



The Demand for Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps in American High Schools

Junior ROTC is as good a bargain as you can get. Young men and women are taught self-discipline, citizenship, patriotism and leadership. Officers and noncommissioned officers retiring from the Army are given a new opportunity to use their talents to serve the nation. School administrators, parents and community leaders get a better youngster and a favorable view of the Army. Everyone wins!

General Colin L. Powell, USA Retired
July 1998

The focus of the Army's Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (Junior ROTC or JROTC) program is reflected in its mission statement: "To Motivate Young People to be Better Citizens." Army JROTC is specifically not a recruitment program for the armed services; combat skills are not taught, and there is no military obligation incurred by participating in the program. Junior ROTC does purport to have a salutary effect on student attendance, propensity to graduate, indiscipline, and college or workforce preparedness.

In a June 1992 memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, then Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell outlined an expansion of Junior ROTC as "the best opportunity for the Department of Defense to make a positive impact on the Nation's youth." In determining that Junior ROTC contributes to national security, General Powell was certainly taking an "over the horizon" view of the defense mission. And yet, this was not a risky branch on which to step. Since passage of the National Defense Act of 1916, each service secretary has been required by law to conduct a Junior ROTC program.¹

Pursuing General Powell's proposed expansion of Junior ROTC, the Army's program grew under the

Clinton administration from about 850 schools in 1992 to about 1,370 in 1995. Because of its positive impact on at-risk youth as well as college-bound teenagers, Junior ROTC may be the one federal education program that has near universal support at the community and neighborhood level.

The enthusiastic endorsement of school officials at existing host sites continues to create demand by their neighbors for more new programs. Indeed, the Army replies virtually every week to members of Congress writing in support of new JROTC units for their constituents. The call is further fueled by requests for expansion within and beyond existing sites, due to normal population increases. However, the grass-roots demand for additional Junior ROTC programs, echoed by Congress, has not been met with corresponding appropriations. Consequently, the Army's waiting list grows daily, with a current backlog of more than 200 high schools. Further, U.S. Army Cadet Command projects an immediate growth of the waiting list by several times if there were a reasonable hope of new starts.

Based on both objective surveys and anecdotal reporting, principals indicate that having a Junior

more . . .

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ROTC program helps academic performance as well as discipline in their schools. In fact, it is often said that discipline is better at high schools on those days when the Junior ROTC cadets wear their uniforms — even among those students not enrolled in JROTC! Key performance measures indicate that cadets attend class more frequently and are less likely to drop out of school; senior cadets are more likely to graduate from high school than the student body as a whole.²

Senior cadets perform better than their general school population peers in every area that is routinely measured by educators, including academic performance. From the Army's standpoint, effectiveness of the program is evaluated against the objectives that support the mission. Supporting objectives³ include:

- ◆ promoting citizenship
- ◆ developing leadership
- ◆ enhancing communication skills
- ◆ strengthening self-esteem
- ◆ providing the incentive to live drug-free
- ◆ providing an appreciation of the military services and their accomplishments (with emphasis on the U.S. Army)
- ◆ improving physical fitness
- ◆ promoting high school graduation
- ◆ teaching team work

The primary vehicle for attaining these objectives is the Program of Instruction,⁴ which includes components pertaining to citizenship, leadership, communications, drug awareness and physical fitness. Teamwork, improved self-esteem and high school graduation derive from the total program and the active mentorship and guidance of the JROTC instructors. It is recognized that confounding variables prevent firm conclusions; yet JROTC is the one program, fielded as a dollar-sharing partnership between the federal and local levels, which seems inarguably to produce positive results.

Given the efficacy of the program, one can argue that the Department of Defense (DoD) is performing more than a little of the mission of several other cabinet departments. From there it is only a short leap to

conclude that moving money into JROTC from other departments (e.g. Education, Health, Labor, Justice) makes sense. Their interests would benefit in the following areas: drug abuse, high school graduation, teen pregnancy, youth physical fitness, delinquency and incarceration, literacy, volunteerism, community or national service, and work-force preparedness.

The currently programmed funding (\$89.5 million for Fiscal year 1999, \$91.5 million for FY 2000) supports only 83 percent of the Army's DoD maximum allowable number of units (1,645). The budget does allow Army Cadet Command to austere sustain approximately 1,370 units, from American Samoa to Augsburg, Germany and in all fifty states — about 228,000 students. And yet the Junior ROTC program is a separate line in the President's Budget; so theoretically it has no associated offsetting cost in terms of tanks or manyears. However, steering additional moneys into the Defense budget, even for assistance to America's youth, has been a difficult prospect during the past few years.

To execute the projected Army waiting list, up to the Army share (1,645 units) of the congressionally imposed DoD limit (3,500 units), would require approximately \$41 million additionally in a three-year expansion period and \$21 million per subsequent year in maintenance. The diversion of that relatively modest amount of money from other federal departments ought to significantly aid their missions and contribute significantly to the fabric of America.

Endnotes

1. Title 10, U.S. Code, § 2301.
2. U.S. Army Cadet Command, Junior ROTC Directorate, *Disposition of Graduates Report – AY 95-96*, Unpublished, Fort Monroe, Va.
3. U.S. Army Cadet Command, Junior ROTC Directorate. *Curriculum Outline*. (RPI 658) Fort Monroe, Va., October 1990.
4. U.S. Army Cadet Command, Junior ROTC Directorate. *Program of Instruction* (RPI 659) Fort Monroe, Va., October 1990.

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