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# Defense Report

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## If We Want An Army of Volunteers We Must Pay the Price

As the United States approached the shift to all-volunteer armed forces Rep. Edward Hebert, then Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, predicted "The only way the United States is going to have a volunteer Army is to draft one." At the same time the Association of the United States Army warned that, if the volunteer concept was to be a success, the people of the United States and their elected leaders must be prepared to pay the price in dollars that it would take to attract and retain enough of the good people our military services need.

Eight years have passed since complete volunteerism became our goal and there are rumblings in Congress about the need to renew Selective Service that may make Rep. Hebert's prediction come true. Also, just beneath the surface of the relationship between the Pentagon and the White House, there are early tremors of a clash over Administration willingness to increase military pay and allowances enough to make them competitive with the civilian sector. Defense Secretary Harold Brown had approved a package of pay and allowances increases that would add \$648 million to the Defense Budget to be presented to Congress in January but the White House Office of Management and Budget killed the entire package.

It is quite true that the personnel-related share of the defense budget has risen sharply since the volunteer scheme went into effect. At one point personnel costs reached 60 percent of the budget (at a time when post-Vietnam expenditures for equipment and supplies had fallen sharply) but the "people" costs have now settled down to about 50 percent annually. In spite of this level of expenditures, however, the purchasing power of military pay has fallen behind the inflation curve by amounts between 11 and 25 percent, depending on the pay grade of the individual service member. Most of this shortfall was caused by three "caps" on inflation-related pay adjustments that the Ford and Carter Administrations imposed in the interest of economy and inflation control.

The Washington POST, on December 20, 1979, carried a report of the shooting of an Army staff sergeant during a robbery while he was working at a "moonlighting" job in a convenience store. The sergeant performed his army duties, went home to sleep a couple of hours and then worked at the store all night, leaving in time to make his army duty call the next morning. His wife also worked. All this was necessary because there is no allowance made for service in a high-cost area, like Washington, D.C.

We all want a credible defense establishment. What we must now decide is whether we are willing to pay the price of filling the ranks of that establishment with volunteers. Until that decision is made and executed we are not getting full value for our defense dollar.