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UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

FEDERAL PERSONNEL AND  
COMPENSATION DIVISION

OCT 27 1976

General John R. Deane, Jr., Commanding General  
U. S. Army Materiel Development and Readiness  
Command  
5001 Eisenhower Avenue  
Alexandria, Virginia 22333



Dear General Deane:

We have made a limited study of the use of training, including specialized training, provided through formal courses to civilian employees of Headquarters, U. S. Army Materiel Development and Readiness Command (DARCOM). This study was made under GAO assignment code 962074. We made similar studies at four civil Government agencies in the Washington, D.C., area.

We interviewed a selected sample of 27 civilian employees, representative of headquarters personnel who received training during calendar year 1975 to determine the extent is or may be used on the job, and to identify the cause and effect of substantial nonutilization. We also interviewed training officials and obtained data from them regarding procedures for insuring utilization of training. Although DARCOM was reorganizing and reducing its force, responses of personnel interviewed generally were not affected.

Although most employees use part of their training on the job, there are instances of little or no utilization. Headquarters training officials said that additional efforts will be made, within current manpower limitations of the training staff, to assure greater use of training. The following information may be of value to you in considering the need for more emphasis on use of training received by civilian employees.

BACKGROUND

The Government Employees Training Act (5 U.S.C. 4101(4)) and the Federal Personnel Manual require that training directly relate to performance of official duties. The Manual states that each agency must establish administrative controls to insure that training improves performance and contributes to economy, efficiency, and effectiveness

of operations. It also urges agencies to follow up on training to insure that knowledge and skills gained are effectively utilized.

DARCOM reported that 1,653 headquarters command activity employees spent 66,500 hours in training at a cost of \$1,717,000 in fiscal year 1975.

#### UTILIZATION OF TRAINING

The average utilization rate--the percent of training received in selected courses and used on the job, as estimated by employees interviewed--is 50 percent at DARCOM headquarters, compared with the overall average of 56 percent for the five agencies studied. Five DARCOM employees said they had not used any of the training on the job and three said they had used only 10 to 20 percent. Five of these eight employees said they may use more of the training in the future; however, several responses indicated low probability of future use. Reasons cited for not using the training included:

- Training did not apply to the job.
- Hardware and time were not available.
- Employee was not in grade level where course material applied.
- Required course was too elementary for employee.

When asked why they took courses not used, the responses indicated that courses described in pamphlets or brochures appeared to be useful to the employee's job when in actuality they were not. One person said that a course was taken only because it was a requirement for advancement in grade.

#### FOLLOWUP EVALUATION

DARCOM's training instructions require that an evaluation form be completed by the employee and sent to the training office within 7 days after completion of training. Within 90 days, the employee's supervisor is required to furnish his comments to the training office on a copy of the same form.

Completion and analysis of the evaluation form could provide information on training utilization, but 15 of the 27 employees interviewed said that agency personnel made no followup on the application

or usefulness of training received. Eight of the 15 believed this followup should be made. The training office needs to be aware of the course's usefulness and the value of sending others to the course. Two individuals said that they probably would not have attended certain courses had they been more fully informed of the content. One suggested that reading previous students' critiques might be helpful and the other commented on the training staff's lack of knowledge regarding the course.

The need to evaluate the application and usefulness of training was discussed with DARCOM's Chief, Career Management and Development Branch, Civilian Personnel Division; and the Chief, Training and Development Section, Civilian Personnel Office. These officials said that trained employees and supervisors are required to send course evaluation forms to the training office, but that current manpower limitations prevent the training staff from following up to insure evaluations are returned. They said that an effort would be made to interview some employees concerning the usefulness of training.

#### CONCLUSIONS

To conform with the Government Employees Training Act and the Federal Personnel Manual, all training should relate to official duties. Nonutilization of training results in inefficient use of training funds and salary costs for the time employees are away from their jobs, and potential decrease in morale of employees who cannot use their training.

Although our study showed that most employees used some of their training, there is need for improvement. To insure better use of training provided at Government expense, you may wish to require training officials to spend more time evaluating

- relevance of training courses to the needs of DARCOM and its employees for improving performance of official duties,
- training of employees who need it most to perform their official duties, and
- application and effectiveness of the training provided.

We appreciate the cooperation shown to us by DARCOM headquarters' officials during this survey. We would appreciate being advised of any action you plan to take.

Copies of this letter are being sent to the Assistant Secretary of the Army, Manpower and Reserve Affairs; and the Chairman, United States Civil Service Commission.

Sincerely yours,

*H. L. Krieger*

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Director

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