
Defense Report

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Would You Believe *Another* Study on Military Pay and Retirement?

The White House Rose Garden has been the setting for all sorts of events. There have been weddings there. President Lyndon Johnson exhibited his gall bladder operation there. Not long ago, on a sweltering Washington summer day, President Carter launched his long-awaited Commission on Military Compensation amid the rose bushes. Maybe he chose the locale because military compensation is such a thorny issue.

The commission will be chaired by a banker and the membership will be composed of another banker, two retired generals, a lawyer, a female corporate executive, the vice president of a sporting goods company, a life insurance executive and a professor of physics—all outstanding experts in their fields.

By March, 1978 the commission is to render a report on the way it thinks military compensation, including retirement, should be structured and to predict how much it will cost. This is unquestionably a worthy task. The public, the Congress, the Commander-in-Chief and the military personnel who are most directly affected should know what the strengths and weaknesses of the system are.

The task is so important, in fact, that the Defense Manpower Commission spent two years studying it along with other personnel-related problems. The commission's report is now just a year old but their massive effort, costing several million dollars and employing a collection of the best manpower brains available has been apparently cast aside.

While the Manpower Commission was at work the Department of Defense was laboriously putting together its Third Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation, as it is required to do by Congressional dictum. Its product consists of ten volumes which stack up more than a foot high and were published early in 1977.

It is comforting to know that the President is so concerned with the subject of military compensation. His constant allusion to "double dipping" as an evil feature of the military retirement system shows that he needs some help in understanding the problem. But with all this recent effort available to be studied it seems necessary to start from scratch again. What is needed *now* is action to modernize the military retirement system and to correct the already-identified weaknesses in the overall compensation package.

The new commission should make full use of the work that has gone on before them. It will speed their progress toward badly-needed solutions for those thorny problems.