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THE PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL SERVICE CORPS AS CONTAINED IN S.3/H.R.660 AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARMY

BY

STEPHEN G. SHARRO

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The paper concludes that the Army should limit national service accessions to a relatively small number of soldiers who would fill specially selected positions requiring minimal training.

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AS CONTAINED IN S.3/H.R.660 AND
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARMY

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Stephen G. Sharro

James W. Williams, Ph.D.
Project Adviser

U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013
9 March 1990

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THE PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL SERVICE CORPS
AS CONTAINED IN S.3/H.R.660 AND
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE U.S. ARMY

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In January 1989 a bill entitled the Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989 (S.3/H.R.660) was introduced in the Senate by Sam Nunn (D, GA) and simultaneously in the House of Representatives by Dan McCurdy (D, OK). The bill included a provision for military service by members of a "National Citizens Corps." The conditions of this service would differ substantially from any manning strategy the American armed forces have seen in the past.

While studies show that most Americans favor some type of national service, how that term is interpreted varies from person to person.¹ For many, national service implies a return to the draft. For others it connotes universal military service. Just what is intended by the current legislation and what its effect would be on the Army are questions this paper will attempt to answer.

BACKGROUND

The issue of how a nation mans its armed force is a controversial one since the objective of the force involves putting its members in harm's way. Because this role is inescapably dangerous and since those in the force represent and defend other citizens who are not soldiers, the question of how individuals

come to be part of the force is important from an ethical as well as a technical standpoint.

Although our world is changing rapidly, most nations still require (or at least feel the need for) a means of defense. To man that defensive system requires some but not all of a nation's citizens. The question, then, is how does the nation get the citizens it needs into the force? And there are essentially two possibilities: either persons join the force voluntarily or they are forced to participate.

In the 200-year history of the United States mandatory military service has been a fairly rare phenomenon.

[E]xcept for periods of major wars, there was no compulsory military service in the United States. Traditionally, the defensive strategy of this country has been based instead upon a small professional force, reinforced by a large trained manpower reserve.

Although the Militia Act of 1792 established a policy of universal military obligation, the American people have always associated that obligation with total national emergency. Consequently, it has been viewed as a wartime obligation. ■

It was only after World War II, beginning in 1948, that the draft became a permanent part of U.S. military manpower procurement policy. Throughout the 1950's and '60's the draft was a fact of life for Americans. In 1972, in the wake of Vietnam and its attendant public opinion problems for the armed services, the draft was terminated and the all-volunteer force initiated.

For the military establishment this presented a special new challenge. Although this country had existed without compulsory

military service for most of its history, it had never done so while trying to maintain the large standing force that the post-World War II environment required. For the armed forces to exist on a diet of volunteers meant making military service sufficiently appealing to attract the necessary young men and women. This requirement, in turn, meant improving recruitment and retention incentives and reforming aspects of military life and discipline. While this process strained many facets of military management, while it was expensive in terms of increased salary and benefits, and while it was uncomfortable for many both inside and outside the military, the process went forward. Now, after nearly 20 years of experience, most would agree that the conversion to a voluntary force has been successful.

The Department of Defense is now so committed to the volunteer force, in fact, that it consistently opposes any attempt to resurrect the draft. Whether this position will remain tenable during the 1990's, as the pool of eligible youth from which to draw recruits diminishes, remains to be seen. But, as for now, the success of the volunteer military with its advantages in terms of morale, professionalism, retention and positive public opinion has DOD committed to the present system.

And while there seems to be little public interest in resuming the draft per se, some sociologists and Congressmen have raised the issue of national service. Their interest is not so much as a military manning strategy but as a means to reinstill in Americans, and particularly American youth, a sense of patrio-

tism and responsibility to the nation. The Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989 is a manifestation of this interest.

ENDNOTES

1. Democratic Leadership Council, Citizenship and National Service, undated, pp. 14-15.

2. Jack R. Butler, "The All-Volunteer Armed Force--Its Feasibility and Implications," Parameters, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1972, pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER II

The Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989

The architect of the most popular view of the new national service is Northwestern University sociologist Charles C. Moskos. In his book, A Call to Civic Service, Moskos presents a detailed rationale for national service and specific recommendations on how it could and should be implemented.¹ Moskos collaborated with the Democratic Leadership Council to draft the Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989.

Although this legislation has received the most attention, it is by no means the first bill submitted recently dealing with national service. Congressman McCurdy, himself, introduced a bill in March 1987 (H.R. 1497) which would have established a voluntary national service. Nor was the current Nunn-McCurdy bill the only one before the 1989 Congress supporting volunteerism or national service. Others were introduced by Representatives Matthew G. Martinez and Leon E. Panetta of California, Representative Constance A. Morella and Senator Barbara A. Mikulski of Maryland, and Senators Christopher J. Dodd of Connecticut and Claiborne Pell of Rhode Island.²

What distinguished the Nunn-McCurdy bill from the others, however, is its comprehensiveness and its influential support. Having been introduced by the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee and with the backing of the Democratic Leadership

Council, the bill was and is a serious piece of legislation. It received considerable attention from the press, from the education community, and from the Department of Defense.

According to the Democratic Leadership Council, the Citizenship and National Service Act represents a new GI Bill. Just as the original GI Bill helped to "democratize opportunity in the United States, making college and home ownership a reality for millions of Americans who otherwise could have afforded neither," the Citizens Corps would be a new GI Bill expanded to include civilian as well as military service. This is seen by its sponsors as correcting a situation existing today where the U.S. has "a GI Bill without the GI," referring to current federal student aid.³

Essentially, the bill would provide those who complete their term of either military or civilian service with vouchers of varying amounts depending on the type and length of their service which could be redeemed for financial aid for postsecondary school attendance or to assist with the purchase of a home. The educational aid could be used to subsidize vocational-technical schooling as well as tuition at colleges and universities.

One controversial element of this legislation is its impact on current federal aid for higher education. As designed, the Nunn-McCurdy bill would create funding for the Civilian Service by phasing out all other student financial aid education programs. Programs such as Pell grants and federally insured student loans would be eliminated except for those who were physi-

cally incapacitated and thus incapable of participating in the National Service program.

Problems such as continuing high rate of defaults on student loan repayments have caused legislators to feel the need to reform federal student aid. From a social standpoint, on the other hand, the proposed legislation has caused considerable debate regarding its impact on education opportunities for minorities. Many educators feel that potential students in the lower socioeconomic classes would be unfairly affected by the requirement to perform national service in order to qualify for educational aid. These concerns have caused those in the field of higher education generally to oppose the legislation.

What then are the provisions of the Nunn-McCurdy bill? First of all, it establishes a Citizens Corps which consists of two components, one for civilian service and one for service with the armed forces. Within the civilian component are separate services for regular civilians (generally considered youth but technically available to high school graduates between 17 and 64 years of age) and for senior service (for those 65 years of age and older). Service obligations and member compensation vary among the programs. A summary of the conditions for each of the categories is provided in Figure 1.

SENIOR SERVICE

Senior service participants would be used primarily to assist with administration of the Citizens Corps itself. Senior

<u>Civilian Service</u>		<u>Senior Service</u>	
Eligibility	<i>At least 17 years old, and high school graduate, and US citizen/permanent resident.</i>	Eligibility	<i>At least 65 years old.</i>
Service Commitment	<i>One year with provision for second year upon application.</i>	Service Commitment	<i>Nons. Indefinite, part-time or full-time employment.</i>
In-service Pay and Benefits	<i>\$100 per week and medical insurance.</i>	In-service Pay and Benefits	<i>Hourly rate to be determined locally.</i>
Benefits on Completion	<i>\$10,000 per year completed.</i>	Benefits on Completion	<i>Nons.</i>
<u>Service with Armed Forces Active/Reserve Component</u>		<u>Service with Armed Forces Reserve Component</u>	
Eligibility	<i>Standard service requirements.</i>	Eligibility	<i>Standard service requirements.</i>
Service Commitment	<i>Two years active duty, plus two years in selected Reserve, plus four years in Individual Ready Reserve.</i>	Service Commitment	<i>Eight years in the Selected Reserve.</i>
In-service Pay and Benefits	<i>66% of of basic pay, basic allowance for subsistence, and basic allowance for quarters.</i>	In-service Pay and Benefits	<i>66% of of basic pay, basic allowance for subsistence, and basic allowance for quarters.</i>
Benefits on Completion	<i>\$24,000.</i>	Benefits on Completion	<i>\$12,000.</i>

Figure 1. The Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989 S.3/H.R.660.

service members do not earn education/home purchase vouchers and are paid for their work on an hourly basis.

CIVILIAN SERVICE

Citizens Corps members choosing to serve in the civilian sector would perform in a four areas: conservation, education, human services, and public safety; and in traditional federal volunteer programs such as the Peace Corps and Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). Examples of work in conservation

include duties in state and federal parks and in community beautification projects. In education, jobs would include work in libraries, schools, and literacy programs. Human service jobs would include work with the homeless or the elderly and with substance-abuse treatment centers. And finally, public safety assignments might include work with police, probation offices, or correctional institutes.

Civilian service is normally for a period of one year for which the participant earns a voucher for \$10,000. Members may request to serve a second year for which they earn an additional \$10,000 in voucher. Members would also be paid \$100 per week during their service and would be covered by medical insurance.

MILITARY SERVICE

Military service under the Citizens Corps includes options for active duty and duty with the reserve component. The active duty option involves two years of active duty followed by two years in the Selected Reserve and then four years in the Individual Ready Reserve. For this service, a volunteer earns a \$24,000 voucher. Those choosing the reserve component option serve eight years in the Selected Reserve for which they earn \$12,000 vouchers.

During their service, Citizens Corps participants in both of the military options would receive two-thirds of normal basic pay, basic allowance for subsistence, and basic allowance for quarters.

ENDNOTES

1. Charles C. Moskos, A Call to Civic Service: National Service for Country and Community, New York, 1988.
2. William D. Ford, "Point of View: Bill in Congress on Public Service for Young People Shows Confusion About Student Aid and Patriotism," The Chronicle of Higher Education, Vol. x, No. x, March 15, 1989.
3. Democratic Leadership Council, Citizenship and National Service--A Blueprint for Civic Enterprise, undated, pp. 1 and 7.

CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ARMY

For some time now, DOD has opposed a return to the draft, believing that the current volunteer system for manning the force works, that the draft would not save money, and that it "would reduce the motivation of today's armed forces and would be perceived by adversaries 'as an unwillingness of the American people to pay the costs of an effective fighting force.'"¹ So any proposal for National Service is a matter of concern for DOD. On the other hand, supporting volunteerism and service to America is in DOD's and the Army's best interests. The armed forces consist of volunteers, and their purpose is service to the nation. Supporting civilian volunteerism and other types of National Service is clearly an object of the nation's political leadership and thus something DOD must also support.

National service legislation could affect the Army in many ways. The Army today relies almost entirely on four-year enlistments, for example.² Training and operational readiness efforts would be complicated by a dramatic increase in two-year enlistments. Citizens Corps enlistments under the Nunn-McCurdy's active-duty option are for two-years with no provision for additional service under the Citizens Corps. Soldiers would receive their \$24,000 vouchers upon completion of their two-year service, and few may be expected to reenlist. The Army would thus need to

enlist, equip and train twice as many Citizens Corps soldiers as regular soldiers under the current system. The Army's Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences has estimated that the cost of two two-year National Service tours would be \$45,280 as compared to \$13,168 for a standard four-year tour.³

Another potential problem involves eligibility requirements. Criteria for the National Service is that an applicant must be at least 17 years of age, have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, and be a U.S. Citizen or lawfully admitted to the U.S. for permanent residence. While these criteria may be sufficient for civilian type service in a food bank or library, they are insufficient for military service. So for those who choose the military service option, the bill provides that applicable enlistment requirements in chapter 31 of Title 10, U.S. Code would apply. Even these constitute ~~minimum~~ requirements. The bill further would permit the Secretary of Defense to establish even more restrictive enlistment criteria if necessary.⁴

IMPACT ON RECRUITMENT

The most serious issue regarding National Service facing the Army, however, may be its potential effect on recruitment. DOD is acutely aware of this problem. According to The Army Times,

[t]he Pentagon claims the combination of time-on-the-job requirements and federal benefits proposed in the bill would make civilian volunteer service "significantly more attractive" than either the current military enlistment or the short-term military enlistment that the bill proposes. In order to compete, the services would be forc-

ed to spend more money to make military service more attractive than it is now.⁵

A National Service program as comprehensive as that outlined in the Nunn-McCurdy bill would affect in at least three ways:

- o National Service civilian service option competing with military options
- o National Service military options competing with regular Army enlistments
- o Competition between Army and other services for Citizens Corps military enlistees

Competition Between Military and Civilian Options

The civilian service option would be more attractive to many young people than either of the military options. The civilian service one-year commitment can be expected to be less daunting to an applicant. Though this service produces a voucher worth only \$10,000, the option exists for a second year, thus for a voucher totalling \$20,000. The difference between this \$20,000 voucher and the \$24,000 voucher an individual would earn for a two-year active-duty enlistment may well be insufficient to cause the best candidates to select the military service option. Although the individual completing his two-year active-duty National Service commitment would receive his voucher at that time, he would still have an additional commitment of six years in the reserves to perform. The civilian service "graduate" would be free.

An additional factor working against the active-duty option is living arrangements. Many civilian service members may choose to live at home, thus, enabling them to save additional money from their \$100-per-week subsistence payments. Active-duty citizens corps soldiers would be forced to relocate and would, thus, not have this option.

While Citizens Corps members choosing the reserve duty option could reside at home most of the time, without a market study, it is difficult to predict how this option with its \$12,000 voucher for eight years in the reserves would compete with the civilian and active-duty options.

Competition with Regular Army Enlistments

The Nunn-McCurdy bill also seems to threaten regular Army enlistments. For the individual committed to serving in the military service in some capacity, the benefits of the National Service military options are more generous than those from a regular enlistment. Specifically, after two years the National Service soldier has earned a voucher worth \$24,000. The regular Army enlistee completing a two-year enlistment is eligible for \$17,000 from the Montgomery GI Bill and the Army College Fund.⁶ Of this \$17,000, the soldier has contributed \$1,200 meaning that the actual benefit is only \$15,800.

The National Service veteran may use his \$24,000 for either schooling or toward the purchase of a home. The regular Army

benefit may be used only for education.

Offsetting this discrepancy is the fact that Citizens Corps soldiers receive only 2/3 of the pay that regular soldiers earn. But whether this differential would be sufficient to attract quality candidates into regular enlistments is uncertain.

ENDNOTES

1. George C. Wilson, "Pentagon Opposes Resuming Draft," The Washington Post, 23 March 1988, p. 25.
2. Naomi Verdugo, "Manpower and Personnel Policy Research Group Working Paper MPPRG 89-06--The Citizenship and National Service Act of 1989: A Discussion of S.S and H.R. 660", March 1989, Alexandria, VA, p. 9.
3. Ibid., p. 10.
4. Ibid., p. 3.
5. Grant Willis, "Pentagon paints dismal picture of national service plan," The Army Times, 28 August 1989, p. 7.
6. Verdugo, p. 7.

CHAPTER IV

AN ALTERNATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

In Nunn-McCurdy, a small provision that many of its opponents overlook is the requirement for the Secretary of Defense to determine and control the number of Citizens Corps members that the armed forces will accommodate in any given year. This is different from a program which would require the Services to take all eligible volunteers who applied.

This provision that authorizes the Secretary of Defense to specify how many positions will be available for Citizens Corps members in the armed forces in the coming fiscal year may mitigate some of the potential impact of the bill on the Services. In fact, the bill's sponsors may envision a military service that is an essentially an extension of the civilian program in which volunteers are placed in relatively unskilled jobs with various public-sector organizations. A certain number of comparable positions could be identified by the Army and other Services as being appropriate to be filled by Citizens Corps members. Such positions would be those that would require minimal training, that would not be affected by turnover, that would not require restationing of incumbents, and that would not be essential to mobilization. Citizens Corps soldiers, for example, might be assigned to work in continental U.S. garrison activities such as morale support facilities, finance offices, military hospitals, education centers, and military museums. They could, perhaps,

also work as facility engineer laborers or serve as clerks.

A further provision of the bill, however, which precludes use of Citizens Corps personnel to perform work that would displace regular employees or contractors, restricts the number of Army positions that they could occupy. Obviously, a major initiative would be required to identify Army positions appropriate for Citizens Corps volunteers. The issue of what would happen to these soldiers during a military emergency and/or mobilization must also be determined. DOD can expect substantial pressure to maximize opportunities for Citizens Corps members. Nevertheless, the number of positions which would actually meet the criteria mentioned above would be limited. Thus, incorporating these soldiers into the basic training program should not present a major problem. With such a procedure, Citizen Corps soldiers might not need to receive advanced individual training (AIT); the bulk of their training could come on the job.

Given this procedure, the impact of Citizens Corps soldiers on the manning of the Army would be nominal. By definition, they would not be filling wartime-essential billets. Their real impact on the force structure would be in the number of regular professional forces that would have to be eliminated to pay Citizens Corps volunteers.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Citizens Corps is not the return of the draft or the modified draft which many in and outside of DOD fear. How it is implemented will determine how it effects the Army. Generally speaking, the most serious implications involve the bill's impact on recruitment. With a regular implementation, the competition from the Citizens Corps civilian service option may affect the Army's ability to attract the best young people. Secondly, the National Service military options themselves may siphon off significant numbers of potential regular Army enlistments.

An alternative would implement the proposed Nunn-McCurdy National Service as a social program in which the Army (and the other services) would participate by accepting Citizens Corps members only into a limited number of specific jobs. With this system, the implications for the Army would be moderate and, perhaps, manageable.

Before accepting Citizens Corps soldiers into the Army under any circumstances, however, many other issues would have to be addressed. The impact of unequal pay and differing performance expectations among Citizens Corps soldiers and their regular soldier co-workers, for example, must be determined.

And finally, a new variable added to the National Service equation is the uncertainty as to what type of force structure

the Army, and, in fact, all the services will have in the coming years. In light of the unprecedented changes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and the reduction in the threat facing the United States and her allies, substantial cutbacks in America's military forces are virtually inevitable. This uncertainty and the difficulties which will have to be addressed in managing these changes in the force structure argue against instituting any major changes in our methods of manning the forces at this time.

The most prudent course of action for our legislators to take, therefore, is to defer any move to a large-scale national service at this time. If this is not possible, the inertia for a National Service in the Congress proving irresistible, then the Army should pursue the limited implementation proposed above where Citizens Corps members are accepted only into specific positions requiring minimal training.

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13. Wilson, Robin. "'Indentured Servitude.'" The Chronicle of Higher Education. 15 February 1989, pp. 19-24.