

An analysis of the retention problem:

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DEPERSONALIZATION

The Navy, concerned with its problem of career motivation and retention, has been holding conferences lately to determine why men leave the Navy.

It might be interesting to ponder how the Navy will be able to retain sufficient numbers within its ranks to staff the Navy, in the event the Army should somehow switch from the draft to a voluntary enlistment system.

The Navy is short on leaders in critical areas. There just aren't enough senior career men to go around. The threat of the Army draft seems to be a major source of manpower for the Navy. Whether or not the Navy cares to admit it, an estimated 75 to 80 per cent of all first-termers never would have enlisted in the Navy if they had not been worried about the draft at the time of enlistment.

According to Bennington's Career Counselor, W1L Ed Kline, the most recent Navy-wide rate of retention of first-termers for at least one more enlistment is 18.6 per cent. Of course, the rate of retention for career-designated men (with seven or more years of obligated service) is much higher, about 75 per cent. The Navy would like to retain nearly all career-designated men, but it seems as though the problem of retaining these men is the same as attracting new career men. If the Navy reformed enough to make service life attractive to first-termers, then the problem of retention of career-designated personnel would also seem to be solved.

Why would 75 to 80 per cent of prospective first-termers prefer not to undergo military service if they had a no-service option? One point which is disturbing to virtually everyone is the prospect of being a target for someone who would like to see you dead. Other points may be: (1) reduction of an individual to a depersonalized state, to where he is no longer an individual, but part of a group personality; (2) living conditions are inferior to those offered in civilian life; and that (3) military service is oftentimes considered by the civilian as being an interruption of his attempt to attain his "goals" in life. Let us consider each of these points by themselves and see how they appear to relate to the military system.

The military services are a means by which our social system protects itself from other social systems that threaten it.

Essentially, the military is a machine. The very nature of a military system requires orders to be issued and carried out in an organized, exacting manner. In order for the machine to perform, everything must be done in an exceptionally organized way. All large organizations are systemized to great extents, and the Navy is no exception. The organization is so huge that people are not regarded as individuals, but parts of the machine. In essence, individuals are part of a group the same way that cogs on a gear wheel are part of a wheel which in turn is part of a machine. When this theory is carried one step farther, an individual is reduced to the level of a body at 98.6 degrees fahrenheit. Theoretically, it is possible to plug this body into any billet and expect it to perform. But, as different parts of any machine vary in capabilities, individuals are different from each other. Individual capabilities must be considered before the body is plugged into any specific billet. If the requirements and capabilities mesh, then, the body should be able to do the job assigned in a satisfactory manner.

LEADERSHIP

Why do 81.4 per cent of the first-termers leave the Navy? One major reason is that the Navy still tends to regard a person as a body capable of "x" amount of work and not as a human being. In the realm of leadership, those who are in authority and are appointed to lead tend to fall down in this area.

A leader, as defined by Freud, differs considerably from a leader as defined by the Navy. A man capable of true leadership, Freud noted, is able to walk up to almost any group and appoint himself a leader and have that group follow him. In the Navy, a "leader" is given authority by a system of which the crowd is part, and having the crowd follow that person because he is the designated authority, not because he is capable of true leadership.

The Navy is not a group with a common

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