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# Defense Report

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## Military Service—An Occupation or A Calling?

Social scientists have some very complex definitions of an occupation but they all boil down to simply, "a day's pay for a day's work." There is no easy definition of a calling. The social scientists talk of it in terms of "purpose transcending individual self-interest in favor of a presumed higher good." A calling, they say, "does not command monetary reward comparable to what one might expect in the general economy."

Preachers here "the call" and march off to do God's work. Up until recently most people believed that military professionals follow a calling of service to one's country. But now the social scientists are looking at the U.S. armed forces with the suspicion that competition with the civilian job market is making military service just another job.

In 1970 the Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force stated that primary reliance in recruiting military personnel should be placed on monetary incentives determined by "marketplace standards." Down grade values like "Duty, Honor, Country," the commission said. Change military service from a calling to an occupation.

So the Selective Service System was put in mothballs and military recruiters, bolstered by hundreds of millions of dollars in advertising, began hand-to-hand combat with their counterparts from business and industry for the services of a dwindling number of suitable 18-year old males. So far, in terms of numbers for the active forces at least, the recruiters have got the job done. In two very important ways, though, the idea of a job in the military has been an utter failure.

First, the lack of draft pressure and the diminution of the concept of service have served to shrink the size of the reserve forces to the point where their ability to meet the urgent missions they have been assigned in an all-out emergency is being diminished.

Second, the idea that military service is just a job has started the mouths of union organizers watering as they view some two million potential members in uniform.

At least two years before the Gates Commission rendered its report Congress accepted the idea that military professionals should be paid on the basis of comparability with the civilian sector. This was done as a matter of simple equity. It was only after the politically expedient decision was made to kill the Selective Service System and to sell military service as an occupation that our current problems began to develop.

Military careerists deserve proper compensation. They also need to know that a career of high risk and self-sacrifice is recognized as something much more than just another job.