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Peril in Volunteer Concept

WITHIN a few weeks, a new round of discussions and debate will start in Washington on the related subjects of the Draft and the all-volunteer force concept. From them will come decisions with far-reaching impact on manpower procurement for the Military Establishment, the National Guard and other Reserve Components included.

The basic question which will be answered is this: Shall America continue to use conscription as a primary means of keeping its Armed Forces manned, or should it switch to a wholly volunteer concept, using monetary inducements to attract men in adequate numbers?

When critics of the Draft agreed to introduction of the lottery system some weeks ago, part of the price they exacted from the Senate Armed Services Committee was an agreement to hold new hearings on the Draft early in 1970. Those could lead to significant changes in current laws, irrespective of what happens to the all-volunteer proposals.

A Presidential commission has been studying the all-volunteer concept since last Spring. In-depth studies also have been conducted by the Department of Defense and the individual Services. These will be analyzed, presumably, and translated into concrete proposals for submission to Congress by the White House.

This Association submitted a statement of views to the Commission, and the National Guard Bureau contributed detailed information both to the Commission and to the Department of Army's own study. The Association statement is presented in its entirety elsewhere in this magazine. In it, NGAUS took an unequivocal stand *against* adoption of the all-volunteer concept and *against* elimination of the Draft. We spoke out *for* an increase in the material rewards of military service, to help attract larger numbers of volunteers, and *for* improvements in our Draft system to eliminate its major inequities.

There are many practical objections to the all-volunteer system, not the least of which is its excessive cost. It likewise would reduce our capability for rapid surge buildup in emergency, and would tend to attract disproportionate numbers of men less-qualified than are produced by the present system.

For the National Guard, adoption of the all-volunteer concept could be disastrous, even with substantial increases in pay and other material rewards. In today's affluent society, the financial rewards for four assemblies per month and 15 days of field training simply don't provide a large enough portion of a man's annual income to be a critical motivating factor for enlistment. It is my belief that the Guard could not maintain a force of anything approaching its present size if the inducement of greater financial reward were substituted for the motivation currently provided by Selective Service laws. The Guard and other Reserve Components will wither and become impotent, in my opinion, in any system in which money is the primary inducement to membership.

More harmful to the Nation over the long haul can be the effect on National attitudes and the National will of a system that absolves ordinary citizens of their responsibility to aid in the Nation's defense. Already, many young Americans seemingly can't be persuaded that military service is a responsibility and not an imposition. Even men in positions of power and influence are telling them that the Draft is unfair, unnecessary and perhaps even unconstitutional.

The long-range consequences for America can be disastrous if we adopt a system which shifts the responsibility for National defense from the citizenry as a whole to an all-professional force of high-paid mercenaries. ♦

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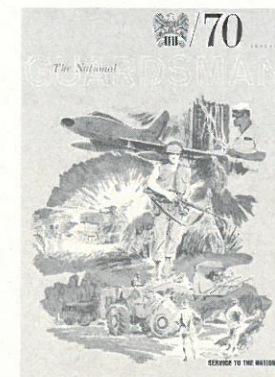
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Army and Air Guardsmen served in every variety of combat and support mission in many parts of the World during their "Pueblo Crisis" tour of active duty.

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