on having as many states as possible participate.

Service Member Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA). This program addresses the needs of unemployed former Service members, particularly those whose military skills do not translate readily to civilian jobs. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the implementing agency and DoD has released $73.5 million to the VA and $1.5 million to DoL for this program. An additional $6.25M was appropriated for FY94.

The Department's role in SMOCTA is more financial and advisory, rather than day-to-day operational as happens with DoL and DVA. We facilitate the SMOCTA program in that SMOCTA is an item covered in Preseparation Counseling and transition sites distribute literature on SMOCTA.

Disabled Transition Assistance Program. All separating Service members may participate in VA's Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). This program provides Service members who are separating or retiring for medical reasons with specialized assistance to learn about VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program and how to apply. Individual counseling is provided to help Service members deal with disabling situations. There is no group of individuals more deserving of

transition assistance than those who leave the service for medical reasons. This is one area we need to focus more attention on in the future to ensure that these individuals are provided adequate assistance.

Veterans Counselors Overseas. DoD, with the support of the VA, provides veterans services and counseling in Europe on essential veterans benefits information to those Service members near separation. The first complement of six VA counselors returned from six-month tours in Europe on December 10, 1993. All indications are that this was an extremely successful joint venture between the Departments of Defense and Veterans' Affairs. Many Service members and their families received timely information on VA benefits and services that will/did ease their transition to civilian life. DVA counselors conducted 287 briefings attended by over 8,700 service members; completed 3,600 interviews in person and over 3,100 by telephone; and, conducted 16 training sessions for transition assistance service providers and education center personnel. Many transition assistance service providers in Europe received valuable and current firsthand information on VA benefit programs which in many instances had not been previously available. The cooperation that between DoD and DVA has been excellent and will continue with the new counselors already in Europe. Transition staff in Europe are unanimous in their vocal support for this initiative. A similar arrangement is being considered for the Pacific.

Outside Reviews. The Defense Conversion Commission, the DoD Inspector General, and the General Accounting Office, have all reviewed the DoD Transition Program since we last testified. In general, the findings were similar. The GAO's work was particularly helpful in noting issues which need increased emphasis. We have taken strong actions to fix those issues.

Command Support. In November 1993, in a Department-wide

memorandum, then Secretary Aspin directed increased support of transitioning Service members in light of concerns about lack of command emphasis. Secretary Perry recently reiterated the Department's concern. The Services have also issued policy statements encouraging command support.

Policy. We have formalized the program in Department of Defense Directives and Instructions to the Military Departments to answer concerns about the lack of formal transition guidance.

Verification documentation. In response to concerns about Service members not receiving documentation translating military skills and training into civilian terms, the Services are improving the processes of getting these documents into the hands of separating Service members as intended.

Strategic Plan. To ensure we continue to focus on what's important within the Department of Defense Transition Assistance Program, I am forming a DoD Transition Quality Council. This Council will release a Transition Strategic Plan in the fall of this year. This Council will be augmented by a Transition Steering Group and various sub-groups as appropriate. In addition, we will continue with our joint service working group that meets on a regular basis to address continuing issues.

Program Evaluation. All reviews of the DoD Transition Program indicate we needed baseline and usage information to evaluate the effectiveness of our program. We are working with the Defense Manpower Data Center to devise and conduct a survey of transitioning and recently separated personnel on the perceived and actual effectiveness of the transition services and benefits provided to departing Service members. We hope to be able to conduct this survey in FY 95. The results of this survey will allow us to identify areas with little interest and to expand or improve those areas which departing and separated Service members and their families indicate are important and/or inadequately addressed.

Additionally, in 1995, DMDC will develop an automated transition evaluation and reporting system for the DoD Transition Assistance Program. This program will provide quantitative information and will be based on large measure on the Preseparation Counseling Checklist and actual usage of transition of transition services.

Finally, as part of the Annual report to Congress, for the next three years, we will participate in developing a special section on Defense Conversion, Reinvestment, and Transition Assistance Programs.

As DoD policy has stressed, protecting the quality of life in our nation's armed forces is a vital element of our defense capability. It has allowed us to attract the best people to serve in our nation's Armed forces. DoD transition support and services are vital to ensure that the quality of life remains high for military personnel, even as they prepare to leave military service and embark upon new civilian careers. This common sense approach to military separation is the final phase of the military life cycle and essential to the well-being of our people. We plan to provide transition assistance well into the foreseeable future.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for your continued interest and commitment to the men and women of the Armed Forces who have served their country honorably and well. will be happy to address your questions.

STATEMENT OF
BRIGADIER GENERAL PATRICIA HICKERSON
U. S. TOTAL ARMY PERSONNEL COMMAND
ADJUTANT GENERAL

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to share the Army's accomplishments in implementing our transition initiatives through the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP). Our program continues to realize its objectives in preparing members of the Army family to make effective and efficient transitions to their civilian communities. The knowledge and assistance provided through this program has made a difference in soldiers lives. The feedback we receive daily from Army alumni confirms this fact. Corporate America has also expressed gratitude to the Army. The preparation of our transitioners has made it easier for growing companies to tap into this highly motivated and capable pool of America's human capital. We are confident that this investment will contribute to a stronger, more productive nation.

Two years ago I testified before this subcommittee that transition benefits counseling and job assistance services were provided to approximately 60,000 separating service personnel. Today, that number is over 330,000. We are as proud of those who have transitioned as we are of those who have assisted them. The effective partnerships with the Departments of Labor and Veterans' Affairs and state and local employment offices have come together to reflect this nation's gratitude and commitment to the Army's men and women. These soldiers have continued to reflect their willingness and ability to put their lives at risk to fulfill the nation's challenges in both peacekeeping and humanitarian efforts around the world. Those who remain are more dedicated to the Army as a result of observing the positive effect this program has had on their friends as they transition. We must commit to continue to provide a quality transition program for them when it is their turn to return to the civilian communities. The care, dignity and quality service that has been the hallmark of this program must be available to all future transitioners if we are to continue to attract and retain highly capable young men and women to fulfill the Army's future mission.
I'd like to take this opportunity to update you on our accomplishments on several important elements of our program.

Preseparation Counseling

The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) initiates individual preseparation counseling to all separating soldiers 90 to 180 days before their separation date. ACAP counselors work closely with soldiers, family members, and Department of The Army civilians to address their individual needs for transition services and benefits. ACAP counselors structure and personalize the preseparation process by helping the soldier develop an individual transition plan. Counselors assess the soldier's needs for assistance in the important transition services outlined in Section 1142 of Title 10, United States Code. Documentation of preseparation orientation is recorded utilizing a preseparation counseling checklist. This checklist is explained to and authenticated by each soldier separating form the Army.

Army Employment Assistance Centers

The Army has established 60 ACAP transition assistance offices worldwide; 55 of these offices are coupled with contracted Job Assistance Centers (JACS). This service provides standardized job search skills training and individual assistance and counseling. Counselors assist soldiers to translate their Army acquired skills into civilian terms and advise them as they prepare their resumes. This one-on-one counseling service is of particular importance to Army transitioners since approximately 33% of military occupational specialties do not relate directly to civilian occupations. Clients have access to numerous reference materials which provide a wealth of information on the types of careers available and the national job market. They can also attend various seminars and workshops, sponsored by ACAP and/or the Department of Labor Transition assistance Program (TAP), on job search strategies, skills assessment, dressing for success, interview skills, job offer evaluation, and salary negotiation. While ACAP is not a job placement program, one of its services provides access to an automated data base of U. S. employers who have expressed an interest in hiring Army alumni. Presently, we have solicited the support of over 11,500 employers and listed approximately 3,300 private, professional, local, state and federal agencies as sources of information. Portable services are available regionally and nationally to support remote areas without

ACAP services. There are 42 ACAP offices in the Continental United States and 18 sites overseas, including Alaska, Hawaii, Europe, Korea and Panama.

The Army is developing improved automated systems to link total program delivery of both benefits information and job assistance. Replacement systems will incorporate multi-media and expanded access to provide transitioners everywhere consistent quality information vital to their transition to civilian life.

Employment Skills Verification

On 22 October 1992, The Army fully implemented the system to produce, generate and mail the Verification of Military Experience and Training Document (VMET - DD Form 2586) to separating soldiers. Since implementation, the Army has distributed approximately 400,000 documents, of which 200,000 were provided retroactively to soldiers who had departed the service during the period of 1 October 1990 and 30 September 1992. The Army established a worldwide 1-800 network as an additional method for soldiers to request their VMET document. The Army has carefully reviewed the distribution of the VMET. Recently it was determined that soldiers who receive approval to depart the service prior to their established separation date were not captured in our 180 day mail-out. To correct this situation, the Army has recently created a procedure to provide all approved early departure information directly to the contractor to expedite delivery to the soldier. Transition counselors are emphasizing the importance of the VMET during pre-separation briefings.

Enlisted soldiers, noncommissioned officers and warrant officers indicate that the document is useful. However, commissioned officers have stated that the document is not useful to them in its present form. The Army's standardized automated personnel management system does not capture an officer's work experience at the level required to write an accurate resume. The Army is implementing a modified VMET which outlines an officer's education and training history. The modified document will be used with Army-unique documents, the officer record brief and officer evaluation reports which narratively translates in detail an officer's work experience. The officer can take these documents to the Army Career and Alumni Office, for employment counseling, equivalent civilian occupational matching to military specialties, and resume preparation.

Employment Assistance, Job Training Assistance, and Other Transition Services; Department of Labor

ACAP and the Department of Labor Transition Assistance Program interface to provide a comprehensive service to our soldiers. Where these two programs are co-located, they compliment each other. This complimentary relationship is no accident. The Army and the Department of Labor jointly developed and fielded specific written guidance on how ACAP and the Department of Labor TAP program work together. Currently, there are 48 Army installations conducting combined workshops. In support of our soldiers located in remote and isolated areas we are planning to distribute the recently developed DOL TAP video and workbook as part of a Department of Defense and Services developed "Transition Tool Kit".

State Employment Service Agencies

Our ACAP offices have an excellent working relationship with the local state employment offices. They often provide on-base Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERS) to help speed the transition from the military to the civilian work force. The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOPS) representatives provide more specialized service for disabled veterans, especially case management counseling and special programs for personnel with disabilities.

Employment Preference By Non-Appropriated Fund Instrumentalities

The Army has implemented the employment preference for soldiers and their families who are separated and who are seeking a position with a non-appropriated fund activity. The transition assistance office of ACAP offices provides counseling and referral to the installation civilian personnel office for detailed explanation of application procedures.

Department of Defense Transition Initiatives

The Army has fully integrated the automated employment tools developed jointly by the Department of Defense and the Services. These systems are a part of our core ACAP services. The Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS) is the automated registry and referral system that provides mini-resumes on military and civilian personnel and their

spouses to potential employers. The program is available at all 60 ACAP sites and 62 Army Community Services (ACS) Center where there is no ACAP office. Over 45,000 Army personnel have enrolled in the program.

The DoD Transition Bulletin Board (TBB), developed in conjunction with DORS, is an electronic bulletin board which enables employers to list job and business opportunities. The TBB is fully operational and is collocated with DORS at all ACAP offices and the 62 ACS centers worldwide.

We are counseling our clients on the benefits of a career in public and community service. Over 20,000 of them have shown an interest in the program. This includes those soldiers who received early retirement under the provisions of Section 4403, Public Law 102-484.

An important recent addition to our employment tools is "America's Job Bank (AJB)." A computerized network, the AJB offers thousands of job opportunities in a unique national database operated by the state employment service agencies.

Command Support

ACAP is highly recognized and well supported throughout the Army by leaders at every level. As a result, 70% of our transitioners start the process well in advance of 90 days before separation.

Veteran's Affairs

The Army strongly supports the joint DoD and DVA efforts in providing veterans services and counseling to our soldiers stationed overseas. The placement of VA counselors on a temporary basis in Europe has been highly successful and well received by our soldiers and family members. The stationing of VA counselors in the Pacific Theater is encouraged and would fill a recognized void and ensure that our soldiers are fully aware of their veteran's benefits.

Program Evaluation

ACAP continues to be evaluated for its quantitative and qualitative value to both participants and Army goals. Evaluations enable a continuous improvement to program services and policies to assure cost effective and high quality service.

Closing

In closing, I thank you for the opportunity to provide a status report on the Army's transition program. The Army is committed to providing quality services to our departing soldiers, civilians and their family members. We ask your continued support.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

STATEMENT OF

REAR ADMIRAL PAUL E. TOBIN, JR., U.S. NAVY

ASSISTANT CHIEF OF NAVAL PERSONNEL

(PERSONNEL READINESS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT)

BEFORE THE

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

ON

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

25 MAY 1994

NAVY'S TRANSITION ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss Navy's transition assistance program with you today.

Two years ago, we provided this subcommittee with a synopsis of our first year progress. We have continued to build and strengthen our existing infrastructure while avoiding duplicative systems and services. We are fully utilizing the resources developed by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, coordinating and integrating our efforts in areas applicable to Naval personnel.

During this period of realignment and right-sizing, we in the Navy remain committed to taking care of our people. In administering the Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP), we are mindful that providing quality transition services not only aids those members leaving the service, but contributes to the morale of those remaining on active duty, and may ultimately affect our ability to attract high quality recruits.

In compliance with congressional mandates, the Navy's Transition Assistance program is fully implemented at over 80 transition sites worldwide, primarily at Navy Family Service

Centers (FSCs), and staffed by over 250 experts in outplacement and employment concerns. During FY 93, we coordinated 1,414 Department of Labor (DoL) sponsored Transition Assistance Program (TAP) workshops at 56 sites, with nearly 62,000 Navy attendees. This represents 68% of the Navy's 92,320 separatees in FY 93 and includes full participation in the Disabled TAP Program (DTAP).

Our goal is to ensure that all separating members and their spouses, have the opportunity to attend a TAP class. To reach those personnel transitioning from overseas or other locations where DoL TAP is not available, we trained 50 overseas TAMP managers to conduct TAP-like workshops. Over 148,000 Navy personnel have attended other TAMP courses, workshops, and seminars presented by The Retired Officers Association and American Association of Retired Personnel. We also trained field staff from 60 sites worldwide to conduct a standardized pre-retirement workshop targeted toward Selected Early Retirement personnel.

Employment Assistance

The Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) document, mandated by the National Defense Authorization Bill of 1991, has been a very successful and much sought after tool for our separating personnel. To date, Navy has distributed over 250,000 of these documents to separating service members, who use them to write resumes and complete job applications. The Navy also took the initiative to send retroactive VMET request forms to 102,000 members who separated from 1 October 1990 through 31 August 1992, when the program began. We are continuing to improve the quality of this document through cooperative efforts within the Navy, as well as the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Transition Support & Services) and the Defense Manpower Data Center. One such effort is an ad hoc request system, where service members who are leaving the service on short notice can request a document by phone. To date we have processed over 30,000 documents through the ad hoc system.

In support of the DoD automated transition programs, Defense Outplacement Referral Service (DORS) and Transition Bulletin Board (TBB), we expended $1.25M in the purchase of hardware and software for use at all transition sites. 100% of the Family Service Centers are on line with DORS and TBB.

Recognizing the realities of dealing with a deployable force, Navy continues to seek innovative methods of reaching members separating while deployed. We have instituted TAP classes on some of our larger combatants, and provided a video training program called "Job Search - The Inside Track" to all Navy commands. The program package consists of six videotapes with accompanying workbooks and provides a comprehensive overview of job search topics from self-assessment to follow up. We have also coordinated for automatic distribution of the new DoL TAP Video series to all afloat and isolated commands.

We are also very excited about a new cooperative effort with the Department of the Army to provide Mobile Job Assistance Teams which can be deployed to meet the needs of ships at sea and commands not served by a Family Service Center. Our first mobile teams will hit the fleet in June of this year.

Preseparation Counseling

The Navy has taken strides to ensure all service members receive preseparation counseling prior to their separation. To assist Command Career Counselors in carrying out this function, Navy developed and distributed over 200,000 preseparation guides as a ready reference tool for members during their separation process.

Our major challenge has been meeting the requirement to complete pre-separation counseling no later than 90 days prior to discharge. Many service members have fewer than 90 days notice before they separate, such as administrative and medical disability separations, and those requesting a "90 day early out." We continue to work diligently on this challenge and have forged a new partnership with the Navy Counselor and Command Career Counselor communities. In 1993, we began a training Navy

Counselors, schoolhouse instructors and Fleet and Force Master Chiefs at the National Veterans' Training Institute. By incorporating transition assistance issues at the Command Career Counselor schoolhouse level, we can ensure that each Navy command will be able to provide all of their separating members with accurate and timely counseling.

Resource Requirements

Our ability to maintain these initiatives and improve transition services is tied directly to our ability to fund this program. Projected budget levels for the next several years, coupled with the challenges of serving civilian employees, providing outreach to remote and isolated locations and continuing to transition over 80,000 personnel annually, will significantly challenge our efforts to meet the mandates and provide our people with the services they deserve. We therefore solicit your continued support in fully funding this vital program.

Conclusion

The Transition Assistance program is one of the best "people programs" we have ever offered and represents a strong commitment to treat our people fairly. The CNO has personally asked all commanders and commanding officers for their full support in encouraging their men and women to take advantage of these services. Navy leadership strongly believes that transition assistance programs are the right thing to do.

I thank you all for your continued support of our Navy men and women and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

STATEMENT BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

OF THE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS

25 MAY 1994

Mr. John R. Graham
Director, Civilian Personnel Policy
and Personnel Plans
United States Air Force

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I am pleased to have this opportunity to give the Subcommittee an update on the current state of the Air Force's Transition Assistance Program. We appreciate the strong support you have given our efforts over the past four years, and look forward to a continued partnership in the future.

The Transition Assistance Program has come a long way since its formal beginning in 1991. We implemented the Air Force Transition Assistance Program as a core program in our Family Support Centers, hiring initial staff members for all overseas bases and most continental US bases in 1991, then completing our initial hiring and expanding the Transition staff in 1992. We now have over 100 Transition offices in Family Support Centers worldwide, located on installations where we have at least 500 people stationed. We regard on-site, continuously available transition services as critical to providing assistance that will be used to maximum advantage by our people. Our offices also provide Transition Assistance and support to smaller, remote, or isolated sites that do not have Transition services available on-site. Our Transition managers work closely with our personnel offices to ensure no one is denied the opportunity to receive preseparation counseling and the full set of follow-on Transition services, including the Department of Labor's three-day Transition Assistance Program seminar. As a result, our people are better prepared for civilian life than ever before -- and our usage rates show a continually increasing awareness and participation in the program.

After our program start-up in FY 91, we recorded over 168,000 customer visits to our Transition offices in FY 92, and then a quantum leap to over 275,000 in FY 93. We expect this year's final total to meet or exceed last year's. Despite a lower volume of separating members, we've had more

than 112,000 visits over the first two quarters -- and we have not yet received data on the larger number of separations and retirements historically seen during the summer months. Our volume of business, and our workload, will continue to grow.

As a Family Support Center (FSC) core program, the Transition Assistance Program is designed to help our members and their families better cope with their cycle of military service, relocations, and transition back to the civilian economy. Besides a full slate of direct transition services such as preseparation counseling, seminars and workshops, resume assistance, job search tools, and computer hardware and software to aid in job preparation and applications, the FSC Transition office offers immediate referrals to other related FSC programs. These include Relocation Assistance, Family Life Education, Personal Financial Management counseling, Career Focus (spouse employment), and other Information and Referral services. The total suite of Transition services available in the Family Support Center emphasizes the importance of transitioning as a family, with every family member involved in the preparation process. The goal is to prepare every military member and family leaving active duty for a successful transition to civilian life.

Word-of-mouth advertising has made a strong case for the credibility of our services. Customer satisfaction rates are uniformly high. The Secretary of the Air Force and our Chief of Staff have endorsed Transition Assistance as an essential element in the treatment of our people, and command support continues to grow stronger at all levels. We've established a strong, viable program that provides the kind of preparation our people need to make a successful transition.

The quality of the services offered by our Transition Assistance Program -- counseling, referrals, and job search assistance -- is very high. Now we're working hard to fine-tune our system to ensure we identify and track every eligible member, and we are continually looking for other enhancements. For example, we recently formed a Quality oriented process action team involving Transition Assistance Program Managers from bases throughout the Air Force. Their mission is to establish standards of program performance to ensure a maximum level of service delivery to our customers, the men, women, and families transitioning from military to civilian life. We're excited about this initiative and believe it will pay big dividends.

We're also refining our production and delivery of the Verification of Military Experience and Training form. A process action team is being formed to explore alternative delivery methods, with a goal of improving timeliness and accuracy. Delivery as soon as possible after establishing a separation date is critical to the effective use of the Verification Document.

I've already noted our appreciation for this Subcommittee's outstanding support of our program. I'd also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Department of Labor. With their support and cooperation, we have been able to ensure TAP Seminars are offered at every Air Force installation, even overseas. The DoL has continued to extend the assistance of the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI) for training our Transition Assistance Managers and Specialists. NVTI is an enormous asset to our program -- they are responsive, totally professional, and completely attuned to the business of assisting transitioning service members -- and we thank the DoL for making them available.

Our close partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs has also continued to be fruitful. We have worked together to bring VA Counselors to our people overseas in both the Pacific and European theaters -- a first for military members separating from overseas locations. Previously, overseas transitioners had to wait until their return to the continental United States to see a VA counselor. This overseas service is tremendously appreciated.

Finally, our thanks to the many Veterans' groups who help our counselors at so many bases, providing advice on disability eligibility and screening records at seminars and workshops. You provide a valued volunteer service which is irreplaceable, and we thank you on behalf of every service member you've helped.

Providing transition assistance for our service members as they complete their active duty is something we should have been doing long ago. We believe it is essential that Transition Assistance be institutionalized as an integral part of every member's career, making sure he or she reenters civilian life as a capable, productive citizen, ready to take part in the economic and social fabric of American life. Converting swords to plowshares is as true of people as it is of equipment, and is in the end far more rewarding for all concerned.

Again, thank you for this chance to discuss our program. I will be glad to address any questions you may have.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT OF

COLONEL KENNETH W. HILLMAN

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

DIRECTOR, HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT

BEFORE THE

EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CONCERNING

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

ON

25 MAY 1994

NOT FOR PUBLICATION UNTIL RELEASED
BY THE VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

MR. CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

It is an honor to appear before you today to report the Marine Corps' status and views on the implementation and effectiveness of the transition assistance program. In particular, I would like to share with you our success in implementing the program and the critical part it plays in the readjustment of our Marines to civilian life and in providing an important quality of life service.

The Marine Corps' transition assistance program is fully implemented. Over 140,000 separating Marines have benefited from transition services since October 1990. Timely preseparation counseling has been provided to 80% of our separating Marines through our Marine Corps Career Resource Management Centers or CRMCs, while the other 20% who are assigned to either remote/ isolated areas, aboard ship or at other service military installations have been provided services through coordination with Navy, Army and Air Force transition offices.

As our transition services are provided, their effectiveness can only be guaranteed if suitable facilities and competent, trained staff are made available. The Marine Corps met this challenge by establishing 18 CRMCs, that is, one at each Marine Corps installation. These CRMCs, usually located at a Family Service Center, are staffed with a total of 86 full time employees trained to assist Marines and their families, as well as other servicemembers, with the hard decisions of transitioning to civilian life. They provide individual counseling, preseparation information and seminars - key aspects of the transition program - and are dedicated to providing the best services possible to our separating Marines. Based on statistical information available to us for the second quarter of this fiscal year, the Marine Corps provided preseparation counseling to 97% of our Marines who received transition services from our CRMCs. That spells success to me. Additionally, although the TAP training sponsored by the Department of Labor is voluntary, 70% of our Marines who used our CRMC services also

attended TAP training during the second quarter of this fiscal year. In both areas, we will continue to work to increase participation with each succeeding quarter.

Also, we have found success with the automated resources available to our Marines. The Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS) and the Transition Bulletin Board (TBB) are regularly used by employers and our Marines respectively to find employees or employment. State Job Service programs and the American Job Bank also serve our Marines. One example of our success with these automated services comes from the use of the Public and Community Service (PACS) automated system. One of our Marines in North Carolina without a teacher certification was able to obtain a job as a vocational education teacher through the PACS program after he found the job which was listed on the TBB. He is now certified to teach, thanks to the availability of PACS at our CRMCs.

We also provide our Marines with a verification of skills, education and training experience document or VERDOC. Although not perfect, it helps most Marines by providing a summary of military training and work experience that they can use when preparing job resumes, in determining future civilian career options and when searching for available employment opportunities.

Today, transition, whether through separation or retirement, is a major issue that all Marines must address at some time in their career. For the foresight the Congress has shown in aiding in this issue through the Transition Assistance Program's policy guidance and funding, I offer my thanks.

Mister Chairman, the military services and thousands of servicemembers have benefited from the programs provided by the transition assistance program. This quality of life program is essential to the Corps and your continued support is requested and will be greatly appreciated. This concludes my prepared testimony on the transition assistance program. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I would be pleased to

answer any questions that you or other Members of this Committee may have.

SERVING
WITH
PRIDE

Statement of

NCCM Leslie O. Bruce, USN (Ret.)
AMVETS National Service Officer

before the

Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives

regarding the

Transition Assistance Program

Cannon House Office Building
Room 334
Friday, May 25, 1994

A M V E T S

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for taking AMVETS' views on the TAP program. I am a retired Navy Master Chief Career Counselor now working as an AMVETS National Service Officer. I am assigned to the Norfolk, VA area to provide TAP counseling at all the major bases in the area.

TAP is a program that provides many benefits and advantages to separating servicemen in all services. It has been needed in the military for many years and it is the wish of this veteran's organization that the program continue both in the short and long term. The military has not, prior to the advent of TAP, done a competent job in preparing it's separating members for civilian life. This failure to properly prepare separating sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen was not, however, the fault of the military. Career military personnel were tasked to prepare their people to enter the civilian community. Career personnel do not have vast knowledge of civilian life themselves. TAP is administered by civilian contractors who are vastly knowledgeable in the world of civilian employment and effectively convey this needed knowledge to the troops.

In the area of veteran's benefits, the information provided is, also, superior to the previous generation of separation counseling. We National Service Officers (veteran's advocates) are afforded the opportunity, via TAP, to furnish more soon-to-be veterans with detailed information on disability benefits than ever before possible. As a individual who spent over 26 years in the Navy as a counselor, I can tell you this information is sorely needed. Many veterans have no idea what sort of conditions are compensable in the VA system nor have any idea how to apply for veteran's benefits. This problem has now been rectified for literally thousands of veterans through the Transition Assistance Program.

This is not to say the program is not without problems. There are several which are of an administrative nature vice that of a substantive one. Some areas in which TAP can be approved are listed below:

- TAP should be coordinated by geographical area vice each base/service administrating the program individually. This would allow for more expedient use of resources and simplify the acquisition of quotas for individual commands.

The Army now forwards medical records to the VA regional office in the state in which the soldier is separated. The Navy still forwards medical records to the archives in St Louis. In both these instances it does not address the needs of the veteran. The Army procedure has inundated the regional office in my state, Virginia, and I'm sure that situation exists elsewhere. The regional office then must forward the medical records to the state each veteran listed as his/her mailing address their DD214. The Navy procedure also delays the process of claims due to the VA having to request the records from the archives.

We suggest all separating facilities forward medical records to the regional office responsible for the mailing address listed on a veteran's DD214.

There needs to be an accurate accounting system developed to ensure each separating member attends TAP in a timely manner. It is our experience some veterans do not attend until the last possible moment. This is often due to command pressures to delay their attendance. The accounting system should be utilized, in part, to hold commands accountable for timely attendance of both officers and enlisted personnel.

Current regulations state an individual can attend TAP as early as a year prior to separation. We feel one year is the optimum time frame for a member to attend TAP. One year affords the prospective veteran the time necessary to prepare for civilian life. Both for employment and to ensure their military records are in order for VA purposes. We very often speak to people who attended TAP too late to make proper preparations.

There should be more cooperation between the Department of Veteran's Affairs and the veteran's organizations participating in TAP. There are, unfortunately, times when individuals view each other as the enemy vice allies.

In closing let me say the Transition Assistance Program is truly outstanding. The few problems listed above are minor in comparison with the great good the program provides to veterans. This program is very much needed by our young men and women as they leave the service of our country and return to the ranks of the civilian community. DOD, I am sure, will provide you with accurate statistics on numbers of personnel attending etc. In support of those statistics, I wish to say I have personally spoken to hundreds perhaps thousands of TAP attendees. The vast majority have had nothing but praise for the professionalism and interest of all who are involved in TAP. They all said the information provided to them was invaluable. We must remember most people enter the military immediately after the completion of high school or college. When leaving the service, whether after one term or a complete career, our veterans are novices in ways of the civilian world. The continued funding of this program is money intelligently spent because it returns knowledgeable veterans to our communities. The Transition Assistance Program must be allowed to survive beyond the current drawdown. It would be a crime to discontinue a program that has been needed for so long because of the completion of a personnel adjustment. Our young veteran's need TAP.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my statement.

STATEMENT OF

BOB MANHAN, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE SERVICE
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

WITH RESPECT TO

OVERSIGHT HEARING REGARDING
THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (TAP)

WASHINGTON, DC MAY 25, 1994

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

Thank you for inviting the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) to participate in this hearing. Our 2.2 million members, who are organized into some 10,900 VFW posts worldwide, have a very keen interest regarding this national effort to assist active duty personnel and their families to return to civilian life with meaningful employment. The overall thrust of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) is a tripartite effort involving Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Labor (DoL), and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Our testimony today will focus exclusively on the requirements cited in section 1142 of title 10, United States Code. This section requires the Armed Forces, as soon as possible but not later than 90 days before separation from active duty, to counsel members of the armed forces. For purposes of today's hearing the VFW will focus only on aspects of the counselling that we have first hand knowledge of whenever veterans request our assistance. Specifically, many of the VFW's network of service officers and our National Director for Veterans' Employment have identified areas of weakness with the intention of improving the TAP efforts.

Generally speaking, there are three major problem areas. The first one is a varying degree of uncertainty regarding an entitlement for disability. The second one is a lack of awareness of VA assistance veteran service offices can provide veterans, and the last one is the problem of employment.

Many recently separated lower ranking enlisted persons who sought VFW claims assistance in various region offices believed they were not eligible for a VA claim for a service-connected disability unless the injury occurred in a combat area or hostile fire zone; i.e., the Persian Gulf War or Somalia. A slightly different version of this entitlement misunderstanding, again primarily with first term enlistees, involves a piece of TAP literature that depicted senior enlisted chevrons on the cover. This graphic

presentation was interpreted as meaning veteran benefits were primarily retiree entitlements rather than something available to all members of the Armed Services.

Whether these above mentioned problems were a misunderstanding on the part of newly minted veterans is hard to determine. There are at least three possible reasons for this type of problem to occur. First, the information could have been properly presented but the soon-to-be veterans did not attend that particular TAP session. Another possibility is simply that this information was presented in a too technical package for some persons to grasp the essentials. Last, there is the possibility that only a handout was provided at a post, camp, or station. If this was the case, then the potential problem is certainly not a major issue. We are interested in hearing what other veteran service organizations have to say regarding initial VA compensation claims.

The other major problem area that is causing varying degrees of confusion and/or frustration is employment. Generally speaking the more senior non-commissioned officers and the college educated junior officers who attended their respective TAP sessions said too much time was spent on the basic skills of resume writing and classes on how to dress for success and/or how to handle the interview rather than solid information on firms and employers who were hiring and what positions were available.

A very unique problem regarding the Service Members Occupational Conversion And Training Act (SMOCTA) is a lack of publicity. Specifically, when former combat arms veterans seek employment assistance from my service organization, the individual is either unaware they are entitled to this specialized training program or more importantly those who have already been certified for training are in a holding pattern, which is to say, they are neither training nor working. The essential problem here seems to be a general lack of awareness or of interest on the part of employers to participate in this $10,000 to $12,000 training-work program. At the present time many SMOCTA administrators at the community level are seeking to find firms and/or employers who are interested in or knowledgeable about participating in the program.

Certainly, the VFW itself can identify what some of the civilian employment problems are. The U.S. economy is geared to a three percent rate of growth for this year and possibly next year with a government expectation of about 6 percent continued unemployment. Furthermore, much of the defense sector firms are reducing the size of their current work force while tailoring their goods and services to a more sophisticated domestic and overseas market. Last, but not least, is the entire new wave of internationalizing of business under such formal arrangements as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

To further compound the SMOCTA problem is the fact many large U.S. corporations and most of our smaller firms apparently have never even heard of this program despite the fact it has been in place for at least a year. A suggestion is to have DoL redirect its publicity efforts towards the mass media of television and radio rather than using only printed material. Too often this becomes just another piece of junk mail.

In our judgment, what is working well is the availability in a more timely manner of medical military records of recently separated personnel. Conversely, what is not working so well is the lack of awareness on the part of recently separated military personnel that they have a wide selection of professional assistance , other than that provided by the VA's own benefits counselors, to submit their initial claims for an entitlement. Said another way, the VFW, as well as other veteran service organizations,

have VA certified service officers who provide free services to the veteran community. Therefore, TAP presentation materials should mention this fact if it is not already being done. Better yet, whenever and wherever possible we suggest having a veterans service officer actually participate in the appropriate TAP session.

At the VFW's 1993 National Convention there was much time devoted to the most critical part of the TAP, which is, in our opinion, employment. Three of the more significant resolutions passed are attached to this statement. They are: Resolution 643, "Personnel Allocation Formula For USDOL/VET Assistant Directors"; Resolution 639, "Full Funding Of State Employment Security Agencies"; and Resolution 647, "Veterans' Vocational Training And Retraining Program."

Unfortunately, the VFW has no new suggestions on how to obtain a decent job for veterans. We can all agree that private industry is the engine that drives the American economy. We can also agree that potential employees must be either qualified for new jobs or retrained for them. These are the same underlying principles that impact on other segments of America's population in varying degrees such as those presently unemployed for one or more years and/or those who remain on welfare for three or more years.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes the VFW's statement. I shall be happy to answer any questions you or the committee members may have.

JAMES B. HUBBARD, DIRECTOR
NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION
THE AMERICAN LEGION
TO THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 25, 1994

****

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present the views of the 3.1 million members of The American Legion on the implementation of two very important programs, Transition Assistance (TAP), and the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA).

Transition Assistance Program

With respect to the Transition Assistance Program, the main concern of The American Legion is that not all service members eligible for TAP training are being reached. We understand that it will not be possible to reach 100% of the eligible population, but it seems to us that 52% is still a low figure.

Part of the problem, as we understand it, is some confusion on the part of potential attendees. We have reports, for example, of some eligible personnel confusing the TAP briefing with other services offered on the base such as ACAP. There have also been instances of officers not recognizing that TAP is for everyone, not just enlisted people. Then too, we still find the occasional recalcitrant installation commander who doesn't recognize the harm he does by either not permitting TAP on base, or not encouraging attendance at TAP by those close to separation. A good marketing program would solve the first problem while command directives from the service headquarters would cure the second.

Mr. Chairman, The American Legion is still troubled over the use of DVOP/LVER population to perform TAP training. We still maintain that the DVOP/LVER program is understaffed. The positions are allocated to each state based on the number of veterans in each state. Active duty service people eligible for TAP are not counted in this number. The formula is contained in Title 38 as this subcommittee well knows. The formula presumes that each DVOP and LVER has a given number of veterans to serve. If the DVOP/LVER personnel are assigned duties as TAP facilitators at a military base, no one is left to serve the veteran population which already exists in the state. The answer to this problem is two-fold. First, in order to serve the existing veteran population, the program must be fully funded.

Second, in order to do TAP at military installations, funding to allow the use of contractor personnel is necessary.

In general, Mr. Chairman, we are pleased with the way that the Veterans' Employment and Training Service has handled the Transition Assistance Program. We know the program works. Data show that people who receive TAP training obtain employment up to three weeks earlier than their counterparts who do not receive the training. With the improvements just mentioned, the TAP effort could be expanded to include many more active duty people than currently participate.

Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act

Begun with some inspired thinking in 1992, the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act has lost some momentum along the way. It took nine months for the Federal agencies involved to decide which one would have what role in implementing the program. That is an unacceptable delay.

Once implemented, however, each agency seemed to find its role clear and problems have been largely cosmetic. We are particularly impressed with the way that the Veterans' Employment and Training Service set about training those who would administer the SMOCTA program in the state employment security agencies. The "train the trainer" approach brought meaningful training to the states very quickly. I personally attended sessions in Iowa and Massachusetts and found the training highly effective.

Mr. Chairman, there are, however, some aspects of the current statute which cause some difficulty when applied to the actual workplace. During the past year, The American Legion, in cooperation with the Laborers' International Union of North America, has succeeded in placing veterans in entry-level jobs in the construction industry with the help of the labor unions. These are good jobs for the veterans, with solid career potential and good wages and benefits. We are looking forward to continuing these placements, and it would be very helpful to utilize the SMOCTA program as an added incentive for the employers. However, several aspects of SMOCTA have made it difficult to apply the program to construction employers.

One of the questions that sometimes comes up is SMOCTA's requirement that eligible jobs not be "seasonal." This restriction was included in the law because of abuses that occurred during prior veterans' employment programs, most visibly with jobs such as lawn mowing services. We agree with the concept behind the limitation, but several questions have been raised about whether <u>construction</u> jobs also are "seasonal," since they often shut down for several weeks in some areas during cold

weather. It would be helpful to make it clear that real career jobs like construction work are not regarded as "seasonal" for SMOCTA purposes, even if the work may be slowed down occasionally because of weather patterns.

There is a similar question that comes up regarding SMOCTA's exclusion of "temporary" jobs as it relates to construction work. As you know, construction workers often change employers when a job ends, and then are referred from the union hiring hall to the next employer who needs workers. Even though the individual project may last only a short time, it is part of a lifetime construction career. Again, we agree completely that SMOCTA should not be used to place veterans in jobs that are merely temporary, but would be helpful to make it clear that stable, career employment in the unionized construction industry is SMOCTA-eligible.

We also are concerned that the SMOCTA program is restricted to veterans with a discharge date after August 2, 1990, thereby not covering veterans who were discharged before Operation Desert Storm. There are many veterans with earlier discharge dates who still need employment assistance, and we would support extending the SMOCTA program to include them.

A further problem with SMOCTA is that it is restricted to training programs with a maximum length of 18 months or less. There are a number of good entry-level career training programs that last longer than 18 months; in fact, the shortest of the construction trades apprenticeship programs last 24 months. The 18-month upper limit is counterproductive, because it prevents us from placing veterans in some of the better construction industry jobs under the SMOCTA program.

Finally, the SMOCTA restriction on employment outside a state also is a problem for placing workers on construction jobs, where contractors frequently have to travel outside state boundaries as a matter of economic necessity.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to present our views on these important programs. I am happy to answer any questions you or members of the subcommittee may have.

STATEMENT OF
RONALD W. DRACH
NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT DIRECTOR
DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON VETERAN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 25, 1994

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE:

On behalf of the more than 1.4 million members of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and its Women's Auxiliary, I want to thank you for holding this most important hearing on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Service Members Occupation Conversion Training Act (SMOCTA).

Mr. Chairman, a review of a recent GAO report shows that little has changed over the last several years regarding the implementation of TAP. While we believe the overall quality of TAP presentations is high, the frequency of such presentations which are attended by separating servicemembers, continues to lag.

Mr. Chairman, as an organization whose membership is made up of veterans who have a service-connected disability, we are extremely concerned over the lack of emphasis on the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). DTAP was originally designed and intended to be a component of TAP and not a "stand alone" program which is more often the case. It is indeed rare that we see TAP presentations being provided to hospitalized servicemembers who are anticipating a medical discharge. DTAP as it presently exists is primarily a counseling session with either a counseling psychologist or vocational rehabilitation specialist from the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Office of Vocational Rehabilitation. We are not critical of the service being provided. Rather, we are concerned that not enough service is provided to the disabled service member.

On a positive note, Assistant Secretary of Labor Preston Taylor has established a task group to review TAP and DTAP and make recommendations for improvements. We commend Assistant Secretary Taylor for his effort and look forward to the final report and recommendations.

Mr. Chairman, in spite of Section 1142, Title 10 USC which requires that individual servicemembers be provided preseparation counseling no later than 90 days before the date of discharge and the Department of Defense (DoD) policy which requires the identification of separating servicemembers 180 days prior to discharge, the GAO reports this is not happening.

On page 8 of the GAO report, Military Downsizing: Persons Returning to Civilian Life Need More Help from DoD, GAO/HEHS-94-39, January 1994, it states "Our work at the 16 installations showed that timely, individual, preseparation counseling was not provided to separatees. None of them had a system in place to ensure that this required counseling was being provided. ... of ... 93 files [reviewed] 17 indicated that the service member received counseling in the last 31 to 90 days of service while 63 files indicated that the servicemember received counseling in the last 30 days of service."

Mr. Chairman, of those 93 files reviewed a full 67 percent received counseling within the last 30 days prior to discharge and 86 percent did not receive the preseparation counseling in

the required 90 days prior to discharge. Throughout GAO's report there was a consistency that showed servicemembers were not, for the most part, receiving preseparation counseling in a timely fashion as required by law.

Mr. Chairman, Section 1143, Title 10 USC, among other things, requires the Secretary of Defense, through the respective military branches, to provide separating members "a certification or verification of any job skills and experience acquired while on active duty that may have application to employment in the civilian sector." The GAO reports this is not being done.

Without this verification document, GAO says "... servicemembers are limited in their ability to prepare resumes and perform other job search activities." GAO further states "... with the exception of discharge papers, the skills verification document is probably the most important document, a separating servicemember can receive ..." (Emphasis added.)

Mr. Chairman, it took almost two years for the military services to even develop such a document. By the time this document was available, approximately 476,000 servicemembers had been separated. In spite of the availability of the document now, GAO was told that there are still some separating servicemembers who do not receive their job skills certificate. Others do not receive this verification until the last month of their military service. It was estimated that fewer than 10 percent were actually receiving this document.

Mr. Chairman, we agree with GAO's assessment of the importance of the job certification document. To the Department of the Army's credit, they are attempting to retroactively send this document to its separated members. The Navy has notified about 100,000 of its former servicemembers that they can request this document. The Air Force and Marine Corp, will provide the certification if requested, but they are not making any attempts to notify the separated servicemember.

GAO further reports "...the Chief of the Air Forces' Transition Assistance Program said that the effort and expense associated with sending the document outweighed its perceived demand and value." Mr. Chairman, it is not known if this individual is on active duty or is a civilian but I can assure you that if he or she were affected by the military base closing or military down-sizing, a job skills certification would be perceived as being very important.

Section 1143(a) Title 10, USC requires the Secretary of Defense to implement a program to encourage servicemembers to enter public and community service jobs following discharge. In line with that mandate the Secretary "shall maintain a registry of members and former members of the Armed Forces discharged or released from active duty who request registration for assistance in pursuing public and community service job opportunities."

Mr. Chairman, we have seen no evidence that the Secretary of Defense has complied with the requirements of Section 1143(a) noted above. If such a program has been implemented we would be interested to know the following: How many servicemembers have obtained employment in public and community service jobs and has registry of public and community service organizations been established and maintained as required?

Mr. Chairman, I would like to turn now to other findings in the GAO report. GAO found that many servicemembers were not receiving their preseparation counseling and most of those who did were not receiving it at least 90 days before separation.

Size and frequency of transition sessions was also a factor. In many instances servicemembers were unable to attend a seminar because the class was filled or they were going to be discharged prior to the scheduling of the next class. This further reinforces the need for the identification of these individuals be made at least 180 days prior to their discharge.

One installation visited by GAO found that the average preseparation class size was 180. Anyone who has ever taught or has been a student knows first hand that a class size of 180 is totally inappropriate. This was confirmed to GAO when a transition manager told them "... a counselors' ability to adequately assess each service member's transitional needs is greatly diminished in such large group settings. We |GAO¬ also talked with several servicemembers at this installation who confirmed that group counseling limited their ability to ask questions and obtain transition information."

Mr. Chairman, the TAP program is fashioned largely after the former Career Awareness Program (CAP) started for the Navy in California several years ago. At that time and continuing to the present a major problem has been that military commanders and supervisors are all too often reluctant to give time off for individuals to attend. By the time they find out about it and are able to attend the seminar, classes are full.

Mr. Chairman, many servicemembers are being discharged because of the end of the "Cold War" and the resulting down-sizing of our military. In essence these individuals are "no longer needed." If they are "no longer needed" why then are the supervisors and commanders unwilling to give them time off to attend this most important transition briefing?

GAO points out what we believe to be the ultimate irony. A service member was on her final week of duty and attending a seminar because she was denied time off to attend an earlier seminar because "her supervisor wouldn't let her attend because she was scheduled for mess hall head-count duty." (Emphasis added.)

Mr. Chairman, this attitude obviously flies in the face of Congressional intent. As a matter of fact, further information in the GAO report leads us to conclude that current military practice by many unit commanders which perceives "allowing servicemembers time off to receive transition services several months or weeks before discharge is inconsistent with the training and philosophy with many unit commanders." (Emphasis added.) This is nothing less than contempt of Congress.

GAO further reports that the issuance of a "DoD directive and military service regulations on the program should be helpful in gaining this support." Mr. Chairman, such a directive or regulation must include accountability, and if necessary, punitive measures to assure that our military men and women receive these Congressionally mandated services. To do less means that the DoD and its military services will continue to do as they please and not as mandated by law.

Mr. Chairman, GAO makes three recommendations to the Secretary of Defense as follows:

- Implement the TAP as required by law.
- Get skills verification documents to those personnel they missed and ensure that all future separatees have a document to use in the individual preseparation counseling sessions.

- Evaluate transition assistance at the installation level until the Secretaries are certain the programs are operating effectively and make periodic evaluations thereafter.

Mr. Chairman, we would like to add a few other recommendations:

- Appropriate steps should be taken to assure that every disabled service member receives services both under DTAP and TAP.

- Every military site that has a DTAP program should develop and implement immediately a TAP program so every disabled service member receives the required instructions.

- The Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers (PEBLO) counseling program should be standardized worldwide. Additionally, there should be mandatory standardized training for all PEBLOs.

Mr. Chairman, the Veterans Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR) in its FY 1993 report recommended the "Secretary of the VA coordinate services with the Secretary of the DoD to assure that all service persons separating from the military receive complete and accurate information about VA benefit programs." VACOR also submitted a recommendation regarding the PEBLOs as outlined above. Mr. Chairman, I have attached to my statement, a copy of the VACOR narrative of DTAP as contained in its FY 1993 report.

The DAV takes very seriously the need to provide transition services to our soon to be separating service men and women. I mentioned earlier the TAP program in California. Early in the evolution of that program the DAV was very active and provided assistance to separating military personnel and offered to review their service medical records to determine possible eligibility for VA benefits and offer assistance in filing claims. The DAV has committed its resources to this nationwide effort by providing National Service Officers at many of the sites to provide this type of service. During the period January 1, 1993 to December 31, 1993, 22 of our offices were involved with providing services at 96 military installations. Additionally, we thought the need so great that we have established a full-time office at Norfolk and San Diego Naval bases. I would be remiss if I didn't thank the Naval department for their strong support and cooperation in assisting us with adequate space and other support.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Attachment

Disabled Transition Assistance Program
(From the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation Annual Report FY 1993)

The Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) is an orientation program through which separating and retiring disabled servicemembers are given information about and assistance in applying for VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling Services (VRCS) prior to leaving the military. This program is jointly sponsored and conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Defense. The pilot program was authorized by passage of PL 101-237, the Veterans' Benefits Amendments of 1989, and the program was expanded nationwide as a result of the passage of PL 101-510, Section 1144, Defense Authorization Act (November 5, 1990.) The goal of the DTAP program is to provide face-to-face counseling and Chapter 31 benefit information to as many separating servicemembers as possible. In FY 1993, 3,658 DTAP sessions took place and there were a total of 94,250 DTAP participants. While the number of service members seen by VRCS staff is impressive, it is estimated that only one out of four separating service members has the opportunity to attend a DTAP session.

The committee members believe that DTAP is a valuable program. However, all too often DTAP is presented as a "stand alone" program and the committee feels it should be part of the TAP program. Additionally, the committee would like the Department of Defense to require all individuals, discharged through the medical/physical evaluation board process, to attend a DTAP session. The committee continues to suggest that the program receive additional personnel to allow for proper administration of the program. They would also like to see the DTAP coordinators receive uniform training to ensure that the DTAP sessions are of sufficient scope to include all the important aspects of the Chapter 31 program and are uniform nationwide.

Several actions were developed and implemented during the year to enhance the quality of DTAP services. These efforts included: the development and distribution of various briefing aids for presenters and the production of a nationwide satellite teleconference for all personnel involved in the DTAP project. In addition, the VRCS produced and distributed a videotape which informs servicemembers of the many benefits available to them. The committee members reviewed the tape during one of their briefings on DTAP.

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STATEMENT OF

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Presented by

William F. Crandell
Legislative Advocate

Before the
House Veterans Affairs Committee

Subcommittee on
Education, Training and Employment

on the Effectiveness of
the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
and
the Service Members Occupational Conversion
and Training Act (SMOCTA)

May 25, 1994

DISCUSSION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) appreciates the opportunity to present its views on the effectiveness of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA).

The Transition Assistance Program

The theory behind the Transition Assistance Program is solid, and through the experience of both the membership of Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) and others, we have learned how helpful such a program would have been for us a generation ago. The implementation of the program is in need of some fine tuning. This program can be made a more effective tool if it reaches a larger segment of our servicemen and women who will be transitioning into the civilian economy. At this time, however, if you see one TAP program you have seen one TAP program. There is no quality control.

TAP and the Department of Defense

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the military departments are in the process of downsizing and are expected to continue this process through at least 1999. The Transition Assistance Program was designed to provide those individuals separating from the military the opportunity to translate, where possible, military skills and training into the civilian job market. America's servicemen and women are highly motivated, educated, and one of the greatest assets this country has. If we provide them the tools, they could be one of the moving forces behind an economic recovery. TAP has the added benefit, if implemented properly, of reducing the Unemployment Insurance burden to the military departments and contributing to the economy in general.

The Department of Defense has the task of identifying separating service members (180 days before discharge), providing verification of military experience and training (DD Form 2586)(120 to 150 days before discharge), providing preseparation counseling and developing individual transition plans (90 days before discharge), and operating employment assistance centers for separating military personnel and their spouses. DOD spent about $83 million in FY92 and again in FY93, a very modest sum for the task.

Yet GAO reports that transition managers did not know who was scheduled for discharge because personnel offices -- which have the information -- and the installations' transition offices did not coordinate to ensure that this information was shared. Commanders are apparently reluctant to allow time off for service members to attend transitional training.

It took over a year to develop the skills verification document (DD Form 2586). By the time the system to produce the document became operational, about 476,000 service members had been separated without receiving it. At 10 of the 16 sites visited by GAO, it was estimated that fewer than 10 percent of the service members received the document before separation.

According to the figures provided by the Department of Labor (DOL), the total military service losses for FY91 were 286,852, of which only 22,804 service members participated in workshops. In FY92 military service losses were 391,665, of which only 119,164 service members participated in workshops.

It is clear to anyone who has served in the military that when a field grade or higher grade commander wants a subordinate commander to do something, it gets done. TAP has not received adequate support from DOD, military headquarters, and military unit commanders.

VVA concurs with the GAO recommendations found in Military Downsizing (GAO/HEHS-94-39) that the Secretary of Defense direct the secretaries of the military departments to:

* implement the Transition Assistance Program as required by law;
* get skills verification documents to those personnel they missed and ensure that all future separating personnel have the documents to use in the individual preseparation counseling sessions, and;
* evaluate transition assistance at the installation level until the secretaries are certain that the programs are operating effectively, and make periodic evaluations thereafter.

TAP and the Department of Labor

The U.S. Department of Labor and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are responsible for conducting seminars and workshops for transitioning service members and their spouses. These workshops cover personal appraisal, career decisions, applying for jobs, interview techniques, evaluating job offers and veterans benefits. They are usually accompanied by a 350-page TAP participant manual developed by the National Veterans Training Instititute.

We would like to take one moment to comment on the TAP manual. It may just be the finest, most comprehensive employment tool for all veterans, the best money DOL has ever spent. We would like to thank them for caring enough to make a difference.

There are currently Memorandums of understanding between DOD, DVA and DOL which commit these agencies to establishing and maintaining the TAP program. It is the State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs), however, that are the primary service providers for TAP workshops and which will also provide services to veterans and their spouses upon release from the military.

The workshops are primarily facilitated by Disabled Veterans Outreach Specialists (DVOPs) and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) from the SESAs. In fact, there are currently 305 DVOPs and LVERs nationwide providing TAP workshops, though the SESAs receive no additional funding to carry out these programs. State Employment Security Agencies (SESAs) must provide personnel to deliver the TAP program while providing the services required under Chapter 41, of Title 38 USC without additional funds.

According to information supplied by DOL, there are fewer positions for both DVOPs and LVERs than are mandated by law. There are currently only 1,701 DVOPs positions funded (the law mandates 1,968) and only 1,466 LVERs funded out of 1,600 required by law. Many states have been forced to reduce the amount of time spent on delivering TAP programs because of shortfalls in staff. When the staffing levels become critical, states are forced to make a Hobson's choice between providing resources for the TAP program -- when 90% of the transitioning service members will be leaving the state -- or serving the needs of veterans returning to and residing in the state after service elsewhere. We believe that all states at this time are providing resources to TAP, but as resources become a greater issue, the program is in doubt.

It is VVA's recommendation that:

* all DVOP and LVER positions be filled and funded;
* SESA be included as full partners in the TAP programs;
* a minimum standard be established for all TAP workshops and seminars;
* the authorized funding be appropriated and distributed to SESA for the TAP program.

If Congress is unwilling to appropriate enough money to do the job properly,

there is one alternative to blunting this instrument of economic recovery. Give departing military personnel the option to out-process early, so they can return to their homes of record and receive TAP training there. This, at least, would allow DVOPs and LVERs to customize a program to fit regional economic conditions.

We also believe it would be helpful if the Departments of Defense, Labor and Education would review the findings of "Workforce 2000 and America's Veterans," a national forum on veterans employment and training issues that was held in Washington, D.C. on April 19-21, 1988. More than 200 people from veterans service organizations, SESA, DOL Veterans Education and Training and others contributed their time, energy and money to make this forum a valuable resource.

VVA also recommends that the Departments of Defense, Labor and Education, with input from the SESAs:

* develop a standardized test that all agencies can use to interpret the skills and abilities of military personnel;
* provide job opportunity counseling, based on the results of standardized tests;
* consider an in-service GI Bill that would provide educational benefits to service members while still in training.

Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act

The Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA) has a number of inherent deficiencies. It was also meant to be a tool to assist transitioning service members reintegrate into the civilian job market. "Under this program," said General Preston W. Taylor, DOL's Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, "$75 million was allocated to help employers improve and expand their businesses with high caliber, highly trainable new employees -- our veterans." This program can pay employers $10,000 for a veteran who served after August 2, 1990 and who meets one of the following three criteria:

* has a primary or secondary military occupational specialty (MOS) that is not readily transferable to the civilian work force;
* has been unemployed for 8 of the last 15 weeks;
* is entitled to compensation (or would be entitled to compensation but for the receipt of military retirement pay) for a service-connected disability rated at 30 per cent or more. Veterans with a 30 per cent or more service-connected disability may be eligible for up to $12,000.

At face value this program appears to offer a helping hand to recently separated veterans, and also to the employer. But figures supplied by DOL show that from July 1, 1993 through May 15, 1994 only 1,923 eligible veterans have been placed in job training programs, although 25,459 veterans were found eligible.

Two problems account for much of SMOCTA's low success rate. It is overly rigid, and it has not been publicized well. There has been no mass media marketing of the program. As a result, many veterans attempted too late to get into training that was not on-going. Likewise, the small businesses that are the fastest growing sector of the economy have yet to hear of SMOCTA, or have not been sold on it aggressively.

SMOCTA's requirement that the veteran have been unemployed for 8 of the last 15 weeks is out of touch with today's economy, in which 8 weeks of unemployment is hard to survive. In some regions there are very few jobs that fit its criteria. The real problem -- which goes unrecognized in this program -- is that the economy has undergone a major shift in the past decade. Many

businesses have gone under. The new high-paying jobs require more than retooling obsolete workers, they demand genuine career shifts based upon longer training.

VVA recommends that:

* the National Veterans Training Instititute develop a training program on working with small businesses and marketing SMOCTA to them;
* DOL develop and distribute brochures that are easily understood and geared to today's small business community;
* decentralize the administration of SMOCTA monies to fit the needs of varying regions;
* authorize state DVETS to approve customized training plans according to regional and individual veteran needs.

SMOCTA is a program that means well but has conceptual flaws. If these flaws are addressed forthrightly, the program would be much more productive and useful. We urge Congress to take these steps, because we cannot afford to waste our veterans.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes our testimony.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

U. S. COAST GUARD

TESTIMONY

ON THE

IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR

SEPARATING SERVICEMEMBERS

CONTAINED IN SECTIONS 1142, 1143, AND 1144 OF

TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

OF THE VETERANS AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

U. S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 25, 1994

THANK YOU FOR INVITING THE U. S. COAST GUARD TO COMMENT ON TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS FOR SEPARATING COAST GUARD MEN AND WOMEN. THE TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS CONTAINED IN SECTIONS 1142, 1143, AND 1144 OF TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE, AND THE OTHER TRANSITION BENEFITS AVAILABLE TO SEPARATING ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS OF THE OTHER FOUR ARMED FORCES THROUGH CHAPTER 58 OF TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE, ARE NOT PRESENTLY AUTHORIZED FOR SEPARATING COAST GUARD ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS. THE COAST GUARD IS NOW REDUCING THE SIZE OF ITS MILITARY WORKFORCE AT A PROPORTIONAL RATE SIMILAR TO THAT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE; THE ABSENCE OF THIS AUTHORITY PLACES OUR SEPARATING ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS AT A DISADVANTAGE IN TRANSITIONING FROM THE MILITARY WORKFORCE TO THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE.

H. R. 4301 (THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL) INCLUDES A PROVISION THAT WOULD AUTHORIZE THESE TRANSITION BENEFITS FOR SEPARATING COAST GUARD ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS. THE COAST GUARD NEEDS THIS AUTHORITY IN ORDER TO PROVIDE ITS MEMBERS WITH THE SAME TRANSITION BENEFITS AS THEIR DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SERVICE COUNTERPARTS. WE HAVE REQUESTED FUNDING FOR THESE BENEFITS IN OUR FISCAL YEAR 1995 BUDGET.

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THIS IMPORTANT WORKFORCE MANAGEMENT TOOL.

WRITTEN COMMITTEE QUESTIONS AND THEIR RESPONSES

QUESTIONS -- DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education,
Training and Employment
Hearing on the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
and the
Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Act (SMOCTA)
May 25, 1994

1. Does the Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) maintain a record of the types of jobs which veterans have taken under SMOCTA? If so, what are some of these categories. What is the average salary earned by veterans under SMOCTA?

VETS is collecting information on the types of jobs filled by SMOCTA eligible veterans. The categories follow, as do the percentage of eligibles placed in these categories from July 1, 1993 to March 31, 1994:

Professional, Technical and Administrative occupations --	11.8%
Clerical	8.1%
Sales	6.8%
Domestic Services	0.4%
Other Services	12.8%
Farm	0.9%
Processing	4.6%
Machine Trades	27.7%
Benchwork	6.3%
Structural	19.1%
Motor Freight	0.5%
Transportation	0.5%
Packaging/Materials Handling	2.1%
Other	1.4%

Similarly, we collect information on wages at placement. Annualizing the hourly wage at placement reported for SMOCTA hires as of March 31, 1994, results in about $16,000 annually.

2. DOL has responsibility for promoting SMOCTA to employers. In your testimony you mentioned a news release VETS sent to employers last July and last April. Who were these employers? How many employers were contacted? Who were the 250,000 employers who received brochures? Have you contacted the employers who participate in DOD job fairs about SMOCTA?

What else can you and others in the Department of Labor do to promote SMOCTA and the hiring of veterans in the civilian employer community?

The news releases were directed at employers, but they were sent to the news media.

The mailing list for the 250,000 employer-geared brochures included those on the Small Business Administration's 8(a) and small business lists; our Federal contractor listing; and lists provided by human resource groups and other associations.

Most of the companies represented at the DOD job fairs had been made aware of SMOCTA. Some were heavy users of the program.

VETS has increased its efforts to publicize SMOCTA to employers. As I travel throughout the country I speak about SMOCTA before audiences and in local media interviews. Also, VETS field staff has been provided information and guidance to insure they publicize the program. Additionally, we have enlisted the support of the Employer National Job Service Council to assist us and media kits have been distributed to VETS field staff, veterans' service organizations and others to facilitate public information efforts.

3. Is DOL collecting information on the number of participants who drop out of the program? If so, how many have dropped out up to this point. What reasons do they give for leaving their jobs?

State Employment Security Agencies have been collecting information on terminations from the SMOCTA program. DOL is in the process of gathering this information for use at the national level. Reasons for both positive and negative terminations will be included. Positive termination means that the eligible veteran completed training. Data is also being collected on the outcomes of the training. Negative terminations would identify those that did not complete training and the reasons, such as terminated by employer, found other job, quit, etc.

4. What percentage of participants in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) are receiving services within the 90 day period prior to separation from active duty?

We do not gather information as to whether service members attending DOL TAP are within 90 or 180 days of separation. We expect that the majority of service members attending TAP are within 180 days from separation.

5. During oversight visits to TAP seminars, Committee Members and staff were informed that the quality of instruction by some facilitators was deficient. Are all TAP instructors now receiving training at the National Veterans Training Institute?

Yes.

6. Section 233 of H.R. 4050, the Reemployment Act of 1994, provides that states may request a waiver of certain statutory requirements, including Chapter 41 of Title 38, USC from the Secretary of Labor. If such a waiver was granted, what would the effect on services provided to veterans under TAP and SMOCTA?

I do not expect the waiver authority provision to affect services provided by DVOP and LVER staff under TAP and SMOCTA. Waivers are off-limits if they affect the purpose of the program, the funding stream, or funding allocations. I expect little change in the availability of DVOP/LVER staff to provide services to veterans.

7. What is the cost per participant in the Transition Assistance Program? Does the DOL have the funding and resources necessary to provide training to all those projected to request TAP training during FY 94?

We estimate the total cost per participant to be about $24 each. Serving all those seeking to attend transition assistance workshops during fiscal year 1994 with existing resources will be difficult, but we do expect to have sufficient resources to provide DOL TAP workshops to all those that ask or are scheduled to participate.

8. What is the average size of a TAP seminar? What resources would you require in FY 95 in order to provide TAP training for all eligible individuals who request it and maintain class size at a level of 30-60 participants?

The average class size of DOL TAP is approximately 42 participants. The ideal would be to bring this average down to 35. Our budget request, in conjunction with increased DVOP/LVER staff support of TAP workshops, should be able to reduce the size of classes within the 30-60 participant range.

9. Are you satisfied with the facilities provided for TAP training at military bases? If a DOL representative expresses dissatisfaction with a facility, do base officials respond and provide a more appropriate classroom or other space?

DOD has been very responsive when we request logistical accommodations. There have been few instances where concerns regarding logistical arrangements had to be surfaced through the chain of command for resolution. In most instances, VETS field staff and their DOD partners at the local level are able to resolve these issues.

10. In your view, is there a duplication of resources under the ACAP program? What exactly is the relationship between TAP and ACAP?

We do not view the Army Career Alumni Program (ACAP) as duplicating our resources. ACAP gears its efforts to individual instruction, or in some instances, sessions for base closures or for overseas where we do not have a presence. We now work well together often as a team complementing each other's efforts.

11. How many contract TAP trainers are now being used? How many have direct experience with private and/or public employment processes? How are the contract instructors evaluated?

About 61 contract trainers are currently providing workshops. The contractor reviewed their resumes and advised us that 59 have experience with public or private employment processes.

Each workshop participant prepares an evaluation of the workshop, including the facilitator's performance. The evaluation forms are reviewed by our State Director of Veterans' Employment and Training.

12. Following Subcommittee hearings in 1992, VETS and DOD produced a very effective document referred to as "Quick-App." Separating service members overseas could send this form to the Employment Service in the state where they would be seeking civilian employment. The ES staff could then begin the job search for the service member. However, a member of the Committee staff recently visited several military installations in Germany, and none of the transition assistance staff located at these bases had ever seen a QuickApp. What happened to them? Where are they? Why haven't they been distributed overseas?

The new TAP workbooks produced in 1993 contain the QuikApp form. We will work with ICESA, who prepared the original QuickApp and DOD to make sure these are made available to separating service members at the appropriate time.

13. How many states are now participating in America's Job Bank (AJB)? What efforts has DOL made to encourage all states to list their jobs with the AJB?

Except Hawaii, all states and the District of Columbia are listing vacancies with America's Job Bank.

QUESTIONS -- DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment
May 25, 1994

Question 1: How many employer applications has VA received under the Service Members Occupational Conversion and Training Program (SMOCTA)? How many veteran applications has VA received? What is the average time for processing and approving applications under SMOCTA? What percentage of employer applications were rejected in 1993? What are some of the reasons these applications were rejected?

Answer 1: From the inception of the program through June 3, 1994, there have been 4,229 employers' programs approved for the training of eligible veterans. We do not keep a statistical listing of approvals which are denied, but estimate that the number is quite low. Programs are denied because they exceed the 18-month limitation or because other requirements of the law are not met. Some 35,000 veterans' applications have been received.

Over the last two months, we completed 98 percent of claims in 30 days or less. Prior to that, our completion rate averaged 95 percent in 30 days or less.

Question 2: It has been suggested that the 180-day restriction on the certification period for veterans having MOS's with no civilian equivalent be eliminated under SMOCTA. What is VA's position on this issue?

Answer 2: We tend to favor this suggestion, although we are still looking at it.

Question 3: It has been recommended that we eliminate the 18-month restriction on the training period under SMOCTA because many employers have established training programs which extend beyond this period. What is VA's position on this issue?

Answer 3: A statutory change to allow approval of training programs longer than 18 months using SMOCTA criteria, while limiting reimbursement to 18 months, will help SMOCTA eligibles pursue higher paying jobs.

Question 4: Have there been any occurrences of overpayments since SMOCTA was implemented? If so, what circumstances contributed to the creation of these overpayments?

Answer 4: Cumulatively, for the week ending June 3, 1994, there have been a total of 6 overpayments, for a dollar value of $532.72. For the most part, these overpayments are due to misreporting by the employer.

Question 5: In the Memorandum of Agreement for administration of SMOCTA, VA shares the responsibility with DOL for outreach and public information. How has VA fulfilled this responsibility?

Answer 5: The primary responsibility for establishing a comprehensive outreach and public information program was delegated to VA regional offices. The success of the program depends upon outreach at the local level. Specific outreach strategies were left to individual offices in order to complement local programs and initiatives. However, guidance in conducting the outreach program was given to field stations to assure a minimum level of outreach.

Several basic activities were required from regional offices. Regional offices coordinated their outreach and public information activities with key officials from local employment or job services and the state Director, Veterans Employment and Training Service, to prevent duplication or fragmentation of effort. Local media were used to publicize the program, and information dissemination events are being used to inform veterans, veterans' organizations, employers, labor and the general public about the opportunities, services and resources available under the Act. SMOCTA has been incorporated into benefit briefings for military personnel as they near discharge or separation from service.

Question 6:. Under the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP), the VA is charged with providing benefit counseling to service members being medically separated. Can you describe the process by which these services are provided and the topics covered during counseling? How many individuals received DTAP counseling during FY 1992 and 1993?

Answer 6: Ideally, the DTAP presentation is offered to servicemembers immediately following the conclusion of a TAP session. However, occasionally the DTAP presentation may be offered on an alternate day or at a different location, such as a military hospital. Topics covered during a DTAP presentation include an overview of VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling program, program entitlement requirements, length of eligibility and assistance, the various types of programs offered (such as on-the-job training), and financial assistance. A brief description of the memorandum rating process and how it accelerates the processing time for vocational rehabilitation applications is also covered.

In fiscal year 1992, 65,104 servicemembers attended DTAP presentations. In fiscal year 1993, 94,250 servicemembers attended DTAP presentations.

Question 7: The Subcommittee has been told that there is a need for increased VA representation at European bases. You mentioned that 6 VA employees are on temporary duty in Europe now. What staffing level do you plan to maintain in the future?

It has also been suggested that an E-mail system be established between the VA and military bases in Europe. Do you have any plans for implementing such a system? It seems to me to make good sense.

Answer 7: It is correct that VA now has six benefits counselors on extended TDY assignments in Europe. This joint program with DoD's Office of Transition Support and Services was implemented in July 1993. The counselors are placed in Europe on six-month TDY assignments to provide briefings to transitioning service members on VA benefits and services. At present, there are three counselors located in Germany, two in Italy and one in the United Kingdom.

Effective with the next assignment period (June - December), there will be two counselors in Germany, one in Italy and one in the United Kingdom. The reduction of counselors is a result of budget constraints experienced by DoD's Office of Transition Support and Services for FY 1994 and the anticipated implementation of an expanded VA presence in the Far East effective October 1, 1994.

At present, there is limited E-mail capability between the installations that host VA counselors on TDY and Veterans Assistance Service in Central Office. This system permits some exchange of information between the counselors assigned in Europe and Central Office concerning administrative matters and inquiries on behalf of service members and retirees who are seeking individualized assistance. At the present time, we do not envision implementation of an E-mail inquiry system between all military installations in Europe and VA offices due to staffing constraints.

Question 8: The Committee has heard from veterans who complain that they were not adequately counseled about their education benefits during transition briefings, and therefore, lost eligibility for GI Bill benefits. In your view, what more can be done to ensure that all separatees receive complete information on GI Bill eligibility requirements?

Answer 8: VA Central Office receives periodic complaints from veterans, sometimes generated through regional offices, concerning inadequate counseling about potential eligibility for Chapter 30 educational benefits.

DoD's preseparation counseling checklist includes a segment on education and training where servicemembers can indicate their interest in education benefits (Montgomery GI Bill, Veterans Educational Assistance Program, VEAP, etc). Servicemembers leaving active duty are required to initial and sign a copy of the checklist indicating whether they desire information or counseling on a given topic. This form is subsequently made a part of each servicemember's personnel record.

All of VA's military services coordinators and veterans benefits counselors who conduct benefits briefings during TAP seminars discuss all categories of eligibility for Chapter 30, especially for those service members who leave service either involuntarily or through one of the early out incentive programs (SSB or VSI) in their presentations.

Unfortunately, since the TAP seminars are voluntary, not all service members who might be eligible for Chapter 30 educational benefits under one of the special enrollment scenarios choose to attend the TAP sessions. While we also try to include briefings on all VA benefits in routine preseparation briefings, not all installations are able to include VA representation on their briefing schedules. Additionally, while VA does have different types of information available at all military installation education offices regarding all VA educational benefit programs, especially Chapter 30, there is no assurance that all service members will read it.

We are currently exploring additional means of disseminating information about educational benefits. These include articles in the Army, Air Force and Navy Times; each of the magazines published by the individual services; press releases and public service announcements for the public affairs offices of all military installations; and reiteration to all VA personnel presenting briefings on military installations to include Chapter 30 eligibility information in their briefing sessions.

Question 9: What effect will upcoming FTEE reductions have on the ability of VA staff to provide TAP and D-TAP services? Will Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling staff be required to curtail counseling for non-service connected veterans in order to continue to provide services to service-connected veterans?

Answer 9: To provide transition services in the most efficient manner, VBA's military services coordinators will now provide DTAP presentations in conjunction with, or immediately following, TAP presentations. Under the current budget model, we anticipate that we will be able to meet our responsibilities. However, if field station resources are diverted to claims processing, our ability to provide benefits briefings in support of the transition assistance process could be impaired.

Servicemembers within six months of discharge, and veterans for one year following discharge, are eligible for comprehensive professional counseling services. VA contracts with qualified counseling providers for most of these counseling requests. By law, contract counseling expenditures cannot exceed $5 million in any fiscal year. The $5 million will provide contract counseling services to approximately 18,000 eligible persons. We anticipate over 45,000 counseling requests.

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

JUN 23 1994

Honorable G.V. Montgomery
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter of May 25, allowing me to comment on questions regarding transition assistance provided to departing Service men and women. The enclosed responses are provided to your questions. I have also enclosed a copy of Secretary Perry's memorandum emphasizing the importance of command support in successful transition programs.

Your continued interest in the well being of the men and women who serve their country honorably and well, is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Carolyn Becraft

Carolyn H. Becraft
Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense
(Personnel Support, Families and Education)

Enclosures:
As Stated

THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-1000

19 APR 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARIES OF THE MILITARY DEPARTMENTS
CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
UNDER SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
COMPTROLLER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, DEFENSE RESEARCH AND ENGINEERING
ASSISTANT SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE
GENERAL COUNSEL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
INSPECTOR GENERAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR, OPERATIONAL TEST AND EVALUATION
ASSISTANTS TO THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT
DIRECTORS OF THE DEFENSE AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Transition Assistance

I want to reiterate that people are our greatest asset and that we need to make sure those leaving the Department of Defense are treated fairly in return for the sacrifices they made while serving our country. No military Service member or civilian employee should leave the Department without having the opportunity to learn about the transition services and benefits to which they are entitled.

Since 1991, transition assistance programs have helped many of our separating Service members and civilian employees prepare for civilian life and obtain productive employment. However, according to a recent General Accounting Office report, not all our departing personnel are being given the opportunity to learn about and participate in these valuable programs.

The United States faces a host of domestic challenges. Our departing people are the best motivated and trained in the world. They have many of the skills and experiences civilian employers need to compete in the world economy. The Department's transition efforts for departing personnel and their families are designed to help make their transition to the civilian sector a positive one.

I ask that you personally continue to support transition programs and ensure that commanders understand and support efforts to disseminate information and assist separating Service members and civilians to avail themselves of these vital programs.

William J. Perry

QUESTION 1: In the January 1994 report on transition services to service members affected by military downsizing, GAO found that many separatees and their spouses were not receiving timely or adequate transition services due to inadequate support from DoD, military service headquarters, and individual unit commanders.

What specific actions has DoD taken to address the concerns expressed in the report?

Has the new DD Form 2648, Preseparation Counseling Checklist, been given to all transition assistance centers?

What is DoD doing to ensure that its directives are carried out by the individual services?

ANSWER: As the GAO noted in their report, lack of formalized policy guidance and command support were the two underlying causes of inadequate support from the DoD. The Deputy Secretary of Defense approved DoD Directive 1332.35, "Transition Assistance Program for Military Personnel," on December 9, 1993, which formalized the program throughout the Department. The Secretary of Defense signed a memorandum to the Military Departments and Components on April 19, 1994, reiterating support for the transition program and asking that commanders support the program as well. The Secretaries of the Army and Air Force and the Chief of Naval Operations have also issued service-wide memorandums calling for strong support of the transition program. The Marine Corps plans to issue similar guidance imminently.

The Department issued DoD Instruction 1332.36, "Preseparation Counseling for Military Personnel," containing the Preseparation Counseling Checklist on February 14, 1994. The Instruction details policy and responsibilities for carrying out this counseling. Prior to development of this standardized form by OSD and the Services, each of the Services maintained their own checklists which they are using pending the production and dissemination of the new form.

The Department has taken several actions to ensure the Military Departments are implementing its directives. DoD Directive 1332.35, "Transition Assistance for Military Personnel," instructs the Secretaries of the Military Departments to use their Inspectors General to evaluate transition programs and provide the Office of the Secretary of Defense with an annual report of their evaluations. In August 1993, the DoD provided to the Military Services an evaluation template that installation-level program managers could use to conduct self-assessments of their program. The DoD also implemented a quarterly report from the installations to Service Headquarters, Military Departments, and the Office of the Secretary of Defense which will provide nominal updates of their programs, and allow better oversight on the part of all management level headquarters. This report will be replaced by an automated transition reporting system which is in the early design stage and supplemented by an annual transition survey, also in the initial design stage. The Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Military Services will spot check transition efforts on a random basis in conjunction with other visits to military installations and has asked this area to be a special interest item for the Inspector General.

QUESTION 2: Under section 1143(a) of title 10, the Secretary of Defense is directed to establish a program to inform and encourage former service members to enter public and community service jobs. What procedures has DoD established to implement this program?

ANSWER: The Department of Defense has instituted guidelines and procedures to implement this program. Public and Community Service is a specific item on the Preseparation Counseling Checklist (DD Form 2648) and it is addressed in the Preseparation Guidebook which is being printed. An information paper on Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) and PACS was distributed to the Military Departments in October 1993. The TERA Instruction on Certification of PACS employment for military retirees was signed on November 17, 1993. The DoD Instruction establishing the program to encourage Public and Community Service Employment was advertised in the Federal Register on April 4, 1994, for a period of 60 days, terminating on June 3. During this time, DoD in coordination with the Services, established interim procedures to accommodate those desiring to apply for PACS. The PACS Instruction is in the final stages of staffing and should be signed imminently.

QUESTION 3: Please keep me advised of the findings of the survey of transitioning and recently-separated personnel you are conducting next year. I'm sure all members of the Subcommittee will be very interested in the results.

ANSWER: I will be happy to advise the Subcommittee on the survey results.

QUESTION 4: How many actual job placements have been made through the Defense Outplacement Referral System (DORS)? How long is each resume maintained in DORS?

ANSWER: Early on, when we were designing Operation Transition employment assistance systems, private sector employers urged us to cut through governmental red tape and bureaucracy and provide them with a direct connection to transitioning Service members seeking employment. They advised us, quite frankly, that if we made the program cumbersome through reporting requirements -- they would not participate. They wanted responsive, easy-to-use, no-hassle systems and that is what I think we have given them.

While we don't have firm numbers regarding hiring through DORS or the Transition Bulletin Board, we do know that over a half million resumes have been faxed or mailed to employers in response to nearly 15,000 calls from employers. During the last two weeks, we have received 445 calls requesting resumes and sent 18,350 resumes in response. Over 95% of job seekers in the DORS data base have been referred to employers at least once, and over 27% more than 6 times. In addition, we currently have 5,518 want ads on our Transition Bulletin Board as well as 822 business opportunities. So even though we can't tell you exactly how many people have been placed as a result of Operation Transition systems, I think we can safely say from anecdotal information that the number is in the thousands. A wide variety of employers of all types and sizes continue to sign up and use Operation Transition because we provide them excellent customer service and immediate, direct access to a well-qualified pool of potential employees at no cost.

In response to your question regarding length of time a resume is maintained in DORS, the answer is 90 days each time it is entered or updated. We encourage Service members to register for DORS around 90 days prior to separation, and then to update their DORS application right before they separate, giving them another 90 days. Service members may continue to use transition services and programs up to 90 days after they separate; so in effect, an individual's resume could be in DORS for up to 270 days.

QUESTION 5: In your view, what are the problem areas regarding delivery of DoL TAP?

ANSWER: I think the increasing military missions coupled with fewer people make availability a problem. However, I believe that increased command support is addressing that problem. Areas where there are large concentration of Service members and areas where there are very small numbers of people also present special challenges. Again, I think we are addressing those problems jointly with VA and DoL. I also believe that the perception that DoL TAP may not be useful for certain people is also a problem, but one that program excellence and marketing can turn around.

QUESTION 6: Are the number of DoL-TAP workshops adequate to meet the needs of the services?

ANSWER: Generally, yes, with the exception of a few areas where there is a high population density of Service members. In those instances we are bound by DoL TAP instructor constraints as well as facility capacity constraints.

QUESTION 7: In your view, do the facilities normally provided for TAP workshops provide a good learning environment?

ANSWER: Again, generally yes. If we are made aware of inadequate facilities, we will work with the Services to alleviate any problems. In some instances, it may not be possible to improve or change facilities given the type of structure, its physical location and fiscal constraints.

QUESTION 8: In previous hearings, some witnesses expressed concern that the ACAP program resulted in a duplication of services? In your view, is this still a legitimate concern?

ANSWER: No. I think if you speak to job seekers, they will tell you that there is no such thing as too much information or too many avenues of assistance when it comes to their individual job search. The ACAP program, which is partially contracted out, is nonetheless similar to the other Services employment assistance programs. DoL TAP represents a one-time opportunity for a broad overview of transition benefits and the job search process. ACAP, and the Services employment assistance programs, represent continuing, one-on-one transition services and advice or coaching. Our view is that these programs are complementary, not duplicative, and that it is the transitioning Service member who profits from synergistic transition services offered in collaboration and partnership by a variety of well-qualified, available transition service providers.

QUESTION 9: Does your office have enough command support and resources in the Pentagon (staffing and personnel) to support the transition effort as a permanent program in the future?

ANSWER: As you may recall, initially during the previous administration, the transition program was viewed as a temporary program to get us through the drawdown. Now, there is widespread agreement within the Department that transition services is something we should have been providing all along. To paraphrase our Operation Transition slogan -- it is the right thing to do and it is the smart thing to do. It is a matter of treating people fairly, people who have volunteered years of their lives in service to their country. While incentive programs will terminate at some point in time, transition services such as preseparation counseling and employment assistance will continue to be improved and institutionalized. We enjoy a high level of support from Secretary Perry and Under Secretary Dorn. We are continually examining transition staffing and personnel requirements to ensure they will meet the needs of the transition program of the future.

QUESTION 10: I want to take this opportunity to compliment you and your staff on the level transition services being provided to military personnel in Europe.

As you mentioned, two Committee staff members attended the recent job fairs in Germany and visited other transition facilities. They were very impressed with DoD's commitment to assist overseas personnel.

ANSWER: Thank you. I very much appreciate your personal concern with the on-going success of the transition program, overseas and in the United States and the support and interest of your staff.

QUESTION 11: You mentioned in your testimony the $6.25 million that was appropriated for SMOCTA. Has this money been transferred to the VA? If not, why not? Is there a problem?

ANSWER: The FY 1993 Defense Authorization Act provided $75.0 million for SMOCTA to be available to the end of the second year of the fiscal year following the year in which it was appropriated. This was interpreted to mean the funds would be available for obligation through September 30, 1995. Plans to execute the program were based upon this premise. Only recently did it become apparent that the Defense Appropriation Act indicates that the funds must be obligated by September 30, 1994. Consequently, the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) has had to accelerate the execution of their program. Using expedited processing procedures, they now anticipate that the full amount of $75.0 million will be obligated by September 30, 1994. However, under these circumstances, it is not possible for the SMOCTA program to execute the additional $6.25 million in FY 1994.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. TOTAL ARMY PERSONNEL COMMAND
ALEXANDRIA, VA
22331-0476

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

June 13, 1994

Honorable G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
Chairman
House of Representatives
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20315

Dear Mr. Montgomery:

The response to your request for additional information concerning my testimony on May 25, 1994 to the Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment is enclosed.

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before your subcommittee to share with you the Army's accomplishments in implementing our transition initiatives through the Army Career and Alumni Program. The Army is committed to providing quality services to our departing soldiers, civilians and their family members. We ask for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Patricia P. Hickerson
Brigadier General, U.S. Army
The Adjutant General

Enclosure

RESPONSE -- ARMY
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education,
Training and Employment
June 10, 1994

1. Title 10 requires the military departments to transmit the service medical records of service members who are being medically separated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs within 60 days of separation or retirement from active duty.

Are each of your services complying with this requirement?

RESPONSE: Yes, Department of Defense (DOD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) signed a memorandum of understanding initiating new procedures in September 1992 to provide medical records to DVA in a more timely manner. The Department of the Army implemented the new process in October 1992. Prior to the new procedures it took DVA 180 days to receive a medical record. DVA is now receiving medical records from the Army on an average of 14 days after separation, thus, reducing the previous processing time period by 166 days. As of May 13, 1994; since October 1992, 119,780 Army Records have been processed by the DVA.

A mobilization project was piloted by the Army and was successfully tested at VA Records Center during the week of of September 7, 1993. This test consisted of DVA's ability to return medical records to Army control within 48 hours during contingency operations or mobilization. The overall test was successful. Mobilization testing reinforced the communication, cooperation of DVA employees and Army Representatives.

What systems have each of you established for implementing this requirement?

RESPONSE: The Department of Veterans Affairs has developed an on-line automated system, known as the Service Medical Records System (SMARTS). This system was developed to track the receipt, control, maintenance and disposition of the soldiers' medical records. It is also used to update the Beneficiary Identification and Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS). These automation initiatives coupled with the expeditious medical records processing by the Army have vastly improved this process.

2. In the January 1994 report on transition services to service members affected by military downsizing, GAO found that many separatees and their spouses were not receiving timely or adequate transition services due to inadequate support from DOD, military service headquarters, and individual commanders.

What actions have your services taken to respond to the concerns expressed in the report?

RESPONSE: As a follow-on to the Secretary of Defense memorandum, the Army reemphasized this commitment using the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) as the vehicle for transition assistance programs within the Army. This was further supported by the Commanding General of the U.S. Total Army Personnel Command in his personal correspondence to Army commanders. The ACAP Transition briefings are presented at the Army's General Officer/SES Force Integration Course and at the Army's Installation Commanders Course at Fort Lee, VA. In addition, a General Officer/SES ACAP Familiarization Course has been designed. As a result of all these initiatives, the Army has received overwhelming success and command support from the senior Army leadership as well as installation and unit commanders. This is evidenced by the fact that 90% of all transitioners have used ACAP and 70% start the process before 90 days prior to separation.

Has the new DD-Form 2648, Preseparation Counseling Checklist, been given to all transition assistance centers?

RESPONSE: The DD-Form 2648, Preseparation Counseling Checklist will replace the Army unique document that has been in place since August 1991. We are currently developing implementation procedures to utilize the new DD-Form 2648. The revised checklist will be operational throughout the Army within the next 30 days. Prior to the DOD Checklist, the Army implemented the Transition Counseling Acknowledgment Checklist in August 1991. This document is utilized to record the delivery of counseling on transition benefits and programs. A copy of this checklist is filed in the official military personnel records to document the counseling received. This checklist coupled with the ACAP automated Individual Transition Plan provides information about the benefits and transition services as provided by law.

3. In the same report, GAO states that too often transition managers do not know which services members are separating from active duty.

What is your service doing to correct this problem?

RESPONSE: DOD guidance requires each branch of service to identify service personnel scheduled for separation six months prior to their departure. The ACAP managers are provided an installation automated personnel information roster which identifies soldiers that are scheduled to separate within 180 days. This report is used as a tool to identify and schedule soldiers to initiate their transition processing in a timely manner.

4. In its inspection report, the DOD Inspector General recommended that the Secretary of the Army conduct a requirements assessment and economic analysis of the Job Assistance Centers.

Has that assessment been completed? If not, when will it be completed?

RESPONSE: The requirements assessment and economic analysis process has been initiated and is expected to be completed in August 1994.

5. What transition services are being provided for individuals stationed overseas and on ships?

RESPONSE: ACAP provides a full range of transition services in 18 locations overseas. Each ACAP site provides individual counseling and employment assistance services to soldiers, Department of the Army Civilians and their family members. Portable services are available to assist remote or isolated Army sites within the overseas command. The Navy has recently contracted with the Army to provide ACAP job assistance, workshops/counseling on board the Battle Group Saratoga during its return from deployment.

6. In your view, are the number of TAP workshops scheduled for the remainder of this year and next year adequate to accommodate the demand for this program?

RESPONSE: Yes, generally, local ACAP transition managers usually work out acceptable schedules with their DOL TAP coordinators.

7. What procedures have been established in your service to ensure that all those who are eligible receive Disabled Transition Assistance Program (D-TAP) services?

RESPONSE: Upon receipt of approval for a disability separation or retirement, each soldier is referred to the D-TAP counselor located at the Army's major medical facilities. The D-TAP counselor ensures that the soldier is aware of their disability benefits and provides referrals to agencies who will assist in educational and employment opportunities. Subsequent to the D-TAP processing, each soldier is referred to ACAP for follow-up and employment training to assist in their return to the civilian sector.

8. What was the funding level in your service for transition services in fiscal years 92, 93, and 94?

RESPONSE: In addition to the OSD funding, the Army provides supplemental funding to ACAP.

	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94
ARMY:	22.7	22.0	20.1
OSD	10.9	13.0	14.2

QUESTIONS -- AIR FORCE
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education
Training and Employment
May 25, 1994

QUESTION: Title 10 requires the military departments to transmit the service medical records of service members who are being medically separated to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs within 60 days of separation or retirement from active duty.

Are you complying with this requirement?

What systems have been established for implementing this requirement?

ANSWER: Yes, we are complying. The Air Force has an established procedural internal requirement to forward the medical records within 30 days. Inspections and internal audits show that we have been meeting this goal. The 30-day procedure has been working successfully for several years.

QUESTION: In the January 1994 report on transition services to service members affected by military downsizing, GAO found that many separatees and their spouses were not receiving timely or adequate transition services due to inadequate support from DoD, military service headquarters, and individual unit commanders.

What actions have you taken to respond to the concerns expressed in the report?

Has the new DD Form 2648, Preseparation Counseling Checklist, been given to all transition assistance centers?

ANSWER: Each major Air Force installation (over 500 military population) has a Transition Assistance Manager and Specialist assigned. The Air Force has implemented a requirement for all service members to report to their Base Transition Offices within seven (7) days of being notified of their approved separation/retirement dates. The Base Transition Offices are being provided with a computer roster listing those individuals. A letter has been sent out jointly by Dr. Widnall, Secretary of the Air Force, and General McPeak, Air Force Chief of Staff, stating their support for the program. We have implemented all DoD Directives currently published.

The DD Form 2648 has been distributed to all Air Force bases. Department of Defense Instruction (DoDI) 1332.36, Preseparation Counseling For Military Personnel, has been implemented and distributed with a sample of the DD Form 2648 attached. Prior to the DoDI, the Air Force had sent out direction to all bases stipulating that counseling take place in accordance with the law; we have used an Air Force document to record the counseling to this point.

QUESTION: In the same report, GAO states that too often transition managers do not know which service members are separating from active duty.

What are you doing to correct this problem?

ANSWER: Previously, we had recommended a procedure through which Transition Assistance Managers would receive rosters from the military personnel office listing projected separations. This was not mandatory, and

some Managers had developed local arrangements in which they were relying on the personnel office to track separating members.

All transition offices are now required to receive the rosters and track departing members to ensure they all receive counseling and services on time.

QUESTION: What Transition services are being developed for individuals stationed overseas and on ships?

ANSWER: The Air Force has full Transition Assistance services available on every overseas base -- the same services that we have available in the Continental US. Additionally, we work with the VA to provide VA Counselors for our people in both the European and Pacific theaters -- something that has never been done before. We also offer the full DoL TAP Seminar at all bases, using the DoL Workbook and curriculum.

Our support for people at isolated sites is provided on an individual basis. All remote sites and units are supported by larger bases which provide them full services. Our feedback indicates our support plan is working well to reach these people.

QUESTION: In your view, are the number of TAP workshops scheduled for the remainder of this year and next year adequate to accommodate the demand for this program?

ANSWER: We have been looking for ways to increase the attendance of our military personnel and their spouses at TAP workshops. The irony to this question is that if we are successful in increasing workshop attendance, we are also successful in increasing the demand. Also, in our process of identifying barriers to TAP participation, the need for smaller classrooms and class attendance size was identified as a reason some of our people are not attending. For FY93, the Air Force installation with the largest average TAP Workshop size averaged 48 members with a maximum surge of 29 people more than this average. Depending on the degree of success we have in our efforts to increase our marketing of the workshop, increasing command emphasis, and removing other barriers to attendance--demand could go up--requiring additional workshops.

QUESTION: What procedures have been established in your service to ensure that all those who are eligible receive Disabled Transition Assistance Program (D-TAP) services?

ANSWER: The Transition Assistance Program for disabled veterans plays an important role in the Air Force Transition Assistance Program. The DTAP has developed as an intrinsic part of the three-day TAP workshop. Although the DVA's role is limited to a three hour presentation, TAP workshop participants are made aware of the importance of the program and receive an overview of what the program offers. Transitioning members who express further interest in the program are given the opportunity to meet with the DVA representative following the workshop. Also, the DTAP program is supported by our clinics and hospitals on most major Air Force installations.

QUESTION: What was the funding level in your service for transition services in fiscal years 92, 93, and 94?

ANSWER: The Air Force received $13.9 million for FY 92; $11.4 million for FY 93; and $10.0 million for FY 94.

AMVETS reply to Additional Questions
regarding the
Transition Assistance Service Member Occupational Conversion
and Training Programs

1. Question: DOL has stated that in a campaign to publicize SMOCTA, they have provided various prototype speeches to veterans' service organizations. Have you received these speeches and have they been disseminated to your membership?

   ANSWER: Headquarters personnel do not remember seeing prototype speeches, but they may have been overlooked in the flood of information that comes to national headquarters. AMVETS' witness, Mr. Bruce states that he has polled all VSO service officers in the Norfolk, VA region concerning the speeches. He states that none of the service officers received the information.

2. QUESTION: Do representatives of your organization participate in TAP workshops? If not, why not?

   ANSWER: Mr. Bruce states that AMVETS was the first VSO to participate in the Hampton Roads area.

3. QUESTION: What is the greatest need among TAP participants.

   ANSWER: a. Online employment information for the local area and the area to which the servicemember will relocate after separation.

   b. Coordination of vocrehab ratings and separation physical examination boards (PEB).

   c. Increasing Commanding Officer's commitment to ensuring that every member has the opportunity to attend TAP.

4. QUESTION: How can program facilitators effectively bring transition services to hospitalized veterans.

   ANSWER: AMVETS concurs that many hospitalized veterans do not receive TAP/DTAP services. TAP/DTAP administrators must increase outreach to hospitalized servicemembers as well as increased emphasis on all hard-to-reach personnel.

5. QUESTION: Can you offer any recommendations to improve the rate at which veteran participants are matched with employers?

ANSWER: a. There needs to be on line access to nation-wide employer databases at all TAP sites.

b. While SMOCTA is valuable, AMVETS would like to propose that the resources devoted to SMOCTA may have been better spent by granting those with no transferable skills a mini GI Bill. There is a sufficient base of community colleges who have ample skill in developing technical training programs for local industries to obviate the need to invent a whole new training program. Unfortunately, many small businesses do not have the resources to design an apprenticeship program, apply for government approval, monitor the trainee and report regularly to the government.

QUESTIONS - VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS
Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Education,
Training and Employment
May 25, 1994

1. DOL has stated that in a campaign to publicize SMOCTA, they have provided various prototype speeches to veterans' service organizations.

Have you received these speeches and have they been disseminated to your membership?

The National Economic Commission has received the suggested documents. They were passed along to our public relations people for dissemination within the organization.

2. Do representatives of your organizations participate in TAP workshops? If not, why not?

I believe some American Legion service officers are involved in DTAP where Dept. Of Veterans Affairs personnel are not available to review medical records. This in not happening at very many places, however. I know of no American Legion people involved in TAP as Legion representatives. SOME of the LVER/DVOP people conducting TAP are Legion members.

3. In your view, what is the greatest need among TAP participants?

The greatest need among TAP participants is a job, or at least a referral to an employer. Perhaps the question should read "what is the greatest need among TAP eligibles?" The answer to that question is to be told by commanders that they WILL attend a TAP session.

4. In DAV testimony, it was noted that hospitalized veterans are not receiving the full range of transition services mandated by Congress, and that DTAP was not meant to be a stand-alone program.

How can program facilitators more effectively bring transition services to these individuals?

DTAP needs to be made an integral part of TAP. When an individual reports to TAP training, he/she should have his/her medical records in hand so that they can be reviewed by a competent service officer or benefits counselor. Absent this requirement, DTAP will never be what Congress mandated.

5. In your testimony, some of you were critical of the rate at which SMOCTA was implemented.

Can you offer any recommendations to improve the rate at which veteran participants are matched with employers?

The rate seems to be improving of late due primarily to the VETS marketing effort. If the VA would step back from its slavish adherence to the Specific Vocational Preparation coded found in the seriously outdated Directory of Occupational Titles, more matches would take place.

A much more serious problem is the lack of availability of funds beyond September 30, 1994. Even if an extension of the obligation period is granted by the Defense Authorization process, VETS projects that all funds will have been obligated by that date. More funds need to be authorized and appropriated for FY 1995.

June 3, 1994

Honorable G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery
Chairman
Committee on Veterans Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
2184 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515-2403

Dear Chairman Montgomery:

This will acknowledge receipt of your recent letter requesting we respond to additional questions as a follow up to the Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment hearing of May 25, 1994. As requested, the following answers are provided consecutively, preceded by the question in its entirety.

1. **DOL has stated that in a campaign to publicize SMOCTA, they have provided various prototype speeches to veterans' service organizations.**

Have you received these speeches and have they been disseminated to your membership?

Immediately following the hearing on Wednesday, May 25, 1994, I left on a business trip and returned to the office on Tuesday, May 31, 1994. Upon my return to the office, I found a "packet" of promotional materials designed to publicize SMOCTA. I believe this material was received in this office on or after May 25, 1994.

We have not disseminated any of this information to our membership and are assessing the best approach to doing so.

2. **Do representatives of your organizations participate in TAP workshops? If not, why not?**

For the year ending December 31, 1993, the DAV had 22 of its offices providing compensation information and claims work at 96 military installations. We assisted some 46,000 TAP participants.

3. **In your view, what is the greatest need among TAP participants?**

We believe the greatest need among TAP participants is to receive retraining prior to their discharge. The current curriculum in TAP is good as far as it goes. However, because many servicemembers do not have readily transferable skills to the civilian labor market, many need retraining if they are to compete in a shrinking labor force. This retraining should be provided starting six months prior to discharge.

Notwithstanding the above, the greatest need of servicemembers is to participate in TAP several months prior to their separation. Of the 46,000 members we assisted 52% participated in the program in the last month of service; 24% participated in the program two to three months prior to their separation. Thus, only 24% participated in the TAP program four months or more before their date of discharge.

There remains a continuing problem for many military personnel to obtain release from their duty station to attend the TAP program.

4. In DAV testimony, it was noted that hospitalized veterans are not receiving the full range of transition services mandated by Congress, and that DTAP was not meant to be stand-alone program.

How can program facilitators more effectively bring transition services to these individuals?

Someone should take responsibility to ensure that all current DTAP programs be assimilated with existing TAP programs. In some cases, the hospitalized servicemembers may be able to attend the TAP session and some may not. Accordingly, if necessary, TAP should be coordinated on site where the DTAP sessions are currently taking place. Hospitalized veterans should be released from their wards to participate in programs such as TAP when possible.

A model DTAP program was established at San Diego Naval Hospital which provided extensive aptitude, interest and other testing. Testing with counseling assisted separating military personnel in selecting occupations consistent with their disabilities. Counseling included information on how to describe their limitations to employers. They were also counseled as to the kinds of accommodations necessary for their disabilities for them to be employed. Thus, a typical four day workshop was extended by offering in depth counseling which was paid for by VA's vocational rehabilitation offices through their contract services.

5. In your testimony, some of you were critical of the rate at SMOCTA was implemented.

Can you offer any recommendations to improve the rate at which veteran participants are matched with employers?

We believe that civilian employers are also in a "downsizing" mode and are not in a position to participate in SMOCTA. Additionally, the lack of assurances that the training monies will be there from one fiscal year to the next is a deterrent. Many employers who attempted to participate in the Veterans' Job Training Act (VJTA) were unable to because of the lack of funds from one fiscal year to the next.

Mr. Chairman, we are pleased to provide these responses to you and if you have any other questions, please don't hestitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

RONALD W. DRACH
National Employment Director

RWD:mb

Vietnam Veterans Of America, Inc.

Chartered by the United States Congress

June 15, 1994

Hon. G.V. Montgomery, Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Montgomery:

Thank you for the opportunity to expand upon our testimony before the Subcommittee on Education, Training and Employment. As requested, here are our responses.

QUESTION 1: DOL has stated that in a campaign to publicize SMOCTA, they have provided various prototype speeches to veterans service organizations. Have you received these speeches and have they been disseminated to your membership?

I don't think we have received them.

QUESTION 2: Do representatives of your organization participate in TAP workshops? If not, why not?

A number of our members, including Economic Affairs Committee Chair Brenda Glenn, have participated as DVOPs.

QUESTION 3: In your view, what is the greatest need among TAP participants?

More effective outreach, especially including tracking down those who did not receive original documentation and training.

QUESTION 4: In DAV testimony, it was noted that hospitalized veterans are not receiving the full range of transition services mandated by Congress, and that DTAP was not meant to be a stand-alone program. How can program facilitators more effectively bring transition services to these individuals?

Again, more effective outreach, especially in hospitals. Commanders need to make their responsible officers aware of the need to reach hospitalized separating service members. Services can be brought to hospitals on a regular or rotating basis.

QUESTION 5: In your testimony, some of you were critial of the rate at which SMOCTA was being implemented. Can you offer any recommendations to improve the rate at which veteran participants are matched with employers?

In some areas, some joint training might offer both economies of scale to the employer and a more visible product. Rather than ask a dozen small businesses to design and execute their own computer training program, for example, DOL might help them contract a generic course to a local college or university's ongoing education department. Although some specifics would be lost, the quality of the training would be much higher, paying off for both the employer and the veteran. A broad range of courses could be presented in this way, bearing the credentialling of known institutions.

If we can provide further information, please let us know.

Sincerely,

William F. Crandell
Legislative Advocate