
Defense Report

AUSA



Draft vs Vols

"It appears as though some people think they can sustain a volunteer Army at the price of a draft Army. Well, you and I both know they can't have it both ways."

This was the warning of Army Vice Chief of Staff General Walter T. Kerwin as he cautioned the assembled members of the Association of the United States Army on the growing tendency in Congress and the executive branch to reduce the legislative and financial support that has made the volunteer force a success over its brief history.

General Kerwin sees the need to renew the decision for a volunteer Army and, with it, a renewal of the philosophy that military compensation will be kept competitive with those prevalent in the civilian sector.

"... some seem surprised to find that when they reduce the competitive position of the Army with the civilian sector, that our ability to recruit quality soldiers deteriorates almost immediately and rather substantially. But that's precisely the case," Kerwin said.

According to General Kerwin the Army's recruiting budget has been shrunk during Fiscal Years 1976 and 1977 by a total of \$84 million. This has occurred at a time when the civilian economy has been gradually improving and jobs have become more plentiful for young men and women. He also cited current trends toward reducing long-standing military fringe benefits and changing the pay structure as a cause for uncertainty about the wisdom of a military career. The net result of these factors, he said, was a drop of about 12 percent in the number of high school graduates recruited during the last half of Fiscal Year 1976 and an overall drop of six percent in the number of enlistees.

The cost of the all-volunteer force is unquestionably high—more than 50 percent of the total defense budget—but there are just two alternatives to paying that price, and both of them seem unacceptable.

We can go back to the draft.

We can keep shrinking the size of the force to fit the numbers that can be recruited—with a concurrent reduction in military capability.

To quote General Kerwin again, the decision-makers, "must fish or cut bait."