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# Defense Report

AUSA



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## Military Unionization

"The Soldiers' Union has undermined discipline in the Dutch Army." This statement by a high ranking Dutch officer who asked that his name not be used states succinctly why the professional American military man is dead-set against any unionization of the U.S. military forces.

Actually, there is no proposal as yet to unionize the U.S. military. The American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), an AFL-CIO union, currently plans to raise the matter at its annual convention in September, 1976. If two-thirds of the delegates approve, the union then plans to begin action.

Mr. Clyde M. Webber, National President of the AFGE, told the *New York Times* last year that the idea to bring the military into his union stems primarily from requests from both officers and enlisted men for help in solving problems such as grievances, pay, and benefit erosion.

Opponents of unionization, such as AUSA, believe that these calls for help show that the individual may not have thought through the problem. Setting aside the overriding anti-union points that (1) commanders are forbidden by law to negotiate with unions and (2) if they were forced to negotiate, discipline and full combat readiness would be quick victims, there are other, what's-in-it-for-me aspects that military men should consider before opting for unionization.

All would not be "golden," especially for the professional soldier. He would often be lumped in with DOD civilian union members and would find himself standing on opposite sides on some issues from the civilians, such as dual compensation and civilianization of military billets or vice versa. On other important issues he could not expect reciprocal support as DOD civilians are not involved seriously in the commissary issue or military benefit erosion in general. Shop stewards might well be civilians. About \$72.00 a year would be charged for union dues—nearly \$17 million for union coffers if 30 per cent of the Army signed up. Union power could impact in non-expert fashion on such things as unit size, training and operations, an unacceptable development for a professional soldier. The AFGE says it is against strikes but cannot stop them. Where would a civilian/military union draw the line?

AUSA strongly believes that military unionization would be a "loser" for both national security and for the individual. More important, the stakes—national existence—are too great to permit the gamble.