

CONSCRIPTION, CONSCIENCE, & WAR: A SKILLS DRAFT AND THE PENTAGON STUDENT DATABASE

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“With known shortages of military personnel with certain critical skills, and with the need for the nation to be capable of responding to domestic emergencies as part of the Homeland Security planning, changes should be made in the Selective Service System’s registration program and primary mission.”

– February 2003 internal Selective Service System memo

PROLOGUE

The Bush administration has adamantly and repeatedly stated that it has no plans for a new draft and that a draft is neither needed nor desired. Those public statements seem to be 180 degrees opposed to activity indicated by government documents. Strategic Objective 1.2 in the Selective Service System’s (SSS’s) performance plan for FY 2004 was to: “Ensure a mobilization infrastructure of 56 State Headquarters, 442 Area Offices, and 1,980 Local Boards are operational within 75 days of an authorized return to conscription.”¹ How can that be reconciled with the Bush administration’s public pronouncements that there are no plans for a draft? It can only be assumed that these public statements reflect the administration’s “announced policy” which is geared toward political and psychological effects. Whereas the actual capability being achieved is the “action policy” which will be followed under certain contingencies.

When that “authorized return to conscription” comes, those men already registered will be affected. But in the new post-Cold-war guidance, issued to the SSS by the Pentagon in 1994, it was recognized that

¹SSS Annual Performance Plan 2004.

both men and women may be inducted in a Medical Draft: “DoD reaffirms that it is not necessary to register or draft women (for a conventional draft of untrained manpower) because they are prohibited by policy from serving in ground combat assignments. [That policy seems to have been altered somewhat during the present occupation of Iraq.] Nevertheless, the SSS recognizes women may have to be included in a health care draft.”² A February 2004 one-page fact sheet issued by the SSS confirms that if a Medical Draft were implemented it would: “Begin a mass registration of male and female health care workers between the ages of 20 and 45. They would register at local post offices.”³ Note that the Medical Draft includes both sexes until they reach their 45th birthday. Only men are required to sign up for the conventional draft today, and only until they reach their 26th birthday.

The Medical Draft has been a sleeper since 1988 when it became part of that year’s Defense Authorization Act. That legislation charged the SSS with developing a structure called the Health Care Personnel Delivery System (HCPDS, a.k.a. the Medical Draft) to register and induct health care personnel in an emergency. The Department of Defense identified over 60 health care specialties that would be included.⁴

In late 2003, the SSS announced that the Medical Draft “is now nearly complete. It is patterned after the Agency’s existing plan for a conventional draft of untrained men, but would differ in that it would require a mass registration of health care practitioners, ages 20 through 44, followed by selection of individuals for induction to fulfill the numbers and skill requirements the military would need.”⁵ The SSS said 36,000 doctors and nurses would be called in the first batch of draftees.⁶

The SSS was also to “Prepare, conduct, and evaluate an Area Office Prototype Exercise in Fiscal Year 2005.”⁷ (FY 2005 ran from 1 October 2004 to 30 September 2005.) There would be no exemptions for medical reasons in a Medical Draft – if a person is able to perform a medical skill as a civilian, that person should also be able to do it in the military.⁸

In this transition we have gone from a combat draft to a medical draft. To complete the transition they will all be combined into a Skills Draft. That is the subject of this paper.

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²SSS Internal Memo.

³SSS Fast Facts.

⁴Some sources put the number at 62. (See Dougherty, 25 July 2003.).

⁵*The Register*, November/December 2003.

⁶Cited in *The Blatant Truth*, 22 October 2004.

⁷SSS Annual Performance Plan 2004.

⁸*The Blatant Truth*, 22 October 2004.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE – 1

CONTENTS – 3

REVIEW OF SKILLS DRAFT HISTORY – 4

The Need For A Comprehensive National Database – 4

Indicators that a Skills Draft may come soon – 5

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS – 7

Quotas for Military Skills Are Largely Unfilled – 7

The Pentagon Student Database – 8

CONCLUSION – 10

REFERENCES – 11

GLOSSARY – 12

REVIEW OF SKILLS DRAFT HISTORY.

In the Prologue I discussed how the groundwork for two types of conscription – a conventional or Combat Draft and a Medical Draft – has been laid. However, there are many more skills than just medical that are badly needed in the military. Additionally, combat now seems to be classified as a skill, judging from the large bonuses being offered for recruits in that area. A review of SSS documents reveals that the combat and medical skills may be combined with other critically-needed skills into what has come to be known as a Skills Draft.

The Need For A Comprehensive National Database.

All draftees in past history have been more of a grab-bag affair to get troops on the front lines. Those with special skills were filtered out after being inducted. But in today's high-tech military it would be much more efficient to screen for the skills needed and then just induct the people who meet the requirements. This was started to a limited extent by preparing for a Medical Draft. Pentagon desires now, such as was indicated by calling up certain people with specific capabilities from the Individual Ready Reserve⁹, point to a Skills Draft.¹⁰

A February 2003 internal SSS memo made public through a Freedom of Information Act request was called "Topical Agenda: The Department of Defense (Personnel & Readiness) and the Selective Service System." It was the agenda for a meeting on 11 February 2003 between top SSS executives and cognizant Pentagon officials.¹¹ In that meeting the SSS observed: "Defense manpower officials concede there are critical shortages of military personnel with certain special skills, such as medical personnel, linguists, computer network engineers, etc. The cost of attracting and retaining such personnel for military service could be prohibitive, leading some officials to conclude that while a conventional draft may never be needed, a draft of men and women possessing these critical skills may be warranted in a future crisis, if too few volunteer."¹²

⁹The Individual Ready Reserve involves individuals who have had training, served previously in the Active Component or the Selected Reserve (such as a member of an Army Reserve unit), and may have some period of military service obligation remaining. Unlike new recruits, these are seasoned, experienced Soldiers who can contribute significantly to Army readiness. All Soldiers have a statutory eight-year military service obligation, which is established at the time of entry into military service (Active or Reserve). (Source: www.army.mil)

¹⁰The Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) provides a pool from which, in the case of a national emergency, the military can select people with certain needed skills. After sifting through the roster, the Army on 29 June 2004 announced plans to call up 5,600 Individual Ready Reservists, with the skills needed, for a year of active duty. From that number the Army hoped to fill 4,400 jobs vacancies in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Army planned to call up another 5,600 IRR soldiers in mid-2005 to replace those from the first batch when their year of active duty is completed..

¹¹See SSS Internal Memo. The SSS executives present at this meeting were Lewis C. Brodsky (Acting Director of SSS) and Richard S. Flahavan (Associate Director of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs). Pentagon officials present were Charles S. Abell (Principle Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness), William Carr (Acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy), and Colonel David Kopanski (Deputy Director, Accession Policy).

¹²SSS Internal Memo.

After that discussion, the SSS proposed that “with today’s needs, the SSS’s structure, programs, and activities should be re-engineered toward maintaining a national inventory of American men and (for the first time) women, ages 18 through 34, with an added focus on identifying individuals with critical skills.” Then the SSS suggests how such a registration might be accomplished: “In addition to the basic identifying information collected in the current program, the expanded and revised program would require all registrants to indicate whether they have been trained in, possess, and professionally practice, one or more skills critical to national security or community health and safety. This could take the form of an initial ‘self-declaration’ as part of the registration process. Men and women would enter on the SSS registration form a multiple-digit number representing their critical skill ... taken from a lengthy list of skills – from doctors to truck drivers, from engineers to file clerks – to be compiled and published ...”¹³

After discussing how a person would choose a multi-digit number representing their special skill (more formally referred to as occupational specialty) during initial registration, the SSS memo pointed out that they “would also be required to update reported information as necessary until they reach age 35. This unique database would provide the military (and national, state, and municipal government agencies) with immediate available links to vital human resources – in effect, a single, most accurate and complete, national inventory of young Americans with special skills.”¹⁴

In the end, the SSS hopes to have this comprehensive database so that the government will have its finger on every eligible person in the nation. This comprehensive national database – this single-point, all inclusive assemblage of information – will be set up to facilitate any type of draft desired, for any agency – federal, state, or local – which may have a need for certain types of personnel. It will not be just a “much smaller draft” to bring in a few engineers and linguists.

Indicators that a Skills Draft may come soon.

In December 2003, Acting SSS Director Brodsky identified the Skills Draft as top priority. An SSS document published in that month shows that a Skills Draft is gaining momentum. The document stated that a principle objective for 2003 is “to shift the Agency’s focus away from maintaining a high state of readiness to execute a large draft of untrained manpower and toward preparing for a much smaller draft of trained personnel possessing critical skills needed for military service in a national crisis. Examining all factors, the smaller ‘special skills’ draft is the conscription program more likely to be needed by today’s armed forces.”¹⁵

Investigating these “changes in Defense manpower requirements” is an “in-depth review, which is dubbed, ‘Process Information Project.’ or ‘PIP-2003’.” Brodsky said “PIP-2003 is providing us with the blueprint to become more effective and efficient while remaining ready for tomorrow’s potential mobilization issues.” He added: “We will consolidate many functions, reorganize along process lines at National Headquarters and in the field, move forward with the modernization of our information technology systems, ... and train

¹³All quotations in this paragraph from SSS Internal Memo.

¹⁴SSS Internal Memo.

¹⁵*The Register*, November/December 2003.

our Board Members and Reserve Officers for their mobilization duties.”¹⁶

In early 2004, Richard Flahavan, the SSS’s Associate Director of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, said that planning for a possible draft of linguists and computer experts was started in the fall of 2003. He was referring to PIP-2003. Although he claimed it was only in the planning stage, he said that the SSS wants “to gear up and make sure we are capable of providing (those types of draftees) since that’s the more likely need.” Then he added that it could take about two years “to have all the kinks worked out.”¹⁷ In those two years the SSS will be designing the database fields required and the format of the registration card. Logistics, procedures, skills needed, and skill coding will also be worked out. That two years will end in the fall of 2005. **That means that by the fall of 2005 the Selective Service System will be geared up for a Skills Draft.** I’ll return to this issue under LATEST DEVELOPMENTS below.

Let us look a little deeper into a Skills Draft. It is more than just a small draft. The Skills Draft is the opening for a bigger and more comprehensive draft which will include all skills, including medical, and combat. The 60+ medical specialties will also be identified by multi-digit numbers on the skills roster. And what about the “unskilled?” That also, it must be presumed, will have a very prominent multi-digit number – a number that will be called up when the Army needs more soldiers for ground combat.

It would not be wise to lull ourselves into thinking that a draft of soldiers for combat is unlikely. Look at the declining trend in enlistment and re-enlistment in the services that perform the ground combat. Look at how the Marines are giving large bonuses – the largest bonuses – to those soldiers who sign up to do the actual fighting. Look at the “stop-loss” policy and the calling up of Individual Ready Reserves.¹⁸ Retired General Merrill McPeak (Air Force Chief of Staff under George H.W. Bush) warned: “The Army’s maxed out here. The Defense Department and the President seem to be still operating off the rosy scenario that the occupation of Iraq will be over soon, that this pain is temporary and therefore we’ll just grit our teeth, hunker down and get out on the other side of this. That’s a bad assumption. What you’ve got now is a real shortage of grunts – guys who can actually carry bayonets” He then said that a Combat Draft may be necessary “to deal with the situation we’ve got ourselves into. We’ve got to have a bigger Army.”¹⁹

There is more. The February 2003 internal SSS memo, discussed above, observed in its synopsis: “With known shortages of military personnel with certain critical skills, and with the need for the nation to be capable of responding to domestic emergencies as part of the Homeland Security planning, changes should be made in the Selective Service System’s registration program and primary mission.”²⁰ That is a frightening statement. Past SSS functions have been to provide men to fill the military ranks. These

¹⁶Quoted in *The Register*, November/December 2003.

¹⁷Quotations in this paragraph from Rosenberg, 13 March 2004.

¹⁸The “stop loss” policy prevents a soldier from being discharged at the end of his enlistment contract that end date falls less than 90 days before he is ordered to deploy overseas, or while he is deployed. In that case he or she will not be discharged until 90 days after returning from deployment.

¹⁹Dickinson, 27 January 2005.

²⁰SSS Internal Memo.

changes in the “Selective Service System’s registration program and primary mission” are more than just adding a Skills Draft, even more than just the military.

PIP-2003 is not just the “planning stage” to have things ready, just in case. All of this activity will be the ultimate tracking device, of every person up to age 35, or even higher, for any skill needed, at any level. Recently published information, though skewed away from any hint of a draft, indicates the imminence of a Skills Draft..

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS.

As mentioned above, planning for a possible draft of linguists, computer experts, and more was started in the autumn of 2003. That is another step toward a Skills Draft. It was further stated by the SSS’s associate director that it would take about two years to work all the kinks out. Two years takes us to the Autumn of 2005. As I write this the autumn of 2005 has just passed. And there has been a focus on skills in the military being needed along with indicators that the blueprint provided by PIP-2003 is now in place and ready to start work.

Quotas for Military Skills Are Largely Unfilled.

On 17 November 2005 the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report addressing the lack of balance in filling various skills in the military.²¹ This report challenged the DoD to keep better track on how the various military occupational specialties (skills) are filled and to address recruitment and retention challenges in order to prevent overfilling and underfilling of needed skills.

The total US military had 1,484 identified skills during FYs 2000-2005.²² Of that total number, 278 (19%) have been consistently overfilled while 611 (41%) were consistently underfilled. This has been identified by the GAO as a systemic problem that raises two critical questions:

First critical question: What does it cost the taxpayers to retain thousands of excess personnel in overfilled skills? During FY 2005 there were almost 31,000 more servicemembers than authorized in these overfilled positions – 8,400 of them in the active duty forces. To support each one on active duty cost the government about \$103,000 in FY 2004. Applying that FY 2004 figure, supporting the 8,400 excess active duty personnel in overfilled skills in FY 2005 cost the government about \$870 million. And that doesn’t include the cost of supporting over 22,000 excess personnel in overfilled skills in the National Guard and Reserve. This unnecessary strain on taxpayers does not stimulate confidence in Pentagon efficiency.

²¹See GAO-06-134.

²²Of the Pentagon’s 1,484 total military occupational specialties, the Army/Army National Guard/Army Reserve and the Marine Corp/Marine Corps Reserve hold 1,007 of them.

Second critical question: How can the military forces fulfill their mission with consistently underfilled occupational specialties? Over 112,000 personnel were needed to meet the authorized personnel levels in consistently underfilled occupational specialties. Active duty forces are required to report on shortfalls in only critical occupational specialties which amounts to no more than 16% of the total 625 active duty skills. Furthermore, the National Guard and Reserve do not have to report shortfalls on any of their 859 specialties. In other words, the Pentagon doesn't really have a good handle on how badly their skills list authorizations are being underfilled, or where financial incentives for recruitment should be placed.

These figures make it very evident that the all-volunteer military is not only failing to meet its total force level, but it is also failing to provide the spread of skills required. As this predicament becomes more transparent, pressure will mount to correct these failures.

In a more surreptitious manner, however, the Pentagon is already working to correct the unbalanced distribution of its personnel.

The Pentagon Student Database.

An entry on the *Federal Register* for 23 May 2005 was identified as FR Doc 05-10216, and was submitted from the Secretary of Defense's Office. It was a notice that the Pentagon was adding a System of Records to The Privacy Act of 1974 called the Joint Advertising and Market Research (JAMR) Recruiting Database. In less formal terms it is referred to as the Pentagon Student Database.

This will be a database of high school students ages 16 and up, current college students, Selective Service System registrants, individuals who have taken the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) test, and people who have responded to various Pentagon advertising campaigns. Another source is those who have filed "opt-out" forms to prevent schools from releasing their information to military recruiters under the No Child Left Behind Act. Instead, the "opt-out" form for students automatically gets them in the student database which will consist of some 30 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 25.

Personal information collected would include, where applicable: full name, birth date, gender (yes, women will be recorded too), social security number, postal and e-mail; addresses, telephone number, ethnicity, name of the high school and graduation date, grade-point average, education level, field of study, career interests, college interests, military interests, current college attending, and the ASVAB Test date and score. The *Federal Register* notice stated: "The purpose of the system ... is to provide a single central facility within the Department of Defense to compile, process and distribute files of individuals who meet age and minimum school requirements for military service."²³

As stated in the *Federal Register*, this new "System of Records" would become effective on 22 June 2005 unless comments were received that would delay that date. One day after that deadline, on 23 June 2005, the public became aware of this Pentagon Student Database. The media reported that BeNow Inc. of Wakefield, Massachusetts, had been awarded a \$342.9 million contract by the Pentagon to manage the

²³FR Doc 05-10216.

student database.²⁴ The Pentagon has spent \$206.3 million on the program since 2002, and could spend the remaining millions over the next two years. The contract is renewable annually until January 2007.²⁵

Other sources of data for the database are The High School Master File,²⁶ the College Students Files, various individuals, commercial databases and public records such as state motor vehicles departments, and data already possessed by the Pentagon. DoD spokeswoman, Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke, said in a written statement: “Using multiple sources allows the compilation of a more complete list of eligible candidates to join the military. This program is important because it helps bolster the effectiveness of all services’ recruiting and retention efforts.”²⁷

There is an “opt-out” opportunity, of sorts, for those aware of the database and who know how to or, take the time to, file. To opt-out the person filing must voluntarily provide all the detailed personal information which the Pentagon is seeking. It will be kept separately in a so-called “suppression file.” Recruiters are not supposed to contact anyone in the “suppression file.” This opt out provision may keep recruiters from knocking at the door. But if a draft is re-instituted, especially a Skills Draft which is the most likely type, all of the information the draft board needs to know about the opt-out people will be available.

Likewise, if a person merely wants to find out if his or her name is in the database, they must submit a written request containing their full name, Social Security number, date of birth, current address, and telephone number. Even by asking one must provide the information necessary to start a file.

In addition, the *Federal Register* notice said the database information will be open to “those who require the records in the performance of their official duties.”²⁸ This means the information will be shared with other agencies such as Homeland Security, all levels of law enforcement, tax authorities, and Congress. Although the data is reportedly protected by passwords, BeNow Inc. publishes no privacy policy on its website – nor does it show a privacy officer or security officer on its list of executives.

Mothers Against the Draft (MAD) and over 75 local, state, and national organizations have joined to urge Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to abolish the JAMR Recruiting Database.²⁹ Janine Hanson, chairperson of MAD, stated: “Particularly troubling is the fact that the Pentagon compiled this massive, centralized database in secrecy, and has been using it for three years before giving public notice as required

²⁴BeNow Inc is a marketing firm that computerizes large amounts of data based on individual profiles and habits to target potential customers. It is located at 500 Edgewater Drive, Suite 525, Wakefield, MA 01880.

²⁵According to the *Boston Business Journal*, the “Defense Department reportedly hired Mullen Advertising of Wenham, Mass., to develop marketing programs ... Mullen subcontracted the database work to BeNow, a ... company acquired in August [2005] by Equifax, Inc. of Atlanta.” (*Boston Business Journal*, 18 October 2005) Equifax is one of the nations top credit bureaus and data brokers.

²⁶The High School Master File is compiled from motor vehicle records and two commercial agencies – American Student List and Student Marketing Group. American Student List creates and sells databases on students from Kindergarten through High School. The information is often obtained through surveys conducted under various pretenses. (Source: PRWeb Press Release Newswire, 18 October 2005)

²⁷Quoted in Krim, 23 June 2005.

²⁸FR Doc 05-10216.

²⁹Some sources say there are over a hundred local, state, and national organizations that sent this message to Rumsfeld. (See PRWeb Press Release Newswire, 18 October 2005)

by the Privacy Act [of 1974].”³⁰ The coalition of privacy groups also stated publicly: “... the collection of this information is not consistent with the Privacy Act, which was passed by Congress to reduce the government’s collection of personal information on Americans.”³¹

Jonathan Krim of *The Washington Post* reported that the Pentagon started the JAMR Recruiting Database in 2002. The Privacy Act of 1974 requires 30 days advance public notice before collecting such data. But that notice was not given until the 23 May 2005 *Federal Register* announcement – three years later.

C ONCLUSION.

It seems possible that when work started on the student database in 2002 that it was actually to help recruiting. The recent Government Accountability Office report – GAO-06-134 – only pinpointed what the Pentagon has always known – that the people being recruited did not have the skills to satisfy the quotas in most of the occupational specialties. But at that time the war in Iraq was still in its first year and the all-volunteer Army still looked credible if enough incentives were offered. The student database seemed a logical way to zero-in on the right people to recruit to bring all occupational specialties up to quota.

As the war wore on the strain on troop deployment and re-deployment became more binding, and overall recruiting quotas became more and more unattainable, to say nothing of supplying all the skills needed. Various Pentagon and SSS documents indicated that conscription in the form of a Skills Draft was being secretly considered. PIP-2003 commenced in the autumn of that year. It was estimated to take two years for all the kinks to be worked out.

Sure enough, two years later, in the autumn of 2005, news of the Pentagon Student Database broke through the surface to become public knowledge. It seems obvious that what was described by the SSS as a “single, most accurate and complete, national inventory of young Americans with special skills”³² has metamorphosed into the “single central facility within the Department of Defense to compile, process and distribute files of individuals,”³³ otherwise known as the JAMR Recruiting Database. The word “Recruiting” in that title is misleading. All of this activity lines up to support a Skills Draft which could be looming just over the horizon. Since a declaration of all this information is not required when registering for the draft as it exists today, this Pentagon Student Database will jump start a Skills Draft once a return to conscription is authorized by Congress.

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³⁰Quoted by PRWeb Press Release Newswire, 18 October 2005.

³¹Quoted in Krim, 23 June 2005.

³²SSS Internal Memo.

³³FR Doc 05-10216.

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³⁴If hyperlinks don't work, type them into the address line on your internet browser.

GLOSSARY

ACLU American Civil Liberties Union.

ASVAB Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

DoD Department of Defense.

FY Fiscal Year.

GAO Government Accountability Office.

HCPDS Health Care Personnel Delivery System (The Medical Draft).

IRR Individual Ready Reserve.

JAMR Joint Advertising and Market Research.

MAD Mothers Against the Draft.

PIP Process Information Project.

PR Public Relations.

SSS Selective Service System.