

RETENTION IN THE RESERVES: THE MOTIVATION FACTOR

by

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Based on information reported through a number of surveys, there is reason to believe that the US Army Reserve (USAR) and the US Army National Guard (ARNG) are conducting retention programs with obsolete motivational tools.¹ In 1978, the US Army Recruiting Command assumed the recruiting mission for the USAR, and perhaps it will do the same for the National Guard in the not-too-distant future; consequently, Reserve component unit commanders can now turn more of their attention to retaining quality individuals. Additional time, however, will not solve problems that have been years in the making. Unit commanders must reorient their thinking, for too many reservists, particularly first-termers, have not been buying what units are selling as retention benefits.

This is a difficult situation to face, because Army managers, like civilian counterparts, do not like to admit that their programs are not working as well as they would like. Commanders want to believe that all is well if personnel strength is at 100 percent, that their units are healthy or well on the road to recovery from minor illness. It is possible, though doubtful, that the Recruiting Command will be able to pump enough recruits into the system each year for the Reserve to continue to appear reasonably healthy while the basic illness grows internally; however, the patient will eventually require major surgery and perhaps a very long rehabilitation.

Extensive emphasis and expense have been placed on Reserve component recruiting, and thousands of accessions have been obtained under the All-Volunteer

program in the last six years. In most cases, units have been recruiting up to a third of their authorized strength each year. Why, then, are the USAR and ARNG still understrength? The answer is obvious—more people are going out the back door than are coming in the front.

In regard to quality, during the period in which the pressure of being drafted was high, there was sufficient motivation for many well-educated young men to join their local Reserve or National Guard organizations. In 1969, for example, more than 90 percent of all enlisted reservists and guardsmen were high school graduates, over one-third of them having completed some technical or academic work beyond high school. But what has happened since the end of the draft? In 1973, the number of high school graduates dropped to slightly less than 50 percent of the non-prior-service accessions.

A related concern is the ratio of non-prior-service enlistments to prior-service enlistments. The Army Guard enlisted 102,684 individuals in fiscal year 1974, or approximately 25 percent of its total authorized strength.² Of this number, only 27 percent—some 28,000—were non-prior-service accessions. The USAR, about three-fifths the size of the Army Guard, had a similar recruiting experience. And, fiscal years 1975-78 have seen a decline in total accessions, with only slight rises in those without prior service.³

In the recession years of 1973 and 1974, recruiting and retaining reservists in such places as Chicago, New York City, and Detroit—where unemployment was running as high as 15 percent—was, if not easy, at least not so difficult. Since the beginning of 1975, however, earnings are up,

unemployment is down, car sales have risen spectacularly, and citizen-soldiers who elected before to augment their paychecks with Reserve pay have been leaving the ranks in droves, choosing rather to boost their incomes with overtime at the factory.⁴ These statistics and facts are sobering from a number of viewpoints: the "dry-up" of large numbers of prior-service individuals willing to enlist; the probable grade and occupational specialty misfits; and the lowering of career progression opportunities for non-prior-service individuals because of the overgrade.

Consequently, the Reserve components are confronted with a paradox. They are a major element of General Purpose Land Forces under the United States' Total Force concept and, concurrently and ironically, their principal impetus of personnel input has been lost with the termination of the draft. Under the Total Force concept, Reserve forces will constitute the equivalent of 12 divisions in a total General Purpose Land Forces structure of 25½ division force equivalents.

Studies show that from 75 to 90 percent of the enlisted personnel fulfilling their initial six-year military service obligation in the Reserve components in 1970 were there because of the threat of the draft.⁵ In 1978, this situation has changed considerably. Few personnel are still in service who were draft-motivated, and the Reserve components must now rely on their own ability—and that of the Recruiting Command—to attract and retain personnel in order to sustain the enlisted strength they need.

THE PROBLEM

Perhaps the basic problem is not with the youth in our communities, but rather with our institution itself in not being responsive to the needs of the late-1950 generation. Why aren't the Reserve components more competitive for the time, interest, energy, and loyalty of the 18- to 26-year-old? Shouldn't the Reserve components—and, for that matter, the Regular Army—be more representative of a cross section of the typical American community?

Dr. Allan H. Fisher's 1972 survey found that high on the list of youth in terms of their propensity for joining the Reserve components were enlistment bonuses and an assortment of material benefits.⁶ By now there seems to be reason not to agree wholly with these findings. It is suggested that money and monetary fringe benefits alone will not make the Reserve components competitive enough to attract and retain young men and women of a *quality* that would be representative of a cross section of our nation's youth.

As a start to determine if this supposition is based on more than personal belief, I scanned an informal unpublished survey conducted by the US Army Institute of Administration as a part of its recruiting and retention instruction. The findings therein suggest that retirement points are still needed and desired, but they do not offset those elements that are lacking as incentives and that are strongly needed by youth. The survey, conducted over a three-year period, included 3656 first-term reservists in 35 states. College graduates were not included. The main survey question, a very simple one, was: "What would it take to keep you in your [USAR or ARNG] unit?" The answer was clear and loud. Fifty-six percent answered, "Give me interesting and useful work and training," or "Cut out the make-work." By comparison, nine percent gave the next most popular answer, "Get better NCOs and officers." Eight percent said, "Get rid of the harassment about haircuts and mustaches," and five percent asked for "less rigidity" in scheduling assemblies and drills. In the same vein, three percent suggested allowing for personal absences from a percentage of the drills without requiring that they be made up. Also, three percent said an improved retirement system (i.e., a lower age requirement) would spur them to stay. The remainder gave a variety of answers that cannot be easily categorized.

The Committee on Public Relations of the National Guard Association of the United States conducted a similar survey and asked: "If you had the power to do whatever you wished to do to improve the National Guard,

what one thing would you do?"⁷ It was clear then that training and the use of time were high-priority matters to the respondents. Fifty-seven percent answered that improved training, more training with up-to-date equipment, or better use of personnel would be their number one change. So, it still appears that the Reserve is not addressing needed actions in the right priority to insure a well-trained and mission-oriented backup force for the Regular Army.

Brigadier General Phillips N. Gordon, Deputy Adjutant General of the Indiana Army National Guard, stressed in an article published in *The New Patriot* the need for the unit to become competitive by offering satisfaction to members and potential new members through better training, opportunity for "belongingness," and meaningful work.⁸ As a result of that article, he reported that he received 93 letters from NCOs and specialists essentially saying the same thing: "You're right, but there's nothing we can do about it!"

Poppycock! There is a lot that can—and must—be done if the Reserve components are to be competitive for the time, interest, energy, and loyalty of our nation's youth. Why, you may ask, must the armed forces—and more especially, the Reserve components—be competitive? After all, the mission cannot be changed, nor the weapons systems simply declared no longer needed or useful. The answer is simple: The industries and businesses of the US compete for the consumer's dollar, and marketing experts explain that a product or service must respond to the needs of the consumer. If there is a golden rule of marketing, it is that successful organizations make and distribute what the consumer wants and can afford, not what the companies' machinery was initially installed to produce.

What our consumer wants, and is willing to pay for, is an opportunity to learn an interesting and provocative job in an environment that places high value on trust and openness. This is substantiated by studies dealing with job satisfaction which confirm

less job satisfaction for workers under age 30 than those over 30 years of age.⁹ Younger workers are significantly more dissatisfied than older workers, not only with their jobs in general, but with the challenges these jobs provide. Industry is becoming increasingly interested in job satisfaction from the worker's point of view. Management is becoming more "employee-centered" and interested in what behavioral science can offer to enhance worker satisfaction with his job, with the ultimate aim of sustaining or improving worker productivity as well. Studies regarding job satisfaction by educational level are more interesting for what they do *not* evidence than for what they support. There is *no* evidence that for each increment in education, there is a corresponding increase in job satisfaction.¹⁰

Any program or policy aimed at improving the conditions under which people work, providing better job-to-individual matches, or providing more satisfying work is or should be based on reasonable assumptions about what the American worker wants and needs from his job. Good pay and fringe benefits are of importance to workers, particularly if they do not have them, but most job dissatisfaction on the part of the enlisted reservist is based primarily on a lack of interesting and personally rewarding training and a lack of duties integrated with

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opportunity for achievement and recognition. Enlisted Reserve component personnel, in other words, will not be "bought" to spend their time and energy in monotonous, dull, or unchallenging efforts or in boring training. This is especially true if they face a similar situation in their full-time employment.

Should commanders and NCOs be concerned about the training or job satisfaction of the "citizen-soldier?" After all, most would argue that creating better or more satisfying conditions (from the soldier's point of view) requires renovating or restructuring the Army's policies on organizational configurations and personnel policies and practices, as well as a modification of mission. These arguments may hold some validity because some changes are needed that can emanate only from the policymaking level of the Department of the Army, but the initial conditions for improvement are within the scope and interest of both small unit leaders and operations and training staffs. It is not suggested that all of the citizen-soldiers can be satisfied with their jobs or training all of the time. Indeed, complete contentment might well cause complacency, as well as an apathy or unwillingness to adjust to changing job conditions or training requirements.

Douglas McGregor has said that "man is a wanting animal."¹¹ This theory implies that man wants more and more, but it does not mean he wants more and more of the same things. Perhaps the traditional rewards for work accomplished or loyalty to the organization are no longer sufficient to build and maintain a ready, well-disciplined, and professional Reserve component force.

BASIC CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

Many human "motivational" systems have been based on the belief that individuals can be led to expend their interest and energies in a specific effort through offers of rewards and threats of punishment. In most organizations (including the armed forces), management has provided satisfaction of the worker's subsistence needs. Thus, the

motivation to fill the need for security is generally well-satisfied. Perhaps in an era of widespread interest in eliminating poverty, creating jobs for all, and providing guaranteed wages, the need to be greatly concerned about security is negated. The reader is referred to Abraham Maslow's conclusion that there exists a hierarchy of human needs.¹² At the base of his structure is the need for survival (physiological needs) and safety (security needs), followed by the social needs of belonging, acceptance, and recognition. At the top of his hierarchy, Maslow placed the need to self-actualize (the maximization of one's potential). In Gordon's text, *Old Theories Versus Changing Environment*, he traces how Maslow's theory can be translated into practical programs to provide opportunities for satisfying unsatisfied needs.¹³ I concur with Gordon in believing that wages, fringe benefits, and good working environments will not, in and by themselves, motivate workers to give their full dedication and enthusiasm to the organizational mission.

If these assumptions are correct, then it logically follows that we are trying to motivate a generation that is not in need of security with primarily security-oriented incentives. In other words, we must recognize that the need with the greatest demand for satisfaction will dictate the overall action of the individual.¹⁴ Those who have the greatest need for security are at the lower end of the structure and should be "turned-on" by the offer of good pay and retirement benefits. However, for the youth born in the late 1950's, the needs so prevalent in the 1930's were already satisfied. The cultural and economic conditions during the formative years of the 20-year-old in the late 1970's are considerably different from those of the 40- or 50-year-old senior sergeant or field grade officer who must understand and lead the youth. To a strong degree, the attitudes, beliefs, and opinions of the older generation were based on scarcity—on a "Work hard, do good, and you're bound to be successful" philosophy, the philosophy that emphasized the value of hard work and keeping busy. In his book, *Like Father, Like Son—Like Hell!*

Robert Hansel notes the differences in basic assumptions about the purpose of life and contrasts the opposing life-styles of the 1930 and the 1955 generations.¹⁵

The unsatisfied needs of the youth we must seek to attract and retain as members of the Reserve components appear to be those of belongingness, acceptance, recognition, and even self-actualization. The promise of achieving satisfaction in these areas is not proffered if our tools for motivation are primarily security-oriented. Joseph Califano has expressed his concern in a slightly different way. He expresses the belief that current programs for active-duty recruitment direct their appeal to the mercenary deficits of potential enlistees.¹⁶ This, he maintains, will be no more likely to develop the feeling of common commitment necessary to instill cohesion than it is likely to "build the personal characters of the affluent teenagers in suburban America whose daddies' dollars and influence have bought their way out of military service."¹⁷

The old image of the carrot on the stick causing the donkey to pull the wagon should be questioned. The question that should now be asked is, "How hungry is the donkey?" In our highly developed technological society, neither economic reward nor punishment seems to possess the motivational value it once held. Yet, many of our institutions still operate their motivational systems as if they were still in an era of the 1930's or earlier.

MORE RECENT RESULTS

Since the data presented thus far are rather old, it seemed evident that more current statistics were needed to support the basic contention that we are using the wrong motivational tools in our retention program. Therefore, over a recent one-year period, subordinate recruiting and retention officers throughout 13 states of mid-America conducted personal interviews with approximately 500 enlisted men nearing the end of their first terms of Reserve service. A smaller number of enlisted women and reservists' wives were also interviewed. The main target of the study was the typical

patterns of attitudes and common thought processes of these young soldiers. While each reservist has his own unique experiences and opinions, there was a clear and consistent thread to their thinking.

For typical young reservists, there were both positive and negative attitudes and motivations concerning reenlistment. It is useful to begin with some of the barriers to reenlistment. One is the fact that the bulk of enlisted personnel volunteered for one-term reasons. Even though they were not explicitly planning to separate after their first tour, most initially volunteered out of motivations which presumed a single term of enlistment. Most young men and women—including many of the higher-quality ones—enlisted for one or more of these reasons:

- *To learn a technical skill.* This usually meant to obtain training and experience with civilian applications, such as electronics or automotive mechanics—in short, to acquire a civilian trade and to be able to apply it in their hometowns.
- *To gain maturity.* Many joined to grow up, to learn self-discipline and self-reliance, to get away from home for a while, to achieve independence, and "to make a mature person of myself."
- *To provide time for planning a career, or perhaps, to delay decisions.* Many young men and women, often with a year or two of college, were quite uncertain about educational and job plans and they joined the Reserve to give them time to work out what they ultimately wanted to do.

Others enlisted for other reasons, including travel, or patriotism, or economic assistance. Most, however, enlisted primarily for one of the goals listed above. A problem for reenlistment is thus that many young people achieved their goals after a single term—or perhaps concluded that they would be unable to achieve these goals in the Reserve. This means that for many their original motivations for enlisting had to change if they were to reenlist.

A second and related barrier to reenlistment was a lack of mid-career benefits. For many, the Reserve was perceived as providing relatively few

inducements for a second (or a third) term of enlistment, unless they were to stay in for many years. Their original motivations were largely satisfied or had diminished. Often they had received job training; they had traveled some; and they had seen fewer additional benefits they might obtain in the next three years. Moreover, at this point very few thought of themselves as career reservists.

Another fundamental factor handicapping reenlistment is that, typically, they did not particularly like the Army life. They joined for their own purposes—job training, or self-development, or whatever—and not out of enthusiasm for the Army life itself. They tended to see the Reserve as a temporary price they had to pay to accomplish these purposes.

This is not to say that they liked nothing about the Reserve, as opposed to what they got out of it, or that morale was universally poor. Features they liked or which worked toward higher satisfaction included the following:

- *Job satisfaction* was crucial, and some were highly satisfied with their assignments.

- *Unit integrity* was also important. Attitudes were favorable when they felt they had a mission they understood and supported, when they felt they were treated fairly, and when they felt that their unit was competent.

- *In-service benefits* such as job training, travel, and camaraderie contributed importantly to affinity for the Reserve program.

However, while there were things that were liked, the usual climate among younger enlisted personnel was a general dislike of the Reserve. Typical criticisms included these:

- They felt that they should be responsible only for their primary job duties and then have freedom to live pretty much as they wished, without strict military discipline or secondary assignments. They felt they were civilians first and citizen-soldiers second.

- There was a widespread feeling that the Reserve was not challenging or demanding enough. They said that the emphasis was on

trivial and housekeeping items—such as personal appearance or maintenance of the armory—and not on job performance, where standards tended to be very lax. Many said that the nonproducers fared as well as those who were doing an effective job.

- They complained that they were “harassed” on petty things—haircuts, dress, military form. However, there was a fairly general attitude that there was considerable amount of bluff in this, that senior NCOs did not have a great deal of authority and would back down if challenged.

- By and large, there did not seem to be a great deal of understanding of—or agreement with—the mission of either the Reserve or of their units.

There was clear conflict in the attitudes of many of the men, which some of them recognized. On the one hand, they resented any interference with their own freedom and life-style; on the other hand, they asked for higher standards and for greater discipline. The point seems to be that these men would be receptive to increased demands on them for the things that really count, but they also want more independence.

Peer pressure represented another barrier to reenlistment. This was dramatically lower than several years ago, when enlisted personnel characteristically felt extremely defensive about any expressed interest in reenlisting. Nevertheless, the general climate was antagonistic to reenlistment, and many reservists considering it faced much more negative than positive advice from their peers.

A final factor to be mentioned is the fundamental presumption that the reservist would separate at the end of his or her term, rather than reenlist. The period of enlistment had a scheduled termination, and this had a pronounced effect on the individual's attitudes about personal permanence in the program—the normal expectation was that the individual would separate then, unless something happened to the contrary. Inertia works toward forcing the individual out; positive actions on both the individual's part and the Reserve's part are required if the reservist is to be retained. This pressure to

separate becomes more pronounced as the separation date approaches. Any delays in processing or any paperwork not completed operate toward putting the reservist out of the program.

The picture is not as bleak as the foregoing may imply, and the interview results indicated that there are many bright spots. General morale and job satisfaction were distinctly higher, and there was less evidence of racial problems. There was also an increased feeling that the Reserve is taking better people and that not everyone can enlist or reenlist.

Despite the built-in influences against reenlistment just cited, a large proportion of first-termers appeared to be receptive to the idea. At least half of the enlisted personnel interviewed had given fairly serious thought to reenlisting and potentially could be signed over—at least with the proper timing and persuasion. A high proportion appeared to be somewhat undecided, and many were wavering “right down to the wire.” A fair number probably had not really made up their minds as to what they wanted to do even when they were attending their final unit meetings.

As has already become evident, the great bulk of the young people thinking of reenlisting do so for some fairly specific benefit. In many cases, this is a new training program, with an accompanying change in MOS. Many of them are thinking of job instruction and experience which will prepare them for a better civilian position.

Smaller numbers are motivated to reenlist largely by the financial rewards and benefits offered by the Reserve. Since most Reserve component personnel are not offered reenlistment bonuses, and since there are no Reserve-wide federal education benefits, an overriding influence on reenlistment attitudes is the general factor of unit morale and job satisfaction. If a young person has had relatively good experiences in the USAR or the Guard, and thinks he has been fairly treated, he is much more likely to consider reenlisting, regardless of what other options may be available.

Of the large number of potential reenlistees, many, including higher-quality personnel, terminate and are lost to the Reserve. Such people are sometimes lost for what appear to be reasons somewhat unrelated to their basic interest in reenlisting.

Individual units seem to vary greatly in the way they handle reenlistment, and they have considerable impact on the individual's interest in rejoining. This goes beyond the obvious point of morale and performance—which is paramount in the individual's satisfaction with the Reserve. Unit commanders are required to have a reenlistment conference with each soldier well in advance of separation. In some cases, these are very effectively done. In others, they are quite perfunctory. Some members report that their conference was in the form of a lecture to a group of 50 or 60. But, however done, these unit commander conferences have a great effect on the soldier's interest, and they merit emphasis.

In part, the issue is that many first-termers are wavering on reenlistment and could be retained with little effort. A frequent comment, which probably has real validity, is that “I would have thought about reenlistment if anyone had shown any interest.” Young people do not always show strong initiative about reenlistment, and many need a push.

In addition to the oral interviews just discussed, a newer written survey also seemed necessary to provide further verification of this latest data. Again, subordinate recruiting officers were used throughout the 13-state Fifth Army area, and a questionnaire was forwarded to approximately 2500 enlisted personnel in Fifth Army units who would reach their separation date in the following 12 months. Completing the questionnaire was voluntary, and respondents were not required to identify themselves. Approximately 200 replies were received. There was sufficient spread throughout the region for random effect, and statistical treatment indicated representativeness. For ease of reporting here, the results are rounded.

Based on the responses received, there is substantial reason to correlate retention to values other than those of financial merit, as earlier postulated. Approximately 110 of the respondents indicated they planned to reenlist at the end of their current tours; 90 said they did not. Of the 90, only 60 responded to the question, "Would you reenlist if the reasons for not reenlisting were removed?" Of this 60, 40 said they would not, indicating that their real reasons possibly lay beyond what they reported. The fact that 55 percent indicated plans to reenlist, however, was encouraging, since this was 8 percent above the Army-wide overall retention rate at the time. This supports the All-Volunteer Army contention that reenlistment rates will rise as the force becomes one comprised of true volunteers whose motivations to join are not draft-induced.

One of the most verbal claims aimed at the Reserve components' failure to maintain authorized strength levels is that of "a lack of meaningful training." The Fifth Army survey supported this claim to a degree, as 100 of the respondents (50 percent) cited their training assemblies as "useless" or "a waste of time." When asked to explain their rationale, the answers ranged from "We need less classroom time and more 'hands on' training," to "This is a 'busy work' system."

One question, "Would you like to see the drill schedule changed?" was designed to help determine if night or weekend drills played a part in respondents' attitudes toward training. They apparently do not, at least not significantly, since 140 indicated that they did not desire a change.

Questions on the subjects of retirement benefits, individual contributions to unit objectives, and earning capacity as a reservist were designed to probe respondent knowledge of these matters as a retention factor. Surprisingly, 160 indicated that they had a thorough understanding of the USAR retirement benefits. Not surprisingly, 180 indicated that they believed they were contributing to their units' objectives, and 130 said they were aware of the amount of money they could earn as a reservist over a 20-year career. Of the 70 who said they were

not aware of their earning capacity, 30 said that earning capacity was not important to them, substantiating in part the claim that modern youth are not as concerned with money as were their fathers and grandfathers.

Other claims given to poor retention are that many reservists' employers do not support—and sometimes even harass— participation in the Reserve, that the summer annual training schedule is poor (true for some farmers and other seasonal workers), and that promotions are too slow. None of these claims was supported to a great extent by the Fifth Army survey. A total of 150 (75 percent) said their employers provided them not only with vacation time, but with additional military time for annual training. Only in one case was it reported that an individual was pressured by his employer to terminate his reserve affiliation.

On the subject of annual training time preferences, 160 said they preferred summer, 10 indicated a primary desire for winter training, and 30 expressed an interest in some other time. A few, for example, said they would be interested in two weeks of overseas training at any time of the year. With regard to promotions, 150 (75 percent) said they believed their promotions were fair and timely. Of the 50 that reported conversely, the criticisms ranged from statements of "The sergeant did me in," to "I didn't care anyway," to "I was the victim of the Army bureaucracy."

An overwhelmingly negative response was expected to a question of whether the respondent had confidence in the knowledge and ability of his NCOs and officers. A large majority (90 percent), however, indicated that they did indeed have confidence in the leadership.

On a question of whether reservists believed they had been sufficiently trained in their job specifications, only 65 percent replied in the affirmative, indicating USAR problems of skill mismatch, unrealized expected training, and unfulfilled recruiter promises.

There was expected unanimity to the question, "Do you believe the USAR serves a necessary function in our society?" Only 10 individuals answered in the negative.

The questionnaire closed with the typical question, "What would you do to improve the USAR?" Responses to this are discussed later in this article.

In summary, while the Fifth Army survey revealed little that is new, it confirmed much of what was already known or strongly suspected. There is reason to believe that retention is improving with time, albeit slowly, as the force takes on more of an all-volunteer cast. In fiscal year 1978, the USAR retention rate for the continental US averaged approximately 50 percent of all eligibles.

SOME COMMENTS ON CHANGE

Toffler tells us that the industrial system is undergoing a crisis as a result of the interaction between tremendous technical achievements and our rapid social change, and that the crisis is too much for the individual and the institutions to absorb or accommodate.¹⁸ Whatever the cause, there is evidence that changes in attitudes toward work and the purpose of life are taking place from the workers' point of view. Shouldn't our military managers respond to the pressures for change?

Our society seems to be committed to change, but are our leaders geared for the change that is really required? The management function itself is constantly changing and increasing in complexity, thereby placing more responsibility on leaders to provide their units and their subordinates with the highest quality of problem-solving. This does not endorse change for the sake of change, but it does advocate selecting and developing leaders who do not fear change.

The leader should be able to distinguish the types of change, such as knowing whether change lies in particular circumstances or in his own reaction to the circumstances. The strong leader should not hesitate to reject change, however popular at the moment, if

he is convinced that it is ill-conceived or could dilute the real mission. But the leader must welcome ideas for change and even conjure some himself, especially the kind that hold promise of improving his own operation. Without constant vigilance, open communications, and accessibility at all levels of leadership, the problem of rigidity and opposition to change will continue. Reserve leaders must attack any attitude that communicates the feelings that new ideas are not only unwanted, but actually unwelcome.

A high order of discipline can be maintained with adherence to established standards when the rules and standards make sense. Augustus Thomas has written that the Army, including the Reserve components, should seize itself by the scruff and shake.¹⁹ His theme is that revolutionary innovations must be developed within a military framework that has existed, essentially unchanged, since the early 1900's.

Despite all the vocal and printed clamor about recent anti-military attitudes in the US, there is evidence that this is not supported by fact. In a nationwide survey conducted by the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan, the military ranked first in stature among 15 public and private institutions.²⁰ Perhaps this study showed something deeper than the military now being "number one," however; it could largely have reflected instead the general disenchantment with the large corporations and other Federal agencies that ranked below the military. Has our industrial society reduced the attractiveness of its employment because it also has not offered what youth seek and need? If this is so, then the attractiveness of joining and staying in the Reserve components should be increased.

We will be competitive provided we insure that the opportunity to find a meaningful relationship, interesting work, and some personal recognition can be a reality even on a part-time basis. Such incentives are aimed at higher-level need satisfaction. Why, then, are we so reluctant to change our appeal? It can only be concluded that our leaders

themselves feel the need for security and that they see change as a threat. They do not understand that what they perceive *their* needs to be are not widely viewed as "turn-ons" for the average youth in their community. Just because the decisionmakers remember what it was like to be a 19-year-old does not mean that their memories form a prototype for the 19-year-old of the late 1970's. In fact, the opposite is probably more realistic. They remember why they joined the military; they see it as rewarding; and they expect it to continue as a pleasant and satisfying association for themselves. But the young men and women whose formative years were in the early 1960's are products of a fast-changing society very different from the one that their fathers knew.²¹ The Reserve must update its techniques and tools to the needs of "modern" young people. The Reserve components must apply the principles of behavioral science to the problems encountered in recruiting and retaining individuals who will represent a cross section of our communities. After all, "credible performance and a sense of accomplishment," according to Augustus Thomas, "are the things *esprit* is made of."²² More and better incentives, other than monetary, must be offered. We must face the question of authority openly and candidly: It must revitalize itself.²³

WHAT ABOUT TRAINING?

It is reasonable to assume that people have always complained about work and training, but there is something different about the kind and intensity of the discontent heard in the last few years. The giant General Motors plant in Lordstown, Ohio, found "blue-collar saboteurs" articulating their discontent with monotony and over-regimentation through the overt retaliatory activities of driving bolts into engine blocks and slashing car interiors.²⁴ The problems are not unique to General Motors, however, and there is evidence that the training in the Reserve components is the single major change that could make retention less of a problem.²⁵

There has been a lot of discussion and

evaluation of "job enrichment," including how to create more meaningful elements within a particular military job.²⁶ Albert S. King and Richard Vaden, in a study conducted for *Military Review*, concluded that more than a token effort must be provided to create "duties which allow a concentration of more meaningful elements within a particular job."²⁷ Janowitz stressed that underemployment is a very powerful source for development of negative attitudes. The relevance of the job or training and the elimination of boredom are high on the list of needed remedial changes.²⁸

The key to good instruction is good instructors. It is obvious that the subjects taught must have a purpose or goal, but the purpose must be understood and accepted by the learner as his goal, too. The prime ingredient of good training is interest. Interest can be created by student involvement and participation in a real or vicarious environment without too much control by too many supervisors diluting the purpose. Military training programs should emphasize the principle of "learning by doing," but they should be limited to those things that are truly relevant to the validated purpose of the training or instruction.

Close order drill, although supporting the concept of discipline and the ability to follow verbal orders, might well give way to small group calisthenics, including individualized physical training. Whenever the justification for continuing a particular practice or method is based solely on precedent, it probably should be high on the list of things to be dropped. It follows, then, that every scheduled training period should be carefully planned, discussed, practiced, and masterfully executed. Training does not have to be dull and boring. As a California Army National Guard infantryman said, "With a little ingenuity and imagination at work, even the more routine tasks can be an adventure."²⁹

The strict exercise of authority seems to encourage people to conceal defects in an operation or training program. Insistence on instructor and student conformity to nonessential petty details supports rigidity in

thinking and hinders the development of improved methods for getting things done. Colonel Robert S. Nichols, in an essay on "New Uses of Psychology in the Army," identified the psychological issues and tasks to be performed if the military is to be responsive to the needs of the soldier. These include officers and senior NCOs being aware of and trained in sensitivity, group dynamics, cross-cultural psychology, and leadership.³⁰ Field Manual 22-100, *Military Leadership*, presents in an interesting format and style those concepts of human behavior that should result in less command and more management of human assets.³¹

In other words, the concept that lessons in adjusting to boredom or practice in being miserable are positive learning factors has long been rejected. We must not continue the effort to try and dignify "busywork" by calling it training! To today's youth, work is stupidity if it makes no sense and has no purpose. Ernest Dichter, in the preface to his well-read book, *Motivating Human Behavior*, said, "Properly translated, motivating human behavior means finding out the best methods of convincing individuals rather than persuading them."³² Involvement and interaction may be the key for opening the door to overcoming the sterility and boredom of training.

The blueprint for the Modern Volunteer Army emphasized that in order to achieve maximum human potential in an organization, it is essential to integrate the achievement of the individual's goals through the pursuit of organizational goals.³³ In training, the task is to generate in the soldier an interest in the learning while he is learning.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

As noted earlier, the final part of the Fifth Army survey questionnaire was a free-response question soliciting suggestions for improving the Army Reserve as a whole. The suggestions received were grouped into two major and six subordinate categories to simplify evaluation. The major categories were monetary and nonmonetary. The monetary category included the subcategories

of direct payment and fringe benefits; the nonmonetary category included the subcategories of training, administration, civil-military relationship, and legislative/regulation/policy responses.

The responses, by subcategories, ranked as follows: legislative/regulation/policy, 27 percent; administration, 19 percent; training, 18 percent; fringe benefits, 17 percent; direct payment, 13 percent; and civil-military relationship, 6 percent.

The top three subcategories of suggestions were thus for nonmonetary changes and improvements, and these areas offer many possibilities for control and direction at major and local command levels. A lot of money would not necessarily have to be spent to effect improvements in these categories.

The respondents placed much less emphasis on the monetary category; its subcategories ranked fourth and fifth. A closer look at these results shows that the respondents ranked fringe benefits, with 17 percent of the comments, above direct payment, or pay increases, with 13 percent.

Although the subcategory of civil-military relationship ranked sixth in respondent comments, its importance should not be slighted. The closest contact between the military and the community at large is through the Reserve components. The Army Reserve and the Army National Guard, with their "citizen-soldiers," serve as excellent means of establishing good civil-military relations and maintaining positive public recognition of the military.

The top 10 of the 67 suggestions from survey respondents for improving the Army Reserve are reported in the paragraphs that follow. They parallel most of the suggestions of the other surveys reported, and—as can be noted—some are closely related to each other. The overall ranking of each suggestion indicates the potential force that each has for making the Army Reserve more palatable for the young man or woman of today. The ranking was computed on the basis of the frequency of each suggestion made by the 72 percent of the respondents who commented on the free-response portion of the survey.

- *Improve training.* The primary concern

in this category was the quality of training. Terms such as "useful," "practical," "interesting," and "meaningful" were used to express the desires of those who responded in this category. Some suggested the conduct of more training that is more directly related to their MOS and unit assignment.

- *Eliminate "make-work."* The respondents making this suggestion generally felt that their work in the Army Reserve lacked challenge, meaning, or interest. There was a definite feeling of discontent with the presence of busywork or "make-work" as opposed to emphasis on productive effort. A general tenor of boredom, with an apparent willingness to work if the activity were considered worthwhile or productive, can be perceived in the comments made in this category.

- *Reduce "Mickey-Mouse."* Like his peers in the Active Army, the reservist was looking toward the removal of irritants that make his job difficult to perform. He questioned the function of what he termed "Mickey-Mouse harassment." Such matters as unnecessary formations; field duty without an apparent purpose; excessive inspections of haircuts, brass, and "spit-shines;" and picky, petty, unnecessary rules and regulations were among the most frequently mentioned complaints.

- *Liberalize haircut regulations.* The matter of hair length appears to continue to be a vital concern of the youth of today. Hair length was worthy of mention by 26 percent of the respondents and was one of the highest-ranking suggestions in all regions surveyed. One of the major concerns was that the 10 to 20 percent of the days of a year a reservist is in uniform dictates, for all practical purposes, the length of his hair for the other 80 to 90 percent of the year that he is a civilian. Another concern here, which appears to be genuine to the young reservist, is that, because of the requirement for him to keep his hair within standards required by the Reserve, he stands out among his peers who are not connected with the military and who wear their hair longer. Some respondents questioned the function of haircuts as presently prescribed and the effect it has upon mission accomplishment.

- *More Army Exchange privileges.* The consensus of those suggesting expansion of Army Exchange privileges was that these should be made available to the reservist on an unlimited basis throughout the year. Other suggestions were for unlimited purchases on drill days, once a week, or after the individual has spent a specified number of years as an active reservist.

- *Reduce length of service.* Reducing the length of obligated service in the Ready Reserve from six years to a total obligation period of four, three, or two years was a frequent suggestion. This suggestion may have a great deal of merit if the prospective enlistee were given an option of from two to six years in yearly increments. Enlistment and reenlistment bonuses could be graduated with the number of years of service. Such a flexible program, along with increased incentives for retention and, one hopes, the consequent increase in reenlistment rates, may well increase the overall strength.

- *Increase pay.* The suggestion to increase Army Reserve pay ranked seventh overall. One concern was that the pay structure, as it presently exists, is not competitive with part-time employment and that more money could consequently be earned by working part-time on weekends. Some commented that higher-ranking officers do well in terms of pay, but lower-ranking enlisted personnel do not.

- *Increase community service.* The gist of suggestions in this category was that the Army Reserve should devote more time to community service projects. The feeling derived was that time spent in busywork and excessive repetition of subjects in training could be better devoted to community projects. An additional concern by some was the matter of building better relations with the community. Those commenting generally indicated that community service projects would be useful, worthwhile, and satisfying.

- *Improve leadership.* The two primary concerns in the suggestion to improve leadership in the Army Reserve were quality of leadership and leadership techniques. The first concern was to eliminate substandard officers and noncommissioned officers. The second concern, regarding leadership techniques, was a little more involved and

was oriented on the method used in controlling and commanding. It was suggested that less reliance be placed on autocratic leadership and more emphasis be placed on democratic leadership.

- *More commissary privileges.* The suggestion to expand commissary privileges might well have been recorded in combination with the category of more Army Exchange privileges. The consensus of those who made this suggestion was that commissary privileges should be made available to the reservist throughout the year on an unlimited basis. Other options discussed under the category of expanded Army Exchange privileges apply equally to this category.

Generally, the findings of this study show the reservist to be a person concerned more about matters which regulate and guide the program than about monetary matters. This corresponds with the recent trends and findings in the business world which see a move away from an economically oriented worker to a worker more concerned about the human aspects of emotional and social needs. Further, the survey findings indicate that the reservist is seeking more self-direction as he points to a perceived need for changes in regulative matters, administration, and training to improve his lot. This creates a second paradox in that the citizen-soldier appears to be a person seeking fewer external controls, while a member of an organization which has been historically regimented and operated under authoritarian leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At this point it will be useful to collate and evaluate everything we have gleaned from our total data base of historical research and these various surveys and to attempt to formulate some manageable and realistic recommendations—a plan of action, if you will—for resolving the problem of maintaining adequate enlisted strength in the Army Reserve. The effect of training on retention will not be addressed here since it was treated at length earlier. These recommendations are presented in the general

order of the importance which survey respondents have placed upon them and can be viewed over the full spectrum of levels concerned with the Reserve components—that is, from the individual reservist all the way to the Congress. Each level is in a position to review the findings and recommendations and to contribute to improvement of the Reserve component program.

The 15 specific recommendations that follow should enhance retention in the United States Army Reserve components.

- *Identify unit personnel who have definite intentions of reenlisting and unit personnel who are uncertain about reenlisting.* Assuming the validity of only a small percentage of reservists planning to reenlist and a slightly larger uncertain population, unit commanders should launch a concerted retention program by identifying and using that 20- to 25-percent population as a baseline. Once those personnel are identified, their spheres of influence can be expanded.

- *Remove all unnecessary irritants that do not contribute to accomplishment of the unit mission.* The militiaman has a difficult enough time adjusting to rapidly changing from a civilian to a soldier and back to a civilian on a repeated basis. He should not have to contend with unnecessary irritants, actions that tend to demean an individual's dignity, try his tolerance level, and discourage him from continuing in the program. The human aspects of emotional and social needs must be given every consideration and a high priority of attention.

- *Improve the quality of leadership at all levels.* There must be a higher quality of leadership attained at all levels through a process of increased opportunities for schooling, improved promotion policies, and retention of only the best-qualified personnel.

- *Review appearance standards with an eye toward flexibility.* Consideration might be given to a more-relaxed standard of appearance in the Reserve components, keeping in mind that the vast majority of a reservist's time is spent in a nonmilitary environment. Consideration might be given

to performing some duties and training in civilian clothes. For example, office work and training that involves lectures, conferences, or discussions, with no requirement to wear the uniform, might be accomplished just as well in civilian clothes.

- *Offer opportunities for short-term tours of active duty through career management to upgrade qualifications and to improve leadership quality of commanders and leaders.* Noncommissioned, warrant, and commissioned officers might serve active duty tours of from one to four years in recruiting, Army Reserve management, or service with Active Army units both in the continental United States and abroad.

- *Offer flexibility in length of service, with a two-year minimum enlistment and a six-year maximum enlistment.* Enlistments of varying periods—two, three, four, five, and six years—might be established, with benefits accruing to the individual based on length of service. Once the young man or woman enlisted for two or three years, the program should be made attractive enough for the reservist to pursue additional terms of service.

- *Exert a concerted effort to improve administration through devoting more time and personnel to administrative aspects.* A general upgrading of all facets of the administration of the Reserve component program should enhance retention. The survey clearly indicated that the regulatory aspects and administration of the Reserve component program are considered foremost among the various areas in need of improvement.

- *Improve the level of unit readiness.* The Reserve components need to become more self-reliant, with less emphasis on the need for, or desirability of, advisory personnel. More self-reliance and independence will appreciably upgrade their true readiness for deployment.

- *Develop fringe benefits that are attractive and well-known to all participants and prospective participants.* Consideration should be given to improved or expanded fringe benefits in the areas of enlistment and reenlistment bonuses, medical and dental care, and expanded Army Exchange and

commissary privileges. Also beneficial would be increased retirement benefits, extension of GI bill benefits to reservists, and development of government-sponsored investment programs. More awards and decorations would also be helpful.

- *Develop intermediate benefits within reasonably close reach of someone considering joining the Reserve components.* Under present legislation, a reservist does not reap most of the benefits of his service until reaching age 60, when retirement pay; full medical, exchange, and commissary privileges; and other benefits become effective.

- *Develop a plan to better integrate a potential enlistee's continuing education plan with Reserve component service.* Acceptance into a college, university, or vocational or technical training school before the prospective reservist's initial active duty tour would be attractive to those young people who hesitate to enlist in the Reserve due to difficulties experienced in enrolling in continuing education programs directly out of high school because they face a four- to six-month interruption.

- *Develop a pay scale that is competitive with part-time employment.* The benefits of Reserve pay must be competitive with part-time civilian employment in order to attract and hold those persons who are able to earn more money by devoting the same amount of time to a part-time job.

- *Conduct civic action programs to serve a number of purposes for the individual reservist, the Reserve program, and the community.* The individual reservist will be able to observe and recognize his contribution to the betterment of the community and the nation through civic action activities. (Assisting during the Post Office emergency in New York in 1970, performing riot control duties, and helping out during natural disasters are examples that come readily to mind, and a myriad of other community services may also be rendered.)

SUMMARY

While much attention has been devoted to the motivation and productivity of the soldier

and the unit, the psychology of motivation is still not fully understood. There is, however, plenty of evidence to support the contention that the "brown shoe" techniques of management and training are not proving successful with young people in the late-1970's. Today's young people are different and must be handled differently from the youth of the 1940's. Those incentives that "turned-on" today's 50-year-old when he was 20 are not the same as those needed by the 20-year-old now. We must stop refining yesterday's solutions to last year's problems. In motivating people, money is not everything. We must stop deluding ourselves that more money and increased fringe benefits automatically benefit productivity and worker satisfaction. Psychologist Frederick Herzberg tested many of the theories about motivating employees in many corporations, and his conclusion was that money may help to keep some people on the job, but it has little value for increasing productivity or providing job satisfaction.³⁴ While continuing to provide for the security needs of workers, organizations should now develop programs to satisfy psychological needs, such as feelings of belongingness, responsibility, and accomplishment.

Senior leaders' failure to keep aware of and be willing to respond to psychological and sociological insights has been a large factor in perpetuating and reinforcing the continued emphasis on obsolete motivational tools. The authoritarian style of management does not have appeal to those in our communities who want to bring their feelings, ideas, and involvement to the job. Augustus Thomas summed it up: "Whatever he may be, the man is not irrational; he can be made to understand why he must do a particular thing if it is, in fact, truly necessary from a functional point of view." Thomas further said: "He will be singularly unimpressed by an argument that in order to be a good infantryman he must so make his bed that a quarter will bounce a foot high."³⁵

Since this article was begun, new Department of the Army incentives have been established that should prove to be at least statistically helpful to the Reserve components' retention program. These

changes include expansion of the reenlistment bonus system, introduction of a selective enlistment bonus, educational tuition assistance, a split basic training/advanced individual training option for certain new recruits, a six-year initial enlistment for women, restoration of pay category "P" for recruits awaiting basic training, and optional retired pay benefits for survivors of reservists who attain retirement eligibility but die before reaching age 60. These incentives should help to improve retention rates, but the distressing fact is that most of them are "money oriented." They apparently are premised on the outmoded philosophy that money can buy adequate quality retention.

I reiterate that today's youth will not abate their clamor for incentives of "challenge" and "meaning" just because they get greater monetary reward. The Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) and the Skill Qualification Test (SQT) are geared to meeting this challenge. Expansion of on-the-job training and increased availability of service schools are other actions that could have the same result. Emphasis *must* be placed on dealing with the psyche of modern young people. Anything else is less than what they are due and will doubtless continue to preserve the retention paradox.

It is not an easy task for organizations as large and conservative as the Reserve components to examine their ethos openly, but from this observation point it appears unlikely that the Reserve components can be spared this "administratively difficult and emotionally painful experience."³⁶ We can be competitive for the time, interest, energy, and loyalty of the youth who represent a cross section of the community if we "afford every opportunity for fulfillment of [their] personal goals."³⁷ In conclusion, priorities must change from career complacency to innovative opportunity.³⁸ Let every commander ask: "What would I have to do to keep you a member of this unit?" And let us all listen carefully to the answer before we decide that we cannot do it.

NOTES

1. This article is condensed from a master's degree thesis and is based on a concept originated several years ago by

- Brigadier General Phillips N. Gordon, Deputy Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard, in a US Army Institute of Administration pamphlet titled, "Are We Operating With Obsolete Motivational Tools?" The author is indebted to General Gordon for reviewing and assisting with this article and for his permission to use selected segments of the pamphlet.
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