THE IMPACT OF PROJECT 100,000 ON THE MARINE CORPS

by
Captain David A. Dawson
U.S. Marine Corps

Occasional Paper

HISTORY AND MUSEUMS DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS, U.S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON, D.C.

1995

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Foreword

The author of this study Captain David A. Dawson, presently serving with H&S Company, BLT 3/8 was a member of the History & Museums Division from August 1991 to June 1994. Commissioned in the Marine Corps in 1985, he served as an infantry platoon commander and company executive officer from 1986-88, and as an instructor at the School of Infantry, Camp Lejeune (1988-1990). From 1990-1991, the Marine Corps sponsored his graduate studies in history at Kansas State University, Lawrence, Kansas, where he was also a recipient of a Marine Corps Historical Foundation research grant. He holds the Navy Achievement Medal and is a High-power rifle shooter. Born in California in 1962, Captain Dawson attended primary and secondary schools in the United States and Scotland, and graduated in 1985 with a Bachelor's degree in history from Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

During his assignment to the Historical Division, he wrote a major chapter on manpower for our 1968 Vietnam volume; helped edit our Gulf War anthology and bibliography; served as a field historian in Somalia; and completed a draft history of that operation which is now being circulated. In addition, during his off-duty hours, Captain Dawson completed his Master's Thesis, which resulted in this publication.

The Division believes Captain Dawson's thesis has plowed new ground and destroys some old stereotypes. Using official published documents, primary Marine Corps Records, and personal intervals, Captain Dawson demonstrates that the presence of "New Standards" men "accounted for only a tiny part of a hugh disciplinary problem" during the latter years of the Vietnam era. What his research reveals is that extended wars such as Vietnam will cause real manpower strains and force the Corps to accept in its ranks men of lower mental ability. Captain Dawson's original and incisive analysis should prove to be of utmost importance to Marine Corps manpower and training specialists as they develop their plans for the Marine Corps of the 21st Century.

EDWIN H. SIMMONS
Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)
Director of Marine Corps History and Museums

THE IMPACT OF PROJECT 100,000 ON THE MARINE CORPS

by

DAVID ANTHONY DAWSON

B.A., Cornell University, 1985

A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

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College of Arts and Sciences

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Approved by:

Dr. Donald J. Mrozek

ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF PROJECT 100,000 ON THE MARINE CORPS

Project 100,000, a program created by Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, required each of the military services to accept a set percentage of their recruits from "Mental Group IV," men with very low scores on the standardized military entrance tests. Each service also had to accept a set percentage of men who could not meet the enlistment standards in effect before the program. These men were called New Standards Men. Project 100,000 lasted from October 1966 to December 1971, bringing roughly 38,000 New Standards men into the Marine Corps.

The Marine Corps vigorously objected to Project 100,000 on the grounds that this program forced recruiters to turn away better qualified volunteers. Many Marines blamed the massive racial and disciplinary problems which swept over the Marine Corps at the end of the Vietnam War on the low quality recruits which Project 100,000 had "forced" on the Marine Corps.

Critics of Project 100,000 ignored the Marine Corps' previous experience with low score men. Even with Project 100,000, during the Vietnam era the Marine Corps received the best educated and highest scoring recruits it had ever received during a major war.

New Standards men did not cause the Marine Corps' disciplinary problems. New Standards men were more likely to be formally punished for disciplinary infractions, but

only to a small degree. The presence of New Standards men accounted for only a tiny part of a huge disciplinary problem. Nor did the presence of New Standards men hamper combat operations. They were more likely to require remedial instruction or to fail basic training, but this was a cost the Marine Corps would have almost certainly borne even without Project 100,000.

Despite the Marine Corps' objections to its Project 100,000 quotas, the Vietnam War made it impossible for the Marine Corps to attract better qualified recruits. Project 100,000 had almost no real impact on the Marine Corps because the manpower problems created by the Vietnam War would have forced the Marine Corps to accept almost as many low score men anyway.

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I would also like to thank Colonel James W. Marsh USMC (Ret.), a manpower expert who has ably served the Marine Corps for nearly 45 years, and Dr. W. S. Sellman, for their encouragement and support.

I could not have even started this project without the people who, at considerable effort, provided much of the primary source material: Captain Debbie Rogers, USAF, from the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel; Captain Daniel F. Harrington, USMC, from the Manpower Analysis Evaluation and Coordination Branch, Headquarters, Marine Corps; and Cathy Hiatt from the Center for Naval Analyses.

Peter Ramsberger, Brian Waters, and especially Janice Laurence deserve special thanks for taking the time to educate

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I would also like to thank all of the members of the Marine Corps Historical Center, especially Dr. Jack Shulimson, Mr. Benis M. Frank, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas A. Richards USMC, and Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons USMC (Ret.) for their continued support, guidance and assistance during this project.

I would also like to thank the members of the Marine Corps Historical Foundation. The Foundation's generous grant made it possible to conduct vital primary source research at the Marine Corps Historical Center. I hope, upon reading this thesis, the members of the Foundation think that this grant was well spent.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis too two special groups of people:

To the Marines learning the skills of the 0311 (Rifleman specialty at the School of Infantry, Camp Lejeune, between December 1988 and March 1990. You inspired this project, and inspired me to excel as a Marine.

To my family. To my wife, Julie, who has been stuck at home while I worked countless late nights and long weekends to finish this thesis, and to our children, Sarah and James, who have spent their entire lives wishing they could play with the father while he worked on his "'puter."

Chapter 1

Introduction

On 23 August 1966, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara announced that starting 1 October 1966 the military would begin accepting men previously rejected for military service.* McNamara wanted to "salvage tens of thousands of these men each year, first to productive military careers and later for productive roles in society." He held out the hope that these men would "return to civilian life with skills and aptitudes which for them and their families will reverse the downward spiral of human decay."[1] The armed forces would take in 40,000 of these disadvantaged youths the first year, and 100,000 every year thereafter, hence the name "Project 100,000." McNamara dubbed the previously ineligible men accepted under Project 100,000 "New Standards" men. He also required the military services to accept a minimum portion of their new recruits from men with low, but previously acceptable, test scores. Project 100,000 lasted until December 1971, bringing roughly 38,000 New Standards men into the Marine Corps.

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* Although McNamara's plan included both low-score men and men with minor physical defects, the medical remedial program made up a very minor part of Project 100,000 and medical remedials are therefore ignored in this paper. Medical remedials, all volunteers, accounted for less than 9 per cent of all Project 100,000 men. Of the medical remedials, 65 per cent consisted of overweight men and underweight men made up another 20 percent. Generally, once these under and over weight men achieved a normal weight, they were indistinguishable from other men.

A Confluence of Interests

McNamara's proposal to use the military for social purposes resulted from the confluence of two separate approaches to military manpower. Army officers were interested in developing effective ways to train "marginal" men, so they could be used effectively if a major war required the full mobilization of the Nation's manpower. Many political leaders, noting that the armed forces trained and cared for millions of men, saw the military as an excellent tool for correcting social problems. Both of these views grew out of the military's experience during World War II.

Impressed by the military's ability to train and care for millions of men during the war, many political leaders began to view the armed forces as a potential tool for correcting social problems. The belief that military service fostered a variety of virtues, usually including strength, courage, and a sense of loyalty and responsibility to the appropriate political body, dated back to classical times. After World War II, President Truman argued that universal military training, in addition to achieving the aforementioned goals, could correct the educational, intellectual, or physical deficiencies of disadvantaged Americans. President Truman was unable to implement universal training, but his vision of using the military to train the most disadvantaged members of society persisted.

Military officers opposed efforts to use the military for social purposes. Many officers were, however, interested in training men with poor academic skills. During World War II manpower shortages forced the armed services to accept large numbers of men with low test scores. All of the services provided remedial academic instruction to bring these men up to a minimum standard. After the war, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, realizing that a future mobilizations would again force them to accept low score men, conducted experiments to develop better remedial training programs. The Army, which expected to experience the largest increase in the event of mobilization, showed the greatest interest in finding methods for training low score men.

Marine Corps Opposition to Project 100,000

The Marine Corps did not share the Army's interest in the problem of mobilizing men with low test scores and opposed Project 100,000 from the start. Initially the Marine Corps objected to Project 100,000 on the grounds that this program forced recruiters to turn away better qualified volunteers. When massive racial and disciplinary problems swept over the Marine Corps at the end of the Vietnam War

senior officers, including former Commandant General Leonard F. Chapman, Jr,* blamed them on Project 100,000.[2]

General Chapman's opinion is still widely shared throughout the Marine Corps. When the subject of Project 100,000 comes up, serving Marines familiar with "McNamara's Morons" almost invariably condemn the Marines enlisted under Project 100,000 as nothing but untrainable troublemakers.

Marines condemning Project 100,000 thought that men with low test scores created most disciplinary problems. Since Project 100,000 was forced on an unwilling Marine Corps by unpopular civilian Defense Department officials, this program provided a convenient way for Marines to blame the Corps' troubles on an outside influence beyond their control. Because the disciplinary problems experienced by the Marine Corps appeared shortly after the start of Project 100,000, many Marines simply assumed a cause and effect relationship. Their assumption was wrong.

The lowering of standards also raises questions about the combat performance of New Standards men. Although many professional soldiers fail to grasp this point, tactics are partly determined by the capabilities of the troops in a unit. If soldiers cannot master certain skills, leaders have to simplify their tactics. On the surface, then, it would seem that New Standards men might have hampered Marine

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* General Chapman was Commandant of the Marine Corps from 1 July 1968 to 31 December 1971.

units fighting in Vietnam by forcing leaders to modify their tactics. They did not.

The Impact of Project 100,000

Critics of Project 100,000 ignore the Marine Corps' previous experience with low score men. During World War II and Korea, the Marine Corps accepted far more low score men than it did during Project 100,000. Many of these men had lower scores than the New Standards Marines. Yet there are no reports of rampant disciplinary problems in 1945 or 1953. Nor did the presence of low score men keep Marine units from earning a reputation as one of the world's finest fighting forces in both wars.

The Marine Corps' experience with New Standards Marines matched its experience with low score men in earlier wars. New Standards Marines were somewhat more likely to be punished for minor infractions, but only slightly so. There were not enough of them to account for more than a fraction of the discipline problems experienced by the Marine Corps at the end of the Vietnam War. In fact, the low point for Marine Corps discipline seems to have occurred sometime around 1974 or 1975, well after the last Project 100,000 Marine had been discharged or reenlisted.

In combat, their record is less clear. Some performed poorly, some performed well. In a few instances, the failures of New Standards men probably cost their lives and

the lives of other Marines. But New Standards Marines did not force leaders to alter their tactics, nor do they seem to have lowered the overall fighting power of Marine units.

New Standards Marines did place an additional burden on the Marine Corps' training system. By 1965 the need to send a constant stream of replacements to Vietnam forced the Marine Corps to drastically reduce the length of training given to recruits. New Standards Marines were much more likely to need additional training to complete, or to fail, their basic training. Additional training required additional time, effort, and money. Failure wasted the Marine Corps' investment to that point. Both placed another strain on a system already stretched to the limit.

The Marine Corps, however, had no viable alternative. Marines condemning "McNamara's Morons" assume that the Marine Corps passed up better qualified men to take New Standards Men. But even with Project 100,000, by the beginning of 1967 the Marine Corps had great difficulty finding qualified volunteers. By late 1967 the Marine was consistently exceeding its quotas for low score men. By late 1968 the Marine Corps needed draftees to fill its ranks. Barring a major change in draft deferment policy, the Marine Corps almost certainly would have lowered standards anyway and probably would have accepted about the same proportion of men in Mental Group IV that it took under Project 100,000. If anything, Project 100,000 may have

helped the Marine corps by preventing the Air Force and Navy from taking only the highest scoring volunteers.

In the end, Project 100,000 had almost no impact on the Marine Corps. Project 100,000 did not significantly contribute to the Marine Corps' disciplinary problems or hamper combat operations in Vietnam. New Standards men placed a burden on the training system, but this was a burden that the Marine Corps would have had to bear anyway. Given the Marine Corps' inability to attract better qualified recruits, not long after McNamara's announcement the Marine Corps would probably have followed the precedent of World War II and Korea, lowering standards to fill its ranks.

During Project 100,000 the armed forces, including the Marine Corps, followed the practice of previous wars. As in World War II and Korea, the increased need for recruits led to a lowering of standards. Vietnam differed from earlier wars in that the shortage was artificially created by a generous draft deferment policy. But if standards had been quietly lowered to meet end strength without Secretary McNamara's "Great Society" rhetoric, in all likelihood no one would have noticed it at the time or remember it today.

Notes

1. Homer Bigart, "M'Namara Plans to 'Salvage' 40,000 Rejected in Draft," The New York Times, 24 August 1966, p. 18.

2. General Leonard H. Chapman interview with Marine Corps Historical Center (MCHC) historians (1), 28 March 1979, p. 87; See also MajGen Lowell E. English interview with Benis M. Frank, 13 June 1974, p. 74; MajGen Rathvon McV. Tompkins interview with Benis M. Frank, 13 April 1973, p. 93-94; LtGen John E. McLaughlin interview with Benis M. Frank, 19 October 1978, p. 149; all in MCHC Oral History collection.

Chapter 2

The Experience of World War II

Project 100,000 grew out of two distinct approaches to military manpower. After World War II, both political and military leaders were interested in training poorly educated men. Political leaders viewed the military as a convenient tool for providing vocational education to these men. Military leaders disliked using the armed forces for social goals, but were interested in developing programs to effectively use low-skill men in the event of full mobilization. Both of these ideas sprang from the military's experience with low-aptitude men during World War II.

The Mental Group Classification System

To discuss the issues surrounding the use of low-score men it is necessary to understand the military's mental classification system. The Army used written tests for classification briefly during World War I; in World War II the armed forces began the comprehensive use of classification tests and have used them continuously ever since. The tests changed over the years, but the basic classification system did not. The principal tests involved were the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) and the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), with variations usually referred to as the GCT. Ideally, persons scoring in the top

7% were considered Mental Group or Category I; the next 27% constituted Mental Group II. The large middle group, about 33% of the total, comprised Mental Group III; this was sometimes broken down into IIIA (above average) and IIIB (below average). The next group of about 20% was classified as Mental Group IV, also sometimes broken down into IVA and IVB, and even sometimes IVC. During Project 100,000, Mental Group IVB referred to New Standards men. All other men in Mental Group IV were considered Group IVA. Last came Mental Group V, the bottom 10 percent of the population (see table 2-1). Mental Group Vs comprised something on the order of 9% of all enlisted men in World War II. In 1948 Congress barred Mental Group Vs from service.[1]

Table 2-1

Mental Groups Related to AFQT, AGCT, and IQ

Mental Group	AFQT Score	WW II Distribution*	AGCT Score	IQ
I	93-100	6.0%	130 and above	123 and above
II	65-92	26.5%	110-129	107-122
III	31-64	30.5%	90-109	92-106
IV	10-30	27.7%	60-89	70-91
V	1-9	9.3%	59 and below	69 and below

* For all men processed through Reception Centers, 1940-44.

Source: U.S. Army, Marginal Man p. 82; Thomas G. Sticht et al., Cast Off Youth (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 22.

The AFQT was used to determine a man's eligibility for induction or enlistment. In addition to the AFQT, the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps used a test called the Army

Qualification Battery (AQB).* The AQB consisted of 11 tests which were then used to render 8 different Aptitude Area scores: Infantry (IN), Armor, Artillery, and Engineer (AE), Electronic (EL), General Maintenance (GM), Motor Maintenance (MM), Clerical (CL), and General Technical (GT). Aptitude Area scores were designed to match those of the General Classification test. Although primarily used to assign recruits to their specialties, the services frequently required applicants with low AFQT scores to achieve a set score on one or more Aptitude Areas.

The GCT and the Aptitude Area tests were developed to measure a man's trainability, not his intelligence. Military testers tried to avoid comparing GCT, AFQT, and Aptitude Area score with IQ test scores, although most serving officers and NCOs considered GCT scores to be identical to IQ scores. Unsurprisingly, since all were similar written tests, a given person's AFQT, GCT, and IQ scores tended to be very similar.[2]

The Genesis of Two Approaches to Remedial Training

World War II convinced military leaders that they needed to plan for the use of low-aptitude men. At the beginning of the war mobilization planners greatly overestimated the number of fit, reasonably educated and

* The Air Force used its a similar test called the Airman Qualifying Exam (AQE).

intelligent men available. Needing to fill the burgeoning ranks, the military was forced to accept large numbers of men who lacked what the military considered to be the minimum necessary literacy and arithmetic skills. All of the armed services dealt with this problem by providing these men with remedial academic instruction to bring them up to the lowest level considered acceptable.

The belief that the military could be used to provide remedial instruction sprang from the military's success training low-score men during World War II. Between 1942 and 1945 the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps provided remedial academic instruction to roughly 350,000 men. Ironically, this experience resulted largely from an earlier effort to use the military to help achieve a different social goal: the efforts of Black leaders to achieve integration and full civil rights for Blacks. This effort foreshadowed later debates, as political leaders pushed for changes in the military with an eye toward their impact on the rest of society while military leaders constantly argued that the armed forces should not be used as an instrument for changing society.

The Black Demand for the Right to Serve

Well before World War II, Black leaders saw the Armed Forces as a potential vehicle for furthering the goal of integration. Increased opportunities for Blacks in the

Armed Forces were not only desirable in their own right; Black leaders hoped that gains made in the military would spread into American society. During World War II Black leaders succeeded in getting a reluctant military to accept large numbers of Blacks. Due to the lack of educational opportunities in a discriminatory American society, most of the Blacks entering the military had very poor literacy and arithmetic skills. The military's segregationist policy compounded this handicap by concentrating about half of the total number of poorly educated men in a few units. Rather than integrate its units to dilute the problem posed by large numbers of illiterate soldiers, the military services instituted remedial training programs. As the war progressed, and the manpower pool shrank, remedial training expanded to include as many low-score whites as Blacks, but both the Army and the Navy started their remedial academic instruction to solve the problem of Black illiteracy.

The NAACP began pressuring the military to increase opportunities for Blacks in 1934, when NAACP Counsel Charles H. Houston began corresponding with Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur. In these early exchanges Houston pushed the Army to increase the total number of Blacks allowed to serve, but his letters also implied the goal of integration. The NAACP's position soon changed to a demand for full integration. Rejecting the concept of "separate but equal," Black leaders had come to believe that only integration led

to the enjoyment of the full rights and duties of citizenship.[3] By 1939, Walter White, Secretary of the NAACP, found an Army plan to create more segregated units unsatisfactory. Some Black leaders were willing to accept segregated units to ensure Black participation in the war, but the NAACP would not. At its 1941 convention the NAACP demanded an immediate end to segregation in the Armed forces.[4]

Walter White and other Black leaders hoped that once whites lived and worked alongside Blacks, whites would recognize the irrationality of their prejudices. Black leaders focused on integrating the Armed Forces because they believed that the military's disciplinary system would both prevent discrimination against Blacks and compel hostile whites to accept integration, a seemingly unattainable goal in the less rigidly controlled civilian realm. Also, by late 1940 the first stages of mobilization, including the first peacetime draft, had begun. All the services expanded, but the Army was growing much faster than the Naval Services. Black leaders therefore concentrated criticism on the Army's racial policies, despite the fact these policies were not only much more progressive than those of the Navy, which allowed Blacks to serve only as stewards, and the Marine Corps, which had no Blacks, but also the prevailing standards of American society.[5]

The 1940 Presidential election gave the Black electorate the leverage to gain some of their goals. The Republicans, in an effort to woo Black voters, adopted a civil rights plank at their June Convention. This plank included a promise to seek proportional representation of Blacks in all branches of the Armed Forces.[6] In September, both the House and the Senate approved amendments to the Selective Service Act barring discrimination on the basis of "race or color."[7] While these amendments accepted the "separate but equal" doctrine and thus allowed segregation, they put further pressure on President Franklin D. Roosevelt to increase opportunities in the military for Blacks before the election.

In response to Republican promises and the changes in the Selective Service law, on 16 September 1940 Roosevelt promised that 36,000 of the first 400,000 men inducted under Selective Service would be Blacks, and that the Air Corps would accept Blacks.[8] During September and October Roosevelt further promised that Blacks would be allowed to serve in all branches of the Armed Forces; that the Army would allow Blacks to serve in all branches; that Blacks would be inducted in proportion to their prevalence in the general population; and that Blacks would be commissioned to serve in colored units.[9]

Senior leaders of all Services opposed these reforms. Both the service secretaries and senior flag and general

officers tended to characterize any proposal to increase opportunities for Blacks as an attempt to further the cause of desegregation in American society. Military leaders insisted that the armed forces should not be used as an instrument of social policy, especially during the strain of war. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, rejecting a proposal for integration from the aide to Secretary of War Judge William H. Hastie, noted on 1 December 1941 that:

> A solution of many of the issues presented by Judge Hastie in his memorandum to you on "The Integration of the Negro Soldier into the Army," September 22, would be tantamount to solving a social problem which has perplexed the American people throughout the history of this nation. The Army cannot accomplish such a solution, and should not be charged with the undertaking. The settlement of vexing racial problems cannot be permitted to complicate the tremendous task of the War Department and thereby jeopardize discipline and morale.[10]

The Navy Department proved even more recalcitrant. After Pearl Harbor, Secretary W. Franklin Knox wrote a friend that the Navy could not risk "crews that are impaired in efficiency because of racial prejudice," and that there were not enough Negroes in the entire country with the necessary skills to man even one segregated ship.[11] Major General Thomas Holcomb, Commandant of the Marine Corps, testified before the General Board of the Navy in January 1942 that "there would be a definite loss of efficiency in the Marine Corps if we have to take Negroes."[12]

While the military leadership's protests undoubtedly were to some extent sincere, they were also rationalizations for the prejudices of senior leaders. In a revealing comment, General Holcomb observed that the efforts of Blacks to join the naval services reflected a desire "to break into a club that doesn't want them."[13]

Black leaders rejected these arguments. They hoped that a strong war record could be used to justify demands for integration in civilian life after the war.[14] The Black public continued to demand racial integration of the Armed Forces throughout the war, making it a major issue before the 1944 election.[15]

To counteract these demands, both the War and Navy Departments tried to limit the number of Blacks they had to take, often at the expense of the other Department. In August 1940, Secretary of the Navy Knox suggested that Blacks be confined mainly to the Army's colored regiments.[16] In January 1942, General Holcomb testified that "[t]he Negro race has every opportunity now to satisfy its aspirations for combat in the Army."[17] In response to pressure from civil rights groups, Secretary Knox appointed a commission in July 1941 to investigate the Navy's racial policy. The commission's report, issued 22 January 1942, unsurprisingly found the Navy's racial policy to be an effective "means of promoting efficiency, dependability, and flexibility," and therefore recommended that no changes be

made.[18] Roosevelt found this unacceptable and told Knox that "BuNav might invent something that colored enlistees could do in addition to the rating of mess man."[19] Under this pressure, the Navy began enlisting Black volunteers for General Duty on 1 June 1942.[20]

Still, the Navy did not take enough Blacks to satisfy the Army. In early 1942 Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson criticized the Navy Department's exclusive reliance on volunteers as a waste of manpower and complained that it forced the Army to take more than its share of Blacks with "adverse effects on its combat efficiency."[21] Roosevelt solved this conflict by issuing Executive Order 9276 on 5 December 1942, which ended voluntary enlistments, forcing all services to take draftees, including a proportionate number of Blacks.[22]

Even after this order, both Departments refused to accept Blacks as called by Selective Service. By early 1943, the Army's quota had already created a backlog of 300,000 qualified Blacks whose induction number had been called but for whom the army had no billet.[23] In early 1943, War Manpower Commissioner Paul V. McNutt wanted all services to accept both white and Black inductees as called to eliminate the backlogs. Both the War and Navy Departments compromised by increasing their calls for Blacks, but both refused to eliminate quotas.[24]

Circumstances quickly made the military department's quotas moot. As new fronts opened, the military found that the supply of high score, fit men was finite. Starting in the Spring of 1943, the Selective Service system failed to meet the monthly quotas for both Blacks and whites.[25] The Army in particular finally had to recognize that Black soldiers were not a burden accepted only to indulge the NAACP but a vital resource needed to fill the Army's ranks. While most Blacks were still relegated to service jobs, by early 1945 a chronic shortage of infantry replacements in the European Theater led General Dwight D. Eisenhower to reluctantly integrate platoons of Black volunteers from overstrength service units into white rifle companies.[26]

The Problem of the Low Score Soldier

The military defended segregation on the grounds of military effectiveness, but it was in fact a wasteful and ineffective system. Perhaps the greatest burden of segregation, after its destructive effect on the morale of Black servicemen, was the concentration of men with low test scores and poor educations into a few units.

Many Black inductees lacked the academic and vocational skills needed to master military training quickly. This showed clearly in the comparative Army General Classification Test (AGCT) score distributions of Blacks and whites. This test, intended to measure only a man's

aptitude for training, actually reflected education as much as intelligence. From March 1941 to December 1942, 34.6 percent of all whites enlisted fell into the top two AGCT Grades, from which the Army expected to draw its officers and NCOs, while another 32.1 percent fell into Grade III, which was expected to provide NCOs and specialists. Only 3.8 per cent of Blacks scored in the first two Grades, with only 12.3 per cent scoring in Grade III. A score in Grade V indicated an education below the fourth grade level. The Army considered Grade V men to be only marginally useful. Only 8.5 per cent of whites scored in Grade V, while 49.2 per cent of Blacks fell into Grade V. Due to the quota of ten per cent on Black enlistments, the Army actually accepted more grade V whites than Blacks (351,951 to 216,664). Segregation created a problem by concentrating Grade IV and V Blacks into a few units, while at the same time ensuring that these units received few men qualified to be NCOs or specialists.[27] The AGCT distribution for whites and Blacks did not change significantly during the war.[28]

Despite claims that the military placed too much emphasis on AGCT scores, or used them to try to limit the numbers of Black inductees, training Grade V men presented the Armed Forces with a real and difficult problem.[29] For example, over half of all Grade V men could not understand common words such as "discipline," "sentinel,"

"compensation," "maintain," "observation," "counter clockwise," and "exterior."[30]

Units made up of large numbers of Grade V men with few men in the upper grades faced nearly insurmountable problems. An inspector found that the men of the colored 76th Coast Artillery (AA) could not perform the "simplest adjustments and operations...even though the men had been told repeatedly how to do them." Of 847 enlisted men in this unit, none scored in Grade I, 2 in Grade II, 28 in Grade III, 124 in Grade IV, 385 in Grade V, and 351 classified as illiterate.*[31]

Many white officers regarded the poor performance of segregated units as proof that Blacks made poor soldiers.[32] But white units with similar AGCT distributions also suffered similar problems.[33] However, since more than a third of all whites scored in the top two grades and less than a tenth scored in Grade V, only a negligible number of white units suffered from these difficulties. Only 3.8 percent of Blacks scored in the top two grades and almost half scored in Grade V, so almost every Black unit was plagued by the problems created by large numbers of poorly educated soldiers.

The military first attempted to solve this problem by raising entry standards. Starting May 15, 1941, a man had

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* Seven soldiers were unclassified, bringing the total to 847.

to be able to read, write, and compute at the fourth grade level to be inducted.[34] As a consequence of this policy the already high rejection rate for Blacks increased. With the outbreak of war the armed forces began a massive expansion. The Army soon found that there were not enough fit men who could perform at a fourth grade level to fill its ranks. On 1 August 1941 the Army authorized each induction center to accept no more than 10 percent of each day's white recruits and 10 percent of each day's Black recruits from men who could not perform at a fourth grade level.[35] The Army realized that this formula effectively limited the number of Blacks drafted since on any given day it was unlikely that more than ten percent of the white men examined at most induction centers would not meet the fourth grade requirement. At many induction centers, particularly those in the South, almost every day the number of Black men who could not meet the academic standard would far exceed ten percent. Army officers worried that this policy might meet political opposition from Black leaders determined to remove the obstacles which kept Blacks from serving and from Southern whites complaining that white men shouldered a disproportionate share of the military burden.[36]

The new standard again proved too lax, as men who scored at the bottom of Grade V proved an excessive burden. This proved particularly true in Black units, which contained a very high proportion of Grade V men. Selective

Service instituted a new standard on 1 June 1943.[37] All men who scored in the top two fifths of Mental Group V were now accepted for service with no quotas or limits.[38] The Army G-3 section, which developed the new standard, expected it to screen out 1 percent of the whites and 20 percent of the Blacks who would have been previously accepted. Still, this new standard ensured that the military, particularly the Army, would accept a large number of Grade V and illiterate men.

Special Training

Forced by political considerations and the demands of global war to accept marginal men, the services had to choose between two courses of action. The military could attempt to limit these men to jobs they were already capable of performing, or it could give these men remedial training to raise them up to the minimum standard. The services chose the latter approach. Manpower planners realized that educational deficiencies created by years of missed or inadequate schooling could not be corrected in a short period. Nor did they have any interest in improving the skills of men rejected for service. The planners wanted only to make low-skill men militarily useful as quickly as possible. To accomplish this, they concentrated on raising the skills of Grade V men to functional literacy (usually

defined as a fourth grade level) through short remedial courses.[39]

The Navy began special training with its first Black General Duty volunteers, using a separate program geared to vocational skills.[40] The Navy needed a broader program once it started taking draftees. A school for Black illiterates was established at Camp Small, Great Lakes Naval Training Center, Illinois, in 1943. Instructed by Blacks who had been educators in civilian life, illiterates received 12 weeks of training intended to give the equivalent of a fifth grade education. Some 15,000 Blacks passed through this school before it was integrated with a similar white school in Bainbridge, Maryland during the last months of the war.[41]

As the war continued the dwindling supply of men with high test scores led the Navy to open a remedial education center for whites at Camp Peary, Virginia. From March 1944 to January 1946, this school trained roughly 20,000 men.[42]

The Marine Corps did not begin to receive low score recruits until the end of 1942 when President Roosevelt's executive order ending voluntary enlistments forced the Corps to accept draftees.[43] The mental group distribution of Marines was not recorded,[44] but it was undoubtedly better than the Army's. Although required to take draftees, the Marine Corps, along with the Navy and Army Air Corps, circumvented Roosevelt's order by creating a reserve

enlistment program for 17 year olds. When these young men then turned 18, they did not pass through the selective service system since they had already enlisted in the armed forces. Instead, they were ordered to active service with the component they had already joined.[45]

Still, the Marine Corps received enough low score men to make some remedial training necessary. The Marine Corps divided its problem recruits into three groups. Physically fit men with natural aptitude who merely lacked formal schooling received three to six months of elementary education. The Marine Corps brought these men up to a sixth grade education and then integrated them into the normal training program. Slow learners were put into a special unit, designated "A platoon," and given special instruction. Men with physical defects were assigned to "B platoon" and skipped the most strenuous parts of training.[46] The Army's special training program had the greatest impact, since the vast majority of illiterate and low score men became soldiers. The Army began to have trouble with marginals as soon as the draft began, receiving roughly 6,000 illiterates and 60,000 men lacking a fourth grade education in the first six months of Selective Service.[47] By May, 1942, the Army authorized each service command to establish special training units for illiterates and low literates. While initially expected to train two Blacks for every white, whites ended up constituting 70 per cent of the

trainees at these schools. In June 1943, the Army consolidated special training at the reception centers. This proved more efficient and allowed men to begin training at the replacement training centers unhandicapped and unstigmatized. The Army predicted that 1 percent of whites and 20 percent of Blacks would require special training. In fact, 9 percent of whites and 49 percent of Blacks, or 11.5 percent of all men received at reception centers after June 1943, entered special training. Illiterates and non-English speakers made up roughly 80 percent of the trainees, with the remainder Grade V men. From June 1943 to May 1945, 302,000 men entered Army special training units, of whom 54 percent were white and 46 percent Black. Special training units forwarded 254,272 men, including 85 percent of the whites and 86 percent of the Blacks, to regular training.[48]

The Army's training program resembled that used by the Navy. Trainees received three hours of academic and five hours of military instruction a day. Class size averaged fifteen men to permit individual instruction. The curriculum was tailored to adult illiterates and tied as closely as possible to military life. While the Army normally allowed a maximum of three months for training, the special training units tried to send men to regular training as quickly as possible. To facilitate this, the units continually screened trainees to ensure that they advanced

as rapidly as possible. Most trainees went to regular training within sixty days.[49]

The Results of the Special Training Program

The achievements of the special training units looked impressive. The four services together taught around 300,000 men to read and write. The Army's program made the equivalent of two divisions of men that would have otherwise been rejected available.[50] The results of the military's efforts to provide remedial education appeared to hold considerable promise for those that hoped to use the Armed Forces as an instrument of social change.

Yet the actual record was not as glowing as graduation figures. What gains remedial education did make came almost entirely among men who lacked formal schooling. There was no evidence that these short courses could make up help those who had attended school but failed to learn. While around 85 percent of the men assigned successfully completed the various special training programs, the military simply discharged men who experienced serious problems learning.[51]

Special training units educated men only to the military's minimum acceptable level. As soon as a man reached the fourth grade level, he went to regular training. In the first six months of special training at reception centers, 99.2 per cent of all Blacks forwarded to training scored in Grade IV or V on the AGCT. While most fell into

Grade IV, which represented an improvement, they were not prepared to assume positions of responsibility or enter specialist training.

Nor are the graduation figures themselves entirely trustworthy. One observer who dealt with low aptitude men during World War II felt that the reported graduation rates reflected the military tendency to placate superiors and to accept favorable reports at face value. He argued that in the military superiors typically judged subordinate commanders by the ability to achieve set goals and quotas. Special training units were no exception. Thus, after few trainees showed much academic progress during the first months of special training, superiors made it clear that they expected a 90 percent graduation rate, and from that point on 90 percent of the men attending special training received passing scores. This observer thought that the graduation rates considerably overstated the actual record of the special training units.[52]

When special training graduates arrived at their regular assignments, usually no one bothered to help them improve or even maintain their new skills. Many, after having been certified as "functionally literate," still signed the payroll with an "X".[53] Perhaps the greatest shortcoming of the special training program was the Army's failure to study the subsequent military performance of its graduates. For all the effort expended, the Army had no

idea whether or not special training made a man a better soldier.[54]

The Experience of World War II

Before World War II, the Army seriously overestimated the number of fit, literate men available to fill its ranks. Initially low score men entered the armed forces as a by product of the military's grudging recruitment of Black troops. As the war progressed and the manpower pool dwindled, all the military services realized that they would have to find ways to use less capable men. The practice of segregation greatly exacerbated the problem posed by low score men by concentrating them in a few units. All of the services used remedial training programs to overcome these problems.

The Army learned another lesson from World War II. During the first years of the War Army planners, assuming that the nation had an ample supply of high quality manpower, concentrated on training specialists and technicians for the services forces. When the Army started to build combat units, it found the manpower pool severely depleted, and had to lower both physical and mental entry standards. The Army then faced the dilemma of either transferring literate, fit men from technical jobs that did not require much physical prowess but which had required considerable training time to combat jobs, or making men

with less ability combat soldiers. During World War II the Army took the latter approach. After the war it vowed to find the best way to use less capable men from the start of mobilization so that it would not face that dilemma again.[55]

Notes

1. In 1948 the Universal Military Training Act set an AGCT score of 70 as the minimum standard for induction, which corresponds to an AFQT score of 13. In 1951 this standard was lowered to an AFQT score of 10, which has remained the legal minimum standard for enlistment or induction to this day. Mark J. Eitelberg et al., Screening For Service: Aptitude and Education Criteria for Military Entry (Alexandria, Virginia: Human Resources Research Organization, 1984), pp. 24-25.

2. See Mark J. Eitelberg et al., Screening For Service: Aptitude and Education Criteria for Military Entry (Alexandria, Virginia: Human Resources Research Organization, 1984), pp. 14-25; Janice H. Laurence and Peter Ramsberger, Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays? (New York: Praeger, 1991), pp. 7-8; CMC Reference Notebook (Personell) 1966-1967 II-D-2, Subj: Criteria for Classification of Enlisted Personnel, 7 August 1967, MCHC; Interviews conducted by author with former and serving Marines.

3. Morris J. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces,1940-1965 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1981), hereafter MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, pp. 13-14.

4. Ibid., pp. 14, 15.

5. Ibid., p. 17.

6. Richard M. Dalfiume, Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953. (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 1969), hereafter Dalfiume, Desegregation, pp. 33-34.

7. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, pp. 11-12.

8. Dalfiume, Desegregation, pp. 36-37.

9. Report on Conference at the White House, 27 September 1940, subject: Negroes in the armed forces of the United States. From Bernard C. Nalty and Morris J. MacGregor, ed., Blacks in the Military: Essential Documents (Wilmington, Delaware: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1981), hereafter Nalty and MacGregor, Documents, pp. 105-106; Philip McGuire, He, Too, Spoke for Democracy: Judge Hastie, World War II, and the Black Soldier (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), pp. 8-9; Dalfiume, Desegregation, p. 41; Memorandum, Assistant Secretary of War (Robert P. Patterson) to the President, 8 October 1940, with notation " OK FDR" and concurrence from HLS (Stimson), Nalty and Macgregor, Documents, pp. 107-108.

10. Memorandum, Chief of Staff for Secretary of War, 1 December 1941, subject: Report of Judge William H, Hastie, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, dated 22 September 1941. Nalty and Macgregor, Documents, pp. 114-115.

11. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 63.

12. Henry I. Shaw, Jr., and Ralph W. Donnelly, Blacks in the Marine Corps (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1975), hereafter Shaw and Donnelly, Blacks in the Marine Corps, p. 1.

13. Ibid., p. 1.

14. Alan L. Gropman, The Air Force Integrates, 1945-1964 (Washington D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1978), p. 7.

15. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, pp. 40-41

16. Knox to Sen. Arthur Capper (Kansas), 1 August 1940, in MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 60.

17. Shaw and Donnelly, Blacks in the Marine Corps, p. 1.

18. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 61.

19. Ibid., p. 63.

20. Ibid., p. 67.

21. Secretary of War to the President, 16 February 1942, in MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 69.

22. Executive Order 9276, 5 December 1942, Nalty and MacGregor, Documents, p. 116.

23. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 25.

24. Ibid., pp. 70-71.

25. Ibid., pp. 32-33, 71.

26. Ibid., pp. 51-53.

27. Ulysses Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1966), hereafter Lee, Negro Troops, pp. 241-245; MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 25.

28. Lee, Negro Troops, pp. 247-249.

29. Dalfiume, Desegregation, p. 91; Lee, Negro Troops, pp. 259-260.

30. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 266.

31. Ibid., p. 250.

32. See Dale E. Wilson, "Recipe for Failure: Major General Edward M. Almond and Preparation of the U.S, 92d Infantry Division for Combat in World War II, Journal of Military History vol. 56, no. 3 (July 1992), pp. 473-488, particularly pp. 481-483.

33. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 255.

34. Ibid., p. 241.

35. Department of the Army, Marginal Man and Military Service (Washington, DC: 1966), hereafter U.S. Army, Marginal Man, p. 75.

36. Lee, Negro Troops, pp. 256-257, 261-263.

37. Ibid., p. 258.

38. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 74-75.

39. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 240

40. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, p. 67.

41. Ibid., p. 77.

42. Elizabeth P. Hagen and Robert L. Thorndike, A Study of the World War II Navy Careers of Illiterates Sent Through Literacy Training (Washington, DC: Bureau of Naval Personnel Research Report, Classification and Survey Research Branch, Research Division, April 1953), hereafter Hagen and Thorndike, Navy Illiterates, pp. 2-3.

43. Kenneth W. Condit, Gerald Diamond, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, HQMC, 1956) (unpublished ms, MCHC), hereafter Condit, Diamond, and Turnbladh, M.C. Ground Training, p. 167.

44. Based on the author's inability to find a record of the Mental Group distribution for Marine recruits during World War II in the records held by the Marine Corps Historical Center.

45. Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops (Washington, DC: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), p. 74.

46. Condit, Diamond, and Turnbladh, M.C. Ground Training, p. 167.

47. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, p. 60.

48. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 263; U.S. Army, Marginal Man, p. 86.

49. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 263; U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 87-88.

50. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 264.

51. Hagen and Thorndike, Navy Illiterates, p. 40.

52. Edward A. Rundquist, The Marginal Personnel Problem (San Diego CA: U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, 15 March 1967) (unpublished ms), pp. 3-4, Waters Papers, HumRRO collection.

53. Lee, Negro Troops, p. 264.

54. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, p. 88.

55. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 47-49, 59-61,

Chapter 3

Plans to Use the Military for Remedial Training: UMT

In the immediate postwar period, many observers felt that the Armed Forces' experience providing equal opportunity and remedial education proved that the military made an ideal tool for implementing social change. In 1946 Truman K. Gibson, a prominent Black businessman and Judge Hastie's former aide at the War Department, declared that the large numbers of illiterates and men with minor physical defects uncovered by Selective Service during the war could have been reduced by a universal military training program.[1] The report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights issued in 1947 stated that

> [d]uring the last war we and our allies, with varying but undeniable success, found that the military services can be used to educate citizens on a broad range of social and political problems. The war experience brought to our attention a laboratory in which we may prove that the majority and minorities of our population can train and work and fight side by side in cooperation and harmony. We should not hesitate to take full advantage of this opportunity.[2]

Military officers again opposed efforts to use the armed forces for social purposes. Military plans for universal training did include remedial academic instruction and physical training, but only to turn illiterate and physically weak men into useful soldiers. Senior officers objected to suggestions that the military play a broader role in the general education and physical training of the nation's young men.

Plans For Universal Training

On June 23, 1945, President Harry S. Truman outlined a plan for universal military training for the postwar period. This program would provide every young man in America with basic military instruction. Truman announced that this program "should give a fundamental basis for discipline, hygiene -- both mental and physical" for America's youth.* Truman specifically included men with slight physical defects, promising that military training would correct most of their problems. This system would enhance the nation's security, foster citizenship, bring the military system into harmony with democratic principles, and improve the health of the nation's youth.[3]

Plans for universal military training were first proposed by the Army in 1944. On 25 August 1944, the War Department published Circular 347, which argued that universal military training was the military system best suited to a democracy.[4] The Navy Department quickly joined forces with the Army. On September 7 1944 the military departments circulated a joint proposal for universal military training to other agencies for comment. Universal military training would be used

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* Although Truman did not elucidate his notion of mental hygiene, in other documents relating to UMT "moral hygiene" appears in discussions of low-skill and illiterate men. In a similar vein "physical hygiene" was not used to refer to cleanliness but to strength and fitness.

(1) to increase the physical standards of the nation's manpower,
(2) to lessen the illiteracy rate of the country, and
(3) to develop sound character and ideals of responsible citizenship.

This proposal also stated clearly that these goals could not be allowed to interfere with the primary mission, military readiness.[5]

Even at the early date of 1944, however, some government officials believed that the Armed forces should be used to achieve broader social goals. Director of the Budget Harold D. Smith criticized the joint proposal for making no plan to "use the year of training for valuable corollary objectives," and for not developing a program "for the one third of the young men of the nation whom the armed forces propose to reject."[6] Smith suggested that the President appoint a committee composed of civilians and military officers to develop a more complete program.[7]

Roosevelt, burdened with the demands of global war, ignored the proposal for universal military training. Truman, a longtime advocate of universal training, quickly revived these plans when he became President.[8]

While resubmitting their proposals, the services emphasized that social goals should not be allowed to interfere with the military purpose of universal training. Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson accepted the idea of teaching vocational skills "which might be useful in future civilian occupations" if it remained only a "by-product of

universal military training." He worried that the inclusion of such a secondary task might "be construed to mean the development of a system of vocational education alien to the military mission of a program of universal military training."[9] The Bureau of the Budget reiterated their Director's arguments of 1944. To overcome political opposition to the program, Truman took Smith's advice and appointed an advisory committee.

In a letter asking Dr. Harold W. Dodds, President of Princeton, to serve on this committee, Truman stated his goals for universal military training. The primary purpose was national defense, but an important secondary mission was to "contribute to the physical fitness of our young men." Truman repeated his favorite argument, stating that 25 to 30 percent of all young men called by Selective Service during World War II had been rejected for physical defects, and claiming that over half of these defects could have been easily corrected.[10]

The President's Advisory Commission on Universal Training first met on 20 December 1946. This civilian body consisted of prominent religious, educational, and governmental leaders, including Truman K. Gibson. The Commission immediately began to consider the possible social applications of universal training. As noted above, Gibson saw a need for a comprehensive system of remedial education and physical rehabilitation. Joseph E. Davies, former

ambassador to the Soviet Union, and Mrs. Anna Rosenberg, a labor leader, believed that President Truman did not intend for universal military training to be a strictly military measure, but wanted it to improve the general welfare and education of youth.[11] Judge Samuel I. Rosenman argued that promoting "public health, literacy, intelligence, general citizenship and high standards" were not merely by-products but "really a part of the national defense."[12] Following this line of reasoning, the commission removed the word "military" from its name and resolved to pursue all possible applications of universal training.

While the military accepted that a degree of social conditioning would be included in universal military training, the services tried to limit this role as much as possible. In February 1947, a study by the War Department prepared for the Advisory Commission claimed that, given the Army's limited medical facilities, caring for the physically impaired would detract from the care of the physically fit. The study also found that of 220,000 men rejected for service for physical reasons, only 17,100 could be rehabilitated under a universal training program.[13] A memorandum to the Commission dated 10 March 1947 stated the military's objections explicitly:

> It is considered that the energies and the facilities of the Armed Services should not be dissipated in the training of individuals physically incapable of performing military type duties.

This memo suggested that it would be more suitable to use a civilian agency to rehabilitate the physically impaired.[14]

The military accepted readily that it would provide special training to illiterates. After all, after special training these men would be militarily useful. However, the military did not want special training to interfere with military training. Specific programs invariably followed the wartime models. A Navy proposal envisaged a special training program which devoted 25 weeks to training split equally between academic and military instruction, with the rest of the year's training devoted solely to military tasks.[15] Both the Navy and Army planned to provide only a fourth grade education.[16] As in World War II, these programs would only benefit reasonably intelligent men that had been deprived of an education.

Experimental Universal Military Training

While objecting to proposals for expanding universal training beyond narrowly defined military goals, the armed forces, particularly the Army, desperately wanted some form of universal training. In an effort to demonstrate the potential of universal training, in early 1947 the Army set up an experimental Universal Military Training (UMT) unit at Fort Knox, Kentucky. The Army was also interested in finding the best way to train men with low test scores, and this unit included a platoon of 40 men who did not achieve

the minimum acceptable score, 70, on the AGCT. Originally designated the STU platoon, the Army renamed it the Pioneer Platoon after the other soldiers, making the obvious connection between the letters STU and the low test scores of the men in it, continually referred to its members as "stupids."[17]

The low scores of the men in the Pioneer Platoon did not reflect a lack of formal instruction; the pioneers had received an average of 7.67 years of schooling. They therefore did not fit the Army definition of "illiterates," which referred to men of reasonable intelligence who had no schooling. Although initial plans envisaged bringing the pioneers up to at least a fourth grade ability level, their commanding officer felt they were "incapable of learning to read and write," and the training schedule was revised to emphasize manual skills.[18]

These men lacked not only basic academic skills but also basic physical abilities. According to their platoon leader, upon their first arrival, most could not perform simple exercises.[19] Only three could play baseball or any other common sport.[20] Training first focused on building physical coordination, with some success. All the pioneers learned to play basketball and other games, and learned to drill as well as the other UMT soldiers.[21]

Academic skills did not improve as readily. Every day the platoon leader read the daily orders and some simple

news items to the platoon, and then quizzed individuals. Some pioneers could answer simple questions after one reading; most needed repetition; and some simply could not answer simple questions.[22] After six months of instruction tailored to their abilities, most of these men could perform only simple routines after receiving repeated instruction. Their platoon leader observed that "[d]eviations from the routine threw them into confusion."[23]

Only 17 pioneers out of the 40 that started completed UMT training. Twelve were discharged as "inapt." In contrast, only 3 of the other 624 trainees in the experimental UMT program were discharged for that reason. The other UMT trainees all had AGCT scores of 95 or higher, but the contrast is still stark.[24] Sixteen of the 17 pioneers who completed training raised their AGCT score to 70 or higher, with five scoring between 80 and 87.[25] Still, much of this improvement can be ascribed to familiarity with the test.[26] Their platoon leader thought that the pioneers could be used by the Army only if they were given a special occupational code which indicated that they were poor learners who could only perform very specific tasks.[27]

A psychiatric visit to the experimental UMT found that little had been done to assist the low IQ men. The psychiatrists and the commanding general of the Experimental UMT unit, Brigadier General John M. Devine, agreed that

pioneer platoon to be the one big problem that had not been solved.[28] These results seemed to confirm the opinion of President of the American Council on Education, Aaron J. Brumbaugh, who felt that since the military proposed to give only a minimal education to men who had been deprived of one in their youth, a better solution probably lay in "the provision of adequate educational facilities during the period when youth should normally be in school."[29]

The Army did learn one lesson from the Pioneer Platoon. To avoid the adverse impact on the pioneers morale resulting from being singled out, later Experimental UMT classes integrated pioneers, now defined as men with AGCT scores between 70 and 90, with the other trainees. The Experimental UMT made no report of the trainability of these later low score men.[30]

The Fort Knox Experimental UMT unit did not produce encouraging results for social reformers. Not only had the Pioneer Platoon failed to meet expectations; the rest of the trainees also achieved disappointing results. All of the trainees had volunteered for the Experimental Unit. Yet, once they reached the point in training when off-duty education became optional, only nine percent of trainees attended.[31] Despite the fact that the six-month curriculum consisted almost entirely of military subjects, the officers of the Experimental UMT unit and inspectors from the War Department considered the regular trainees unready for

either combat or any specific Army job without further training.[32]

Universal Military Training Enacted in Law but not in Fact

While the Army experimented with UMT at Fort Knox, President Truman continued to pursue his goal of full scale universal training. On 29 May 1947 the President's Commission issued its report. This report recommended a civilian controlled system of universal training which would include both military and non-military training. Both groups of trainees would be treated the same, and serve for at least one year. On 9 July this report was translated into a proposal for legislation, H.R. 4121, which was quickly superseded by H.R. 4278 on 18 July 1947. This bill enjoyed the support of military and veterans' groups, and the Armed Services Committee favorably reported it.[33]

The 80th Congress did not enact Truman's Universal Training bill, but it did pass the Selective Service Act of 1948 which reintroduced the draft. This act also prohibited the induction of men scoring below 70 on the AGCT. This corresponded to a score of 13 on the AFQT. Inductions began on 1 November 1948.[34] Although not passed during the 80th Congress, Truman continued to lobby for the bill. On 29 August 1950 the President wrote to Carl Vinson, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, to again advocate universal training. Truman acknowledged that the Korean War

made it impossible to begin a universal training program in the foreseeable future, but advocated getting a law authorizing UMT on the books as soon as possible so that this program could be implemented when circumstances permitted.[35]

On 20 September Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, Chairman of the Preparedness Sub-Committee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, wrote to Truman about the proposed UMT legislation. Foreshadowing his support for Project 100,000 25 years later, Johnson expressed his concern over the lack of provision for training those men not fit for military service in the UMT legislation.[36] Apparently Truman shared Johnson's concern, for on 26 October he wrote to Congressman Olin E. Teague that "[o]ne of the most disgraceful things in the last war was that thirty-four percent of our young men were unfit physically and mentally for service." Truman also noted that "[t]he object of a Universal Training Program is not necessarily confined strictly to military training."[37]

Truman's efforts bore fruit almost exactly six years after his first proposal for universal training with the passage of the Universal Military Training and Service Act on 19 June 1951. Still, this act proved only a partial victory. Passed an as amendment to the Selective Service Act of 1948, this legislation specified that men inducted into the National Security Training Corps would receive

"basic military training."[38] The National Security Training Commission created by the act interpreted this phrase to specifically exclude special military training for men physically or mentally unqualified.[39] This interpretation also precluded other types of non-military training. The act also lowered the minimum score for induction to an AFQT score of 10, the lowest score in Mental Group IV. This standard has remained in effect to the present.[40]

Despite the passage of the act, Truman's years of effort had little practical effect. The Universal Military Training and Service Act specified that the National Security Training Corps could only be established by Congress when the Armed Forces' requirements for men under Selective Service were eliminated or reduced, an event which never occurred during the life of the act.[41]

Although universal training was never implemented, in the debate surrounding Truman's proposal many influential persons both in and out of government argued that the Armed Forces provided an excellent "social laboratory." The services did not accept this view, consistently opposing efforts to include social programs in universal training on the grounds that these distractions would impair military effectiveness. The experience of the Experimental UMT unit seemed to support the military's position. In this case, the social agenda had apparently interfered with the

military training, since after six months of training the Army considered all the UMT soldiers unfit for combat, or even direct assignment to a branch. The Pioneer Platoon of the Experimental Unit also reinforced the belief that the military could not help the ineducable. The Experimental UMT unit indicated that the Armed Forces' ability to combine effective military training with social improvement had limits.

Notes

1. Report of First Meeting of the President's Advisory Commission on Universal Training at the White House, December 20 1946 10 A.M., p. 7. Universal Military Training Subject File, Official File (OF) 109B, Truman Library.

2. The Report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, To Secure These Rights (Washington, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1947), p. 47.

3. Statement by the President, given at Olympia, Washington, Governor's Mansion, June 23 1945, pp. 1-3, President's Secretary's Files (PSF), Truman Library.

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5. Principles and Assumptions to be applied by the Army and Navy in Connection with a Program o Universal Military Training. (Submitted to the Bureau of the Budget 7 September 1944) p. 2. UMT General File OF 109, Truman Library.

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Chapter 4

Military Interest in Low Score Men

During the later stages of the Korean War and throughout the Eisenhower Presidency the problem of low score men received little attention from civilian leaders. During this period the combination of force reductions and the increase in the number of men the appropriate age for service led all military services to increase entry standards.[1] The Armed Services, however, particularly the Army, continued to study the problem of turning low score men into effective soldiers. The services found that most men with low scores performed adequately, but that they did not make as good soldiers, sailors, airmen, or Marines as men with higher scores. The services also found that remedial training did not significantly improve the performance of men with low test scores.

The Korean War

While Truman and other political leaders debated the merits of Universal Military Training, the outbreak of the Korean War on 25 June 1950 forced the armed forces to once again deal with the problem of low aptitude men. During the first year of the war, the Army and Marine Corps received a disproportionately large share of Mental Group IV recruits. To correct this problem, on 1 September 1951 the Secretary of Defense established a qualitative distribution system

assigning the same mental group distribution to each service.[2] Since voluntary enlistments continued, the Navy and Air Force continued to get proportionately more men in Mental Groups I and II and fewer in Mental Group IV, but this policy considerably improved the mental group distribution of Army and Marine recruits (see table 4-1).[3]

Table 4-1

Mental Group Distribution of Marine Corps Enlisted Accessions, May 1951 - June 1954

Year	MG I	MG II	MG III	MG IV*
1951#	6.1	17.3	27.3	49.3
1952@	5.4	23.9	32.5	38.2
FY 1953	4.9	23.1	37.8	34.2
1 May 1951-30 June 1953	**5.5**	**21.7**	**32.3**	**40.5**

* Includes administrative acceptees, who scored below the minimum score on the AFQT but were judged by an officer at the examination station to be intelligent enough to serve.
# May-Nov
@ Dec 1951-June 1952

Source: Annual Report of the Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower Program, 1951-1953.

With the outbreak of the Korean War and the consequent heavy reliance on the Draft, Selective Service found that unexpectedly large numbers of men failed the entry test. Many of these men presumably deliberately failed to avoid induction. To combat this problem, Selective Service authorized the commanding officers of induction stations to administratively accept any man who failed the test if other evidence indicated that the test score did not accurately reflect that man's abilities. Men who had completed high

school were automatically inducted regardless of their test score. Men who, after an interview, were deemed to have been either exceptionally nervous during the test or to have deliberately failed, were also inducted.

Although not in a definite Mental Group, these "administrative acceptees" were classified as Mental Group IV. Supposedly more capable than their induction scores indicated, most administrative acceptees did not significantly differ from true test failures. During the Korean War the Army accepted over 85,000 administrative acceptees. The Marine Corps took 5,625 administrative acceptees between August 1951 and May 1952, after which the Marine Corps stopped taking draftees.[4]

Partly to deal with problems created by administrative acceptees, during the Korean War the Marine Corps introduced three special training programs: one for non-English speaking recruits, one for slow learners, and one for extremely slow learners.[5] Towards the end of the Korean War, the Navy instituted a 13 week "Recruit Preparatory Program" for sailors with poor test scores.[6] There is no evidence of any Army remedial training programs during the Korean War. This is not surprising. While the Army and Marine Corps accepted large numbers of men in Group IV, thanks to Congress the services did not have to contend with men in Group V. During World War II only illiterates and men in Group V received remedial training; men in Group IV

were considered ready for duty. Presumably the same standard applied during the Korean War.

Military Studies of Low Score Men

The military had actually started to grapple with the issue of low score men just before the outbreak of war. On 1 June 1950 The Secretary of Defense asked the services to jointly to explore ways to use low ability men effectively.[7] This request resulted in a series of meetings between Army, Air Force, and Navy representatives lasting into 1951. These meetings produced a research plan but it was not implemented.[8]

After joint discussions failed to produce any practical results the Army, Navy and Air Force conducted their own studies. These studies concentrated on training men for purely military duties. None of the services showed any inclination to utilize low score men in a situation short of full mobilization. The studies almost unanimously found that most low score men met the minimum standards but on average they did not perform as well as men with higher score, that men with low scores created more disciplinary problems, and that special training did little to improve the utility of these men.

In 1952 the Air Force conducted two experiments to determine if longer periods of basic training and extra remedial academic instruction improved the performance of

low score airmen. These studies found that allotting more time for instruction had little impact on the ability of these airmen to learn the material. One study followed the airmen's subsequent military performance. This study indicated that remedial academic instruction had little impact on a man's ability to perform his military duties after basic training. Men with average scores performed better than the low score men in both groups.[9]

In January 1953 the Army began a program to test the effect of special training before normal basic training began. This test ran through 1954. It found that remedial instruction, whether it concentrated on academic or military subjects, increased the test scores of low score men so slightly that it had limited practical significance. Again, after basic training men with average scores outperformed low score men even after the latter had received remedial instruction.[10] An Army report on these experiments concluded that

> [t]he potential military usefulness of educationally deficient men appeared to be only slightly increased, on the average, by a short period of special prebasic training. Whether the emphasis in the training was military, academic, or a combination of the two did not seem to affect these results.[11]

Reexamining the Experience World War II

In 1953 the Navy studied the record of its World War II special training program. The Bureau of Naval Personnel examined the records of three groups of white sailors who

entered service in 1944: illiterates who received remedial academic training at Camp Peary, "marginals" who had more education and somewhat better intellectual skills than the illiterates, and a control group. Unfortunately, the groups were not well matched for other variables. This made the conclusions tentative at best and made it impossible to determine if remedial training had any positive effect.

This study found that illiterates did not perform as well as the control group. The performance of sailors designated as "marginal" fell between the two other groups, but was somewhat closer to the illiterates. The graduates of remedial training and the "marginals" tended to receive low skill ratings such as boatswains or coxswains or to be assigned manual jobs in the SeaBees*. Both "marginal" and illiterate sailors were more likely to have disciplinary problems. However, the "marginals" tended to be younger than the other groups, so immaturity might have accounted for their higher disciplinary rate. Interestingly, illiterates got into trouble for losing identification cards and entering restricted or off limits areas more than the other groups. Possibly this reflected their poor reading skills more than any failure to adapt to military discipline.[12]

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* The nickname SeaBees derived from the initials CB, which stood for construction battalion. In World War II most of the jobs in engineer units involved low skill manual labor.

While the Navy study indicated that illiterates and marginals made poor sailors, a study of Army graduates of World War II special training units, also published in 1953, reached the opposite conclusion. This study was a small part of a much broader examination of the problem posed by poorly educated men, the Conservation of Human Resources research project conducted by the Columbia University Graduate School of Business. Established by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, this project studied manpower utilization in both the military and business. The Director of this project, Eli Ginzberg, along with Donald W. Bray, published some of the project's conclusions in The Uneducated. Ginzberg and Bray advocated a general effort to improve the education of the general population. As part of this effort, they argued that the armed forces should reject only the "clearly non-usable group of idiots and imbeciles," and then provide remedial instruction to those who do not meet the military's requirements.[13]

Ginzberg and Bray, using an extremely small sample, found that just over 10 percent of the soldiers sent to special training units failed to graduate due to ineptitude.[14] They then rated the performance of the graduates, considering their rank, combat record, health, and disciplinary record. Ginzberg and Bray considered 13 percent of the graduates to have been unacceptable soldiers.

Almost half performed acceptably, and 38 percent were considered to be good or very good soldiers.[15]

Further Studies

In 1954 the Army tried mixing low score men with higher score men during basic training. The designers of this study tried to use inter-squad competition to encourage the higher score men to "coach" the lower score men, thus improving the performance of the lower score men. This study found that competition spurred all the participants to perform better. Neither the low score men nor the high score men improved their scores. Nor did the low score men perform any better than a control group of low score men using inter-squad competition without higher score men. Competition worked, but the attempt to use higher score recruits to help lower score recruits did not.[16]

In 1957, the Army reduced its strength. Faced with the problem of deciding which soldiers to discharge, the Army opted for those with low test scores. After these discharges occurred, failure rates at lower level service schools dropped markedly and disciplinary problems declined significantly. These discharges also reduced the burden of special training and remedial instruction, freeing soldiers for other tasks. Many commanders objected to the discharge of otherwise satisfactory long service soldiers. Instead of arguing that low score men should be accepted and retained,

however, these commanders suggested that in the future low score men be screened out before enlistment to save them the pain of discharge after years of service.[17]

After the Korean War, all the services gradually raised their enlistment requirements, eliminating men scoring in the lower portions of Mental Group IV. On 4 August 1958 Selective Service also raised the standard for induction. Previously men who scored 10 or more on the AFQT, the legal minimum, had been drafted. Under the new standard Selective Service inducted men scoring in the upper third of Mental Group IV (AFQT 21-30) if they also scored well on 2 of the 8 Aptitude Areas of the Army Classification Battery. Between August and December 1958 the Army modified its enlistment requirements to match the standards for induction. The Army followed these men through their first 12-18 months of service, comparing them to volunteers who scored in the bottom half of Mental Group III (AFQT 31-50) and draftees who scored in between 10 and 50 on the AFQT. In technical fields, the enlistees in Mental Group III performed markedly better than those in Mental Group IV. In combat specialties, however, the regulars in the upper third of Group IV performed as well as the regulars in the lower half of Group III. Interestingly, the draftees significantly outperformed the regulars in every specialty.[18]

Another Army study published in August 1962 examined the records of first term enlisted soldiers who entered

active duty between November 1952 and October 1953. This study, in keeping with earlier studies, found that men in Mental Groups IV and V were significantly more likely to be convicted by courts martial or receive less than honorable discharges than men with higher scores. Men with more education also got into less trouble. Interestingly, in this study the draftees had fewer disciplinary problems than the regular soldiers.[19]

The Marine Corps Experience

Despite the fact that it had needed Slow Learner's platoons during both World War II and Korea, the Marine Corps did not share the other services' interest in low score men. During World War II Marines could blame the presence of "marginal" recruits on President Roosevelt's Executive Order 9276 which forced the Corps to accept draftees. The Corps' ability to attract 17 year olds into its Reserve program certainly reinforced the impression that, left to its own devices, the Marine Corps would attract a better quality recruit. During the Korean War a manpower shortage, not the President, forced the Marine Corps to take draftees. Yet despite the fact that during the Korean War well over a third of all Marine recruits scored in Mental Group IV, the Marine Corps regarded the problem of "marginal" recruits as an unpleasant aberration. Consciously fostering an elite image, and being a relatively

small force, the Marine Corps preferred to concentrate on raising its enlistment standards.

The Marine Corps did conduct a study of administrative acceptees inducted in August and September of 1951. This study found that AFQT scores provided a reasonably accurate gauge of the abilities of administrative acceptees compared to other recruits. Between 70 and 80 percent of administrative acceptees ranked in the bottom half of their platoons. At the rifle range, 28 percent of the administrative inductees failed to qualify, compared to 11 percent of all recruits. Administrative inductees were more than two and a half times as likely to be discharged as recruits in general. The study estimated that it cost 16 percent more to train an administrative inductee than a normal recruit.[20]

After the Korean War, the proportion of Mental Group IV's among Marine recruits remained high. At the same time, Marine recruit training became increasingly brutal, a trend which culminated in the drowning of six recruits in the Ribbon Creek incident of 1956. In the aftermath of Ribbon Creek, the Marine Corps carefully examined its recruit training system. The high proportion of Mental Group IV's among recruits was not identified as part of the problem by any of the inspectors and investigators, but a number of drill instructors argued that this situation made their job much more difficult.[21]

Among the changes in recruit training resulting from Ribbon Creek was the establishment of the Special Training Branch in the Recruit Training Regiment at Parris Island. This unit gave intensive instruction to recruits having difficulty keeping up in training.[22] With some minor interruptions, Special Training Branch became a permanent part of the Marine Corps' recruit training system. Unlike earlier special training programs, Special Training Branch was not primarily designed to assist poorly educated recruits. Rather, Special Training Branch worked with any recruit that experienced difficulty completing boot camp.

At times the Special Training Branch included a "slow learners" platoon. This remedial instruction was mainly intended for Puerto Rican recruits with poor academic skills.[23] After 1957, the Marine Corps enjoyed a dramatic decline in the proportion of Marine recruits scoring in Mental Group IV. From 1958 to 1966 the proportion of Marine recruits scoring in Mental Group IV never rose above 10 percent. In fiscal years 1963 and 1965, it fell below 4 percent. The higher minimum scores and small numbers of Group IV men made a remedial academic program unnecessary. (See table 4-2).

Table 4-2

Marine Corps Minimum Standards for Enlistment, 1951-1967		
Date	Minimum AFQT score with no additional qualifications	Minimum score with additional qualifications
1951	13	None
Jun 52	10	None
Apr 56	21	None
Jul 57	25	None
Dec 58	28	None
Jan 60	25	None
Jun 62	31	21 with GT=80 and 2 AA=90
Nov 65	31	16 with GT=80 and 2 AA=90 **or** High School Graduate
Apr 66	31	16 with 2 AA=90 **or** HSG
Oct 66*	31	16 with 2 AA=90 **or** HSG
Jan 67	31	16 with 1 AA=90 **or** 10 with 2 AA=90 or HSG

* Project 100,000 begins.

AA indicates Aptitude Area subtest; GT indicates the General Technical Aptitude Area score.

Source: Maj R. W. Bolves USMC, "Group IV Personnel," Individual Research Project (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Command and Staff College, 28 February 1967).

In the summer of 1965, over 15 per cent of all Marine recruits went to Special Training Branch for one reason or another. With the exception of men who arrived at Boot Camp chronically overweight or hopelessly weak, Special Training Branch handled recruits who had started the regular training program but failed to make satisfactory progress. The Special Training units contained four separate programs. Both the Parris Island and San Diego Recruit Depots had a

Physical Conditioning Platoon, a Motivation Platoon for recruits with bad attitudes, and a Corrective Custody Platoon for recruits sentenced to a period of punishment for minor disciplinary infractions. Just under half of all recruits receiving special training entered one of the programs in the Physical Conditioning Platoon, while just under a third went to either the Motivation or Corrective Custody platoons.

Only Parris Island maintained a Proficiency Platoon. This platoon gave remedial training to recruits who failed a written test on basic military subjects given at the end of the second week of training. Just over a third of all privates entering Special Training Branch, or nearly 4 percent of all recruits, spent time in Parris Island's Proficiency Platoon. While their peers spent a week on mess duty, privates in the Proficiency Platoon typically received one hour of drill, one hour of physical training, and six hours of classroom instruction a day. After a weekend's instruction they were retested, with those passing the test rejoining their platoon on mess duty. Those failing the second test received five more days instruction. Since they did not miss any during their stay in Proficiency Platoon, the recruits were not recycled and rejoined their original training platoons.[24]

Conclusion

After the Korean War, all the military services raised the standards for enlistment as high as possible. Yet the Navy, the Air Force, and particularly the Army recognized that during wartime they would have to again use low score men. All three services conducted studies to determine if remedial training turned "marginal" men into better soldiers, sailors, or airmen. The Army and Air Force also conducted experiments to develop the best methods for training these men.

All of the studies found that men with poor educations and low test scores did not perform as well as others but that most still met the military's minimum standards. Efforts to find effective remedial instruction programs, however, failed. Without exception, these studies found that remedial training had little impact on the performance of low score men.

Notes

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2. Office of the Adjutant General, Department of the Army, Annual Report of the Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower program, 1951-1952, p. 4.

3. Memo fm Chairman, Joint Working Group on Question 1 - Selection Process, to Mr. Thomas Blades et al, subj: Report on Conditions of Military Service For the Presidents Commission on Veteran's Pensions relating to Question 1 regarding Selection Process, 14 November 1955. Selective Service 1861-1955 file, Reference Section, MCHC.

4. Department of the Army, Marginal Man and Military Service (Washington, DC: 1966), hereafter U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 157-158, 165-168.

5. Ibid., p. 166.

6. Elizabeth P. Hagen and Robert L. Thorndike, A Study of the World War II Careers of Illiterates Sent Through Literacy Training (Washington, DC: Bureau of Naval Personnel Research Report, Classification and Survey Research Branch, Research Division, 1953), hereafter Hagen and Thorndike, Navy Illiterates, p. 2.

7. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, p. 105. The request was dated 1 June 1950.

8. Ibid., pp. 105-110.

9. Salvatore Mastropoalo et al., A Study of the relative effect of Six-Week and Twelve-Week Experimental Basic Training on a Sample of Limited Aptitude Airmen: Part I Basic Training Analysis, Part II Six-Week Follow-Up Analyses, Technical report AFPTRC-54-36 Sept 1954 (Lackland AFB, TX: Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center, 1954), pp. 27-28; U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 145-153.

10. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 123-134.

11. S. James Gofford, An Experimental Evaluation of a Basic Education Program in the Army, Technical Report 28, April 1956

(Washington, DC: Human Resources Research Office (HumRRO), Washington, 1956), p. 5.

12. Hagen and Thorndike, Navy Illiterates, pp. 19-22, 30, 49-51.

13. Eli Ginzberg and Douglas W. Bray, The Uneducated (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953), p. 216 -221. The quote is from p. 216 and refers to European military selection practices, but it clearly applies to the authors' suggestions on pp. 220-221.

14. Ibid., p. 85.

15. Ibid, p. 95.

16. Donald C. Finlay, Seymour M. Matyos, and Hermann Rogge III, Training Achievement in Basic Combat Squads With Controlled Aptitude, TR 16 January 1955 (Fort Knox, KY: HumRRO, George Washington University, OCAFF Ft Knox KY, 1955), pp. 15-16.

17. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, p. 169.

18. Ibid., pp. 170-173, 242.

19. Walter A. Kleiger, Adrian U. Dubuisson, and Bryan B. Sargent, III, Correlates of Disciplinary Record in a Wide-Ranging Sample, Technical Research Note 125 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Personnel Research Office, 1962), pp. 3-4, 8.

20. U.S. Army, Marginal Man, pp. 166-167.

21. Keith Fleming, Jr, The U.S. Marine Corps in Crises: Ribbon Creek and Recruit Training (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), p. 59.

22. Ibid, p. 67.

23. Memo fm AC/S G-3 to CMC, Subj: Special Education Program for Slow Learners at Marine Corps Recruit Depots, 27 Sep 65., File 1500, HQMC Central Files 1965.

24. Point Paper, Subj: Special Training Branch (STB), Marine Corps Recruit Depots, 20 September 1965, File 1510, HQMC Central Files 1965.

Chapter 5

The Birth of Project 100,000

Shortly after taking office, President Kennedy and members of his administration, including Secretary of Defense McNamara, resurrected the idea of using the military to help solve a number of social problems. Interest in solving one social problem, that of men rejected for military service, complemented the Army's interest in developing methods for training men with low test scores, resulting in a proposed program to train 60,000 low score men.

The Marine Corps did not share the Army's concern over the problem of low score men, and steadfastly refused to conduct remedial academic training. Even when the initial Vietnam expansion forced the Marine Corps to lower its enlistments standards, Marine officers felt that remedial instruction was unnecessary.

Congress did not share the administration's enthusiasm for this program, and killed it. This did not end the administration's plans. Ironically, a Marine Corps program eventually gave Secretary McNamara a way to create a remedial training program despite Congress's and the Marine Corps' objections.

New Efforts to Use the Military to Achieve Social Goals

A number of characteristics made the military attractive to members of the administration interested in social reform. The President could command persons on active duty to a far greater degree than he could anyone else. Generally, when given direct orders by the civilian leadership, military officers would ensure, if only grudgingly, that the services complied. The services could be ordered to implement policies that could not be passed through Congress, although Congressman could always refuse to fund, bar through amendments, or hold hostage to other legislation any program they opposed. Perhaps most importantly, the Defense Department was the largest federal agency, directly employing millions of people and indirectly affecting millions more. Many reform minded members of the administration hoped to use the Armed Forces to set the pace of social change in America, both by educating the millions of young people who served and by setting an example for the rest of the nation.[1]

President Kennedy and his advisors first used the military to improve Civil Rights for Blacks. Kennedy worked to end discrimination within the military. In his first two months in office, for example, Kennedy asked pointed questions about the numerically insignificant but symbolically important lack of Blacks in White House honor guards.[2] President Kennedy soon turned to more

substantive issues, trying to use military commanders to attack discriminatory practices outside their bases, particularly segregated housing. This addressed a real hardship for Black servicemen and women, but was also intended to help the local civilians.[3]

In 1963 President Kennedy looked to the military for help with another social problem. The previous year Selective Service judged one third of all 18-year old men examined unfit for service. Concerned with the implications of this high rejection rate, on 30 September 1963 the President established the Task Force on Manpower Conservation, with Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara as one of the members. In his letter to the members of the task force, President Kennedy noted that "[t]oday's military rejects include tomorrow's hard-core unemployed."[4] He also charged the task force to examine the Army's experience with "special training units for illiterates," citing the specific numbers of trainees received and graduated.[5]

As required, the Task Force issued its report on 1 January 1964. This report, entitled <u>One Third of a Nation</u>, focused on methods for improving the skills of young men before they reached draft age and on referring those rejected to civilian agencies for training. This report found that high enlistment standards unfairly stigmatized those who failed, as well as denying them opportunities for employment, vocational training, and veteran's benefits.

One Third of a Nation was only one of many reports, books, and articles describing the problems posed by poverty and lack of education in the United States. It reinforced a belief among the political appointees in the Administration and the Defense Secretariat that the military services could make an excellent tool for social reform.[6]

In June of 1964, Secretary McNamara expressed concern over the fact that the Army rejected 30 percent of the nation's youth. He asked the Secretary of the Army, Stephen Ailes, if Army enlistment standards were too high. After discussion, McNamara immediately asked Secretary Ailes to explore the possibility of bringing rejected men up to the Army's standards as opposed to lowering those standards.[7] Of course, such a program would also produce the politically desirable result of reducing draft calls.

A Plan For Remedial Training: STEP

The Army staff began to study this issue and quickly developed a plan to use low score men. On 13 August 1964 the Pentagon announced plans for the "Special Training Enlistment Program," or STEP. The Army proposed to accept volunteers with easily corrected physical problems or poor test scores for three year enlistments. These men would then receive rehabilitative care or academic instruction to bring them to the normal Army standard.[8] The Pentagon announced that this experiment, scheduled to start in

November 1964, was "intended to reduce reliance on the draft by expanding the pool of qualified volunteers available for enlistment."[9]

The Army expected men with low test scores to comprise the vast majority of the STEP soldiers. In 1964 the Army enlisted anyone with an AFQT score of 31 or higher, and high school graduates who scored 21 or higher if they scored well on at least three sub tests. Selective Service, which at that time sent men to the Army only, accepted men with scores as low as 10 on the AFQT if they scored well on other sub tests. Under STEP, the Army would accept all men scoring between 15 and 30 on the AFQT. Thus, the Army would still bar from enlisting some men acceptable to the Selective Service Administration. There would be no shortage of applicants, since the previous fiscal year the Army had rejected over 40,000 men with scores in this range who had applied to enlist.[10] Initially the Army hoped to bring 60,000 into STEP over a three year period, with up to 11,000 in training at the height of the program.[11]

The Senate Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations, unhappy that it had not been consulted before the Army announced its plans, ordered the Defense Department to submit a formal request to the committee before any funds could be used for STEP.[12] The Army quickly began to build its case.

During the fall of 1964, Army staff officers and researchers prepared plans for STEP. From September 1964 to January 1965, the Army conducted an experiment comparing the performance during Basic Combat Training of soldiers in Mental Group IV to that of other soldiers. This study, published in April 1966, found that Men in higher mental groups consistently performed better than men in Group IV, but that this difference was slight. The study also noted that there was considerable overlap between the two groups, with many of the Group IV men ranking among the best soldiers and many of the higher scoring men placing among the worst. The study concluded that the Army could "apparently make good use of a considerable number" of Mental Group IV soldiers, but that it appeared "unlikely that a program of general educational development...could have large effects on subsequent military training and performance."[13]

The Defense Department delivered its formal request for STEP to Congress on 12 December 1964.[14] In January 1965, just in time for the first Congressional hearings, the Army published the first part of Marginal Man and Military Service. This report outlined the military's experience with both physically and mentally "marginal" soldiers. It argued that during mobilization, the military had always been forced to lower its standards, and that failure to foresee this necessity led to wasteful and harmful manpower

policies. To overcome this problem, the authors of Marginal Man and Military Service claimed that the Army needed to develop effective methods for using low aptitude men in peacetime.[15]

On 26 January 1965 Secretary Ailes, Vice Chief of Staff of the Army General Creighton W. Abrams, and other Army officers appeared before the Senate Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations. Secretary Ailes told the Committee that "[t]he purpose of the STEP program is to increase the number of volunteers accepted by the Army without lowering our standards."[16] Increasing the number of volunteers would benefit the Army by decreasing personnel turbulence, since every three-year contract soldier enlisted through STEP would replace a two-year draftee. General Abrams pointed out that every man meeting the requirements for STEP would have qualified for combat duty in World War II and Korea. He also noted that volunteers would be more likely to become career soldiers than draftees.[17]

General Abrams emphasized that STEP was "in a very real sense" sound preparation for full mobilization, a point which Secretary Ailes did not make at all. General Abrams noted that the men trained through STEP would be "our trained manpower for tomorrow's emergency." In keeping with the conclusions in Marginal Man and Military Service, he pointed out that the peacetime Army required "higher enlistment standards than we can afford in an emergency."

The knowledge gained from STEP would prepare the Army to train low score men to meet the Army's need if such an emergency arose.[18]

Despite the Defense Department's spirited presentation, the Senators of the Committee thought agencies such as the Job Corps more suitable than the Army for the task of rehabilitating low skill youth. The Senate Committee turned down the Defense Department's request to fund STEP. The Defense Department then turned to the House. On 4 February, Secretary Ailes, General Abrams and the rest reiterated their arguments to the House Subcommittee on Defense Appropriations. The Representatives shared the Senator's concern over using the Army for remedial instruction.[19] On 29 September 1965, Congress passed the 1966 military appropriation bill into law. Tacked on to the end of this bill was the requirement that "[n]one of the funds provided in this act shall be available for the expenses of the Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP)."[20]

Senior Army officers backed STEP, but they may not have been as enthusiastic as the civilians in the Defense Department. In December 1965 the House considered a bill, H.R. 11153,

> [t]o authorize the Secretary of Defense to carry out a special educational training program for enlistees and draftees in the Armed Forces who would otherwise fail to meet minimum requirements of the Armed Forces because of educational deficiencies.

This sounded like a copy of the recently defeated proposal for STEP, but the Army's proposed report on the bill, while posing no objection to the legislation, stated that the Army believed the proposed legislation unnecessary.[21]

The Marine Corps Position

Throughout this period Marine officers insisted that the Corps did not need any remedial training program.

In September 1965 officers at Headquarters Marine Corps gave the special training branches a close look. This interest occurred as the Marine Corps began to increase its strength to meet its recent commitment to Vietnam and just days before the 1966 Defense Appropriations act formally killed STEP. Staff studies focused on programs for slow learners. Marine officers uniformly opposed implementing any special programs for "slow learners."

On 21 September 1965 Lieutenant Colonel Hanlon of the G-3 Division at Headquarters Marine Corps informed the Under Secretary of the Navy that the Marine Corps had contingency plans to provide "limited remedial reading and arithmetical application classes" during mobilization.[22] When the Marine Corps prepared to lower its entry standards to accept men who scored 16 on the AFQT if they were high school graduates or scored well on certain subtests, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, General W. R. Collins, argued that

there was no need to reestablish the Slow Learners programs at the Recruit Depots.[23]

In November 1965, the Marine Corps lowered its entry standards for the first time since the Korean War. It also made its first draft call since May 1952. The draftees requested would include Puerto Ricans, the group that constituted the main target of previous remedial academic programs. Still, the Marine Corps did not recreate the "slow learners" platoon. Instead, on 8 November 1965, the Commander of the Recruit Training Regiment at Parris Island added a "Language Orientation Unit" to the Special Training Branch.[24]

Despite the need to lower standards in November 1965, the Marine corps still tried to keep the number of recruits in Mental Group IV as small as possible. In December 1965, while the Army believed H.R. 11153 to be unnecessary, the G-1 of the Marine Corps recommended that the Navy Department "strongly oppose the enactment" of this bill.[25] In January 1966, the Commandant's reference book repeated the policy statement of January 1965: "[t]he Marine Corps will accept for enlistment duty only the minimum number of Mental Group IV's needed to fill its recruiting quotas."[26]

After the Korean War, while other services looked for ways to effectively train low score men, the Marine Corps took its own path. Forced to deal with fundamental problems in its recruit training program by the Ribbon Creek

incident, the Marine Corps quickly introduced the Special Training Branch as only one of a number of reforms. Unlike some of the other reforms, Special Training Branch became a permanent part of the Marine Corps' basic training system. The recruit depots took pride in their ability to turn unmotivated, fat, and weak recruits into Marines. The Marine Corps did not show the same enthusiasm for turning around men with low test scores. Fostering its elite image, the Marine Corps preferred to simply raise its entry standards. Even when the Vietnam buildup forced the Corps to lower standards, Marines resisted efforts to reintroduce a program for slow learners. After Congress killed STEP, this resistance must have seemed successful. It was not. A "slow learners" program larger than anyone could have imagined in the Fall of 1965 would soon be forced on all services, including the Marine Corps. Ironically this program owed its inception to the Special Training Branch.

The Birth of Project 100,000

After the stillbirth of STEP, the issue of men rejected for service continued to occupy the attention of Secretary McNamara and his staff. In 1965 President Johnson directed the Defense Department to conduct a new study of the Draft. This study found that many of the young men rejected by Selective Service wanted to serve, and that many of the men rejected were classified as I-Y, or acceptable during

wartime or national emergency. These findings and the need for large numbers of recruits to fill the rapidly expanding military led the Defense Department to lower the mental standards for induction in November 1965 and again in April 1966.[27] Lowering standards did not require Congressional approval, as long the minimum standard remained an AFQT score of 10. However, Secretary McNamara still had no way to fund the remedial training he wanted to provide for low score men.

On 18 July 1966 a group of Marines from Parris Island briefed Secretary of Defense McNamara and his Staff on their Recruit Depot's Special Training Branch.[28] The Marines noted with pride that Special Training Branch enabled the Marine Corps to salvage recruits that would otherwise have been discharged. Secretary McNamara realized that this program could allow the military to provide extra instruction to low score men without Congressional approval. Since the Special Training Branches provided remedial instruction for a wide variety of problems, most of which developed after regular training had begun, it did not violate the Congressional ban on special programs for low score men. And, since the Marine Corps ran Special Training Branch out of their normal recruit training budget, there was no need to ask Congress for additional funding. McNamara directed his staff to determine if it was feasible to create Special Training Branches at every recruit

training center in all services. McNamara then ordered the services to ensure that all recruit training facilities included some special training units.[29]

On August 23, 1966, Secretary of Defense McNamara surprised Pentagon staffers when he publicly announced that during the 10 months remaining in the fiscal year* the Defense Department would "salvage" 40,000 men currently disqualified for service, followed by 100,000 every year thereafter.[30] McNamara did not mention the shortage of manpower, describing only the social welfare aspects of the program. McNamara claimed that military training would give these men new trades and skills, enabling them to compete in the civilian economy, doubling or tripling their income.[31] Project 100,000 began on 1 October 1966.

Goals

Project 100,000 had three goals. First, it was intended to achieve "greater equity in spreading the opportunities and obligations of military service." A guidance paper from the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower) described the system of draft exemption "both wasteful and discriminatory." The paper argued that insisting on standards "higher than actually required deprives some men of the opportunity to serve, and produces

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* Fiscal Year 1967, which ran from 1 July 1966 to 30 June 1967.

under-utilization and under-motivation of others." This was bad for both society and the military.[32]

The second purpose was recognize the "unique capability of the military training establishment to produce fully satisfactory servicemen among culturally disadvantaged men." The paper stated that the Army and Marine Corps' experience proved that men in Mental Group IV could become perfectly satisfactory soldiers and Marines through the normal training system. The military had an obligation to enthusiastically improve the Nation's manpower so long as, the paper emphasized, "in doing so military missions [were] not impaired or degraded."

Third, Project 100,000 supported "foresighted military planning." The armed services needed to use large numbers of low score men during both World War II and Korea, but had difficulty training these men. By enabling the services to perfect techniques for quickly training low score men, Project 100,000 would help them prepare for future mobilizations.

From the beginning of the program, Secretary McNamara outlined four basic policies. First, entry standards would be reduced, but performance standards would not. The military would train low score men to meet the standards already in effect. If a man could not meet those standards, he would be discharged.

Secretary McNamara's second point made it clear that such discharges would be a last, not a first, resort. He was "dedicated to achieving a high degree of success" in bringing men to "satisfactory performance levels." Secretary McNamara authorized New Mental Standards men to spend up to three extra months in entry level training. Medical remedial enlistees with minor physical defects could be enlisted if minor surgery could correct their problem within six weeks. Overweight, underweight, weak, and uncoordinated men were equated with New Mental Standards recruits and granted more time to overcome their handicaps.

In keeping with his emphasis on system analysis, McNamara also ordered continuous, detailed monitoring of Project 100,000. The statistics generated would be used to ensure that the objectives of the program were met and to provide data for further research. McNamara also wanted to provide "adequate controls" to "avoid impairment of military performance." In light of the second point listed above and his speech announcing Project 100,000, McNamara clearly did not plan to use the data generated to reexamine the wisdom of the program itself. Rather, he was interested in fine tuning the program. Of course, this system would also generate data that could be used to counter any claims that Project 100,000 was hurting the military, a real possibility in light of Congress' reaction to STEP.

Finally, Secretary McNamara ordered every service to participate. Project 100,000 quotas would be assigned based on each services occupational mix, Mental Group IV accessions the previous year, and their experience with and facilities for training low score men. To ensure that the services complied with the quotas, McNamara ordered them to make up any shortfalls with draftees.[33] During the first phase the Army received the largest quota, the Marine Corps the next largest, and the Navy and Air Force the smallest. Marine officers would have cause to question the Defense Department's adherence to the criteria listed above for assigning quotas when, during later phases of Project 100,000, the it gave the Marine Corps and the Army identical quotas despite the considerable differences between the two services.

As a Senator in 1950 Lyndon B. Johnson had worried about provisions for men rejected for service during the debate on Universal Military Training; as President he supported Project 100,000. Johnson mentioned the program in his address to Congress on 31 January 1967, noting that he was "directing the Secretary of Defense to find new ways to improve this program."[34] In his message on Selective Service just over a month later, the President emphasized the social benefits of Project 100,000 In addition to

making good soldiers out of men previously rejected,

President Johnson noted that

> the remedial training they receive can enable them to live fuller and more productive lives....[t]he Nation can never again afford to deny to men who can effectively serve their country, the obligation -- and the right -- to share in a basic responsibility of citizenship.[35]

Notes

1. Morris J. MacGregor, Integration of the Armed Forces, 1940-1965 (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1981), p. 507, 531-533. The preceding paragraph is a much stronger statement than MacGregor makes; MacGregor described only the Defense Department's efforts to end racial segregation. These considerations described were present in that effort. Interviews with former members of the Kennedy and Johnson Administration indicate that a similar view of social progress in general prevailed in the Department.

2. Ibid., pp. 508-509

3. Ibid., pp. 512-517; The President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces, Initial Report: Equality of Treatment and Opportunity for Negro Military Personnel Stationed Within the United States (Washington, DC: U.S.G.P.O., 13 June 1963).

4. The President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation, One-Third of A Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service (Washington, D.C.: 1 January 1964), p. A-1.

5. Ibid., p. A-2.

6. David A. Dawson interviews with Robert S. McNamara, 4 June 1991; Thomas D. Morris, 24 May 1991; Stephen N. Shulman, 23 May 1991; William Gorham, 24 May 1991. The first paragraph of the Guidance Paper: Project One Hundred Thousand, distributed by the Assistant Secretary for Defense (Manpower) on 31 March 1967, says that "[d]uring the past several years, there has been a growing concern in Government and among public leaders with the fact that one-third of our nation's youth have been declared unfit for military service." See also Steven L. Canby, Military Manpower Procurement (Lexington MA: Lexington Books, 1972), p. 35 (This was a RAND study.)

7. U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Department of the Army Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP), Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., 1965, hereafter Senate STEP hearings, p. 44.

8. Ibid., p. 1.

9. "Pentagon to Test New Draft Plan," New York Times 14 August 1964, p. 4.

10. Senate STEP Hearings, pp. 2, 5-8.

11. "Pentagon to Test New Draft Plan," New York Times 14 August 1964, p. 4.

12. Senate STEP Hearings, p. 1.

13. S. James Gofford, Morris Showel, and Hilton M. Bialek, A Study of Category IV Personnel in Basic Training Technical Report 66-2 (Washington DC: Human Resources Research Office, April 1966), pp. 17-18.

14. Senate STEP Hearings, p. 1.

15. Department of the Army, Marginal Man and Military Service (Washington, DC: 1966), pp. ii, 1-7, passim.

16. Senate STEP Hearings, p. 5.

17. Ibid., p. 34.

18. Ibid., p. 34.

19. Ibid., pp. 1-65. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department of the Army Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP), Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 89th Cong., 1st Sess., 1965, pp. 531-534.

20. Department of Defense Appropriations Act 1966 (Public Law 89-213), U.S. Statutes at Large 79, sec. 640 (1965).

21. G-1 Division Comment, Subj: H.R. 11153, a bill "To authorize the Secretary of Defense to carry out a special educational training program for enlistees and draftees in the Armed Forces who would otherwise fail to meet minimum requirements of the Armed Forces because of educational deficiencies." 8 December 1965, file 1500, HQMC Central Files 1965.

22. Memo for SecNav fm LtCol Hanlon, Subj: Special Education Program for Marine Recruits (Slow Learners), 21 September 1965, file 1500, HQMC Central Files 1965.

23. Memo to CMC fm AC/S G-3, Subj: Special Education for Slow Learners at Marine Corps Recruit Depots, 27 September 1965, file 1500, HQMC Central Files 1965.

24. MCRD Parris Island Command Chronology July-December 1965, p. 6-1, MCHC.

25. G-1 comment, H.R. 11153, file 1500, HQMC Central Files 1965.

26. CMC Reference Notebook 1964-1967, subj: Procurement Policies Toward Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, January 1966, approved 4 February 1966, MCHC.

27. Office of the Secretary of Defense, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower), Guidance Paper: Project One Hundred Thousand, 31 March 1967, hereafter OASD(M), Guidance Paper, HumRRO collection.

28. Memo for the Record, Subj: Telephone Call with Gen Keiffer Regarding Category IV Requirements, by MajGen Nils O. Ohman USAF, Vice Commander Air Training Command, 23 August 1966, Air Training Command History July-December 1966 II-24.

29. Roberts S. McNamara, interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 4 June 1991.

30. Homer Bigart, "M'Namara Plans to 'Salvage' 40,000 Rejected in Draft," The New York Times 24 August 1966, pp. 1, 18.

31. Paul Starr, The Discarded Army (New York: Charterhouse, 1973), pp. 185-186, 190.

32. OASD (M), Guidance Paper. The paragraphs describing the goals of Project 100,000 are from pp. 4-6; paragraphs describing policies set by Secretary McNamara are from pp. 9-11.

33. FY-1967 Selection Procedures for Mental Group IV Enlisted Men, 31 August 1966, p. 2, Waters Papers, HumRRO.

34. Extract from President's message to Congress 31 January 1967, OASD(M), Guidance Paper, Tab A.

35. Extract from President's message to Congress on Selective Service, 6 March 1967, Ibid., Tab B.

Chapter 6

Marine Corps Objections To Project 100,000

The Marine Corps objected to Project 100,000 from the start. It argued that Project 100,000 quotas forced recruiters to turn away better applicants and failed to account for the large numbers of Marines in ground combat units. Once Project 100,000 began, the Marine Corps looked for loopholes to avoid taking men with low test scores. By late 1967, however, Marine recruiters consistently exceeded their Project 100,000 quotas. Despite the complaints of senior Marine officers, the poor recruiting climate created by the Vietnam War meant that shortly after Project 100,000 began the Marine Corps could not attract better qualified volunteers. To fill its ranks, the Marine Corps would have been forced to lower enlistment standards and accept large numbers of recruits scoring in Mental group IV with or without Project 100,000.

Initial Objections

The Marine Corps initially objected to Project 100,000 on the grounds that this program forced recruiters to turn away better qualified volunteers to make their Mental Group IV quotas.[1] During the first three months of Project 100,000 the Marine Corps was not required to actually lower standards; it was merely required to ensure that 18 percent of all new recruits scored in Mental Group IV.[2] Between 1

October and 31 December 1966 the Marine Corps took only 10 men who would not have met the enlistment standards of 30 September 1966 and thus counted as New Standards Marines.[3]

Still, the Marine Corps' objections had merit. During the last three months of 1966 Marine recruiters turned away 2,575 volunteers in higher groups while they worked to make their Mental Group IV quotas. Another 1,730 men in higher groups withdrew their applications for enlistment because they could not be sent to Boot Camp at a suitable time.[4]

Starting 1 January, the Defense Department required that at least one third of the Marine Corps' Group IV quota, or 6 percent of all new recruits, consist of "New Standards" men, men who would have failed the standards in effect on 30 September. On 1 February 1967, the Marine Corps started the Medical Remedial Enlistment Program, for men with minor physical defects that could be corrected within six weeks. Since these men had been barred before, they also counted as "New Standards" men.[5]

Despite the Marine Corps objections to Group IV quotas, the Marine Corps dutifully ensured that it met its assigned goals. A point paper prepared at Headquarters, Marine Corps, on 4 January 1967 stated that the Marine Corps was generally "sympathetic to the program and its purpose and [would] continue to respond willingly" as long as it did not hurt combat readiness.[6]

This sympathy, if real, must have been shallow, for the Marine Corps was already looking for ways to avoid its Mental Group IV quotas. On 23 December 1966, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, suggested that the Marine Corps try to fill as much of its "New Standards" with men in the Medical Remedial Enlistment Program. Since roughly three quarters of these men were expected to be weight problems, presumably once they reached a healthy weight they would be indistinguishable from ordinary Marines. Less than two months after Medical Remedial Enlistments began, it became obvious that only a tiny number of men would enlist under this program, and the G-1 withdrew his suggestion. The G-1's prediction proved accurate; over the course of Project 100,000 Medical Remedial Enlistments accounted for less than 1 percent of all enlistments and only 9.5 percent of all New Standards Marines.[7] Exact figures are not available for Marine Recruits, but over 85 percent of all Medical Remedial men enlisted were either over or under weight.[8]

Less than a week after the point paper which stated that the Marine Corps would "respond willingly" to the Defense Department quotas was written, Major General R. G. Davis, the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, assured the Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Chapman, that the G-1 division was hurrying to complete its analysis of two studies examining the performance of Mental Group IV men by 1 February "[i]n an effort to build a case against continued

accession of marginal personnel."[9] This effort failed, for when Phase II of Project 100,000 began on 1 October 1967 the Marine Corps' quota of Mental Group IVs increased to 21 percent of all enlistments, with a further requirement that half of these men, or 10.5 percent of all new recruits, be New Standards men.

While senior Marine officers looked for ways to reduce or circumvent the Project 100,000 quotas, they instructed recruiters to meet their quotas. As noted above, if the Marine Corps failed to meet its Project 100,000 quotas the Defense department would force it to make up the difference with draftees. The Marine Corps supported the draft, believing the threat of induction to be an important factor in filling both its officer and enlisted ranks, but normally went to considerable effort to fill its ranks with volunteers.[10] At the start of Project 100,000 the Commandant decided that the Marine Corps would resort to Selective Service to fill its Project 100,000 quotas only if enough volunteers could not be found or if the effort proved unreasonably expensive and hurt other recruiting efforts, a policy which remained in effect throughout the program.

The Initial Assessment

Although the long term impact of Project 100,000 remained unclear, by the Summer of 1968 the Marine Corps had reached some tentative conclusions. Over 20 percent of the

New Standards Marines enlisted between 1 January and 31 March 67 had failed to complete 18 months of service, compared to 12 percent of other men who joined in the same period. In boot camp, one third of the New Standards recruits had to go to Special Training or be recycled. After recruit training, 35 percent of the New Standards Marines received poor ratings from their leaders, compared to 20 percent of the higher score men. New Standards men were more than twice as likely to be killed in action than other Marines, although this difference resulted from the fact that they were much more likely to be assigned to the combat arms and not to any inherent inability to survive in combat.

This data supported the Marine Corps' opposition to the Project 100,000 quotas, and the Marine Corps again objected when the Defense Department set the quotas for phase III of the program, scheduled to begin on 1 October 1968. To the original objection, that Mental Group quotas forced the Marine Corps to turn away better qualified applicants, the Commandant added a number of new arguments.

In July 1968 an official position paper outlined new objections to the Project 100,000 quotas. The Marine Corps opposed quotas set as a percentage of new recruits rather than total strength because this unfairly burdened the service with the largest commitment to Vietnam. The Marine Corps also protested that quotas were assigned without

regard to the needs of the different services or their ability to find appropriate duties and provide useful training for New Standards men. Finally, the paper noted the Marine Corps was "gravely concerned" about the high proportion of New Mental Standards men who were recycled or failed basic training.[11] These were valid complaints.

How the Marine Corps Differed

In many ways Project 100,000 affected the Marine Corps more than any other Service. The Marine Corps committed a far larger proportion of its strength to the War in Vietnam than the other services. The demands of the Vietnam war forced the Marine Corps to change more than any other service. And the Marine Corps' emphasis on ground combat meant that it had few opportunities for any Marine to learn a skill that would be useful in civilian life.

By 1968, 8 of the 12 active Marine infantry regiments were in Vietnam. The Marine Corps had 30 per cent of its strength in Vietnam. This does not include Marines assigned to the Western Pacific, many of whom were merely on a temporary rotation out of Vietnam. The Marine Corps overall strength was too small to support this commitment, which forced the Marine Corps to drastically shorten the normal period of service to maintain the flow of replacements to Southeast Asia. After the war General Chapman recalled that by late 1967, "there were just three kinds of Marines;

there were those in Vietnam, those who had just come back from Vietnam, and those who were getting ready to go to Vietnam."[12]

To support this huge commitment the Marine Corps changed from a stable, long service organization to one marked by high turnover and constant personnel turbulence. To support its commitment to Vietnam, the Marine Corps needed a steady stream of replacements. Before Vietnam, all recruits enlisted for at least three years, and over four fifths joined for four years.[13] Instead of sending individuals overseas, the Marine Corps rotated battalions, so a Marine could expect to stay with the same unit for his entire enlistment.[14] The Vietnam War forced the Marine Corps to end this practice.

Defense Department policy set the maximum length for involuntary tours in Vietnam at one year, with at least two years in the Continental United States between tours.* To comply with this policy while maintaining a large force in Vietnam, the Marine Corps needed three times as many Marines in the United States than it had in Southeast Asia. It had only twice as many. Between September 1966 and May 1968 the Commandant repeatedly asked Secretary McNamara to increase

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* The Army used a 12 month tour throughout the War. The Marine Corps started the War with a 13 month tour, but in late 1967 changed to a tour of no more than 395 days between departure from and return to the Continental United States. With stops in Okinawa on both legs of the journey, this worked out to a little over 12 months actually in Vietnam.

the Marine Corps' strength to provide an adequate rotation base. McNamara denied or severely reduced every one of these requests.[15] Given the rotation policy, an end strength cap, and the need to send a steady stream of replacements to Vietnam, the Marine Corps had no choice but to start using two year enlistments.

By 1968 over half of all new recruits came in on two year contracts.[16] Still struggling to stay within its authorized end strength, the Marine Corps released most of these men shortly after they returned from Vietnam, driving the typical period of service down to around 20 months. As a result, the Marine Corps' personnel turnover rate increased dramatically during the Vietnam War (see table 6-1).

Table 6-1
Male Enlisted Non-Prior Service Accessions as Percentage of Male Enlisted Strength, 1961-1973*

Year	USMC	Army	Navy	USAF
1961-64	18	25	15	13
1965	30	40	20	16
1966	42	53	16	21
1967	28	31	15	12
1968	35	35	19	14
1969	33	33	18	12
1970	26	26	14	11
1971	27	26	15	16
1972	31	34	20	12
1973	26	21	14	12

* Percentages derived by dividing male enlisted end strength as of 30 June (calculated from Department of Defense Selected Manpower Statistics 1976) by total male non-prior service accessions for that calendar year from Bernard D. Karpinos, Male Chargeable Accessions: Evaluation by Mental Categories (1953-1973) (Alexandria, Virginia: Human Resources Research Organization, January 1977).

The Marine Corps' high turnover was the basis for the Commandant's objection to quotas set as a percentage of accessions. Since Marine Corps and the Army took in a much higher proportion of their strength as new recruits the Navy or the Air Force, the proportion of Project 100,000 men in their ranks compared to the other services was much larger than the quotas would suggest. In effect, the Army and Marine Corps took 20% of 30%, or approximately 6-8% of their enlisted end strength, in MG IV's every year, half of whom were New Standards men. In contrast, the Navy and Air Force annually accepted about 15% of 15%, or 2-3%, of their enlisted end strength in MG IV's (see table 6-2).

Table 6-2

Mental Group IV Accessions and Project 100,000 Mental Group IV Quotas, FY 1961-1971

Period	Army		USMC		Navy		USAF	
	Qta	**Actl**	Qta	**Actl**	Qta	**Actl**	Qta	**Actl**
FY61		**13.2**		**7.1**		**10.0**		**16.1**
FY62		**22.4**		**9.0**		**11.8**		**7.2**
FY63		**21.2**		**3.9**		**5.5**		**8.4**
FY64		**19.8**		**9.2**		**10.9**		**4.3**
FY65		**18.4**		**3.9**		**13.8**		**7.5**
FY66		**23.4**		**13.5**		**5.7**		**6.6**
Oct66-Jun67	25.9	**27.6**	18.0	**19.9**	15.0	**15.5**	15.0	**15.3**
FY68*	24.5	**28.0**	21.0	**22.2**	17.0	**16.6**	17.0	**17.0**
FY69*	24.0	**27.5**	24.0	**25.7**	18.0	**19.2**	18.0	**17.7**
FY70	24.0	**25.8**	24.0	**24.2**	18.0	**16.4**	18.0	**18.1**
FY71	24.0	**25.2**	20.0	**20.7**	15.0	**14.0**	15.0	**17.9**
Oct66-Jun71		**27.0**		**23.0**		**16.7**		**17.3**

Quotas set as a percentage of Non-Prior Service Accessions. From Oct-Dec 66, the Marine Corps was not required to take New Standards men. From Jan-Sep 1967 the New Standards quota for the Marine Corps was one third of all Mental Group IV accessions, or 6% of all recruits. From Oct 1967 to Jun 1971, the New Standards quota consisted of half the Mental Group IV quota.
* Quotas in these years set in October; the quota from the previous year remained in effect during the first three months of the fiscal year.

Source: Characteristics/New Standards Men, 1971, table A-6; Annual Report, Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower Program, 1961-1965.

The Marine Corps' quotas tended to be slightly lower than the Army's, but under these quotas the proportion of Mental Group IVs entering the Marine Corps more than tripled

while the proportion of Mental Group IVs entering the Army increased by about a third. As a result of these quotas, by July 1969, 8 percent of all enlisted soldiers, 6 percent of Marines, 3 percent of sailors and 3 percent of airmen were New Standards men. The Marine Corps had a slighter smaller proportion of New Standards men than the Army, but again it experienced a bigger change. In July 1968 5 percent of soldiers were New Standards men compared to 3 percent of all Marines. As Project 100,000 continued, the proportion of New Standards men in the Marine Corps grew to nearly match the proportion in the Army.[17]

The quotas did not reflect the ability of each service to use low score men or to provide training useful in civilian life.[18] Again, in this regard the Marine Corps fared worse than any other service.

Proportionally, the Marine Corps supported by far the largest commitment in Vietnam. Neither the Air Force or the Navy ever deployed more than 7 percent of their strength to Vietnam.[19] The Army had about 20 percent of its end strength in Vietnam. If these services found Mental Group IVs ineffective, they could at least find relatively harmless places for them to serve. The Marine Corps had no place to stash an ineffective man; almost everyone eventually went to Vietnam.

Nor was the Marine Corps a particularly good place to provide "skills and aptitudes" for civilian jobs. Some

observers argued that technological advance had reduced the proportion of low skill and combat jobs in the military, but this was not the case in the Marine Corps. The proportion of enlisted Marines in the ground combat arms during Vietnam was slightly higher than in World War II. In July 1945 just under 30 percent of all Marines served in the ground combat specialties of infantry, artillery, engineers, and armored vehicles. During the Marine Corps' involvement in Vietnam over 34 percent of enlisted Marines served in these fields.[20] Since these fields had proportionally fewer high ranking career enlisted men than the technical fields, they needed a disproportionately larger share of new recruits. Between 1966 and the end of 1968 almost half of all new recruits went to the combat arms and a third went into the infantry.[21]

Few New Standards men qualified for the limited number of technical specialties available, since these usually required high scores on one or more aptitude areas. This was exacerbated by the fact that starting 1 October 1967 the Marine Corps limited all men in Mental Group IV to two year enlistments, and men on two year contracts were not sent to lengthy schools regardless of their scores.[22] This included most technical courses. As a result the vast majority of New Standards Marines were assigned to combat specialties. In 1967, 80 percent of all New Standards Marines were assigned to the combat arms. The Marine Corps

worked to reduce this number, but by the end of 1968 almost three quarters of New Standards men were still in the combat arms, with over half serving in the infantry.[23] In contrast, only a third of the Army New Standards men served in ground combat specialties, and only a fifth became infantrymen.[24] And, as noted above, in the Marine Corps between 1966 and the end of 1969 a combat specialty almost invariably meant a combat tour in Vietnam.

The Commandant's "grave concern" over the added strain New Standards men placed on the training system was also well founded. To maintain the flow of replacement to Vietnam, in September 1965 the Marine Corps cut recruit training from 80 to 60 days and Individual Combat Training for non-infantry Marines from four to two weeks. In January 1968, in an effort to save a few more days in the training pipeline, the Commandant shortened boot camp to 56 days.[25]

The influx of New Standards men undermined the Marine Corps' effort to reduce the amount of time a Marine spent in the training pipeline. Almost a third of the New Standards recruits had to be recycled or needed remedial instruction, nearly three times the proportion of other recruits.[26] Remedial training required extra instructions, training facilities, and most of all time, commodities in very short supply during the Vietnam War.

Efforts To Improve Enlisted Quality

By the Spring of 1969 the Marine Corps had developed a four pronged program for improving the quality of its enlisted force: decreasing its Project 100,000 quotas, limiting Mental Group IV men to two year enlistments, stricter reenlistment standards, and new discharge procedures.[27]

The first course proved a dead end. Through 1969 the Commandant continued to appeal to the Secretary of Defense for a reduction in the Marine Corps' Mental Group quotas, to no avail. To his list of objections the Commandant added the need for enough high score recruits to provide skilled career NCOs. As an interim measure, the Marine Corps asked that its Mental Group IV quota not exceed 24 percent of all accessions and that its quota for New Standards Marines be capped at 6 percent of new recruits. The Defense Department honored the first request but not the second. Quotas for Phase IV of Project 100,000 (1 July 1969-30 June 1970) remained the same as those for Phase III (1 July 1968-30 June 1969): 24 percent of all accessions in Mental Group IV, and 12 percent of all accessions New Standards men. At least half of the New Standards men had to score between 10 and 15 on the AFQT. The Medical Remedial quota was set at 1 percent of all accessions.[28] The Marine Corps found it particularly galling that the civilian appointees in the Defense Secretariat failed to recognize the unique nature of

the Marine Corps. These appointees apparently considered the Marine Corps to be identical to the Army, since during fiscal years 1969 and 1970 both services received identical Project 100,000 quotas.[29]

However, the Marine Corps undermined its own complaints by continually exceeding its Project 100,000 quotas (see table 6-2). In July 1969 the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Major General Jonas M. Platt, admitted to a gathering of Marine general officers that the Marine Corps had "a serious qualitative problem in the enlisted population which is caused for the most part by Project 100,000, but not entirely."[30] He explained that "[o]ur requirements for large numbers of recruits in an increasingly deteriorating recruiting climate has (sic) increased our reliance on MG IVs."[31]

The recruiting climate was so poor, in fact, that Marine recruiters could not find enough volunteers regardless of their test scores. In April and May of 1968, shortly after the Tet offensive, the Marine Corps made its first draft calls since the initial Vietnam buildup of late 1965 and early 1966. Starting in December 1968, the Marine Corps called for draftees in 12 of 15 months.

Table 6-3

Marine Corps Non-Prior Service Male Enlisted Accessions, Total Recruits and Draftees, 1967-1970

M	1967		1968		1969		1970	
	Total Recrt	**	Total Recrt	Draft Call*	Total Recrt	Draft Call*	Total Recrt	Draft Call*
J	3,968		8,646		7,620		7,461	2,500
F	2,523		8,000		7,653	1,500	5,900	800
M	3,486		7,504		7,144	1,500	4,016	
A	3,984		8,894	4,000	8,261	2,500	3,570	
M	5,988		9,035	1,900	7,252	2,000	3,458	
J	9,394		9,429		9,273	2,000	5,489	
J	9,038		7,497		8,372		5,723	
A	8,342		7,573		7,643		6,639	
S	8,664		7,573		7,606	1,500	6,364	
O	5,593		7,947		7,817	1,400	4,301	
N	5,468		6,898		7,224	1,000	3,885	
D	5,555		8,346	2,500	6,887	1,500	3,534	
T	**72,003**	**0**	**97,342**	**8,400**	**92,752**	**14,900**	**60,340**	**3,300**

** The Marine Corps made no draft calls in 1967. It called for a total of 19,030 draftees between November 1965 and March 1966, and made its last call in February 1970.

* This is the number of draftees called for, not the number of draftees actually joined in a given month. Due to the workings of Selective Service, none of the calls were completely filled, while the Marine Corps received a few draftees in months in which it did not make a call. The Marine Corps accepted 145 draftees in 1967, 7,702 in 1968, and 12,872 in 1969.

Source: Annual Report of Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower; Selected Manpower Statistics.

General Chapman and manpower officers claimed that these calls did not reflect an overall shortage of volunteers.[32] Instead, the draft calls were used to

"smooth out" the flow of recruits. Normally the Marine Corps received the bulk of its recruits at the end of the school year, referred to as the "summer surge," and accepted only a few recruits in the winter. Between early 1968 and the end of 1969 the total strength of the Marine Corps remained fairly stable. To ensure a steady stream of replacements to Vietnam, however, the Marine Corps needed the same number of men to graduate from recruit training every month. This obviously meant that it needed the same number of men to report for recruit training every month, hence the need for draft calls in winter months.

This explanation, while plausible, does not fit the record (see table 6-3). Through 1969 the Marine Corps made draft calls in the traditional "surge" months of June and September. In February, March, June, October, and December 1969 the Marine Corps made draft calls, although it needed no draft calls to get more recruits in the same months of 1968. The call for 1,500 draftees in September 1969 resulted in only 39 more recruits than September 1968. In January 1970 the Marine Corps called for 2,500 draftees, although it had managed to attract 159 more recruits in January 1969 and over a thousand more recruits in January 1968 without draft calls.

By the beginning of 1969 the Marine Corps could not find enough volunteers to fill its ranks. The need for draftees ended, and the proportion of Mental Group IV

recruits declined to just over the Project 100,000 quota (see table 6-2), only when the Vietnam draw down cut the number of recruits nearly in half.

The Marine Corps could not change its Mental Group IV quotas, but it could implement the other three policies in its program to improve enlisted quality. As noted above, the Marine corps had already started limiting men scoring in Mental group IV to two year enlistments. In the Spring of 1969 Major General Platt and the Marines of the G-1 section began working on tightening reenlistment standards and reviewing discharge standards.

In their effort to reenlist only the best Marines, however, General Platt and his staff had to contend with the same problem faced by recruiters: too many openings and too few applicants. Enlisted Marines, unwilling to face the prospect of repeated tours in Vietnam, began leaving the Marine Corps in droves (see table 6-4).

Table 6-4

Unadjusted Reenlistment Rates for Marine Regulars by Fiscal Year, 1961-1976				
	Marine Corps wide 1st Term Regular reenlistment rate	Inf, Gun Crews & Allied Specialists 1st Term Regular reenlistment rate	Marine Corps wide Career reenlistment rate	Inf, Gun Crews & Allied Specialists Career reenlistment rate
FY 61	18.3	*	78.7	*
FY 62	20.0	*	83.1	*
FY 63	15.5	*	84.6	*
FY 64	14.4	*	85.7	*
FY 65	16.3	15.7	84.5	88.3
FY 66	16.3	15.6	88.6	90.2
FY 67	10.6	9.2	77.9	76.1
FY 68	11.9	10.3	76.0	62.0
FY 69	7.4	6.2	74.5	59.8
FY 70	4.7	3.1	78.0	72.5
FY 71	7.9	4.5	81.8	77.6
FY 72	12.3	11.5	82.6	75.8
FY 73	13.0	5.1	81.7	59.5
FY 74	15.3	9.8	79.6	68.7
FY 75	20.4	15.1	73.3	60.1
FY 76	26.4	22.8	75.7	71.6
* DoD changed its occupational categories in 1965, and breakdowns for similar occupations are not readily available.				
Source. DoD, Selected Manpower Statistics, 1968-77				

First term Marines were leaving at a particularly alarming rate. To staunch this exodus, On 1 April 1968 the Commandant established the Career Advisory Branch. This

branch supervised the efforts of career advisors throughout the Marine Corps to convince Marines to remain on active duty.[33]

Fortunately for the G-1 staff, in the Spring of 1969 the Marine Corps began withdrawing from Vietnam. The draw down in Vietnam foreshadowed a reduction in the Marine Corps' overall strength, giving the Marine Corps an opportunity to weed out poor performers. On 12 September 1969, the Marine Corps set disciplinary and educational requirements for reenlistment. Before this change, junior Marines wanting to reenlist had to demonstrate the potential to become NCOs and all Marines had to show leadership, competence, high standards and be physically fit.[34] There were also restrictions on junior married Marines. Now all first term Marines wanting to reenlist needed to have at least a tenth grade education and had score above 90 on at least three aptitude areas of the AQB test.

Marines reenlisting also needed a good, but hardly exemplary, record. All needed at least average marks for proficiency and conduct. Marines with less than two years service could reenlist if they had no more than three non-judicial punishment convictions or one non-judicial conviction and one conviction by a special court martial. Marines with more than two years service could reenlist with

four non-judicial convictions or two non-judicial and one special court martial convictions.*[35]

The draw down also presented an excellent opportunity to administratively discharge poor performers. From March 1969 to July 1971 the number of enlisted Marines fell 290,000 to less 190,000. Realizing that large numbers of Marines would have to be discharged well before their enlistments expired, the Commandant authorized local commanders to discharge poor performers.[36]

The Marine Corps achieved most of its strength reductions by allowing Marines to leave active duty before their contracts expired. Still, between July 1970 and June 1971 commanders discharged 15,000 problem Marines.[37] Although not specifically aimed at low score men, in general Marines scoring in Mental Group IV, particularly New Standards men, were about three times as likely to receive discharges for unsuitability as other Marines. These groups undoubtedly received a similar portion of the 15,000 general and undesirable discharges.

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* Non-judicial punishment refers to convictions under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Under this article commanding officers could demote a junior Marine one or two ranks, levy fines, and restrict or confine Marines for up to a month. Commanding officers could not discharge Marines. Special courts martial could demote any enlisted to private, confine them for up to six months, and award a bad conduct discharge. Only General courts martial could impose longer sentences or award a dishonorable discharge.

Continued Objections to Project 100,000

While taking action to improve enlisted quality where it could, the Marine Corps continued to fight the Project 100,000 quotas. In the Spring of 1969 the new Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Brigadier General James D. Hittle USMC (Ret.), championed the Marine Corps cause. He emphasized that the Marine Corps should have smaller quotas due to its proportionally heavier involvement in Vietnam.[38] At first he made no headway; for fiscal year 1971 (1 July 1970-30 June 1971) the Defense Department again set a quota of 24 percent Mental Group IVs and 12 percent New Standards men.

In October of 1970 the Commandant requested an immediate reduction in the Marine Corps Mental Group IV quotas from 24 percent to 16 percent, and the complete elimination of all Project 100,000 quotas when the number of enlisted Marines fell to 210,000 (from the Vietnam peak of 290,000 in March 1969). On 31 January 1971, the Marine Corps' enlisted strength fell to 207,000.

For the first time in four years the Defense Department heeded the Commandant's plea. On 26 February 1971 the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower and Reserve Affairs reduced the Marine Corps Mental Group IV quota to 20 percent of all recruits for the fiscal year. For the 12 month period, 8 percent of all recruits had to be New Standards men.[39] Only 4 percent had to score between 10

and 15 on the AFQT. The quota for the Medical Remedial Enlistment Program was 1 percent of all accessions.[40]

For July to December 1972, the Defense Department required the Marine Corps to take 20 percent of its recruits from men scoring in Mental Group IV, with no quota for Mental Group IVBs. In October 1971 the Defense Department proposed a new set of quotas for the coming year. The Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the Secretary of Defense that they found the Mental Group IV and New Standards quotas "incompatible with the primary objective of improving the quality of men in the Armed Forces."[41]

By this time, however, the arguments of General Hittle, General Chapman, and others had borne fruit on Capitol Hill. The 1972 Defense Appropriations Bill, passed on 18 December 1971, contained a provision which prohibited the Secretary of Defense from assigning the services quotas for mental group accessions.[42] Project 100,000 was over.

Notes

1. Memo, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, n.d., p. 2., file 1100, HQMC Central Files 1967.

2. Memo for the Deputy Under Secretary [of Defense] for Manpower, subj: Progress Report on Project 100,000, s/ LtGen L. F. Chapman Jr, Chief of Staff HQMC, 29 March 1967, p. 1, file 1510, HQMC Central Files 1967; Memo for CMC, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, n.d. [Between 1 and 20 Feb 67], p. 1-2., file 1100, HQMC Central Files 1967; CMC Reference Notebook 1968, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 20 July 1968, MCHC.

3. Memo for All Participants of Manpower Conference at Ramey Air Force Base, 5-8 January 1967, fm Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower [Thomas D. Morris], Subj: Conference Report, 6 February 67, p. 5, HQMC Central Files 1967.

4. Memo for the Deputy Under Secretary for Manpower, Subj: Progress Report on Project 100,000, 29 March 1967 (For DUS/M, Defense), p. 2, file 1510, HQMC Central Files 1967.

5. Memo for CMC, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, n.d. [between 1 and 20 February 1967], HQMC Central Files 1967.

6. Point Paper, Subj: Progress Report on Project One Hundred Thousand, 4 January 1967, p. 5, file 1510, HQMC Central Files 1967.

7. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report, June 1971, (unpublished), hereafter Project One Hundred Thousand: Final Report, HumRRO collection, table A-1.

8. Ibid., Table A-7.

9. Memo to Chief of Staff fm Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Subj: Mental Group IV Accessions, 13 January 1967, file 1510, HQMC Central Files 1967.

10. Memo fm Assistant Chief of Staff G-1 (s/MajGen R. G. Davis) to Chief of Staff, subj: Selective Service (Draft), 2 February 1967; Memo fm Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1 S/MajGen R. G. Davis) to CMC via Chief of Staff, 15 February 1967; both in file 1140, HQMC Central Files 1967.

11. CMC Reference Notebook 1968, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 20 July 1968, pp. 4-5, MCHC.

12. Gen Leonard F. Chapman, Jr, interview with MCHC historians, 17 January 1979 and 28 March 1979, hereafter Chapman intvw, p. 66.

13. The proportion of Marines on four year enlistments would have been even higher, but in fiscal year 1964 the Marine Corps deliberately increased the number of three year enlistments. This was done to smooth out the undesirable tendency for the Marine Corps to experience a large turnover in the enlisted ranks and exceptionally large number of recruits needed every fourth year because large numbers of enlistments expired at the same time. Once the system had been balanced so that only a quarter of all enlistments expired each year, the Marine Corps fully intended to return to at least four year contracts for almost all recruits. General Officer's Symposium 1965, BGen Raymond G. Davis AC/S G-1, tab V.A.I, p. 3; Vietnam Manpower Statistics file, Reference Section, MCHC.

14. Jack Shulimson and Major Charles M Johnson, USMC, U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1965: The Landing and Buildup, (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1978), p. 117, and Jack Shulimson, U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1966: An Expanding War (Washington, D.C.: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1982), fn p. 283.

15. CMC Reference Notebook 1968, Tab I-f, Senate Armed Services Committee insert for the record, MCHC.

16. CMC Reference Notebook 1970, Subj: Enlistment Standards and Periods of Enlistment, 17 November 1970, MCHC.

17. General Officer's Symposium 1969, section E, MajGen Jonas M. Platt, AC/S G-1, p. 19, MCHC.

18. CMC Reference Notebook 1968, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 20 July 1968, MCHC.

19. Calculated from Department of Defense, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Defence (Comptroller), Directorate for Information Operations and Control, Selected Manpower Statistics (Washington, D.C.: June 1976), pp. 20, 60.

20. Kenneth W. Condit, Gerald Diamond, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, HQMC, 1956), unpublished ms, p. 197; CMC Reference Notebook 1966-1967, Subj; Negro Marines, p. 2; CMC Reference Notebook 1968, Subj: Assignment of Negro Marines, Tab D, MCHC

21. Calculations indicate that on 31 December 1968 33 percent of all Marines between the rank of private and corporal, not including those in recruit training, held infantry specialties. 44 percent held ground combat specialties in infantry, armored vehicles, artillery, or combat engineers. Since at this time over 75 percent of all corporals had less than three years of service, the Pvt-Cpl group is roughly equivalent to the body of Marines on their first

enlistment. The Marine Corps documents of the period work on the same assumption. Due to the large number of sources used to derive these figures, they should be considered as estimates, not exact percentages. The Marine involvement in Vietnam peaked in the summer of 1968. In early 1969 the Marine Corps began withdrawing units from Vietnam. Calculated from figures in CMC Reference Notebook 1969, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 1 October 1969; Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy and Marine Corps Military Personnel Statistics, January 1969; Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards Men" (Washington, DC: December 1969); and the MCRD Parris Island and MCRD San Diego Command Chronologies, July-December 1968.

22. Memo for the Deputy Under Secretary [of Defense] for Manpower, Subj: Two Year Term of Enlistment for Mental Group IV personnel, 29 September 1967, s/ MajGen R.G. Davis, AC/S G-1, ByDir, file 1130, HQMC Central Files 1967, MCHC; Colonel James W. Marsh (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 26 February 1992, hereafter Marsh intvw.

23. The figures 31 December 1968 are 72 percent of New Standards Marines in the ground combat arms and 53 percent in the infantry. Calculated from the same sources as note 21, and CMC Reference Notebook 1968, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, p. 2.

24. Project One Hundred Thousand: Final Report, Tables E-2 and E-7.

25. CMC Reference Notebook, 1965-1968.

26. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, Tab B-1, 1 October 1969, MCHC.

27. General Officers Symposium 1969, sect. E, MajGen Jonas M. Platt, AC/S G-1, p. 20.

28. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal,Personnel, 1 October 1969, p. 3, MCHC.

29. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, Subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 10 March 1969, Tab C, MCHC.

30. General Officer's Symposium 1969, sect. E, MajGen Jonas M. Platt, AC/S G-1, p. 17.

31. Ibid., pp. 18-19, 23.

32. Chapman intvw, p. 10; Marsh intvw; LtCol Richard J. Alger (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 16 January 1992.

33. MC Bulletin 5430, Activation of Career Advisory Branch, 8 Apr 68; HQ Bulletin 5400, Activation of Career Advisory Branch, 12 Apr 68; file 5400, HQMC Central Files 1968, MCHC.

34. CMC Reference Notebook 1967, Subj: Qualifications for Reenlistment, 30 December 1966, rev. 8 September 1967, MCHC.

35. MCO P1040.28 ch. 2, p. 4-4, 4-5, 4-6, 12 September 1969, file 1040, HQMC Central Files 1968.

36. Chapman intvw, p. 99.

37. Allan R. Millett, Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps, rev. and exp. (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 600.

38. BGen James D. Hittle (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 3 February 1992.

39. CMC Reference Notebook 1970, Subj: Mental and Educational Level of Recent Accessions, 15 March 1971, MCHC.

40. Project One Hundred Thousand: Final Report, Table A-8.

41. JCSM-469-71, 26 October 1971, Waters collection, HumRRO.

42. CMC Reference Notebook 1972, subj; Quality Level of Recent Enlisted Accessions, 30 December 1971, p. 1, encl (3), MCHC.

Chapter 7

The Combat Performance of New Standards Men

As with all Marines, the most important aspect of the New Standards men's service was their combat performance. As a social program foisted on an unwilling military, Project 100,000 made a convenient scapegoat for the military's failure in Vietnam. General William Westmoreland, former commander of the U.S. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam, implicitly blamed Project 100,000 for the Army's poor performance in Vietnam, stating that "[w]hen those people came to Vietnam...that's when the disciplinary problems began on the battlefield."[1] No Marine leader levelled that damning a charge against the New Standards Men. A number felt that the presence of New Standards Marines placed an added burden on junior officers and NCOs. Many thought that New Standards Marines caused unnecessary casualties. But almost every Marine who commented on the subject felt that in Vietnam Marine Corps units always managed to accomplish their mission.

These opinions do not settle the question, however: did New Standards Marines adversely affect combat operations in Vietnam? Unfortunately, there is little data on the combat performance of low score men in any conflict, let alone Vietnam. The limited material available indicates that most New Standards Marines, did their jobs competently if not exceptionally. A few demonstrated exceptional

leadership, skill, or heroism. In general, however, New Standards Marines, did not perform as well in combat as other Marines.

Frequently their fellow Marines made allowances for men who could not master the basic skills required, finding simpler tasks for them that still contributed to the unit's mission. Some men were so incompetent that they posed a danger to themselves and others, and these men were usually removed from combat positions. The incompetence of some New Standards Marines might have caused a some unnecessary casualties. Their presence, however, never interfered with the ability of Marine units to accomplish their missions.

The Experience of Previous Wars

There was no attempt to examine the combat performance of low score or poorly educated men during the Vietnam War.* Nor have their been any studies of the combat performance of Marines. The only information available directly comparing the combat performance of soldiers with poor educations and low test scores comes from studies conducted at the end of World War II and the Korean War. Neither of these studies focused on the combat performance of low score men. Both examined combat performance in general, with test scores and educational level considered

* This conclusion is based upon the author's inability to find any mention of such a study. If one does exist, the author would very much like to hear about it.

as two of many variables. The findings of these studies, limited as they are, found that, in general, men with low test scores or little education did not perform as well as other soldiers. Still, most men with low scores and poor educations performed adequately, and some excelled.

Despite the tremendous effort expended to give remedial training to men with poor academic skills, there was no systematic effort to determine the relationship between combat performance and mental group or education level during World War II. The U.S. Army official history of the war clearly argued that excessive numbers of low aptitude men in a unit hurt overall unit performance, particularly when a poor mental group spread meant that there were not enough high score men to fill the NCO and technician billets.[2] This conclusion, however, did not necessarily mean that low score men did not perform well as individuals in combat when assigned to appropriate jobs.

Relying on personal experience, many World War II officers agreed with the sentiments of an Army officer serving in Italy during 1943 who commented that "the assignment of Grade V men to infantry is murder."[3] Certainly the objective evidence supported the belief that low score men did not perform as well. Men with grade school educations or less were more likely to become psychiatric casualties and to go AWOL than other soldiers.[4]

In paratrooper training, a specialty which did not require much intellect but which did require an ability to master a physical skill and overcome fear, performance was strongly related to GCT score. All of the soldiers volunteered for this training, and so presumably were reasonably motivated to succeed. Yet only 11 percent of the men in Grade V and 31 percent of the men in Grade IV graduated from jump school without a serious error on a practice jump, compared to 59 percent of the men in Grade I. Only 14 percent of the Grade I men failed to earn their jump wings, but 31 percent of the Grade IV men and 44 percent of the Grade V men did not graduate.[5]

The only formal examination of combat veterans further supported the conclusion that low score men did not make good soldiers. This study, involving infantrymen with around three months in combat, examined the relationship between attitudes and a variety of background factors on combat performance. Years of education and AGCT score were included as two of the many background factors considered. Specially trained interviewers asked the officers and NCOs who worked the most closely with the soldiers to rate their combat performance as "above average," "average," or "below average" when compared to other men in the same unit. Men were only placed in one of these groups if the responses showed substantial agreement.

This study found that men with an 8th grade education or lower and men in Grades IV and V were more likely to be considered "below average" in combat. Men with high school educations or better and men in Groups I and II were more likely to be considered "above average." These relationships were remarkably consistent. As education and AGCT score increased, combat performance improved. Still, this relationship was hardly absolute. The officers and NCOs considered 38 percent of the men in Groups IV and V "below average," while 35 percent of the men in Groups I and II were rated "above average." Conversely, 25 percent of the men in Groups I and II were rated "below average" and to 24 percent of the men in Groups IV and V were considered "above average." A considerable proportion of the men with high AGCT scores did not perform well in combat, while a considerable number of those with low AGCT scores performed better than most soldiers in combat.[6]

Immediately after the Korean War, the Army conducted one of the few scientific studies specifically designed to determine the characteristics of a good combat soldier. This study, dubbed "Fighter," used a similar method to that used in the World War II study, asking infantrymen recently in combat who they would like to fight with. Men were rated as "fighters" or "non-fighters" only after two or more persons provided specific examples of good or bad performance.[7]

This study found that "fighters" tended to have higher GCT scores than "non-fighters." "Fighters" had an average GCT score of 94. Although significantly below the Army average, this doubtless reflected the comparatively low scores generally found in infantry units. The average GCT score for the sample was 86. "Non-fighters" scored an average of 84 on the GCT, putting them at the upper end of Mental Group IV. The report stated that

> [i]t seems clear that a man with the latter score [84] would have a difficult time carrying out the activities of a combat rifleman; he is simply not adept enough to perfect easily the many techniques and skills which are necessary for efficient performance.[8]

The study reached the conclusion that "men who are low in intelligence tend to make poor fighters."[9]

The Marine Corps Experience in Vietnam

The question of the combat effectiveness of low score men held particular import for the Marine Corps during Project 100,000. About three quarters of the New Standards Marines entering before 1969 were assigned to the ground combat arms of infantry, artillery, tracked vehicles, or combat engineers; over half became infantrymen. Among non-New Mental Standards Marines, about half went into the combat arms and a third into the infantry.[10] In contrast, only a third of Army new standards men served in the combat arms, and only a fifth in the infantry.[11] This also contrasts with the Marine Corps experience in World War II.

In July 1945, only 12.8 percent of enlisted Marines were in the infantry, and less than a third were assigned to the ground combat arms.[12] Between 1966 and 1970, almost every combat arms Marine served in Vietnam.

As a result of these assignment patterns, by the end of 1968 about 12 percent of lower ranking infantrymen and over 16 percent of lower ranking combat engineers were New Standards Men.[13] The proportion of mental group IV's in these fields would have been at least double that number. With such a high proportion of "marginal" men, one might expect to find a decline in combat effectiveness, with junior leaders modifying their tactics to compensate for the limitations of their troops.

This expectation must be tempered by the fact that the number of mental group IV's in the Marine Corps (and the Army) during the late 1960's was large only compared to the Marine Corps (and Army) of the early 1960's. Unfortunately, there was no study comparable to "Fighter" for Vietnam. The one piece of data readily available, casualty rates, shows that New Standards men were slightly more likely than others to become casualties in combat. However, this difference resulted from the fact that New Standards men were much more likely to be assigned to the combat arms, particularly the infantry. Among infantrymen, men in Mental Groups I and II suffered casualties at a much higher rate than other men,[14]

probably because these men tended to be assigned or assume duties as small unit leaders.

Although little objective data on the combat performance of New Standards men exists, it is still possible to collect anecdotal evidence. Interviews with men who were company grade officers or senior enlisted men in Vietnam indicate that low score men were not noticeably likely to be ineffective in combat and that their presence did not hinder combat operations. The opinions of these men are particularly germane, as these individuals were close enough to the front line Marine to know them well while at the same time distant enough and sufficiently well trained to give a reliable professional judgement.*

When discussing the combat effectiveness of New Standards Marines, it is important to remember the Marines interviewed had no way of positively identifying Project 100,000 Marines.** Many interviewees maintained that they could tell by looking at the GCT score in each Marine's record book. However, the score came from tests given at boot camp, not the AFQT test given at the examination

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*For a description of the interview process, see Appendix 2, A Note on the Interviews.

** Each Marines' reenlistment contract, included in his record book, contained a letter code which designated him as a New Mental Standards Marine, a non-New Standards Mental Group IV, a Medical Remedial Enlistment Program enlistee, or a regular enlistee. Few Marines, however, seem to have been aware of this code. None of the persons interviewed knew of it.

center. The two often differed markedly. While officers and NCO's could tell who had low GCT scores, most undoubtedly could not tell who was a "New Standards" man and who was a Mental Group IV acceptable under the old standards. For most interviewees the problem was moot, since few had either the opportunity or the inclination to check record books for GCT scores. Interviewees have therefore identified Marines as belonging to Project 100,000 on the basis of their observed performance, or, more accurately, their inability to perform. This is not a reflection of test score but of "horse sense."

For comparison it is useful to consider the Marine Corps of today, in which almost every Marine is a High School Graduate and at least Mental group III. Yet personal experience indicates that almost every junior officer and senior enlisted man would identify at least one Marine in his company as mentally deficient. These men are often unable to perform simple military tasks, although they graduated from high school and scored reasonably well on the AFQT. Even officer trainees, who are almost all college graduates, often make incredibly stupid mistakes or cannot perform simple tasks. Undoubtedly a number of Marines tagged by their superiors as one of "McNamara's Morons" were not in fact New Standards men, although for all practical military purposes they probably were morons.

The Opinions of the Leaders

Of the thirty men with relevant experience who were either interviewed or filled out questionnaires, a number felt that low ability men must have hampered combat operations. However, of the twenty men who served in a combat unit in Vietnam, only seven recalled problems with low ability men in combat. Of these seven, only two felt that the presence of low score men significantly hampered combat operations. Another three felt that mistakes made by low ability Marines cost lives or had an small, indirect negative impact on combat operations. Reflecting a powerful part of the culture of the Marine Corps, most of the Marines who felt that low ability Marines hampered combat operations or cost lives promptly qualified this view by stating that the presence of low aptitude men never prevented a unit from accomplishing its mission.

Four of the seven Marines who recalled problems with low ability men in combat felt that the presence of these men led to higher casualties. Some felt that the mistakes made by low ability men resulted in the deaths of other Marines. All four felt that low ability men were more likely to become casualties themselves. Sergeant Major Francis T. McNeive, who served as a first sergeant in Vietnam between 1966 and 1967 and again between 1969 and 1970, stated that "people who were border line retarded did

not respond fast enough...and that's how people become casualties."[15]

Most of the Marines who recalled problems with low skill men in combat stated that units made allowances for these men. If Marines could not perform the tasks normally expected of a private, they were usually reassigned to less intellectually taxing duties. A common job was "ammo humper," the Marine assigned to carry the extra ammunition for a machine gun or mortar. Major John R. Jack Dewan, who served as a battery commander in Vietnam between 1965 and 1966 and later as an artillery battalion executive officer and commander and regimental logistics officer from 1969 to 1970, stated that many Marines could not perform the basic tasks required of a private, such as calculating aiming data in the Fire Direction Center (FDC) or sighting the gun. These Marines were assigned as loaders and ammo handlers, responsible only for carrying the shell to the gun after the powder bags had already been cut.[16]

Only one Marine, Captain Eugene Breeze, felt that the presence of low aptitude men forced officers to modify their tactics. Captain Breeze, who commanded a weapons platoon in Vietnam as a senior NCO between 1965 and 1966, noticed a dramatic decline in the quality of Marines when he commanded a rifle company in Vietnam as a captain in 1968. Captain Breeze recalled that these Marines could not handle the tactics taught during basic training, so leaders tended to

use simpler frontal assault. The Marines on his first tour were superb," but on his second tour Breeze "was more frightened at times of my own troops than [he] was of the Vietnamese."[17]

A number of Marines who initially stated that low ability men created problems in combat either revised their statements during their interviews or could not recall any specific instances to back up their assertions. Gunnery Sergeant William Taylor, who served with an assault amphibian unit in Vietnam during 1967, did not initially recall any problems with low ability Marines. Reflecting after answering questions, he thought that perhaps low intelligence accounted for the numerous instances of Marines sleeping on post and similar problems.[18]

The rest of the Marines with relevant combat experience did not recall any problems with low ability men in combat. A few simply did not recall any particular problem. This is revealing in itself, since presumably a serious problem, particularly one ascribable to low skill men, would have stuck in the interviewees' minds. Nine of the Marines interviewed specifically argued that low aptitude men did not create any problems in combat. Reflecting another deeply ingrained part of Marine Corps culture, a number of Marines maintained that good leadership could overcome any academic failings in a unit's members. Colonel Howard Lovingood, who served in the infantry as a senior non

commissioned officer in Vietnam between 1965 and 1966, and then as a junior officer between 1969 and 1970, noted a definite drop in the ability of Marines between his tours but ascribed the difference to a lack of training and unit stability. Colonel Lovingood felt that he "looked at it as any other Marine leader would." His solution was to "take the Marines and train them to the best of your ability and get on with the job."[19]

Two of the Marines interviewed distinctly recalled that one of their best Marines could not read and write. Colonel Marshall B. Darling, who served as a rifle company commander in Vietnam between 1965 and 1966 and again in 1970, had a very competent Marine who then-Captain Darling was sure was a New Standards Marine. When his company received a quota for a promotion to corporal, the company's officers and senior NCOs agreed that this Marine was the most deserving member of the company. The Marine heard about the impending promotion, and came to Darling to ask that he not be promoted. The Marine stated that he knew he was not very intelligent, and that he was not very good at map reading and other skills. He told Darling that "if you promote me, pretty soon some one will make me a fire team leader, and I'll get somebody killed." Darling agreed not to promote the Marine, who ably served out the rest of his tour.[20]

Lieutenant Colonel John D. Wintersteen was convinced that the best Marine in the combat engineer company he

commanded in Vietnam as a lieutenant between 1968 and 1969 was a New Standards Marine. This man could not read or write, but he was the best equipment operator in the company and had able to solve practical engineering problems. Colonel Wintersteen did not think anything of the Marine's illiteracy at the time, since it was quite common. Even the company gunnery sergeant could not read or write. Colonel Wintersteen vividly recalled the difficulties he faced getting this Marine a well deserved promotion to corporal. Since he had a low GCT, higher headquarters continually blocked his promotion.[21]

The Complexity of Combat Skills

Although not as common during Vietnam as during World War II and Korea, low aptitude men could be expected to have created more problems if the skills required of a private during the Vietnam war were more intellectually demanding than those of earlier conflicts. This does not appear to have been the case.

From World War II to Vietnam the official requirements for a rifleman were stated in vague terms, making a direct comparison difficult. However, the responsibilities that were stated changed only slightly between 1945 and 1972. In 1945, a rifleman, Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) 745, was expected to be able to use all the individual weapons found in an infantry company. The order also stated that he

may be required to lead other Marines.[22] In 1949 a revised order changed the MOS to infantryman with the designators 0300 for basic infantryman and 0311 for an infantrymen. Basic infantrymen held the rank of privates or PFC and were expected to participate in the "routine functioning and tactical employment of unit to which assigned." The 0311 MOS added a requirement to take appropriate protective action to deal with chemical weapons, but otherwise remained very similar to the old 745 MOS.[23] By 1956 the 0311 MOS was redesignated rifleman, and slight changes were made to the requirements of 1949.[24] The wording of the duties of the 0311 MOS remained exactly the same from 1956 to 1972.[23]

Nor did the weapons, tactics, or techniques used change much between 1945 and 1968. The M-16 rifle used in Vietnam was easier to use and maintain than the M-1 rifle of World War II and Korea.[24] Basic squad and platoon tactics, including patrolling, remained largely unchanged from World war II, as did procedures for adjusting artillery and mortar fire. Helicopters gave the infantrymen much greater mobility, but the rifleman was merely a passenger. The biggest change between Vietnam and earlier wars was the heavy reliance on radios for communication. Since talking into a hand set was much easier than laying telephone wire or using morse code, if anything this simplified the rifleman's duties.

A number of Marines interviewed complained that the infantry was mistakenly viewed as a low skill occupation and therefore ended up as a dumping ground for New Standards Men. Brigadier General William Weise, who commanded an infantry battalion in Vietnam in 1968, noted that an infantryman has

> got to be able to read a map, he's got to be able to read a compass, ...he's got to be able to figure out where he is on a map and call in supporting fires, direct in emergency medevac helicopters...and he's got to be able to think on his feet because all too frequently he's out there by himself, and unit leaders become casualties, and you'll find a private in charge of three or four men...and that's when their training and their innate ability pays off....You've got to have people that are trainable in these jobs.[25]

Others felt that infantrymen did not necessarily require much intellect. Terrell J. Wheeler, Sr., who served as an infantry corporal, said that NCOs needed independence and initiative but that

> it's not an intelligence like book intelligence, it's..."street smarts." The smartest guy in the world couldn't handle Vietnam any better in the trenches than an illiterate person. Being able to stay awake and stay really <u>aware</u> was the most important thing, and I don't think that takes a lot of intelligence.[26]

Some argued that Marines with slower intellects had some advantages as infantryman because they were not as easily distracted or bored by the dull, repetitive, but vital routines of infantry life. Colonel Darling recalled a radio operator who couldn't operate a radio very well, but who wasn't bored by routine tasks such as cleaning weapons. At every halt this Marine cleaned his weapon, and when he

was done he would clean other people's weapons.[27] Corporal Wheeler summed this view up when he noted that "you didn't have to have a big vocabulary to be a Marine Grunt in Vietnam."[28]

Most Marines interviewed or responding to questionnaires felt that the technical skills required of a basic infantryman in 1968 were not any more complex than those required of a basic infantryman in 1945 or 1952. This seemed to partly reflect a belief among the Marines interviewed that a person's ability to cope with the strain of combat counted for more than technical proficiency.

Coping with the Strain of Combat

Many participants and observers have argued that, because of the lack of clear lines and safe rear areas, Vietnam was more mentally taxing than earlier war. The interviewees did not unequivocally support this conclusion. All Marines who commented on this issue remarked that Vietnam was a very different kind of war from Korea. Of the nine Marines interviewed with combat experience in Korea, four felt that combat in Vietnam placed greater demands upon the junior enlisted Marine than Korea had. Three felt the demands of both wars were about the same, and two did not comment on that issue.

The responses did clearly indicate that if even if Vietnam did place a greater mental strain on Marines, low

score men dealt with the extra stress as well as others. Two of the three Marines who felt that Vietnam was no more demanding than Korea also felt that low aptitude men had hampered combat operations in Vietnam. None of the four who felt that Vietnam placed a greater demand on the junior enlisted Marine recalled problems with New Standards Marines. This was somewhat surprising, since if Vietnam was a more demanding war that would provide a ready explanation for comparatively poorer performance of low score men. Presumably men who felt that New Standards Marines performed poorly would have been attracted to this explanation, but such was not the case. Instead, the men who felt that New Standards Marines performed poorly in combat maintained that New Standards Marines were not as capable as the Marines of the Korean era.

Vietnam in Comparison to World War II and Korea

Of the nine Marines with combat experience in both Vietnam and Korea, only two felt that there was no difference between the intellectual abilities of the Marines in both periods. Two made no specific comment on the subject, although their interviews imply that they felt that the Vietnam era Marines were not as capable as those who served in Korea. Five stated that, while they recalled slow learners and illiterates during World War II and Korea, these problems were far more common during Project 100,000.

These responses do not fit the actual record. In World War II, the Marine Corps accepted a far higher proportion of men in Group IV than it did it Vietnam. It also took a large numbers of illiterates and men in Group V. Although segregation concentrated many of these men into a few Black units, there was still a much larger proportion of low score whites in the Marine Corps during this period than during Project 100,000. During the Korean War, after Congress barred Grade V men from service, over 40 percent of Marine recruits scored in Grade IV. Many of these recruits would have been barred under the "New Standards." Even at Project 100,000's peak, the Marine Corps received the best educated, highest scoring recruits it ever had during a major war.

The discrepancy between the record and the responses can be explained in part by the attitudes of the Marines interviewed. Four of the five men who explicitly stated that Vietnam era Marines were not as intellectually capable as those who served in earlier conflicts blamed Project 100,000 for the Marine Corps' problems during the Vietnam era. Thinking that the Marines of the Vietnam era were just as capable as those of earlier conflicts would not be consistent with this belief.

Many argued that the low score man of the Vietnam era was a different kind of Grade IV man, less able to learn than low score men of earlier eras. Chief Warrant Officer Fowler S. "Rocky" Williams, who did not have a strongly

negative view of Project 100,000, did not recall serving with any slow learners during World War II. He did serve with uneducated men, including a number of illiterates, but he remembered that these illiterates were experts at semaphore, with weapons, and other military skills.*[29] Sergeant Major Leland D. Crawford, who served as the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, served as a rifleman and artilleryman in Korea and three tours with infantry units in Vietnam. He remembered a number of illiterates and Grade IV Marines in Korea, but felt that they were "far superior to those of Vietnam." The low score men were the products of a good school system and stable society and had discipline, an attribute that Sergeant Major Crawford felt was lacking in the Grade IV men of the Vietnam era.[30]

Master Gunnery Sergeant Robert Foley offered a different view. Foley served in intelligence and reconnaissance units in Vietnam, and as a rifleman just after the Korean War. Although admittedly working in a field which tended to get better Marines, Foley did not recall any slow learners in Vietnam but remembered that he served with quite a few Marines during the 1950's who were genuinely slow[31].

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* During the interview the author failed to ask CWO-4 Williams how a person could be illiterate and an expert at semaphore, since sending semaphore signals usually involves spelling out words.

Battlefield Incompetence

Men who could not understand simple orders or perform simple tasks clearly posed a danger to themselves and the other members of their unit in combat. For example, while serving as a battalion commander in Vietnam, Brigadier General Weise watched a squad leader give an order for an ambush patrol. The squad leader gave a simple, clear order, but one Marine couldn't remember any of the crucial details, including the password. That night, this Marine left the ambush to relieve himself without telling anyone. When returning he wandered into the kill zone. The squad leader sprang the ambush and his squad killed him.[32]

Still, this incident does not necessarily make the connection between low test scores and combat ineffectiveness. In James Webb's novel Fields of Fire, the unit's worst performer, a Marine whose inaction results in another's death, was a former Harvard student.[33] Foolish behavior was not solely confined to New Standards Marines.

An incident recalled by Sergeant Major Crawford highlights the inherent uncertainty of determining which Marines will prove "combat effective." As a first sergeant in Vietnam, Sergeant Major Crawford had a Marine who was "an accident going some place to happen." This Marine once compromised an ambush when a .45 caliber pistol he had been playing with went off. Eventually this Marine was

transferred to a Combined Action Platoon.* While in this assignment this Marine used a machine gun to repulse a major attack, winning an award for valor. Yet the only instruction he had received on heavy machine guns was that given by his old first sergeant, Sergeant Major Crawford.[34] In one situation this Marine proved a liability, but in another he proved a hero.

Conclusion

Neither the anecdotal evidence nor the casualty rates indicate that New Standards Marines significantly hampered combat operations in Vietnam. A number of Marines recalled instances in which an individual's failure to understand a clear order or properly perform a given task cost lives. However, these things happen in all wars; nor are these mistakes made solely by men who score poorly on the AFQT. A few Marines argued that the presence of New Standards Marines caused unnecessary casualties. More felt that with good leadership any problems presented by poorly educated Marines or slow learners could be dealt with, if necessary by putting those Marines in low skill jobs such as ammunition carrier. Almost without exception the Marines

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* Combined Action Platoons consisted of a squad of Marines integrated with 25-30 South Vietnamese Popular Forces soldiers. The Marines lived in the village with the Vietnamese troops.

interviewed agreed that the presence of New Standards Marines did not prevent the accomplishment of the mission.

The Marine Corps which fought the Vietnam War was the best educated force with the highest test scores to ever fight a major war. Marines who participated in earlier wars thought that Vietnam did not place more demands on the intellectual abilities of the typical rifleman. Nor does the job of the average infantryman seem to have been inherently more complex.

Given this evidence, it is likely that during Vietnam low score men posed less of a problem than they did during World War II. Any failure on the battlefield cannot be ascribed to the presence of New Standards men. Any blame to be placed must be placed elsewhere.

Notes

1. Laura Palmer, "The General, At Ease: An Interview with Westmoreland," MHQ, The Quarterly Journal of Military History, no. 1, vol 1, (Autumn 1988), p. 34.

2. Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), pp. 3-4, 19-20; Ulysses Lee, The Employment of Negro Troops (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1966), pp. 243-248.

3. Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops (Washington, D.C.: Historical Division, Department of the Army, 1948), p. 50.

4. Samuel A. Stouffer et al, The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life, vol. 1 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 114.

5. Samuel A. Stouffer et al, The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 218.

6. See Samuel A. Stouffer et al, The American Soldier: Combat and its Aftermath, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949), pp. 31-32, 36. Percentages of men within each grade rated "above average" or "below average" have been calculated from the information given in the table on page 36 and may be off by one or two percent.

7. Robert L. Egbert et al, Fighter 1: An Analysis of Combat Fighters and Non-Fighters Technical Report 44, (Presidio, California: U.S. Army Leadership Research Unit, 1957), pp. 9-12.

8. Ibid., p. 26

9. Ibid., p. 5.

10. Based on CMC Reference Notebook 1969, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, tab C-2, 1 October 1969, MCHC.

11. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report, June 1971, (unpublished), HumRRO collection, tables E-2 and E-7.

12. Kenneth W. Condit, Gerald Diamond, and Edwin T. Turnbladh, Marine Corps Ground Training in World War II (Washington, DC: Historical Branch, G-3, HQMC, 1956) (unpublished ms, MCHC), p. 197.

13. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, Personnel, tab II-c-1-h, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 1 October 1969, tab C-2. MCHC.

14. Analysis of Marine Corps Separation files held by the Center for Naval Analysis, Alexandria, Virginia.

15. SgtMaj Francis T. McNeive (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 15 May 1991.

16. Maj John R. Dewan (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 1 June 1991.

17. Capt Gene Breeze (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 15 May 1991.

18. GySgt William Taylor (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 1 June 1991.

19. LtCol Howard Lovingood interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 17 May 1991.

20. Author's conversation with Col Marshall B. Darling, 16 July 1992, hereafter Darling intvw.

21. LtCol John D. Wintersteen interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 10 March 1992.

22. U.S. Marine Corps, Manual of Military Occupational Specialties (NAVMC 1008-PD [Revised]), (Washington, DC: Classification Division, Detail Branch Personnel Department, Headquarters Marine Corps, June 1945), p. 174.

23. U.S. Marine Corps, MOS Manual (NAVMC P-1008-PD [Revised 1949]), (Washington DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1949), p. 56.

24. U.S. Marine Corps, MOS Manual (NAVMC-P-1008-PD [Revised 1954]), change 2, (Washington DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1956), p. 03-3.

23. U.S. Marine Corps, Military Occupational Specialties Manual (MCO P1200.7B), (Washington DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 19 October 1972), p. III-28.

24. Based on the author's personal experience with weapons. Complaints about the M-16 focused on its need to be cleaned often and its inaccuracy. However, the weapon is much simpler to disassemble and clean than an M-1 or M-14 rifle. The M-16's capability for full automatic fire to some extent compensated for its inaccuracy, particularly since marksmanship training was sadly neglected during the Vietnam era.

25. BGen William Weise (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 10 June 1991, hereafter Weise intvw.

26. Terrell J. Wheeler, Sr., interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 1 June 1991, hereafter Wheeler intvw.

27. Darling intvw.

28. Wheeler intvw.

29. Chief Warrant Officer Fowler S. Williams (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 17 May 1991.

30. Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Leland D. Crawford (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 18 November 1991, hereafter Crawford intvw.

31. Master Gunnery Sergeant Robert Foley interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 1 June 1991.

32. Weise intvw.

33. James Webb, Fields of Fire (Eaglewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1978), passim.

34. Crawford intvw.

Chapter 8

The Effect of New Standards Men on Discipline

At the end of the Vietnam era, the armed forces in general and the Marine Corps in particular suffered from an unprecedented number of disciplinary problems. Many military men of all services and ranks have blamed the rampant disciplinary problems of the late Vietnam era on "McNamara's Morons." Military men also tended to equate New Standards men with Blacks, drug users, and men with civilian criminal records.

A number of civilian authors have implicitly accepted this argument adding an anti-military twist. These authors have argued that Project 100,000 unjustly forced into service men incapable of adapting to an authoritarian and arbitrary military. The military then punished these men, kicking them out with less than honorable discharges and ruining their lives.[1]

This perception is inaccurate. Project 100,000 did not cause the disciplinary problems of the Vietnam era. New Standards Marines were more likely to be formally punished for disciplinary infractions than other Marines, but only to a slight degree. Even if most New Standards Marines had run afoul of the military justice system, there were not enough of them to account for more than a tiny fraction of the overall discipline problem. In fact, the vast majority of New Standards did not experience any legal difficulties.

Finally, most observers blaming Project 100,000 for the disciplinary crisis of the late Vietnam era place this crisis in the early seventies, after Project 100,000 ended.

Marine Corps Critics of Project 100,000

The belief that Project 100,000 created or greatly exacerbated the Marine Corps' disciplinary crisis was and remains widespread among Marines of all ranks. Of the 29 Marines with relevant experience interviewed, 14, or nearly half, recalled disciplinary problems with low score men. Many of these men vehemently denounced Project 100,000. For example, Gary D. Solis left Vietnam after his second tour as an amphibian tractor officer to attend law school. Returning to active duty as a judge advocate in late 1971, he

> couldn't believe the criminality that was overwhelming the Corps....we [the lawyers] came to realize that, although there were no tell-tale notations in [the service records], we were dealing with "Cat Fours"...the Project 100,000 enlistees. They were a crime wave in themselves.[2]

Other Marines, while still criticizing Project 100,000, offered somewhat more charitable assessments of the New Standards Marines. Many agreed with Sergeant Major Robert C. Brinkman, who thought that "[New Standards men] were unable to accept or understand discipline."[3] A few argued that New Standards men were easily led and therefore prone

to exploitation by ringleaders.* A number linked New Standards men to the most serious disciplinary problems faced by the Marine Corps: drug use and racial conflict.

Drugs and Race

A number of the Marines interviewed thought that New Standards Marines were more prone to use drugs than other Marines. A few specifically stated that the less intelligent Marines were more susceptible to the attentions of drug dealers or ringleaders within their units.

While the statistics on drug convictions are not available, some observations can be made. As some of the persons interviewed noted, drug use at the end of the Vietnam era was hardly confined to a few trouble makers. Sergeant Major Crawford noted that it "wasn't just the Project 100,000 boys" using drugs. Some of the smartest Marines, including senior NCOs and officers, were also drug users. New Standards men might have simply been less adept at concealing their drug use. It is possible that unintelligent men were more likely to use drugs at inappropriate times, thus endangering themselves and others, although this was more an indication of common sense than intelligence.

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* This argument, of course, immediately raises a rhetorical question. If New Standards men were easily led, why did their officers and NCOs have so much difficulty with them?

Half of the Marines who recalled disciplinary problems with low score men specifically linked New standards men to racial problems. A number stated or implied that most New Standards Marines were Black.

This was not the case. While Blacks made up a much larger proportion of the New Standards Marines than Marines as a whole, 40 percent compared to 11 percent, 58 percent of the New Standards Marines were white.*[4] The Marines making the racial link argued that young Blacks had been socialized to see everything in racially antagonistic terms. The Marines interviewed claimed that this made uneducated or unintelligent Blacks susceptible to the arguments of malcontents who argued that the Marine Corps was a racist organization, and that Black career NCOs were "Uncle Toms" and thus as much the enemy as whites. A few of the Marines interviewed blamed the bulk of the racial problems experienced by the Marine Corps on Project 100,000.

These views were not confined to a few Southern NCOs or bigoted officers. After the war General Leonard F. Chapman, Commandant of the Marine Corps from July 1968 to 31 December 1971, agreed that his Commandancy saw "some of the worst racial problems that the Corps ever experienced," and he

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* Another 2 percent of New Standards Marines were listed as "Other." Most of these men were hispanic.

replied that a large part of this problem "was due to Project 100,000 and drafting."*[5]

The only study distinguishing performance by race not only failed to support these opinions, it showed that Black New Standards Marines had significantly fewer disciplinary problems than their white peers. This study, dated June 1968, compared Marines of all mental groups enlisted in 1967. The study's authors found that white New Standards Marines were more than twice as likely to be discharged for unsatisfactory behavior as Black New Standards Marines. In fact, Black New Standards men with no high school diploma had a better record than both white New Standards men who had graduated from high school and white Mental Group IIIs who had not.[6] A later study indirectly confirmed these conclusions, finding no significant relationship between race and disciplinary problems.[7]

Misconceptions About the New Standards Men

None of the Marines who recalled problems with Project 100,000 had an accurate method for identifying New Standards men. There was a code on the enlistment contract

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* Although beyond the scope of this paper, the large number of Marines who linked Project 100,000 to the Marine Corps' racial problems raises troubling questions. Racial gangs committed serious crimes, including murder. Many of these gangs may have consisted of a few ringleaders and a larger group of easily swayed young men. However, the fact that a number of Marines effectively equated blacks with low score men has disturbing implications.

identifying men as upper group Mental group IV, New Mental standards, Remedial Medical Enlistment Program, or normal enlistment, but few Marines were aware of this code. None of the Marines interviewed knew of it.

Many Marines, including Lieutenant Colonel Solis, identified New Standards Marines by the GCT scores in their record book. This could accurately identify a man in Mental Group IV, but only a person intimately familiar with the mental classification could distinguish a New Standards man from a "regular" Mental Group IV man solely by their GCT score. Also, the GCT score in the record book was derived from tests given at boot camp. There was no record of a man's score from his enlistment or induction tests, which determined if he was a New Standards man. Generally boot camp scores were lower than enlistment scores, making some "regular" Marines look like New Standards men.

A number of men, including General Westmoreland and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Sommers, stated that Project 100,000 forced the military to accept men with criminal records or who had been given the choice of enlistment or jail by a judge.*[8] This was not a part of

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* The idea that many men joined the military as a result of a judge's "enlist or jail" offer is widely accepted in the military and in American society in general. However, no judge could force the military to take a person. A judge could merely offer to dismiss charges if a recruiter agreed to accept a person. Such deals undoubtedly occurred frequently, but these deals represented a conscious choice on the part of the recruiter.

the program. It is possible that during the Vietnam War the number of recruits who had run afoul of the law increased. If so, this represented the cumulative effect of decisions made individual recruiters trying to meet their quota, not judges or Secretary McNamara. Despite the perceptions of many Marines, just under a tenth of all New Standards men had civilian convictions.[9]

Most of the men who blamed New Standards men for disciplinary problems simply accepted poor performance as prima facie evidence that a Marine had been enlisted under Project 100,000. Lieutenant Colonel Luther Lawson, who served as company grade officer in this period, recalled that in late 1968 and early 1969 "Cat IV became a very popular term." He remembered that troublemakers were always referred to as "Cat IVs," but no one bothered to actually check whether a Marine was really in Mental Group IV or not.[10]

A Different View of New Standards Men

The perception that New Standards men created disciplinary problems, while widespread, was hardly universal. Almost half of the Marines interviewed recalled problems with New Standards men and a slightly over a quarter vehemently denounced the New Standards Marines, but a slight majority did not recall any disciplinary problems with low score men. Some stated that men who were not

particularly bright often unintentionally committed offenses that demanded formal punishment but did not constitute real challenges to authority. Even Captain Eugene Breeze, who strongly condemned Project 100,000 and thought that New Standards Marines created most of the disciplinary problems, allowed that "most of these kids didn't realize that they were doing anything wrong."[11]

Some Marines thought that worst troublemakers were very bright men, who were often also smart enough to avoid formal punishment. Often the best educated men held their NCOs in contempt. Major General Rathvon McV. Tompkins recalled a study he commissioned which found that Mental Group IV Marines had fewer disciplinary problems than some of the higher groups. What disgusted him, however, were

> the Group Is. You get some smart fellow and he tells a DI* to his face, "you're just about as stupid as they come. Anybody who'd say just what you did, hasn't go[t] the intellect to come in out of the rain."[12]

A few of the Marines interviewed fondly remembered particular individuals who had difficulty reading and writing but were enthusiastic and hard workers. Gunnery Sergeant James H. Coughlin, for example had a young clerk who identified himself as a Project 100,000 man. Although this Marine had limited skills, learned slowly, had a short attention span and required considerable supervision, he "was extremely accommodating right from the start and wanted

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* Drill Instructor.

very badly to succeed."[13] Most Marines simply did not recall being able to single out New Standards Marines at all, and many had no recollection of Project 100,000.

The Statistical Record

While some Marines had no trouble with New Standards men and others blamed them for all the Corps' troubles, the truth fell somewhere in between. New Standards men were more likely to be formally punished through the military justice system, but only slightly so. While 23.8 per cent of New Standards Marines were punished for minor offenses under Article 15, referred to as NJP (for non-judicial punishment) in the Marine Corps, 18.2 per cent of the control group also received NJP.[14]

The assertion of authors such as Myra MacPherson that large numbers of New Standards men received less than honorable discharges, forming a "bad-paper brigade," is also misleading.[15] A large proportion did receive less than honorable discharges, but so did a large proportion of all Marines.

Only 5.3 percent of the New Standards Marines were convicted by courts martial, compared to 4.7 percent of all Marines.[16] Only a court martial could award a bad conduct or dishonorable discharge, although not all courts martial awarded a discharge. Marines could be administratively discharged "under other than honorable conditions," creating

another category of less than honorable discharge. Including this category, New Standards still did not receive a disproportionately large number of unfavorable discharges.

Marine Corps figures from October 1969 show that only 9.2 percent of New Standards Marines received less than honorable discharges after joining their units, fewer than other Marines, of whom 10.6 percent received similar discharges.* Another 6.3 percent of New Standards men were declared deserters, compared to 2.1 percent of other Marines.[17] Thus 15.5 percent of the New Standards Marines received less than honorable discharges, compared to 12.7 percent of the control group.

A study examining New Standards Marines enlisted between October 1967 and March 1968 found that 21 percent received less than honorable or unsuitability discharges. Only 13 percent of the members of a control group selected to mirror the mental group spread of all Marine recruits received similar discharges, but 15 percent of the larger control group consisting of Marines on two year enlistments received less than honorable or unsuitability discharges.[18]

A high proportion, roughly a fifth, of New Standards Marines received unfavorable discharges. This did not

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* These figure refer to discharges after entry level training. Far more New Standards Marines were discharged in entry level training (8.1 percent vs 4.1 percent for other Marines) but these were almost all routine administrative discharges which would not have been considered "other than honorable."

reflect either an inherent unsuitability on their part or an unfair military justice system, but the large number of less than honorable discharges awarded to all Marines.

A Tiny Part of a Huge Problem

The preceding discussion of disciplinary and discharge rates compares New Standards Marines against all other Marine recruits. This disguises the fact that the disciplinary record of New Standards Marines was only slightly worse than that of non-New Standards Mental Groups IVs, which was in turn slightly worse than the record of Marines in Mental Group IIIB, and so on. In fact, New Standards High School graduates had a better disciplinary record than non-New Standards non-High School Graduate Mental Group IVs or IIIs.[19] These findings also refute the belief in an "absolute" standard for service. As standards fell the proportion of ineffective Marines increased, but very gradually.

Even if these factors were not at work, since New Standards Marines never accounted for more than 14 per cent of all recruits, their presence would have raised the overall rate of NJP by about 2 per cent, nowhere near enough to account for the huge increase experienced between 1967 and 1975 (see table 8-1).

Table 8-1

Marine Corps Annual Rate of Selected Disciplinary Indicators Per 1,000 Enlisted Strength, 1965-1977				
Fiscal Year	Unauthorized Absence	Desertion	Courts Martial	Non-Judicial Punishment
1965	NA	18.8	45.3	157.0
1966	NA	16.1	39.0	142.8
1967	77.8	26.8	43.5	142.7
1968	87.6	30.7	44.0	186.2
1969	120.3	40.4	55.0	181.0
1970	174.3	59.6	57.5	228.6
1971	166.6	55.8	64.7	239.9
1972	170.0	46.4	64.9	251.6
1973	241.0	64.8	68.4	304.0
1974	291.4	88.3	68.0	370.6
1975	298.3	99.8	67.8	335.2
1976	213.9	69.1	52.5	309.0
1977	103.8	47.1	NA	NA

Source: Manpower Dept, HQMC (in Deserters, Vietnam Manpower Statistics Files, Reference Section, MCHC).

Discipline in the Marine Corps began slipping in 1967, around the same time that Project 100,000 began. But the Marine Corps' disciplinary problem did not reach its worst until sometime 1974 and 1975. Many of the Marines interviewed indirectly confirmed that this period saw the worst disciplinary problems, asserting that Project 100,000 caused the disciplinary problems "of the early seventies."

Congress, however, ended mental group quotas on 18 December 1971.[20] Since, starting October 1967, the Marine Corps limited all men scoring in Mental Group IV to two year

enlistments, in 1973 there must have been only a few New Standards Marines left.[21] By January 1974 the last Marine enlisted under Project 100,000 had been either discharged or reenlisted. The discipline problems of 1975 and 1976 could not have been caused by the New Standards Marines.

Still, many of the Marines interviewed attributed these later problems to Project 100,000. They argued that Project saddled the Marine Corps with poor performers for years to come.[22] But there was nothing in Project 100,000 which required the services to reenlist New Standards men. Throughout the program, the Defense Department allowed each service to set its own reenlistment standards. In the Marine Corps, only men deemed capable of assuming leadership positions were supposed to be allowed to reenlist. A requirement for a reenlisting Marines to score at least 90 on three aptitude areas was not added until 12 December 1970.[23]

Of those eligible, low score men were more likely to reenlist than others, but most were not eligible and few New Standards men remained on active duty. In the case of the New Standards men who did reenlist, presumably the Marine Corps had no better takers, and that it had to either reenlist those men or do without. A quick glance at Marine Corps reenlistment rates shows the extent of the Marine Corps retention problem (see table 6-4).

The low reenlistment rates translated into not only a relative, but also an absolute, decline in reenlistments. In fiscal year 1964, almost 12,000 Marines shipped over for another tour. In fiscal year 1966, just under 10,800 opted to stay in the Corps. In fiscal year 1969, when there were one hundred thousand more Marines on active duty than 1965, just over 9,100 Marines reenlisted. The Marine Corps was not "saddled" with low score men. It had to take what it could get.

Eventually, the Commandant of the Marine Corps announced that enlistment and reenlistment standards would be tightened, even if this meant that the Marine Corps would fall below its authorized strength. This announcement, however, did not come until July 1975 when General Louis H. Wilson assumed the Commandancy, two and a half years after Project 100,000 ended.[24]

What Caused the Discipline Problem?

The Marine Corps did suffer a discipline crisis that began in the late Sixties and peaked in the early Seventies. Project 100,000 played a very small part in this crisis, which only begs the question: what did cause the crisis? Obviously many factors played a part, not the least of which was the Vietnam War itself. However, after the Marine Corps pulled out of Southeast Asia, policy decisions made by Headquarters Marine Corps aggravated these problems.

In Vietnam the Marine Corps suffered a leadership crisis. The reenlistment rate for career combat arms Marines fell from over 90% in Fiscal Year 1966 to less than 60% in Fiscal Year 1969 (see table 6-4). The proportion of reserve officers applying to stay in the Marine Corps fell from one in five to one in fifteen, too few to fill even half the available positions.[25] The proportion of new recruits in Mental Groups I and II, and the proportion of enlisted men with college educations, fell far below that of World War II or Korea. The Marine Corps could not convince bright young men to join, and could not persuade its junior leaders to stay.

After the Marine Corps withdrew from Vietnam, the quality of new recruits remained low as a result of Marine Corps policies implemented during the transition to the All-Volunteer Force. Before 1973, the Marine Corps seriously underestimated the proportion of draft motivated volunteers entering its ranks.[26] According to Lieutenant General Samuel Jaskilka, Deputy Chief of Staff, Manpower, the Marine Corps "desired both trainability and 'stick-to-itiveness', but the recruiting market forced us to select one." The Marine Corps chose trainability, measured by AFQT scores, over "stick-to-itiveness," indicated by high school graduation.[27] This decision foundered on two rocks; the AFQT test in use during the early 70's was probably badly flawed and was certainly badly compromised,[28] and high

school graduation had been shown to be a much better predictor of successful performance than AFQT score.[29]

Table 8-2

Percent of Enlisted Marines with High School Educations, 1950-1978						
Year	USMC Recruits % HSG (FY)	Male Civ. 18-19 % HSG (March)	USMC total Enlistd % HSG (CY)	Army total Enlistd % HSG (CY)	DoD total Enlistd % HSG (CY)	Male Civ. 20-24 % HSG (March)
1950		40.3				48.7
1952		46.8				52.2
1957		46.5				61.4
1959		46.9				63.2
1960*	57		62.8	63.5	66.1*	
1962		56.5				68.3
1964		52.0				72.3
1965		53.2	70.5	77.1	81.6	72.7
1966	66.4	56.1				75.0
1967	65.3	63.3	71.7	79.1	82.7	76.4
1968	57.4	54.1				77.2
1969	56.2	54.6	65.9	79.8	82.0	77.6
1970	55.1	57.0	67.0	83.5	85.2	80.1
1971	49.9	56.7	67.4	85.0	85.6	81.3
1972	50.8	58.9	64.2	76.3	81.3	83.4
1973	49.6	59.8	65.1	83.4	86.2	83.8
1974	54.2	60.1	66.4	84.7	86.7	83.8
1975	59.1	58.7	71.5	85.3	87.4	84.8
1976#	69.3	63.7	73.6	85.6	87.8	84.1
1977#	75.5	62.1	78.9	87.8	86.2	83.8
1978#	76.8	56.3	82.2	87.9	89.4	83.5

*This is the only year for which the Marine Corps did not have the lowest percentage of High School Graduates. The service with the lowest percentage of High School Graduates was the Navy, with 51.4 percent

#Part of the increase in these years reflect an increase in the percentage of female recruits, all of whom were required to have a high school diploma. However, since the percentage of females in the Marine Corps as a whole increased from slightly less than one percent to just over three percent, their impact on the overall rate is negligible.

Note: Marine Recruit HSG includes GED holders

Source: Vietnam Manpower Statistics file, Reference Section, MCHC; Census Bureau, Current Population Reports: Educational Attainment; DoD, Selected Manpower Statistics.

As table 8-2 shows, the proportion of Marine recruits with high school diplomas did not bottom out until 1973, more than a year after Project 100,000 ended. Particularly interesting is the fact that the education level of Marines fell dramatically in this period when compared to the civilian male population and to the other services, including the Army. In December 1975, the Haynes Board, a group of Marine officers investigating disciplinary problems, concluded that the overall quality of Marine recruits probably reached its lowest level "during the period from FY [fiscal year] 1972 through the third quarter of FY 75."[30]

Of course, the changing nature of American society also contributed to disciplinary problems. According to the Brigadier General Charles C. Krulak, who served as a company grade officer in this period, "[o]ur society was in real trouble, and the Marine Corps was a microcosm of that

society. We couldn't help but reflect and suffer from those same troubles."[31] The Haynes Board also pointed to the growing problems with crime, particularly among young males, in American society.[32] The Marine Corps' high rates of desertion, courts-martial, and NJP as compared to other services probably resulted more from the insistence of junior officers and non-commissioned officers on maintaining traditional standards than from any inherent difference between the quality of new Marines and other servicemen.

Conclusion

The Marine Corps did suffer a discipline crisis at the end of the Vietnam era. While much of this crisis sprang from a general lack of respect for formal authority in American society, it was also associated with a decline in recruit quality. The crucial measurement of recruit quality, however, was not mental group but educational level. Recruit quality hit its low point in the early Seventies, during the first years of the All-Volunteer Force and well after Project 100,000 ended.

The discipline crisis has been unfairly blamed on the New Standards Marines. New Standards Marines were more likely to be disciplinary problems, but only to a slight degree. Project 100,000 can only account for a tiny fraction of a huge problem. A large portion of the New Standards Marines joined the "bad-paper brigade," but so did

nearly as many of the other Marines. The high rate of unfavorable discharges resulted from the disciplinary crisis, not the inherent failings of the New Standards Marines or the Marine Corps itself. It might be more accurate to say that New Standards Marines did not contribute to the disciplinary crisis, but rather were swept up by it.

Notes

1. Lisa Hsiao, "Project 100,000: The Great Society's Answer to Military Manpower Needs in Vietnam," Vietnam Generation vol. 1, no. 2 (Spring 1989), p. 21; Myra MacPherson, Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984), hereafter MacPherson, Long Time Passing, pp. 642-643, 663; Robert Sherrill, Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), pp. 219-220.

2. Ltr, LtCol Gary D. Solis USMC (Ret.) to Capt David A. Dawson, 10 Jan 92, p. 2. LtCol Solis blamed Project 100,000 for the Marine corps Disciplinary Problems in his book Trial by Fire: Marines and Military Law in Vietnam (Washington DC: History and Museums Division, HQMC, 1989), part of the Marine Corps' official history of the Vietnam War. However, since corresponding and meeting with the author, LtCol Solis had modified his views and agrees with the author's conclusions.

3. SgtMaj Robert C. Brinkman (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 1 June 1991.

4. Manpower Performance Evaluation Study, G-1 HQMC, June 1968, conducted by Decision Systems Associates, Inc, Rockville MD, hereafter G-1 Manpower Performance Study, p. 14; Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report, (Washington, DC: December 1969), p. 14; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report June 1971, (unpublished), table B-2, HumRRO collection.

5. General Leonard F. Chapman interview with Mr. Benis Frank, 28 March 1979, p. 23.

6. G-1 Manpower Performance Study, table 18 & 19, p. 23

7. John A. Plag, Jerry M. Goffman, and James D. Phelan, Predicting the Effectiveness of New Mental Standards Enlistees in the U.S. Marine Corps Report 71-42 (San Diego, CA: Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit, December 1970), hereafter Plag et al., Predicting Effectiveness, p. 50. The authors of this study found a slightly significant relationship between race and overall performance, with whites performing slightly better (p. 47) This finding did not control for other factors such as education and family background, both of which had a much stronger relationship with performance. The chart on page 50 shows a very weak relationship between race (-007) and NJP convictions. This table also shows strong relationships between race and test scores (104),

age (-142), and education level (-271), all of which show stronger relationships with both disciplinary record and overall performance. Given the fact that disproportionate number of the blacks in the study group were New Standards men and therefore had low test scores, less education, and were probably younger and more likely to come from broken homes, if anything Plag's findings suggest that Blacks had fewer disciplinary problems than whites from similar backgrounds.

8. Laura Palmer, "The General, At Ease: An Interview with Westmoreland," MHQ, The Quarterly Journal of Military History, no. 1, vol 1, (Autumn 1988), p. 34; John C. Chapin, Uncommon Men: The Sergeants Major of the Marine Corps (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1993), p. 314.

9. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report, (Washington, DC: December 1969), p. 17; Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report June 1971, (unpublished), table B-11, HumRRO collection.

10. LtCol Luther L. Lawson III (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 14 June 1991.

11. Capt Gene Breeze (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 15 May 1991.

12. MajGen Rathvon McV. Tompkins interview with Benis M. Frank, 13 April 1973, p. 94.

13. GySgt James H. Coughlin ltr to Capt David A. Dawson, 9 January 1991, p. 1.

14. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report, June 1971, (unpublished), table H-1, HumRRO collection.

15. MacPherson, Long Time Passing, p. 663.

16. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of New Standards Men: Final Report, June 1971, (unpublished), table H-1, HumRRO collection.

17. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel - Project 100,000, 1 October 1969, Tab B-1.

18. Plag et al., Predicting Effectiveness, p. 26.

19. G-1 Manpower Performance Study, p. 23. Caucasian New Standards High School Graduates (HSG) had a somewhat higher rate of separation for unsatisfactory behavior than caucasian non-HSG Mental Group IIIs, although slightly lower than that of non-New Standards non-HSG Mental Group IVs. In all other cases HSG Mental Group IVs had lower rates than non-HSG men in all Mental Groups. Catherine M Hiatt and William B. Sims, Memo on Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and Job Performance, Marine Corps Operations Analysis Group, Center for Naval Analyses, Alexandria, Virginia, December 1981, shows a clear linear relationship between AFQT category and successful completion of first enlistment for Marine recruits joining in 1976 (p. 7). This reports also shows men in Mental Groups IVB and IVC performing better than men with no diplomas scoring in Mental Group I.

20. CMC Reference Notebook 1972, subj: Quality Level of Recent Enlisted Accessions, 30 December 1971.

21. Memo fm MajGen R. G. Davis, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, for Deputy Under Secretary for Manpower, subj: Two Year Term of Enlistment for Mental Group IV Personnel, 29 September 1967, file 1100, HQMC Central Files 1967.

22. Capt Breeze, LtCol Solis, and other many other Marine officers have made this point to the author.

23. The requirement for 3 Aptitude Area score over 90 was added 12 December 1970. Marine Corps Order P1040.28 through change 5 (23 October 1968-12 December 1970), file 1040, HQMC Central Files 1968.

24. General Louis H. Wilson, "A Message From the Commandant," Leatherneck, July 1975, p. 16; Allan R. Millet, Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps, rev. and exp., (New York: The Free Press, 1991), p. 614.

25. General Officer's Symposium 1969, sect. E, MajGen Jonas M. Platt, AC/S G-1, p. 15.

26. U.S. Marine Corps, Report on Marine Corps Manpower Quality and Force Structure, Report to the Senate Armed Services Committee, 31 December 1975, hereafter Haynes Board, p. 6.

27. Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here? (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976), p. 60.

28. Author's conversation with Janice H. Laurence; Memo fm Gus C. Lee to A. J. Martin, subj: Post Enlistment Verification of Entry Mental Test Results, 17 May 1977, Waters Papers, HumRRO collection; Defense Manpower Commission, Defense Manpower: The Keystone of National Security: Report to the President and the Congress (Washington, D.C.: April 1976), p. 158.

29. There were numerous studies before 1972 which reached the conclusion that years of education was the most accurate predictor of satisfactory performance, including Cdr Newell H. Berry, MSC, USN, and LCdr Paul D. Nelson, MSC, USN, "Many Are Called," Marine Corps Gazette August 1966, pp. 52-56; and John A. Plag, Walter L. Wilkins, and James D. Phelan, Strategies for Predicting Adjustment of AFQT Category IV Navy and Marine Corps Personnel (San Diego, California: Navy Neuropsychiatric Research Unit, October 1968), report No. 68-28. Although not specifically stated in the report, Plag et al., Predicting Effectiveness, clearly showed that when race, age, and parent's marital status were held constant, high school graduates with the lowest test scores performed better than all but the highest scoring non-high school graduates (pp. 72-73, 78-79).

30. Haynes Board, p. 21

31. BGen Charles C. Krulak interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 17 January 1992.

32. Haynes Board, pp. 13-14.

Chapter 9

The Added Cost of New Standards Marines

The demands of the Vietnam War forced the Marine Corps to stretch its training establishment to the limit. To support the Marine forces in Southeast Asia, in September 1965 the Marine Corps drastically reduced the length of its basic training programs. As the war continued, the Marine Corps made more reductions, shortening basic training to "the minimum time possible in an emergency situation."[1] The Defense Department turned down repeated requests for additional funds and personnel to support training. To this system, stretched to the breaking point, McNamara added the strain of Project 100,000.

McNamara maintained that the armed forces could provide remedial training to the New Standards men at no additional cost in money or resources. This was, of course, not the case. Men with low scores could not be trained as easily. They required more remedial instruction, needed more time to master the necessary skills, and were more likely to fail the training courses. But the foundation of Project 100,000 was the fact that it did not require any special appropriations from Congress. There were no additional funds to cover the cost of training the New Standards men.

Still, in the long run Project 100,000 did not prove to be a great burden for the Marine Corps. In the first months of the program, the Marine Corps turned away higher scoring

men to meet its Mental Group quotas. The "excess" Mental Group IVs placed a strain on the training system that would not otherwise have existed.

By the middle of 1967, however, the poor recruiting climate made it difficult for the Marine Corps to find enough high score volunteers, forcing recruiters to exceed their Project 100,000 quotas. By the end of 1968 the lack of volunteers forced the Marine Corps to start taking draftees. The Mental Group IV and New Standards men taken after the middle of 1967 did not do as well in training as men with higher scores. They cannot be counted as an additional strain, however, because the Marine Corps would probably have taken these men even if there had been no Project 100,000 quotas.

The Decline in Recruit Quality

When he announced Project 100,000, Secretary McNamara assured his audience that the lowering of the minimum scores on entry tests did not mean that standards would decline. Men did not fail the entry test or initial training because they were truly "low-aptitude," he explained, but because the tests and training methods used were outmoded and inadequate. Modern training methods would allow men previously labeled as "low-aptitude" to realize their full potential and perform as well or better as higher scoring men.[2]

Despite McNamara's assertion, large numbers of men with low test scores created real problems for the Marine Corps' training establishment. Under Project 100,000, the proportion of recruits in Mental Group IV more than quadrupled compared to the period from 1961-1964. The poor recruiting climate created by the Vietnam War also meant that the Marine Corps could not recruit as many men with high test scores as it had in previous years. Between 1963 and 1966, nearly 40 percent of Marine recruits scored in Mental Group I or II. By 1968, the percentage of recruits scoring in these groups fell to just over 30 percent, and by 1972 it dropped to less than 25 percent.

In 1962 Marine enlistees (as opposed to draftees) had the highest average AFQT score of any service. As a result of these trends, by 1968 they had the lowest average, having dropped 10 points. By 1969 the average test score for Marine volunteers fell below the nominal average score of 50 on the AFQT, despite the fact that men with scores below ten were still barred from service. (see table 9-1).

Table 9-1

Quality of Marine Corps Enlistees, FY 60-FY 75.		
	Mean AFQT/ASVAB for enlistees (CY)	% High School Grads (FY)
1960	52.0	54.3
1961	57.2	50.9
1962	61.1	55.0
1963	58.4	60.1
1964	58.1	60.4
1965	57.8	59.6
1966	56.6	66.4
1967	52.2	65.3
1968	51.7	56.8
1969	49.2	54.1
1970	49.4	52.8
1971	49.1	49.9
1972	48.3	50.8
1973	51.0	49.6
1974	56.7	50.2
1975	59.3	52.7

Source: CMC Reference Notebook 1975 subj: Recruit Attrition, encl (2) 24Jul75; Plag et al., Predicting Effectiveness, p. 6.

Taking a large proportion of Mental Group IV recruits was hardly a new experience for the Marine Corps. During the Korean War 40 percent of all Marine recruits scored in Mental Group IV. After the Korean War, 34 percent of Marine recruits scored in Mental Group IV (see Appendix 1). This long term effect of this showed in the ranks of the Marine

Corps' staff sergeants, of whom 13 percent scored in Mental Group IV in 1969.*[3]

The educational level of Marine recruits also declined. During the first nine months of fiscal year 1967, 73 percent of all Marine recruits had high school diplomas. During the first three months of Project 100,000, only 64 percent of new recruits had completed high school.[4] By 1968 the proportion fell another 10 percent. This trend held even more ominous implications than the decline in average test scores because high school graduation had a much stronger correlation with military performance than AFQT score.

Most New Standards Men spent a number of years in school but had failed to master basic academic skills. The median number of years of school completed by New Standards Marines was 10.5. However, their median reading level was only 5.8 years, and their median arithmetic ability only 6.1 years. Non-New Standards Marines completed only slightly more schooling, with a median of 11.4 years. The exact figure for the reading ability of control group Marines is not available, but it was probably not too far off the Defense Department wide level of 10.9 years. The ability of New Standards Marines fell about four and a half years below their level of schooling, while the ability level of other

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*Staff sergeants were senior, career enlisted Marines holding the paygrade of E-6 out of nine paygrades, E-9 being the highest. In 1969 over two thirds of the Marines holding this rank had more than ten years of service.

Marines fell about half a year below their level of schooling.[5]

There was no additional funding, however, to develop and implement new training methods to cope with the challenges presented by these men. As McNamara admitted, Project 100,000 was a way to get around Congress's refusal to fund STEP.[6] Nor was there to be any special training for low score men. Instead, every recruit training command in every service set up a special training program modeled on the Marine Corps' Special training Branches. These programs provided remedial instruction to any man who had difficulty with the course, neatly sidestepping the Congressional ban on using funds to create remedial training programs for low score men.

To avoid stigmatizing the New Standards men, McNamara ordered the services to ensure that they were not identified or set apart in any way.* New Standards men went to Boot Camp like any other recruit, and if they had difficulty with

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* This proved impractical, since McNamara also required the services to carefully monitor the progress of all New Standards men. The Marine Corps used a letter code on the enlistment contract to identify non-New Standards men in Mental Group IV, Mental New Standards men, Men enlisted under the Medical Remedial Enlistment Program, and all other men. Although hardly a secret, apparently few Marines knew what these codes meant. Memo fm Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1 (s/R.G. Davis) for Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, subj: Identification of Mental Group IV personnel, 6 October 1967; MCO 1510.16, Educational and Occupational Development of Servicemen -- Project One Hundred Thousand, file 1510 HQMC Central Files 1967.

the normal training they were either recycled or sent to remedial training like any other recruit.

The Marine Corps did not follow the example of the other services and institute a remedial literacy program. General Jonas M. Platt, Assistant Chief of Staff for Manpower, explained to the House Armed Services Committee on 3 March 1970 that the Marine Corps was "not impressed with the long-term effects of a short remedial reading program," and noted that the Marine Corps would have to fund such a program out of its normal budget.[7] The sole concession to the presence of low score men was the addition of the Academic Proficiency Platoon to the Special Training Branches at the beginning of 1967.[8]

McNamara did direct the services to reexamine their entry level training with an eye toward reducing the amount of classroom lectures and written examinations. The services were advised to replace these old fashioned methods with televised, hands-on, and self-paced instruction, tested by practical application.

The Marine Corps did modify a few courses to suit New Standards men. In September 1966 the Defense Department held a conference in Annapolis, Maryland to discuss this issue. The participants concluded that men scoring at the bottom of Mental Group IV could complete recruit training in all the services, although they may take longer to do so than other recruits. However, these men would have more

difficulty passing the entry level courses for military specialties. As a result of this conference, the Defense Department required each service to adapt the curriculum and training methods of three skill courses to accommodate low score men.

The Marine Corps designated the Motor Vehicle Operators Course, the Combat Engineer Course, and the Engineer Equipment Operators Course as its "Pilot" training courses.[9] This had little impact on the types of jobs available to men with low test scores, since combat engineering and motor transport skills typically received a high proportion of Mental Group IV privates before the course modifications.[10] Since these fields received far fewer recruits than the combat arms of infantry and artillery, however, only a small number of New Standards men attended these pilot courses.

The Marine finally took McNamara's advice to reexamine its training program in the Spring of 1968, initiating a review of its training methods using a "systems approach." This review determined that in many technical fields the Marine Corps was "overtraining," teaching skills to recruits that were only needed by senior NCOs. Since few recruits ever became senior NCOs, in the opinion of Brigadier General Robert G. Owens, Jr, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Training, much of the Marine Corps' training was "either wasted or result[ed] in future benefit to industry."[11] To

end this inefficiency, the Marine Corps began to cut all extraneous training from its specialist courses. For instance, the communications-electricians school found that it could delete over a third of its instruction, and the engineer equipment mechanics course found that it could halve its fourteen week course.[12]

Reducing the amount of training received, particularly training that "result[ed] in future benefit to industry," was probably not what McNamara had in mind when he suggested the Marine Corps reexamine its instruction. But reducing the amount of time devoted to training served to speed the recruit on his way to Vietnam. The Marine Corps started shortening its basic training programs a year before McNamara announced Project 100,000. As the war progressed, the need to feed a constant stream of replacements to Southeast Asia forced the Marine Corps to continue cutting the length of time new Marines spent in training.

Reductions in Basic Training

Before the Vietnam War, male Marines spent 80 days in recruit training, and then received four weeks of Individual Combat Training before their first assignment. Marines that did not go to a formal school, a group that included most Marines assigned to the ground combat arms, required a further 90 days of on-the-job training (OJT) before the Marine Corps considered them to be fully trained in their

specialty. A new recruit was not supposed to be sent overseas until he had completed his OJT, more than six months after his first day of Boot Camp.

The Vietnam buildup quickly forced the Marine Corps to shorten its training pipeline. In September 1965, the Marine Corps reduced the time a new recruit spent in training before going overseas to four months, the minimum time required by law. Boot Camp was reduced from 80 to 60 days; for all Marines save infantrymen, Individual Combat Training was reduced from four to two weeks; and OJT was replaced by a short period of formal instruction, usually lasting four weeks, called Basic Specialist Training. Infantrymen continued to receive four weeks Individual Combat Training, but almost all of them spent only two weeks at their Basic Specialist Training. Finally, all Lance Corporals and below received 15 days Southeast Asia Orientation Training over a three week period at Camp Pendleton's Staging Battalion before leaving for Vietnam.

In many ways Basic Specialist Training proved to be a significant improvement over OJT. Not only was Basic Specialist Training faster than OJT, the Basic Specialist Training graduate was "as well trained or better trained than the Marine who previously spent 90 or more days in on-the-job training."[13]

Unfortunately, the efficiency of Basic Specialist Training came at a price. Before September 1965, a new

Marine spent at least three months with his unit before deploying overseas, plenty of time for him and his squad mates to get to know each other and learn to work as a team. After September 1965, recruits rushed through a disorienting swirl of training programs and instructors, moving on before most of their superiors had time to learn much about them. Most new recruits joined their first permanent unit in Vietnam.

While Basic Specialist Training proved a mixed blessing, the reduced length of recruit training and Individual Combat Training remained a necessary evil. On 27 October 1967, less than two months after the start of the 8 week program, the commander of the San Diego recruit training regiment asked the Commandant to return to the previous 11 week program. He argued that the improvements gained with the additional three weeks "far exceed the savings in overhead gained" in the 8 week program.[14]

In April 1968 the Commandant of the Marine Corps regarded the ideal training program to be 10 weeks recruit training, 4 weeks Individual Combat Training, and the 4 weeks Basic Specialist Training, a full month less than the program in effect at that time. A policy statement noted that the shortened training course was a temporary measure, and that

> the Marine Corps intends to return to a longer training period as soon as the international situation permits. The present length of training is the minimum time

possible in an emergency situation to meet the objectives of recruit training.[15]

In January 1968, a few months before this policy statement, the Marine Corps had further cut recruit training from 60 to 56 days. This reduced total training time to exactly 17 weeks, more than 11 weeks shorter than the program in effect in August 1965 and barely over the legal requirement for four months of training.[16]

The Strain Created by New Standards Marines

New Standards men placed a further strain on this training program. Despite McNamara's hopes, they did not perform as well as other Marines. There is no doubt that Mental Group IV's did not absorb training as quickly as other men. New Standards Marines were almost three times as likely to fail recruit training as other Marines. Between October 1966 and June 1969, 11.1 per cent of New Standards men washed out of Boot Camp compared to 4.4 per cent of non-New Standards Marines. Between July 1969 and June 1970, when 14.1 per cent of higher scoring Marines failed recruit training, 37.8 percent of New Standards Marines failed to complete Boot Camp.[17]

Somewhere between a quarter and a third of the New Standards recruits, but only a tenth of the other recruits, required remedial training, lengthening their stay at Boot Camp.[18] The Special Training Branches added Academic Proficiency Platoons to handle the influx of barely literate

and innumerate men.[19] While most of the men sent to Special Training Branch successfully completed recruit training, the G-1 staff at Headquarters Marine Corps felt that Special Training Branch simply postponed a Marine's failure from Boot Camp to his first year in the operating forces.[20]

Most of the operating forces were in Vietnam, and no better able to absorb a poor Marine than the training establishment. Taking into account a variety of factors, including recommendation for reenlistment, disciplinary record, promotion, and performance ratings, one study found that 39.34% of New Standards Marines (compared to 25% of non-New Standards Marines) were ineffective.[21] This study concluded that quotas for New Standards Marines added an additional 1150 ineffective Marines each year. The authors of the study noted that "[f]or a military organization the size of the U.S. Marine Corps, a difference in the number of non-effective enlistees amounting to over 1100 men is quite sizeable and extremely costly."[22]

No Viable Alternative

The authors of the above statement assumed that without Project 100,000 the Marine Corps would not have accepted any New Standards men. Given the difficulty the Marine Corps experience finding enough recruits, this seems unlikely. Despite the Marine Corps' continued opposition from October

1966 on to Project 100,000 quotas on the grounds that they forced the Corps to turn away more qualified applicants,[23] the after the Autumn of 1967 the Marine Corps consistently exceeded its quota of New Standards men.[24] In fact, the proportion of new recruits in Mental Group IV began to rise in 1965, after the first Marine ground units landed in Vietnam (see Appendix 1). The Marine Corps had already lowered entry standards in April 1966, only a few months before Project 100,000 began.[25] This, combined with its steady reliance on the draft from December 1968 to February 1970, indicates that by mid-1967 the Marine Corps could not in fact attract enough better qualified volunteers.

Even without Project 100,000 the Marine Corps would have been forced to lower its standards and accept large numbers of men with low test scores, just as it had done in World War II and the Korean War. Colonel James W. Marsh, a senior member of the manpower division the Vietnam War, claimed that without the Defense Department quotas the Marine Corps would never have taken the lowest score New Standards men.*[26] There is no way to test Colonel Marsh's assertion, but the evidence indicates that, at the most, the Project 100,000 quotas forced the Marine Corps to take only a few men it would not have otherwise accepted.

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* During much of the program, half of the New Standards men had to score below 15 on the AFQT. See page..

Conclusion

Men with low scores did not do as well in training as other men, further straining an already stressed training system, just as they did in World War II and Korea. As in earlier conflicts, the Marine Corps had no choice but to lower its standards to fill its ranks. The additional burdens created by lowering the standards cannot be blamed on Project 100,000, since they would have occurred anyway.

The real tragedy of Project 100,000 lay in McNamara's refusal to find additional funding for special training. McNamara announced that the services would take steps to modify their training for men with low test scores, but then proposed budgets which allotted just enough to provide the minimum amount of training for all Marines. The Marine Corps could barely prepare men for combat. It had nothing left for remedial or vocational training.

Notes

1. CMC Reference Notebook 1968, subj: Recruit Training (Including Changes to Accommodate SEASIA), 26 April 68.

2. "Excerpts from Address by McNamara," The New York Times, 24 August 1966, p. 18.

3. General Officer's Symposium 1969, sect. E, MajGen Jonas M. Platt, AC/S G-1, pp. 18-19, 23.

4. Memo for the Deputy Under Secretary [of Defense] for Manpower, subj: Progress Report on Project One Hundred Thousand, s/LtGen L. F. Chapman, Jr., Chief of Staff HQMC, 29 March 1967, p. 2, file 1510 HQMC Central Files 1967.

5. Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men: Final Report, (unpublished report), June 1971, tables B-5 through B-10, hereafter Project One Hundred Thousand: Final Report.

6. Robert S. McNamara interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 4 June 1991.

7. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Appropriations, Department of Defense Appropriations for 1971, Hearings Before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, 91st Cong., 2d Sess, 1970, pt. II, p. 314.

8. BGen Charles C. Krulak interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 17 January 1991, hereafter Krulak intvw.

9. Memo, by G-3 Division, Subj: Project One Hundred Thousand, 18 July 1967, file 1510, HQMC Central Files 1967.

10. Memo fm Head, PP&P Branch to Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1, Subj: Two-Year Enlistments For Mental Group IV Personnel, 25 September 1967, p. 3, file 1510 HQMC Central Files 1967; Colonel James W. Marsh (Ret.) interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 26 February 1992, hereafter Marsh intvw.

11. General Officer's Symposium 1968, Tab D, BGen Robert G Owens, Jr., AC/S G-3, p. 9.

12. Ibid., p. 9-10.

13. CMC Reference Notebook 1968, Subj: Basic Specialist Training, 8 January 1968.

14. 8-week Recruit Training Period Presentation To CMC, by Headquarters, Recruit Training Regiment, San Diego, 27 October 1967, file 1510 HQMC Central Files 1967.

15. CMC Reference Notebook 1968, subj: Recruit Training (Including Changes to Accommodate SEASIA), 26 April 1968.

16. CMC Reference Notebook, 1965-1968.

17. Project One Hundred Thousand: Final Report, table C-1.

18. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, tab B-1, 1 October 1969.

19. Krulak intvw.

20. Marsh intvw.

21. John A. Plag, Jerry M. Coffman, and James D. Phelan, Predicting the Effectiveness of New Mental Standards Enlistees in the U.S. Marine Corps, Report No. 71-42, San Diego, California (Navy Medical Neuropsychiatric Research Unit: December, 1970), p. 59.

22. Ibid., p. 54.

23. See CMC Reference Notebook 1968, 1969, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel.

24. CMC Reference Notebook 1969, subj: Enlistment of Marginal Personnel, Tab A, 10 March 1969; Project One Hundred Thousand: Final Report, table A-3.

25. Janice H. Laurence and Peter F. Ramsberger, Low-Aptitude Men: Who Profits, Who Pays? (New York: Praeger, 1991), p. 23.

26. Marsh intvw.

Chapter 10

The Impact of Project 100,000

In a very real sense, Project 100,000 had little impact on the Marine Corps. The New Standards men created problems, but compared to the other problems faced by the Marine Corps the burden created by New Standards men was slight. And this was a burden the Marine Corps would almost certainly have borne without Project 100,000. During this program, the percentage of low-score Marines increased dramatically, but it would have increased to about the same degree anyway due to the demands of the Vietnam War.

Project 100,000 had an equally limited impact on the New Standards Marines. Of course, military service undoubtedly had a profound effect on all of the New Standards Marines. Even two years of peacetime service has a profound impact on a person, immersing that person into a world that is more controlled, disciplined, and organized than anything found in civilian life. Many of the New Standards Marines served in combat, one of the most powerful human experiences. But the vast majority of the New Standards Marines were volunteers; if we accept that the Marine Corps would have lowered its standards without Project 100,000, it is reasonable to assume that most of these men would have volunteered to serve without Project 100,000. And Project 100,000 had almost no impact on the conditions of their service.

The Impact of Military Service on the New Standards Marines

Few New Standards Marines received any kind of training that might be considered vocational. McNamara admitted this after the fact, but still maintained that the military taught "discipline, self reliance, and promptness...exactly the skills employers need."[1]

A study published in 1987, conducted by persons involved with Project 100,000, backed McNamara's assertion, finding that military service benefitted the New Standards men. The authors of this study found that over by 1974 two thirds of the former New Standards men had used their G.I. Bill educational benefits, and that they were more likely to take try to complete their high school education than similar nonveterans. Compared to their peers who did not serve, New Standards men had a lower rate of unemployment, better jobs, and earned more.[2]

The most recent study, published in 1989, reached the opposite conclusion. The authors of this study found that New Standards men were more likely to be unemployed, generally earned less if employed, had less education, were less likely to have received vocational training, and were more likely to be divorced than similar men who did not serve.[3]

Both of these studies had great difficulty tracking down New Standards veterans, and even more difficulty finding a suitable group of nonveterans for comparison,

making their conclusions doubtful. Secretary McNamara was probably correct when he observed that, since the careful follow up of these men he envisaged was never carried out, we will probably never know the real truth.[4]

It is still possible, however, to reflect on the probable benefits of military service. To do this, it might be instructive to consider the progress of a New Standards Marine. Of course, the experience of each one of the 38,000 New Standards Marines was unique, but these Marines also shared many experiences. A useful device for examining the experience of these Marines, therefore, might be to follow the career of a hypothetical "typical" Marine which included the most common elements.

More than 90 percent of all of the New Standards Marines were volunteers, not draftees, and so let us make this hypothetical Marine a volunteer. Nearly half of all New Standards men were Southerners. Almost 60 percent of New Standards Marines were white, and 40 percent were Black. The average age upon enlisting of Black New Standards Marines was 19.3 years, of white New Standards Marines 18.1. This made him the same age as other Marine recruits and, like other Marine recruits, more than a year younger than recruits in other services.

Only a third of the New Standards Marines had finished high school, the lowest percentage of any service. Sixty percent of other Marine recruits had completed high school,

also the lowest percentage of any service. Only a quarter of the white New Standards Marines had finished high school, compared to half the Black New Standards Marines. The whites New Standards Marines had completed an average of 10 years of school, the Blacks 11.1 years of school. Both Blacks and whites, however, read below the 6th grade level, and could compute at just above the 6th grade level. Other Marine recruits had completed 11.4 years of school and could perform at roughly the 10th grade level.[5]

Out imaginary "typical" Marine, then, was a white, Southern, 18 year old, who completed the 10th grade but could only perform at a sixth grade level. He was the same age as his peers, but had less scholling and considerably poorer academic skills.

He was a volunteer, and probably would have volunteered without any draft pressure. He almost certainly had never heard of Project 100,000, and probably did not expect learn any skills that would carry over into civilian life.

The Marine Corps considered New Standards Marines poor candidates for rank and responsibility. After 1 October 1967, all New Standards Marines were limited to two year enlistments, so our imaginary Marine also entered on a two year enlistment.

Like all Marines, he went to Boot Camp. There was no special literacy training, or any other special training, for New Standards men in the Marine Corps. Like all

recruits, he was told exactly what to do every minute of the day. Only a third of the New Standards Marines needed remedial training in boot camp, so our imaginary Marine probably graduated with his platoon. His fellow recruits, however, probably helped him keep up. Before 1970, his drill instructors were under considerable pressure to graduate ninety percent of their recruits. His drill instructors were very good at making sure his entire platoon suffered if individuals lagged.

After Boot Camp our new Marine went to a brief school to learn a military specialty. He probably became an infantryman; almost half of all Marine New Standards men did. Even if his test scores had not precluded his assignment to the more advanced technical courses, his two-year enlistment barred him from all but the shortest courses. Even those New Standards Marines assigned to technical sounding fields such as combat engineers or supply almost invariably were assigned to jobs that required far more brawn than brains. In fact, the job most frequently held by New Standards men in the supply field was and is referred to as "boxkicker" by other Marines; today's Marine Corps does not bother with any formal schooling for this assignment. But the three quarters of New Standards Marines went into combat arms assignments, and half went into the infantry, so let us make this Marine an infantryman.

After he completed a few weeks of infantry training, this young Marine was granted around ten days leave. His recruiter, following a common practice, dropped in on him, in part to ensure that he understood his orders. When it came time to leave for his next assignment, his recruiter took him to the station, just as he had when sending our Marine to Boot Camp. The recruiter was not worried that the Marine might try to desert; rather, he was worried that this new Marine might have some difficulty dealing with ticket windows, or getting on the right bus, or any task that involved reading or writing.[6]

Almost all Marines who joined Marine Corps before the end of 1969 went to Vietnam for their first assignment. Almost none of those who enlisted after 1969 went to Vietnam. Since three quarters of the New Standards Marines joined before 1970, out "typical" Marine should be a combat veteran. After a three week training period at the aptly named Staging Battalion at Camp Pendleton, California, and probably no more than five months from the day he first stood in the yellow footprints at Boot Camp, our Marine boarded an airplane and went to war.

In Vietnam, he did the things the Marine Corps expected of him. Although formal discipline was far more relaxed than any thing he had experienced so far, there was still a clear chain of command telling him what to do and when to do it.

After 13 months in Vietnam, he returned to the States. At this point he had less than six months left to serve. He might have tried to reenlist, but his low scores on the entry tests probably made him ineligible. Like most Marines on two year enlistments, the Marine Corps probably offered him an early release, and he probably took it. If he had stayed in the extra six months, he would have been eligible for a program called "Project Transition," arranged training in civilian occupations for servicemen nearing their discharge date. But like almost every "New Standards" Marine, he did not avail himself of this opportunity.

So he became a civilian again. He had been a Marine for less than twenty months. His military experience consisted of boot camp, a few weeks additional training in a purely military skill, and then a year in Vietnam. Throughout the entire time, someone was responsible for him, and someone constantly checked on him to make sure he did everything he was supposed to, including bathing, eating, and getting up in the morning.

Before passing judgement, consider this story from the perspective of Headquarters, Marine Corps. There was a war on. The Marine Corps recruited our young man, trained him in a skill the Marine Corps needed, and sent him to play his part in a job the Marine Corps was assigned to do. When he returned, the Marine Corps needed to make room for a another man to do the same job, so it offered him a chance to leave

early. He eagerly accepted this offer. Throughout his time on active duty, the Marine Corps made sure that he was housed, clothed, fed, paid, and generally cared for.

This was the story not only of the New Standards Marine, but of most Marines of who served during the Vietnam War.

The Impact of New Standards Men on the Marine Corps

New Standards Marines did not hamper combat operations in Vietnam. Nor did they significantly add to the massive disciplinary problems experienced by the Marine Corps at the end of the war. New Standards Marines did strain the Marine Corps training system. By late 1965 the demand of the Vietnam War had already stretched the training establishment to its limits. Men with low test scores, by needing additional instruction, recycling, or failing, stretched the training establishment further.

This strain, however, cannot be blamed on Project 100,000. Despite the Commandant's repeated complaints about the Marine Corps' Mental Group IV quotas, the Marine Corps needed these men. By late 1967 the Marine Corps could not attract enough high score volunteers to fill its ranks. It would almost certainly have lowered standards even if McNamara had not instituted Project 100,000.

New Standards Men in Combat

New Standards Marines did not hurt the war effort in Vietnam. A small minority of Marines recalled serious problems with slow learners in combat. A larger number recalled that some of their best Marines had low test scores. Others noted that Marines who could not master more complex tasks could perform mundane but necessary tasks, such as "ammo humper."

There is no way to determine if New Standards men caused additional casualties. The foolish mistakes of some Marines unnecessarily cost lives, but foolish behavior has never been confined to the poorly educated or those with low test scores. Nor was it usually possible, given the chaotic, confusing nature of combat, to differentiate between mistakes and bad luck. And often the distinction between "foolish" behavior and heroism was equally blurry. In any case, New Standards Marines could not have been exceptionally foolish, since they were no more likely to be killed than other Marines.

Attempts to decide if a New Standards Marine caused an "unnecessary" death are inherently futile. Every death is a tragedy, but death is a part of war. The best that can be said is that the presence of New Standards men did not significantly increase the overall casualty count.

The Impact of Project 100,000 on Discipline

Persons regarding New Standards men as inherently unfit for service ignored the fact that hundreds of thousands of men with test scores below those of most New Standards men served during World War II and tens of thousands with scores as low served during Korea. During these wars men with low test scores or poor educations were somewhat more likely to be formally disciplined or rated as poor performers, but their presence did not create a disciplinary crisis, nor did they receive large numbers of unfavorable discharges.

The service of the New Standards Marines followed the same pattern. They were more likely to be formally punished, receive poor performance ratings, and receive less than honorable discharges, but only to a small degree. New Standards men accounted for only a tiny part of a huge disciplinary problem.

The Added Cost of Low Score Men

Despite McNamara's claim that New Standards men could be trained at no additional cost, these Marines did cost more. In June 1969 Irving M. Greenberg, the Director of Project 100,000, estimated that New Standards men cost the military about $200 more than other men. The added costs came from remedial training, higher attrition, hospitalization for physical marginals, and requirements for data collection.[7] The additional $200 might not seem a

large sum, but in June 1969 the typical first term Marine, a lance corporal (paygrade E-3) with less than two years of service, was paid $137.70 a month.[8]

Desperately short of Marines due to budget driven limits on end strength and forced to drastically shorten its basic training program, during the Vietnam War the Marine Corps could not afford even a slight drain of its resources.

During the first few months of Project 100,000, Project 100,000 created a drain, as recruiters turned away men with higher scores to meet their Mental Group IV quotas.

By late 1967, however, Project 100,000 could no longer be counted as a burden. New Standards men still cost more to train, but the Marine Corps could no longer truthfully blame their presence on the Defense Department quotas. Unable to attract recruits with higher scores, the Marine Corps needed these men to fill the ranks. Recruiters, desperate for volunteers, consistently exceeded their Project 100,000 quotas. By late 1968 the Marine Corps could not find enough volunteers, even by exceeding their Project 100,000 quotas, forcing the Marine Corps to resort to the draft for recruits. When Congress finally abolished Mental Group IV quotas, the Marine Corps continued to sacrifice recruit quality to meet end strength. The New Standards Marines' added cost would have been incurred if there had been no Project 100,000.

Criticism: Based on a False Assumption

At the heart the criticism of Project 100,000 was the belief that an absolute standard for military service existed, and that no one falling below that standard should have been allowed to serve. Many Marines agreed with the assessment of Louise Ransom, a counselor for imprisoned veterans: "these guys should never have been in the military."[9]

This belief was false. Standards for military entry were not absolute. For all military specialty courses, a certain portion of the persons achieving a given score would fail. Higher entry standards resulted in a smaller portion of those accepted for training failing to complete any given course of instruction; lower standards resulted in a larger portion failing. To minimize the number of failures, the military tried to set minimum scores at the highest level that would still allow enough people to pass to fill the ranks.

If the number of persons needed increased or the pool of applicants decreased, the only way to get more graduates was to lower the cutoff score. This would produce more graduates, since many of the individuals previously rejected were always capable of passing the course. At the same time, the proportion of persons beginning training who failed to complete the course would increase. Thus, military recruiting obeyed the economic law of supply and

demand, with test scores substituting for cost. As demand (willing applicants) decreased in proportion to recruits needed, recruiters were forced to lower the price (test scores). Marine Corps manpower experts understood this principle well before Project 100,000 began.[10]

The Marine Corps experience in Vietnam followed this economic law. Unable to attract enough volunteers, the Marine Corps was forced to lower standards. The low score men brought in did not perform as well. A higher proportion of New Standards men required additional training or failed basic training. In general, the New Standards Marines who passed basic training did not perform as well as other Marines.

Most New Standards Marines, however, graduated from boot camp and rendered useful service. As a group they may not have been as good, but the Marine Corps needed them to perform its mission.

The Legacy of Project 100,000

Critics of Project 100,000 forget that the Marine Corps of the Vietnam era contained the best educated Marines, with the highest average test scores, that ever fought a major war. Project 100,000 did not hurt the Marine Corps. In the absence of McNamara's program, the Marine Corps would almost certainly have lowered standards to roughly the same level

to fill its ranks. Nor did the presence of low score men create or significantly exacerbate disciplinary problems.

Project 100,000 had its greatest impact on the Marine Corps after it ended. It taught the Marine Corps a false lesson. By coinciding with one of the Marine Corps' darkest hours, Project 100,000 convinced a generation of career Marines that men with low test scores should not be enlisted under any circumstances.

Notes

1. Robert S. McNamara interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 4 June 1991, hereafter McNamara intvw.

2. Thomas G. Sticht, William B. Armstrong, Daniel T. Hickey, and John S. Caylor, Cast-off Youth: Policy Training Methods From the Military Experience (New York: Praeger, 1987), pp. 62-64.

3. Janice H. Laurence, Peter F. Ramsberger, and Monica A. Gribben, Effects of Military Experience on the Post Service Lives of Low-Aptitude Recruits: Project 100,000 and the ASVAB Misnorming Final Report 89-29 (Alexandria, VA: Human Resources Research Organization, December 1989), pp. 161-163.

4. McNamara intvw.

5. Information in this section is taken from Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men: Final Report, (unpublished report), June 1971, tables B-1 to B-10.

6. Conversations with former recruiters indicate that this was a common practice.

7. I. M. Greenberg, "Project 100,000: The Training of Former Rejectees," Phi Delta Kappan vol. 50, no. 10 (June 1969), p. 574.

8. Disbursing Instructional Section, Marine Corps Support School, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, A History of Armed Services Pay Scales (Camp Lejeune, NC: 1981), p. 8.

9. Myra MacPherson, Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984), p. 643.

10. Memo, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, G-1 (LtGen Samuel Jaskilka) to Deputy Manpower Coordinator for Research and Information Systems, 9 May 1967, file 1510 HQMC Central Files 1967. See also the G-1 comments at the General Officer's Symposium, 1964, discussing the Marine Corps' ability to lower the proportion of Mental group IV recruits due to the favorable recruiting climate.

The Literature on Project 100,000

Historians have written little on Project 100,000. Most histories of the Vietnam conflict have concentrated on military operations, diplomacy, and American politics. These either failed to mention the program or merely made passing reference to it. George C. Herring's America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979) did not even mention manpower policies. Stanley Karnow's Vietnam: A History (New York: The Viking Press, 1983, pp. 464-473) and General Bruce Palmer, Jr.'s The 25-Year War: America's Role in Vietnam (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1984, pp. 155-159, 169-171) both briefly discussed the characteristics of combat troops and personnel issues, but neither mentions Project 100,000. Neither the Dictionary of the Vietnam War (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) edited by James S. Olson nor Harry G. Summers, Jr.'s Vietnam War Almanac (New York: Facts on File Publications, 1985) contained entries for Project 100,000.

The limited material published which has mentioned Project 100,000 can be divided into three categories: sociological studies, material written by military professionals, and works by social historians and journalists. Of the three groups, only the sociologists have treated the program in any depth, and only the sociologists have written anything approaching an accurate

or balanced account. Military authors have generally confined themselves to brief, offhand comments condemning the program. Social historians, relying almost exclusively on poorly researched books by journalists, have uncritically echoed the prejudices of crusading reporters.

The Sociologists

Since World War II sociologists working for the military have conducted dozens of studies examining the military performance of men with low test scores. These studies consistently found that most men with low test scores made acceptable soldiers, but that in general this group did not perform as well as men with higher scores. The numerous studies of Project 100,000 reached the same conclusion.

Some of the sociologists involved with the program interpreted this result as a success, since most men performed acceptably. Persons responsible for creating and administering Project 100,000, including Robert S. McNamara and the former Director of Project 100,000, Irving M. Greenberg, share this opinion. Thomas G. Sticht, William B. Armstrong, Daniel T. Hickey, and John S. Caylor, all of whom were involved with implementing Project 100,000, provided the best argument for this view in Cast-off Youth: Policy and Training Methods From the Military Experience (New York: Praeger, 1987).

Other sociologists have argued against using men with low test scores, pointing out that these men did not perform as well and were therefore not as cost effective as men with higher scores. Janice H. Laurence and Peter F. Ramsberger, in the best book by far on the subject, Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays? (New York: Praeger, 1991), ably made the case for this view.

The sociologists' greatest strength has been their reliance on careful scientific studies and hard data. They have also placed Project 100,000 into historical context, comparing this program to the military's experience with low-score men from World War II to 1980. For the most part Sticht et al. and Laurence and Ramsberger relied on the same sources but emphasized different aspects of the data. Sticht et al. ignored the additional costs associated with lowered entry standards. Lawrence and Ramsberger recognized that most low-score men performed adequately, but argued that standards should be set as high as the recruiting market allows to create the most effective military for the least cost.

The Marines

Marine criticism of Project 100,000 has been largely confined to grumbles at the officers' and NCO clubs, and occasional references in military journals to "the dark days of Project 100,000." Allan R. Millett, in his classic

single volume history of the Marine Corps Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps (New York: The Free Press, 1991), made two passing references to Project 100,000. While not specifically blaming the Marine Corps disciplinary crises on Project 100,000, he ascribed the program to "Johnson's and McNamara peculiar notion that wartime military service provided opportunities for social uplift," and noted that "[t]o meet its Project 100,000 goals the Marine Corps had to reject more promising recruits."[1] Later Millett blamed Project 100,000 quotas for denying the Marine Corps the quality recruits it needed.[2]

In Marines and Military Law in Vietnam: Trial by Fire (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989), a volume of the Marine Corps' official history of the Vietnam War, Lieutenant Colonel Gary D. Solis charged that "[t]he influx of category IV Marines had an immediate negative effect on discipline."[3] Colonel Solis admitted that "not all disciplinary problems" were the fault of New Standards Marines, but throughout the book he linked the large number of prosecutions to the presence of low-score men. Colonel Solis' interpretation was colored by his personal experience as a Marine lawyer at the end of the Vietnam War. In fairness to Colonel Solis, he supported his position with contemporary quotations from senior Marine officers. He

has, however, since modified his views in light of further research.[4]

In his collections of "sea stories" popular with junior officers and enlisted Marines, retired Major H. G. Duncan espoused views held by many career Marines. In Brown Side Out: More (Marine Corps Sea Stories) (Privately Published, 1981) Duncan described Mental Group IV Marines as "mostly illiterate, largely criminal, generally stupid, and...no-good sons of bitches."[5] Duncan also noted "that a disproportionate number of these recruits were from minority groups,"[6] and claimed that these "Cat fours" were easily swayed by Blacks fostering racial conflict. Duncan did admit "that a few of them (damned few) earned their pay."[7] Duncan summed up of the feelings of many Marines, and imparted those feelings to a new generation, when he exclaimed "God save us ever again from another Project 100,000!"[8]

The Journalists

Almost all academic historians that mention Project 100,000 have claimed or implied that President Johnson and Secretary McNamara deliberately used Project 100,000 to send the most disadvantaged members of society, particularly Blacks, to fight the war in Vietnam. These historians further argued that military service provided no benefits to

these men. Project 100,000 merely got them killed or court martialed.

This view was a gross distortion of the true purpose and impact of Project 100,000. It was based on limited, flawed research. The academic scholarship on Project 100,000 can be traced back to a few books written at the end of the Vietnam War by reporters with strong anti-military biases.

The first important work mentioning Project 100,000 was reporter Robert Sherrill's Military Justice is to Justice as Military Music is to Music (New York: Harper & Row, 1969). Sherrill passionately claimed that military officers could not be trusted to administer justice, and that a infractions by active duty personnel should be tried in civilian courts. He also maintained that the military legal system was unjust because it judged men solely on the basis of their record while in the service. "[O]ne compelling reason," he argued,

> for returning all Americans in uniform to the jurisdiction of the civilian courts, is that the military courts make no allowance for the types and background of the people who come before them.[9]

Earlier in the book Sherrill noted that a number of the "Presidio 27," soldiers involved in a prison mutiny on 14 October 1968, had low GCT scores, including one with a score of 62, one with 64, and one with 66. Sherrill also listed the GCT of other soldiers, apparently implying that these men also had low scores, but the scores given (89, 90, 94, 103, 109) were either very high Mental Group IV or Mental

Group III.[10] Relying on this and other presumably anecdotal evidence (his book had no footnotes, bibliography, or list of sources), Sherrill claimed that "many of the young men who wind up in military courts and then in stockades [were] the victims of the Pentagon's benevolence,'" i.e. Project 100,000.[11] Relying on the Defense Department's December 1969 report on Project 100,000, Sherrill correctly noted that New Standards men in the Army were twice as likely to be court martialed as other soldiers: 3.7 percent to 1.5 percent. Greenberg and others, of course, would have looked at this statistic differently, emphasizing that 96.3 percent of New Standards men had no serious convictions compared to 98.5 percent of all soldiers.

Sherrill also combined the fact that New Standards men were more likely to be assigned to combat specialties and that the Navy and Air Force discharged a higher proportion of New Standards men than the Army to make the dubious claim that the Army "preferred to hang on to these young men for combat use if at all possible."[12]

Two books written shortly after Sherrill's made similar arguments. Peter Barnes' Pawns: The Plight of the Citizen Soldier (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), and Paul Starr's Discarded Army: Veterans After Vietnam (New York: Charterhouse, 1973) became the spring feeding the stream of academic citations.

Barnes, another reporter, questioned the legitimacy of most aspects of the military manpower system. Barnes introduced the idea that to meet its Project 100,000 quotas, the military specifically targeted Blacks in low income inner city neighborhoods. To support this contention, he quoted an Army Colonel in charge of a recruiting district, who said that "President Johnson wanted these guys off the streets."[13] Barnes did not explain why a single Colonel's version of the program's true purpose should be accepted over McNamara's.

Barnes also claimed that the military was working to assign Black recruiters to predominantly Black neighborhoods. He described the Marine Corps recruiting station in Oakland, where two of the four recruiters were Black. These recruiters told Barnes that to relate to inner city youths, they "use[d] their language...we even call the cops 'pigs.'" Between July 1968 and June 1969 most of the Marines recruited by this station were from poor neighborhoods and 70 percent were Black or hispanic.

Barnes considered this prima facie evidence that the military was concentrating recruiting efforts on low income Blacks. A more charitable interpretation might have been that the assignment of Black recruiters to Black neighborhoods resulted from an enlightened sensitivity to racial matters by the military. Given the difficulty both the Army and the Marine Corps had getting volunteers, the

recognition by the military that Black recruiters were more effective in Black neighborhoods provided an even more plausible explanation. The techniques used and results achieved by the Oakland recruiting station probably reflected no more than the recruiter's efforts to find volunteers in a difficult market. And Oakland was hardly a typical recruiting market.

Starr's book, written as a report for Ralph Nader's Center for Study of Responsive Law, provided the first discussion of Project 100,000 of any length, devoting a 12 page chapter to the subject. Starr also used more sources than Sherrill or Barnes, although not many more. Starr's book argued that the country's military manpower policy during the Vietnam War was grossly unjust. He fit Project 100,000 into this framework, claiming that "[t]o an Administration trying to fight both a ground war in Asia and a war on poverty at home, it must have seemed a stroke of genius to fight one war with another."[14] He claimed that in peacetime senior military officers would not have accepted lower entry standards, and that it "was only the escalation of the war, and the concomitant manpower crises and expansion of the army, that induced them to swallow it."[15] Starr did mention STEP, which was proposed well before the first ground troops landed in Vietnam. However, he noted that the first announcement for STEP occurred nine days after the Tonkin Gulf resolution, implying that STEP

was a deliberate precursor to the huge increase in active duty strength and the commitment of hundreds of thousands of troop to Vietnam.

Starr criticized McNamara's policy of not identifying New Standards men to avoid stigmatizing them. Starr observed that this meant that "they never received the special training that was promised, and never will receive any marked attention from the Veterans Administration."[16] This statement implied that individual New Standards men had been promised special treatment, but New Standards men received no such promises.* To the contrary, every effort was made to treat New Standards men like other soldiers, and many if not most New Standards men did not know that they were New Standards men.

Starr also emphasized the fact that New Standards men were more likely to be assigned combat specialties, although he confused assignment to a combat specialty with assignment to combat. He quoted military officers claiming that New Standards men made poor soldiers, throwing in a few of the familiar comparative statistics from the 1969 Defense Department report for good measure. Starr ended the chapter by claiming that Project 100,000 was not a genuine effort to

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* Individual recruiters may have made unauthorized promises of "special training" to convince a New Standards man to enlist, but such unauthorized promises were hardly confined to New Standards men.

help the New Standards men, but merely a hypocritical way to fill the ranks.[17]

Starr's most important legacy was his assertion that Project 100,000 was inspired by Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel P. Moynihan's Negro Family report, published in March 1965.[18] In this report Moynihan argued that military service would provide young Black men with male role models.[19] Moynihan's thoughts on the benefits of military service, however, tended to get lost in the heated controversy over his thesis that poverty and poor academic performance resulted from the breakdown of the Black family.[20]

The contention that the Negro Family report played any significant role in the decision to launch Project 100,000 seems unlikely, given that this report was not published until nearly a year after the first proposal for STEP. Nor did McNamara or any of his principal aides have any recollection the Negro Family report. None remembered Moynihan playing any part in the decision to create Project 100,000. All, however, alluded to the One Third of a Nation report.[21]

Nor is there any credible evidence that Project 100,000 was aimed at Blacks in particular. Stephen N. Shulman, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civil Rights during this period, had little to do with Project 100,000 but strongly supported any program which created more

openings in the military for Blacks since they had so few opportunities open to them.[22] The architects of Project 100,000 realized that any program for poorly educated men with poor test scores would affect a disproportionately large number of young Blacks, since Blacks suffered disproportionately from these problems. But Project 100,000 was intended to help the disadvantaged, regardless of race.[23]

The Favorite Source: Baskir and Strauss

Journalists and historians writing later apparently made no effort to use the numerous sociological studies, instead relying on Barnes, Starr, and to some extent Sherrill, or other authors who relied on Sherrill, Barnes, and Starr. Perhaps the most widely cited work on Project 100,000 has been Lawrence M. Baskir's and William M. Strauss's Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, the War and the Vietnam Generation (New York: Vintage Books, 1978). Both Baskir and Strauss served on the staff of the clemency board for draft avoiders established by President Ford. Baskir and Strauss devoted nine pages of their book to Project 100,000, and relied heavily on Barnes and Starr. They also used Sherrill and other, largely anecdotal, sources.

Baskir and Strauss's discussion of Project 100,000 was filled with misleading statements, questionable

interpretations and complete inaccuracies. The errors were too numerous to list. For illustrative purposes it is worth examining one mistake in detail.

The authors cited a volume of Ginzberg's The Ineffective Soldier, Patterns of Performance, to claim that accepting low score men represented "a dramatic shift from earlier manpower policies."[24] Baskir and Strauss claim that during World War II the Army learned that high school dropouts were three times as likely to perform poorly as men with high school diplomas and five times as likely to perform poorly as men with some college. Baskir and Strauss claimed that the military, "[b]uilding on Ginzberg's analysis...developed a series of tests to measure the qualifications of young men for military service."[25]

This account distorted Ginzberg's findings and completely misrepresented the actual development of military manpower policy and screening. In Patterns of Performance, Ginzberg used the term "ineffective" to describe soldiers who "broke down" in service and were discharged for psychiatric problems.[26] This was hardly a good sample for judging overall performance. Besides, many of these soldier performed well before their breakdown. Nor were the poorly educated men "dropouts." Ginzberg identified them as men with grammar school educations, the expected level of education for many men in that era.[27]

Contrary to Baskir's and Strauss' implication, Ginzberg was opposed to screening out men with poor educations. In Patterns of Performance, Ginzberg argued that careful assignment and good leadership could prevent most breakdowns.[28] A few years earlier Ginzberg, along with his coauthor Douglas W. Bray, argued in the Uneducated that cut off scores on military entry tests were unreasonably high and should be lowered.

Baskir and Strauss's assertion that the military created the AFQT as a result of Ginzberg's findings was simply false. The military briefly used tests to screen recruits in World War I, started using tests again early in World War II and never stopped. Nor did World War II convince the Army that it should not use low score men; rather, the experience convinced the Army that it had to find ways to efficiently train and use low score men.

Baskir and Strauss also repeated Starr's suggestion that Project 100,000 had been inspired by The Negro Family report and was targeted at Blacks. Drawing on Barnes, Baskir and Strauss argued that the poorly educated men were "drawn into military service by recruiting campaigns consciously directed at disadvantaged teenagers."[29]

They implied that New Standards men were unfairly assigned to combat in greater numbers. Baskir and Strauss stated, incorrectly, that the military did not consider this a problem, suggesting, again incorrectly, that this was

"perhaps because low-IQ troops were considered good fighting men."[30] With an interesting disregard for consistency the authors also argued that New Standards men made poor soldiers, citing the opinion of officers and the disciplinary record.

Since Baskir and Strauss had such a major impact on subsequent scholarship, their concluding paragraph on the subject is worth quoting in full:

> In the opinion of many military leaders, social planners, and liberal critics, Project 100,000 proved a failure. While it expanded the wartime manpower pool, it also required additional resources which the services could ill afford. But above all, it was a failure for the recruits themselves. They never got the training that military service seemed to promise. They were the last to be promoted and the first to be sent to Vietnam. They saw more than their share of combat and got more than their share of bad discharges. Many ended up with greater difficulties in civilian society than when they started. For them, it was an ironic and tragic conclusion to a program that promised special treatment and a brighter future, and denied both.[31]

Later Works

Compared to later works, Baskir and Strauss provided a reasonably balanced account of Project 100,000. Most subsequent authors, most of whom relied largely on Baskir and Strauss, portrayed Project 100,000 as a plot to send the underprivileged to fight in Vietnam.

In 1984 Myra MacPherson, a journalist, published Long Time Passing: Vietnam and the Haunted Generation (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1984). MacPherson mainly relied on Sherrill, Starr, Barnes, and Baskir and Strauss.

She repeated these author's assertions that Project 100,000 was deliberately aimed at Blacks, that the military failed to provide the "promised" training, and that bad discharges ruined the lives of a large portion of the New Standards men.[32]

MacPherson also claimed that Project 100,000 was deliberately used to avoid increasing draft calls or calling up the reserves.[33] She argued that New Standards men were obviously unfit to serve, claiming that the "'bad apples' who became disciplinary and desertion problems undoubtedly should never have been taken in the first place." She backed this assertion applying to tens of thousands of men by citing one extreme example.[34]

MacPherson's assertion that Project 100,000 "was a vehicle for channeling poor, mostly Southern and Black youths to Vietnam's front lines" summed up her view of the program.[35]

Clark Dougan and Samuel Lipsman's A Nation Divided, a volume in the series The Vietnam Experience (Boston, MA: Boston Publishing Company, 1984), relied on MacPherson and Baskir and Strauss. Dougan and Lipsman also blamed Project 100,000 for increasing the numbers of Blacks drafted to fight in Vietnam. Claiming that this program was "ostensibly" intended to help the disadvantaged, the authors stated that Project 100,000,

> for all its high-minded purposes,...quickly developed into a vehicle for channeling underprivileged youths

> from the streets of America's cities to the battlefields of Vietnam.[36]

James William Gibson, relying again on Baskir and Strauss, wrote in The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam (Boston, MA: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986) that Project 100,000

> was a hoax; Technowar needed an ever-increasing labor supply at the point of production. Standards were changed so that those at the bottom of the racial and economic system of power could fight and die in Vietnam.[37]

Lisa Hsiao, an undergraduate at Yale, echoed these sentiments in her article "Project 100,000: The Great Society's Answer to Military Manpower need in Vietnam," in The Vietnam Generation, vol. 1, no. 2, (Spring 1989). Hsiao noted that "[v]irtually no historical research has been done on Project 100,000, and the Johnson Administration's motives have remained obscure." This was a surprising statement, since Johnson, McNamara, and others frequently and clearly stated their reasons for creating Project 100,000 and the goals they hoped to achieve. Hsiao evidently assumed that these public statements could not be trusted, since she complained that the works which do mention Project 100,000 "accept the administration's explanation without probing more deeply."[38] Hsiao, again relying largely on Starr and Baskir and Strauss, proclaimed her version of the administration's true purpose: "it exploited Black Americans, using them as cannon fodder while cloaking their betrayal in the rhetoric of advancement."[39]

The views of Starr and Barnes, via MacPherson, Baskir and Strauss, and Hsiao, became the accepted version of Project 100,000. Marilyn B. Young, in The Vietnam Wars 1945-1990 (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), devoted a paragraph to Project 100,000. She cited Baskir and Strauss and Hsiao. Unsurprisingly, Young repeated Starr's claim that Project 100,000 was inspired by the Negro Family report, and implied that Project 100,000 was deliberately aimed at Blacks and then channeled these men into combat. Young asserted that

> eighty thousand of these veterans left the military without the skills and opportunities McNamara assured them would be theirs, and many of them with service records that would make civilian life far more difficult than if they had never served at all.[40]

The True Failings of Project 100,000

The criticisms of these journalists and historians, although grossly overstated, touch on two legitimate points. First, Project 100,000 failed to provide most men with vocational training. Second, by opening up a previously unavailable pool of manpower, Project 100,000 also allowed a large number of other draft age men to avoid service.

When he announced Project 100,000, McNamara emphasized the beneficial training that low score men would receive, but provided no funds for remedial or restructured training. He had no choice, since Congress had explicitly barred funds for a similar program in 1965. Project 100,000 was

McNamara's way of creating a remedial training program without Congressional approval.

Unfortunately, New Standards men arrived at training depots already stretched by the demands of the Vietnam War. These depots had few resources left for remedial training. Few New Standards men qualified for technical training, so few received training with any direct civilian application. McNamara recognized this, and claimed that military service in any specialty taught self discipline, order, and punctuality, the very skills needed by civilian employers.[41]

The official goals of both STEP and Project 100,000 included increasing the number of potential volunteers and thereby lowering draft calls.[42] McNamara publicly argued that it was preferable to allow a man with a low score to volunteer than to draft an unwilling man with a higher score. He did not mention that Project 100,000 also helped to solve a growing manpower shortage. When the armed forces began rapidly expanding in the fall of 1965, generous draft deferments remained in place, creating an artificial manpower shortage. To find enough recruits, the military services and Selective Service started lowering entry standards well before August 1966 without arousing any significant reaction from any quarter. In an interview McNamara maintained that his decision to start Project 100,000 had nothing to do with the manpower shortage, but

his Assistant Secretary of Defense for Manpower, Thomas D. Morris, admitted that Project 100,000 would not have been launched if the shortage had not existed.[43]

This does not necessarily mean that Project 100,000 was merely a cynical ploy. There is every reason to take McNamara, President Johnson, and the others involved at their word, for they had begun pursuing ways to use the military to help low score men long before the Vietnam buildup. Johnson expressed concern over the plight of men rejected for military service in 1950 while serving in the Senate.[44] President Kennedy showed interest in helping men rejected for service as early as September 1963.[45] McNamara asked the Army to explore the possibility of creating a program for low score men in June 1964, well before President Johnson asked Congress for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution on 5 August 1964.[46] McNamara enthusiastically backed the plan to take more than 60,000 low score men over three years under STEP in August 1964, long before the first ground troops landed in Vietnam.[47] As late as August 1966, when he announced the start of Project 100,000, McNamara had no idea how large, long, or destructive America's involvement in Vietnam would prove.

A disproportionately large number of Blacks were accepted under Project 100,000, but this was the natural result of any program which lowered entry standards. New Standards men were, by definition, men with low test scores.

Due to the lack of educational opportunities, large numbers of Blacks received very low scores on the standardized tests used by the military. Any program which lowered test scores was bound to bring in large numbers of Blacks. As McNamara observed, these were precisely the people he intended to help.[48] There is no reason to believe that Project 100,000 was inspired by the Negro Family report or targeted at Blacks.

The high proportion of New Standards men assigned to combat specialties also resulted from their poor test scores. Military schools for technical specialties required minimum scores on certain aptitude tests. New Standards men seldom met these minimum standards. Since combat specialties had some of the lowest minimum requirements, the normal workings of the military assignment system assigned a large proportion of these men to combat specialties.

Journalists and academics have also overlooked a group of New Standards men that probably greatly benefitted from Project 100,000: sailors and airmen. In the Vietnam era only the Army and Marine Corps had difficulty finding recruits. The Air Force and Navy, which sent few men to Vietnam, had no need to lower standards. Project 100,000 forced these services to accept large numbers of low score men. By ensuring that all low score men were not concentrated in the Army and Marine Corps, this may have

actually reduced the number of low score men that would otherwise have been assigned to combat in Vietnam.

Recent Works: A Ray of Hope

Two books published recently have made dramatic improvements in the published literature on Project 100,000. Deborah Shapley devoted four pages of her biography of McNamara, Promise and Power: The Life and Times of Robert McNamara (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), to Project 100,000. Her account contained some factual errors (e,g. she stated that STEP occurred while Kennedy was President, although the program was not announced until seven months after Kennedy's death), but in general it provided a balanced view of the program. Shapley acquired this balance by doing her homework. She interviewed the key administrators of the program, Thomas D. Morris and Irving M. Greenberg, noted military sociologist Charles Moskos, and two recognized experts on the problem of low score men, Janice Laurence and Dr. W. S. Sellman, as well as others. Shapley also used primary source documents, including personal papers collections.

Shapley pointed out that Project 100,000 was launched with the best of intentions, but recognized that the McNamara and his aides failed to anticipate the likely results of conducting such a program without funding and during a major war. She correctly noted that although

ostensibly an experiment McNamara and his key aides were clearly determined to make Project 100,000 succeed. Shapley missed the fact that Project 100,000 also helped to solve a growing manpower shortage. Still, her work represented a remarkable improvement over earlier efforts.

Ronald H. Spector's After Tet: The Bloodiest Year in Vietnam (New York: The Free Press, 1993) also made a useful contribution. Surprisingly, Spector did not mention Project 100,000, but his superb discussion of military manpower policy helped put the New Standards Men into context. He pointed out that the uneven workings of the draft resulted from a liberal deferment policy created during the years before Vietnam to whittle down an unmanageably large pool of draft-age males. When Vietnam came, these existing deferments made it possible for men who could join the reserve or remain in school full-time to avoid military service, while their less fortunate peers were drafted.

Spector corrected the myth that the men who served in Vietnam were "simply a collection of ill-educated, impoverished youths from the bottom rungs of society." He pointed out that the Vietnam military was the best educated American military force to date. Spector described the Vietnam military as not an army of "losers," but an

> an army of achievers, of solid hard workers, men and women to whom society had given no special advantages but who were accustomed to making their own way. If they were not the social and intellectual cream of American youth, neither were they its dregs and castoffs.[49]

The literature on Project 100,000 serves as a lesson for all historians. Authors content with using a few convenient, anecdotal, or secondary sources have merely reinforced personal biases and produced distorted history, often to the point of outright falsehood. Authors willing to conduct serious, primary source research, such as Shapley, have provided reasonably balanced accounts. The best works have been written by authors who both made the effort to study primary source materials and added historical context by examining earlier military manpower programs. The fact that only sociologists fall into this later category, while most historians examining the subject fall into the first, does not speak well of the academic historical community.

Notes

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19. Office of Policy Planning and Research, United States Department of Labor, The Negro Family: The Case For National Action (Washington, D.C.: March 1965), p. 42.

20. Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy (Cambridge MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1967) described the heated debate generated by the Negro Family report in detail. Only one of 22 responses to the report included, that of Laura Cooper from the March-April 1966 issue of Dissent, mentioned Moynihan's suggestion that Blacks would benefit from military service. Cooper strongly criticized this suggestion (pp. 473-474).

21. Capt David A. Dawson interviews with Robert S. McNamara, 4 June 1991; Thomas D. Morris, 24 May 1991; Irving M. Greenberg, 4 June 1991.

22. Stephen N. Shulman interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 23 May 1991.

23. Robert S. McNamara interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 4 June 1991.

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44. Ltr, Lyndon B. Johnson, Chairman, Preparedness Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Armed Services, to Harry S. Truman, 20 September 1950. President's Secretary's Files, Truman Library.

45. President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation, One Third of a Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service (Washington, DC: 1 January 1964), pp. A-1, A-2.

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47. "Pentagon to Test New Draft Plan," New York Times, 14 August 1964, p. 4

48. Robert S. McNamara interview with Capt David A. Dawson, 4 June 1991.

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Appendix 1

Mental Group Distribution of Marine Recruits, 1951-1973					
Period	MG I	MG II	MG III	MG IV	Administrative Acceptees
May 51-Nov 52	6.1	17.3	27.3	42.5	6.9
Dec 51-Jun 52	5.4	23.9	32.5	35.2	3.0
FY 53	4.9	23.1	37.8	34.2	-
FY 54	4.2	20.5	40.9	34.4	-
FY 55	6.2	27.5	46.1	20.2	-
FY 56	4.4	21.7	39.0	34.9	-
FY 57	5.4	23.1	45.9	25.6	-
FY 58	7.4	26.9	56.7	9.0	-
FY 59	6.0	25.4	58.9	9.7	N
FY 60	5.3	22.3	56.0	16.4	-
FY 61	4.8	31.2	56.9	7.1	-
FY 62	4.4	32.5	54.1	9.0	-
FY 63	4.9	37.5	53.7	3.9	N
FY 64	4.6	32.9	53.2	9.2	N
FY 65	4.6	35.0	56.5	3.9	N
FY 66	5.5	33.3	47.7	13.3	-
FY 67*	4.7	31.2	46.7	17.3	.1
FY 68	3.9	26.7	47.2	22.1	-
FY 69	2.9	29.0	45.3	25.7	.1
FY 70	2.9	24.4	48.5	24.1	-
FY 71	2.4	23.4	53.5	20.7	-
FY 72	2.1	22.3	53.4	22.2	N
FY 73	1.9	22.9	59.4	15.8	-

* First year of Project 100,000

Dashes indicate no administrative acceptees
N indicates less than .1 percent of all recruits.

Appendix 2

A Note on the Interviews

When beginning this Project, I noticed that when describing the military's assessment of Project 100,000, most authors relied on the opinions officers quoted men who were generals during the Vietnam era. My own experience as an officer led me to question the validity of these opinions, since I knew that generals seldom meet the worst performers in a unit. Indeed, junior officers and NCOs frequently go to great lengths to prevent the generals from meeting these men.

Lacking an objective measure of the combat performance of New Standards men, I decided to interview Marines who served as company grade officers (warrant officers, lieutenants, and captains) and senior NCOs (staff sergeants [E-6] through sergeants major/master gunnery sergeants [E-9]). In my opinion, these men had enough knowledge and depth of experience to make professional judgements and also dealt with the lowest ranking Marines frequently and intimately enough to truly know them. The bulk of the men interviewed fell into this category. A few men ranking as high as lieutenant colonel during this period were included, as were a few NCOs who served only one enlistment.

This approach naturally created an inherent bias, since junior officers and senior NCOs tend to be more likely to strongly subscribe to the Marine Corps' culture. However, I felt that first term Marines, with no basis to compare their

experience, could offer little insight. Having such a person comment that he served with "dummies" in Vietnam would prove little, since this has been an almost universal experience in the modern American military. I was convinced that my OCS class graduated "dummies," even though everyone of my fellow officer candidates had completed three years of college.

The interviews contain another inherent bias. About a third of the persons interviewed or filling out questionnaires responded to notices which specifically mentioned Project 100,000. A few of the other responses resulted from comments that certain individuals had to be asked about Project 100,000. This approach tended to elicit responses from individuals who felt strongly about the subject. Given Project 100,000's reputation in the Marine Corps and the background of the persons interviewed, one would expect a large number of responses from Marines reviling the program. Surprisingly, this was not the case.

In using these interviews I have tried to allow for the limitations of the group selected, my method of soliciting them, and long period of time between the events discussed and the interviews. For this reason I have eschewed any attempt to try to statistically analyze the interviews, presenting only the broadest breakdown.

Appendix 3

Project 100,000 Questionnaire

(This is a copy of the questionnaire sent to persons responding to the author's notices. This questionnaire was also used as a guideline for the interviews with Marines who served during Project 100,000.)

Please fill out all sections which apply to you. Everyone should complete sections 1, 5, and 6. If you fill out other sections, you will find that some of the questions are redundant; there is no need to repeat information that you have given earlier. "CAT IV's" refers to men in Mental Group IV, the lowest group accepted for enlistment during the Vietnam era. For all dates, month/year is sufficient. If there is not enough room for your answer, please feel free to attach additional sheets. Thank you for your help.

Section 1: Background Information

1. (a) Please give your full name, the month/year you came on active duty, month/year you left active duty, and rank you held when you left active duty.

(b) Please list your primary specialty or specialties, in the order you held them, indicating when they changed (i.e. infantry to 1966, then intel to 1974, then supply).

(c) Please list the billets you held from 1966 to 1973, indicating the location, month/year arrived and left, and rank held for each billet.

(d) Please list any tours not shown above as an instructor at boot camp or an entry level training school such as ITR.

2. (a) When and how did you first learn about Project 100,000?

(b) At this time, did you know what the goals of the program were? If so, please describe the goals as you understood them in the 1960's.

3. (a) Did you have significant numbers of Project 100,000 men or CAT IV's in your unit? (if possible, estimate percentage).

(b) How did you know these men were Project 100,000 or CAT IV?

(c) Were men assigned to jobs that they could not perform? (If yes, please give examples).

4. (a) Did Project 100,000 men or CAT IV's create any specific problems? If so, please describe the nature of the problems.

(b) Were they more likely or less likely to be discipline problems? If so, please give your opinion of why they differed from the norm.

5. (a) Did you Know of any special programs to help Project 100,000 men? If you did, please describe these programs.

(b) In your opinion, were these programs effective?

6. (a) In general, how did the quality of the boot camp/ITR graduate of 1968-69 compare to the graduate of 1965-66?

(b) How did the quality of the NCO Corps of 1968-69 compare to that of 1965-66?

Section 2: Vietnam Veterans. (Please answer these questions

if you served in Vietnam)

1. (a) Were there significant numbers of Project 100,000 men or CAT IV's in your unit in Vietnam? If so, please estimate the percentage.

(b) How could you tell?

(c) In your experience, were Project 100,000 men more likely to serve in Vietnam than other men?

2. (a) Did Cat IV's create problems in combat? (Please give examples).

(b) Were there tasks that CAT IV's had difficulty performing, such as deploying claymores, walking point, etc.?

(c) Did you have to make allowances or compensate for CAT IV's in your unit?

(d) Were combat tactics or techniques ever modified because of the presence of CAT IV's in the unit?

(e) Did the presence of CAT IV's hamper combat operations?

(f) How did CAT IV's compare to other men in their dealings with the Vietnamese?

Section 3: WW II/Korean War Veterans.

1. (a) In your opinion, were the skills required for junior enlisted in your MOS more, less, or about the same level of complexity in 1966-1969 as in 1945? 1955?

(b) In your opinion, did Vietnam place greater mental demands on the junior enlisted man than WW II or Korea?

2. (a) In you opinion, were the CAT IV's of 1966-1970 different from the CAT IV's of 1945 or 1955? (Explain).

Section 4: Training Commands. (Boot camp, ITR, or entry level MOS school.)

1. (a) Were any special efforts made to modify training to accommodate low aptitude men? If so, please describe them.

(b) Did Project 100,000 or CAT IV men have difficulty completing the training?

(c) Were training standards lowered?

2. (a) Were instructors/DI's under pressure to graduate men that did not meet the minimum standards?

(b) Did most Instructors/DI's feel that any man could be trained?

(c) Did this attitude change after 1967?

Section 5: Overall Assessment.

1. (a) Did Project 100,000 hurt the Marine Corps (or Army)? How?

(b) Did Project 100,000 hamper the effort in Vietnam? How?

(c) Did military service benefit most CAT IV's? How?

Section 6: General.

1. (a) In your opinion, does the Marine Corps (or Army) provide a good place for a young man to learn self discipline / useful skills?

(b) What about CAT IV's?

(c) What about during wartime?

2. (a) In the late 1960's, were there military jobs that could be adequately performed by men of limited intelligence?

(b) Were their jobs that were so simple and monotonous that it would have been a waste to assign an intelligent man to them?

(c) Could an MOS/assignment system have been designed to train Cat IV's for jobs they could handle and then ensure that they stayed in those jobs?

3. (a) Can the Marine Corps (or Army) provide remedial training without adversely impacting on its primary mission?

(b) Should it?

4. Please add any comments or discuss any pertinent areas I have not covered.

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