
Defense Report

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Army Morale and Welfare Programs —Essential Ingredients of Readiness

Congress seems resolved to severely limit the funds spent in support of the Army's Quality of Life programs for soldiers and their families. In the 1987 Continuing Resolution, the law which permits the Army to operate for the current fiscal year, Congress reduced the Army's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs by \$32.5 million.

It was the intent of the legislators to reduce the taxpayer support of certain revenue producing activities in metropolitan areas of the United States, such as bowling alleys, clubs, golf courses and temporary lodging facilities (guest houses). Unfortunately, the amount of the cut was twice the size of appropriated fund support for these activities forcing the Army to spread nearly half the reduction to overseas and remote areas and to deprive some non revenue generating programs of essential support.

Programs such as physical fitness and recreation centers, libraries, gymnasiums and other athletic activities have traditionally received more than two-thirds of their funding from the profits of post exchanges and other revenue generating MWR programs. Thus, soldiers and their families were already paying most of the cost of these activities. The remaining third of the support came from the taxpayers in much the same manner that similar programs are normally funded in local municipalities with tax revenue.

Gen. Carl E. Vuono, the new Army Chief of Staff, is reported to have a sign in his office which reads, "Quality of Life is a readiness issue." Additional Congressional cuts to the Army MWR program, which contributes so handily to that quality of life, will undoubtedly force the closing of some of these facilities.

The exceptional young men and women who wear the uniform today are entitled to the same quality of life that is afforded the society they are pledged to defend. The Army's MWR programs help tremendously in providing soldiers and their families that quality of life. They directly affect our ability to man the force and to maintain a high degree of readiness. These programs deserve the full support of the Administration and Congress.