
Defense Report

AUSA



Military Service—A Responsibility of Citizenship

By all reports, the volunteer nature of the armed forces has produced a high-quality defense establishment. Well trained, well led and now getting modern equipment, its high quality has been achieved by a variety of incentives to serve. But is it the best for the country? Or, said another way, what is being lost? Answer: both the concept that service in the armed forces is a responsibility of all citizens and not just another job and, most importantly, a deep commitment by the American people to the day-to-day requirements and operations of their armed forces and the welfare of those who serve therein.

The all-volunteer force was a bold undertaking; in several respects it has proved a remarkably successful one. Democratic institutions handily survived; while the racial composition of the enlisted force shifted noticeably, the armed forces are not an army of the socially disadvantaged; it is not a mercenary force. Nevertheless, there has been a definite separation, even isolation, of the military from the rest of society.

Mainstreet U.S.A. seems willing to "let Joe do it" unless—or until—the armed forces fail in their principal mission: to deter war. Then, most would apparently agree on the need for a draft to obtain the personnel necessary to fight and win the war. It seems to us a draft to maintain the peace should be equally acceptable as a responsibility of citizenship.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "The great thing in the world is not where we are, but in what direction we are heading." While some would consider a sudden return to peacetime draft untimely, the challenge of today is to debate and refine the prudent and attainable choices for the decade ahead. Certainly one of the most important decisions our nation must make is how best to provide manpower for the armed forces in *both* peace and war. We believe this can only be achieved by fair, random selection from the draft-eligible population.

This would assure once again that our armed forces are truly "of the people" and would restore one of the unifying influences which has enabled this country historically to place its faith in its citizens rallying to its defense.