

Strategy Research Project

Canary in the Coal Mine: Army Reserve and Talent Management

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United States Army War College
Class of 2016

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188		
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2016		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Canary in the Coal Mine: Army Reserve and Talent Management				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Mr. Philip F. Romanelli Department of the Army				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel George P. McDonnell				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited. Please consider submitting to DTIC for worldwide availability? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (student check one) Project Adviser recommends DTIC submission? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (PA check one)					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 5,992					
14. ABSTRACT Talent management of officers in the United States Army is approaching a state of crisis and far-reaching changes are necessary. The impact on the US Army Reserve (USAR) is exacerbated by the fact that it is the smallest component of the Army, is tightly bound to the Active Component, and lacks the dual mission and resulting political strength of the Army National Guard. So to some extent the USAR may be the canary in the coal mine--anything negative may affect the USAR before the other components. This research paper examines four key areas: permeability (movement between components), promotions (who is selected to lead at the next level, when, and how), positions (the structure of the organizations and how they are filled), and proficiencies (how are skills captured and employed). In analyzing these challenges, this paper advocates swift change to selected policies, emphasizes talent management, and identifies needed law and policy updates to enable the Army to better respond to the ever-changing strategic environment.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Permeability, Promotions, Positions, Proficiencies, Reserve Component					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 27	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

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(5,992 words)

Abstract

Talent management of officers in the United States Army is approaching a state of crisis and far-reaching changes are necessary. The impact on the US Army Reserve (USAR) is exacerbated by the fact that it is the smallest component of the Army, is tightly bound to the Active Component, and lacks the dual mission and resulting political strength of the Army National Guard. So to some extent the USAR may be the canary in the coal mine--anything negative may affect the USAR before the other components. This research paper examines four key areas: permeability (movement between components), promotions (who is selected to lead at the next level, when, and how), positions (the structure of the organizations and how they are filled), and proficiencies (how are skills captured and employed). In analyzing these challenges, this paper advocates swift change to selected policies, emphasizes talent management, and identifies needed law and policy updates to enable the Army to better respond to the ever-changing strategic environment.

Canary in the Coal Mine: Army Reserve and Talent Management

Talent management of officers in the United States Army in general and the United States Army Reserve (USAR) specifically is approaching a state of crisis.¹ Budget cuts have decreased end strength and structures across all components of the Army: the Active Component (AC), Army National Guard (ARNG), and the USAR at a time when operational tempo (OPTEMPO) is not falling. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that officers are becoming an increasingly scarce resource.

This may be an especially acute problem for the USAR. It is the smallest component of the Army, is subordinate to the AC in a way the ARNG is not, and lacks the ARNG's dual mission and resulting political strength. So to some extent the USAR may be the canary in the coal mine: Army-wide problems such as too few officers may affect the USAR first and more obviously than the other components.

In this environment, Army and the Department of Defense (DoD) continued reliance on an industrial age personnel system that "treats individuals as interchangeable parts" is no longer viable.² This paper will provide some background to illustrate the genesis of that system, why it has endured, and the imperative for reform. Swift changes are necessary in permeability (movement between components), promotions (who is selected to lead at the next level, when, and how), positions (the structure of the organizations and how they are filled), and proficiencies (how are skills captured and employed). While broad reforms such as those laid out in the DoD's Force of the Future proposals are desirable, this research paper includes a few specific and more easily implemented recommendations for needed law and policy updates to enable the Army to better respond to the ever-changing strategic environment.

Background

Many defense experts assert that America's military is more capable than ever, despite the demands of persistent conflict for almost fifteen years.³ And the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) remains in place, even though at least one member of the Gates Commission which established the AVF thought this impossible.⁴ Given the success of the DoD and Army personnel systems even under such pressures, the framing assumption that these systems need reform at all may seem to require examination

This requires a basic understanding of the ethos of the Army personnel system, and a brief outline of the history behind it. Despite superficial changes and the incorporation of technology, the Army personnel system is fundamentally the same as it was a hundred years ago, following the sweeping reforms of Secretary of War Elihu Root during his tenure with the McKinley and Roosevelt administrations (1899 – 1904).⁵ Root was a corporate lawyer with no military experience looking at the Army through the lens of its poor performance in the Spanish-American War. He believed in the “scientific management” espoused by engineer and production expert Frederick Winslow Taylor.

Taylor broke down “complex production tasks into a sequence of simple, standardized steps” and subsequently standardized both tasks and workers so that “people who were trained to these standards became interchangeable cogs in the machine. . . [which] greatly simplified personnel management in a vast industrial enterprise.”⁶ Although strongly associated with industrial age business practices, ironically the “first conscious and systematic” application of these principles on a grand scale was “the reorganization of the U.S. Army in 1901 by Elihu Root.”⁷

This means that at the very heart of the Army's personnel process is the assumption that “labor is indeed interchangeable.”⁸ More than a century later, “Within

their occupational specialty, junior officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) are to this day considered interchangeable parts.”⁹ Nor is this limited to junior officers. When he was promoted to O7, General Colin Powell was told, “All of you could board an airplane and disappear over the Atlantic tomorrow, and the 52 colonels we’d replace you with would be just as good as you are. We would not be able to tell the difference.”¹⁰

This perspective also rests on an assumption of supply--that another “52 colonels” are available. In 1979 when General Powell earned his first star and the Army had an authorized AC end strength of 773,800, that assumption seemed plausible. In a sequestration scenario where the AC Army would drop to just 54% of that figure, it does not. Already in 2007, “The Army was predicting a shortfall of over three thousand officers, particularly in the crucial senior captain and major range.”¹¹

Despite that shortfall and what one author calls an “exodus” of high-performing junior officers, the Army continues to execute its missions successfully. What helps explain the contradiction between the Army’s strong performance and the flawed nature of its personnel system is that the system is *effective*, but *inefficient*, something like using heavy artillery to suppress a lone sniper.¹²

The worst aspects of this inefficiency are masked by the Army’s success in attracting high-quality talent for initial entry, by twenty-year “cliff vesting” for retirement (which allows the Army to retain many officers it would otherwise lose earlier), and by the current drawdown, which makes retention issues appear irrelevant. However, these circumstances seem to be changing; as they do, the crisis will be increasingly evident.

These factors are obviously linked: the reform of the retirement system, embedded in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2016, eliminates twenty-year cliff vesting and makes the military less attractive as a long-term career. It reduces government benefits for retirees by 20% and shifts to a defined contribution rather than a defined benefit system, while making Soldier contributions portable.¹³ The individual now bears the risk of his or her investments appreciating too little or declining in value outright, and gains less advantage by becoming or remaining a Soldier.

This could jeopardize future recruiting and retention in an economy where unemployment has now fallen below 5%. Although the Army's shrinking size means it needs fewer new recruits, in 2015 "the Army barely met its annual goal of 59,000 new soldiers and did so by depleting its pool of recruits in its delayed-entry program."¹⁴ This recruiting difficulty is especially concerning given the "war for talent" in America. Only 13% of American youth qualify for military service, and only about 1% are both eligible for and interested in serving, according to Major General Allen Batschelet, the commander of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command.¹⁵ In a 2014 interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, he put it bluntly, "The quality of people willing to serve has been declining rapidly."¹⁶

At the same time, retention may suffer for reasons other than changes to the retirement system, as a generation of officers accustomed to the challenges and rewards of combat leadership may show little patience for the requirements of peacetime service. Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates made this clear:

Men and women in the prime of their professional lives, who may have been responsible for the lives of scores or hundreds of troops, or millions of dollars in assistance, or engaging in reconciling warring tribes, they may find themselves in a cube all day re-formatting power point slides,

preparing quarterly training briefs, or assigned an ever-expanding array of clerical duties. The consequences of this terrify me.¹⁷

The DoD and the Army itself now acknowledge the problems of the Army's personnel system. As the then-Under Secretary of the Army, Brad Carson, admitted in 2014, "You will find nary a single source anywhere that defends the current way that we run our personnel system except many people will lament how hard it is to actually change it. As a concept, no one defends it at all."¹⁸

In fact, the Army has created a Talent Management Task Force to identify needed reforms. Ostensibly stood up in November of 2015, its charter is still pending because it lacks a Secretary of the Army signature (This may be because the two successive Acting Secretaries of the Army since then are perhaps avoiding any action that could seem like a presumption of confirmation).

Whatever changes this nascent Task Force recommends will obviously affect all Army components. But the USAR may be particularly vulnerable if timely reforms are not made. One indication of this is a widely-read 2004 memo from the then-Commander of the Army Reserve, Lieutenant General James R. Helmly. Lieutenant General Helmly asserted that the USAR was "rapidly degenerating into a 'broken' force" because of outdated rules. "The policies and procedures which govern the Army Reserve's very existence. . . would be dysfunctional if there were no mobilization and war today; their dysfunction is made more acute and hurtful by the strain of wartime use on the USAR today."¹⁹

While the reduction in large-scale mobilizations to Iraq and Afghanistan has eased the pressure on all of the Army Total Force since then, Lieutenant General Helmly identified early on the unsustainable nature of a combination of high OPTEMPO

and obsolete policies. While there are fewer troops in contact with the enemy today, the OPTEMPO remains extremely high, in part due to the aforementioned personnel cuts. The USAR may again see the dysfunction of these policies become unmistakable.

Although the personnel system is based on a century-old paradigm, and as Secretary Carson said has no real defenders even within the defense establishment, reform of the system has been slow and incremental. In part, this is because some attempted changes proved unsuccessful or inconclusive.

Permeability

Several of those unsuccessful changes involved the concept formerly called the “Continuum of Service,” and now more often referred to as “permeability” within the Army. The degree to which these two terms refer to the same concept is underscored by the official Army definition: the “Army Continuum of Service (COS) is a human capital management strategy that facilitates a more flexible transfer of Soldiers (Regular Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve) across components of the Total Army and the Civilian Corps, supporting strategic requirements while promoting a lifetime of service to the nation.”²⁰ The uniformed Army is made up of three components--the AC, the ARNG, and the USAR. The question of permeability between these three components carries tension, chiefly over resources, but also driven by cultural differences.²¹

As conscription ended in 1973, two successive Secretaries of Defense set out the Total Force Concept, later the Total Force Policy, and directed the Services to better integrate the active, guard, and reserve forces into a whole.²² But a 1975 study showed low Reserve Component (RC) readiness, so RC units were not considered “full substitutes” for AC ground forces.²³ The “tiered readiness” model at the time meant that few RC units could gain or maintain a high state of readiness in any case.²⁴

Nonetheless, from the mid-1970s on, the Total Force Policy made integration of AC and RC units a stated DoD objective. As part of this, the “roundout” program designated ARNG maneuver brigades (and one USAR brigade) to “round out” AC units as a response to the Soviet threat at its height on the plains of central Europe. But when the time came for the use of those integrated units, it was in the different strategic and fiscal circumstances of 1991 and the Gulf War. The DoD did not mobilize the roundout brigades, and controversy arose over whether this was due to poor RC readiness or AC prejudice.²⁵ Whatever the reason, the dispute caused distrust between the AC and the ARNG for some time, further hampering integration.

If early attempts at fostering permeability foundered, that may have been in part because it then seemed like a luxury. Until the post-Gulf War drawdown, the AC Army’s end strength was over 700,000. Today, the Army AC is on track to fall to 475,000 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 – already the smallest Army AC since 1940--and is slated to continue being cut to 450,000 by the end of FY 2018.²⁶ At that size, integration is no longer just desirable, it’s necessary: the AC alone is likely insufficient to meet the needs of America’s national defense. According to the National Commission on the Future of the Army, the projected end strengths of each Army component in FY 2018 represent “the absolute minimums to meet America’s national security objectives.”²⁷ But those objectives can only be met if the Army RCs are resourced and maintained at current readiness levels, which would be impossible if sequestration is executed.²⁸ In the current environment, permeability becomes less about dividing up resources and more about recognizing the interdependence of the components.

This shift in perception is already evident at the top. In his first public speech as the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Mark A. Milley spoke to this new understanding. “We are a total Army. We are one Army. And we are an Army of almost a million strong, not 490,000. . . We are one Army consisting of three components in the regular Army, National Guard, and United States Army Reserve.”²⁹

Much of that change in perspective is also due to the fact that the components have fought together for almost 15 years. The long conflict and the accompanying resources resulted in a better-trained, better-equipped, more experienced USAR and ARNG and markedly less evident distinctions between components. General Frank J. Grass, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, put it this way in 2013: “We have the best military and the best Reserve Components we’ve ever had in our history.”³⁰

Nonetheless, the Army components have legitimate reasons to worry about *how* permeability will be implemented. Given that the overall number of Soldiers is unlikely to grow, there is the potential for movement between components to seem like a zero-sum game, where gains for one can come only through a loss for another.

During the height of American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the USAR tracked what it calls “uniformed losses:” transfers from the USAR to the AC and the ARNG. (Some degree of permeability obviously already exists for this even to be a metric.) The USAR gained over 9,300 more troops than it lost to the AC and ARNG from FY 02 through FY 04. Then the trend reversed from FY 05 through FY 07 and the AR lost over 7,700 more troops than it gained.³¹ Permeability meant an additional 2% to 5% in USAR losses during that period.

One detail slowing permeability is that all officers must be “scrolled” when commissioned or promoted and “re-scrolled” if they change components. The scrolls (lists of the officers involved) are a means of ensuring Congressional oversight under the Appointments Clause of the Constitution (Article II, Section 2, Clause 2). The President is to make the appointment, and Congress is to review it. The President has delegated the scrolling process for O6 and below to the Secretary of Defense. The entire re-scrolling process can take six to nine months, and sometimes longer.³²

Another detail in the current understanding of permeability makes separation not simply a zero-sum, win-lose game, but a lose-lose game. Those AC Soldiers who accept early separation pay (voluntary or involuntary) from the AC will forfeit that pay if they enter the RC and serve long enough to qualify for retirement. This “separation recoupment” dates from a time when the AC Army wished to discourage officers from leaving. Today, as the AC is forcing officers to leave who would prefer to stay, it is merely a disincentive to continued service in the Army RCs.

Promotions

Brad Carson, then the Under Secretary of the Army, noted that we still have a “promotion system that is based on the amount of time that you have served--that is up or out over time--a system based in the industrial age.” He said that if we offered the management of any successful civilian enterprise the chance to trade our personnel system for theirs, they would turn that trade down as being completely unsuitable.³³ As one author put it, “In terms of attracting and training innovative leaders, the U.S. military is unparalleled. . . In terms of managing talent, the U.S. military is doing everything wrong.”³⁴ This is also the sense of many Soldiers and veterans. In one survey, a primary reason that high performers gave for leaving the military was “frustration with military

bureaucracy.”³⁵ (This survey had a small margin of error of just 6.2% with 95% confidence.)³⁶ In another highly reputable survey, “the number one reported reason for separation was limited ability to control their own careers.”³⁷

The rigidity of the 1980 Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) is the source of much of the bureaucracy. It mandates the numbers of field grades that can be on active duty, and requires the rigid “up-or-out” system that has been a hallmark of the military since World War II. The “year group” system is due to DOPMA, which means that officers are promoted almost in lockstep with their peers: “the military personnel system--every aspect of it--is nearly blind to merit. . .there is essentially no difference in rank among officers of the same age, even after 15 years of service.”³⁸

The RC equivalent to DOPMA, the Reserve Officer Personnel Management (ROPMA), was passed in 1994, but its express aim was “to achieve uniformity and compatibility with DOPMA” so there was no re-appraisal of the system.³⁹ Many of the provisions of DOPMA and ROPMA “were derived from legislation passed at the end of World War II,” specifically, the Officer Personnel Act (OPA) of 1947.⁴⁰ The Navy had already used an “up or out” system; this was now applied to the other services as a way to prevent the problems the Army had experienced during the inter-war period with “a lack of effective means of separating older officers.”⁴¹

So today’s governing documents of the military personnel system are heavily based on those written immediately after World War II to prevent the recurrence of pre-war problems. Even if that weren’t the case, they would still be based on facts and assumptions from 1986 (36 years ago, written in a time before the internet and the

breakup of the Soviet Union). It is unsurprising that they no longer mesh well with the exigencies of the present age.

Even as DoD considers reform of the year group system, the USAR has an opportunity to take the lead. As it stands right now, it is chiefly the ARNG and the Judge Advocate General (JAG) corps that most often use Position Vacancy Boards (PVBs). But PVBs could be used more aggressively as a leadership tool to fill key vacancies, if there were a better developed understanding of what constitutes a key position in the USAR.

Positions

The most obvious answer to what constitutes a key position in the USAR is command of a unit. Beyond that, the question becomes more interesting. The USAR, like all Army components, tends to focus on and rewards the “hard jobs”--Key Developmental positions that enhance career progression. This makes sense, especially because the consequences of failure there in a wartime Army are so stark. But if and when the USAR no longer has troops in harm’s way, there may be room for a more expansive definition of what constitutes a key position worthy of fill through a PVB.

The USAR has an advantage over the AC here, because to a great extent, its officers serve as their own branch detailers. They have more flexibility than AC leaders in deciding when and where to seek new positions and new units, although in practice many of those decisions are often driven by considerations external to their military service (graduation, civilian job moves, changes in marital status, etc.).

The vast majority of USAR Soldiers are in Troop Program Unit (TPU) positions, but there are many senior-level USAR positions at Joint and Headquarters, Department of the Army organizations. Leaders in the USAR are encouraged to broaden

themselves, but in practice that often means just switching from one TPU to another to avoid the perception of “homesteading” in one particular unit. In contrast, many Individual Mobilization Augmentee (IMA) billets at high levels of the Army and DoD go unfilled. One recent search on the Human Resources Command website revealed four pages of vacant IMA positions. On the first page alone were billets with the Army G2, G3/5/7, G4, G8, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer Headquarters, the Missile Defense Agency, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.⁴²

Those officers who do take on an IMA assignment tend to receive less career guidance or administrative support compared to their TPU counterparts. Similarly, there is little attention paid to those who volunteer for individual mobilizations. These individual mobilization tours could be examined for their implications regarding the support needed from RC officers. This is especially meaningful in an age of Overseas Contingency Operations funds, where RC personnel have consistently been used to fill in AC gaps, frequently in the “Institutional Army” (e.g., the Army Operations Center in the Pentagon or First Army, both of which made heavy use of mobilized Reserve officers during the height of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan).

Finally, to take the logic of the “Soldier for Life” understanding of military service to its logical conclusion, there are those officers who have already left the military who decide they wish to return. For them, the barriers to re-entry once you have left the military are as almost as high as entering in the first place. As it stands now, the process for returning to the military is lengthy and confusing.

Before Major Lisa Jaster became the first USAR female to graduate from Ranger School, she re-entered the Army after having been completely out. In Major Jaster’s

case, she essentially had to go through all of the processes just as if she were entering the military for the first time, including going through the Military Entrance Processing Station with all of the actual enlistees. Because the process of officer re-entry was so cumbersome and little-known, her re-entry to the US Army spanned three years, two pregnancies, and an interstate move, despite her determined efforts and her contacts among other West Point alumni.⁴³ It is difficult to assess if her experience is typical. It remains unclear how many people abandon the process or are discouraged from even attempting it because only those who manage re-entry are tracked.

Proficiencies

One reason why the ability to rapidly re-accession prior-service officers is important is that a downsizing Army and USAR are losing people with skills that take months or years to develop. This is particularly worrisome as it affects the USAR, which provides most of the low-density, high-demand enablers for the Army. The USAR provides a majority of the Army's personnel for Civil Affairs, Quartermaster, Medical, Military-Information Support Operations, Postal and personnel management, Chemical, Transportation, Legal Support, Military History, and Chaplains.⁴⁴

Even more significant is the fact that

specialized Army Reserve capabilities not present elsewhere in the Joint Force include those especially critical to the theater opening phase of an operations plan such as Petroleum Pipeline and Terminal Operations, rail units, Biological Identification Detachments, Broadcast Operation Detachments, General Purpose Civil Affairs, General Purpose Military Information Support Operations, Theater Engineer Commands and Medical Logistics.⁴⁵

If we do not retain people with these capabilities in the USAR, we will not retain them within DoD at all. But our current paradigm means that the "low density" in these Military Operational Specialties (MOSs) often masks the problem. Demand for these

USAR-only capabilities is not high in a steady-state environment, and the small numbers involved may hide the incapacity to open two theaters at once, for example.

The Army's (understandable) emphasis on maintaining the combat power of line units has ironically left not only the AC Army, but also the Joint Force dependent on the USAR in order to successfully complete the theater-opening phase of an operation. However, this may not be well-understood outside the USAR, and it's unclear to what extent personnel with these particular skills are being retained and a robust pipeline of their (eventual) replacements being generated.

This problem of capturing and anticipating mid-term and long-term needs is even more pronounced for civilian skills. Civilian skills are often touted--by both RC and AC Army leaders--as one major benefit to RC involvement in operations. But our institutional visibility of civilian skills is poor. Until recently, Officer Evaluation Reports were not searchable, and the Officer Record Brief only includes civilian education when it is degree or certificate granting. With the exception of professionals brought into the Army for their specific skill set (doctors, nurses, dentists, lawyers, priests), if the Army didn't train an officer in a skill, the Army may not know about it. Army systems do not capture the whole person very well. Secretary Carson put it this way: "[O]ur Officer Record Briefs. . .are little more than accounting data, really. They don't tell you about any of the idiosyncratic skills that you might have picked up along the way. . .things that the Army could use--in important ways, if we knew more about it."⁴⁶

Although Civilian Employer Information (CEI) reporting is mandatory for RC Soldiers, it is not enforced. There are numerous problems with the CEI that make it of little use. Only actual job information is required, and it is superficial data at that (job

title, labor category, address, etc.) rather than actual skill descriptions. Entering non-job related skill information (such as languages) is voluntary, but there is little incentive to do so. Although officers can receive a Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB) if they speak another language, the paperwork is separate from the CEI, and FLPB is also restricted to specific languages and specific MOSs or duty positions (e.g., Civil Affairs, Foreign Affairs Officer, Army Linguist, etc.). Even for the officer who speaks, say, Arabic or Urdu, there is a possible downside to letting the USAR know that: it is perceived as making deployment more likely, possibly as an individual rather than with one's unit. Among the Army Talent Management Task Force's charges is reshaping (or replacing altogether) the CEI to make it a useful part of the Army's talent management system.

Recommendations

As the DoD contemplates broad strategic reforms to its talent management system, below are several somewhat more easily implemented recommendations for needed law and policy updates to enable the Army to better respond to the ever-changing strategic environment.

Fully Staff and Empower the Army Talent Management Task Force

The Army Talent Management Task Force is only about the size of a squad currently, and many of its members are involved as an additional duty. Major General Todd Semonite had been the Task Force head, but is already leaving to become the Chief of Engineers. Brigadier General Wilson A. Shoffner, Jr. has been designated as the next Task Force lead. The Army also plans to name a civilian member of the Senior Executive Service as a deputy. This is an insufficient number of personnel for the massive amount of coordination and staffing necessary for reform throughout the entire Army enterprise and making it an additional duty is unlikely to ensure progress. The

Army should provide dedicated staff and quickly establish lasting leadership until the Task Force completes its recommendations.

Repeal Limitations on Field-Grade Officers

For true permeability, the Army will need to ask Congress for relief of the DOPMA/ROPMA limitations on the number of O4s, O5s, and O6s. This can be done, because the Army was already allowed to ignore DOPMA's limits on the percentage of those promoted. For example, DOPMA stipulates no more than 80% of AC captains be promoted to major; the promotion rate has in recent years been as high as 94% in the Army.⁴⁷ This will also require Congressional acceptance of a somewhat top-heavy military, but that is a necessary evil. Mid-grade and senior officers will be needed as cadre in case the AC Army has to quickly increase in size (this is what allowed the Army to rapidly scale up during World War II). While this may not seem likely in the immediate future, the AC Army is already smaller than it was before 9/11, and at 450,000 by the end of FY 18 it will be the smallest US Army since 1940, well below the post-war average for end strength.

Develop/Streamline Component Transfer Standards

Increasing permeability gives the institution and the individual greater flexibility. Changing this allows officers to intensify or reduce their commitment to the military in a way that makes sense given the exigencies of family life and health, and would provide the Army with greater access to high performers in the RC. To allow each component to better manage its manpower needs, the Army should set up specific "business rules" for how "the needs of the Army" are determined within its three components. The Army could balance predictability and flexibility by establishing clear standards for movement between components. Generally, the Army would need to establish some sort of

“payback” period for the cost incurred for recruitment/initial training of the Soldier. If the Soldier wanted to transfer to another component within that “payback” period, the gaining component could “buy out” the Soldier and pay the recruitment/training cost to the losing component.

Eliminate or at Least Automate “Re-Scrolling” and Request Delegation to the Service Secretaries

As resources shrink, there are some things that DoD will simply have to stop doing. The current “re-scrolling” process, which can take nine months or more without adding any real value, should be one of them. The Army should seek legislative relief from this significant burden that affects thousands of people in multiple offices throughout the Army, DoD, Congress, and the White House.

If the process cannot be eliminated entirely, the President had already delegated the review of appointments at the O6 level and below to the Secretary of Defense. This could now be further delegated to the Service Secretaries, shortening the process. It should also be automated--as it stands, paper is still being used. In practice, Congress pays little attention to junior officer promotions: for at least two years, the DoD failed to provide Congress with scrolls from the appointment of ROTC officers and it took them that long to notice.⁴⁸ The more detailed periodic scrub of officer records already required to secure or maintain a security clearance provides a more useful check on possible malfeasance than re-scrolling.

Develop a Comprehensive Program for the Use of PVBs in the USAR

The use of PVBs in the USAR may be a partial answer to the underuse of IMA positions at the strategic level. This could provide officers with an incentive to go beyond TPU positions, and help compensate for the career downside of Officer

Evaluation Reports being considered in the same pool as AC personnel. Not every IMA position could or should be tied to a PVB, but it would make the genuinely key positions more desirable and give USAR officers opportunities for broadening that could enhance their careers.

End Separation Pay Recoupment for Voluntary Separation Pay

Not all of those who enter the RC after service in the AC will stay long enough to qualify for an RC retirement. But arguably, the Army should now encourage people to do so, not punish them for it. This disincentive to continued service virtually ensures that these officers won't still be accessible to the Army if and when they are needed.

Some may question the potential for abuse of separation pay, but the amounts involved are (relatively) trivial. In some ways, this is similar to the Critical Skills Retention Bonus (CSRB) that was offered to junior officers. Many officers took the CSRB who were planning to stay in anyway; presumably many of those who take involuntary separation pay may have been planning to leave anyway. This seems less a matter of abuse than luck.

In any case, the amount of separation pay is dwarfed by the investment that the Army has already irretrievably made in the Soldier which is inaccessible in a purely civilian status. "We have invested thousands of hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars in the development of each of these officers, and that development is being leveraged by the private sector, by corporate America, and not by the Army."⁴⁹ If the mid-grades now leaving the AC are not retained in the RC, access to them is forever lost, and they are vital for the rapid re-growth of a larger Army.

The recoupment of separation pay for involuntary separation, as opposed to voluntary separation, should depend on the cause of the separation. In some cases, the Army may wish to maintain the disincentive to continued military service.

Facilitate the Re-Entry of Former Officers

The Army should streamline the requirements for officer re-entry as long as applicants can still meet the standards. Although there is a “Call to Active Duty” program that can provide for the re-entry of former officers, it is not necessarily understood by many recruiters, who are the first point of contact for those seeking re-entry. The Army has the necessary authorities for this now, but Service culture will influence the success or failure of this change. Returning a previously-trained officer to duty is also likely to cost less than accessioning a brand-new individual for some of the more technical branches.⁵⁰ The process needs to be simplified and recruiters made more aware of it.

Better Capture and Employ Individual Proficiencies

The Army’s new Integrated Personnel and Pay System (IPPS-A) is based on the commercially successful PeopleSoft application. It is robust enough to include information on civilian skills. Indeed, the IPPS-A website expressly states that “Certification & Qualification Query” to include “military and Civilian education, technical certifications, and special skills” will be part of Release 1 of IPPS-A.⁵¹

But there is a larger issue of how the USAR can use personnel for their civilian skills without breaking faith with them regarding their understanding of their function and unit integrity. An officer proficient in Arabic may not wish to deploy as an individual engaged in document exploitation, but prefer to mobilize with his or her unit in his or her MOS. There is also the potential for degrading units if they are “strip-mined” for people with particular skills. Benefits such as Assignment Incentive Pay as well as non-

compensation incentives might help persuade officers to think about this differently and voluntarily make their skills known and available to the USAR.

Just as the Army is increasingly succeeding in having civilians recognize military certifications, so the Army should recognize most civilian certifications as well (e.g., the Project Management Professional credential or a certificate from a college or university, or proof of employment as a journeyman apprentice in a trade, etc.).

Conclusion

The DoD and the Army are prime examples of closed systems. Losses of lieutenants and captains now mean fewer options when it comes time to promote colonels and generals later. Today, the need to better capture and manage talent so that it isn't "lost" is becoming a crisis due to the personnel drawdown, the war for talent in a time where military service holds less appeal, and the continued high OPTEMPO. That crisis will become evident first for the USAR. The Army's personnel system is an antique, an anachronism that no longer serves the organization well. Rapid reforms are needed in terms of permeability across components, promotions of those who can lead in the future, positions that touch on strategy as well as operations and tactics, and proficiencies that supplement the military skills taught at Army schools and courses.

During World War II, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill reportedly said, "Gentlemen, we have run out of money; now we have to think." The U.S. Army is not only short on money but on people and—perhaps--time, since by definition, no one can predict the unexpected. We no longer have the luxury of allowing the talent we have developed and invested in to be dissipated. By seeing the Army as an overall enterprise rather than distinct components, we can both enlarge the system and retain the talented people we need to ensure the continued preeminence of our Service and our nation.

Endnotes

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