

# America's mercenary army: Drugs and illiteracy

by Susan Welsh

The United States armed forces today are less capable of fighting and winning a war than any peacetime armed forces this nation has ever had. Under the regime of the "All-Volunteer Force," between 10 and 30 percent of troops in Europe are on heroin or cocaine, with a much larger percentage of habitual users of hashish or marijuana; 25 percent are classed by the Army as "problem drinkers." The average recruit reads at a fifth grade level, and 60 percent of recruits are rated "below average" in the Army's mental aptitude tests. They are unable to effectively operate the weapons or machinery to which they are assigned.

If war were to break out in Europe, one reserve division (18,000 men) could be sent over from the United States within ten days; the next soldier, however, would not arrive for 180 days.

This appalling state of affairs is the result of 30 years of policy control over the American military machine by the adherents of British "cabinet warfare" military doctrine and the "cost-cutting systems analysts" of the Robert S. McNamara School. While the disintegration of the armed forces which were once the best in the world reflects a process ongoing in American society at large, it is also a specific demonstration of the invalidity of the "volunteer army" concept.

"The American soldiers here are mercenaries really," an officer in the West German army, the Bundeswehr, told *EIR* correspondent George Gregory in Munich this week. "In fact, spiritually and mentally they are poor mercenaries at that. As for the officers, we think they could do something about the drug problem if they really wanted to."

## The British model

The All-Volunteer Force (AVF) officially replaced the draft system in 1973. It was based on the example of Great Britain, which abolished compulsory military service in 1961, and is the only European military power (today) with a volunteer army.

The concept of the AVF was sold to President Richard Nixon because the Vietnam War debacle meant that it was becoming virtually impossible to operate the Selective Service System anyway. In 1969, Nixon appointed a commission, led by former Secretary of defense Thomas S. Gates, Jr., to look into the matter. Economist Milton Friedman was one prominent member of the Gates Commission, arguing for the application of the principles of "free enterprise" to the problem of military recruitment. Another "fiscal conservative," Martin Anderson of the Hoover Institution, who is an advisor to Reagan, played a role in the commission's work and wrote the legislation which set up the AVF.

The process of decay was already far advanced before Friedman and Anderson got their hands on the Department of Defense. Since World War II, traditionalist military officers who stood by the code of "duty, honor, country," and knew that war is not something you draw pictures of on a blackboard, were being squeezed out of positions of power. With McNamara's appointment as Secretary of Defense under President Kennedy in 1961, the takeover by the "whiz kids" began in earnest. They argued that America's strategic "deterrent"—ICBMs, bombers and submarine-launched missiles—made in-depth war-fighting capability unnecessary, since the Soviet Union would never dare to take on the U.S. strategic arsenal. Therefore advanced research and development programs, conventional weapons, and manpower training were not considered "cost-efficient."

McNamara had applied the accounting principles of "cost-benefit analysis" at the Ford Motor Company during the 1957-1961 recession period, and when he came to the Defense Department he ran it the same way. Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, in *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (Hill & Wang, New York: 1978) describe how the military officer became identified with the up and coming corporate executive, and suddenly became preoccupied with "career management." Lower-ranking officers became known

as "middle-tier manager." Strategists talked about the "automated battlefield," as though the soldier no longer had anything much to do with warfare.

A current Democratic presidential contender Lyndon H. LaRouche, in a 1977 military policy memorandum titled "How Kissinger and McNamara Wrecked U.S. Military Capabilities," addressed this problem with the following recommendation: "To have a functioning Pentagon, it would be necessary to begin by cleaning out every taint of the influences of "Slickum" McNamara, Schlesinger and Defense Secretary Harold Brown, and painting the faces of accountants a distinctive, indelible purple, so that their opinions on all military subjects might be efficiently ignored at the outset." An officer or enlisted man who is wondering whether participation in a battle will "further his career" is not a soldier, and a combat unit built around the principles of cost-effectiveness and pursuit of self-interest will not fight.

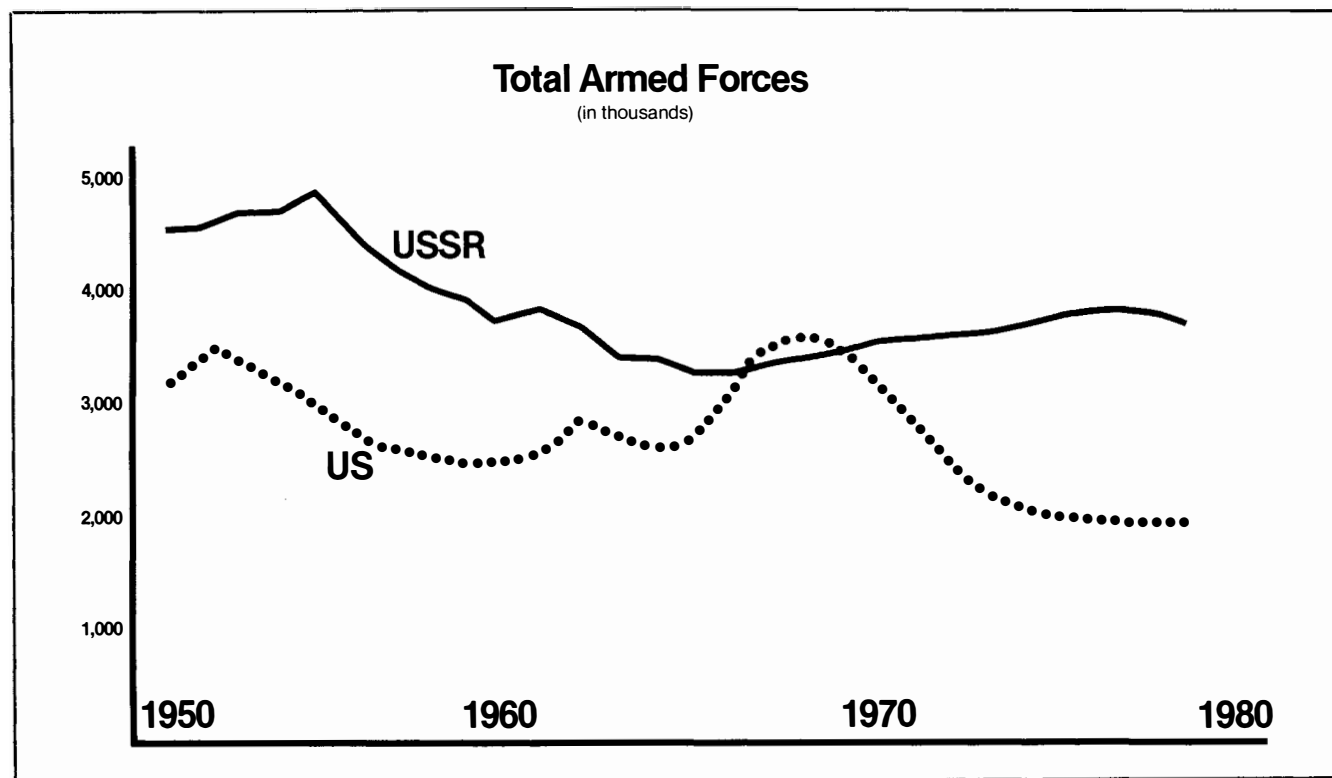
This became rapidly apparent in the Vietnam War, as the U.S. army destroyed itself under conditions of relatively minimal stress. Desertion, "fragging" (assassination of officers by enlisted men), and mutiny were rampant, and nearly one-third of the troops had used hard narcotics. Corruption was widespread, as the drug-running proceeded through the highest-ranking members of the South Vietnamese government. American diplomats and military commanders were complicit in the dope

traffic, and the CIA airline Air America flew drugs from Laos into Vietnam.

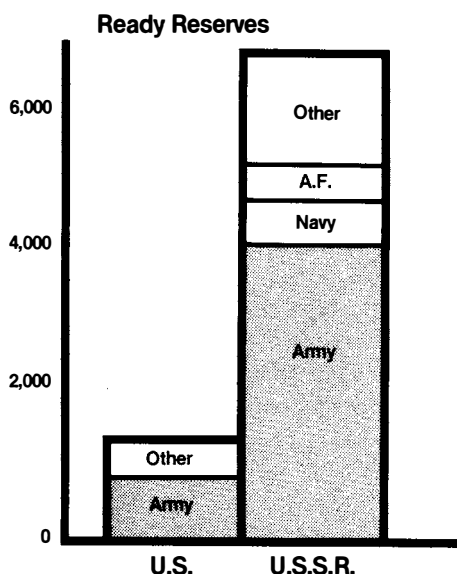
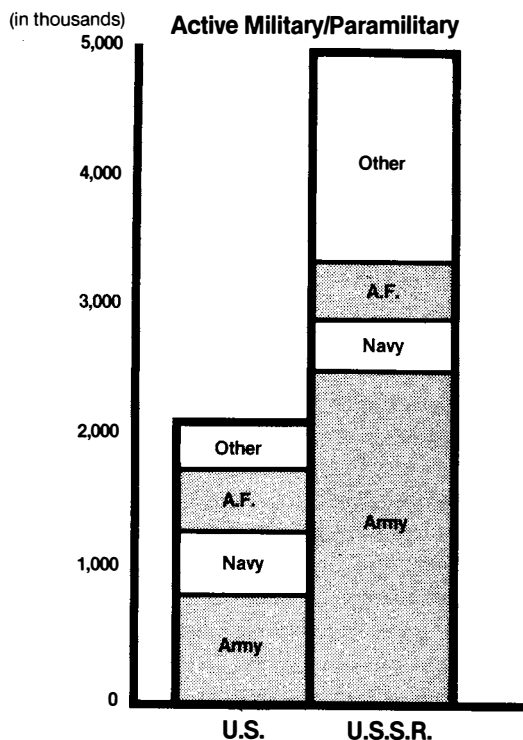
### The "Hessian" army

The institution of the All-Volunteer Force after Vietnam has kept the manpower situation in the military at crisis proportions. Total Soviet active military manpower today is estimated at more than twice that of the U.S. (4,437,000 to 2,095,000), with the U.S. reserves being in particularly critical condition. The social composition of the armed forces has shifted heavily toward the poor, the black and Hispanic. At present, 33 percent of the army is black, and 11 percent is composed of non-citizens (largely Hispanic, some of whom do not speak English); 15 percent is female, not available for a combat role.

Educational levels and literacy have fallen precipitously. Whereas during World War II 8.5 percent of servicemen aged 20-24 had completed four or more years of college, the figure was 2.6 percent of all veterans in 1971, and is lower now. In 1973 under the draft the average reading level was 11th grade; today it is 5th grade. In 1973 only 10 percent of troops scored below average in intelligence on the Armed Forces Qualification Test, whereas today 59 percent are in this category. In October 1979, the army was forced to change its recruitment requirements, relaxing standards to eliminate the previously required high school diploma for



## Comparative Manpower 1977



women and 17-year-old male volunteers, in order to meet its recruitment quotas.

Drug use is difficult to measure accurately, but is unquestionably high. Rep. Lester Wolff, Chairman of the House Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control, said in Dec. 1978 that hard drug abuse in the military forces in Europe was estimated at about 9 percent, or 27,000 men—the equivalent of nearly two divisions. Defense manpower expert Richard Gabriel cites more recent Defense Department figures showing at least 28 percent heroin use in Europe, and 20 percent of troops using hashish at least once a week. Given this manpower material to work with the “cost effectiveness” bias of training programs, those programs have shown very poor results in improving the skill levels of armed forces personnel. An army training study done over a year ago revealed that only 45 percent of E-2 and E-3 category automobile repairmen could perform even 1.3 out of 8 common auto maintenance tasks. A similar situation existed for track vehicle mechanics, tank commanders and gunners.

### Defense Department “coverup”

The DoD and its allied think-tanks like the Rand Corporation are continuing to claim that the AVF is working just fine. This led Rep. Robin Beard (R-Tenn) to charge last April that the DoD has perpetrated a “deliberate coverup” of the manpower crisis. Beard charged that the latest figures show there would be a shortfall of over one million trained personnel 90 days after the beginning of a conventional arms war in Europe. “There are desperate shortages of soldiers in the infantry, in medical, in armor, in artillery and combat engineers. In some critical areas, our combat units would have no more than 30 percent of the trained manpower necessary 90 days into the war,” the Congressman said, according to *Armed Forces Journal International* dated April 1979. Beard attributed the situation to “invisible” OMB and DoD analysts, “an unseemly colony of termites who have consistently bored away at the defense budget, opting for cutting costs at the expense of readiness.”

The lack of reserves is particularly acute, as U.S. Ready Reserve strengths dropped from 2,661,000 in 1970 under the draft to 1,189,000 in 1977 (the Soviet Union possessed at least 6,800,000 in 1977). Leading West German military analyst Adelbert Weinstein drew attention to this situation in a Dec. 28, 1979 article in the daily *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, titled “An Army Without Soldiers.” The Pentagon fell short of its recruitment goals by 13,000 men and 2,000 women in 1979, he said, despite an additional \$20 million spent on advertising. Furthermore, “the volunteer army has a blemish which

cannot be eliminated by any cosmetic corrections: This army does not produce any reserves. By now as many as 150,000 reservists are lacking in the 'individual ready reserve. This is the reservoir from which the combat troops are reinforced with trained personnel reserves. Unless this gap is closed all promises will remain hollow that U.S. strategic reinforcement would arrive in good time in the event of a crisis and possibly stabilize a dangerous situation by its presence, because the combat troops could count on the arrival of trained personnel only months later. Said Weinstein:

This causes the lowest level of deterrence strategy to lose credibility. For world politics, however, the army without soldiers means that President Carter will be unable to set up his strategic rapid deployment force. This may mean that Teheran will not remain an isolated case.

As serious as the lack of reserves is the high turnover of personnel, especially skilled officers like pilots. Two out of five servicemen do not finish their hitch, and in the Air Force and Navy, pilots are resigning in unprecedented numbers. Gen. Lew Allen, USAF Chief of Staff, described the situation in an interview to *Aviation Week* magazine Nov. 5, 1979: "There are trends that look bad . . . The exodus of young pilots and navigators has affected every aspect of our force planning. Significant numbers of skilled aviators are leaving active duty at the very point where they should be moving into important mid-level leadership responsibilities." The Air Force lost nearly 3,000 pilots in FY 1979, about 1,800 in the second-tour 6-11 year experience group. Most of the pilots took jobs in civilian aviation.

### **War-fighting and the militia system**

The failure of the All-Volunteer Force is an indictment of the whole strategic approach which produced it: the official U.S. advocacy of "deterrence" and of "limited nuclear war" chicken games instead of the war-fighting doctrine of the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union does not want war, it has always maintained that if World War III comes the Soviet armed forces will fight to win. For this reason, the Soviet leadership has always seen research and development as top priority; it has instituted far-ranging civil defense programs, and it has implemented militia-style training for virtually the entire population.

Any modern nation that is unwilling or unable to sustain a militia system is not psychologically qualified to fight through a war. A volunteer army must necessarily attract the most deprived layers of society, the urban unemployed and the rural poor. Such a "Hessian" force

can only be effective to the extent that repeating predefined drill patterns is adequate. Once the culturally and educationally deprived youth is confronted with an equal or superior enemy in actual combat conditions, when new creative solutions to tactical problems are required, his veneer of acquired skills vanishes, and the volunteer army falls apart.

In the Soviet Union, the Law of Universal Military Service was instituted in 1967, and remains effective today. The law shortened the length of service from three years to two for the army, coast guard and border guards; naval tours and coastguard combat units were reduced from four years to three. Draftees with higher education serve for only one year. The program also included the transition to a compulsory pre-draft training program, implemented through primary and secondary schools. These training programs, as well as the training of the new recruit, are pursued with extraordinary attention and effort on the part of military leaders—what one American commentator called "typical Russian overkill." While the Soviet program has its own difficulties—such as the rapid turnover of a twice-yearly call-up, and the need to deploy as much manpower as possible to the needs of the labor-short civilian economy—these problems are of a completely different order than those facing the United States.

Soviet officer training programs are two to three times longer than in the U.S. No U.S. professional military school program lasts longer than one year, whereas in the Soviet Union the norm is two, three or four years. There are 175 military schools in the U.S.S.R.—many more than in the U.S.A.—and approximately 15 percent of all undergraduate schools and 30 percent of graduate schools are military.

There is a very heavy emphasis on military history in Soviet military schools—including tsarist military history, according to Col Richard G. Head, writing in the *Military Review* Feb. 1979. At the Frunze Naval School, the five-year curriculum includes about 25 percent "political training," which consists only partly of Marxism-Leninism. The bulk of the program is cultural enrichment, including visits to museums, monuments, and even the ballet. Especially in the Navy, but also in the Army, Col. Head found that the educational ideal for the Soviet officer is "remarkably nonideological," a reflection of the tradition of cultured tsarist officers.

This is the same standard of excellence and integrity which America's founding fathers sought for this country, and which was embodied in the academies at West Point and Annapolis. Such traditions of military competence and honor are no longer held in esteem at the highest levels of U.S. leadership, and America's armed forces reflect the fact.