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CHARACTERISTICS OF INCARCERATED VETERANS

Executive Summary

There has been an increase in the number of inquiries to the Department concerning veterans in State correctional facilities.

At this time, there are 3,932 inmates who report prior military service. These self-reported veterans comprise approximately 11% of the Department's total inmate population.

NCJRS

JUL 15 1987

ACQUISITIONS

September 1986

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## CHARACTERISTICS OF INCARCERATED VETERANS

This brief report represents a statistical overview of veterans under the Department's custody.

### Background

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of inquiries from the Legislature, State agencies, and community groups to the Department concerning veterans in State correctional facilities.

### Purpose of Report

This brief report addresses this frequent request for a statistical overview of veterans under custody with respect to their prior military service, personal characteristics, and criminal histories.

### Data Source

The Department's computerized inmate record system was used to compile the statistical data presented in this report.

In reviewing the provided data on type of discharge it should be noted that this is unverified, self-reported data.

### A. MILITARY RECORD

#### Number of Veterans Under Custody

As of September 1986, a total of 3,932 inmates claim having had military service.

These 3,932 self-reported veterans comprise 11% of the Department's overall inmate population of 36,884.

#### Type of Discharge

The vast majority 3,299 (84%) of these 3,932 inmates claim honorable discharges. Only 454 (12%) report undesirable discharges. The remaining 179 (4%) report other types of discharges.

<u>Military Discharge Type/ Current Military Status</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Honorable	3,299	83.9%
Mental Disability	25	0.6%
Undesirable	454	11.6%
Dishonorable	80	2.0%
Other/Unstated	36	0.9%
In Reserves at time of Arrest	2	0.1%
AWOL at time of Arrest	36	0.9%
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TOTAL	3,932	100.0%

This percentage distribution is consistent (with one major exception) with the breakdown presented in the preceding (December 1984) report which was based on a special survey of inmate veterans which was jointly conducted with the Department's Division of Guidance.

The major exception involves the lack of data on "General" discharges on the Department's computerized data file. These cases are coded under the "Honorable" category at this time. At the time of the December 1984 report, 16% of all inmate veterans reported General discharges. If this percentage is applied to the current population of inmate veterans, it may be estimated that 629 inmates have General discharges. If these cases are subtracted from the Honorable category, it may be estimated that 2,670 (rather than 3,299) inmates have Honorable discharges.

Based on the results of this prior survey, it has been proposed that the Department's Division of Management Information Services enact a revised coding system for Military Discharge/Military Status, which is based on the standard categories used by the U. S. Department of Defense and reiterated in U.S. Department of Justice recommended standards for corrections agencies.

## B. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

### Sex and Age

All but four of these 3,932 self-reported veterans are male.

As illustrated by the following table, these inmate veterans are somewhat older as a group than the overall inmate population.

<u>Age</u>	<u>Inmate Veterans</u>		<u>Total Inmate Population</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
16-18	8	0.3%	854	2.3%
19-20	43	1.1%	2,333	6.3%
21-24	478	12.1%	7,658	20.8%
25-29	985	25.0%	9,449	25.6%
30-34	914	23.3%	6,996	19.0%
35-39	647	16.5%	4,607	12.5%
40-44	339	8.6%	2,402	6.5%
45-49	208	5.3%	1,293	3.5%
50-64	280	7.1%	1,187	3.2%
65 & over	30	0.7%	102	0.3%
TOTAL	3,932	100.0%	36,881*	100.0%

\* Monthly Inmate Profile (9/8/86) contains three (3) missing cases on this variable.

Of the total inmate population, 29.4% are under 25 years old while only 13.5% of the inmate veterans fall in this age range.

On the other hand, 38.3% of the inmate veterans are over 34 years old as compared to 26.0% of the total inmate population.

County of Commitment

As compared to the total inmate population, a lower percentage of these inmate veterans were from New York City (57.3% as compared to 69.9% of the overall inmate population).

	<u>Inmate Veterans</u>		<u>Total Inmate Population</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
New York City	2,253	57.3%	25,783	69.9%
Suburban New York (Nassau, Rockland, Suffolk, Westchester)	618	15.7%	4,513	12.2%
Upstate	1,048	26.7%	6,588	17.9%
Not Available	13	0.3%	-	-
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TOTAL	3,932	100.0%	36,884	100.0%

Ethnic Group

As compared to the total inmate population, white inmates comprise a notably higher percentage of this group of inmate veterans (38.2% as compared to 21.3%).

	<u>Inmate Veterans</u>		<u>Total Inmate Population</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Black	1,773	45.1%	18,492	50.1%
White	1,502	38.2%	7,855	21.3%
Hispanic	644	16.4%	10,314	28.0%
Other/Not Available	13	0.3%	223	0.6%
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TOTAL	3,932	100.0%	36,884	100.0%

## C. CRIMINAL HISTORY

### Conviction Crime

Overall, the conviction crimes of the inmate veterans resemble the instant offenses of the total inmate population with certain notable exceptions.

Slightly fewer of the inmate veterans were committed for robbery and burglary than the overall inmate population. Correspondingly, higher percentages of the veterans were committed for murder and rape. Otherwise, the distributions seem quite similar.

	<u>Inmate Veterans</u>		<u>Total Inmate Population</u>	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Murder/Homicide	900	22.9%	6,769	18.4%
Robbery	872	22.2%	11,044	30.0%
Burglary	462	11.7%	5,052	13.7%
Assault	179	4.6%	1,389	3.8%
Grand Larceny	106	2.7%	1,028	2.8%
Rape/Sex Crimes	423	10.8%	2,403	6.5%
Drugs	544	13.8%	5,325	14.4%
Forgery	31	0.8%	350	0.9%
Weapons	136	3.4%	1,453	3.9%
Other Felonies	270	6.9%	1,552	4.2%
Youthful Offenders	1	0.0%	348	0.9%
Not Available	8	0.2%	171	0.5%
TOTAL	3,932	100.0%	36,884	100.0%

A higher combined percentage of the veterans, however, were committed for the violent non-property offenses of Murder, Homicide, Assault, and Rape/Sex Crimes than the overall inmate population. Nearly 10% more veterans were committed for these offenses than the overall inmate population.



	<u>Inmate Veterans</u>	<u>Total Inmate Population</u>
Violent Non-Property Offenses*	38.3%	28.7%
Robbery	22.2%	30.0%
All Other	39.5%	41.3%
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TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%

\*Homicides, Assaults, Rape/Sex Offenses

#### Conclusion

Overall, self-reported inmate veterans differ from the overall inmate population on a number of variables. A higher percentage of the inmate veterans are from Upstate counties. As a group, greater percentages of the veteran inmates are white and over 35 years old than the overall inmate population. Proportionately, they appear to have committed more violent non-property crimes than the general inmate population.