



**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND  
PUBLIC SERVICE  
INTERNAL MEETING NOTES**

**Subject: Meeting with Selective Service System Staff**

The following is a summary of a September 26, 2018 meeting between Commission staff and members of the Selective Service System's (SSS) senior operations staff. The meeting was facilitated by Jud Crane, who gave a brief update on what the commission has accomplished thus far and what is coming ahead for RAW, as well as Eleanor Vuono and Erin Schneider who provided insight from the OGC and GPE perspective.

**Attendees:**

- Commission Staff: Mr. Jud Crane, Ms. Eleanor Vuono, Ms. Erin Schneider, Mr. Timothy Joslyn
- Selective Service System Staff: Craig Brown – Director of Operations, Thomas Devine – Deputy Director of Operations

**Key Takeaways:**

- The Deputy Director of Operations posited that a future Selective Service System could be recast as one that primarily emphasized the identification of individuals with unique skills, and a secondary focus on mass mobilization. This would entail two pools of registrants – an unskilled pool of primarily 18-25-year-olds, and a skilled pool of 26-45-year-olds.
- The SSS would benefit from improved data collection, standardization, and quality of Driver License Legislation (DLL) information sharing. SSS drafted both model legislation and specific proposed bills when they were passed by each state but SSS' intentions were not equally translated into action across the states nor has the legislation been updated to address technological or other changes. SSS has taken note of these discrepancies and is interested in making necessary improvements to this vital source of data. To this end SSS tracks states with successful and less than optimal DLL situations, including whether they include “gender neutral” language in the event that SSS registration is extended to all Americans.
- The SSS has begun to regularly perform readiness exercises to ensure their unique mix of digital and analog systems are functional and reliable. This will eventually extend to every aspect of the draft process, including draft orders, lottery machines, standing up regional offices, and setting up State alternative service networks for conscientious objectors. Through this process SSS has met some obstacles including an issue with the lottery machines that would not have been discovered without this readiness exercise.
- To ensure the smooth operation of a future draft, the SSS has increased their outreach to stakeholders and vital partners, something they have been prevented from doing for many years. This includes multiple branches of the military, local board members, and administration officials within and outside of DoD, like the GSA.
- Senior operations staff highlighted the benefit from the Navy Reserve Force Officers being assigned to the SSS as a unit, contrasting with the other services which provided individual augmentees assigned to other reserve units.

**Meeting Discussion:**

**Mr. Crane** began the meeting by detailing what the Commission has already discussed within selective service topics and plans to address moving forward. This led **Mr. Brown** and **Mr. Devine** to detail where SSS stands with capturing emails, and cell phone numbers, in registration data. Phase 1 of the email pilot program is focused on capturing the emails provided in paper submissions; though 90% of information captured is electronic, SSS wanted to focus the pilot on the remaining 10% before addressing the myriad of electronic mediums for registration data. This pilot also does not include registration cards, which are “in another evolution” of the plan and are waiting for OMB review. **Mr. Brown** further mentioned that the law still requires SSS notify individuals by mail and this is something they are looking to update with the collection of emails.

**Driver’s License Legislation**

**Ms. Vuono** followed with a question about the state of current capture processes and driver’s license legislation (DLLs). **Mr. Brown** agreed that email collection is only one part of improving the standardization of data collection processes; he provided examples for areas of improvement, including that North Carolina does not provide social security numbers, other states will collect information when an individual gets their driver’s permit at 17 but will not share this information with SSS due to consent issues, and other examples. **Ms. Vuono** continued to ask about state DLL and how involved SSS was in drafting the legislation. **Mr. Devine** answered that SSS wrote both model legislation and specific legislation which, with an imperfect translation of SSS’ original intent, has resulted in a patchwork of DLL policies and procedures across the states and territories. The differences include when the states provide information to SSS, the details and nature of that information, as well as whether the DLL has “gender-neutral” language. This language would enable all Americans to have their information collected and not just males. **Mr. Brown** added that even in Alaska, where SSS registration is required to receive an individual’s dividend from the Alaska Permanent Fund, compliance is not 100%. This is due to a myriad of smaller issues interacting with each other, including when the male turns 18, when SSS receives the data from Alaska, and when SSS inputs the data. This is compounded by the rolling nature of SSS registration; there is built in skewness due to the birthdays of individuals and the data collection process. None of this is automatic as some states submit data monthly, weekly, biweekly, etc. and this creates a gap in compliance. **Mr. Brown** provided the example of Guam which, for two years in a row, provided the same document to SSS on the same individuals. **Mr. Crane** asked whether different compliance methods influence state compliance rates and whether data on this exists. **Mr. Brown** stated that SSS does have this data broken down by percentages for each region and state.

Due to these structural issues, it will be difficult to move the needle and increase 18-year-old compliance rates nationwide according to the current push by SSS leadership. **Ms. Vuono** asked does it matter if 18-year-olds register since 20-year-olds is the target age range for the selective service draft. **Mr. Devine** responded by describing that drivers’ licenses are the primary feeder on the front side, but the difference between 18 and 19-year-olds is filled by FAFSA form which sees 4.5 million records transfer back and forth between the Department of Education and the SSS. Therefore the 18-year-old target is not necessarily prudent, but it is a statutory requirement of individuals to register by then. Regardless, **Mr. Brown** added the leadership’s initiative to improve 18-year-old registration compliance rate should increase compliance rates for older cohorts, which **Mr. Devine** agreed with. **Mr. Brown** stipulated the important takeaway is that if there was a draft, 20-year-olds are the “first slice” so keeping their compliance rates above 90% is important. **Mr. Crane** responded by asking whether SSS has conducted studies on other processes that could generate the right info for automatic enrollment to which **Mr. Brown** answered that the short answer is that studies show fewer adults are getting drivers licenses, but more are attending college, so the

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY  
DELIBERATIVE & PRE-DECISIONAL**

trends balance out. The longer answer is that SSS has looked into alternatives and have not identified other systems that capture individuals who do not attend college or obtain a driver's license.

**Ms. Vuono** picked up on this and asked whether SSS works with the IRS currently and, if the SSS could interface with the IRS, would this pool of potential data be of interest to their mission. **Mr. Devine** explained the SSS does not work with the IRS currently and additionally thinks doing so begins to get SSS mixed up with “overt versus covert” data collection techniques as well as lacking the conscious choice an individual, since everyone with an income must file a tax return with the IRS. **Mr. Devine** cited MSSA language that male individuals “shall present himself” for registration as the language that indicated individuals must choose whether or not they comply – and precluded automatic registration. **Ms. Vuono** responded by asking if this is a bad idea because SSS has an internal emphasis on capturing people who choose actively to submit data through a DMV, FAFSA application, or other means, or because the wider debate will harm SSS’ mission. **Mr. Brown** is agnostic on this issue; he believes that the active choice issue could be resolved with a simple checkbox on the IRS form but what the SSS has not done is determine if this is the appropriate method to capture those missed by the current data collection processes with state DLL and the FAFSA. For example, **Mr. Brown** discussed SSS advertising efforts in Chicago, a large city with relatively low compliance rates, and California, which does not have DLL. When asked by **Ms. Vuono** what SSS’ advertising methods are, **Mr. Brown** described how SSS, to increase advertising in Chicago or California over other areas, must reallocate spending from other priorities. They do so based on the theory that young children in urban populations without a driver’s licenses are more likely to ride the bus and so take out advertisements on bus systems, as well as utilize reserve officers to target high schools, put posters up in schools, and coordinate with JROTC staff.

### **Exercises**

**Mr. Brown** then began to discuss readiness exercises SSS has conducted over time in preparation for a future draft. The last full readiness exercises were completed in 1999 but there is a focus within SSS that over the next two years old plans and policies will be unearthed and reviewed to ensure timeliness and feasibility. To this end SSS has tested some of the functions and procedures in place. These include drafting simulated orders, running a mock lottery with the lottery machines, identifying space for alternative service offices as well as internal procedures for accommodating COs, and SSS hosts the naval reserves every 6 months. SSS has talked with other reserve units to include them—the idea being to give all branches a tour of SSS, what they do, and what can be done moving forward—but there have been organizational challenges. In addition, the SSS has begun reviewing the training and guidance outlines for local board members. The theory was, and is, that local board members will participate in annual training and in the event of a draft they will all be retrained.

### **Local Boards**

**Mr. Crane** and **Mr. Brown** discussed that the system was created to ensure the community, defined as the local geographic place, could provide input and perspective on the draft process. But **Mr. Brown** agreed with **Mr. Crane** that the assumption of geographic communities does not necessarily hold anymore. **Ms. Vuono** questioned if this affects the SSS’ plans and outlines to which **Mr. Brown** detailed the history of the local board system and how initial issues were rectified through the implementation of the regions to enforce nationwide standards. Yet, he admits, much of the initial thought processes and culture from the founding still reside in the system as it has been stagnant over time. Particularly **Mr. Brown** worries that there is an incoming wave of retirements from the local boards that, while a positive as these older members have less of an understanding of the life of a contemporary 20-year-old male, they also have years of experience

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY  
DELIBERATIVE & PRE-DECISIONAL**

that could prove difficult to fill. Of the current crop of local board members there is a core, dependable cadre that it would be a disservice to cut ties with when they retire. But there is also a cadre who joined for the resume boost, because a neighbor/parent asked them too, or for a reason they do not recall anymore. Mr. Brown believes one area that will need to be modernized for the judgmental review process is the application of standards; in the social media age, if one individual in Minnesota and another in Florida are treated differently by their draft boards they could immediately discover this in contrast to the 1960s where there was less information sharing. **Mr. Devine** agrees that the local board system has been stagnant, but overall, he expects this to be an opportunity for SSS standard operating procedures, standards, and the local board system to be productively and constructively questioned as new members filter into the system.

Mr. Brown hypothesized that, in the event of a draft, there would be less than 10,000 effective board members, a number that would need to be supplemented. At that point volunteers are of two ilk; the first is quite passionate about the issue and wants to help, the second is someone potentially trying to destabilize the SSS from the inside and/or protect their local friends and families from the draft. **Mr. Devine** added that the specifics of the volunteer role make it difficult to attract enough interested Americans. Beyond it being unpaid and volunteer, the role has varying requirements based on the number of claims received. This means that, although the average American may accept a small number of hours of volunteering a year, they cannot be assured the requirements in the context of a draft would not extend beyond what is acceptable to them. This is especially the case in highly populated areas, like Los Angeles county. **Ms. Vuono** was curious if SSS has thought about developing an available pool of subject matter experts (SMEs), which Mr. Brown thought was an interesting idea they have not explored previously. Upon further reflection he thought it would be straightforward to implement and could be designed to use them like the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) of the U.S. Armed Forces and incorporate retired military personnel.

### **Skills Draft**

This then led into a wider discussion on alternative mobilization scenarios and purposes. **Mr. Devine** described the SSS as stuck between the analog and digital world which provides a host of technical difficulties. He furthered that the SSS' mission could be changed as there is an untrained and trained parts to the draft already; untrained provides the bodies whereas trained is seen through the healthcare draft. He questioned why not make the mission to provide critical skills the primary purpose of SSS then the untrained draft becomes secondary. He believes this is a perfect time to make that switch to capture middle aged, mid-career critical skill professionals using and maintaining a database for all critical skills. Then, if the situation devolves sufficiently, the secondary draft of 18-25-year-olds is activated. **Mr. Crane** asked if this would be a post mobilization change and how the critical skills databases would be constructed. Mr. Devine specified that it would be pre-mobilization for skills and post-mobilization for everyone else and the databases could be constructed from private sources. There already exist certification, accreditations, and job classifications in the federal government that could all inform the roles and people to be included in a skills draft. Changing the system to this model would enable a more flexible and targeted response to national disasters such as the wildfires in California, Hurricanes Harvey in Texas and Maria in Puerto Rico, and it would be easier for FEMA to come to SSS for a list of firefighters, plumbers, etc. This enables the nation to, if it needs 6,000 electricians after a hurricane to repair the power grid, to initiate the draft from SSS' database and the individuals will get a notice from FEMA with a duty location.

### **Call for Volunteers**

**Mr. Crane** shared that the Commission has heard from SSS Region 1 a suggestion to take the registration system and use that to drive a call for volunteers—this would be a means to not conduct a full

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY  
DELIBERATIVE & PRE-DECISIONAL**

evaluation and judgement review, but just to get early manpower volunteers without activating the entire system. **Mr. Brown** replied that there is a process in law for a voluntary induction process, but only once the SSS was actively drafting.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Brown wondered if SSS would do this or if another agency would vis a vis Mr. Devine's FEMA example. Currently, there is nothing that would prohibit SSS from giving their database to recruiting command for this pre-draft volunteer purpose. This new idea is beneficial as it avoids the issue of selecting individuals who do not wish to contribute and, though SSS would probably need to work through the tactical details of how this would occur (i.e. is the ask delivered from the President, SSS, etc.) there are already MOUs that allow SSS to share data with other entities. Mr. Brown sees no reason SSS would not implement such a proposal.

### **Interagency Communications**

**Ms. Vuono** took this time to ask the SSS staff about whether they have established any communication or operative links with DoD or other external partners. **Mr. Brown** reiterated the MOUs with external partners, like the Department of Education, but overall admitted there is not enough communication and coordination with external stakeholders. Some of this is due to prior administrative guidance to make as little noise as possible while completing their task but this is beginning to change. The current leadership has made a plea that any meeting or discussion involving DoD, like Veteran's Affairs, should also include SSS. Mr. Brown further detailed that SSS has reached out to all of the different service recruiting commands and asked them what their responsibilities are in a mobilization scenario and they have unclear and muddled answers. It was their impression that organizational assumptions about procedures in a mass mobilization scenario had changed significantly. For instance, in the 1990's, the secretary of the army wrote a memo stating that if a draft was instituted the Army would continue recruiting operations for 90 days and then turn it all over to SSS. It is unclear if the Army still expects to follow this procedure.

Another example of recent outreach was SSS' effort to ensure that, in the event of a draft, SSS will have the requisite office space required to conduct it. According to **Mr. Brown**, when the draft is activated SSS will need to hire 6,000 people, open 400 offices, open 48 alternative service offices, activate reservists, and more. Mr. Brown is attempting to connect with GSA to assist with this. SSS could also, alternatively, provisionally identify facilities but not make moves to requisition them or otherwise interface with state national guards to provide locations and facilities. In terms of cooperation with DoD, SSS has established contact with J5/planners. Ms. Vuono asked if they are having similar conversations about mobilization and **Mr. Devine** recounted that the Office of Net Assessment was examining requirements for the SSS in a Taiwan Strait scenario.<sup>2</sup> The DoD study will hopefully shine a light on this for SSS. On this note, Ms. Vuono asked who is conducting the thinking and work on "new think questions" and Mr. Devine replied that the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan showed the utility of SSS as an insurance policy, but the military and DoD sometimes do not build SSS into the forefront of their planning.

While discussing the issues the Commission has encountered and been informed of with this inventory-based planning approach, **Mr. Crane** shared that the Army War College is conducting a 2-year review of mobilization. Mr. Brown asked where the model plans to get the manpower from and Mr. Crane replied that they are working on volunteer accession and pre-mobilization forces with the hope to outline places in the pipeline to increase capacity and move from "little m" to "big m" mobilization.

Towards the end of the conversation **Ms. Vuono** asked whether SSS encounters any stereotypes or assumptions that the MSSA's purpose is combat replacement? **Mr. Brown** said they do not, but they are not

---

<sup>1</sup> If the draft is active, individuals can move themselves up in the draft order, effectively "volunteering."

<sup>2</sup> This is potentially in preparation for ONA's October presentation to the Commission.

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY  
DELIBERATIVE & PRE-DECISIONAL**

necessarily talking to people who would hold those assumptions and that could change if they interface with more of other populations. He could see where combat replacement scenario could come into play, like a land war in Asia or something of similar scope, but otherwise unlikely. Mr. Brown added that the meeting had yet to discuss national service. SSS need not be involved but he believes there is a need for national service, though there is a difficulty in scoping it. Overall, he described that there is a movement for change right now in the country and he is dedicated to addressing and rectifying the above-mentioned issues, concerns, and challenges over the next 3-5 years. All parties discussed asks and further information sharing in the future; from SSS, Ms. Vuono asked for the spreadsheet that details the DLL status for all states and territories as well as the spreadsheet listing desired legislative changes SSS has kept track of, **Mr. Crane** asked for the poster visual aids and the database on state compliance broken down once PII has been checked; from the Commission, Mr. Brown expressed interest in a roundtable focused on skills that Mr. Crane agreed to propose a few times for scheduling.