22 October 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Personnel

FROM : Office of Personnel Advisory GROUP

SUBJECT : The Applicant Process - Recruitment to EOD

1. General: The following paragraphs contain recommendations for your consideration concerning the applicant in process system. In approaching our study of the applicant process, OPAG attempted to gather information from all parties involved in converting an applicant to employee status. To this end, we talked with individuals from Recruitment Division, Correspondence Branch, Clerical Staffing Branch, Staff Personnel Division, Office of Security, Office of Medical Services, Applicant Review Panel and with various operating components (Commo, OWI, OTS, OTR, NPIC, Finance, Logistics, and OD&E). From the customer (operating components), we found there were several universal concerns, namely:

a. The length of time required to process an applicant once the operating component has expressed an interest.

b. The lack of feedback from OP/SPD to the customer on the status of the applicant.

c. An apparent lack of communication between OP/SPD, OS, and OMS.

d. Untimely and inappropriate correspondence.

e. The lengthy wait for polygraph and medical appointments.

f. An inordinate time lag between OP, OS, and OMS in moving an applicant from one stage of processing to another.

Although the above six concerns are universal in nature, each operating component was armed with specific cases to reinforce their concerns. In actuality however, we found the one universal complaint to be that the applicant system is not operating to anyone's satisfaction. The remainder of this paper concerns itself with each phase of the process and contains OPAG recommendations for corrective action. We do not represent this paper to be a panacea, in fact, we would like to recommend a working level review of the process in order that more time can be devoted toward improving the applicant processing system. Nevertheless, the following represents OPAG's views and recommendations on the applicant in process.

2. Recruitment:

a. The one overriding problem we encountered in our study is the current overloading of the system, i.e., far too many applicants for far too few positions. We recommend that the recruitment guides be made part of a viable and working system rather than the static system it appears to be today. Initially we recommend Recruitment Division go to every Office in the Agency indicating what guides they currently have on record, requesting updatings or cancellations as appropriate, and asking the Office to estimate how many employees fitting this category will be required in the next six months. This procedure would be a continuing one under the control of Recruitment Division and completed on a semiannual basis. The objective of course is to reduce the quantity of applicant files reaching Headquarters by placing the recruiter in a better position to "screen out" not only those marginal candidates as they are doing now but also those good candidates for which the Agency has no current requirements. This system gives the recruiter a better idea of what he should be looking for and will ensure him that his information is current. Operating components could update their requirements at any time but would be compelled to do so on a semiannual basis. As part of this system, some type of retrieval system (possibly computerized) could be established in order that an otherwise good applicant is not lost forever but could be retrieved from the system if such a requirement did arise in a reasonable time frame.

b. We recommend that the recruiters, on their occasional visits to Headquarters, be given substantive briefings by substantive officers on the recruitment requirements. Although we understand this is done

to some extent now, we believe the Office of Personnel can be more aggressive in this field. Coupled with (a) above, we believe these recommendations can give the recruiter a much greater input as to where he ought to be placing his priorities. This in turn can substantially reduce the excessive number of applications received at Headquarters and reduce the overload currently bogging down the system.

c. OPAG also questions the usefulness of the two-part PHS form recently introduced. We recognize the paper savings and the applicants viewpoint, however, it appears to us to be another device to encourage more applicants at a time when applicants substantially exceed requirements. The applicants eventually placed in process have to complete the entire form anyway at the cost of additional time. The basic question then, as we see it, is applicant convenience versus additional time in process. We would opt for the "old system" with the resulting decrease in the time the applicant is in process.

d. In the current climate of decreasing employment, we also question the need for the apparent relatively large number of professional recruiters employed to recruit the relatively small number of EOD's. Basically this is a "gut" reaction as we do not have access to the relevant figures, however, we do recommend the Director of Personnel take a look at this aspect with an eye to reducing the number of professional recruiters (or redirecting them toward clerical recruitment in the Eastern United States).

3. Correspondence:

a. We understand the Agency's position of replying to each and every letter received covering the gamut from legitimate applicants to kooks. We see it as a protective device from Congressional ire and the like and, based on the current political climate, we accept this policy. We do believe however that routine correspondence can be stretched from 30 to 60 days by simply adding to each letter a statement such as "As you were advised by our field recruiter, processing of your application will take from 4 to 6 months. In the past, we have tried to keep each of our applicants apprised of his standing by a letter each 30 days. As an economy measure, we are now extending this to 60 days. During this period you can be sure your application is receiving the most expeditious review possible. If developments do occur

within the 60 days we will of course be in touch with you. In any event, you can expect to hear from us within 60 days on the status of your application. Please feel free to contact us at any time during this period if your personal circumstances should change, etc..." Again, we believe this will relieve another burden on the overloaded internal system.

b. Another all too obvious problem in the correspondence field is the physical location of the Correspondence Branch. We understand no correspondence is sent unless the applicant file itself is available. We recognize this as a necessity to prevent embarrassing duplicate letters, etc. Obviously retrieving a file from review, forwarding it to OP/SPD and then to OP/CARB in Rosslyn, back to OP/SPD, and then back to the reviewing component adds considerable time to the process. Extending the "interim letter" to 60 days will help, however relocating OP/CARB physically with OP/SPD would also reduce the time span.

4. Staff Personnel Division/Skills Bank

a. OPAG believes the prostitution of the Skills Bank system is a major factor in the overload of the system. We believe, once an applicant file is banked, the onus is upon the operating component to express an interest. If no interest is expressed during the ten day (extended from seven) banking period, the applicant should be rejected. If he is a good applicant, he should be included in the retrieval system recommended under the recruitment section. If interest is expressed, the file is forwarded to that Office. If there is more than one Office expressing interest, we recommend the duplicate file system with each interested Office reviewing the folder at the same time. As soon as one expresses an interest, the clearance and invitee procedure can commence.

b. We further understand resumes are not included on the Skills Bank listing but rather are circulated independently because they are not "complete cases." This puts an additional load on SPD for no valid reason that we can ascertain. We recommend resumes be included on the Skills Bank listing just as PHS' and handled in the same manner at the end of the banking period.

5. Components

a. To turn the tables for a moment, one of the major complaints of those involved in the processing system is the inordinate amount of time taken by operating

components in reviewing and deciding on placing an applicant in process. One reason is that under the current practice components are bogged down reviewing unsolicited applicant folders. Under our Skills Bank proposal, if there is no component interest, the applicant is rejected. Thus, the components review only those folders in which they have expressed an interest.

6. Processing

a. In our review so far, we have addressed only recommendations that will get the applicant in process sooner and simultaneously reduce the overload on the entire system. Since the individuals in SPD are concurrently handling applicants and applicants in process, it is felt a reduction both in the number of applicants being reviewed and the number of times each file must be reviewed will allow these individuals to devote more time to the applicant in process. We note that the operating components are principally concerned about the applicants status once he is in process. However, upon reviewing the procedures we find little of substance that we can add to expedite the process. In other words, the system as designed appears to be equipped to handle the situation, yet it does not to anyone's complete satisfaction. As noted, reducing OP/SPD's review of applicants will allow them to devote more time and attention to the applicant in process and should reduce the time span. Simply reproducing the thirteen copies of the PHS required by Security at Headquarters rather than shipping them to Rosslyn for reproduction could save 3 days processing time. Another factor OPAG and the operating components find disconcerting is that no follow-up appears to be made on an applicant in process unless the operating component requests such a follow-up. Anyone who has worked in an operating component is aware if we followed this system on overseas processing, it is unlikely anyone would ever get overseas. It is incumbent upon OP/SPD to devise a "tickler" system to monitor the applicant in process; to "needle" Security, Medics, the component, or the applicant at appropriate intervals to ensure that the processing continues at a reasonable pace rather than waiting for an inquiry to initiate corrective action. Periodic feedback of the status of an applicant to the operating component would help to alleviate misunderstandings and distrust on their part.

7. Conclusion: OPAG believes the applicant process to be an issue of primary importance to the Office of Personnel. As the system provides a service to all Agency components, its effectiveness or lack thereof is a direct reflection on the managerial and administrative capabilities of the Office of Personnel and its careerists. We believe the foregoing recommendations can substantially increase the effectiveness of the system and request your consideration of these proposals. OPAG of course stands ready to discuss these proposals with you at your convenience.

STAT

Chairman, OPAG