

TESTIMONY**DRAFT TESTIMONY OF SHERI A. FARRAR**

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International Security, Proliferation and Federal Services
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Mr. Chairman, distinguished Senators of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to come before you on the subject of Critical Skills for National Security and the Homeland Workforce Act (S. 1800).

My name is Sheri Farrar. I am currently assigned as the Assistant Director, Administrative Services Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation. I have served in the FBI for over 20 years in assignments in several field offices as well as at FBI headquarters. The FBI's Administrative Services Division, is responsible for working with the FBI's program managers to identify our workforce needs and develop our hiring plan. Our hiring plan and recruitment strategies for both Special Agent and professional support employees for FY 2002 is designed to ensure that we are recruiting and hiring people who have the critical skills needed to enable the FBI to successfully achieve its mission.

I am joined here today by Mrs. Leah Meisel, the Deputy Assistant Director of Administrative Services and one of the FBI's Personnel Officers and Mrs. Margaret Gulotta, Section Chief of the FBI's Language Services Section. At the conclusion of the formal testimony, we are all available to answer your questions.

The FBI currently has significant requirements for Special Agent and Support employees with critical skills in science, engineering, computer science and a number of foreign languages. We expect these needs to continue for at least the next several years. This year alone we expect to hire approximately 960 new Agents. Of these, we have determined, based on our assessment of skill needs that approximately 20 percent should have backgrounds in computer science and information technology, approximately 10 percent should have education and experience in physical and natural sciences, and another 10 percent should possess a background in various fields of engineering. Further, it would be advantageous for another approximately 20 percent to have a foreign language proficiency in our priorities of Arabic, Farsi, Pashtu, Urdu, all dialects of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese. The remainder of our Special Agent candidates will be drawn from other such priority backgrounds as foreign counterintelligence, counterterrorism and military intelligence, in addition to recruiting candidates with the more traditional background of law enforcement, law and accounting. The FBI's Special Agent Hiring Plan focuses on recruiting to these specialty needs and has prioritized the processing of those candidates who possess these critical skills. The FBI recently implemented its on-line application capability on the internet. Since the implementation of this system approximately one month ago, we have received over 11,000 applications for the Special Agent position. The system allows candidates to "self-identify" their skill areas. Those candidates who "self identify" a critical skill are immediately sent to the appropriate field office for priority processing. These applicants are in addition to those who are recruited by our field offices. While we are early in the process of implementing our targeted recruitment strategy for Special Agent candidates possessing these particular skills, we are cautiously optimistic about our ability to recruit sufficient numbers of qualified candidates.

Our hiring plan for professional support personnel requires that we hire over 1400 personnel. This number is comprised of newly funded positions from our FY 2002 Appropriations and the Counterterrorism Supplemental as well as replacement of

personnel lost through attrition. The majority of the new positions (204 from FY 02 enhancements and 526 from the CT supplemental) are in specialized categories supporting our intelligence mission as well as our information technology, language and technical programs. The FBI is aggressively recruiting to fill these position using our on-line application system as well as targeted recruiting activities. To date, the FBI has received over 8600 applications for the over 1200 support positions which have been advertised to date. While we are still early in the hiring process, all indications are that the candidate pool includes highly qualified candidates for the advertised positions.

Not only do we need personnel who have these skills and experience, but we must hire those who can meet our rigorous requirements for professional and personal maturity, have the requisite communication and leadership skills, and be able to successfully pass our background investigation process to determine suitability and trustworthiness.

For the FBI, the number one priority for skills from those I have mentioned thus far, and across all investigative and supporting programs, is that of computer and information technology literacy. This is true regardless of what an individual's educational, primary skill set and experience base is. This is being driven by several factors: the pervasive use of computer-based technologies in all areas of our lives and, certainly by those seeking more innovative ways to engage in criminal activity; the continuing rapid advancement of computer, information, wireless and telecommunications technology by their respective industries; the ready availability of this technology for use by the FBI and other law enforcement agencies, as well as by the subjects of our investigations in all programs and environments, including those which involve national and homeland security; and the absolute requirement of the FBI to be able to fully exploit such for intelligence and evidentiary purposes, by lawful means for lawful purposes. Certainly, our ability to utilize technology to manage the information we obtain also improves our ability to share that information with our law enforcement and intelligence community counterparts. We expect that our demand for computer skills will continue to increase in the years to come.

Let me now specifically address the questions you posed:

First, "How have the events of September 11th affected the skills needed at the FBI? What is the significance of strong math, science and foreign language expertise in the FBI and what combinations of these skills are most useful to the Bureau's mission?" Actually, for some years, we have seen the need emerging to hire a greater percentage of employees with the skills noted previously. We have been aggressively pursuing the hiring of scientists and engineers for some time. The events of September 11th galvanized us into an action plan to enhance our recruitment focus on identifying Special Agent applicants with the skills noted earlier. Certainly our need for Agents with experience in computer and information technology as well as engineers is critical to enable our efforts to exploit digital evidence and the technologies that collect, convey or process digital information. As our Agents deploy both domestically and internationally to collect evidence at crime scenes, our successes are also enhanced with personnel who have an expertise in physical and natural sciences. The FBI's responsibilities in the areas of domestic preparedness had already heightened our awareness to the need for fully training hazardous materials experts, often individuals with science background, but this need has intensified in the wake of the anthrax investigation and the necessity for Agents to respond to potentially hazardous crime scenes. Equally as important are the necessary language skills to assist in collecting and analyzing evidence, interviewing witnesses and subjects and the ability to effectively communicate while working cooperatively with our law enforcement and intelligence counterparts overseas. As you would expect, our greatest language need at the present time is in Middle Eastern and Central Asian languages. It became readily apparent to us that we no longer have the luxury of borrowing these skills from others, who may or may not have them to loan, to meet our needs or satisfy our time constraints.

I would add that another significant reason for the FBI to enhance its efforts

to hire increased numbers of personnel with the necessary critical skills is to ensure our ability to quickly and effectively respond to major crime scenes and to reinforce our ability to sustain adequate resources for multiple long term investigations. When our level of resources in a particular area of expertise is limited, it is obviously more difficult to effectively staff all aspects of an investigation. Having adequate pools of personnel with these critical skills permits us to plan and prepare for, as well as prevent future events, not just provide a reactive response after the fact.

Second, "How can the student loan repayment provisions in S.1800 be most beneficial for the FBI to recruit those with requisite expertise?" Any program that enables the FBI to be more competitive in recruiting and retaining the necessary skills is beneficial, so we certainly support the concept of the legislation. In that regard, we would, however, like to make a few observations concerning the language of the bill. As you know, the FBI is in the excepted service. Consequently, as drafted, many of our employees would not be eligible under the provisions of S. 1800. The FBI is currently covered by existing guidance which allows repayment of student loans to be used as a recruitment and retention tool and are not restricted to only national security positions. Since we only recently have developed our loan repayment policy, it is too early to determine if it will be beneficial to our recruitment and retention efforts. We are also concerned that S. 1800 could create additional, unnecessary levels of bureaucracy, to include the management and administration of the funding, which have a tendency to inhibit the use of flexibilities. We are grateful that this subcommittee is interested in supporting the National security mission by developing programs to enhance our ability to attract the critical skills that we need. In that connection, we strongly encourage you to also consider the flexibilities available under the Administration's proposed Managerial Flexibility Act of 2001, which would provide agencies with greater ability to address workforce issues. The FBI looks forward to working with the members of your subcommittee and the other agencies to continue to address ways to enhance our ability to recruit and retain the skills needed to successfully achieve our missions.

3) "How has the FBI's needs for math, science and foreign language skills changed over the last several years?" In the past, the FBI sought Agents and support employees with scientific and technical backgrounds to work in the FBI Laboratory and to support our Engineering Research Facility and technical programs. However, the FBI maintained its emphasis on recruiting attorneys, accountants and former law enforcement personnel for the majority of its Agent positions. Changes in technology, the enhancement of our information technology needs, the establishment of the National Infrastructure Protection Center at FBIHQ, our growing responsibilities and increased work in the areas of domestic preparedness, computer crimes, and most significantly, our expanded terrorism responsibilities to include the enhanced responsibilities to coordinate information sharing have all impacted on our need to seek different critical skills. The FBI has adjusted its recruiting strategies and enhanced the use of all available recruitment and retention flexibilities to shape our workforce for the future.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my testimony. Mrs. Meisel, Mrs. Gulotta and I will be happy to answer the Subcommittee's questions at the appropriate time.

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