

Reserves and Guard: A More Selective Service

by Adam Hochschild

In the Civil War days, if you didn't want to be drafted, you could "buy a man" for \$300 to take your place in the Army. You can also avoid the draft today, though things are more indirect—instead of paying \$300, you can join the Reserves or the National Guard. As long as this escape valve exists for a million privileged men, most of President Nixon's reforms to democratize the draft are meaningless.

The Reserve and the Guard are much easier to be in than the regular Army. First, they usually don't send

you to Vietnam; second, you're on full-time active duty for only four and one half months, which disrupts your marriage, career, and friendships far less than being drafted for two whole years. For these reasons, when I was 21, I enlisted in the Army Reserve rather than wait to be drafted.

An enlisted man must join the Reserve or the Guard for a six-year hitch. After those initial few months of active duty training, you go to a two-week camp each summer, and to weekly drills during the year. Theoretically, the weekly drills in your hometown Reserve or Guard unit keep up your training. In practice, they are more like a mechanical toy which I

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remember reading about a few years ago. The toy was a square black box full of machinery with a switch on the side. When you flipped the switch, the cover of the box opened slowly, a mechanical hand came out, turned the switch off, and then retreated slowly back inside the box. The toy had no use aside from grinding away and eventually turning itself off. My Reserve unit was like that.

When I first joined, I spent several of those drills being processed, paid, and promoted. All around me the same was happening to most of the unit's other 500-odd officers and men. I somehow thought this was a deliberate lull to catch up on administrative paperwork, and that the regular program would start in a few weeks. But it never did. Eventually I realized my Reserve unit did virtually nothing but administer itself.

Each drill began with recorded bugle calls played over a loudspeaker, and then sundry saluting and marching about on the small San Francisco Army base where we met. Then the 500 soldiers, with much shouting of commands and waving of clipboards, were sent indoors and divided up for work into more than a dozen different "sections," for what was called "on-the-job training."

One section checked through the sign-in rosters, and sent threatening letters to people who missed meetings (if you miss five meetings, you get sent to active duty); another promoted people; another issued everybody's paychecks; a truly enormous section with yards of desks and typewriters kept the personnel files in order. Still another section processed men into the unit, while a subgroup processed them out. A section of Military Policemen patrolled the building to make sure no one escaped from all this. (They weren't always successful. One evening three friends and I got out, saw a movie downtown, and came back to the drill in time to sign out. Others, still bolder, did this kind of thing regularly). Another section dispensed paper and type-

writers and mimeograph ink; another prepared coffee and doughnuts for the refreshment break. As the unit grew new jobs flowered: one section set up interoffice telephones and another provided a messenger service to carry papers between all the sections.

Surviving the Boredom

A number of mechanisms used up excess time. One was lesson plans. Every time somebody gives an Army class, he must turn in a "lesson plan"—a long outline, in a special format, of what he said. However, in my own section of the unit, and I believe in most of the others, there were no classes: everyone was too busy either doing the administrative paperwork or trying to get out of it. But regulations called for classes, so we had to write out lesson plans each week—outlines of classes never given. We turned in the lesson plans quarterly to another section, which kept people busy tabulating them. Visiting generals could then be shown proof of all the training we were getting.

There were also the movies. Unit members who could not be kept busy in the sections were sent to a large auditorium. There, they were usually shown Army films, with the same film often shown many times over the years. Occasionally there were movies on things like first aid or safe driving, but most were much farther afield. I remember one documentary about Greenland (huskies, ice, fjords, and freedom-loving Eskimos), and one ancient Air Force film, in an extraordinary reddish-brown no-man's-land between black and white and color, about "Survival in the Tundra."

For all its insanity, going through this charade each week is preferable to being shot at in Vietnam, which is why Reserve units have huge waiting lists. (Each armed force has its Reserve; the most important are the Army Reserve and the Army National Guard, to which nearly 700,000 of the country's one million paid Reservists belong). Men whose draft notices

are about to arrive are sometimes so desperate to join the Reserve that they pay. In New York City alone, there have been half a dozen cases in recent years where Reserve or Guard officials have been arrested and accused of accepting bribes to enlist people. One Chicago National Guard sergeant was charged with letting men into his unit at a price of over \$500 apiece.

Only the Right People

Competition to get into the Reserve and Guard is heavy, and the privileged usually win. Most Reserve and Guard units are exclusive institutions, with the flavor of country clubs, fraternal societies, or comfortable restaurants where you know the other patrons. Defense Department figures show the percentage of college graduates among Army Reserve enlisted men is nearly *three times* as high as among draftees and enlistees of the regular Army, who do the fighting in Vietnam. In my own unit, most members were attorneys, stockbrokers, insurance agents, students, or executive trainees. A number of people had been fraternity brothers in college. At drills men talked about ski trips, stock tips, and M.B.A.'s.

All of this is far different from the World War II Army, where the Hollywood myths had a little truth and rich and poor actually sometimes did fight together. Now the split between the Reserves and the regular Army intensifies the class divisions in this country rather than lessening them.

Besides being unjust, all this matters politically. If the sons of the influential were being killed in Vietnam at the same rate as the sons of black people and the often pro-war white working class, pressure to stop the war would be enormously stronger. An anti-war movement of upper-middle-class college students has already put something of a dent in two Administrations' war plans. If this class of men had been forced to do the actual fighting, instead of being

able to join Reserve units, their protests might well have stopped the war. The Pentagon must be grateful for the Reserves and Guard, a system that keeps so many of these men out of Vietnam.

(Like regular Army soldiers, a good many Reservists and National Guardsmen are publicly protesting the war now. The way they do so often reflects their affluence: recently, large groups of Reservists and Guardsmen in Boston and Washington, D.C. called press conferences, and announced that they were giving their military pay away to peace organizations and candidates. The Army was furious, but couldn't find any regulations against this. Legal actions are also popular, since thousands of Reservists and Guardsmen are lawyers or law students. The Army has been hit with lawsuits over every conceivable issue, ranging from its right to send Reservists to war to its right to make them cut their hair.)

Reserve and National Guard units are not supposed to have such an elite clientele. With some exceptions, the law says units are supposed to enlist new members first-come first-served. Theoretically you can't get in until your name comes to the top of the long waiting list. But in practice, it doesn't work that way. As with all things in the military, it takes lots of paperwork to enlist somebody. So you just speed up the paperwork when you want to get a friend in, or when you want to keep someone out, you slow it down until he gets drafted.

I know this often happens, because I'm guilty of having taken advantage of it twice. When I joined my unit, I was able to jump over the heads of a sizable backlog of other applicants because a friend of a friend knew a high-ranking officer. A year later I was able to get a close friend into my unit in a hurry. I was told quite frankly: "We wouldn't do it except that he's a friend of yours."

Most Reservists and National Guardsmen are guilty of the same

practice. In almost every unit, sons, brothers, in-laws, and former college classmates abound. There are also lots of certain kinds of people whom everybody wants to know—such as professional athletes. We had several San Francisco Giants and Forty-Niners; a 1967 survey disclosed 360 pro athletes in Reserve and Guard units around the country.

Another way the Reserve's and Guard's class nature shows is that they are virtually all white. San Francisco is roughly one-seventh black, but except for pro ballplayers, my unit had only three Negroes out of 500 men. The unit I was in before that drilled a few blocks from downtown Oakland, one of the largest Negro ghettos in the western United States, yet we had no black members at all. In the National Guard, things are worse: the proportion of Negroes in the Guard actually *declined* during 1969 from 1.18 to 1.15 per cent.

Vigilant Nostalgia

This escape valve for upper-middle-class draft-avoiders is not only unjust, but colossally expensive. In 1969, my old unit cost the U.S. taxpayers over \$300,000 in salaries alone. Nationally, this adds up. The total Reserve and Guard budget is \$2.5 billion a year. There are also certain additional costs, such as the hefty pensions paid retired Reservists and Guardsmen. And altogether the two organizations own approximately \$10 billion worth of real estate, armories, airplanes, tanks, guns, ships, and other equipment.

The Reserves and Guard help draft-avoiders, and help the Army by keeping such men out of Vietnam, but they have no other military use whatever—either for defense or for our adventures in Southeast Asia, the Dominican Republic and elsewhere. The best proof of this is that the U.S. is fighting the fourth largest war in its history, Vietnam, almost without them. Approximately 35,000, many of them fliers, were mobilized briefly

after the *Pueblo* incident, but they are all home now. Otherwise there have been no Reserve or Guard units in Vietnam.

Of course the National Guard does sometimes rescue people from avalanches, tornadoes, and the like, and no one can argue against that. People who believe the demands of students, blacks, and strikers should be answered with armed force probably would say there is a "need" for the National Guard there, too—(though not for the Army Reserve, which in recent years has not been used in domestic disorders, except for the New York mail strike). But even then, huge parts of the Guard establishment are excess by anyone's definition: even George Wallace doesn't advocate putting down ghetto rebellions with long-range artillery. In fiscal year 1969, less than one out of every seven Army National Guardsmen in the country was called up for what the Pentagon likes to call "civil disturbances." And the Guardsmen sent into battle at Kent State and elsewhere have created many additional disturbances of their own.

Though the Reserves and Guard provided a good deal of manpower for World War II, in the 1970's America does not need a reserve land army of 700,000 men for its "defense." And in the days of ICBM's and ground-to-air missiles, the Air National Guard's expensive jet fighters, manned round-the-clock at 22 bases throughout the country, are about as necessary as horse cavalry.

Unable to get rid of this ungainly and ill-trained force, the government from time to time asserts that there really is a need for it after all. Defense Secretary Laird recently announced that in the future, Vietnam-type wars would be fought with mobilized Reserve and Guard units, not with draftees. It is not yet clear whether he really means what he says. At present his words mean nothing, for there are no Reserve and Guard units among the 300,000-plus Americans in Vietnam, and there are no plans for send-

ing any.

Defense Secretary MacNamara had enough technical common sense to know the Reserves were military surplus. In 1964 he proposed that the Army Reserve be cut down drastically, and that what remained be merged into the National Guard. His plan suffered a resounding defeat by Congress, and no Administration has dared try anything like it since. Reserve and Guard strength has remained the same. MacNamara had run up against one of the most powerful and least known lobbies in Washington.

Fly with Walter Mitty

The Reserve and Guard of course provide an inexhaustible market for tanks and guns and planes the same way the rest of the armed forces do, and no doubt the big war contractors like this. But the most powerful lobby behind the Reserve and the Guard is its members. I'm not talking here of draft-avoiders like myself who leave as soon as their mandatory six years are up, but of the men who stay in voluntarily beyond them. Most Reserve and Guard officers above the rank of captain and most enlisted men above staff sergeant are making a part-time career out of the military. The pay is excellent. A colonel, for instance, can earn over \$90 for a single day's drill. Twenty years service earns you a pension of up to several hundred dollars a month—not bad for a one-evening-a-week job.

These "20-year men" are a mixture. Some are decent people who just need the money. Others are lonely men, often divorced or unmarried, who seek in Reserve or Guard units the kind of fellowship they can't find elsewhere. And some are the type anyone who has been in the Army knows too well: men who get a visible, almost erotic pleasure out of snapping salutes and shouting commands, who would like to see the whole world in uniform. (In a sane society, there should be drill teams

and marching bands for these people, so they could satisfy their desires in a socially harmless way—and not at public expense.) For these militarist types, the Reserve is sometimes a Walter Mitty fantasy momentarily come true: the busboy by day becomes a sergeant major by night; the insurance clerk flies jet fighters on weekends.

These career soldiers are well organized. They have two efficient pressure groups, which even Hanson Baldwin, the hawkish former military writer for the *New York Times*, calls "powerful lobbies," the Reserve Officers Association and the National Guard Association. The roots of these groups go back a long way, and their histories are full of fascinating lessons in lobbying technique. (The lobbying prowess of the National Guard Association is the subject of a full-length book by a Harvard political scientist.) Shortly after World War II, for example, the Air Force wanted to merge the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard for obvious efficiency reasons. The NGA stopped the plan cold by quietly threatening to use its influence to get a Congressional investigation of liquor sales at certain air bases.

The most remarkable thing about these pressure groups is that, unlike most lobbies, they don't just influence Congress: their members are *in* Congress. About 130 Senators and Representatives are in the Reserves, plus a similar number of their staff. A good many of these Reservist-Congressmen are also active members and office-holders of the two associations. Senator Strom Thurmond, an Army Reserve major general, is a former national president of the Reserve Officers Association.

This strange combination of outside pressure groups and Congressmen has stopped all attempts to change the Reserve structure. Its most stunning victory was over the 1964 MacNamara plan, but, unlike the Reserves the ROA is always ready for battle. In 1970 the Nixon Administration tried

to cut a few thousand men from the small Coast Guard Reserves as a minor economy measure. The ROA swung into action, vigorously, effectively, and rather dishonestly (it instructed its Coast Guard members to fire off protest letters to Congressmen and the President *without* saying they were Coast Guard Reserve officers). Reservist-Congressmen joined the fray, and the plan was swiftly killed in committee. As former White House assistant Douglass Cater wrote a few years ago: "These citizen soldiers are so solidly entrenched politically that no one in Washington dares challenge them frontally."

The Best Defense is Good PR

The links between Congress, the Reserves, and the two lobbies make one big family. The ROA's Washington office is headed by Colonel John T. Carlton, former administrative assistant to ex-Senator George Smathers of Florida. The former head of the NGA's office was once a staff member of the House Armed Services Committee. Committee chief counsel John Blandford is a Marine Reserve brigadier general, scheduled for promotion to major general. A few years ago, the Committee's chief clerk was an Air Force Reserve brigadier general.

No one seems to mind that soldier-Congressmen are Reservists under the command of armed forces for which as Senators and Representatives they vote money. Or that a Reservist-Senator could vote to call—or not to call—himself to active duty. (A group of anti-war Reservists I belong to recently brought suit charging that this situation is unconstitutional.) This conflict of interest simply strengthens the military bloc; the chance to do things like fly jets on weekends (remember those pictures of Air Force Reserve Major General Barry Goldwater from the 1964 campaign?) makes these hawks still friendlier towards the military budget.

The Reserve lobby is also helped

by forces within the military itself. To begin with, every bureaucracy creates its own needs. Career Reserve and Guard officers energetically pressure their Pentagon superiors for more troops, because the more men they command the better their chance for promotion. There's a similar momentum with buildings and equipment. During the last few years my old unit constantly grew and the building we drilled in got more and more crowded. Offices were so packed you had to shout to be heard, and the hallway was like a railway station. Finally they built us a new and larger building at the cost of nearly a million dollars, and all the officers and men, even those who clearly saw the insanity of the Reserve, rejoiced the Army had taken this "reasonable" step at last. There must be similar pressures from other units, because the Army is now planning to build \$600 million worth of new Reserve and Guard armories in the next 10 years.

Momentum also comes from the Reserves' lavish public relations program, which is currently getting a major step-up. (I know a little of this first-hand, because I spent much of my own recently-ended six years in the Army Reserve writing press releases.) A good example of how this works was provided in 1968, the Army Reserve's sixtieth anniversary. Information officers in the nation's Reserve units were sent neatly-packaged red cardboard "kits" of propaganda for their local news media. Among other things, each kit contained slides and scripts for TV and radio commercials, and a selection of newspaper advertisements in different sizes. The largest ad was worded as if written by someone other than the Army: "... they're always there when we need them. So now we'd just like to say thanks. And happy sixtieth anniversary to the men and women of the U.S. Army Reserve." There was a blank space at the bottom where a local newspaper or business could print its name. The kit also included a prepared speech about the Reserves

for delivery "before such groups as the Lions, Rotary, and Kiwanis, etc.," a statement for your mayor to sign to proclaim Army Reserve Week and a memo with an unnerving suggestion: "Check with your local television stations. . . to see if they would show one or more 'war' movies during the anniversary week as a special salute to the Army Reserve."

The National Guard handbook for unit information officers includes a prepared prayer to give local clergymen: "Almighty God. . . we thank Thee for those noble patriots who in times past didst rise up to deliver our nation out of the hands of the enemy. . . ." When talking to mortals, the handbook urges officers to stress the Guard's pork barrel aspect: "Your unit. . . represents a 'hidden' industry for your town. Your Chamber of Commerce or other civic newsletter will be glad to know this. . . . The fact that the extra pay earned by Guardsmen during the year and at field training is spent with local merchants is a good selling point."

The National Guard, especially, goes in for publicity in a big way. Its public relations office at the Pentagon has a \$450,000 annual budget, and besides this there are information officers at hundreds of Guard units around the country. The Guard employed a big ad agency two years ago and has gotten the late Senator Everett Dirksen, John Wayne, and others to tape radio and TV commercials. Supposedly all this hoopla is necessary for "recruiting," but the Guard now has a waiting list of over 100,000 men hoping to get in. In fact, these publicity campaigns are really to help persuade the public to keep the Guard and Reserves alive at all.

Sometimes the Reserve-Guard public relations network is used more openly for political purposes, much as a labor union mobilizes members to work for an election candidate. In November, 1969, Major General Winston Wilson, head of the National Guard, asked Guard commanders in all states to suggest to the nation's

470,000 Guardsmen that as a protest to the November Moratorium against the war, they fly the flag, drive with their headlights on, and leave their porch lights on at night. (Like the Guard, there is something archaic about this: how many Americans still have porches?) Some Ohio National Guardsmen were asked to write letters to President Nixon supporting the war.

Finally, the Reserve-Guard lobby gets strong support from another unexpected source—state governors. A number of them can always be counted on to testify before Congress if Guard appropriations are under fire. The main reason is that governors appoint National Guard officers, and no politician wants to lose that valuable patronage network.

The end result of all these pressures is that Congress methodically votes more money for the Reserves and Guard than the President asks for. In 1967 Congress wanted to continue certain Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard units the Pentagon wanted dropped, and the House Appropriations Committee wrote into the defense bill provisions for 20,000 more Army Reservists than the Pentagon wanted. President Johnson blew his top: "While similar restrictions have been included in the Defense Department appropriations bill in recent years, I am becoming increasingly concerned about them because of the undesirable rigidity they impose on our military structure." When even Johnson complains about military appropriations being too high—and this in the middle of the Vietnam build-up—then things are really out of control.

A Sorry System

The cost is one reason for ending the Reserves and the Guard; Vietnam is the other. It is a sorry system: the poor and the blacks fight the war; the courageous of all classes go to jail as draft resisters; the privileged join the Reserves or the Guard. Eliminating

that escape valve from the draft would not only be just, it would help end the war. People with power in America have shown themselves little moved by the deaths of Vietnamese and of U.S. troops there now. If their own sons were there, things might be different. Now, the sons of senators and corporation presidents are more

likely to be in Reserve or Guard units than on patrol in Vietnam. It is harder to talk calmly of just "slowly winding down" the war if your own boy is in it. This alone should make elimination of the Reserves and the Guard an urgent goal for all who care about stopping this war and preventing the next. ■

Running the Bus Lines of Sofia

One interesting and little-known Reserve operation is the Civil Affairs program. The idea, based on World War II experience, is that Army Reservists be trained to administer the daily, civilian affairs of countries the Pentagon may be occupying. There are currently over 5,000 officers and men in the Reserve Civil Affairs units. Judging from the countries they are studying, it looks as if the Pentagon has contingency plans to run most of the world.

Generally, each unit specializes in running one country, or a group of small countries in one area. A large unit in the Bronx is trained to set up a government anywhere in Africa; a smaller San Francisco unit reportedly concentrates on Southern Africa; a San Pablo, California, unit spent its last summer camp learning about South Korea; a group of South Carolina units specialize in the Balkans.

Some units train each man for a specific job—running the railways of Bolivia, the museums of Czechoslovakia, or the bus lines of Sofia, Bulgaria.

The Civil Affairs units often write booklets on "their" countries—long tracts not unlike diligent high-school papers, full of statistics from almanacs and encyclopedias. There are such Reservist-written books on Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Azerbaijan-Armenia-Georgia.

It is hard to find out much

about the Civil Affairs units. The Pentagon is not eager to publicize them. But a clue to the way the Army plans to use these men comes from the "scenario" of a recent training exercise done by 80 men of the 450th Civil Affairs Company of Riverdale, Maryland. Several other East Coast Reserve units appear to have drilled with the same war-game-on-paper.

The scenario was this: It is June 1970. An anti-Castro revolt breaks out in the Las Villas province of Cuba. Great food shortages. Exile groups (apparently supported by the United States) send raiders. Castro flies to Moscow for instructions. He flies back and declares martial law. Peasants join the invading exiles. The rebels set up a provisional government. "Anarchy" is in sight, so the provisional government requests 20,000 OAS troops. The troops are to "maintain law and order." The U.S. will provide only air cover and non-combat support troops; other OAS nations will supply the rest (Vietnamization catches on fast).

The exercise goes on to say which Reserve units are to administer which areas—the 352nd and the 300th in Camaguey and the 450th near Santa Clara.

Whatever anonymous Army officer wrote the scenario doesn't seem to know much about Cuba. Among other things, he confuses the Cuban July 26 national holiday with the French July 14.

Blaming the Victim

by William Ryan

A major pharmaceutical manufacturer, as an act of humanitarian concern, has distributed copies of a large poster warning "Lead Paint Can Kill!" The poster, featuring a photograph of the face of a charming little girl, goes on to explain that if children *eat* lead paint, it can poison them, they can develop serious symptoms, suffer permanent brain damage, even die. The health department of a major American city has put out a coloring book that provides the same information. While the poster urges parents to prevent their children from eating paint, the coloring book is more vivid. It labels as neglectful and thoughtless the mother who does not keep her infant under constant surveillance to keep it from eating paint chips.

Now, no one would argue against the idea that it is important to spread knowledge about the danger of eating paint in order that parents might act to forestall their children from doing so. But to campaign against lead paint *only* in these terms is destructive and misleading and, in a sense, an effective way to support and agree with slum landlords—who define the problem of lead poisoning in precisely these terms.

The cause of the poisoning is the lead in the paint on the walls of the

This article is adapted from William Ryan's Blaming the Victim, to be published this month by Pantheon. Copyright 1971 by William Ryan.

apartment in which the children live. The presence of the lead is illegal. To use lead paint in a residence is illegal. To permit lead paint to be exposed in a residence is illegal. It is not only illegal, it is potentially criminal since the housing code does provide for criminal penalties. The general problem of lead poisoning, then, is more accurately analyzed as the result of a systematic program of lawbreaking by one interest group in the community, with the toleration and encouragement of the public authority charged with enforcing that law. To ignore these continued and repeated law violations, to ignore the fact that the supposed law enforcer actually cooperates in lawbreaking, and then to load a burden of guilt on the mother of a dead or dangerously ill child is an egregious distortion of reality. And to do so under the guise of public-spirited and humanitarian service to the community is intolerable.

But this is how Blaming the Victim works. The righteous humanitarian concern displayed by the drug company with its poster, and the health department with its coloring book, is a genuine concern, and this is a typical feature of blaming the victim. Also typical is the swerving away from the central target that requires systematic change and, instead, focusing in on the individual affected. The ultimate effect is always to distract attention from the basic causes and to leave the