



MEMORANDUM FOR Distribution

From: Cynthia Clark
 Associate Director for Methodology and Standards

Subject: Contractor-Submitted Intentional Fraud in the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal

I am pleased to present the executive summary of one of the evaluation studies for the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal. The dress rehearsal was conducted in three sites — Columbia, South Carolina; Menominee County, Wisconsin; and Sacramento, California. The evaluation studies cover detailed aspects of eight broad areas related to the census dress rehearsal — census questionnaire, address list, coverage measurement, coverage improvement, promotion activities, procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting, field operations, and technology.

The executive summary for each evaluation study is also available on the Census Bureau Internet site (<http://www.census.gov/census2000> and click on the link to “Evaluation”). Copies of the complete report may be obtained by contacting Carnelle Sligh at (301) 457-3525 or by e-mail at carnelle.e.sligh@ccmail.census.gov. Please note that the complete copy of the following reports will not be publically released: reports regarding procedures addressing multiple options for census reporting and the Evaluation of Housing Unit Coverage on the Master Address File.

The evaluations are distributed broadly to promote the open and thorough review of census processes and procedures. The primary purpose of the dress rehearsal is to simulate portions of the environment we anticipate for Census 2000, so we can identify and correct potential problems in the processes. Thus, the purpose of the evaluation studies is to provide analysis to support time critical review and possible refinements of Census 2000 operations and procedures.

The analysis and recommendations in the evaluation study reports are those of staff working on specific evaluations and, thus, do not represent the official position of the Census Bureau. They represent the results of an evaluation of a component of the census plan. They will be used to analyze and improve processes and procedures for Census 2000. The individual evaluation recommendations have not all yet been reviewed for incorporation in the official plan for Census 2000. These evaluation study reports will be used as input to the decision making process to refine the plans for Census 2000.

The Census Bureau will issue a report that synthesizes the recommendations from all the evaluation studies and provides the Census Bureau review of the dress rehearsal operation. This report will also indicate the Census Bureau’s official position on the utilization of these results in the Census 2000 operation. This report will be available July 30th.

Contractor-Submitted Intentional Fraud in the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal

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David A. Phelps
Planning, Research, and
Evaluation Division

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal included options that were not available in the 1990 Census:

- Census forms were made available in public places (Be Counted Forms),
- Census forms were provided in languages other than English and Spanish,
- a second Census form was mailed out,
- telephone interviews were accepted by staff at Telephone Questionnaire Assistance centers.

These options have the potential to impact the Dress Rehearsal in the following ways:

- increase the likelihood that the Census Bureau will collect data for each person,
- increase the possibility that information for a given person may be collected more than once,
- introduce opportunities for invalid returns, an intentional act designed to alter or increase the population count.

In an attempt to measure the Census Bureau's ability to detect invalid returns, the National Opinion Research Center was contracted to corrupt the integrity of the dress rehearsal by adding up to 2,000 fictitious persons in the Sacramento, California and South Carolina sites.

To maintain tight control of the contractor's invalid returns, the Census Bureau produced two response files after census enumeration. The invalid cases were removed from the file used for all subsequent Census operations. The file with the invalid cases was used to conduct the Invalid Return Detection operation and evaluation.

A total of 772 contractor-submitted invalid returns with just less than 2,000 fictitious persons were known to have been captured in the Dress Rehearsal. There were 371 returns submitted in Sacramento, California and 401 returns submitted in South Carolina. There were two situations that caused the invalid returns to be removed from the Dress Rehearsal:

- the invalid return did not meet Census inclusion criteria during a processing step,
- the invalid return was detected during the Invalid Return Detection operation.

Of the 371 invalid returns submitted in Sacramento, California; 251 (67%) returns did not meet census inclusion criteria during processing and zero returns were detected as invalid during the Invalid Return Detection operation. Hence, a total of 251 (67%) returns were removed from the Dress Rehearsal evaluation file and 120 (33%) returns were erroneously included in the evaluation file.

Of the 401 invalid returns submitted in South Carolina; 253 (63%) returns didn't meet census inclusion criteria during processing and six (1%) returns were detected as invalid during the Invalid Return Detection operation. Hence, a total of 259 (64%) returns were removed from the Dress Rehearsal evaluation file and 142 (36%) returns were erroneously included in the evaluation file.

In both sites, approximately two-thirds of the contractor-submitted invalid returns were removed from the processing flow. The vast majority of these returns were removed because they did not meet census inclusion criteria during processing.

In light of these findings, the Census Bureau is examining the characteristics of the contractor-submitted cases that were not detected, along with those that were, and developing a process to ensure that fraudulent forms are not included in Census 2000.