
Defense Report

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The Reserve Officers' Training Corps — Alive and Well on America's Cam- puses

Only a dozen or so years ago the Reserve Officer Training Corps was scorned by large segments of America's college population and faced the threat of cancellation on many campuses. In fact, a number of the nation's most prestigious schools — including Harvard, Dartmouth, Yale and Stanford — had dropped ROTC during the Vietnam era. Several of these have lately sought to reinstate the program, only to find themselves at the bottom of a sizable waiting list.

From the ranks of ROTC come more than 70 percent of the lieutenants who enter the Army's active and reserve components each year. Enrollment reached an all-time high in 1961 when 180,000 cadets participated. When the draft ended, after Vietnam, enrollment fell to less than 34,000. That was in 1974 and in the intervening twelve years a renewed pride in uniformed service and a program of scholarship incentives have swelled cadet ranks to more than 63,000.

Today some 1450 colleges and universities across the nation offer Army ROTC courses, either as host, extension center or cross-enrolled schools. As a result, about 85 percent of U.S. college and university students are afforded the opportunity to sign up for ROTC. Nearly 8,000 college graduates were commissioned in the Army last year and 59 percent of them entered active duty. The remaining 41 percent assumed duties as second lieutenants in the Army Reserve or National Guard.

Political scientists have long considered ROTC one of the great strengths of the U.S. military system. Those who view critically many of the "old world" military systems see ROTC as a source of military leadership with its feet firmly planted in the American grass roots. Governor Lee Dreyfuss, former chancellor at the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point, ably expressed those sentiments by saying, "ROTC is not the presence of the military in the university, it is the presence of the university in the military."

This peculiarly American institution seems certain to continue to serve the nation at least as effectively as it has in the past. It has already produced men like George Catlett Marshall and several other Chiefs of Staff of the Army. Somewhere in the college ranks today there may well be others.