

OVERVIEW

THE AUDITOR
STATE OF HAWAII

A Review of a Formula for Security Staffing at the Department of Public Safety

Summary

The Department of Public Safety proposed a revised staffing formula (called shift relief factor) to the 1992 Legislature. If fully funded, the proposed change in the formula would add almost 200 security staff positions at an annual cost exceeding \$5 million. The Legislature requested this review because of the cost implications of the staffing formula. To assist us in conducting this review, we engaged the consulting services of James D. Henderson, a recognized authority in correctional security management and staffing.

We found the revised shift relief factor for determining the level of security staffing for Hawaii's correctional institutions to be reasonable. The data used in calculating the formula, however, are questionable. Thus, until reliable data are available, a definitive formula cannot be developed. More importantly, the base, or the number of work positions, to which the shift relief factor is applied appears to be larger than necessary.

The shift relief factor is calculated from the number of work days required for a correctional security job and the number of days actually worked by a security staff member. The formula relies on leave data that, subtracted from the number of work days a year, would show the actual number of days worked. The department's data on leave are questionable. The data are manually maintained at the individual correctional institutions and the institutions are inconsistent and sometimes inaccurate in the way they record leave data. We found incorrect and improper data being recorded on official leave forms.

To derive the number of security staff needed, the shift relief factor is applied to a base—the total number of security work positions deployed throughout the correctional institutions. We found that the base to which the formula is applied appears to be larger than necessary at a number of the institutions. Our consultant noted, for example, that Oahu Community Correctional Center is the most overstaffed. For example, he considers a total waste the \$150,000 per year cost of staffing a 24-hour post to oversee a parking lot.

Unlike the systematic approach followed in many correctional systems where security staff deployment is based on clear criteria and careful analysis, Hawaii's correctional institutions generally have been left to develop their own individual staffing patterns. With indications of

excessive staffing in a number of areas, the whole staffing base needs to be properly analyzed and justified.

The department is incurring overtime expenditures for its security staff that far exceed appropriations for this purpose—\$8.4 million against an authorized \$3.8 million for fiscal year 1991-92. Overtime pay for the correctional security staff is virtually out of control. During fiscal year 1991-92, the top earner of overtime pay received more than \$36,750 in extra income above his regular salary and 285 security employees—almost one-third of the total—were paid \$12,000 or more each in overtime income. A separate financial audit has revealed lax control over and abuse of overtime usage.

This excess reflects a lack of management control of the various forms of lost time which result from leaves and vacancies. These problems are symptomatic of a general situation where the department fails to keep track of and control such matters as vacancies, training time, sick leave, and vacation leave, all of which impact the staffing formula.

Recommendations and Response

We recommend that the Department of Public Safety fix responsibility for security staffing at a senior management level and assure the reliability of data used in calculating the staffing formula. This includes making sure that employees are properly trained to record leave information correctly and that internal controls are in place to ensure accuracy and accountability. We also recommend that the department should install a comprehensive and systematic approach to assessing its security staffing needs and deploying its security staffing resources. Before approving a revised staffing formula, the Legislature should require the department to submit a more reliable and valid staffing base—that is, a base founded upon clearly established criteria and careful analysis. Finally, we recommend that the department should establish appropriate management controls over lost time and overtime.

The department did not respond to our recommendations. Instead it took exception to our finding that the data used to calculate the staffing formula are not reliable. It does acknowledge, however, that it will be addressing the problem of standardizing the way leaves are recorded and making sure that persons responsible are properly trained. The department also says that we denied it full access to our consultant's report. We had previously notified the department that our consultant's communications to us would remain confidential until our report was issued. Once the report is published, the consultant's report becomes part of the official working papers for the study. Like all our official working papers, these are available for public inspection.

Marlon M. Higa
State Auditor
State of Hawaii

Office of the Auditor
465 South King Street, Room 500
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813
(808) 587-0800
FAX (808) 587-0830