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TECHNICAL REPORT CPO-90-4

**RESULTS OF VETERAN'S READJUSTMENT PROGRAM IN  
RECRUITING BLACKS AT THE U. S. ARMY MISSILE  
COMMAND, FY85-FY89**

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**U.S. ARMY MISSILE COMMAND**

*Redstone Arsenal, Alabama 35898-5000*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Long before the cessation of the Vietnam conflict, it became known that many Vietnam-era veterans were having difficulties in adjusting to civilian life. While many of these difficulties were latent problems, the problem of finding employment was very apparent. In response to the high unemployment rate for these veterans, Executive Order 11397 was issued in 1968. This granted special hiring authority to Federal Agencies to employ, noncompetitively, certain categories of Vietnam-era veterans within a specified pay-grade structure.

## II. BACKGROUND

As the United States moves into the middle of the second decade since the end of the Vietnam conflict, labor estimates still indicate continuing employment problems for Vietnam-era veterans. Department of Labor report issued in January 1989 revealed that veterans in the age bracket of 30 to 34 years are continuing to face employment problems, i. e., unemployment rates from 1988, white veterans 6%, white non-veterans 4%, black veterans 12.3%, black non-veterans 9.7%. The wider age bracket of 30 to 44 years shows a narrowing of the employment gap between veterans and non-veterans, i. e., white veterans 3.8%, white non-veterans 3.6%, black veterans 7.1%, black non-veterans 8.9%. In the 30 to 44 age bracket the black veterans actually enjoyed a more favorable employment status than the non-veterans.

The continued practice of granting veteran's preference for Federal positions remains a controversial issue. There was considerable discussion of eliminating veteran's preference prior to passage of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. Actually, what resulted from the Reform Act was a reinforcement of veterans's preference. Not only were all of the original recruitment provisions kept intact, they were actually strengthened and a new recruitment authority was provided for disabled veterans. Additional protection was also provided for disabled veterans during periods of reduction in force (RIF).

Proponents of veteran's preference have been unwilling to consider veteran's preference as a merit factor in the selection process. Proponents still claim, as supporters did upon passage of the Veteran's Preference law in 1944, that special preference is due the veteran because of time lost in getting established in an occupation, and that it is also to repay a debt of gratitude.

In accordance with the tradition began in 1944 with the passage of veteran's preference, both the executive and legislative branches of congress have continued to provide strong support for veterans. Inherent in the administration of special recruitment programs is the requirement for government agencies to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the various programs. An earlier study analyzed the effectiveness of the Veteran's Readjustment Program (VRP) in bringing black veterans into the work force in grades GS-1, WG-1 through GS-7, WG-7 for the recruitment period FY78 through FY84. Veteran's benefits, enacted on October 24, 1984 raised the authorized recruitment grades to the WG-9 and GS-9 level.

### III. DISCUSSION

#### A. U.S. Army Missile Command

Contrary to the beliefs of some people, the Department of Defense is far from being exclusively a military organization and must rely on the latest expertise in the field of personnel management in order to attract and retain a competent work force. The U.S. Army Missile Command located on Redstone Arsenal is a 39,000 acre military reservation in Madison County, Alabama, and is responsible for the total life cycle management of all Army missile systems. Total life cycle management includes research, development, production management, procurement, quality assurance, maintenance, and logistics support to U.S. troops or to foreign governments that have purchased Army missile systems. There are more than 7,000 civilian and approximately 1,000 military employees assigned to this command.

A work force comprised of both military and civilian employees is unique to the Department of Defense because of its dichotomous administrative and organizational structure. Some obvious differences are unions, dress, wages, and benefits. Since as early as 1775, civilians have worked with and for the military as riflemakers, quartermasters, and physicians.

#### B. Establishment of Civil Service

Discussion of this topic is found in Technical Report CPO-86-1, dated December 1985.

#### C. Adjustment Problems of Veterans

The literature search for Technical Report CPO-86-1, dated December 1985 quoted from various studies and articles that were written in the 1970's and early 1980's to document adjustment problems faced by Vietnam-era veterans. The following literature review reveals that Vietnam-era veterans have continued to face adjustment problems through the middle and late 1980's: Foy, D., Rueger, Sippelle, C., and Carroll, E., ("Etiology of Post Traumatic Disorder in Vietnam Veterans: Analysis of Premilitary, Military, and Combat Exposure Influences", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 1984, Vol. 52, pp. 79-87; Gelman, David, "Treating War's Psychic Wounds", *Newsweek*, August 1988, Vol. 112, pp. 82-84; Kennedy, R. Bryan, "Veterans' Preference: A Barrier to the Recruitment of Women?", *Journal of Employment Counseling*, June 1988, Vol. 25, pp. 70-75; Lyons, Gene, "Ballad of a Mad Green Beret", *Newsweek*, September 12, 1983, Vol. 102, p. 76; O'Connor, Colleen, and Doherty, Shawn, "A Vietnam Vet's Suicide Pact", *Newsweek*, March 17, 1986, Vol. 107, p. 30.

Black Vietnam-era veterans mirror many of the same problems faced by the overall black population, especially in the area of employment. In a special study of employment problems faced by Vietnam-era veterans, the U.S. Department of Labor (U. S. Department of Labor, 1974) Job situation Vietnam-era veteran Special Labor Force Report 167, Washington, D.C., (U.S. Government Printing Office) documented that black veterans had twice as much difficulty in finding employment as did white veterans. In a later research study (U.S. Department of Labor, 1981) "Employment and Training Report of the President", Washington, D. C., (U.S. Government Printing Office), it was found

that the actual unemployment rate of Vietnam-era veterans (ages 25-29) was 8.9% compared to their non-veteran counterparts rate of 6.8%. This same study reported that black veterans (ages 25-39) had an unemployment rate of 10.9% compared to a 4.8% rate for white veterans.

A United Press International news release dated, 23 March 1981, states that more than one-third of the soldiers who saw heavy combat suffer from "Vietnam Syndrome", an emotional disorder that can appear up to 15 years after their homecoming. The study found the syndrome affects veterans of all social backgrounds, including those with stable family situations. Based on 1,380 nationwide interviews, the study found that a veteran's exposure to combat rather than the emotional stability of his childhood determines to a great degree whether symptoms of the syndrome will persist. Overall, the study found that the syndrome was more prevalent among black combat veterans and that combat-related psychological problems were largely concentrated among veterans who served after 1968, when anti-war sentiment in America intensified. The Vietnam war ended more than a decade ago, but the problem of the Vietnam veteran and the black Vietnam veteran, in particular, linger on.

#### D. Veteran's Readjustment Appointments

A special authority granting Federal Agencies the right to employ non-competitively certain Vietnam-era veterans (VEV's) was established in 1968 by Executive Order 11397. The Transitional Appointment Authority enabled each agency to direct-hire Vietnam-era veterans who had completed not more than 1 year of education above the high school level into jobs at grades General Schedule (GS) 5 or Wage Grade (WG) 5 or below, if appointed within 1 year of military separation. The veteran was required to complete a formal education program within a period of from 1 to 8 years and was converted to Career or Career-Conditional status upon completion. The educational program was restricted to institutional training, and the veteran was not eligible for position change.

On 26 March 1970, Executive Order 11521 replaced the Transitional Appointment with the Veteran's Readjustment Appointment (VRA) which had several advantages over the former. Eligibility was expanded to include those who had completed not more than 2 years of education above the high school level; the time before conversion was set at a flat 2 years; the training program was changed to extend for not less than 1 year and may include planned on-the-job training, classroom training, or a combination of the two; and the appointees became eligible for noncompetitive movement by reassignment, transfer, or promotion.

On 3 December 1974, Public Law 93-508, the Vietnam Era Veteran's Readjustment Assistance Act, became law. Section 403 of that Act incorporated by reference the Veteran's Readjustment Appointment Authority with one change. Where previously the veteran was eligible only for a VRA appointment for a period of 1 year from separation (or release from hospitalization or treatment immediately following separation from the Armed Forces), that period was extended by the length of time a veteran is continuously enrolled in a program of education on more than a half-time basis, with an additional provision that at least 6 months of eligibility remains when the veteran leaves the program.

On 26 October 1978, Public Law (PL) 95-520 was signed into law liberalizing the Veteran's Readjustment Program to provide improved Federal employment opportunities for Vietnam-era veterans. Under the provisions of this revised program, Federal personnel offices are required to establish an inventory of eligible veterans. The eligibility level of employment was raised from WG-5 and GS-5 to WG-7 and GS-7. The educational limit on compensability disabled veterans was removed. Public Law 98-543, entitled "Veteran Benefits" enacted on October 24, 1984 continued the program and raised the employment eligibility level to grade 9.

Recruitment procedures for Vietnam veterans are relatively simple. Each Federal Agency including the U.S. Army Missile Command maintains their own inventory of applicants and are not required to request a list of eligibles from the Office of Personnel Management.

At the U.S. Army Missile Command, Vietnam-era veterans file applications directly and are rated for up to five positions of their preference. Federal managers can either utilize traditional Office of Personnel Management procedures to recruit for positions grade 1 through 9 or they can utilize the Veteran's Readjustment Program. If a manager decides to utilize traditional Office of Personnel Management procedures, he/she is restricted to selecting from the top three applicants and cannot pass over or fail to select a veteran to select a non-veteran.

#### E. Equal Employment Opportunity

Discussion of this topic is found Technical Report CPO-86-1, dated December 1985.

#### IV. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to compare the Veteran's Readjustment Program with all other recruitment procedures to ascertain its effectiveness in attracting a larger percentage of blacks into the work force at the U.S. Army Missile Command.

The population considered in this study included all of the people hired from outside government service into the U.S. Army Missile Command grades 1 through 9 from fiscal year 85 through fiscal 89. Pay grades 1 through 9 are the grades to which Vietnam-era veterans are eligible for appointment through the Veteran's Readjustment Program. The principle pay system in the Federal service is divided into 18 grades or levels with grade 1 representing the lower level (i. e., routine, repetitive duties) and grade 18 the upper level (i. e., high level managerial positions). Grades 1 through 9 typically represent clerical, technical and entry level professional/administrative positions. Total hires by race, sex, and veteran's status for traditional Office of Personnel Management recruitment procedures as well as total hires by race, sex, and veteran's status through the Veteran's Readjustment Program were considered. The use of the total population recruited through these two programs eliminated the need for inferring results from statistical sampling methods used in most research studies of this nature. The utilization of the total population from both recruitment sources provided a direct comparison of percentages of blacks and whites recruited through both programs. This study considered a difference of 5% from one program to another as significant.

Recruitment data for fiscal year 85 through fiscal year 89 for the VRP was compared against all other recruitment data for the same time frame for appointments grades 1 through 9 from outside the government. Mean percentages were developed by year from each program, and a comparison was made to determine if there was a 5% difference in the percentage of recruitment by categories, by programs. A mean percentage for all 5 fiscal years was developed to provide an overall comparison.

The following Table compares the percentages of blacks recruited to the U.S. Army Missile Command through the VRP to the percentages of blacks recruited through all other procedures for the period fiscal year 85 through fiscal year 89. As depicted in this table, over 5% more blacks were recruited through the VRP than through all other recruitment procedures for the 5 years studied. The composite mean percentage for the VRP for all 5 years, as shown, is 26.9% as compared to the composite mean percentage of 18.1 for all other recruitment procedures.

TABLE. Comparison of Percentages of Blacks Recruited Through the Veteran's Readjustment Program (VRP) and Through All Other Recruitment Procedures

(U.S. Army Missile Command Appointments)

(N = 2,256)

Years	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989
VRP (N = 112)					
Total recruits	5.0	51.0	32.0	8.0	16.0
Percentage of total	0.9	11.5	5.4	4.4	3.1
Total black recruits	3.0	6.0	10.0	1.0	3.0
Percentage of total	60.0	11.8	31.2	12.5	18.8
Composites for 1985-89					
Mean percentage	26.9				
Non-VRP (N = 2,144)					
Total recruits	523.0	393.0	558.0	172.0	498.0
Percentage of total	99.1	88.5	94.6	95.6	96.9
Total black recruits	111.0	108.0	80.6	18.0	91.0
Percentage of total	21.0	27.5	14.0	10.0	18.0
Composites for 1985-89					
Mean percentage	18.1				

Note: Recruitment figures represent total populations recruited and are not subsets of larger populations.

The VRP has exceeded all other recruitment procedures by 8.8% in successfully recruiting blacks. While the VRP is still more successful in recruiting blacks into the work force, the percentage of difference has narrowed considerably from the earlier study that analyzed the period FY78 through FY84. In that study, the mean percentage for the VRP in recruiting blacks was 32% as compared to 17% for all other recruitment procedures.

## V. CONCLUSION

The VRP is viewed as providing Federal managers with an efficient and effective recruitment source for positions grades 1 through 9. Because the list of eligibles is issued by the U.S. Army Missile Command Civilian Personnel Office, the time frame for recruitment is usually less than when lists of eligibles are obtained from other sources.

Managers are free to consider the VRP as a source of eligibles and may recruit from other sources if they so desire. The fact that managers at the U.S. Army Missile Command have continued to utilize this program indicates a general acceptance of the VRP. A continuing emphasis has been placed on the program by the Department of Army.

The VRP had a positive impact on the recruitment of blacks. The U.S. Army Missile Command made great strides in increasing the percentage of blacks in the work force. In FY77, blacks accounted for 6.2% of the employees at the U.S. Army Missile Command. In FY84, blacks comprised 10.1% of the work force. In FY89, blacks comprised 13.2% of the work force. There is no doubt that the VRP has helped to increase the percentage of blacks in the work force.

## VI. IMPLICATIONS

Employment problems facing Vietnam-era veterans are severe enough that the Federal Government has continued to view them as a special population requiring special assistance, as evidenced by strengthening their benefits and employment opportunities through the passage of Public Law 98-543. The eight-year investigation reported in the United Press International news release (1981) stated that the "Vietnam Syndrome" can appear up to 15 years after homecoming. Other articles such as O'Conner, Colleen, Doherty, Shaw, "A Vietnam Vet's Suicide Pact," *Newweek*: March 17, 1986, Vol. 107, p. 30, continue to chronicle problems of Vietnam veterans. Continuing controversies and pressures on both the executive and legislative areas of the Federal Government to make wise use of tax monies requires a careful assessment of all Federal recruitment programs. There is a continuing need for managers, counselors, and public administrators to understand not only the adjustment problem faced by this group, but to also ensure that programs designed to deal with veteran's problems are in fact addressing and helping to solve these problems. As our Nation moves further away from the Vietnam conflict and legislation is expanded for protected segments of the population, public administrators and lawmakers need to continuously evaluate programs to ensure they are needed and if so, they are effective.

The findings of this study have been positive in the area of Equal Employment Opportunity for blacks. Federal Agencies and other large-scale organizations should study the results carefully with an eye to possibly utilizing other innovative recruitment procedures to achieve Equal Employment Opportunity for groups that are underrepresented in the work force. New programs often are not as encumbered with red tape and restrictions as are programs that have been in existence for a longer period of time.

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