Press Briefing -- April 25, 2000
Director Prewitt

MR. STEVE JOST: This is another one of our regular census operational press briefings where we're providing you and the public with a status of all census operations. Today we're going to focus on the largest of all those operations, known as Non-Response Follow-Up, and try and provide you in as much detail, as time will permit, how those operations function. I just want to remind you if you have not been part of our operational press briefings before, we have reporters on the phone from around the country. Once the Director finishes with some opening remarks we'll turn the questions over to you and we'll alternate from the room to the phones. All we ask is that you identify yourself and your affiliation before your question. We have staff with microphones so that we can pick you up on audio, as well as the director.

With that, I give you Dr. Kenneth Prewitt.

DR. KENNETH PREWITT: Thank you, Steve. It is, of course, a cliche, but nevertheless true, that the census is the nation's largest mobilization in peacetime. As you know, we concluded the first key operation, the mail-back phase, successfully, I might say, but the response rate was, as we announced earlier, better than we had anticipated. Indeed, I can report to you today that we will post tonight at 6 o'clock a final tally for both the nation and all 39,000 jurisdictions. That tally will show 65 percent, which I indicated last week we were certain that we would reach. It does show some movement from last week. That is, now 17 percent of our communities around the country, or more than 6,600, have bettered their 1990 performance by 5 percent or more. This is really a dramatic improvement for those communities.

However, as we have feared and announced last week, the response rates for the long and the short forms continue to show a much greater differential than in 1990. In 1990, as you recall, it was 6 percent, and today it is twice that rate, or 12 percent. I won't dwell on the particulars of the response rate phenomena. I can answer your questions, if you wish, during Q&A, and, of course, direct you to our Web site, where there's an icon on the Census 2000 initial response rate.

But now, of course, we enter our most demanding phase. Starting tomorrow we need to visit every household from which no census form was returned or cleared through our data capture centers. That's approximately 42 million addresses. We need to identify them, we need to get information on each of them, and do that in 10 weeks.

Who is going to do this job? A few words about our employment pool. Remembering that as recently as six months ago there were many skeptics who said that the Census Bureau would never get enough people to do the task of Non-Response Follow-Up. We

recruited aggressively. More than 5,000 print ads, over 160,000 radio spots, 25,000 bus posters, over 150 million flyers and brochures. The recruitment strategy worked. We generated 6 million calls to our toll free jobs line and over 10 million hits on our Internet job site. The bottom line? We have 3.4 million applicants, which is well over our goal, 113 percent of our goal, and from that applicant pool we identified 2.59 million qualified applications, again well over our target, 108 percent of our goal. Or, put differently, this is approximately a 5 to 1 ratio for reaching our actual hiring goal.

As of today, we have 492,245 people on the payroll. They are being trained at approximately 40,000 sites around the country, and this, of course, represents the most qualified selection from the larger pool of 2.6 million.

Now a word or two about this workforce. It is what we call front-loaded. That is, it is approximately twice the minimum needed to do the job. This is our way of protecting against expected attrition. Indeed, we want to conclude our Non-Response Follow-Up phase with about a quarter million people on the job. So, we have front-loaded it roughly 2 to 1 to make certain that as we have encountered the expected attrition, we nevertheless will have an adequate number to complete the task. Of course, if we do not have attrition, it simply means that we get the job finished sooner.

As a further redundancy, we have already identified 53,000 for replacement training. That is, even if we have as many as 10 percent of our additional hires who do not complete training -- and of course that happens in an operation like this -- we already have replacements in place.

Now across this, as far as I'm concerned, quite spectacular recruitment success at the national level, there are, of course, a few spots where there are weak areas. In three of our 520 local census offices -- that is, about a half a percent, there are specific training sites where fewer than twice the minimum did arrive for training. For example, let us say we have a training site where we needed a minimum of 15 people but we wanted 30. That is, the front-loaded number was twice the minimum. And we only got, say, 23. This is a hypothetical case. We're working on those cases, but I say these are specific sites in fewer than -- well, there are only three LCO's out of 520.

But the important fact is, every one of our training sites has been started, or will be started if it's on Thursday as against Monday -- we started in two phases -- every one of the training sites is starting with an excess above the minimum required. That is, none of our workload is not going to go forward with the requisite number of census-takers.

Obviously, the basic task of these census-takers is to convince someone in nonresponding households, those who could not be bothered to mail a form back, to

now cooperate. And this really is the fundamental message to the American people: if, as of today, you've not mailed in your form, we ask you then to please cooperate with the census-taker. These are not professional survey-takers. They're certainly not sales or marketing people. They are part-time workers who accepted the challenge to do this very difficult job for America. They are committed to doing it well and to doing it right.

I'm going to return in a moment to the Non-Response Follow-Up operation and how it works, but first let me give you a very quick update on other field operations. We have completed operations with our questionnaire assistance service in six languages, and our thousands of local questionnaire assistance centers and other locations where "Be Counted" forms were available. We made available about 16 million "Be Counted" forms, and approximately 650,000 have now been returned.

Also, as you know, we set up a process by which language forms could be requested and about 2.2 million language forms were requested, and of those more than 80 percent have now been returned. It's a response rate well above the national average of 65 percent, which is to suggest, of course, that our language program did work, as we had hoped that it would.

At the end of March we completed our special place enumeration that was 8,600 emergency shelters, hotels, motels used as shelters, 3,500 soup kitchens, 300 mobile food vans, 5,800 targeted shelter outdoor locations, transient night operations, 13,000 locations, racetracks, carnivals, marinas and so forth. All of those operations have now been completed on schedule, and we've concluded our enumeration of 240 villages in remote Alaska. We've completed military enumeration of uniformed personnel in 500 installations overseas, and we still have underway some other special operations like List Enumerate. I won't go into that in detail, but that's about 375,000 housing units, and also a process we call Update/Enumerate -- American Indian reservation areas, resort areas with high rates of seasonal housing. And that's about 930,000 housing units. And group quarters, which we start soon, 11,000 enumerators will go to about 200,000 college dorms, hospitals, nursing homes and so forth.

All of those operations -- and there are, of course, a number of them that I've just listed -- all of those operations are either completed, if they were scheduled to be completed by now, or they're under way and, as of now, operating on schedule without any major difficulties.

Now let me return quickly to Non-Response Follow-Up. Just to let you know how it works operationally, because obviously over the next 10 weeks it will be the story that many of you will want to be following. Bear in mind that the census universe that we start the census with is 120 million addresses in the country. We now have shifted to

the second universe, which is the universe of nonrespondents, as I say, about 42 million of those addresses. So that's where our focus is now. Whereas a month ago, of course, it was on getting mail back from 120 (million) addresses, we now have about 65 percent of those that have come in, and so we now talk about a new universe that is the universe of nonrespondent households.

For this universe we must generate address files and geographic files for each one of our local offices, and load these files onto our databases. From these then the local offices print file assignment directories, address listings and labels for questionnaires. In each local office we calculate the assignment based upon the nonresponse rate, and also specific characteristics of the blocks, including block sizes and shapes. Larger distances take more travel time. Therefore, you do your workload accordingly.

We then carry that workload down to the next level of geography, first, to the level of what we call field operation supervisor districts, and then from that, of course, down to our crew leader districts, which is the smallest unit that we operate with. That's the 40,000, where the actual door-to-door operations take place. For each of these operations we produce census field maps with boundaries drawn for field operations to crew leader levels and, of course, we do different maps differently depending on whether it's city-style or rural addresses.

Here now is an issue that I want to explain as clearly as I can. We actually have to do that. That is, we have to create a non-response file or universe in order to make all of these assignments, to get the maps, to get the kits in all of the right places. We started that work on about April 18th. Of course, since we started training yesterday on the 25th, we had to have all of that work finished by then. Which means forms are still coming in, even after we have cut for our nonresponse universe.

We do the best we can at striking late forms that come in from that nonresponse universe, but you cannot find all of them. You can find all of them but they're still coming in. Which is to say, we're still getting forms coming in today, and we're also getting what we call non-ID forms, which are "Be Counted" forms, and it's impossible instantaneously to make certain we know what household that "Be Counted" form came back in. So there's necessarily some overlap between the nonresponse universe and the responding households.

That universe is hard for us to calculate, but out of the 42 million, that could easily be a million or 1.5 million addresses, where we will actually get a form but we don't know we've got a form when we have to do this work, which means we nevertheless have to send somebody out to that address, knock on the door, and ask for a form. That, of course, will irritate some members of the American public, understandably. They'll say, "I mailed it in and why in the world, if you know that, why are you bothering me

again?" and we'll try to explain as best we can.

Some of you will have already seen because you visited a training site, we are trying to get roughly 500,000 people to understand these kinds of subtleties in just a few days of training, but nevertheless, that will be one of the things that we encounter. Many of you will pick up that story and will understandably be saying, well, why in the world couldn't they get it right? I'm just trying to explain it's not that we could not get it right, it's just that at a certain point you have to stop and get this other operation on track.

Obviously, address lists must be customized to fit target areas in which special enumerations are required, such as "blitz enumeration" or "paired enumeration." Blitz enumeration is when we actually send a crew of enumerators into an area, let us say a large apartment building in a hard-to-enumerate area, because we simply think that's the most effective way to do it, send a lot of enumerators in on one day and try to blitz the entire complex. Paired enumeration is a bit different, as we send out enumerators, obviously, in pairs, and that's for safety reasons where we're sending them in to high crime areas.

All these addresses are loaded onto our automated operation control system, and this system tracks every census household ID in the Non-Response Follow-Up universe. All enumerator assignments and all cases selected for the quality control re-interview program, we obviously have a quality control process. We're selecting a number of cases where we go back for every enumerator, for all 500,000, we go back out and check some of their work to make certain that we are dealing with honest employees who are doing the job that they are saying they are doing. We only know that by going out and doing a quality check.

We then produce address registers for each enumerator assignment area, and identify whether it's a short form or a long form. And each register contains about 40 cases. That's each enumerator initially is sent out in the field on about 40 cases. They, of course, carry both the forms, but also the labels for each address. That is, our Non-Response Follow-Up universe now has to have an address label for each of those addresses. The right enumerator has to have the right label forms so that when they actually get it and stand on the doorway, they put it onto the forms to be mailed back in -- or not mailed back in -- taken to the LCO and properly handled.

The labeled questionnaires are then bundled for each enumerator assignment area. They are handed over to crew leaders. The crew leader checks them, makes sure that it does meet all of our quality standards, and then they come back into our local census offices. Obviously the enumerators now are what the whole enterprise rests upon. The quality of the work they do, their flexibility, their ingenuity, their determination. We are very

pleased with the quality of the workforce that we have for this task. Nevertheless, we know it's going to be a difficult, challenging, and even at times a stressful task.

One of the things that we've concentrated on, I just mention it quickly, and this is the possibility that the census enumerators, that there will be phony census enumerators who use the census as an opportunity to get into homes inappropriately, illegally. You should know that an individual is phony if they don't carry a census ID card printed with their name, they don't carry this tote bag. This is the census enumerator bag. If they don't have this on them then you simply say, this is not a census-taker, if they don't have the tote bag. If they also don't have the actual document itself with questionnaires. And they should be providing -- to everyone when they knock on the door a form that shows the phone number of the local census office, and any resident who is concerned will then go back into their home, call that number, and make certain that this is a census-taker.

So, we think that this is a number of different ways in which to try to reassure the American public that they will have a way to determine whether someone is a census-taker. And most importantly, under no circumstances is a census-taker to ask to come into the home. Obviously, if someone wants to invite them into their home, fine, but if a census-taker asks to come in, that is a signal, an alert to the resident that this could well be not a census-taker but someone trying to scam the census.

So, we think we have five or six different ways. You would have to fabricate the material, you would have to get a fake badge, you would have to get a fake tote bag, you would have to get fake papers, you would have to carry a phone number and make sure that somebody back there would answer that phone and say yes, you are. And then you would have to make the extra mistake of waiting and hoping they invite you in. That's the only way that someone who's not a census-taker could actually use the census operation to get in. Those, we believe, are enough layers of protection that we hope we've reduced to the absolute minimum any misuse of the census experience by members -- by criminals who simply want to use this as a way to get into homes.

If no one is at home, then the census-taker on the first visit, the census-taker then leaves a notice of visit form, notes the time of day when he or she would like to make a follow-up visit. If it's obviously occupied housing, then they should come back at least three times and try to make phone calls at least three times, for a maximum of six attempts. At that time the census-taker can interview a neighbor, a building manager or some other knowledgeable person and get the best possible information they can.

If an enumerator is unable to complete an interview because of a refusal, the reasons given are documented on a form, they're returned to the crew leader, who in most

instances will assign the case to an even more experienced or expert enumerator for yet another attempt. That is, we make an attempt, of course, to convert refusals into cooperation. If all else fails then we do try to get at least basic information from a neighbor or building manager.

If we can determine that the house is vacant, then it will be deleted from our nonresponse universe, if it's been demolished or burnt out or obviously for sale or vacant. Enumerators are not actively looking for missing housing units, though if they discover one they will record the address, information, and if possible complete a blank enumerator questionnaire that is unlabeled, or non-ID enumerator questionnaire.

Every day census-takers return their completed work in individual transmittal envelopes to their crew leader, and every day their crew leader delivers this work to the local census office, and there the questionnaires are reviewed in our assignment control operation to make sure the quality standards are met. If they fail that test then they are sent back to the enumerator for resolution. Starting May 1st, questionnaires which pass the quality review are routed for automated check-in, where they are properly ID-ed in their local census office. They are then labeled with the address bar with the enumerator's payroll materials and so forth. Status reports reaching the LCO and each field operation crew leader are prepared daily again. And also daily, each LCO will box all questionnaires checked out by operations control, give a bar-code shipping label, and ship it Fed Ex back to our central processing offices, and we'll start processing these questionnaires as early as May 4th.

Throughout this Non-Response Follow-Up period, we will be juggling a variety of difficult kinds of cases. Census Day households with the usual home elsewhere, an apartment or trailer park address mix-ups, partial interview data, non-English-speaking respondent households, those that we selected randomly for quality control, there's a large number of units, will get special treatment because that's what has to happen in a census.

Finally, of course every census success is measured by what the people do. That is, do the households cooperate? It's very hard for us sitting here today to tell you how many households simply will not cooperate. We are about to learn that, and will be reporting that back as we have the experience.

Finally, I'd like to say that I know for many of you good news is not easily written up as news, and I want to apologize that I can only give you good news today. Just the facts. Just the facts. We are on schedule. We have hired the people we need to hire. We are doing Non-Response Follow-Up, as we have said that we will do it. That doesn't mean we won't have some difficulty tomorrow morning that we can then reconvene you and let you know about, but as of today the census is where we would hope it would be. We

are, of course, extremely pleased. We start on this Non-Response Follow-Up period from the platform of 65 percent response rate rather than 61 or a lower response rate.

The only bad news I could come up with to read to you today comes from an issue of Business Week magazine, and I'd like to read you a few quotes from that Business Week magazine. "This week, in advance of the scheduled starting date, the census was bubbling hot in the news. The census director had his hands full oiling the machinery for the start-up of the big project and at the same time trying to quiet the storm of protests stirred up by some of the census questions. Though the Census Bureau explained that all information will be confidential, the objections are piling up. The census has become a political football. Legislatures are declaiming against violation of the sanctity of the home by the Census Bureau snoopers." That was in Business Week, March 9th, 1940. So here we are.

With that, I'm happy to take your questions. Steve will organize it.

Q: [Off-mike/inaudible.]

DR. PREWITT: Well, the basic number in 1990, the completed number that we find reported was 98.6 percent of the population was counted. However, that's a net number. In 1990 about 8 million people were not counted and about 4 million people were double counted, so the net was about a little over 4 or 4.5 million. So, we have been saying all along with respect to this census that we are making every effort to count everyone in the United States. However, we do not believe that we can completely do that. You've been writing the stories. You've been quoting people back to us saying, I've thrown it away, I refuse to cooperate, I'm not going to answer the door, they're not going to get this information from me. There are X number of people in this country who either won't be found, or if found, won't cooperate. The magnitude of that we will not know until we have finished this basic census operation and then done our Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation, our own big quality survey. We will field that starting in August, and it won't be until next -- middle of winter or early spring that we'll report that number.

We will not know, of course -- by definition you won't know how many people you did not count until you've done that piece of quality work. There's no other way to know it. What is the true number? A census is an approximation of the true number. That's what it is. We will have an estimate based upon this enumeration, but we are not promising to actually count a higher percentage of the American population from the basic enumeration that we did in 1990. The conditions that make that difficult have not lessened. High mobility, irregular housing, high percentages of immigrant populations, linguistically isolated households and now, of course, coupled with that has been the stirring of anti-census, anti-government arguments, which simply will mean some

people are going to slam the door and say, "I won't cooperate."

D'Vera COHEN (Washington Post): You have had some experience, haven't you, though, with people going door to door already, the enumerators in the remote areas. What experience have they reported back on, for example, refusal to answer questions on the long form or slamming doors in faces? Does it seem to you that that has gone up, and do you have any numbers to show how many folks?

DR. PREWITT: I don't have anything systematic on that, Dee. We have not encountered any unusual problems. Now these are very special populations, as you know. When you're doing remote Alaska, it's a different kind of exercise. You're doing it with the authorities, with the cooperation of the village chiefs. That's the same thing in Indians lands, and so forth. So it's a slightly different kind of knocking on the door operation than it is when we're now going back into the rest of the country.

But, no, the good news is that in none of those operations have we encountered an exceptionally high or unexpected level of refusals. In fact, we think that we did a very good job in remote Alaska, which is the one big operation that is complete. A very complete job there.

MR. JOST: We'll go to our first call on the telephone. It's Laurie Krise of the Arlington, Texas Morning News. Before we take your question, Laurie, I can report to you that Arlington, Texas, is one of 800 communities that reached their 90 + 5 goal over the weekend, at 66 percent.

DR. PREWITT: Congratulations.

Q: Thank you very much. My question today is, how helpful is the door-to-door phase? In other words, for example, in 1990 how much did it help push up the numbers and get the response rate higher?

DR. PREWITT: Well, there is no census without Non-Response Follow-Up because the base therefore, would be approximately 65 percent of the population, which would, by any count, be a disaster if you could only count 65 percent of the population. So we always expect a heavy Non-Response Follow-Up workload. That's been true since we went to the mail-out census, which really starts partially in 1960, and then in 1970. So, we've really only had three censuses, which are like the one we're conducting in 2000, where we first do the mail-out and then we do the door-to-door follow-up.

But certainly we've always expected to have a heavy Non-Response Follow-Up workload. That's what we'll have in 2000. And we expect to get close to 100 percent, but we would be very surprised if we actually got to 100 percent. As I say, we won't know that until we've done our Accuracy and Coverage Evaluation.

Q: Congressman Coburn from Oklahoma, one of the anti-census critics, he's using his two weeks away from Washington to hold a series of town meetings and he's going to be talking about the census. One of the things he's going to be doing is again urging his constituents to politely refuse to give any more information to the census-takers other than the basic questions. Would you respond directly to that, and can your agency -- or will your agency enter that part of Oklahoma with a different agenda or go to those households differently?

DR. PREWITT: No. We can't fine-tune the census operation at this stage to try to respond to local campaigns that have as their purpose creating less than complete census responses. I can simply say what I've said before, that if there is serious degradation of the quality of the census information that the country will suffer for 10 years. That is, the array of programs that depend upon high quality census data range, as you know, across education, health, transportation, housing and job training. They also, of course, do connect back to how we calculate the Consumer Price Index, to which the Social Security is of course indexed, as are all private pension plans. They connect back to our unemployment numbers, which, of course, are what are used to make judgments about the state of the economy.

So we put at risk, if we seriously degrade the quality of long-form information, we put at risk a very substantial number of government obligations. There's simply no doubt about that. We are hoping that when we actually look at the data that only a scattering of the American people will cooperate in these efforts to degrade the data. But all I can simply say as the director of the Census Bureau, that if the data are degraded, we have put at risk programs which, after all, are federally mandated programs. These are not Census Bureau programs. These are government programs.

I know there has been a lot of concern about the race question, but I can only remind us all that the U.S. Congress in 1964 did pass the Civil Rights Act, in 1965 the Voting Rights Act, and short of repealing those acts, or deciding to administer them differently, we need high-quality race information about this society. On the other hand, all we can do is train these enumerators to do the best job that they can. In this book, which is the training material, we obviously have all kinds of special sections, what are the laws, how is this question used, what happens when you get refusals, how do you try to convince them. What happens if they will give you some information but not all the

information.

Just keep in mind how big this operation is. We have 500,000 people today, 495,200, whatever the number was. Close to 500,000. There will be more tomorrow, going through this kind of material. These are not professional survey takers. Those of you who have gone to training sessions will recognize that they are people, as we have all along promised, hired from the local communities to try to count those communities. So we are putting those people in a very difficult position. We're saying it is the law that they are supposed to get this information, and it's not a law the Census Bureau has passed, it's a law that the United States Congress has passed.

They're going to knock on the door and someone's going to say, "But my congressman says I don't have to." All we can do at that moment is say, "Do the best job you can."

There's not much else that we can do. It is too bad that at this key moment in the census process that there are efforts to convince the American people not to cooperate with one of our most fundamental civic obligations.

MR JOST: We'll go to the phones again. Mark Skertic of the Chicago Sun Times.

Q: Good afternoon, Dr. Prewitt. What kind of training or what kind of precautions have been put in place for enumerators who have to go into high crime areas, such as a housing project or a neighborhood where crime is a major problem?

DR. PREWITT: I very quickly covered that, but let me just repeat it. We have two processes. One we call blitz enumeration. That's a particular place, like, say, the Robert Taylor homes in Chicago. We will send a whole team in one day and try to simply cover that entire complex over a period of days, in that case, because that's a number of buildings. In other areas where simply it is a high crime area, we send them in pairs. But beyond that we do have special instructions to all of our enumerators, wherever they are in the country, to say, here's how to psych out, if you will, or anticipate a troubling situation, a possible crime situation, a place where you could be put at risk. Here's what you do. Don't go back. Wait until you call your crew leader, get help. We're very, very focused on making certain that we don't put any of our enumerators in a vulnerable position.

On the other hand, we do have the responsibility to the American people to count everyone, and so we're constantly balancing off the two things. How do we make absolutely certain that we don't put an enumerator at risk, and on the other hand, that we don't create a situation in which whole areas don't get counted. Because then they

are suffering because they don't get the kinds of benefits or programs or attention that they merit.

So we can't put law-abiding citizens at risk by not counting them simply because they happen to live in a neighborhood where there are crimes. So we are balancing that off as best we can and trying to give our enumerators all kinds of assets, clues, instructions, materials and so forth to make certain that nothing does happen to them, and we will pay very close attention to that.

PAM FESSLER: Of the 42 million households that the enumerators have to go to, how many of those people have to fill out the long form rather than the short form? And how will that complicate the follow-up job?

DR. PREWITT: Pam, I'm going to have to do some very quick arithmetic. It should have been 1 out of 6, but since the differential and the return rate is, as you know, higher -- that is, fewer of the long forms came in -- I'm worried that I'll get my arithmetic wrong. At any rate, it will be close to 20 percent of those households will have to get a long-form questionnaire, which is higher, as I say, than we had anticipated, since we anticipated 60 or 70 percent. Actually we anticipate a little higher because we always have the short forms. I'll have to do my arithmetic and give you the right number.

But certainly it puts a bigger strain on the enumerator task. The two things. One, it's more difficult to administer, and also you get higher levels of resistance. I want to say that we got resistance in 1990, as we got resistance in 1940, as I just read. There's always been resistance. It's always been harder to get the long form data than the short form because it takes a bit longer, 45 minutes. Obviously you would say, correctly, that 45 minutes doesn't seem like an awfully large investment to make every 10 years. It's not like we're asking the American population to stop everything and work hard at this for months and months and months. We are asking for 38, 45 minutes. Nevertheless, there will be people who say, I'm too busy, I don't want to take the time, I don't know the answer to this, and so forth. And that will put a strain on the enumerators.

They are being trained today to go ahead and be as persistent as they are capable of being, consistent with being friendly and cooperative and neighborly about this task. It's very hard for us today, Pam, to say exactly the magnitude of additional burden that will occur. We simply are going to work on that now, but what we worked on last week is getting these 500,000 people at the right places with the right materials, and getting trained.

MR. JOST: On the phone is Melissa Campanelli with Direct Marketing News.

Q: I'm just wondering about more on the long-form. Are you sending out enumerators to households that have only entered some of the long-form questions? Are you asking for the households to fill out the rest of the questions?

DR. PREWITT: No, we do not -- in this operation that we're starting tomorrow -- we are only going to households from which we did not get any kind of form back. These are nonresponding households. If a household sent back a long form but did not completely fill it out, they are not part of our nonresponding household universe. They become part of a different universe, and that doesn't happen for about another two months. That is the universe of people who -- well, actually some of that work starts a little sooner. Some of that work starts in about two or three weeks.

If we get a long form in that says there is so many people living here but there is not enough information on the long form to determine with some level of certainty, then they will get a follow-up phone call, or, if necessary, a field visit. We cannot put a household into the census file unless we are certain that there are people living there. As I've said in testimony and have said to the press before, if someone sends a form in and says there are 23 of us living here and no information about them, we simply can't put 23 into the apportionment count or districting count, for obvious reasons. We have to make certain that someone is there.

What we cannot do in a census environment, in a census year, is when we get long forms that have the basic -- the minimum amount of information to be certain the people are there but have not all of the other information that you need for these other purposes -- we do not have the capacity, the budget or the operational tools in place to go out and get that information. The country will simply have to get along without that basic information.

Q: Thank you.

MR. JOST: That's you. Go.

Q: Hi, Simon Kennedy, Bridge News.

You touched on the role the census played on the economy, in the jobs report and the March data, or the March employment report, [which] was the last, kind of showed a combined through this year of about 117,000 people. And I was wondering how many

people have been hired since then for your -- for the census?

DR. PREWITT: I think if I understood you correctly, we had hired 117,000 earlier for other operations that we talked about before --

Q: Through -- purely from a 2000 perspective. I think you employed 39,000 in January and February --

DR. PREWITT: That's right.

Q: Yeah.

DR. PREWITT: Those people were hired for a certain task. They then went off the payroll. Now, I don't know what percentage of them are now part of our 492,000 but a high percentage of them, anybody who did an earlier census job for us and did it well and wanted to remain a census employee, we would then put them back on the payroll. My guess is a very high percentage of the initial people who did our early work for us have now come back in on the payroll, but I can't give you the exact percentage.

Q: Is the 492,000 -- I don't want to kind of compare apples and oranges -- is that people who've been employed purely for carrying out the 2000 census or is that the total payroll of the U.S. Census Bureau?

DR. PREWITT: Oh, no. We're just talking about decennial census payroll now in all of these numbers. In addition, the Census Bureau has others doing other kinds of surveys, other kinds of work, economic statistics and so forth, including field work. But all of these numbers are just decennial census numbers.

Q: And when did you start employing people for --

DR. PREWITT: What?

Q: When did you start employing people for the decennial -- ?

DR. PREWITT: For the decennial census? Well, our first big field operation was where

we did the address work and that was almost two years ago.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much.

MR. JOST: Okay, on the telephone from the Philly Daily News is Myung (Oak) Kim (ph).

Q: Dr. Prewitt, I have two quick questions. First of all, of the total, the almost 500,000 workers, what percentage are enumerators?

MR. JOST: Nearly all.

DR. PREWITT: Trying to do the arithmetic in my head. It's kind of eight to one ratio. They are 40,000. Of those, close to 440,000 are enumerators.

Q: Oh, okay.

DR. PREWITT: There are 40,000 crew leaders, and there's another layer, about 5,000, what we call district level supervisors and another level in the local offices. But I would say approximately 435,000 to 440,000 of those are enumerators.

Q: Okay. And then going back to the safety issue, are you aware of any enumerators or other census workers who have been threatened or hurt during non-response follow-up since this operation?

DR. PREWITT: Not yet in the 2000 experience. In previous censuses we certainly have had occurrences. Someone was shot at in 1990, I think in the Bronx. We've had dog attacks. We've had plates thrown at enumerators; I mean, angry kinds of outbreaks. But, fortunately, we have not suffered any serious injury or fatality in that kind of incident.

We have already suffered -- in this census we've had, I believe, the current number is four census deaths; that is, deaths of people working on census material. These have been traffic fatalities. After all, there's a lot of people covering a lot of miles, especially in our rural areas, mountain states, and so forth. And when you have that many people driving that many miles, then you, of course, are going to suffer certain kinds of accidents. And I believe the number today is there've been four deaths of census

workers since the decennial census started. The number that I had at one time; this is now dated; this was about two weeks ago. At that time we'd driven a total of 62 million miles getting the census materials out and, of course, that number's been expanded since then somewhat.

Q: Okay. So as far as non-accident related situations, you haven't had any so far then?

DR. PREWITT: No. And on the other hand, the operations have not required us to do what we're now about to do, which is to start knocking on lots of doors. That is, for that purpose, for that part of the operation, we're still in training.

Q: Okay. And then the three local census offices that you mentioned earlier, that was less than half a percent, that had shortcomings of enumerator recruits --

DR. PREWITT: Yes.

Q: Are any of them in this -- in my area?

DR. PREWITT: Remind me where you are?

Q: In the Philadelphia area.

DR. PREWITT: No.

Q: Okay. Are they very far away? Can you say where they are?

[Laughter.]

DR. PREWITT: Oh, no, I'm not trying to be --

MR. JOST: You're at the five follow-up limit.

DR. PREWITT: There's one in Chicago, one in Wisconsin and one in Florida.

Q: Thank you very much.

DR. PREWITT: So you can decide whether that's far away or not.

Q: Thank you very much.

Q: In terms of non-response follow-up, would you say this year you have the more difficult task in rural areas or in big cities, urban areas?

DR. PREWITT: Well, that's a tough question. I think historically we've had more difficulty in urban areas. One, people aren't at home and you have a higher concentration of population groups which are resistant. Young, unemployed males, for example, are very hard to count. You have a higher density of rental units. It's harder to count for all kinds of reasons. We never get as full a count of people who rent as we do of those who own. They feel less settled, less connected to the community.

What I cannot tell is the long-form effect. The long form, not to forget, there are -- a higher percentage of the people in the rural areas get the long form because you have a higher sampling ratio. You use the long-form data to make statistical estimates about population characteristics as --

[MOMENTARY BREAK IN RECORDING.]

DR. PREWITT: -- New York City, you don't need 1 out of 6; you need 1 out of 10. So if we have more long-form resistance than we had in previous censuses, then the pattern of resistance that we've encountered in the urban areas of today will shift in part to the rural areas. But it's too early -- again, too early to know that.

MR. JOST: We'll go back to Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Gary, are you with us?

Q: Yes. Dr. Prewitt, two basic questions, please. One, any demographic breakdown you can give of your enumerator workforce by gender, age, race, et cetera? And second, for the 42 million who have not returned the forms, based on past experience, any estimate as to how many of those are people who actually received forms and deliberately did

not return them as opposed to the number who probably just never got a form in the first place?

DR. PREWITT: Well, let me take the second half. It's, again, very difficult to estimate that. We certainly know that some parts of those 42 [million] households did not get forms. For example, there is, in that household list, what we call new construction. These are houses that simply weren't even built when we started the mail-out process, and weren't lived in. And we've added those records to our Master Address File, but we added them right up until April 1st. We obviously didn't mail to them. And now we'll be knocking on the doors.

There are other areas where there were some mail delivery problems, having to do with the fact that we don't mail to post office boxes. But some people get their mail at post office boxes but they weren't delivered to their homes because the post office treated them as city-style addresses. I won't go into the details of how that happened. But, yes, there are perhaps as many as a million households who will not have gotten a form for one reason or another. So, when we go knock on those doors we hope these are people saying, "Hi, we've been waiting for you; glad you finally found me, and I want to answer my questionnaire." It's not a large number and that we know because we did have very good luck with our Mail Address File. We know the number of people who did tell us they got the advance letter, the questionnaire and the card.

We actually got a lot of calls and e-mails back from people who said, "I got the advance letter and I got the follow-up card, but I did not get the form. What happened?" Well, that's a mail delivery problem; that wasn't an address file problem. If they got one piece of mail from us that means they were on our address file and the address file worked, but for some reason they did not get the form. You know, bags and forms get lost, things happen. But we do not think that's a huge number, and most of the people who did not mail the form in either lost it, couldn't be bothered, put it aside, whatever happened, well, we won't know until we knock on the door and start trying to get them.

The demographic breakdown, I'm sorry, I don't have that in front of me. It's available, in effect. I do know that we have recruited a -- well, I can only give you some anecdotal evidence. We know that we've hired a large number of people who are bilingual. We were yesterday in a training session here in the New York area -- or in the Washington area. And I went to that training session. And I would say at least a third of the people, 40 percent of the people were bilingual, and I would say a quarter of them were not born in the United States, and they were from all over, because this is a high immigrant area. There was someone there from Nicaragua, from Bolivia, from Russia, from --

MR. JOST: Ghana, Vietnam.

DR. PREWITT: -- Ghana, Vietnam, a quite remarkable collection of kind of new immigrants, out-and-out trying to count their population groups. I can also tell you, but this is not very systematic. This is not the hires; this was the recruitment pool. About 60 percent were female and 40 percent were male, and about the same number, 60 percent, were over 45, which means that we got a good supply of probably women who either were part time in the workforce or had not been in the workforce and wanted to do this work. We're very pleased with those kinds of numbers. That means we have a more mature workforce than we might have expected. Indeed, the session I went to yesterday, just interacting with about 35 trainees, I would say there were two or three senior college students, that is, maybe graduate students, that age grade. But the preponderance were certainly mature workers and many of them retired workers. Of course, that's in the Washington area with a lot of federal retirees, and they've come back to do this job.

MR. JOST: We have time for two more. Bob?

Q: Yes. Just eyeballing the list, there seemed to be a number of states that had significant drops from 1990. And I wonder if there's anything you had heard or anything they have in common. Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kansas, Michigan, Indiana, all were down at least three or four points in their initial response rate.

DR. PREWITT: Yeah.

Q: I don't know if there's anything that they have in common from --

DR. PREWITT: No. This question, of course, came up the last time we went over this in more detail. And we simply, as I said then and have to repeat today, have not been able to do any serious work on the response rate.

I would say it's very important when you look at these response rates that any state which is down 4 percent or less actually met what we thought it would get. Don't forget, the 1990 response rate was 65 percent. Our predicted national response rate was 61 percent, a 4 percentage point drop between '90 and 2000. So any state which is 5 percentage points or lower actually did not perform as well as we thought it would.

Meeting the 1990 target was no modest accomplishment. And the fact that the country did it, as I've said before, I consider to be a very serious achievement by the country

and by the Census Bureau. And so I'm hesitant. There're certainly a few states that are below that 4 percentage points. And as a state, Delaware was one I see; Pennsylvania, barely. The state or the area which looks the worst on this piece of paper is Puerto Rico. And I do want to defend Puerto Rico again, because I think we did not treat them as we should have in this process. Just to repeat it. Puerto Rico did not have a mailout/ mailback census in 1990. Therefore, it had no base against which to measure its performance. And we asked the governor of Puerto Rico, "What would you like to set for yourself as the target?" He said "I will beat the national target." That was a very, very high mark. So that 15 percent differential is really a little unfair to Puerto Rico. We had no way ourselves. In fact, our best guess is that Puerto Rico would come in at 50 percent, and that's exactly where it came in.

We budgeted in Puerto Rico for a mail-back response rate of 50 percent. And, lo and behold, they got 50 percent, which means the people down there who worked with the Census Bureau had a really very subtle and complicated understanding of how Puerto Rico would respond to its first mail-back census.

But, setting Puerto Rico aside, actually very, very few states failed to meet the target that we had set, which, as I say, 4 percent -- not target, but our predicted level -- 4 percentage points below the 1990 number.

MR. JOST: And just to clarify, in your handouts, those asterisks indicate states whose rates went up since our last report to you last week.

With that, we'll go to our last question for Paul Johnson at the Bergen County, N.J., Record.

Q: Yeah. My question was basically what is your average pay scale for the enumerators? And I missed the beginning, so I didn't know how many people you had hired as enumerators.

DR. PREWITT: Right. As I said when we started, we currently have on the payroll 492,245 people, which is well, well above the minimum we need to start this task. The wage rates vary a lot, depending upon the community. They're set, depending upon the local pay rate, from roughly $8.75 to $17.50, I believe, for enumerators.

Q: You wouldn't happen to know what the rate was in New Jersey.

DR. PREWITT: And the rates are slightly higher, of course, for crew leaders and other

supervisory work.

Am I right on that number? I think it's 17.50 is the top rate.

MR. JOST: Eighteen.

DR. PREWITT: It's actually 18 now.

MR. JOST: Eighteen-fifty.

DR. PREWITT: I should say, just to back up on this, because some of you expressed interest in this earlier, we set wage rates. We then went into our recruitment effort. And in those areas where we felt like we were not getting a deep enough recruitment pool, we changed wage rates and we changed wage rates in 10 percent of the local offices. So that was about the number. So some of those earlier numbers you saw, we set a wage rate. That's why it's probably 18 in some of those places where we increased the wage rate to make sure we had a deep enough recruitment pool.

Q: All right. Thanks a lot.

DR. PREWITT: Sure.

MR. JOST: Okay. With that, the one last reminder. The response rates, the final posting of the response rates, will be public tonight at 6:00 on our Web site, www.census. gov, for all 38,000-plus jurisdictions in the country. And you may see at smaller levels of geography bigger changes than in the national rate if a region had a large amount of mail that came in in the last six or seven days.

Thank you very much. We'll see you again in a few weeks.

[END OF PRESS CONFERENCE.]

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