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41st Joint Civilian
Orientation Conference

B-169242

Department of Defense

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

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096191

JAN. 17. 1973



COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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Dear Mr. Reuss:

As requested, the General Accounting Office reviewed selected aspects of the Department of Defense's (DOD's) 41st Joint Civilian Orientation Conference. You asked for (1) the total cost of the Conference, with types of costs specified, (2) the type and amount of costs recovered from participants, (3) the DOD cost estimates, and (4) a description of tour activities compared to those described in our report on the 40th Conference submitted to you on June 29, 1971.

Sixty-one guests participated in the 41st Conference held from May 8 to 13, 1972. The conferees arranged their own transportation to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where the Conference began, and to their residence from Washington, D.C., where it ended. DOD provided free transportation during the tour.

We estimate the Conference cost DOD about \$50,000, of which \$15,000 was paid by the conferees. The \$15,000 covered meals, lodging, and other services.

BACKGROUND

The Joint Civilian Orientation Conference is one of several DOD public affairs programs designed to foster community relations through participation of civilian guests. Under this program, a 6- to 10-day tour of military installations is given to a group of civilian leaders.

According to DOD, the purpose of the program is to inform leading business, professional, and religious representatives about the DOD's mission and about the strength and readiness of the U.S. Armed Forces. Conferees are encouraged to impart this information to their communities to stimulate support and interest in DOD activities.

Forty-one conferences have been held since the program began in 1948. During the first 13 years, a varying number of conferences were held each year. Since 1960 there has been only one conference annually, except in 1961 and 1971 when there were none.



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THE 41ST CONFERENCE

The activities of the 41st Conference were similar to those of the 40th. However, conferees did not fire military weapons, nor did they drive combat vehicles, such as tanks and personnel carriers, as was the case for the 40th Conference. During the 41st, conferees only observed the use of such vehicles and weapons during training exercises. The 41st lasted 6 days and for the first time included women (four) and students (two).

Itinerary

The Conference started in Colorado Springs, Colorado, on May 8, 1972. The conferees traveled by bus to the North American Air Defense Command, Colorado Springs, where they were briefed on the Air Defense Command and toured the Cheyenne Mountain Complex and the nearby U.S. Air Force Academy.

Later they were flown to the Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska, and were briefed on that command's activities.

During the next 3 days, the conferees visited three military installations--Fort Benning, Georgia; Parris Island, South Carolina; and the Norfolk Naval Station, Virginia. They were flown to each location by military aircraft. The conferees attended briefings, observed tactical training demonstrations, and toured base facilities. They were also flown by helicopter to the carrier U.S.S. Forrestal, off the coast of Norfolk, where they watched sea and air maneuvers.

The conferees were flown to Washington, D.C., on May 12 to meet with high-ranking DOD officials on the following day. The Conference ended in Washington on May 13.

Costs

In a May 5, 1972, press release, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) estimated that the 41st Conference would cost about \$17,000, exclusive of expenses conferees are required to pay. We estimate the program cost about \$50,000, with the conferees paying about \$15,000 and DOD absorbing about \$35,000.

Charged to conferees

DOD administrative instructions provide that conferees pay for such items as meals, rooms, and official receptions. The conferees paid a total of \$15,468, as shown in the breakdown:

Meals, receptions, and lodging	\$10,366
Pictures, mementos, and other miscellaneous items	4,860
Insurance	<u>242</u>
	<u>\$15,468</u>

Absorbed by DOD

According to a DOD official, the \$17,000 estimate appearing in the press release represented costs of transporting the conferees by military aircraft and travel allowances of military staff accompanying the tour.

We have concluded that a more reasonable estimate of the costs would be as follows:

Services provided by military and civilian personnel	\$19,648
Use of commercial buses and noncombat ground vehicles	868
Use of military aircraft including helicopters	11,375
Per diem and commercial air expenses of military personnel	1,179
Security checks	1,540
Program booklets	<u>266</u>
Total estimated costs	<u>\$34,876^a</u>

^aExclusive of the \$15,468 paid by the conferees.

Military and civilian personnel services include only persons participating directly in planning, briefing, and escorting conferees. We estimated these costs by using fiscal year 1972 military and civil service employee salary and wage rates. The costs of noncombat ground vehicles and military aircraft were developed by applying standard DOD rates to the actual miles driven or the hours flown.

The 41st Conference cost DOD about \$45,000 less than the 40th. The primary reasons for the difference are (1) the participants did not fire military weapons nor drive military vehicles, (2) the number of personnel involved in planning the tour, and briefing and escorting the participants was reduced, and (3) military aircraft for transporting conferees were used fewer hours.

In discussing these cost estimates with DOD officials, they believed that the cost of \$19,648 for services provided by military and civilian personnel would have been incurred in any event and should therefore not be charged to this project.

Selection of participants

The Assistant Secretary of Defense (Public Affairs) is responsible for selecting conferees, subject to the approval of the Secretary of Defense. The policy governing selection states that nominees be considered without regard to race, religion, or political connection.

The selection process for the 41st Conference was essentially the same as for the 40th. Nominations were received from agencies and organizations within DOD, Members of the Congress, and the Defense Orientation Conference Association--an association of previous conference participants. Almost half of the conferees were nominated by former conference participants.

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We discussed our findings with DOD officials but did not obtain their written comments. We shall not distribute this report further unless copies are requested and you agree or you publicly announce its contents.

Sincerely yours,



Comptroller General
of the United States

The Honorable Henry S. Reuss
House of Representatives