

Military Service

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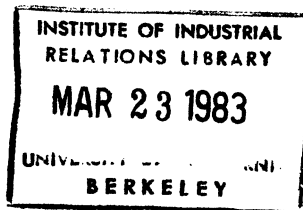
# **MILITARY SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES.**

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**THE SIXTIETH AMERICAN ASSEMBLY,**  
**September 17-20, 1981 ,**  
**Seven Springs Center,**  
**Mt. Kisco, New York.**

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**THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY .**

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**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

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The volume *Military Service in the United States* [editor, Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, USAF (ret.)], containing the chapters described on the next page, will appear in public print in winter of 1982, and may be ordered from the publisher, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J. 07632.

## PREFACE

On September 17, 1981, thirty-four persons from the federal government, the United States armed services, business, the academic community, organizations, the communications media, and our NATO allies met at Seven Springs Center in Mt. Kisco, New York, for the Sixtieth American Assembly on *Military Service in the United States*. For three days, the participants discussed the personnel requirements of the United States armed forces and the premises underlying their recruitment, retention, and mobilization for national emergencies. The focus of their interest was to decide whether the nation should continue with an all-volunteer system or whether some form of conscription was considered necessary.

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, USAF (retired), acted as director for this Assembly program and supervised the preparation of papers which were used as background reading by the participants. Authors and titles of these papers, which will be compiled and published as a Prentice-Hall book, were as follows:

Lt. General Brent Scowcroft	<i>Introduction</i>
William W. Kaufmann	<i>U.S. Defense Needs in the 1980s</i>
John P. White & James R. Hosek	<i>The Analysis of Military Manpower Issues</i>
Richard W. Hunter & Gary R. Nelson	<i>Eight Years with the All-Volunteer Armed Forces: Assessments and Prospects</i>
Charles C. Moskos	<i>Social Considerations of the All-Volunteer Force</i>
Richard V.L. Cooper	<i>Military Manpower Procurement Policy in the 1980s</i>
James L. Lacy	<i>The Case for Conscription</i>

Speakers during the Assembly were Professor Michael Howard, Regius Professor of Modern History, Oxford University, who placed the issues in their historical context; Congressman Paul N. McCloskey, Jr., who described legislation he has drafted on a program for national service; and the Honorable Lawrence Korb, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Reserve Affairs, and Logistics, who presented the administration's position on the issues.

On September 20, following their discussions, the participants produced this report, which contains both assessments and recommendations. We gratefully acknowledge the contribution of the Ford Foundation, which sponsored the Assembly. The foundation and The American Assembly, a national, nonpartisan educational institution, take no official stands on subjects they present for public discussion, and the participants spoke for themselves rather than for the institutions with which they are affiliated.

William H. Sullivan  
*President*  
The American Assembly

**FINAL REPORT**  
**of the**  
**SIXTIETH AMERICAN ASSEMBLY**

At the close of their discussions, the participants in the Sixtieth American Assembly on *Military Service in the United States*, at Seven Springs Center, Mt. Kisco, New York, September 17-20, 1981, reviewed as a group the following statement. This statement represents general agreement; however, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to every recommendation.

Current manning of the military forces in the United States is inadequate to our national needs. The problems involved in manning the armed forces of the United States are complex, have developed over a substantial period of time, and cannot be ascribed solely to the all-volunteer force (AVF). Nonetheless, manpower in adequate numbers and quality is so central to our security needs that this issue demands our priority attention. We face a fundamental national decision to determine whether we will attempt to deal with this problem through purely voluntary measures, through a return to some form of compulsory service, or through some combination of measures involving elements both of inducement and compulsion.

**FORCE REQUIREMENTS**

The international environment of the decade of the 1980s is likely to be more turbulent and more unstable than was that of the decade just past. Potential demands on U.S. military forces, as a consequence, can be expected to increase. In the past, force structure and size have been based in theory on a political determination of the number, scale, and duration of the contingencies U.S. military forces should be prepared to meet simultaneously. The present military force structure, for example, was based upon the need to be able to fight simultaneously one major and one minor conflict. There are two important factors to consider when analyzing a force posture constructed on the basis of such a concept.

The first is that there is an element of arbitrariness about the determination of the number of simultaneous contingencies; that is, they often do not represent the full range of the actual "threat" against which the U.S. government may in the event perceive that military force should be employed. The other factor is that not for some time, if ever, have U.S. military forces been adequate to meet the requirement even of the "defined threat."

Therefore, rather than start with an analysis of the forces required to meet an actual threat or one specified for force planning purposes, it is more realistic to use as a point of departure the current force posture. This includes both active duty and reserve component forces. The current active force size is not adequate, nor was it so designed, for conflicts of more than brief duration or for major conflicts such as a war in Europe. For such contingencies a pretrained combat reserve force and a responsive system of mobilization are also essential.

Since the need for military forces in the coming years is anticipated to be greater than in the past, there should be no thought of reducing the force structure below its current level. On the other hand, while force increases would be desirable in the future, the first priority should be to correct the serious inadequacies in the current force.

This process of arriving at force size has little other than practicality to recommend it. However, the participants rejected the concept of letting success in attracting qualified recruits determine the size of the force. There is obvious benefit in having an active force of absolutely top quality, but the dangers of letting force size drop below current levels are too serious to allow the structuring of forces on the sole basis of voluntarism, regardless of consequence.

In considering manpower requirements, there do not appear to be any immediate modifications in strategy, substitutions of technology, or changes in allied military contributions which would permit substantial savings in U.S. military manpower. A continued effort should be made, however, to seek innovative measures which could contribute to the easing of the manpower problem.

For most of the post-World War II era, military manpower needs were met in part by resorting to a selective service draft. While the problems associated with the Vietnam conflict were the occasion

for the abandonment of the draft system, there is doubt that it would have been continued even in the absence of that conflict. Increases in the numbers of young people entering the manpower pool, or cohort, from which most recruits are obtained, declining force size and domestic politics might well have magnified the sense of inequity in taking so few to the point of forcing at least some significant changes in the system.

### **THE AVF EXPERIENCE**

In assessing the experience of the AVF, the participants noted the devotion to duty and sacrifices being made by the men and women in the armed forces of the United States. Nevertheless, they identified and distinguished between problems in manpower quantity and quality, issues involving the first-term and career forces, and problems in the active duty and reserve component forces.

The AVF, which in 1973 replaced the draft, has, in general, met the quantitative goals which have been set for the active force. This quantitative success was significantly facilitated by an increase in cohort size over this period and a simultaneous lowering of force strength requirements by about 200,000. This reduction appears to have been a result of budgetary pressures rather than justified by any reduction in force requirements. Over the coming decade, however, it is clear that a decline in cohort size will occur. This will magnify the problems of the AVF, and, especially if it is accompanied by a decision to increase significantly the active force size, the ability of the AVF to meet force goals could be in considerable doubt. This problem could be accommodated by increasing the percentage of careerists in the active force.

Even more serious are questions such as quality of the force under the AVF and various apparent societal consequences. Indeed, in meeting the quantitative goals of the active AVF, there continues to be a shortage of recruits from the higher mental categories, particularly in the Army.

It was the unanimous view of the participants that the Army reserve and national guard forces are wholly inadequate to current need. The shift to the AVF has also had a deleterious impact on their manning. These reserve components had relied heavily on draft-induced volunteers and, following a period during which outstanding reserve enlistments sustained the force

level, the reserves suffered a definite decline both in force size and quality. The problem is most severe in the Army Individual Ready Reserves (IRR), estimated to be under strength by about 200,000, but the Selected Reserve Force can also be expected to continue to have problems of quality, training, equipment, and deployment. In many anticipated deployment scenarios, the reserve components, especially in the Army, could not be expected to perform their assigned missions adequately.

At the same time, many participants believed that the AVF concept was being held responsible for shortcomings which were not clearly its fault. A failure to make available the resources needed for training and readiness, for example, has resulted in poor performance unrelated to the volunteer nature of the force. In addition, considerations of recruit quality should not be used to relieve the officer and NCO cadres of their responsibility for leadership, training, and motivation.

The relationship of the AVF to problems in career force retention was also discussed. While the discussion was far from conclusive, it was generally thought that career retention challenges are distinct from accession problems, whether the force is volunteer or conscripted. Nevertheless, most considered that the AVF, on the whole, has had a more favorable impact on overall force retention than would a return to a draft or a draft-motivated force.

A comparison was made of the characteristics of the AVF with the force which existed under the draft. Under the AVF there has been a substantial increase in the number of women in the armed forces. It was agreed that there was a decline in white middle-class representation. Concern was expressed that, in the event of a conflict, overrepresentation of blacks in the Army would result in a black casualty rate sharply higher than the proportion of blacks in the general population. This could stimulate serious charges of inequity at a critical or sensitive time.

It was pointed out that a draft, if it were designed simply to fill numerical gaps in the AVF, would be relatively so small as to have negligible impact on the representativeness of the force as a whole. As a final point on this issue, it was agreed that social representativeness, except as it might contribute to the fighting effectiveness of the force, should not be an objective of high priority.

## **PRINCIPLES GOVERNING MILITARY SERVICE**

There was considerable discussion of what purposes and principles military manpower policies should serve, aside from the obvious goal of providing the men and women necessary for the production of an effective fighting force.

It was the unanimous view of the participants that military effectiveness should be the principal, if not exclusive, goal of military manpower policy. To the extent that manpower policies are designed to assist in the achievement of other societal goals, they should not detract from military effectiveness. There was, however, consensus that manpower policy should serve to reinforce or instill a sense of dedication and patriotism in the youth of the nation, although there was no firm conclusion as to how this could effectively be done.

There was debate about a limit on the amount of resources of the defense budget which should be allocated to military manpower. A categoric approach was rejected, although it was generally agreed that there were practical limits on the degree to which we should rely principally on monetary incentives. It was noted that the military retirement system could be restructured to reduce overall manpower costs in the long term.

The quality of our military force is generally satisfactory and improving. Nevertheless, problems remain, especially in the Army. The quality of the Army's active military force is not adequate, and the Army reserve forces require improvements in both quantity and quality. The question is how best to deal with these deficiencies. A variety of measures was considered, ranging from comprehensive systems of compulsion to minor modifications in the current volunteer system and incentives.

## **PROPOSALS CONSIDERED**

Systems of universal military service (UMS) were dismissed because they require a force structure substantially larger than current needs and result in costs beyond reason.

A program of universal military training (UMT) would avoid some of the serious drawbacks of UMS. Following the training period of up to four months, the active and reserve forces could be manned from this trainee pool through a system either of compulsory or volunteer service. There was a belief expressed



that some sort of universal basic training, at least for males, would be useful for the positive effects it could be expected to have on the confidence, esprit, and general outlook of those who completed it. Not incidentally, such a program could also result in an increased quantity and quality of volunteers. Notwithstanding these benefits, however, it was felt that such a system would be very costly, requiring a training establishment so large as to constitute a serious drain on active duty forces and producing reserves far in excess of any requirement.

Some participants believed that a return to compulsory service could satisfactorily cure the ills of the present AVF. A small minority thought that only such a move could deal adequately with the problem. One possible concept was to register all males, encourage volunteers, and draft by lottery for two years of service, either in the active or reserve forces. Educational benefits would be provided for the career force and volunteers; in addition, the career force would receive increased pay. Pay for recruits would be cut from current levels, and no educational benefits would be provided for draftees. A "skill bank" would be created from the registered cohort to facilitate mobilization in an emergency.

A substantial majority, however, was of the opinion that a return to compulsory service at this time was neither necessary nor desirable in order to correct the deficiencies in the AVF. With requirements for additional manpower being very small relative to the size of the present cohort, this majority felt that the perceived inequities, even of the lottery draft, would make such a system politically infeasible. Of greater significance, improving the quality of the recruit force by more than a marginal amount would require substantial reductions in the volunteer component. In addition, the problems created by those compelled to serve would more than offset the military advantages.

Of this majority, there were several who believed that a return to compulsory service at some point in the future had a probability sufficiently high to make prudent a careful examination now of the circumstances likely to require such a move and the optimum characteristics of such a draft. Among the issues deserving of study are appropriate triggering events, political reactions associated with a return to the draft, adequacy of the current standby draft system and plans for its activation, characteristics of those to be drafted and exempted, terms and types of service,

compensation, postservice obligations and benefits, and the relationship between volunteers and draftees.

Most believed that remedies other than compulsion existed that could sustain the AVF in some amended form for the present, at least in the absence of a significant increase in required force size. There was a variety of opinions as to how much of an inducement would be required, the kind of measures which would produce the most desirable results, and the extent to which any solution should focus on or differentiate between the active and reserve forces. There was, however, a general consensus that an improved educational benefit program should be enacted for both the active and reserve forces, directed toward obtaining high quality recruits for areas of demonstrated need, such as the combat arms. The program should include the right to use the benefit while in service and on reenlistment and could include the right to "cash in" the benefit or possibly to transfer it to dependents. Any such benefit would have to be substantially in excess of those presently available to college students. There was as well a discussion of terminating federally sponsored educational benefits for all but those volunteering for service, in lieu of adding an increment above current benefits for those who volunteer for military service. Others felt that future budget cuts were likely to produce those same results and separate prior action in that direction was, therefore, unnecessary and undesirable. No conclusions on this latter issue were reached.

A number of options based on various combinations of voluntarism and compulsion were discussed. They generally addressed four separate components. The first component would provide substantially new educational grants for two-year volunteers in areas of special military need. Their pay would be lower than present enlistment standards, and they would assume a substantial reserve commitment. A second choice would offer lesser educational benefits for those volunteering for a six-month period of active duty training and an extensive reserve commitment. A third component, requiring substantial study, would be the provision of educational benefits along the lines now available through federally sponsored programs for those volunteering for approved national civilian service. An element of compulsion would be added to this conceptual scheme by automatic placement of nonvolunteers in a realistic standby draft pool.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The participants unanimously stressed the need to assure a high quality, professional career force. There must be continued emphasis upon sufficient compensation and amenities to attract and keep trained people.

A significant majority of the participants agreed that a new, targetted educational incentive program would be most effective in promptly increasing the supply of highly qualified recruits.

There was general agreement among the participants that while some reserve and national guard units are extremely good, some serious overall shortcomings in the reserve components demand special attention. Many believed that substantial restructuring was essential in order to provide the necessary pretrained forces. This may include selected relocation of reserve units. However, even if restructuring proves infeasible, there are actions that can and should be taken to improve the readiness and morale of the reserve components. Increased support must, in fact, be accorded to the reserve components by the active establishment. Increased funding for equipment and training must be provided, but so too must energy and imagination be expended to ensure that service in the reserve components is more relevant to the primary mission and more challenging. If necessary to ensure higher readiness, larger numbers of active duty cadre should be assigned to Army reserve component units, similar to the practice of the Marine Corps. Closer relationships should be established between reserve component forces and the active duty units they support or with which they affiliate.

As stated at the outset of this report, the problems involved in manning the armed forces of the United States are complex, have developed over a substantial period of time, and cannot be ascribed solely to the AVF. These problems will not be solved quickly nor with the mere application of simple nostrums. Moreover, economic recovery and reduced unemployment will make the attraction of adequate quantity and quality of manpower more challenging. It is the judgment of the majority of this group, however, that the proper course of action at this time is to dedicate ourselves to the determined application of remedies, such as those here examined, within the overall framework of a volunteer force.

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## **AMERICAN ASSEMBLY BOOKS**

The background papers for each Assembly program are published as cloth and paperbound books; the conclusions of the Assemblies, in pamphlets. These studies are put to use by individuals, libraries, businesses, public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions, discussion and service groups. In that way the deliberations of Assembly sessions are continued and extended.

### **American Assembly Books:**

- 1951 — U.S.-Western Europe Relationships
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- 1953 — Economic Security for Americans
- 1954 — The U.S. Stake in the U.N. • The Federal Government Service (revised 1965)
- 1955 — United States Agriculture • The Forty-eight States (State Government)
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  - Military Service in the United States
  - Ethnic Relations in America
- 1982 — The Future of American Political Parties
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## **ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY**

The American Assembly was established by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Columbia University in 1950. It holds nonpartisan meetings and publishes authoritative books to illuminate issues of United States policy.

An affiliate of Columbia, with offices in the Graduate School of Business, the Assembly is a national, educational institution incorporated in the State of New York.

The Assembly seeks to provide information, stimulate discussion, and evoke independent conclusions on matters of vital public interest.

### **American Assembly Sessions**

At least two national programs are initiated each year. Authorities are retained to write background papers presenting essential data and defining the main issues of each subject.

A group of men and women representing a broad range of experience, competence, and American leadership meet for several days to discuss the Assembly topic and consider alternatives for national policy.

All Assemblies follow the same procedure. The background papers are sent to participants in advance of the Assembly. The Assembly meets in small groups for four or five lengthy periods. All groups use the same agenda. At the close of these informal sessions participants adopt in plenary session a final report of findings and recommendations.

Regional, state, and local Assemblies are held following the national session at Arden House. Assemblies have also been held in England, Switzerland, Malaysia, Canada, the Caribbean, South America, Central America, the Philippines, and Japan. Over one hundred thirty institutions have cosponsored one or more Assemblies.

### **Arden House**

Home of the American Assembly and scene of the national sessions is Arden House, which was given to Columbia University in 1950 by W. Averell Harriman. E. Roland Harriman joined his brother in contributing toward adaptation of the property for conference purposes. The buildings and surrounding land, known as the Harriman Campus of Columbia University, are 50 miles north of New York City.

Arden House is a distinguished conference center. It is self-supporting and operates throughout the year for use by organizations with educational objectives. The American Assembly is a tenant of this Columbia University facility only during Assembly sessions.

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