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# Defense Report

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## Is the Return of the Draft a Political Impossibility?

The United States has a tradition of citizen-service that is older than the Nation itself. It goes back to the militia companies that protected isolated settlements in the wilds of the colonies, where every farmer and trader was expected to pick up his musket and rally to the common defense in time of need. In every war the United States has fought militia units have served alongside regulars and, in every major war since the Civil War, the regulars and militia have been augmented by draftees, selected by "their friends and neighbors."

But a succession of Presidents misused the Selective Service concept to support the U.S. effort in Vietnam by excusing from service many categories of men who should have served. Because of this misuse Selective Service unfairly shared growing disapproval of the war. It was not until the final stages of the war, with public opinion already set against it, that the draft machinery was readjusted to its more equitable random selection. By that time President Nixon was ready to give up on it and shift to all-volunteer armed forces. He and many other politicians breathed a sigh of relief that they would never again have to explain or defend the draft. Some politicians still say, "A return to the draft is a political impossibility—The American people would never stand for it."

So eight years have passed since the last draft call, and the following phenomena are being observed: Volunteer service is being sold as just another "job"; The Army's ability to respond to mobilization needs is dwindling as reserve strength shrinks and the Selective Service machinery crumbles into a pile of inoperative rust, and; the state of readiness of the Volunteer Active Army is being called into question by one study after another.

But if the volunteer Army is not working it is not due to any lack of effort on the Army's part. Only the finest officers and enlisted people have been assigned to recruiting duty and they have been impressed with the criticality of their mission. Yet administration budgeteers have trimmed advertising budgets, cut recruiter strength and training time. Discipline has been weakened by court rulings and by the growing, "it's just a job" syndrome.

Clearly, the American people are not getting what they think they are getting and that realization is growing. Members of Congress who cling to the notion that the draft is a political "no, no" should verify that point with their constituents. There is a lot of grass roots support for a return to the concept of obligated service and we are seeing more serious support for it in the press.

The Army has done all it can. The administration shows no signs of doing anything but maintain the *status quo*. Congress must see to it that the volunteer Army is adequately supported or quickly abandoned in favor of an obligated citizen-soldiery.