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The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act of 1980

A Retrospective Assessment

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Assistant Secretary of Defense
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PREFACE

Section 403 of the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Years 1990 and 1991 (Public Law 101-189) required the Department of Defense (DoD) to report on the adequacy of the strength-in-grade limitations prescribed in 10 U.S.C. 523 and particularly on how those limitations affect the ability of the military services to recruit and retain nurses and other health professionals for service on active duty. The first part of the congressionally requested study was done within the DoD. In September 1990, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) asked RAND to review the past ten years' experience with the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), to identify and appraise any difficulties in manpower management that may have developed from that legislation, and to suggest, analyze, and recommend changes.

The initial review was circulated within the DoD in April 1991. Service comments were incorporated and a revised draft was circulated and briefed in November 1991. This report includes final service comments and a set of recommended changes to DOPMA that the authors believe will make the drawdown of forces more manageable. The authors also point to a rapidly changing future and call for a rethinking of many of the tenets that govern the management of officers.

This research was conducted for the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) within the Defense Manpower Research Center in RAND's National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Staff.

SUMMARY

After years of discussion and debate, the Congress enacted the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) on December 12, 1980. The new code replaced an existing patchwork of rules and regulations governing the management of military officers and updated numerical constraints on the number of field-grade officers (O-4 through O-6) that each service might have as a percentage of its officer corps. It was the Congress's expectation that DOPMA would "maintain a high-quality, numerically sufficient officer corps, provide career opportunity that would attract and retain the numbers of high-caliber officers needed, [and] provide reasonably consistent career opportunity among the services."

In September 1990, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) asked RAND to review the past ten years of operations of DOPMA, to identify and appraise any difficulties in manpower management that may have developed from that legislation, and to suggest, analyze, and recommend changes.

This report concludes our assessment of DOPMA. While DOPMA broke new ground (permanent sliding-scale grade tables, single promotion system, augmentation of reserve officers into regular status), it was basically an evolutionary document, extending the existing paradigm (grade controls, promotion opportunity and timing objectives, up-or-out, and consistency across the services) that was established after World War II. In our assessment we found that DOPMA was a better static description of the desired officer structure than a dynamic management tool. In retrospect, DOPMA could neither handily control the growth in the officer corps in the early part of the 1980s nor flexibly manage the reduction-in-force in the later part of the decade. Put in another way, while the military and geopolitical successes of the 1980s and early 1990s can in part be attributed to the professional officer corps that was built under DOPMA, in the current dynamic environment DOPMA cannot meet all its stated objectives.

Congress has provided some flexibility, but in so doing, major tenets of DOPMA (e.g., tenure) have been voided. DOPMA forces choice between grade table violations (law) or diminution of proffered tenure (law) and proffered promotion opportunity/timing (policy, promise) in a period of reductions. Moreover, the implicit assumption that the officer management system should be able to adjust instantaneously (as seen in the way the grade table is implemented) points to the need

for further flexibility to meet short-term needs. Specifically, the DoD has proposed that the Secretary of Defense be authorized to exceed the grade tables by up to 2 percent to “deal with both the nursing issue and any other problems experienced during the force drawdown.” We also recommend flexibility in the grade table but through a different implementing mechanism, a longer adjustment period for the services to accommodate reductions mandated by the DOPMA grade table.

Beyond the drawdown period, given a changed environment, are the same objectives for officer management and the assumptions underlying them still valid? Changes to officer management that preserve some of the recent traditions yet break with others may be needed. The future focus should be on how change to the existing system contributes to performance as the ultimate criterion and satisfies intermediate criteria relating to the needs of officer management and officers. In the nineties and beyond, the active force will be smaller, more skillful, more vigorous, more joint, and more specialized. What will be needed is a rethinking of the principles on which officer management is based and, if change is needed, defining legislation that operationalizes those principles.

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The authors wish to thank the many dedicated officers in the Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management Directorate of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Manpower and Personnel Policy) for their encouragement and support, particularly Commander Bill Lansing, Lieutenant Colonels Neil Touchet, Thomas Page, and Kenneth Martell, and Colonels Lamar Crosby and Kenneth Deutsch. Many officers took the time to explain how DOPMA was implemented by their services and to review earlier versions of this report. The Deputy Chiefs of Staff for Personnel in the Army, Navy, and Air Force, Lieutenant General William H. Reno, Vice Admiral J. M. Boorda, and Lieutenant General Thomas J. Hickey, respectively, were most kind in their personal review of an early draft, as was Mr. Robert Emmerichs in the Office of the Secretary of the Army. In addition, Colonel John Hudock, Lieutenant Colonel Steven Sem, and Commander Mary Anne Gardner provided insights on the management of nonline competitive categories. We are aware, however, that the views expressed in this report will not find universal favor within the Office of the Secretary of Defense or among all the service personnel managers. These are our views and do not represent the policy of the Department of Defense or the individual military departments.

CONTENTS

PREFACE	iii
SUMMARY	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	vii
FIGURES	xi
TABLES	xiii

Section

1. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE	1
Scope	1
Setting the Stage: A Historical Review	2
Review, Analysis, and Recommendations	6
2. THE DOPMA OFFICER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM ...	7
Introduction	7
Officer Management Under DOPMA	7
DOPMA Dynamics	18
3. DOPMA DURING GROWTH AND DECLINE: ITS FIRST DECADE	21
Introduction	21
How Many Officers Are Enough?	21
Understanding Officer Personnel Management in the 1980s	26
Lessons to Be Learned	28
4. DOPMA AND THE POST-COLD WAR DRAW- DOWN: THE SECOND DECADE	31
Introduction	31
Drawing Down the Force	31
Understanding Officer Personnel Management During the Drawdown	37
Analysis of Alternative Drawdown Policies	38
Summing Up DOPMA During the Drawdown	42
5. DOPMA AS A PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT TOOL ..	44
Introduction	44
Understanding the Nurse Problem	44

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Current Limitations	46
Considering “Appropriate Changes to the Current Strength-in-Grade Limitations Provisions of DOPMA”	55
6. PROVIDING A MORE FLEXIBLE GRADE TABLE.....	64
Temporary 2 Percent Increase to the DOPMA Table ...	64
Fixed Increment Increase to the Grade Table	65
Glide Path in the Grade Table	66
Recommendation	68
7. CONCLUSION	69
Past	69
Present	70
Future	70
Appendix	
A. A SHORT HISTORY OF OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT	73
B. SERVICE DRAWDOWN PLANS	99
C. OFFICER INVENTORY PROJECTIONS, FY 1991–2008	103
D. PROMOTION HISTORY, FY 1979–1990	105

FIGURES

1.1. Changing Face of Officer Management (1800–1997)	4
2.1. DOPMA Grade Tables Relative Increase in Field Grades as Officer Strength Declines	9
3.1. Percentage Change in Officer Strength	22
3.2. Percentage Change in Enlisted-to-Officer Ratio	23
3.3. Percentage Change in Field-Grade Table and Company- and Field-Grade Inventories (FY 1981– 1986)	27
3.4. Percentage Change in Field-Grade Table and Company- and Field-Grade Inventories (FY 1987– 1990)	29
4.1. Ideal Personnel Year of Service Distribution	35
4.2. Army Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991–2008	36
4.3. Projected Percentage Change in Field-Grade Table and Company- and Field-Grade Inventories (FY 1991– 1995)	38
4.4. Grade Table Increases Needed to Accommodate DOPMA Promotion Opportunity and Timing (Army) . . .	39
4.5. Army Force Reduction Options	40
5.1. Percentage of Nurse Field-Grade Inventory Over or Under DOPMA Grade Table Distribution (FY 1981– 1990)	46
5.2. Percentage of Nurse O-4 Inventory Over or Under DOPMA Grade Table Distribution (FY 1981–2009)	50
5.3. Army Nurse Requirements and Authorizations vs. DOPMA	53
5.4. Department of Defense DOPMA and Nurse-Grade Structure (FY 1990)	55
5.5. Field-Grade Percentage for Select Competitive Categories, 1981–1990	57
6.1. Implementation of 2 Percent Flexibility (Army Example)	65
6.2. Implementation of Fixed-Step Flexibility (Army Example)	66
6.3. Implementation of Lag Flexibility (Army Example)	67
C.1. Navy Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991–2008	103

C.2.	Marine Corps Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991–2008.....	104
C.3.	Air Force Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991–2008.....	104

TABLES

2.1.	Officer Grades for the United States Military Services	8
2.2.	DOPMA Up-or-Out Promotion System for “Due-Course” Officer	14
2.3.	Distribution of Army Field-Grade Officer Promotions, Fiscal Year 1990	15
3.1.	Analysis of Officer Growth, FY 1980–1986	25
3.2.	Average Officer Promotion Opportunity and Timing, 1981–1985	28
3.3.	Average Officer Promotion Opportunity and Timing, 1981–1985 and 1986–1990	30
4.1.	The Planned Drawdown by Service, FY 1990–1995	32
5.1.	Average Promotion Opportunity and Timing, 1986–1990	48
5.2.	DOPMA Grade Tables Analysis, FY 1990	56
5.3.	Characteristics of Various Alternatives for Nurse Competitive Category Management	61
B.1.	DOPMA Provisions and the Planned Defense Drawdown, FY 1991–1995	99
B.2.	Planned Involuntary Early Retirements and Separations, FY 1991–1995	100
B.3.	Actual and Planned Promotion Opportunity, FY 1989–1995	101
B.4.	Actual and Planned Promotion Timing, FY 1989–1995	102
D.1.	Officer Promotion Opportunity	106
D.2.	Officer Promotion Point	107

1. INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE STAGE

In November 1980, Congress amended Title 10, United States Code, to “make uniform the provisions of law relating to appointment, promotion, separation and retirement of regular commissioned officers of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.”¹ The purpose of the Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA), Public Law 96-513, was to “maintain a high-quality, numerically sufficient officer corps [that] provided career opportunity that would attract and retain the numbers of high-caliber officers needed [and] provide reasonably consistent career opportunity among the services.”² The law established a ceiling on the number of officers in each grade above O-3, (e.g., captain in the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps, and lieutenant in the Navy). For the first time in history, DOPMA established “uniform” laws for all four military services governing original appointment of commissioned officers (both regular and reserve officers on extended active duty), rules governing promotion, and standards for the mandatory separation and retirement of officers (including separation pay for those separated involuntarily short of retirement).³ In September 1990, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel) asked RAND to review the past ten years’ experience with DOPMA, to identify and appraise any difficulties in manpower management that may have developed from that legislation, and to suggest, analyze, and recommend changes.

SCOPE

DOPMA can best be understood by considering the problems that it was designed to address. Accordingly, our assessment starts (Section 1) with a brief history of officer management in the post–World War II period. (A more complete history is contained in Appendix A.) This is followed by a review of the basic provisions of DOPMA (Section 2) and an overview of how DOPMA operated during the 1980s and early 1990s (Sections 3 and 4). Our initial review of DOPMA centers on its ability to manage the overall officer corps in a period of rapid

¹The law also established the grade of commodore admiral in the Navy, later repealed, and “equalized the treatment of male and female commissioned officers.” See *House Report No. 96-1462*.

²*House Report No. 96-1462*, p. 6345.

³*Senate Report No. 96-375*, p. 1.

change—the Reagan buildup and the post–Cold War drawdown. We identify a number of internal inconsistencies that resulted in conflicts of goals, policy, and promises and led Congress in 1990 to temporarily suspend several key provisions of DOPMA to provide additional flexibility to manage officers during the defense drawdown of the early 1990s. Our analysis shows that even with these changes, additional flexibility in administering grade controls is needed to mitigate some of the more troublesome aspects of the drawdown.

DOPMA is not only a tool for overall officer management but provides a system to manage the careers of military generalists as well as specialists. In Section 5 the problems the services are having managing their Nurse Corps are reviewed and a number of current proposals to provide a more flexible system are discussed. In Section 6 we consider three ways to provide more flexibility in the grade table, and in the concluding section (7) we raise a number of concerns about the adequacy of DOPMA for the future.

SETTING THE STAGE: A HISTORICAL REVIEW

DOPMA was an evolutionary piece of legislation that was firmly rooted in the experience of World War II and tempered by problems of managing the military during the Cold War. Many of the provisions can be understood only in the context of the problems DOPMA addressed and as a compromise among the individual services and Congress.

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, procurement, promotion, tenure, and discharge of military officers were recurrent sources of policy dispute, as were the size and composition of the officer corps itself. During much of this period, the Army and the Navy, with the concurrence of Congress, pursued their own remedies on their own terms, such that for many questions there often were two different answers. Congress, often on its own initiative, was a key player. Indeed, apart from the budgetary aspects of national defense, it is difficult to locate an area in which Congress was not more consistently and intimately involved than management of the officer corps. It is often charged that Congress is micromanaging the Department of Defense (DoD) when it legislates the number of colonels in the Army or captains in the Navy. On the other hand, Congress has argued that the issue is too important to be left to the executive branch, saying that “[t]hroughout the long history of the United States, the officer corps of the armed forces as a whole has been

unready for combat at the time war commenced.”⁴ The immediate post–World War II period that provides the setting for DOPMA is summarized below. (For those who want a more complete background, Appendix A presents a comprehensive history of officer personnel management.)

World War II and the Officer Personnel Act of 1947

On the eve of World War II the United States had less than 15,000 active Army officers (Figure 1.1); there were approximately 14,000 officers in the naval service.⁵ At the end of World War II the United States was the preeminent military power in the world and, as it contemplated building a postwar military establishment, still had an active military of over 1.5 million, with over 385,000 officers.⁶ Three themes dominated consideration of a new military personnel system as Congress moved toward passage of the “Officer Personnel Act” (OPA) in 1947: “uniformness” between the Army and the Navy (and after 1947, the Air Force), emphasis on a “young and vigorous” officer corps, and the “remobilization” capability of the peacetime military establishment.

Most important of these changes, given experience in the war, was a change from a seniority to a competitive up-or-out promotion system. General Eisenhower, when he was Army Chief of Staff, told the Congress that “I think that no great argument would have to be presented to show that our promotion system has been unsatisfactory. Until we got to the grade of general officer, it was absolutely a lock step promotion; and short of almost crime being committed by an officer, there were ineffectual ways of eliminating a man.”⁷ He pointed out that in the postwar period the military must be capable of immediately waging war and that with few exceptions those who held senior command positions before World War II “had to be replaced and gotten out of the way and younger men had to come along and take over the job.”⁸ In General Eisenhower’s words, “It is merely a ques-

⁴House Report No. 96-1462, p. 6339.

⁵Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics*, Fiscal Year 1980, Table 2-28.

⁶Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Selected Manpower Statistics*, Fiscal Year 1989, Table 2-12.

⁷Hearings before the Senate Committee on Armed Services, *Officer Personnel Act of 1947*, July 16, 1947, p. 1.

⁸Ibid., p. 10.

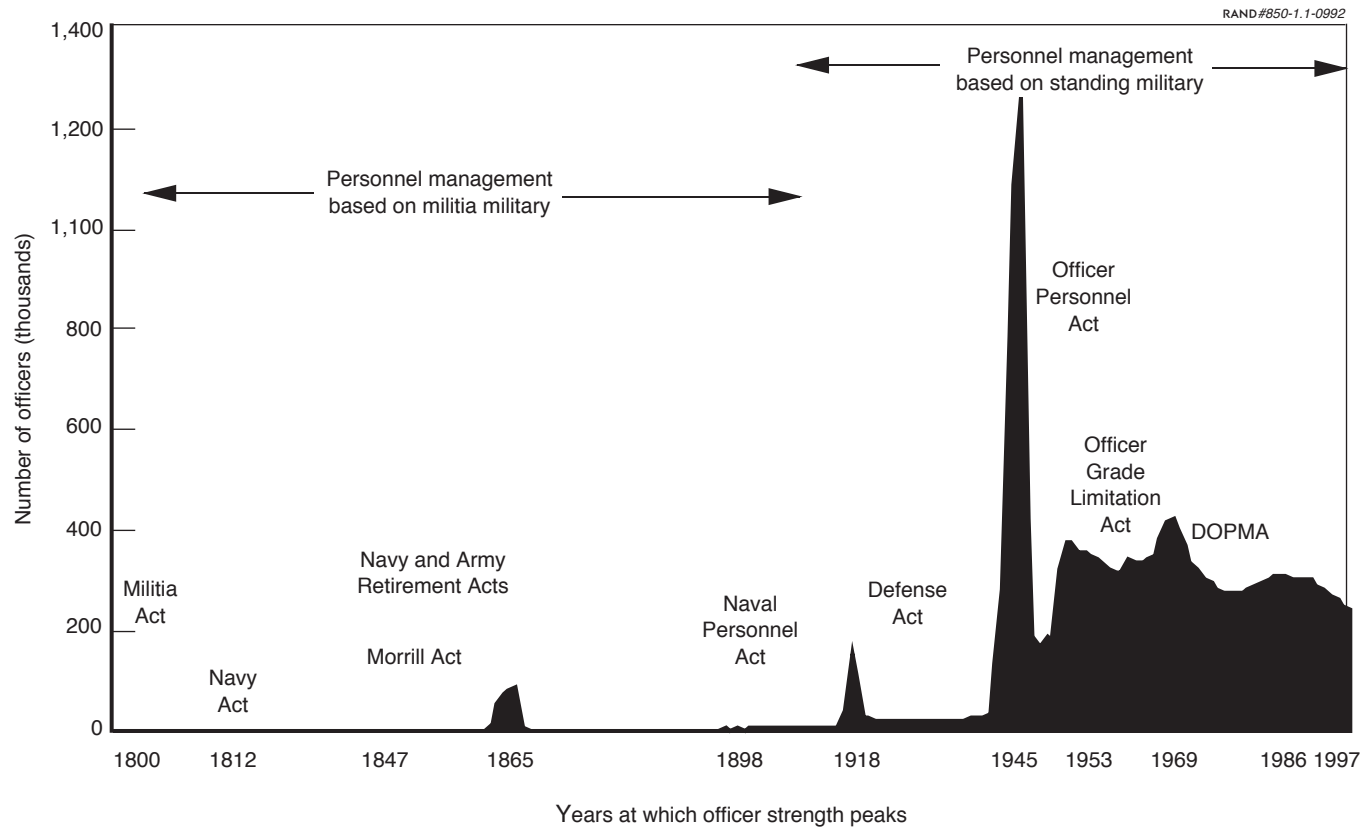


Figure 1.1—Changing Face of Officer Management (1800–1997)

tion . . . of keeping the outflow at the top so as to keep your vigorous body underneath.”⁹ OPA extended the principle of up-or-out across the board.

The role the United States played in the war and in the immediate postwar confrontation with the Soviet Union convinced Congress that in spite of a very large demobilization there was a “continuing need for many thousands of temporary officers for years into the future.”¹⁰ Congress provided a permanent career plan for Regular Army and Regular Navy officers, and yet, at the same time, authority was provided for carrying along 30,000 to 40,000 temporary officers for some years. Congress’s hope was that it could reduce the officer corps over the course of the next decade.¹¹

In the 1947 act, Congress imposed tight controls on permanent promotions but no control over temporary promotions in the Army and Air Force, and the statutory limitations that did exist on temporary promotions in the Navy and Marine Corps were viewed by many in Congress as far too liberal.¹²

Problems in the Officer Management System Before 1980

In fiscal years (FY) 1953 and 1954, Congress reacted by establishing grade limitations through amendments to the budget and in 1954 passed the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA),¹³ which imposed statutory limitations on the number of regular and reserve officers who could serve in the grades of major and above (and Navy equivalents).

⁹Hearings, Senate, 1947, p. 11.

¹⁰At the time, total active-duty commissioned strength in the Army was close to 100,000, only 37,500 of whom were regular officers. In the Navy, not more than 27,000 regulars were represented among its 40,000+ officers on active duty (*House Report*, 1947, p. 1648). OPA established fixed percentages in each grade regardless of total officer strength. For the Army and Air Force, these were 8 percent (O-6), 14 percent (O-5), and 19 percent (O-4). For the Navy/Marine Corps, the percentages were 6 (O-6), 12 (O-5), and 18 (O-4).

¹¹Congress in 1947 contemplated an eventual “peacetime” strength of about 35,000 line officers in the Navy, 30,600 officers in the Army, some 7,000 in the Marine Corps, and some 27,500 in the Air Force.

¹²According to Congressman Leslie Arends (R-Ill.) in early 1953: “[T]here is growing concern in the Congress with respect to temporary promotions and the number of officers holding high grade compared with the number that were in existence in World War II.”

¹³P.L. 83-349, May 5, 1954, Ch. 180, 68 Stat. 65.

In 1960, the DoD impaneled an “Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act” (the “Bolte committee”) to recommend a new system to “achieve uniformity whenever practicable in officer career management systems.” Legislation based on the Bolte committee’s recommendations¹⁴ was submitted to Congress by the DoD in the early 1960s, but Congress did not act on it and it was subsequently withdrawn in 1966. In 1972, concerned that the military services still had too many senior officers and troubled by the need to provide annual grade relief to the Air Force, Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to submit a written report “regarding limitations on the number of officers who may serve in the various commissioned grades . . . [and] include . . . such recommendations he deems appropriate for legislation to establish new permanent [grade] limitations.”¹⁵ The resulting “Report on Officer Grade Limitations” set forth the provisions to be included in a new Defense Officer Personnel Management Act. DOPMA was approved by the House twice (in 1976 and 1978), but the Senate disagreed with many of its provisions and did not act.¹⁶ In 1979, the Senate Armed Services Committee and later the full Senate approved its own version of DOPMA, but the House (and also the DoD) disagreed with its terms and held to the view that no legislation was better than the Senate’s version. In mid-1980, however, a compromise effort was spearheaded by both armed services committees. DOPMA passed that November.

REVIEW, ANALYSIS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The remainder of the report focuses on a review of the DOPMA design, an analysis of its workings, and our assessment of future needs. Section 2 of the report summarizes the workings of the DOPMA officer management system, Section 3 reviews the implementation of DOPMA during the 1980s, Section 4 discusses the drawdown of the 1990s, and Section 5 assesses DOPMA as a personnel management tool. In Section 6 we consider several ways to provide flexibility with the DOPMA grade control system, and Section 7 looks toward the future of DOPMA after the drawdown as we approach the twenty-first century.

¹⁴Many of the Bolt Commission recommendations eventually were incorporated into DOPMA, most notably the up-or-out promotion system.

¹⁵P.L. 92-561, October 25, 1972, 86 Stat. 1175.

¹⁶See Senator Sam Nunn’s (D-Ga.) floor speech of August 10, 1976, *Congressional Record—Senate*, p. 26643.

2. THE DOPMA OFFICER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act that went into effect in 1981 unified in a single act the rules reflecting the post–World War II reforms and thirty-five years of officer management experience of the extended Cold War. Not only did DOPMA continue such policies as up-or-out, but it reformed the system of active and reserve officer commissions and grade controls that was originally envisioned as a temporary measure to facilitate a peacetime military larger than the historical norm. In this section we review the basic provisions of DOPMA and highlight implicit conflicts in the DOPMA structure that create problems for personnel managers trying to cope with real problems of career management and the growth and decline in the number of officers on active duty.

OFFICER MANAGEMENT UNDER DOPMA

DOPMA established a common officer management system built around a uniform notion of how military officers should be trained, appointed, promoted, separated, and retired. Under the DOPMA “system” *most* officers are trained at one of the service academies, in the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program, or through an officer candidate program open to enlisted personnel.¹ Each military service has ten officer grades as indicated in Table 2.1. Congress authorizes total officer strength for each military service each year, considering the historical relationship between officer and enlisted personnel (the so-called enlisted-officer ratio), stated manpower requirements, and the achievement of other goals.

Grade Control

Congress specifies in DOPMA the number of officers it would allow in each field grade above O-3. Known as the *officer grade distribution* and published in the *DOPMA grade table*, the distribution varies as a function of total officer end-strength rather than as a fixed percentage

¹DOPMA does provide specific provisions for “requiring advanced education as a prerequisite for appointment as a commissioned officer.” See *House Report No. 96-1462*, pp. 6357–6370.

Table 2.1
Officer Grades for the United States Military Services

Officer Pay Grades	Army/Air Force/ Marine Corps	Navy
O-1	2nd Lieutenant	Ensign
O-2	1st Lieutenant	Lieutenant (junior grade)
O-3	Captain	Lieutenant
O-4	Major	Lieutenant Commander
O-5	Lieutenant Colonel	Commander
O-6	Colonel	Captain
O-7	Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (lower half)
O-8	Major General	Rear Admiral (upper half)
O-9	Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral
O-10	General	Admiral

of total military end-strength. There are several features of the grade table system that are worth highlighting.

While it was the stated intent of Congress that the grade table would allow “the services to meet requirements for officers in the various grades at ages and levels of experience conducive to effective performance,”² the grade table published in 1980 reflected a compromise between the Senate, which wanted to reduce the size of the officer corps, and the DoD backed by the House, which opted for the status quo. The table is not linked to the manpower requirements and personnel authorization process; it represents *legal* goals to be met rather than needs to be accommodated. The degree of arbitrariness is reflected in the curves shown in Figure 2.1 and can be seen in the very construction of the grade table. The smooth curves actually are based upon a *constant* number of new field-grade officers to the various services for a given increment of officer end-strength, regardless of the overall size of the officer corps. Specifically, for every 5,000 officers, the Army and Air Force get 1,264 and 1,290 field grades, respectively. For every 3,000 new officers, the Navy gets 750 field grades, and for every 2,500 new officers, the Marine Corps gets 435 new field grades.

²House Report No. 96-1462, pp. 13–14.

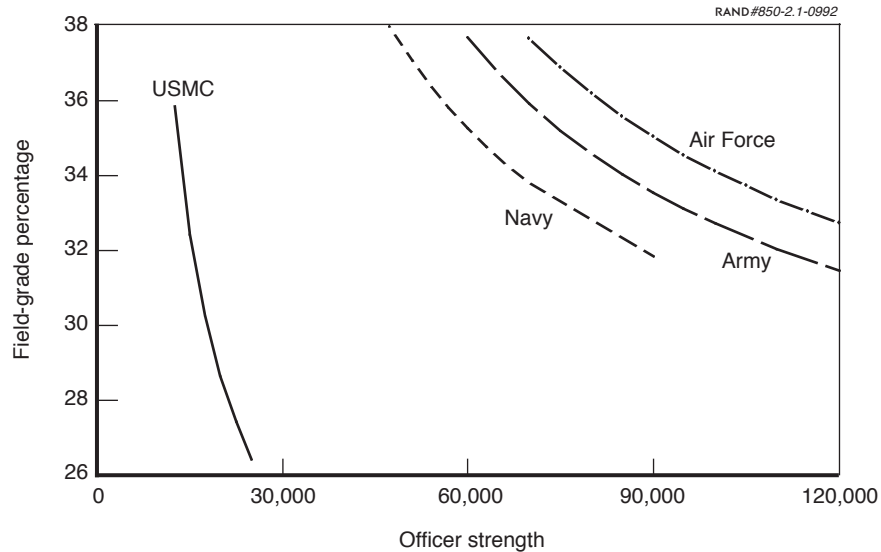


Figure 2.1—DOPMA Grade Tables Relative Increase in Field Grades as Officer Strength Declines

The constant increment of field-grade officers for equal incremental steps of officer end-strength results in *relatively* more field-grade officers for a smaller officer force. The so-called “sliding-scale” effect reflects Congress’s concern that the services maintain a base of officers in the field grades in case of any future mobilization.³ In addition, in periods of end-strength reductions, Congress allows for a larger fraction of officers to be in the field grades to perform grade-rich “overhead” functions to manage headquarters, training, medical, bases, etc.

Another feature of the DOPMA grade table is that change in the number of midcareer field-grade officers as overall officer end-strength changes is *instantaneous* and *independent* of other aspects of the DOPMA system. The consequence of instantaneously adjusting field-grade tables in an “in-at-the-bottom, up-through-the-ranks” system is to “unbalance” the force in periods of growth by providing more field-grade officers than are immediately needed and encouraging the

³This argument seems to be based in post-WWII concerns, but, today, working under the “Total Force” concept, mobilization would be met by reserve component individuals and units or the recall of retirees.

services to access more company-grade officers than can be sustained. In periods of declining officer end-strength, the opposite occurs.

The need to instantaneously adjust field-grade strength in line with the grade table limits exceeds the ability of the services to manage personnel flows within the promotion and tenure rules of DOPMA. In fact (as will be discussed in detail later), to maintain some balance in the forces during periods of drawdown, Congress has had to give the Department of Defense temporary authority to change several of the underlying provisions of DOPMA.

Finally, under DOPMA some officers are not counted in the grade table, most notably physicians and dentists.⁴ The law recognizes that officers working in a small number of particular specialties are “out of the normal promotion stream”⁵ and receive their grade based upon professional education, experience, and service rather than service in the military. A number of other professional groups could be treated in a like manner, e.g., nurses, lawyers, and chaplains. Accommodating these groups was one of the issues often spoken of as requiring changes to DOPMA.

Regular and Reserve Commissions

Under DOPMA some officers are offered regular commissions when they enter their respective services and other officers are offered reserve commissions.⁶ One of the more significant changes made in 1980 was the *single-promotion system* with an *all-regular career officer corps*, i.e., DOPMA did away with the temporary and permanent promotion systems used in the Army and the Air Force and the running-mate system used by the Navy and provided that all active-duty officers become regular officers by the time they reach the 11th year of service or are promoted to the grade of O-4.⁷ Below that grade, the law provides different tenure rights for regular and reserve officers. Regular officers are “on probation” for the first five years of service

⁴Congress excluded all physicians and dentists from the OGLA grade tables in 1967 “in recognition of the unique problems of obtaining and retaining medical and dental officers” (*House Report No. 96-1462*, p. 6342). Also excluded are certain reserve and retired officers, general and flag officers, and warrant officers.

⁵*House Report No. 96-1462*, p. 6352.

⁶Congress in the FY 1992 National Defense Authorization Act has mandated that after September 30, 1996, all officers will initially be commissioned reserve officers.

⁷A small number of officers who accept promotion to the grade of O-4 and are offered regular commissions turn them down and choose to remain reserve officers on active duty. However, for the most part, officers in the grade of O-4 and above hold regular commissions.

and reserve officers serve at the pleasure of their service. Given the requirement that all career officers be regular, the services use the formal process of *integration* (also called augmentation) of reserve officers into the regular officer corps as a way to indicate to reserve officers the service's desire that they make the military a career.

Tenure Rules

A significant feature of DOPMA is the tenure rules associated with the type of commission. Approximately 50 percent of officers commissioned in FY 1990 were appointed regular officers.⁸ Thus, DOPMA provides tenure protection to a very large number of officers even before their first day of active military service, which deprives personnel managers of the means to "shape" the kind of force that can best meet future needs. While the most incompetent regular officer might be asked to leave during his initial five-year probationary period, in fact, very few officers were ever separated under this provision of the law. After five years, regular officers cannot be involuntarily separated unless they consecutively fail selection for promotion to the next higher grade. Thus, if reductions have to be made, they must fall on reserve officers. However, since the services offered regular commissions to large numbers of reserve officers well before the mandatory "all-regular" force point of 11 years of service, their ability to manage the force through involuntary separations of reserve officers is limited.

Recently, several of the services have informally questioned the distinction made between regular and reserve officers and argued that, especially during periods of force reductions when the "out" provisions of the up-or-out promotion system cannot generate enough losses to meet reduced grade tables and end-strength goals, they should be free to select the best *performing* officers for continued service, regardless of the kind of commission the officer might hold. Congress is, in fact, temporarily allowing the services to set aside the tenure rules during the current drawdown, and the Senate Armed Services Committee in its Report on the FY 1992 National Defense Authorization Act notes that "the committee believes that all officers, regardless of their source of commission, should compete for regular commissions on the basis of their demonstrated performance and potential. Such competition is healthy and consistent with the principle of equal opportu-

⁸Accessions Policy Directorate, Office of Secretary of Defense. Typically, all service academy graduates receive regular commissions. Lesser proportions from the other commissioning sources, varying by service, also receive regular commissions. Direct appointments, warrant officers, and others are excluded from the percentage.

nity which allows the best officer to enter the regular component.”⁹ The Department of Defense prefers to retain the authority “to appoint certain persons as regular officers” and argued that congressionally mandated officer reductions that may exceed a service’s capability to execute under current law without legislative relief do “not necessitate a change in commissioning policy that has worked effectively over the last two decades.”¹⁰ The Senate’s view prevailed in the FY 1992 National Defense Authorization Act. After September 30, 1996, all officers will be initially commissioned reserve officers.

Up-or-Out Promotion System

At the heart of DOPMA is the *up-or-out promotion system*, with common promotion, separation, and retirement rules that in the judgment of Congress provide “in peacetime, a youthful, vigorous, full combat-ready officer corps.”¹¹ The “up” portion of the “up-or-out” system provides that, in general, officers move through the system in “cohorts” originally determined by the year of commissioning, and compete for promotion to the next higher grade against other members of the group at set *years-of-service* (YOS) points. The “out” portion of the “up-or-out” system provides that “officers twice passed over for promotion, after a certain number of years, depending upon their particular grade, are to be separated from active service, and if eligible retired.”

There are, however, exceptions to the mandatory separation rules. DOPMA provides for *selective continuation* on active duty of officers who have twice failed selection for promotion. It was Congress’s expectation that O-4s who failed to be selected to the next higher grade would be permitted to remain on active duty until they were eligible to retire at 20 years of service.¹² The law also provides for selective early retirement for O-5s and O-6s. However, it was the intent of the framers of DOPMA that these provisions would be “used

⁹*Senate Report 102-113*, p. 210.

¹⁰Department of Defense, “Report on Initial Appointments in the Reserves and Active Duty Obligation for Service Academies,” January 3, 1991.

¹¹*House Report No. 96-1462*, p. 6350. The President can waive the provisions of DOPMA during a mobilization, e.g., a declared national emergency. See *House Report No. 96-1462*, p. 6354.

¹²The *House Report* notes, “It is the committee’s strong desire that . . . only in unusual circumstances would this authority not be fully utilized” (*House Report No. 3296-1462*, p. 6336).

sparingly . . . [to] reduce the number in senior officer grades when necessary, such as during a reduction in force.”¹³

Table 2.2 shows the DOPMA promotion opportunity—the cumulative opportunity for advancement for those who compete for promotion to the next higher grade—for each grade and the promotion window that the authors of DOPMA believed would attract and retain the required number of officers.¹⁴ Table 2.2 also shows the mandatory years-of-service retirement points based upon current grades for officers who twice fail selection to the next higher grade.

The DOPMA system not only provides a standard for career progression for the majority of officers, i.e., the so-called due-course officer, but also provides for early and late promotion. In simplest terms, each selection board considers officers in three cohorts. A small number of “*above the zone*” promotions go to officers who failed to be selected for promotion the previous year, i.e., had been “passed over” when their cohort was in the *primary zone* the previous year. A small number of promotions also go to officers who have demonstrated outstanding potential and are selected before the majority of their cohort. These promotions are referred to as *below the zone* promotions. In effect, each cohort is looked at for promotion at least three times: a small number are selected early, the majority are selected “on-time” (*in the zone* or *in due course*), and a small number are selected late.¹⁵ When officers are selected early or late, they are associated with the officers who were in the primary zone in that year and will be considered for future promotion when that cohort is reviewed by a future selection board. As an example, Table 2.3 shows the actual distribution of grades by year of service for the Army for FY 1990. The distribution of promotions above and below the primary zone reflects officers who are multiple above or below the zone selectees. For

¹³House Report No. 96-1462, p. 6358. The Senate noted, “These provisions are not intended to be used solely for the purpose of maintaining or improving promotion opportunity or promotion timing” (Senate Report No. 96-375, p. 7).

¹⁴DOPMA recommended, but did not make statutory, minimum promotion opportunities for each of the officer field grades and offered guidelines for when an officer should be able to pin on the next higher grade (years of service plus all entry-grade credit). Eligibility for promotion depends on time in grade and not time in service. The effect of constructive credit on promotion will be examined in Section 5.

¹⁵An officer who is not selected “below the zone” is not considered to have been “passed over” (a promotion nonselect). An officer not selected for promotion from the primary zone remains eligible for consideration for promotion “above the zone” as long as he continues on active duty. An officer consecutively not selected in the primary zone and above the zone may be involuntarily separated, except that officers nearing retirement are allowed to complete 20 years of service.

Table 2.2
DOPMA Up-or-Out Promotion System for “Due-Course” Officer

Officer Pay Grade	Promotion Opportunity (percentage promoted from surviving cohort)	Promotion Timing (primary zone years of service)	Career Expectation	Career Pattern (cumulative probability to grade from original cohort less attrition)
O-2	100% if fully qualified	2.0	2X nonselect & separation	96%
O-3	95%	3.5/4	2X nonselect & separation or may be allowed to stay on active duty until retirement at 20 YOS	82%
O-4	80%	10±1	2X nonselect & separation or may be allowed to stay until 24 YOS; normal retirement at 20 YOS	66%
O-5	70%	16±1	30% of 2X nonselectees can be retired before normal (28 YOS) retirement	41%
O-6	50%	22±1	Normal retirement at 30 YOS, but 30% early retirement possible after 4 years in grade ^a	18%

^aBoth O-5 and O-6 could experience a more than 30 percent early retirement if considered more than once prior to reaching mandatory retirement.

Table 2.3
Distribution of Army Field-Grade Officer Promotions,
Fiscal Year 1990

Year of Service	Promotion Zone	O-4 (nominal promotion point is 10±1 years of service)	O-5 (nominal promotion point is 16±1 years of service)	O-6 (nominal promotion point is 22±1 years of service)
10		23		
11	O-4 below zone	153		
12	O-4 primary zone	1,885		
13	O-4 above zone	85	1	
14		10	2	
15		3		
16		0	15	
17	O-5 below zone	3	119	
18	O-5 primary zone	4	1,306	
19	O-5 above zone	2	53	3
20			13	6
21			1	26
22	O-6 below zone		1	98
23	O-6 primary zone			405
24	O-6 above zone			23
25				5

SOURCE: *Defense Manpower Data Center Report, 85M8820*. The nominal promotion point—years of active commissioned service plus all entry-grade credit—is derived from House and Senate reports on DOPMA and is specified as policy in DoD Instruction 1320.13.

example, in FY 1990, three Army lieutenant colonels who had been previously selected early were able to reach the grade of colonel with as little as 19 years of service, five years before the normal, due-course promotion to that grade. Moreover, note that in FY 1990 the primary zone phase point for the Army was also beyond the DOPMA “windows.”

Service Differences

While DOPMA requires each service to maintain a single active-duty list “to establish seniority within grade, to determine eligibility for promotion, . . . to provide for a proper timing of the promotion system, . . . to determine promotion zones and relative promotion opportunity and for the legal determination of failure of selection,” in

reality each service manages its officer corps in very different ways.¹⁶ The Navy, as was its practice before DOPMA, maintains a single “lineal list” without reference to a specific *year group*. Each year, based upon projected vacancies in each DOPMA-controlled grade for the coming five years, the Navy brings into the primary zone enough officers so that it can select the required number based upon the DOPMA promotion opportunity goal. By closely managing the number of officers considered by each selection board, the Navy is able to control the time between selection and promotion.

The Army, on the other hand, usually holds selection boards each year and considers for selection entire cohorts designated as *year groups*, regardless of the number of officers in a specific cohort. Applying the DOPMA or another promotion opportunity goal each year to cohorts of varying sizes results in selection lists of varying sizes, and often more people are on the list than can be promoted in the coming year (i.e., more people are on the list than there are projected vacancies). As a result, Army personnel often spend years in a selected, but not promoted, status.

In managing its promotion system, the Air Force takes features from the Army and the Navy. The Air Force maintains year group integrity, as does the Army, but it does not have regularly scheduled selection boards. By convening selection boards “as needed,” the Air Force is able to minimize the time between selection and promotion and to achieve the desired promotion opportunity goal. As a result of these differing practices, promotion problems typically appear as not meeting promotion timing goals (flowpoints) in the Navy and Air Force and as missing opportunity or timing goals in the Army. Timing problems in the Army are uniquely exacerbated by extended periods between selection and promotion and have led the Army to explicitly identify selected, but not yet promoted, officers with the designator “(P)” (for promotable) after their current grade.

The DOPMA Balancing Act

DOPMA provides a description of the normal, static, and ideal officer career profile and an officer force profile that is ideal over a “steady state” career. However, as DOPMA plays out in the real world, it is a compromise between competing management objectives.

¹⁶*House Report No. 3296-1462*, p. 6355.

Balancing Management Control and Career Expectations

DOPMA tries to provide an officer corps that “meet[s] requirements for officers in the various grades at ages and levels of experience conducive to effective performance, [and] provide[s] career opportunities that will attract and retain the number of high-caliber officers needed.”¹⁷ The ideal officer career profile is achieved *only* when DOPMA effectively balances the grade tables, promotion opportunity and promotion timing, and tenure rules, and when officers voluntarily show the “normal” officer attrition, e.g., *continuation rates*, that were assumed by DOPMA planners. In reality, however, continuation rates vary from year to year. Thus, it is not always possible to meet the grade tables, meet the “norms” for promotion, and have the desired career profile. As a result, to meet congressionally mandated grade tables, actual promotion opportunities and timing will often differ from the DOPMA norm. If career and other expectations are not met, officers are expected to react to reduced career opportunity by leaving. While in the long run this may act as a self-correcting mechanism for the system, in the short term, the services are deprived of officers they might like to have, and individual officers are affected to their perceived detriment. Furthermore, in periods of rapid reductions in the size of the officer corps, tenure rules cannot be maintained.

Balancing the Needs of “Competitive Categories”

If it is often difficult to accommodate the competing goals of “meeting requirements” and satisfying career expectations for the total officer corps, it is even more difficult to balance competing goals for each subgroup of officers, e.g., each *competitive category*. An effective officer corps is made up of not only officers proficient in general military and combat skills but also of officers who have professional or other special qualifications that complement core military and combat skills. It has long been held that because such officers have professional rather than “line” military experience, “it is impossible for them to compete for promotion on an equal footing with other officers having more general experience.”¹⁸ DOPMA provided a system where each service secretary can establish separate “competitive categories for promotion . . . for officers performing functions requiring special training or experience.”¹⁹ However, DOPMA has no

¹⁷House Report No. 96-1462, p. 6345.

¹⁸House Report No. 96-1462, p. 6372.

¹⁹Ibid.

formal mechanism to ensure that all competitive categories have the same promotion opportunities or receive their “fair share” of promotions based upon the grade tables.²⁰ Managing the various competitive categories has increasingly become a problem under DOPMA, as it was for some competitive categories prior to DOPMA.

DOPMA DYNAMICS

Probably the most important test of the adequacies of DOPMA is how well it allows the services to manage their officer corps during periods of rapid change. Unfortunately, from the beginning DOPMA has been a better *static* than *dynamic* description of how an officer management system should work. DOPMA is insensitive to the cyclical nature of personnel flows.²¹ During periods of buildup DOPMA provides personnel managers many tools to “grow” the force. The services have a variety of officer commissioning programs that can quickly respond by producing new officers. For example, officer strength can be increased by allowing more reserve officers on active duty to become regular officers. Given the overall growth in end-strength associated with a buildup, the DOPMA grade tables immediately provide each service with additional numbers of field-grade vacancies that can be filled by junior officers. Promotion opportunities are increased and/or promotion points decline. DOPMA, it should be recalled, provides that officers twice passed over for promotion may be retained on active duty until they are eligible to retire and beyond. If an increase is seen to be temporary, DOPMA enables the services to increase company-grade officers in ways that can be reversed. However, if an increase is seen to be permanent or if personnel managers in the DoD cannot restrain themselves from using all the grade authorizations made available by the instantaneously expanding DOPMA sliding-scale grade tables, the services can build an officer force that is very difficult to reduce within the DOPMA framework. Such was the case during the 1980s.

²⁰DOPMA does specify that, *within* a competitive category, officers over a five-year period should have relatively similar opportunity for promotion. DoD Directive 1320.12 allows for higher authorizations in a grade and competitive category than actual requirements when warranted by promotion flow considerations.

²¹The House noted that “models . . . presently available are incapable of portraying the dynamic near-term and long-term impacts of radically different management systems . . . [and that] . . . although the personnel system will eventually reach a steady state, the turbulence experienced in the meantime could prove disastrous. . . . The committee urges . . . the development of relatively simple, aggregate and dynamic models to support personnel and compensation proposals in the future” (*House Report No. 96-1462*, pp. 29–30).

During periods of decline DOPMA provides personnel managers with fewer tools to draw down the force, tools that take longer to produce an effect, or tools that are arduous to implement. In fact, as provided in law, many of the provisions of DOPMA either directly impede management action during periods of force reduction or result in situations that seem inconsistent with the goals and guidelines established for the management of officers as provided in DOPMA.

While grade tables ensure that any force reduction will be taken in the career force as well as in the noncareer force, tenure rules that regulate the involuntary separation of officers mean that end-strength and grade ceilings can be reduced more quickly than personnel managers can adjust personnel inventories. In the junior officer force, regular officers with more than five years of service can be removed only for cause or by twice failing selection to the next higher grade. While reserve officers have no such formal protection, the services offer regular commissions to many new accessions and to large numbers of reserve officers starting in their fifth year of service, thus affording them the same tenure protection as officers originally receiving regular commissions.

Under DOPMA the involuntary separation of career officers before retirement eligibility at 20 years of service is very difficult. While those O-4s who fail to be selected to O-5 may be terminated, during periods of force reduction the promotion point for O-5 is usually extended, placing nonselected officers in the grade of O-4 very near, if not beyond, the 18-year sanctuary for retirement. For all practical purposes career officers cannot be forced to leave before 20 years of service. The provisions for *Selective Early Retirement* contain restrictions on when an officer can first be considered for early retirement, the percentage of officers that can be selected, and how often an officer can be subject to such a review. The minimum time-in-grade (TIG) after promotion rules and the active commissioned service (ACS) rules²² further prevent nominally retirement-eligible officers from voluntarily retiring as early as they might wish, even during a force reduction. The nonvesting retirement discourages voluntary separations before 20 years of service. As a result, during the mid-1980s force reductions and again during the reductions scheduled for the early 1990s, the services could not adhere to the DOPMA career

²²In general, to retire in the grade of O-5 or O-6, a commissioned officer must have served on active duty in that grade for not less than three years; to retire upon request with 20 years of service, at least ten of those years must be in active service as a commissioned officer.

progression guidelines and had to ask Congress to temporarily suspend many of the tenure provisions of DOPMA. The next section will examine this and other aspects of how DOPMA was implemented during the 1980s.

3. DOPMA DURING GROWTH AND DECLINE: ITS FIRST DECADE

INTRODUCTION

DOPMA became effective on September 15, 1981. During the DOPMA decade Congress maintained a constant dialogue with DoD concerning the management of military officers. Central was a continuing concern about the total number of military officers. In addition to absolute growth as the military expanded, the services argued that increasingly technical weapons systems, changing military doctrine, changes in military organization, and the impact of Goldwater-Nichols (Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986) required relatively more (or more highly graded) commissioned officers. However, by mid-decade Congress had imposed a significant reduction in the number of officers, ordered a review of the officer manpower requirements system, and then partly rescinded its decision to legislate a lower number of officers. While the full reduction originally contemplated by Congress was never taken, planning for that reduction pointed to a number of problems with DOPMA. By the end of the decade, the need to cut officer strength as part of the post-Cold War drawdown was again pointing to the complex relationships resulting from DOPMA law, policy, and promise, and disagreement about the tools needed to manage the force.

In this section we review in detail the above events and explain why DOPMA itself created problems for personnel managers trying to cope with a dynamically changing demand for officers.

HOW MANY OFFICERS ARE ENOUGH?

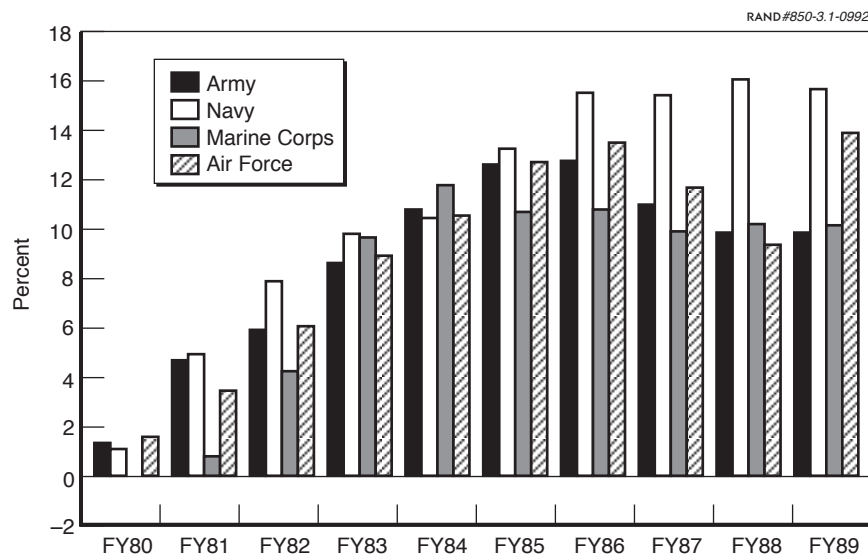
One of the reasons DOPMA was proposed was to bring into line the services' personnel systems with congressionally mandated personnel ceilings, such as those imposed under the Officer Grade Limitation Act of 1954, and to end the yearly trek to Capitol Hill for yet another "temporary" grade relief. However, even before DOPMA was passed, it was clear that the new legislation would not settle the dispute between the DoD and the Senate over the number of military officers who should be on active duty.¹ While the Senate finally agreed to a compromise bill that cut officers about 5 percent, vice the 20 to 30

¹See "Senate Approach 'Short-Sighted,'" *The Air Force Times*, May 26, 1980.

percent originally suggested by the Senate Armed Services Committee, DoD was on notice that important members of Congress were concerned about both the number of officers and “grade creep.”²

Growth of Officers in the Early Eighties

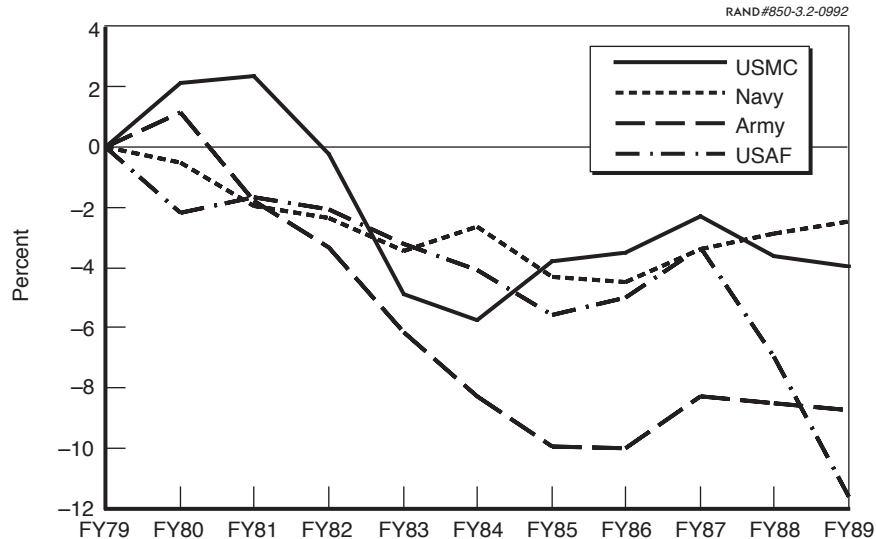
By mid-decade Congress again expressed concern that, for whatever reasons, the active-duty officer strength in absolute numbers and relative to enlisted strength had increased. Figure 3.1 shows the growth in officer strength relative to that of FY 1979, and Figure 3.2 shows the decline in the enlisted-to-officer ratio during the decade.³ Given these changes, Congress took action to cut officer strength. The National Defense Authorization Act for 1987 reduced officer strength over three years by 22,438 (18,528 were to be actual reductions from



**Fig. 3.1—Percentage Change in Officer Strength
(Base Year = FY 1979)**

²See Martha L. Craver, “DOPMA Moving Again,” *The Air Force Times*, October 13, 1980.

³A decline in the ratio indicates that, in a buildup, officers are increasing at a faster rate than that of enlisted.



**Fig. 3.2—Percentage Change in Enlisted-to-Officer Ratio
(Base Year = FY 1979)**

the FY 1986 end-strength levels and the remainder from planned growth).

In retrospect, there appear to be several reasons that officer strength grew during the early part of the decade. On the demand side DoD argued that “force expansion and modernization” caused the increases. DoD cited such things as improvements in enlisted retention, with corresponding decreases in enlisted overhead accounts, new weapons systems that reduced crew size without changing the number of officers needed to lead combat units, and growth in the number of medical officers and new officer positions in such areas as joint assignments and the management of research and development and contracting activities.⁴

Congress directed DoD to complete a comprehensive officer requirement study to be monitored by the General Accounting Office (GAO).⁵ The study found that DoD could “validate” (or as the GAO noted

⁴Department of Defense, *Defense Officer Requirements Study*, March 1988, pp. 32–36.

⁵The GAO found that “DoD did a credible job in explaining officer growth between 1980 and 1986.” General Accounting Office, *Military Officers: Assessment of the 1988 Defense Officer Requirements Study*, GAO/NSIAD-88-146, April 1988, p. 2.

“explain”) most of the growth, but as seen in Table 3.1, depending upon the service, significant unvalidated growth occurred.⁶

Growth in the demand for officers was matched on the supply side by an increased desire by many officers to make the military a career; a willingness on the part of the services to let the size of their officer corps increase, especially as they contemplated increased growth during the early Reagan buildup; and improvements in the promotion prospects to and for field-grade officers as a result of the instantaneous adjustment provisions of the DOPMA grade tables.

The 1986 Proposed Officer Reductions

When Congress mandated the 6 percent reduction in 1986, it asked the General Accounting Office to review “the adequacy of current officer separation policies.”⁷ The GAO concluded that:

- Proposed reductions will cause the services to delay promotions and reduce promotion opportunities beyond those recommended by the House of Representatives in its 1981 report on DOPMA.
- DOPMA protects virtually all officers with more than 11 years of service from reductions-in-force (RIF) actions and “since the inception of DOPMA, the opportunity for DOD to RIF or otherwise separate officers after their 11th year of service has diminished significantly.”⁸
- The limitations that DOPMA places on career force reductions will result in significant cuts in the number of officers commissioned, reductions below that needed to sustain the force over the long run, and will force separations to be taken by company-grade officers.

⁶The DoD study noted that:

The nonvalidated portion of the Army growth is primarily some unexplained growth in the training pipeline, coupled with some difficulties in tracking growth at Program Element Code levels.

The nonvalidated portion of Navy growth includes some civilian-eligible billets and some unexplained growth in management headquarters functions.

Nonvalidated growth in the Air Force is predominantly in civilian-eligible billets, particularly in the Research and Development and support areas.

See DOD *Defense Officer Requirements Study*, March 1988, p. 5.

⁷General Accounting Office, *Military Personnel: Options to Implement Officer Reductions*, GAO/NSIAD-87-162, August 1987, p. 1.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 2.

Table 3.1
Analysis of Officer Growth, FY 1980–1986

Service	Growth Validated	Growth Not Validated	Percentage Not Validated
Army	11,665	3,584	30.7
Navy	8,342	631	7.6
Air Force	11,235	3,472	30.9
Marine Corps	2,349	46	1.9
Total	33,591	7,733	
Mean			23.0

SOURCE: DoD, *Defense Officer Requirements Study*, March 1988, p. 4.

- While there is “adequate discretionary authority” to involuntarily separate officers who have between 1 and 11 years of service, the fact that regular officers are exempt from RIF authority would result in a disproportionate number of reserve officers being separated.⁹

The GAO also noted the negative impact that the nonvested retirement system had on the willingness of the services to ask for authority to RIF career officers.¹⁰ It recommended that the RIF be extended to career officers, together with a temporary increase in separation pay “to equitably compensate officers currently protected but who might be subject to a RIF before they reach retirement eligibility” (11–15 years of service) and an *extension in the period in which the reductions should be taken* to allow officers with more than 16 years of service to reach retirement eligibility. While the DoD did not concur with the GAO’s recommendations and eventually was successful in having most of the reduction set aside (eventually only 2 percent of the original 6 percent was taken), this experience clearly pointed to the problems that DOPMA was going to have with the more drastic cuts associated with the changing world situation at the end of the decade.

⁹This resulted in the Association of the United States Army’s call for “[a]uthority to include Regular Army officers in the zone of consideration for reduction-in-force boards.” *Fact Sheet: The Serious Issues Impacting on Officer Retention*, 1987.

¹⁰The GAO noted, “The services are particularly reluctant to separate officers who have 16 to 20 years of service and are close to retirement because they would lose all benefits and receive only a maximum of \$30,000 separation pay—far less than the long-term retirement costs.” GAO, *Military Personnel: Options to Implement Officer Reductions*, p. 3.

UNDERSTANDING OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT IN THE 1980s

Under DOPMA the 1980s was a decade of *boom* and *bust*. The boom started with the Reagan administration program to “expand and modernize” the force in 1981. Given that military organizations almost always obtain new officers through increased accessions, the inventory of junior or company grades grew faster than that of field grades. However, under the DOPMA rules, the increased end-strength (made up mostly of junior officers) caused an *instantaneous* increase in the number of *allowable* field-grade officers. Figure 3.3 shows for each service the changes in the field-grade table and in company and field-grade inventories between FY 1981 and FY 1986.¹¹ In all services except the Marine Corps,¹² the percentage change in the field-grade table exceeded the percentage change in the field-grade inventory. As a result, the DOPMA system treated company-grade and junior field-grade officers *in service* at the start of the Reagan buildup to a windfall as promotion opportunities rose and/or the time it took to reach a higher grade was reduced (Table 3.2). As shown in Table 3.2, in all services, promotion opportunity was greater than the DOPMA minimum opportunity but varied by service. Promotion timing was generally within DOPMA norms (a band of plus or minus one year around a center point) but was later in the Army than in the Navy. In particular, the Navy, with small cohorts approaching promotion at the various field grades, promoted faster and with a higher percentage of those eligible but still did not meet its allowed grade table. In the vernacular of the time, there was a lot of “head space,” as *promotions exceeded DOPMA expectations*.¹³

However, high accession rates and increased promotion opportunity could not be sustained. Both of these changes, the growth in company

¹¹Prior to officer strength controls in 1987, company-grade officers grew quickly. They were uncontrolled. Figures 3.3 and 3.4 use the line competitive category calculated with grade table entry points at the overall DOPMA strength.

¹²In the FY 1986 DoD authorization, the USMC (Marine Corps) received a revised grade table that allowed for absolutely more O-4s at each officer strength step and proportionally more O-4s as strength increased (e.g., at a strength of 17,500, the increase in O-4 allowed was 5.1 percent and at a strength of 25,000, the increase was 12.6 percent). At a FY 1986 actual strength of 18,660, the increase was 6.5 percent in O-4s and 3.6 percent as a percentage of the entire table. Figure 3.3 portrays only change based on end-strength change; if the effect of the grade table change were also factored in, the grade table for the USMC in FY 1981–1986 expanded by 6 percent. The USMC did not exceed the authorized grade table.

¹³A complete promotion history for the period FY 1979 to FY 1990 can be found in Appendix D.

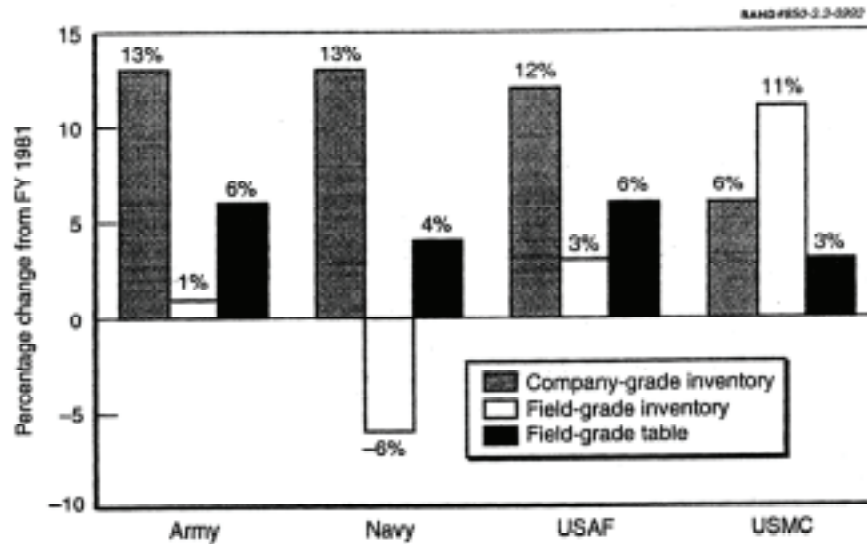


Figure 3.3—Percentage of Change in Field-Grade Table and Company- and Field-Grade Inventories (FY 1981-1986)

grades and the instantaneous increase in the DOPMA grade table, set the stage for the promotion “bust” beginning in the late 1980s and continuing into the 1990s. The seeds of the bust were sown by the size of the “Reagan cohorts” accessed to “feed” the buildup. The cohorts were so large and had such good retention that the higher levels of promotion opportunity and shorter promotion cycles of the early 1980s could be maintained only if officer strength were allowed to stay high or grow indefinitely—a situation that did not happen.

The impact of the end of the Reagan buildup and the instantaneous effect of the DOPMA sliding-scale grade tables can be seen in Figure 3.4, which, for the period FY 1986 to FY 1990, shows the changes in company- and field-grade inventories and grade table authorizations.¹⁴ Accession cuts began as a result of officer strength decreases. With these strength cuts, the grade table allowance was reduced through the instantaneous effect of the sliding scale. Field-

¹⁴Except in the Navy, where officer strength continued to increase, the field-grade inventory decreased less quickly than the company-grade inventory and was generally in line with changes in the field-grade table.

Table 3.2
Average Officer Promotion Opportunity and Timing,
1981-1985

	O-6	O-5	O-4
Promotion Opportunity			
	DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%
Army	57.8%	81.4%	84.4%
Navy	63.8%	79.6%	88.0%
USMC	60.2%	74.6%	81.0%
Air Force	55.4%	75.4%	90.2%
Promotion Point			
	DOPMA = 22±1	DOPMA = 16±1	DOPMA = 10±1
Army	21-11	16-4	11-4
Navy	21-3	14-11	9-3
USMC	21-10	15-7	10-6
Air Force	20-7	15-11	11-7

SOURCE: Director of Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management (O&EPM) in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel (FM&P), August 19, 1991.

NOTE: Average promotion point for all competitive categories is the number of years and months of active commissioned service plus entry-grade credit at which officers are promoted to a particular grade. Average opportunity, for all competitive categories, is computed by totaling all officers due course, above, and below zone promotions, and dividing by the number of officers in zone.

grade inventories went down through reduced promotions to stay within the statutory grade table. As a result, in most services, promotion timing increased and/or opportunity decreased when compared with those of the previous period, and in some cases outside the norms below the level considered by the DOPMA framers as desirable to attract and maintain a quality officer corps.

In particular, as shown in Table 3.3, in the Army and Marine Corps, opportunity for promotion was at or below the DOPMA minimums. Timing in the Army to the grade of O-5 had exceeded the DOPMA norm, and certain grades in other services were approaching the limits. In general, uniformity and consistency across services or within a service over time were not being achieved.

LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A decade that began with a growing force and officer corps and a new management system ended with a decreasing force and officer corps

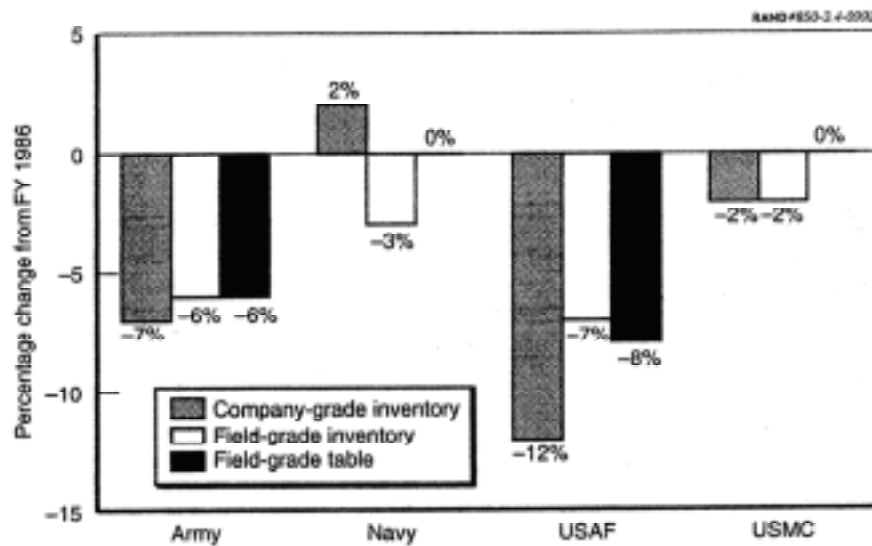


Fig. 3.4—Percentage Change in Field-Grade Table and Company- and Field-Grade Inventories (FY 1987–1990)

and a management system unable to reconcile its own constraints of law, policy, and promise. The impact of these flows on the force will be seen in the next section as we review the drawdown. What became clear only after the fact and in the face of proposed cuts in officer strength was that DOPMA provides a lot more flexibility in its grade tables during a period of growth than it does during a period of decline. Tenure rules that regulate the involuntary separation of officers mean that end-strength and grade ceilings can be reduced more quickly than personnel inventories. By virtue of its internal design, DOPMA forces choice between grade table violations (law) or diminution of proffered tenure (law) and proffered promotion opportunity/timing (policy, promise) in a period of reductions. Some means to better balance the constraints of control and promotion equity, such as a more measured means of making adjustments, is needed rather than the instantaneous adjustment mechanism of DOPMA. We will further consider the advantages of a flexible adjustment mechanism later in this report as well as several other means to provide personnel managers with more flexible means for managing the military officer corps.

Table 3.3
Average Officer Promotion Opportunity and Timing,
1981-1985 and 1986-1990

	Years	O-6	O-5	O-4
		Promotion Opportunity		
		DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%
Army	81-85	57.8%	81.4%	84.4%
	86-90	47.6%	73.2%	78.8%
Navy	81-85	63.8%	79.6%	88.0%
	86-90	56.2%	72.4%	82.8%
USMC	81-85	60.2%	74.6%	81.0%
	86-90	52.6%	69.0%	78.2%
Air Force	81-85	55.4%	75.4%	90.2%
	86-90	56.5%	74.4%	89.5%
Promotion Point				
		DOPMA = 22±1	DOPMA = 16±1	DOPMA = 10±1
Army	81-85	21-11	16-4	11-4
	86-90	22-5	17-5	11-5
Navy	81-85	21-3	14-11	9-3
	86-90	21-3	15-3	9-10
USMC	81-85	21-10	15-7	10-6
	86-90	21-10	16-8	11-5
Air Force	81-85	20-7	15-11	11-7
	86-90	21-4	16-2	10-10

SOURCE: Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P), (MM&PP), (O&EPM), August 19, 1991. (See NOTE, Table 3.2.)

4. DOPMA AND THE POST-COLD WAR DRAWDOWN: THE SECOND DECADE

INTRODUCTION

The issue of reducing the number of military personnel on active duty was again a topic of consideration in 1990 as DoD started to plan for a general drawdown in U.S. forces. DoD told Congress that to meet end-strength and grade table limits and adhere to reasonable promotion opportunities and timing, it would have to suspend the DOPMA tenure rules and force people to leave.¹

In this section we will review in detail the services' initial plans for drawing down their officer corps and explain why changes to DOPMA were necessary to provide for an orderly reduction. We also provide the results of a number of computer simulations that explored several alternative drawdown policies to gain insight into the range of policies that might be followed.

DRAWING DOWN THE FORCE

Under the provisions of DOPMA, DoD could authorize a voluntary early-out program and establish boards to discharge both active and reserve officers within their first five years of service. It could lower promotion rates and authorize separation of many twice nonselected officers.² It could convene selected early retirement boards (SERB) and initiate a RIF of reserve company-grade officers. These actions, however, were not enough to reduce the force in a balanced way as quickly or as deeply as proposed. As a result, DoD requested a change in DOPMA. Congress responded in the FY 1991 Authorization Act by allowing the Secretary of Defense, during the five-year period beginning October 1, 1990, to shorten the period of selective

¹See Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel), *Officer Management Legislation: Why Needed?* Report to the Committees on Armed Services of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, February 1990.

²The timing of promotion boards and the selection rate directly and indirectly affect retention. The direct effect is from the ability to separate (within constraints) two-time nonselectees. Thus, the frequency with which boards for each grade are held governs when people leave, and the amount of selection opportunity provided governs how many people leave. The indirect effect comes from self-selection out when an individual finds out he/she is less competitive than his/her peers.

continuation, to expand selective early retirement, and to convene selection boards to discharge regular officers.

Service Plans

In March 1991, the services, incorporating legislative relief provided for several of the provisions of DOPMA, presented their drawdown, plans to the Secretary of Defense. Table 4.1 shows the services' planned drawdown by fiscal year. (The specific means the services proposed to use to accomplish the drawdown are in Table B.2 of Appendix B.) The majority of cuts were to be made in the Army and Air Force, reducing their officer corps to levels some 30 and 23 percent smaller over a six-year period. Officer accessions were planned to decline. In relative terms, the enlisted-to-officer ratio would decline in all services following the general philosophy of the sliding-scale principle for field-grade officers, e.g., relatively more officers are required in a smaller force. In addition, it was expected that over 32 thousand officers would be involuntarily separated from the services.

Table 4.1
The Planned Drawdown by Service, FY 1990–1995

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Officer strength						
Army	104,498	99,291	95,481	89,468	84,530	78,790
Navy	72,090	71,016	69,468	67,557	65,782	65,196
Marine Corps	19,958	19,757	19,180	18,591	18,002	17,413
Air Force	100,045	96,660	92,020	86,594	84,077	82,667
Reduction from FY 1989						
Army	4.9	8.8	14.2	19.7	25.1	30.4
Navy	2.2	3.8	6.9	9.5	12.8	14.0
Marine Corps	.2	1.6	4.5	7.5	10.4	13.4
Air Force	6.2	10.9	14.7	19.8	22.1	23.4
Accessions						
Army	8,002	7,150	6,987	6,847	6,631	6,381
Navy	6,952	6,291	5,112	4,930	4,466	4,381
Marine Corps	1,800	1,600	1,500	1,415	1,415	1,414
Air Force	5,378	5,738	5,435	4,444	5,659	6,261
Enlisted-to- officer ratio						
Army	5.97	6.03	5.87	5.86	5.77	5.75
Navy	6.97	6.96	6.87	6.87	6.78	6.75
Marine Corps	8.85	8.81	8.80	8.80	8.80	8.80
Air Force	4.31	4.22	4.24	4.24	4.24	4.24

SOURCE: Service March 1991 submissions to the Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P) based upon ASD memo dated 16 January 1991.

While the plans submitted by the services to the Office of the Secretary of Defense in March 1991 are only a snapshot of a very dynamic and moving set of policies, they do provide an indication of how the services view the relative attractiveness of the various DOPMA provisions. (The specifics of how the services planned on using the various authorities are presented in Appendix B.) The Army intended to allow officers to leave early and to use special boards to RIF both regular and reserve officers. The Navy, with a much smaller cut to manage, intended to use selective early retirement and to apply, as in past years, the failure-to-select provisions of the promotion system to reduce its officer corps. The Marine Corps would use the augmentation process to identify reserve officers that it would separate. The Air Force intended to use the workings of the promotion system and to RIF reserve but not regular officers. In total, over 32 thousand officers were projected to be separated involuntarily between October 1, 1990, and September 31, 1995. Particularly in the Army, many of these would have been separated by suspending the normal DOPMA tenure rules.

Congressional Concerns

Congress, however, remains uneasy about “shaping” the force, especially if it requires the involuntary separation of service members. The Senate Appropriations Committee in its report on the FY 1992 Defense Appropriations Bill noted,

The Committee has been particularly troubled by the question of involuntary separation of members of the armed forces. For the first time in its history, this country has an all-volunteer military force, composed of people who have chosen to make a career of service to their country. . . . The Committee believes . . . the most attractive options for reducing the size of the military, such as by attrition or by reducing the numbers of personnel entering the military, either unacceptably lengthen the time it would take to make sufficient reductions or result in an unbalanced, top heavy force. The Committee has reluctantly come to believe that, as they prudently reduce the size of our armed forces, the military services must be allowed to take advantage of all options available to them, including involuntary separations.³

This was, however, at odds with the position taken by the House Appropriations Committee, which argued that “reductions should be accomplished from attrition, reduced accessions, and early-out oppor-

³Senate Appropriations Committee, *Report 102-154*, Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 1992, p. 9.

tunities, and not through involuntary separations,”⁴ and singled out the Army for proposing to use “involuntary separations in fiscal year 1992 . . . [because it had] . . . not exercised all available options to meet authorized end strength.”⁵ The House Appropriations Committee was joined by the Senate Armed Services Committee in banning involuntary separations during FY 1992.

In addition to a general concern for those who might have to involuntarily separate, the Senate raised the issue “of the vesting of military personnel into the retirement system.”⁶ They noted, as had others before them, the chilling effect that the nonvested 20-year retirement system had on the willingness of personnel planners to cut career personnel and the inadequacies of the separation pay provisions of DOPMA to adequately compensate officers asked to leave before they reach retirement eligibility.⁷

The FY 1992 and 1993 National Defense Authorization Act ultimately allowed the services to “shape” the force by involuntarily separating personnel, but only after service members are offered their choice of two voluntary incentive programs “that would give a reasonable, fair choice to personnel who would otherwise have no option but to face selection for involuntary separation, and to risk being separated at a point not of their own choosing.”⁸ (As of May 13, 1992, 4,414 and 3,717 officers in the Army and Air Force, respectively, had taken one or another of the options and separated early rather than to risk involuntary separation “at a point not of their own choosing.”)

⁴House Appropriations Committee, *Report 102-95*, Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, 1992, p. 57.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶“Senate Armed Services Committee, *Report 102-113*, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, p. 199.

⁷The GAO noted the same concern in their assessment of DoD’s 1986 officer reduction (United States General Accounting Office, *Military Personnel: Options to Implement Officer Reductions*, GAO/NSIAD-87-162, August 1987). Others have also noted the distortions caused by the nonvesting retirement system. In 1978, the President’s Commission on Military Compensation argued that the current retirement system compromises manpower managers’ “ability to adapt to a changing technological and strategic environment.” The commission noted, “Because the current system provides benefits only after 20 years of service, managers are reluctant to separate ineffective people who are approaching retirement eligibility. After a member has served 20 years, the availability of an immediate annuity lessens the incentive to remain on active duty. As manpower requirements change in future years, manpower managers will find that the current system constrains their ability to adapt to a changing technological and strategic environment” (*Report of the President’s Commission on Military Compensation*, April 1978, p. 27).

⁸*House of Representatives Conference Report 102-311*, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Years 1992 and 1993, p. 556.

The Need to “Shape” the Force

While the “concern over the effect of strength reduction during the next few years on our men and women in uniform and their families, . . . especially . . . because it affects people who are a product of an all volunteer force”⁹ is laudable, the resulting policy of reducing accessions below that needed to sustain the force over time has very undesirable consequences for the future personnel proficiency and readiness of our armed forces. Figure 4.1 shows an “ideal military personnel profile” with the characteristic shape of an “in-at-the-bottom, up-through-the-ranks” system.¹⁰

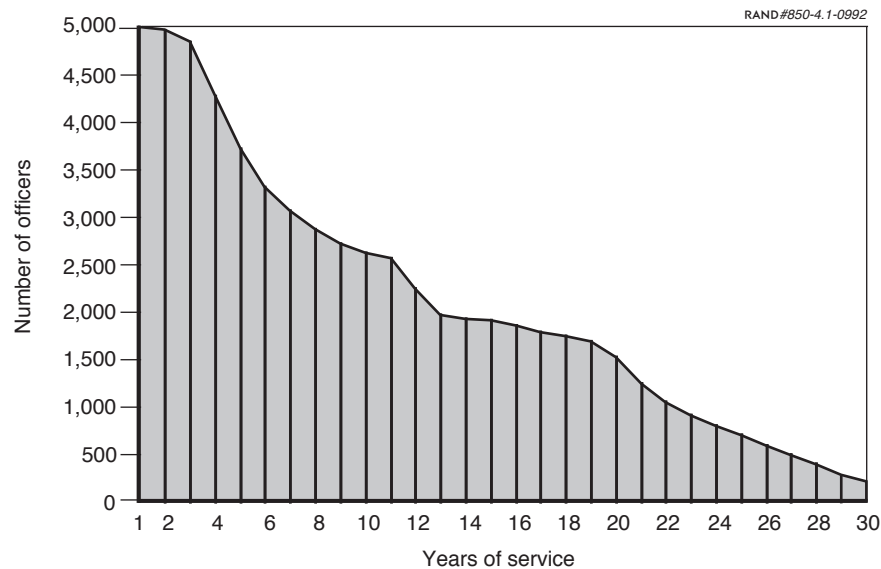


Fig. 4.1—Ideal Personnel Year of Service Distribution

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰A. P. Smith points out that, as early as 1679, the Secretary of the Admiralty regulated the annual entry of officers into the British Navy, and that by 1779, career structures, retention rates, and promotion probabilities were regularly analyzed for the Royal Marines. The systematic collection of the statistics used in personnel planning dates from 1820 in the British Navy, and the basic personnel planning models were discussed in 1899 in the Naval Proceeding of the American Navy. See A. P. Smith, “Defense Manpower Studies,” *Operational Research Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1968. For a discussion of manpower structures and personnel planning models, see Richard C. Grinold and Kneale T. Marshall, *Manpower Planning Models*, North Holland Press, New York, 1977.

This personnel year-of-service profile has been “ideal” in at least two ways. First, at any point in time it is consistent with the workings of the promotion system, the internal organization of military units, the desired ratio of junior to senior personnel, the military pay system, minimization of the total cost of military personnel, and provision of the right experience mix. *Most important*, this general shape will “reproduce” itself over time, and thus the age and experience of such a force called to war in ten years will be substantially the same as one called to war tomorrow. DOPMA was constructed using such a profile.

Figure 4.2 shows the impact on the Army of restricting its ability to take career force separations needed to keep the force in balance. Such a policy will result in a “trough” moving forward during the next two decades, with an overly senior force in the first decade and an overly junior one in the second. To the extent that a reduction program results in such a profile, a service is simply trading a short-term problem for a more serious long-term problem. In such a force over the next decade, the Congressional Budget Office notes, “Some senior personnel might find themselves performing more and more of the



Fig. 4.2—Army Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separation, FY 1991–2008

work usually delegated to junior personnel even as the experience levels, and perhaps the pay grade of these senior personnel, advance. Morale almost certainly would suffer and the higher pay following promotion might offer little consolation.”¹¹ In the second decade, just the reverse would occur as junior officers would be performing tasks for which they might be underqualified and, unless promotions were accelerated, underpaid as well.

If the Army were forced to follow a policy of drastically reducing their accessions, they would end the 1990s with a far more costly and senior officer corps than once thought desirable. As these officers retire in the early years of the next century, the Army will have an immediate and prolonged loss of experienced personnel. To avoid a sharp reduction in total strength, the Army will have to increase the number of new officers they access, thus increasing the experience imbalance in their personnel structure. (Similar situations exist for the other services, as portrayed in Appendix C.) Such cycles of boom and bust play havoc with normal career progression and adversely impact performance, job satisfaction, and readiness.

UNDERSTANDING OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT DURING THE DRAWDOWN

The above discussion considers why involuntary separations may be necessary to maintain an appropriate year-of-service profile. Similarly, Figure 4.3 shows the extent to which the field-grade table and the field-grade inventory would diverge during the drawdown period if the congressionally mandated end-strengths were met without involuntarily separating service members.¹² Such a situation would require the services to either violate the grade tables or diminish field-grade timing and opportunity for cohorts moving through the system.

If it were desirable to maintain promotion opportunity and timing, Congress could authorize a modification to the DOPMA grade tables

¹¹The Congressional Budget Office, in a recent study on *Managing the Reduction in Military Personnel* (July 1990), also identified two approaches open to defense personnel planners—an “accession-heavy approach” and an “across-the-board approach”—as the two options available to reduce the active-duty force.

¹²This projection is based on the assumptions that the congressionally mandated end-strengths through FY 1995 are met, no increased voluntary or involuntary separations occur (which means accessions must be cut), and DOPMA norms for promotion opportunity and timing are provided to the field grades (which allows the grade tables to be violated).

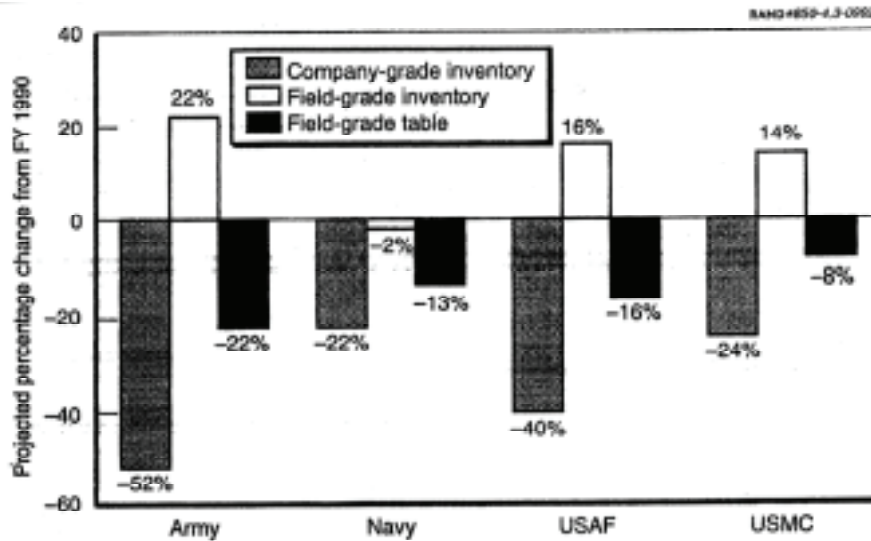


Fig. 4.3—Projected Percentage Change in Field-Grade Table and Company- and Field-Grade Inventories (FY 1991-1995)

to provide an alternative drawdown path (e.g., modify the provision of DOPMA that allows for instantaneous adjustment of the field-grade tables) and/or allow the services to involuntarily separate officers. Figure 4.4 shows that substantially more grade relief would be necessary if the current congressional restrictions against involuntary separations are continued. For example, the Army in its original drawdown plan incorporated involuntary separations to provide DOPMA promotion opportunity and timing. If the Army decided not to involuntarily separate any officer, it would need in FY 1995 approximately 49 percent more field-grade authorizations. If the Army were allowed to involuntarily separate officers according to their original plan, we estimate that DOPMA promotion norms could be maintained with as little as a 4 percent increase in the grade table.

ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVE DRAWDOWN POLICIES

Given the need to separate officers before retirement to avoid developing an imbalanced force structure and to meet end-strength goals, the

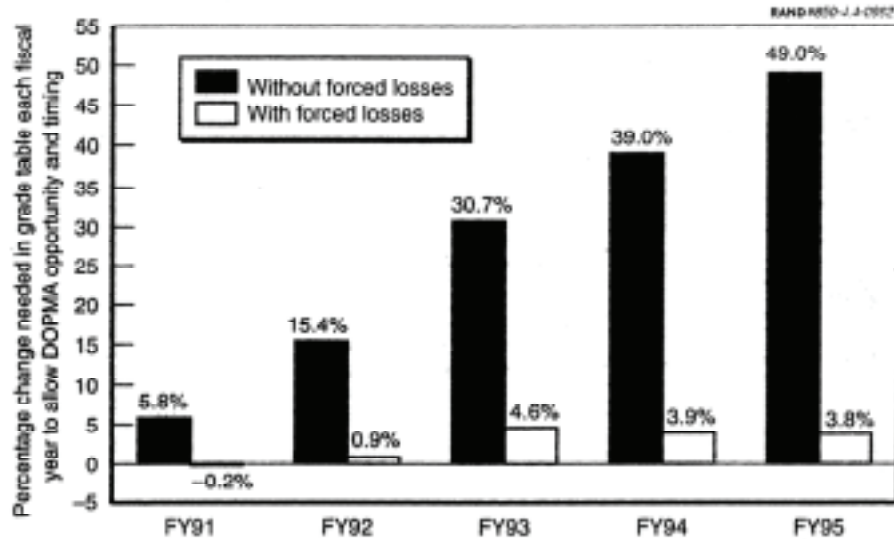


Fig. 4.4—Grade Table Increases Needed to Accommodate DOPMA Promotion Opportunity and Timing (Army)

original DOPMA legislation and the FY 1991 temporary changes to DOPMA provided a range of tools.¹³ To better understand the efficacy of these measures and to suggest an implementation policy that could be followed, we examined a number of alternative policy options—as applied to the Army—using a simulation model based on the Officer Inventory Projection Model developed for the Office of the Secretary of Defense by the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center. The work presented here examines a reduction of line officers to end-strengths planned for the drawdown. In considering alternative drawdown options, we tried to maintain promotion opportunity in the various grades at or above the DOPMA norm, particularly to the controlled grades of O-4, O-5, and O-6, and to increase the number of new officer accessions to minimize future problems.

We found that without reducing the number of officers, it was impossible to maintain anything close to the DOPMA promotion opportuni-

¹³This analysis was based on the “tools” provided in 1990, which did not include such programs as the Voluntary Separation Incentive or early retirement options to induce losses during the drawdown period.

ties or the historical flow of new officers into the Army. Specifically, our analysis, summarized in Figure 4.5, shows that normal promotion opportunities to O-4, O-5, and O-6 of 80 percent, 70 percent, and 50 percent, respectively, cannot all be sustained.¹⁴ Given traditional patterns of voluntary year-to-year continuation, the normal DOPMA system—continuation of junior officers until twice nonselected for promotion and no SERB (portrayed as Alternative 1 in Figure 4.5)—could not sustain reasonable promotion opportunities and accession rates. Introducing an O-5 and O-6 SERB (Alternative 2, Figure 4.5) does improve accessions and opportunity but not significantly. Using the enhanced SERB authority (Alternative 3, Figure 4.5) increases both opportunity and accessions but not to the extent needed. In Alternative 4 of Figure 4.5, we approached the problem somewhat dif-

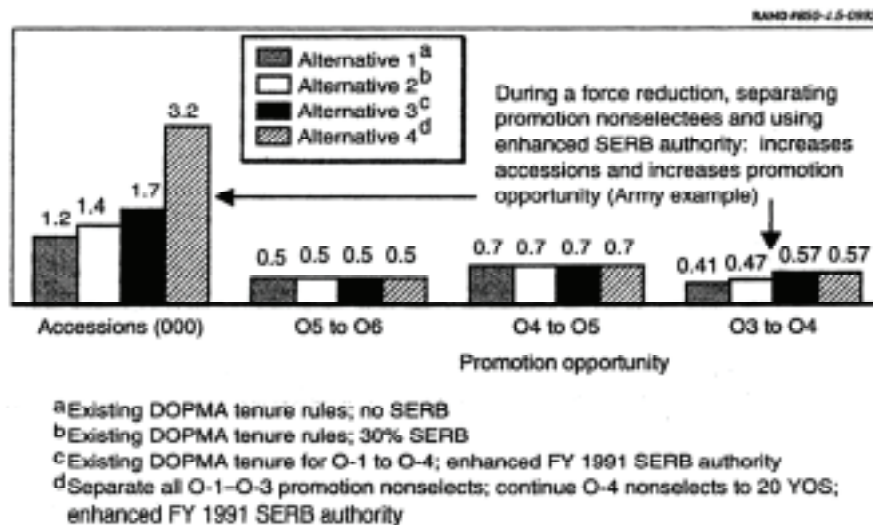


Fig. 4.5—Army Force Reduction Options

¹⁴In this figure, we have chosen to reflect the shortfall in promotion opportunity at the grade of O-4. Other combinations of promotion opportunity to the three grades are possible. While we have not directly assessed the impact of extending promotion phase points (those we used were at the upper end of the DOPMA range for all grades), such action could create problems on the job by substantially changing the traditional year-of-service/grade relationships.

ferently by placing emphasis on the SERB process allowed in the FY 1991 Authorization Act¹⁵ and making more use of the “out” provisions of the up-or-out promotion system than is currently allowed by law. We separated all company-grade officers upon failure of promotion in this alternative.¹⁶

Figure 4.5 compares the results of these several alternative draw-down policies. In our analysis of alternative policies, we found the greatest impact on future promotion opportunity when we used the enhanced SERB mechanism, which even had a significant impact on accessions. When a retirement-eligible officer in the grade of O-6 leaves, his departure sets off a chain of vacancies, as other officers are allowed to move up, that substantially increases promotion opportunity in *all* lower grades. Moreover, the overall vacancies directly affect ability to access new officers.

We found the greater effect on accessions from reducing the number of junior officers than from reductions using the SERB. The SERB affects both promotions and accessions; reducing serving company-grade officers allows for more accessions (greater turnover) independent of field-grade promotions.

The Army recognizes the infeasibility of the current situation and in their March 1991 submission to the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) proposed to involuntarily separate over 3,500 officers before retirement and approximately 450 retirement-eligible officers in FY 1991. Our analysis does not contradict the Army’s basic conclusion that the only way to meet the mandated force reductions and maintain a viable officer management system is to increase the number of officers leaving in the drawdown years. However, in our analysis, we also separated junior officers by more extensively using the “out” provision of the up-or-out promotion system. Rather than establishing special boards (as allowed by the FY 1991 Authorization) to recommend the discharge of regular officers outside the normal promotion system, we separated company-grade officers (O-1 to O-3) upon failure of promotion selection but allowed O-4 not-selected to continue to 20

¹⁵For a temporary period, the department is allowed to selectively retire through a board process O-5 upon failure of selection for promotion and O-6 with two years of time in grade. These officers may also be considered for early retirement over multiple years.

¹⁶This is done to simulate the effect of a reduction-in-force mechanism and is useful for the one-year look we are using. Such a policy does not necessarily foster significantly increased losses except in the first year. For other years, it would accelerate, but not increase, losses. As noted earlier, promotion opportunity determines the number of officers who could be separated and the timing of promotion boards determines when separations occur.

years of service before separation after initial nonselection for promotion; a policy of continuing promotion of nonselectees during a drawdown encourages officers who have been judged to be less qualified¹⁷ than those selected to remain on active duty, but to what end? Very few officers are ever promoted above the zone, but many more passed-over officers remain for one or two more looks. Our analysis shows that those passed-over officers reduce the promotion opportunity for following cohorts in that grade and *all* lower grades.

In sum, our analysis of alternative drawdown policies suggests:

- Separating O-6s with two years of time in grade and O-5s upon failure of selection for promotion using the SERB process not only increases the number of officers accessed but opens up promotion flows resulting in higher promotion opportunities in all grades.
- While special “discharge” selection boards may be able to better target officers by skill, the normal promotion selection process is functionally equivalent *as long as officers who fail selection are separated*. Separating company-grade nonselectees disadvantages those few officers who might have later achieved above-the-zone promotions. Most officers would have been separated anyway; the process is simply accelerated.
- Continuing officers on active duty who have failed selection results in reduced accessions and lower promotion opportunities for those grades and *all* lower grades.

SUMMING UP DOPMA DURING THE DRAWDOWN

The company-grade cohorts that grew in the early eighties are only now approaching field-grade eligibility. At the time that these large company-grade stocks will expect field-grade positions (for their own promotion timing and opportunity), these field-grade positions will have vanished as the end-strengths of the nineties are being reduced in size through lowered accessions to accomplish the drawdown. The DOPMA system has done the reverse of what, in retrospect, is needed: DOPMA provided expanded grade tables ten years sooner than actually needed to accommodate the expansion hump as it passes through the system in the future. At the time the expanded grade tables are actually needed, these tables will be in the process of con-

¹⁷These officers are typically “fully qualified” but not “best qualified.”

tracting. By its own workings, DOPMA is at least ten years out of cycle with the reality of force expansion and contraction.¹⁸

By being silent on the adjustment mechanism, DOPMA itself leads to potential “violation” of key control and officer management tenets (e.g., the legal grade tables and the proffered promotion timing and opportunity). To maintain promotion timing and opportunity, other aspects of the DOPMA system (e.g., career tenure for regular and reserve) must be violated. In these dynamic times, DOPMA simply has too many incompatible constraints of law, policy, and promise.¹⁹ Examining only a five-year period allows short-term policies (e.g., SERB, reduced timing, and opportunity) to mask more systemic longer-term problems of the DOPMA design. The changes in the grade tables that DOPMA allows do not reflect how the services really “grow” or reduce officers in a closed system. DOPMA does not provide for an appropriate adjustment mechanism that balances the need for control (the grade table) and the need for consistent tenure and promotion expectations in periods of rapid change, up or down. The end-state mandated by the sliding scale may be right, but the path to get there appears to be wrong. In a period of reduction, DOPMA requires sharp downward adjustments in promotion opportunity and/or timing, and requires large numbers of officers to be involuntarily separated before they would normally choose to leave active military service.

¹⁸A better balance of control and promotion equity would have each cohort imprinted with its own norms that it carries throughout its 30-year life. For example, providing fixed promotion opportunity and timing to a cohort and allowing grades to float (the opposite of the current mechanism) would accomplish this but represent a significant departure from the DOPMA paradigm.

¹⁹In commenting on an earlier version of this report, the Air Force personnel chief noted, “We agree with your assessment that any fundamental change to DOPMA must address the problem currently caused by conflict between law, Service policy, and Service promise. Any new legislation must allow the Services the flexibility to balance the demands of grade control, and career tenure and opportunity (promotion flow)” (letter from Lieutenant General Billy J. Boles, Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, United States Air Force, to RAND, February 3, 1992).

The Navy personnel chief noted, “On the whole, I agree with your assessment of the adaptability of DOPMA to officer management. As your study reveals, even with the enhanced authority provided by the FY-91 and FY-92 Authorization Acts, it will be extremely difficult to accomplish the mandated reductions and remain within all DOPMA management constraints particularly if there are increased and steeper officer cuts in the future” (letter from Vice Admiral R. J. Zlatoper, Chief of Naval Personnel, to RAND, January 27, 1991).

5. DOPMA AS A PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT TOOL

INTRODUCTION

Earlier in this paper, we argued that “probably the most important test of the adequacy of DOPMA is how well it allows the services to manage their officer corps in response to specific personnel problems and during periods of rapid change.” In the last sections we examined DOPMA during the dynamic times of the 1980s and 1990s. In this section we consider how DOPMA facilitates the management of individual career fields, or as DOPMA terms them, competitive categories. In particular, we highlight concerns expressed by Congress that the DOPMA strength-in-grade limitations might adversely affect the ability to recruit and retain nurses.

UNDERSTANDING THE NURSE PROBLEM

One of the most controversial features of DOPMA has been the inclusion of all officers, except medical and dental officers, *in a single grade table*. The DOPMA system of a single grade table and separate competitive categories for promotion was supposed to solve the long-standing problem of managing line and support corps, i.e., the problem of promotion equity for officers who have predominantly professional rather than general or combat-related military skills and experience. The House Armed Services Committee has questioned if the current grade limitation system should be changed. Section 707 of the House FY 1990–1991 Defense Authorization Bill (H.R. 2461) asks the Secretary of Defense to consider “the *advantages and disadvantages of the current limitations*” and to recommend appropriate changes to the current strength-in-grade limitations provisions of DOPMA.¹

There are many, sometimes inconsistent, views of the current nurses problem. For the House, the problem is that “Service manning documents still reflect the majority of nursing requirements in pay grades O-3 and below, with substantially lower requirements in grades O-4 and above . . . [and the resulting] lower [promotion] opportunity is

¹Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel), “ADEQUACY OF DOPMA: Impact of Field Grade Tables on Professionals—Nurses,” April 1991, p. 6.

causing the Services to lose experienced nurses at a time when they are encountering increased difficulty in recruiting nurses.”²

On the other hand, personnel managers in the Army and the Navy claim that to address the problems outlined by the House, they have had to treat the line “unfairly” by allocating a proportionately greater number of field grades to the Nurse Corps than is reflected in service authorization documents or as a “fair share” of the DOPMA grade table.³ This is sometimes expressed as nurses “taking” field-grade positions that “belong” to the line.⁴ Air Force personnel managers are perceived as “taking” field grades from nurses while ignoring, until recently, nurse promotion equity. Both these views are reflected in Figure 5.1, which compares the inventory of nurses relative to the DOPMA grade table during the decade of the 1980s. Currently, the Air Force allocates fewer field-grade positions to nurses than one would expect when one looks at grade tables. Recently, the Army and Navy have given nurses more field grades, predominantly at the O-4 level, than their proportional or “fair share”⁵ of the DOPMA grade tables.

To address the dual problem, the Army and the Navy favor either removing nurses from the DOPMA grade table (in the same way medical and dental officers are excluded) or providing some form of separate grade table(s) or some grade table relief to bring the nurse competitive category promotions into line with DOPMA norms, now and for the future, without “taking” more field grades from the line.

²Ibid., p. 6. This view is also expressed by the Navy Surgeon General (“Retention likewise has been crippled by the reduced promotion opportunity resulting from DOPMA restraints.”) and the Air Force Surgeon General (“We are also seeking to improve the attractiveness of a career for mid-level nurses by improving their promotion opportunity.”) among others. House Armed Services Committee, March 16, 1989.

³For example, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy noted that the Navy has taken specific action to ensure career progression by compensating the Nurse Corps with control grade numbers from warfare communities. “This compensation will become increasingly more difficult in the declining end strength environment. . . . Through compensation from the warfare communities, the desired [nurse] inventory can be created; however, the authorization cannot be accurately structured without reducing valid control grades in other DOPMA controlled communities.” Memorandum for the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Force Management and Personnel), Subject: Report to Congress: “ADEQUACY OF DOPMA,” June 11, 1991.

⁴This discussion will focus on “nurse” versus “line.” However, all DOPMA-controlled competitive categories are managed to achieve promotion flexibility through such practices as “compensation.”

⁵Fair share is generally used as a term to denote a grade distribution for a competitive category that is equal to the grade distribution in the DOPMA grade table.

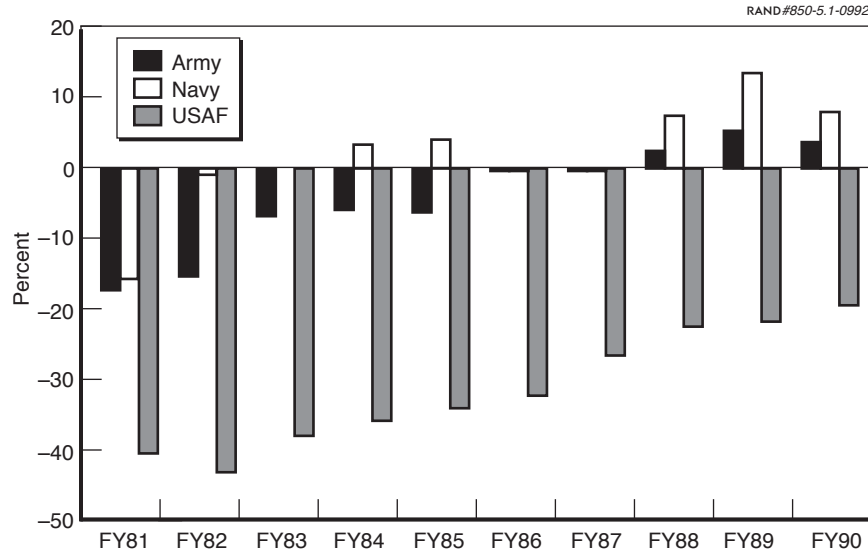


Fig. 5.1—Percentage of Nurse Field-Grade Inventory Over or Under DOPMA Grade Table Distribution (FY 1981–1990)

The Air Force has argued for the status quo but has begun to provide more field-grade promotion authorizations to nurses and also supports grade table relief.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE CURRENT LIMITATIONS

Following the charge of the House, it is important to understand “the *advantages and disadvantages of the current limitations*” system established by DOPMA. There are at least three problems with the DOPMA grade tables that have resulted in the current situation: (1) they are independent from the other provisions of DOPMA and do not ensure that all the competing personnel goals of DOPMA will or can be met, (2) they do not reflect the services’ perceived need for field-grade officers, in general or in any specific competitive category, and (3) the sliding-scale feature sets up perverse incentives to the inclusion or exclusion of a specific competitive category in the overall control total of field-grade officers. These problems perpetuate the claim that either the largest competitive category—the line—or another smaller competitive category is being treated unfairly and has to

compensate other competitive categories to provide promotion equity. The following looks at these three problem areas in detail.

The Grade Tables Do Not Facilitate the Other Goals of DOPMA

The DOPMA grade tables are part of a system that tries to satisfy three, often conflicting, objectives: (1) “to meet requirements for officers in various grades at ages and levels of experience conducive to effective performance; (2) [to] provide career opportunities that will attract and retain the number of officers of high caliber needed; and (3) [to] provide reasonably consistent career opportunities among the services.”⁶ Unfortunately, while the framers of DOPMA talked about acceptable levels for promotion opportunity and ranges for promotion timing, these “variables” are left to float with no guarantee that they will remain at a level or stay within a range consistent with the proper management of a future officer corps—the ultimate goal of DOPMA.⁷

Table 5.1 shows the differences between average promotion opportunity and timing for the line and nurses for the period from FY 1986 to FY 1990. In those years promotion differences cut both ways and helped to perpetuate the common perceptions discussed above. For example, the Army attempted to “grow” field-grade nurses during this period by providing additional promotion allocations in the grades of O-4 and O-6. In the Navy, nurse opportunity and timing lagged those of the line. In the Air Force, opportunity lagged, but timing was comparable.

DOPMA formally fixes only one element in the system, the grade table, and lets the other elements of the system, promotion opportunity and promotion timing, float. It may have been that all goals were being met in 1980 when DOPMA was passed, but it is unlikely that the same grade table can achieve those goals in 1992. For example, the Navy notes that there are still not enough field-grade positions available to Navy nurses to prevent “promotion stagnation” even though nurses are currently getting more than their fair share of grades from the DOPMA grade table. This problem is directly attributed to large entry cohorts and to the large number of new acces-

⁶*Officer Management Legislation: Why Needed?* p. 4.

⁷The House did hold out the promise that “in the face of improving retention and more definitive grade requirements determinations, [it] would increase the statutory ceiling to continue to permit operations within the DOPMA management parameters [promotion opportunity and timing].”

Table 5.1
Average Promotion Opportunity and Timing, 1986–1990

		O-6	O-5	O-4
		Promotion Opportunity		
Competitive Category		DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%
Army	Line	48.2%	73.5%	76.6%
	Nurse	58.0%	72.6%	96.6%
Navy	Line	55.2%	70.0%	80.0%
	Nurse	49.0%	67.6%	68.8%
Air Force	Line	55.0%	75.0%	90.0%
	Nurse	41.3%	51.0%	78.3%
		Promotion Point		
		DOPMA = 22±1	DOPMA = 16±1	DOPMA = 10±1
Army	Line	22-7	17-5	11-5
	Nurse	22-4	17-4	11-10
Navy	Line	21-2	15-3	9-10
	Nurse	21-4	16-6	10-8
Air Force	Line	21-1	16-3	11-0
	Nurse	21-0	15-9	11-1

SOURCE: The years 1986–1989 are from the OSD Nurse Study; 1990 is from service drawdown submissions to OSD. Average promotion point is the number of years and months of active commissioned service plus entry-grade credit at which officers are promoted to a particular grade. Average opportunity is computed by totaling all officers due course, above, and below zone promotions and dividing by the number of officers in zone.

sions given constructive credit as part of a concerted effort to attract new nurses to the Navy several years ago. Unfortunately, the DOPMA grade tables do not account for such real-life factors as large cohorts moving through the system or changes in constructive credit toward initial grades for professionals. Currently, the only way a service can manage such a situation is to provide additional promotion allocations, or as the Navy calls it, “to provide compensation”⁸ at the grades of O-5 and eventually O-6. If relief is not continually

⁸In the Navy, “compensation” is the practice of providing additional promotion allocations to a competitive category to improve promotion flow. The Air Force uses a similar concept but calls it “fair share” promotions to denote a revised grade distribution that will allow a competitive category to have promotion opportunity and timing comparable, but not necessarily equal, to those of the line. For a force that is growing, or in steady state, these practices may accommodate needs. Officer reductions make manifest the problem of insufficient flexibility, given other dynamics in the system. These practices are useful only to the extent there are sufficient field-grade vacancies for reallocation among competitive categories.

forthcoming, either external relief or internal relief (e.g., compensation from the line), the problem will “back up” and the large accession cohorts of FY 1982 to FY 1987 will stagnate, resulting in disincentives to remain on active duty.⁹ From the vantage point of the line officer, if relief is provided internally, the line will be allowed fewer promotions than would otherwise be the case.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the above problem and shows the past and projected inventory for O-4 nurses as a percentage above or below the DOPMA grade table distribution—the so-called fair share line—for the period 1991–2009.¹⁰ History (1981 to 1991) and projections (1992–2009) reflect the impact of uneven accession cohorts. For all services and for much of the period, nurses will exceed their fair share of O-4 provided by the DOPMA grade table and thus the “line” will have to provide additional promotion allocations. Moreover, such additional promotion allocations will be needed at the grades of O-5 and O-6 in the future as the cohorts age through the system. The O-4 inventory below the DOPMA fair share line after about the year 2000 reflects the delayed impact of the expected cuts in accessions as part of the drawdown of forces.

The Grade Table Does Not Reflect the Services’ Needs for Field-Grade Officers

While it was the intent of Congress to establish a grade table that “allows the services to meet requirements for officers in the various grades at ages and levels of experience conducive to effective performance,”¹¹ the grade table published in 1980 reflected a compromise between the Senate, which wanted to reduce the size of the officer corps, and the DoD, backed by the House, which opted for the status quo. The table is linked to the manpower requirements and personnel authorization process after the fact as *legal* goals to be met rather than before the fact as needs to be accommodated. This situation is particularly troublesome for individual competitive categories,

⁹A similar situation exists for the Army. Throughout the 1980s, company-grade inventories of nurses grew. Unless additional field-grade positions are provided in the grades of O-4, O-5, and later O-6, these large cohorts will stagnate.

¹⁰Projects using OSD’s Officer Inventory Projection Model developed by Naval Personnel Research and Development Center (NPRDC). These projections assume end-strength but not grade-strength controls, that promotion equity continues to be provided by some means, that neither SERB nor RIF actions occur, and that accessions in the 1990s are reduced. The merits of taking such actions are currently being debated. The “valley” beyond the year 2000 results from reduced accessions in the 1990s.

¹¹*House Report No. 96-1462*, pp. 13–14.

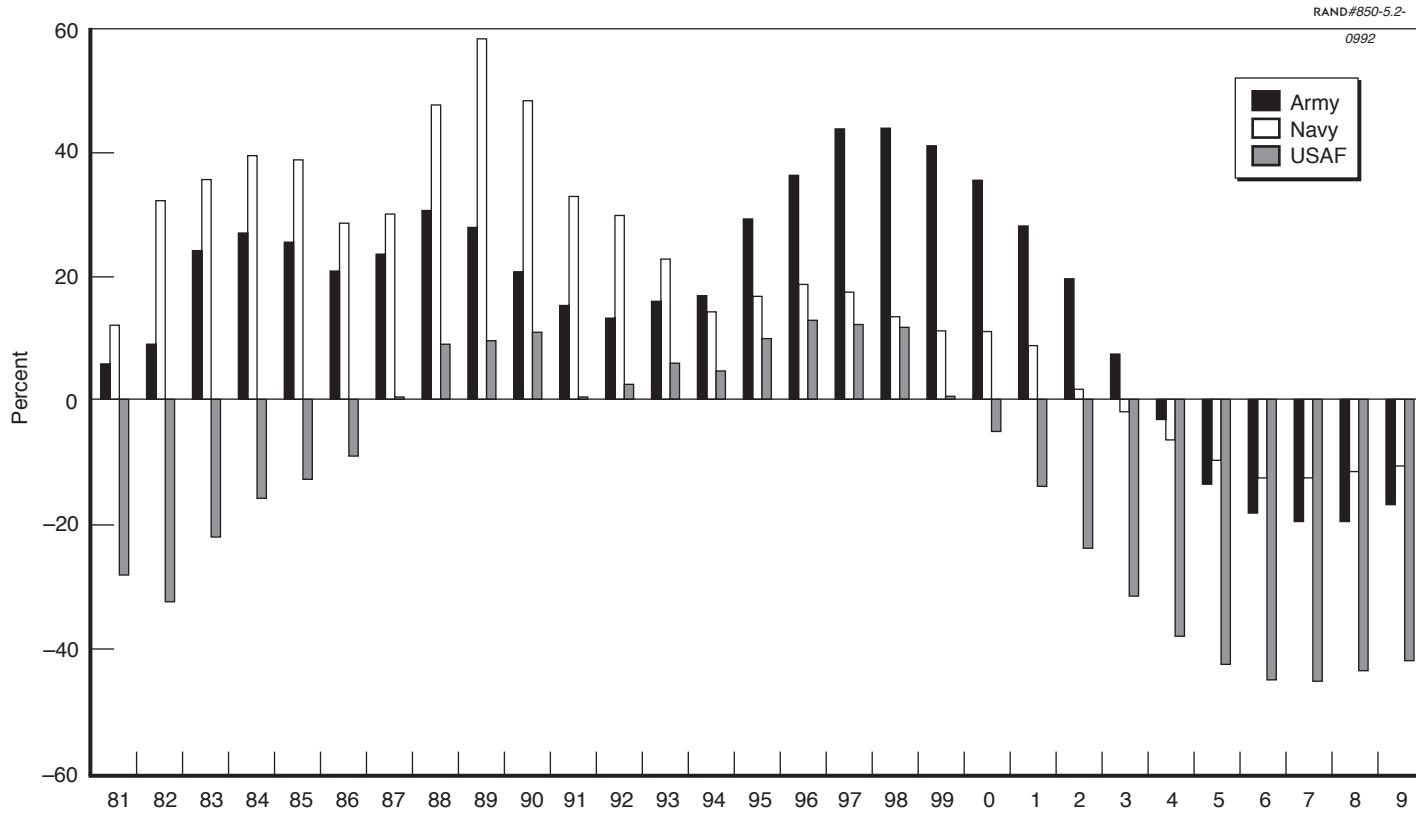


Figure 5.2—Percentage of Nurse O-4 Inventory Over or Under DOPMA Grade Table Distribution (FY 1981-2009)

like nurses, when the formal manpower requirements process does not reflect what some professionals think is needed¹² or when the services determine that they will not pay the price and are unwilling to “provide adequate structure for nurses under existing DOPMA constraints.”¹³ The history of Army and Navy nurses illustrates both points.

Setting Manpower Requirements: The Army’s Experience.

Before 1967, women were generally restricted¹⁴ from holding grades at or above O-5 in significant numbers. Nurses, mostly women, retired predominantly at or below the grade of O-5 or left active duty at or before the grade of O-3.¹⁵ No service particularly needed a field-grade structure for nurses because the law precluded any inventory development along grade distribution patterns that existed in other competitive categories. Nurse positions were not “requirements” driven but inventory driven. In 1966, the Army Nurse Corps had five authorized colonels out of total authorizations of 3,590.¹⁶ During the years between the removal of the grade restriction for women (1967)¹⁷ and the passage of DOPMA (1981), an evolving inventory of women now promotable to O-6 drove the structure. In fact, field-grade authorizations for nurses did not flow from requirements but reflected the inventory of field grades. Authorizations for O-6 nurses increased from 12 in 1967 to 85 in 1981 even as total nurse authorizations in

¹²The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs noted, “Not only do we have the need for more nurses in general, but also a growing demand for experienced nurses in the seven to fifteen year range of experience because of the increasing complexity of nursing care.” The Army Surgeon General in discussing nurses stated that “the increased acuity of today’s patient dictates a more experienced force.” House Armed Services Committee, March 16, 1989.

¹³Memorandum for Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P) from Deputy Assistant Secretary of Army, Military Personnel Management and Equal Opportunity Policy (MPM&EOP), Subject: Report to Congress: “ADEQUACY OF DOPMA,” June 7, 1991. Also see testimony by the service Surgeons General before the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, March 1989.

¹⁴Public Law No. 80-625 (1948).

¹⁵As an example of other restrictions, in 1970, female navy Nurse Corps officers could have no dependents. They could be married, but civilian husbands were not considered legal dependents and were authorized no benefits. A female officer who became pregnant was discharged. Bureau of Naval Personnel letter, September 1991.

¹⁶“In the Army Nurse Corps . . . a total of five nurses can occupy the permanent rank of colonel, and 107 can occupy the permanent rank of lieutenant colonel. . . . The same personnel limitations apply in the Air Force. In the Navy Nurse Corps, only two-tenths of 1 percent of the corps officer strength may be in the rank of captain. This contrasts with the 5.3 percent authorized by law for this grade for male line officers.” Statement of ASD for manpower in support of HR 5894, 1967.

¹⁷Public Law No. 90-130 (November 8, 1967) authorized promotion consideration under the same promotion procedures applicable to the consideration of men.

the Army declined from 4,500 in 1967 to 3,858 in 1981. As the Army began to implement the provisions of DOPMA after 1981, nurse O-6 authorizations were frozen at the existing inventory level of 89. No requirements study addressed the need for nurses or validated the inherited authorization level.

The Army did complete a requirements analysis in 1989.¹⁸ The resulting Medical Grade Table (which includes nurses) as published in Army Regulation 611-101 shows a requirement for 28.8 percent field-grade nurses, with 3.3 percent at colonel. However, not all requirements are “authorized” to be filled in peacetime.¹⁹ After much internal negotiation, the resulting authorization document provides for a field-grade percentage of 34.6 (not far different from the line), with 2.6 percent at colonel. In the future, given the new authorizations, nurse promotion equity should not be a problem. Figure 5.3 compares DOPMA field-grade distributions with those developed by the Army during their manpower requirements study and finally established as peacetime authorizations.

Establishing Manpower Authorizations: The Navy’s Experience. The Navy has gone through a similar experience but to a less amicable conclusion. In July 1989, a medical blue-ribbon panel reported new nurse-grade requirements that were based upon “proposed force structure . . . years of clinical nursing experience required, levels of responsibility both clinical and administrative, number and grade/rate of personnel supervised, teaching responsibilities, levels of interaction with other departments or commands, and clearly delineated clinical career pathways.”²⁰ While it is expected that these requirements will be further supported by the Joint Healthcare Manpower Standard and an internal Navy Medical Facilities Efficiency Review, the constraints placed upon the system by the DOPMA grade table have precluded any long-term changes in the

¹⁸The Army Medical Department (AMEDD) Officer Structure Study included an overlay against “structure” for the civilian nursing profession to ensure a reasonable match. The resulting manpower tables reflect increased needs for experienced nurses. In 1989, the Air Force Surgeon General also noted that his service was undertaking “a limited review of existing grade structure.” The Navy Surgeon General stated, “There is a study ongoing which focuses on the existing Nurse Corps structure and will recommend necessary adjustments to the mix of nurses to satisfy inpatient and outpatient requirements.” House Armed Services Committee, March 16, 1989.

¹⁹The bulk of wartime requirements is typically in the company grades, so there are proportionally fewer field-grade wartime positions. Requirements are filled at less than 100 percent in peacetime, and the mix of field- and company-grade positions authorized is different. (Both the numerator and the denominator change.)

²⁰Letter attachment from Navy Director of Military Personnel Policy to RAND, September 9, 1991, p. 2.

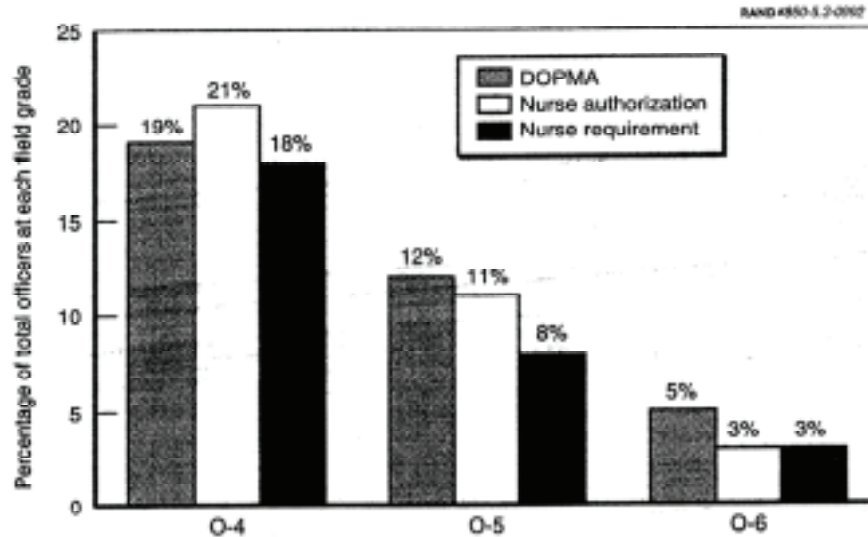


Figure 5.3—Army Nurse Requirements and Authorizations vs. DOPMA (total authorized officer strength of 70,000)

number of control-grade positions authorized to nurses. In other words, under DOPMA the status quo prevails. Commenting on DOPMA, the Navy noted,

Because the recommended force structure included an increase in DOPMA accountable control grades, compensation was required from a DOPMA accountable community. . . . This compensation was not received. . . . The problem is essentially that the billet structure [authorized positions] as it exists is outdated, inappropriate, and fails to reflect actual requirements. But DOPMA constraints on control grades force any billet changes to be a zero-sum game. In order for the Nurse Corps to increase control grades, some other community must give up an equal number. The unrestricted line has provided compensation on a year-to-year basis, but long-range planning, whether for promotion, career paths, growth, or downsizing, is essentially impossible.²¹

The central issue here is control. In the past Congress has been reluctant to accept manpower studies as justification for specific grades and has explicitly forced the services to manage to their arbitrary control totals. If the system were changed, some competitive categories might find it easy to justify grade structures, while others

²¹Ibid.

might find it more difficult. The system today enforces discipline by creating a loser for every winner, the so-called zero-sum game, at the expense of those who have equally valid requirements but fail to convince the senior managers of the services that their claim is more worthy than others.

The Sliding Scale Sets Up Perverse Incentives That Favor Exclusion of Certain Competitive Categories

Another feature of the DOPMA grade tables is that every competitive category remaining within DOPMA controls would be better off if nurses, or for that matter most any other competitive category, were excluded from DOPMA control. This results from the sliding-scale effect where proportionately fewer field-grade positions are lost as overall officer end-strength declines.

Currently, as shown in Figure 5.4, Army and Navy nurses proportionately have slightly more field grades than their numbers would suggest (against a normal DOPMA mix), and Air Force nurses have relatively fewer field grades than the other services or their numbers would suggest.

Table 5.2 shows the number of field-grade positions (by grade) that would be available for the line if nurses were excluded from the grade table.²² Also of note in Table 5.2 is the percentage gain to the line in terms of flexibility if nurses were excluded. Thus the line, depending on the field-grade content of the competitive category being removed from the grade structure, would almost always have more field-grade positions if other competitive categories were not counted in the DOPMA grade tables. This can be illustrated by the example of nurses. However, because nurse field-grade content is different from that of the line, excluding the specific category of nurses causes a slightly different pattern from that of the sliding scale alone.²³ In

²²This discussion is in terms of line officers; technically, the impact is on all competitive categories remaining under the DOPMA grade tables, of which line constitutes the bulk.

²³This change is based on two factors: the greater field-grade richness of the grade table as strength goes down from exclusion of a competitive category and the actual field-grade richness of the competitive category excluded as compared to the actual field-grade richness of the remaining categories.

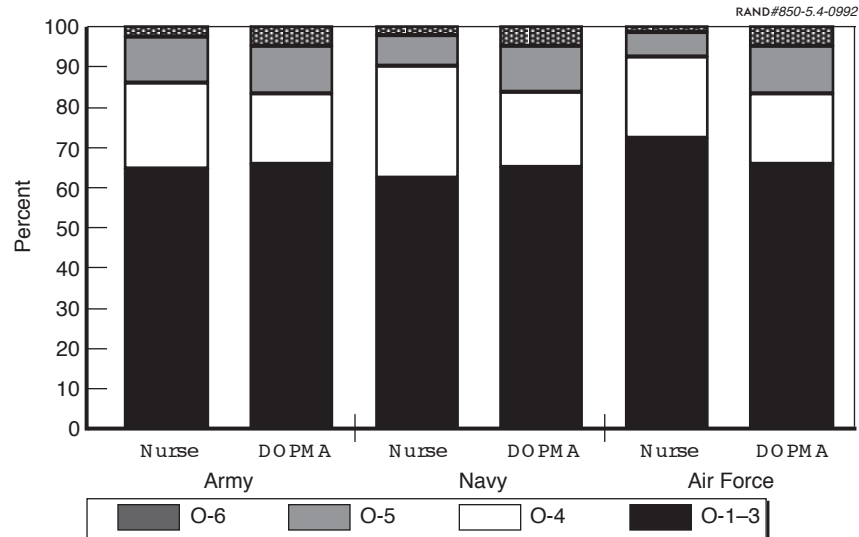


Fig. 5.4—Department of Defense DOPMA and Nurse-Grade Structure (FY 1990)

general, in each service, including the Air Force,²⁴ the line would still have more total field grades available.

CONSIDERING “APPROPRIATE CHANGES TO THE CURRENT STRENGTH-IN-GRADE LIMITATIONS PROVISIONS OF DOPMA”

A number of changes have been proposed by the service staffs and the Office of the Secretary of Defense. They include the following:

- Exclusion of nurse from the grade table;
- Separate grade tables for each competitive category;
- Separate grade tables for select competitive categories; and
- Discretionary grade relief for select competitive categories.

²⁴The Air Force grade table for O-6 was reduced by the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1990 and 1991 (P.L. 101-189) by 250, which accounts for most of the lowered flexibility in the Air Force numbers.

Table 5.2
DOPMA Grade Tables Analysis, FY 1990

	O-6	O-5	O-4	Total Field Grades
Army				
DOPMA ceiling with nurses	3,884	9,648	14,613	28,145
DOPMA ceiling without nurses	3,713	9,287	13,970	26,970
Change in DOPMA ceiling with nurse exclusion	-171	-361	-643	-1,175
Change in line allocation with nurse exclusion	-57	170	359	472
Percentage change	-1.4%	1.7%	2.5%	1.7%
Navy				
DOPMA ceiling with nurses	3,028	6,862	11,435	21,325
DOPMA ceiling without nurses	2,927	6,650	10,982	20,554
Change in DOPMA ceiling with nurse exclusion	-101	-212	-453	-771
Change in line allocation with nurse exclusion	-30	21	411	396
Percentage change	-1.0%	0.3%	3.6%	1.9%
Air Force				
DOPMA ceiling with nurses	4,250	11,199	17,013	32,462
DOPMA ceiling without nurses	4,056	10,797	16,220	31,074
Change in DOPMA ceiling with nurse exclusion	-194	-402	-793	-1,389
Change in line allocation with nurse exclusion	-113	-79	298	106
Percentage change	-2.6%	-0.7%	1.8%	0.3%

SOURCE: Analysis based on personnel inventory as of September 30, 1990, reported by the Defense Manpower Data Center in Report 85M8220 and DOPMA grade table (Title 10, Section 523, U.S. Code).

Exclusion from the Grade Table

The most obvious way of providing grade relief for nurses, consistent with the way physicians and dentists have been treated since 1967,²⁵ is to exempt them from the grade limitation provisions. In fact, the Senate Armed Services Committee recently asked the DoD for their views on “excluding Nurse officers from computation of authorized

²⁵However, it should be noted that the original 1967 DoD request provided only for the exclusion of doctors. Much of the rationale for eventually including dentists was based on the argument of “parity between members of sister professions.” Hearings on HR 10242, July 25, 1967.

grade strength.”²⁶ While DoD noted that under this exclusion “[t]he services would have more flexibility to adjust nurse promotion opportunity and timing,” the proposal was rejected as not serving “the Department’s long-term interests.”²⁷

A relevant question is “What is the most recent experience with physicians and dentists, the two categories excluded from DOPMA?” Figure 5.5 shows that the experience over the past decade is mixed: substantial increases in field-grade percentage for dentists in the Army and the Air Force (at a time when nationally there was a glut of dentists) as compared to dentists in the Navy or to all physicians.²⁸

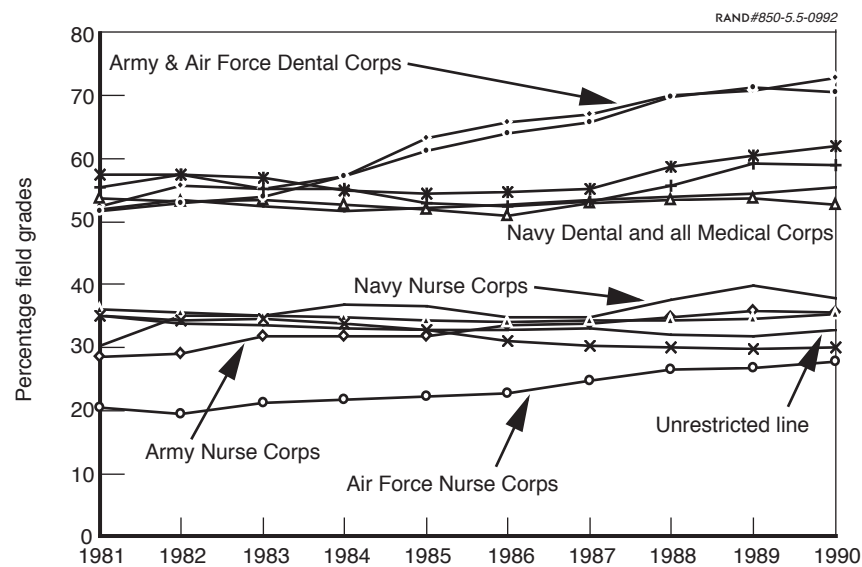


Fig. 5.5—Field-Grade Percentage for Select Competitive Categories, 1981–1990

²⁶S. 73, 102nd Congress. Also the Senate Appropriations Committee “believes it is time to take a hard look at promotion policies affecting the nonphysician disciplines.” Report accompanying the FY 1991 DoD Appropriations Act.

²⁷See letter from the General Counsel of the Department of Defense to the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, dated August 30, 1991.

²⁸The change in field-grade content since 1967 when medical and dental officers were removed from grade controls is much greater. For example, in the Army in mid-1967, prior to exclusion, the approximate field-grade content for the medical corps was 35 percent of authorized and 25 percent of assigned strength.

The problem with exclusion is that it removes the overriding control of a grade table (when other alternatives might equally improve nurse promotion equity); only the year-to-year control of the budget process remains. While this certainly does not make the case for or against the elimination of grade controls for specific categories, Figure 5.5 provides grist for those concerned about so-called “grade creep” to argue against exemption from congressionally imposed grade controls.²⁹

Separate Grade Table for Each Competitive Category

Another approach often suggested would provide each competitive category with its own grade table. Unfortunately, separate grade tables for each competitive category would perpetuate the worst features of DOPMA and reduce the existing flexibility that allows the services to address most problems. The problem is that grade tables are the most rigid of DOPMA’s many controls, but by including all nonexcluded competitive categories in a single total, DOPMA does provide a degree of flexibility. Specific grade tables for individual competitive categories would eliminate this flexibility. Thus, while it is true that a separate grade table would allow a closer link to requirements *at a specific point in time*, it would not necessarily foster, over time, consistency with the other goals of DOPMA to include that of promotion equity. To be manageable, separate grade tables would have to be much more dynamic than has been the case since the passage of DOPMA. In fact, without granting the Secretary of Defense some discretion in the administration of separate grade tables to meet real-life changes in requirements, cohort size, and promotion dynamics, the DoD would again have to make the yearly trek to Congress for grade relief, reminiscent of the pre-DOPMA days under the Officer Grade Limitation Act. The Navy sums it up: “Proliferation of grade tables is not particularly desirable. . . . A grade table for each competitive category would destroy flexibility in the planning process and could be an administrative nightmare.”³⁰

²⁹Even supporters of exempting doctors and dentists recognized the potential problem. In one congressional exchange, in 1967, Mr. Hébert said, “I noticed the other day that they are going to promote now by computer—this is very interesting.” To which Mr. Bennet replied, “Watch out, they will promote the computer.” While administrative constraints on grades could be imposed if legislative constraints were removed, there is no history reflecting the efficacy of such constraints.

³⁰Letter attachment from Navy Director of Military Personnel Policy to RAND, September 9, 1991, p. 6.

Separate Grade Tables for Several Competitive Categories

Another alternative is to amalgamate grade tables for two or more competitive categories. In the Army's view, "A separate grade table for special branches should be examined."³¹ The Senate Armed Services Committee also suggested "development and evaluation of separate grade tables—one for the 'line' category and others for the 'other than the line' categories (to include medical and dental officers). These grade tables might have different 'sliding scales' to reflect the fundamentally different management systems underlying the categories included therein."³² Again, the situation is ambiguous. There are a number of factors that *should* enter into category-specific grade tables, e.g., the sliding-scale principle, responsibility and organizational requirements, the ability to attract and retain officers, promotion equity, and the volatile pattern of continuation rates. If DOPMA itself is an example, grade tables tend to be arbitrary and unresponsive to changing needs. Giving competitive categories a "fair share" or the same field-grade percentage as the line (which is in essence the basis of the currently used compensation schemes for nurses) would eliminate the perception that any one category was being treated unfairly but might not ensure equitable promotion opportunity or even adequate promotion opportunity given the specific needs of the competitive categories and the patterns of accession³³ and retention that evolve.

The alternative of a separate grade table for two or more competitive categories might ultimately have the most merit, but existing evidence offers no insight to conclude it is currently the preferred alternative. It is certainly an alternative that calls into question the existing structure of DOPMA itself as it affects the various professional competitive categories. Separate grade tables would allow a closer link to requirements/authorizations but might still not provide consistent opportunity. The issue would still remain whether separate grade tables should be driven by promotion equity, by requirements/authorization, or by an arbitrary sliding scale. One would also need to determine how such grade tables should be adjusted over time (e.g., as retention changed or as patterns of constructive credit accessions changed) and during periods of change in force size. Further research is warranted on the overall issue of specialists versus general-

³¹Memorandum from Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (MPM&EOP) to Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P), June 7, 1991.

³²Conference Report, DoD FY 1990 Authorization Act, p. 576.

³³Use of constructive credit at entry makes most of the professional competitive categories somewhat different from the "due course" line.

ists that might lead to conclusions concerning separate grade tables for certain competitive categories to include nurses and/or other significant changes to DOPMA as currently known.

Discretionary Grade Relief for Select Competitive Categories

Many personnel managers in the DoD prefer to enhance the existing flexibility under DOPMA by giving the Secretary of Defense added authority to temporarily exceed DOPMA control totals.³⁴

The Department of Defense appreciates the flexibility [exclusion] offers in managing the nurse corps. We believe, however, that an alternative proposal would be more beneficial. Authorizing the Secretary of Defense to allow a Service to temporarily exceed the grade limitation . . . by up to 2.0 percent for a period of up to five years would enable the Department *to deal with both the nursing issue and any other problems experienced during the force drawdown.*³⁵

The DoD stresses the need for flexibility through discretionary grade relief in dealing not only with the nurse problem, but, as suggested earlier in this paper, also with the more general problem of managing officers during the drawdown. If one thing is certain, turbulence in the 1990s will provide many yet unforeseen management problems. Discretionary grade relief is consistent with the willingness of Congress to grant temporary relief from DOPMA's tenure provisions³⁶ during the drawdown while retaining overall control.

Summary of Possible Changes

To better understand the options, their common features, and how they differ, Table 5.3 matches alternatives in a common taxonomy of selected characteristics. This does not indicate which alternative is best but highlights the similarities and differences.

³⁴The Navy would disagree and has argued that "the proposed 2 percent grade limitation waiver is [not] a viable short-term solution to the Nurse Corps; it would actually impede flexible management of the DOPMA communities. The Navy continues to support legislation that would exclude the Nurse Corps." Memorandum from Assistant Secretary of the Navy (M&RA) to Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P), dated June 11, 1991.

³⁵Letter from the General Counsel of the Department of Defense to the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, dated August 30, 1991 (italics added).

³⁶In the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 1990 and 1991, several provisions were enacted to facilitate officer management during the drawdown.

- Enforcing existing requirements is unique as a solution but does not encompass the promotion equity issue or that of management flexibility.
- Exclusion is unique as a solution but does not encompass the grade control issue.
- A separate grade table or a grade table with other competitive categories does not provide promotion equity or maintain management flexibility and requires significant restructuring of DOPMA to make the system more responsive to changes in requirements, cohort sizes, etc.
- Compensation and discretionary grade relief have common characteristics (they encompass equity and control) but with some major differences: compensation is internal to the service, while discretionary grade relief is external relief. Compensation creates winners and losers for even the smallest changes in requirements or cohort dynamics. Discretionary grade relief, depending on implementation, creates a range for effective management and, as the Army sees it, “should be implemented under strict guidelines that would ensure the services have totally exhausted other means to resolve their field grade end strength problems.”³⁷

Recommendation

If end-strengths and cohort flows were stable, managing competitive categories within the existing grade table is plausible and was envisioned by DOPMA. However, as shown in the previous sections, the instantaneous effect of end-strength changes on the grade table has made it difficult to manage officers overall and, in particular, to manage the dynamic flows of competitive categories with the flexibility intended. The greater the officer strength change within a year, the more difficult is the officer management task.

The most reasonable alternative for competitive category management at this point in time is to provide additional discretionary management flexibility that would allow personnel managers to address some of the inconsistencies and inappropriately timed adjustments of DOPMA. Discretionary grade relief allows some grade table relief to accommodate the large cohorts accessed in the early 1980s that are passing into the DOPMA control grade window in the 1990s just as field grades are being reduced. Discretionary grade relief would allow

³⁷Memorandum from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army (MPM&EOP) to Assistant Secretary of Defense (FM&P), June 7, 1991.

for resolution of the problem of nurse promotion flow and for a longer adjustment period³⁸ to the newer grade tables generated instantaneously by the sliding scale as end-strength is reduced. Changing the grade table to allow a glide path, up and down, is desirable to improve both management of officers during periods of change and competitive category management.

Will discretionary grade relief improve competitive category management without other management interventions? Not necessarily. The DOPMA system remains arbitrary and competitive categories would continue to be managed within the DOPMA constraints. However, to the extent that decreasing officer strengths exacerbates the problem of competitive category management, any proposal for discretionary grade relief would improve the situation during the period of greatest need.

³⁸Depending on implementation, either promotion opportunity or timing could be moved toward DOPMA norms. For example, the Navy estimates it could keep O-4 Unrestricted Line (URL) flowpoints from approaching DOPMA limits in FY 1996 and 1997 and bring O-6 nurse flowpoints within DOPMA limits for the same years through use of 2 percent flexibility.

6. PROVIDING A MORE FLEXIBLE GRADE TABLE

Our review of DOPMA during periods of growth and decline and as a personnel management tool leads us to recommend that added flexibility be provided in the way the grade table is implemented. In this section we examine three reasonable options for providing a more flexible grade table. For each option, we suggest legislative language to implement it and provide a numerical example of the effect of implementation using Army data from the March 1991 submission to OSD.

TEMPORARY 2 PERCENT INCREASE TO THE DOPMA TABLE

As noted, DoD has told Congress that they would like added authority to allow the Secretary of Defense to apply a temporary 2 percent increase to the DOPMA table as needed for each service.¹ This type of increase is larger in absolute numbers at higher officer strengths and decreases absolutely as strength decreases. It is administratively complex to plan for and use as the number of positions available each fiscal year for allocation is known only after Congress sets officer strength in the authorization act for that particular year.

Figure 6.1 shows the effect of this option through FY 1997 as compared to the normal grade table. It provides flexibility when officer strength is decreasing but does not necessarily affect the grade table when officer strength is increasing. Control of grades for the 2 percent increase would be at the discretion of the Secretary. The option could be implemented through language such as the following: “The Secretary of Defense may increase the strength-in-grade limitations specified in section 523 (a) of title 10, United States Code, by 2 percent, to be distributed among grades as the Secretary considers appropriate. Any increase pursuant to the preceding sentence in an otherwise applicable limitation shall expire, as specified by the Secretary, but not later than September 30, 1998.”

¹“Authorizing the Secretary of Defense to allow a Service to temporarily exceed the grade limitation . . . by up to 2.0 percent for a period of up to five years would enable the Department to deal with both the Nursing issue and any other problems experienced during the force drawdown” (letter from the General Counsel of the Department of Defense to the Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, dated August 30, 1991).

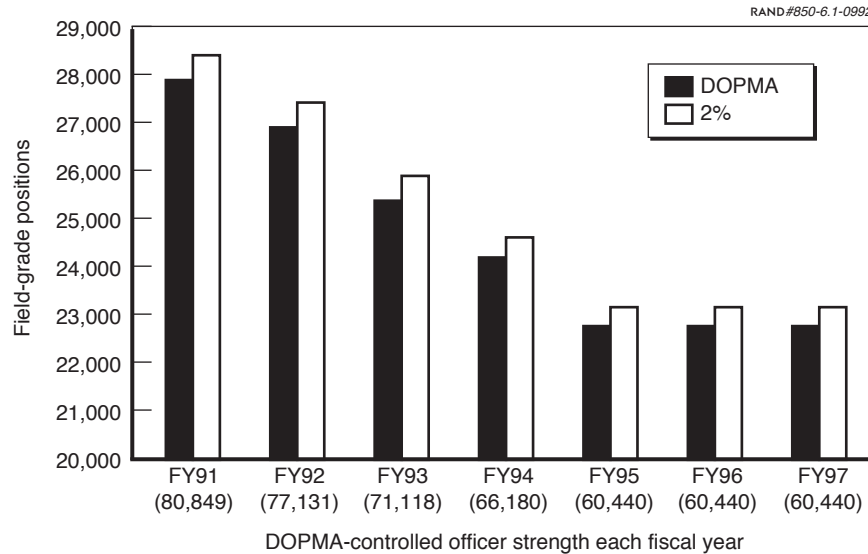


Fig. 6.1—Implementation of 2 Percent Flexibility (Army Example)

FIXED INCREMENT INCREASE TO THE GRADE TABLE

The second option would add a fixed increment to the grade table for each service to provide a margin to facilitate management flexibility. The increment would be constant across all ranges of officer strength. It is somewhat easier to use as the maximum number of additional positions for allocation is known in advance for all fiscal years to which it applies. It also follows the logic of how the grade table was constructed (fixed increments for various strengths) and of most recent changes to the table, e.g., the cut of 250 Air Force positions.

Figure 6.2 shows the effect of this option through FY 1997 in comparison to the normal DOPMA table and the previous 2 percent option. In essence, this option allows greater flexibility at lower officer strengths. As with the first option, this would allow flexibility when officer strength is decreasing but would be arduous to implement when officer strength was increasing. Control of grades for the temporary increase is again at the discretion of the Secretary. This option might be implemented through language such as the following: “The Secretary of Defense may increase the strength-in-grade limitations specified in section 523 (a) of title 10, United States Code, by a total of 560 positions for the Army [each service would have a specific

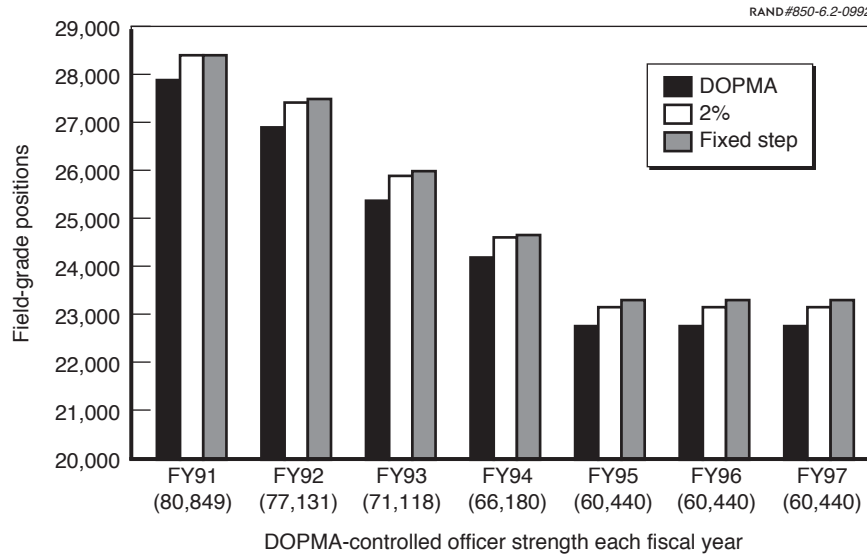


Fig. 6.2—Implementation of Fixed-Step Flexibility (Army Example)

number of positions designated; 560 is equal to 2 percent of FY 1991 strength for the Army], to be distributed among grades as the Secretary considers appropriate. Any increase pursuant to the preceding sentence in an otherwise applicable limitation shall expire, as specified by the Secretary, but not later than September 30, 1998.”

GLIDE PATH IN THE GRADE TABLE

The third way DOPMA could be modified to provide more flexibility in implementing grade limitation is to induce a *glide path* in the grade table by lagging the effect of the grade table by one or more years. No change would be made to the grade table itself. The officer strength that determines the number of field grades would be the previous fiscal year’s officer strength and not the current year’s end-strength. This option allows for flexibility to manage as officer strength decreases (the amount of flexibility varies with the magnitude of the change) but exerts greater control of grades whenever officer strength increases. Also, control of grades is inherent in the implementation in that no flexibility is provided whenever officer strength does not change over time. The authority to use a past year’s strength as the

entry point to the grade table could be placed in law or the authority to decide to use it could be given to the Secretary.

Figure 6.3 shows the effect through FY 1997 of this option for a lag of both one and two fiscal years compared to the previous options. Of note is that this option provides the greatest flexibility for the Army during the period of greatest strength changes—flexibility depends on the magnitude of the change²—and disappears when strength change ceases. It works directly for strength changes, up or down, and appears to best satisfy those concerned with control of grades as it has a meaningful effect only when officer strength is increasing or decreasing. This option could be implemented through language changes such as the following: “at the end of any fiscal year . . . the number of officers who may be serving on active duty in each of the grades of major, lieutenant colonel, and colonel may not, as of the end of such fiscal year, exceed a number determined in accordance with the following table [the existing grade table] applied against the total number of commissioned officers serving on active duty at the end of the previous [or earlier] fiscal year.” While this language as written

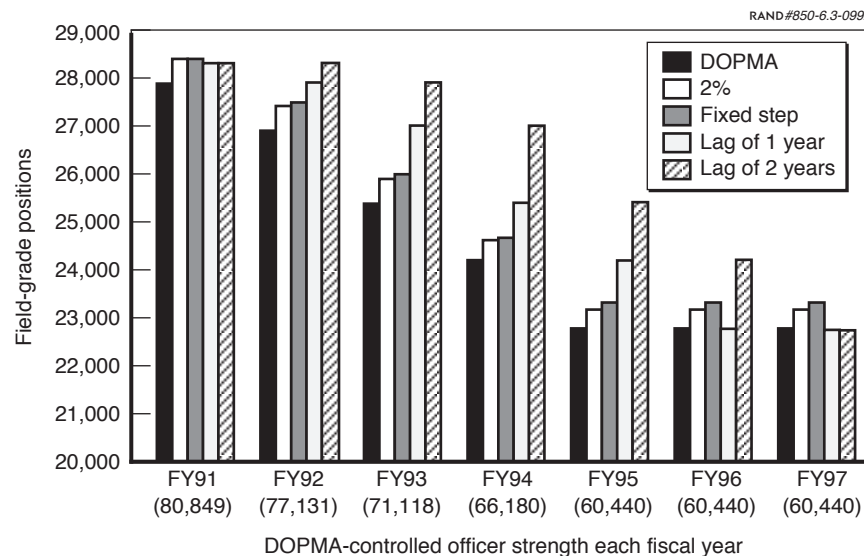


Fig. 6.3—Implementation of Lag Flexibility (Army Example)

²As the other services do not have the magnitude of change that the Army does, the flexibility would be proportionally lower.

does not give discretion to the Secretary, it could be easily modified to allow the Secretary to determine whether the control for each service should be the current fiscal year, the previous fiscal year, or an earlier fiscal year.

RECOMMENDATION

Which of these options is best? To control dynamic change, lagging the effect of the grade table by one or two years appears to be best. First, it maintains the principle of grade control, working only on the speed of required adjustments and not the ultimate number of field-grade officers. Second, it works automatically in periods of increases and decreases to even out sharp changes, encouraging long-term stability in the factors of the officer management system. Third, it is self-adjusting, providing the greatest flexibility during periods of greatest change.

We also believe that lagging the grade table will be beneficial in helping to resolve the current problems the services are having in managing nurses. Over the next five years, lagging the grade table will provide more numerical grade relief than DoD's original proposal to apply a temporary 2 percent increase to the DOPMA table. In the longer run the DoD and Congress must come to terms with career management problems and the failure of the grade table to adequately reflect manpower requirements to guarantee stability in tenure, promotion opportunity, or promotion timing.

7. CONCLUSION

DOPMA was to be all things to all people. For those interested in controlling the growth of the officer corps, DOPMA provided grade tables and authorities to manage the officer force. For those interested in grade relief, DOPMA provided higher field-grade allocations than did the Officer Grade Limitation Act. For those interested in promotion stability, DOPMA provided uniform law for promotion procedures and defined minimum promotion opportunities and promotion windows. For those interested in building a professional officer corps, DOPMA provided common provisions governing career expectations and opportunities for large numbers of officers to flow into the career force through common law for the appointment of regular officers. For those interested in safeguarding the interests of special staff and support officers, DOPMA provided competitive categories. Unfortunately, DOPMA could neither handily control the growth in the officer corps in the early part of the decade nor flexibly manage the reduction-in-force in the later part of the decade.¹ With an understanding of DOPMA's past, the real challenge, however, is to work within the DOPMA framework to manage the present and to revise DOPMA, when appropriate, to ensure its relevance for the future.

PAST

The overall success or failure of DOPMA should be judged by whether it suited the environment that prevailed during its use² and whether it achieved its objectives, which can be summarized as uniformity and consistency in officer management. In this context, the variables of interest in judging success or failure for any officer management system are more broadly seen over time. On balance, and only perceivable after the fact, DOPMA appears better suited to a period of growth or stability than one of decline. But even in a period of

¹To be fair, personnel planners in 1980 could not reasonably have predicted the 1982–1983 pay raises and the increase in officer “retention” that resulted, the Reagan buildup, or the sharp drawdown of forces as a result of conventional arms reductions with, and then the collapse of, the Soviet Union.

²This is not unlike the judgments by the DOPMA designers of earlier legislation. In critiquing the 1947 Officer Personnel Act, the House Report on DOPMA outlines shortcomings in the act that are related to “contemplated developments that did not materialize” (HR 96-1420, p. 9). One might say that, in retrospect, DOPMA did not contemplate developments that did materialize.

growth, uniformity and consistency in officer management among the services or between competitive categories were not achieved.

PRESENT

Whether DOPMA, as originally designed, can manage the downsizing now under way is the most important current question. DOPMA, in the current dynamic environment, lacks the flexibility to meet all stated objectives. During periods of force reduction, DOPMA forces choice between grade table violations (law) or diminution of proffered tenure (law) and proffered promotion opportunity/timing (policy, promise). As passed by Congress in 1980, DOPMA did not achieve what it attempted. While Congress has provided some flexibility, in so doing, major tenets of DOPMA, e.g., tenure, have been voided. Further flexibility, particularly to overcome problems created by the instantaneous nature of the grade tables and to deal with special problems such as nurses, is needed. In particular, we recommend lagging the effect of the grade table by one or more years to improve management during periods of change and to improve the prospects for equitable competitive category management.

FUTURE

Is DOPMA right for the decade and environment of the nineties and beyond? When one looks beyond the drawdown period, changes may be needed for officer management that preserve some of the recent traditions yet break with others. Given a changed environment, are the same objectives for officer management and the assumptions underlying them still valid? The two most significant environmental challenges to be accommodated are already in motion: exploding technology and an older but more vigorous population in and out of the force. The most significant organizational challenges—reduced size and jointness—are also playing out.

While in the immediate future it may be necessary to keep DOPMA intact, the Department of Defense and the Congress should point to 1997, the end of the currently programmed contraction, to consider the need for fundamental changes in the way officers will be managed in the new century. Any new officer management legislation should be based not on how serving officers are used to being managed or as a reaction to past practices and outdated situations, but on how future officers will need to be managed to maintain requisite quantity and quality and to confront the dynamics of the future environment.

In sum, officer management previously has tended to change as a result of transient conditions—a buildup or a build-down—rather than being premised on how to manage a future force. Much of the current practice of officer management is either a continuation of pre-1945 practice or a reaction to those practices. In the nineties and beyond, the active force will be smaller, more skillful, more vigorous, more joint, and more specialized. For the management of future officers, we recommend a rethinking of the principles on which officer management is based and, if change is needed, defining legislation that operationalizes those principles.

Appendix A

A SHORT HISTORY OF OFFICER PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

DOPMA's immediate precursors were two postwar enactments—the Officer Personnel Act (OPA) of 1947 and the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA) of 1954¹—but the policies, practices, and issues that Congress dealt with in DOPMA (and in some cases did not deal with) have a much longer history. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, procurement, promotion, tenure, and discharge of military officers were recurrent sources of policy dispute, as were the size and composition of the officer corps itself. During much of this period, the Army and the Navy, with the concurrence of Congress, pursued their own remedies in their own terms, such that for many questions there were often two different answers. Congress, often on its own initiative, was a key player. Indeed, apart from the budgetary aspects of national defense, it is difficult to locate an area in which Congress was not more consistently and intimately involved than management of the officer corps.

All three post–World War II acts broke new ground. From the longer view of history, however, each had ample precedents and each embodied considerably more continuity than departure from earlier patterns. The answers were somewhat different after 1947; the questions, by and large, were not. A review of the century-plus experience leading up to DOPMA's passage is helpful.

ORIGINS

The concept of a professional officer corps retained in peacetime to study, organize, train, and prepare for war did not emerge in serious fashion until the sixteenth century. Officer training as such dates to the seventeenth century, and most modern military academies have their origins in the eighteenth. Previously, military officers counted in war but seldom afterward.

Retaining senior personnel in peacetime presented no difficulties in the feudal age, when vassals swore a lifelong oath of fealty to assist their

¹P.L. 80-381, August 7, 1947, Ch. 512, 61 Stat. 795; P.L. 83-349, May 5, 1954, Ch. 180, 68 Stat. 65.

lord whenever called upon and spent the rest of their time on their estates. Nor did the question arise in the age of mercenaries, when officers were dismissed and, if possible, robbed of their pay each time a war was terminated. It first became an issue during the eighteenth century. The rise of absolute states, standing armies, and professionalism tended to turn officers into officers and nothing else.²

By the late eighteenth century, most of Europe had embraced the idea of a standing officer corps devoted exclusively to the military art. The United States pursued a different course. Rousseau's dictum—"Every citizen must be a soldier as a duty and none may be so by profession"—enjoyed wide support among the republic's founders, as did the works of seventeenth century English spokesmen for extreme liberalism, like John Trenchard, who held that standing armies were no more than gangs of restless mercenaries. In this view, permanently maintained armies were "a number of men paid by the public to devote themselves wholly to the military profession" and "the means . . . of overturning the constitution of a country and establishing the most intolerable despotism."³

In fact, the American Revolution was fought with a mixture of "amateurs" (the citizen militia) and "professionals." But the militia won nothing but condemnation from George Washington, who argued to the Continental Congress in 1776 that "to place any dependence upon the Militia is, assuredly, resting upon a broken staff." In Washington's view, concerns about professional forces were greatly exaggerated. "The Jealousies of a standing Army; and the Evils to be apprehended from one are remote; and in my judgment, situated and circumstanced as we are, not at all to be dreaded."⁴

Still, in keeping with the view that "the Constitution did not envisage a separate class of persons exclusively devoted to military leadership," the early congresses equivocated. A small regular army was established, but the nation continued to place its faith in the militia of the several states, even though the militia idea itself had pretty much died with Oliver Cromwell and had been shown to be of doubtful effi-

²Martin Van Creveld, *The Training of Officers: From Military Professionalism to Irrelevance*, The Free Press, New York, 1990, p. 5.

³Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1967, p. 63; Mark J. Eitelberg and Martin Binkin, "Military Service in American Society," in Goodpaster et al. (eds.), *Toward a Consensus on Military Service: Report of the Atlantic Council's Working Group on Military Service*, Pergamon Press, New York, 1982, pp. 237-238.

⁴Walter Millis (ed.), *American Military Thought*, Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis, 1966, pp. 12-14.

ciency in the wars in Europe.⁵ Congress did, however, make one important allowance. In authorizing the establishment of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1802, it provided the means by which the regular Army would receive a continuous flow of officers in yearly cohorts.⁶

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

On the eve of the Civil War, most of the regular officers in the Army and the Navy were products of the two service academies.⁷ The nation's other principal source of officers was severely restricted. The Militia Act of 1792 established a "universal" military obligation for all free, white, male citizens between the ages of 18 and 45, but amendments in 1795 imposed two limitations: when mobilized, the state militia could not be compelled to serve for more than three months a year, and the respective states had sole authority over militia officers ("the militia shall be officered by the respective states").

Stagnation in the regular officer ranks plagued both services. Promotion was solely by seniority, but, with no system to encourage or require the departure of senior officers, vacancies in the senior grades were infrequent. Army officers remained in the junior ranks for as long as 20 years, and even West Point cadet graduates were not assured of a commission upon graduation unless a vacancy existed at the time.⁸ Promotion in the Navy was further hamstrung by the ex-

⁵Russel F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*, Macmillan Publishing Co., New York, 1967, p. 2.

⁶Congress was less persuaded of the need for a similar institution for the Navy. The Navy's recurring petitions for a separate school for the procurement and training of naval officers were not granted until 1845, when Congress finally authorized a U.S. Naval Academy.

⁷Several private institutions in which military training was required were also established before the war—the American Literary, Scientific, and Military Academy at Norwich University (1819), the Virginia Military Institute (1839), and the Citadel (1842)—but their contributions to the commissioned officer corps in the period before the Civil War are lost to history.

⁸In expanding the size of the West Point student body following the War of 1812, Congress made no provision that graduates would actually be commissioned. In at least one year, 1836, with no vacancies in the ranks, graduates had to be given brevet rank instead of commissions as second lieutenants. The omission was partly corrected legislatively in 1878, when Congress provided that "all vacancies in the grade of second lieutenant should be filled from the graduates of the Military Academy so long as any such remained in the service unassigned" (James H. Hayes, *The Evolution of Military Officer Personnel Management Policies: A Preliminary Study with Parallels from Industry*, RAND, R-2276-AF, August 1978, p. 30). (Current law provides for a temporary increase in authorized strength to assure that cadet graduates receive their commissions.)

istence of only three ranks: lieutenant, master commandant, and captain. A Navy officer could thus look forward to only two promotions in his military career.⁹

Large-scale resignations of disgruntled junior Army officers prompted a marginal reform in 1836. “My attention having been called, by repeated resignations and other circumstances, to the pay of subordinate grades, I have looked into the subject with some care,” the Secretary of War told Congress in 1836. The idea was not to speed up promotions but, instead, to compensate for limited promotion opportunities. “[T]o remedy the inadequacy of the present system when promotion is slow, it has occurred to me that it would be expedient and just to introduce the additional feature of increasing the pay after five years of service in any one grade.”¹⁰ Congress enacted a variation of the idea two years later. Henceforth, “every commissioned officer, of the line or staff, exclusive of general officers, shall be entitled to receive one additional ration per diem for every five years he may have served, or shall serve in the army of the United States.”¹¹ For the first time, pay was tied to seniority as well as rank (and to seniority within rank).

A more ambitious proposal followed within a year. Resignations of unhappy junior officers were only part of the problem; superannuation in the Army officer corps as a whole adversely affected military competence. Concerned that “nearly all the field-officers of the line were old and decrepit” during the Seminole and Creek wars (few, in fact, actually bothered to join their troops in the field), the Army’s General-in-Chief recommended that Congress establish a retirement system as an incentive to create vacancies in the upper ranks. Congress declined, presumably out of concerns about costs, but it returned to the idea in limited fashion in 1855. The “Act to Promote the Efficiency of the Navy” of February 1855 applied only to that service, but it established the precedent. The legislation provided for a board of naval officers to examine the proficiency of the officers of the line and to identify officers who were “incapable of performing promptly and efficiently all their duties both ashore and afloat.” Naval officers judged incompetent were to be discharged; those deemed incapable were to be retired with furlough pay.

⁹Congress refused to authorize the rank of admiral because the rank “savored of royalty and its use . . . was contrary to democratic principles” (Hayes, 1978, p. 37).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹Ibid.

Legislation during the early war years expanded on these ideas. The prewar Regular Army (1,080 officers and 16,215 enlisted men in 1860) was enlarged with calls to the Union states for the provision of volunteers. In the Act of July 22, 1861, Congress left the selection of “volunteer” (nonregular) Army officers essentially in the hands of the states (officer vacancies were to be filled by vote of their units, with the state governors responsible for commissioning the selections), but it also took a page from the Navy act of 1855 by authorizing a board of Army officers to review “the capacity, qualifications, propriety of conduct, and efficiency” of any *volunteer* officer—a procedure that led to the termination of over 300 officers as unsuited for command within eight months of its enactment.¹² Three days later, Congress authorized an additional 500,000 volunteers and empowered the President to appoint as many general officers as were needed to command them. On July 29, 1861, Congress removed the three-month limit on militia service and permitted regular officers to be transferred to volunteer units and volunteer officers to regular units at the President’s discretion.

The first general (nondisability) retirement law, applicable to both the Army and the Navy, was enacted on August 3, 1861. Its purpose was to both induce and require the departure of superannuated and otherwise incompetent officers. Officers who had served 40 years, upon application to the President, could retire voluntarily. Officers who were deemed incapable of performing their duties, after a “full and fair hearing,” could be involuntarily placed on the retired list. On December 21, 1861, Congress provided for nondisability compulsory retirement for Navy officers who had completed 45 years of service or reached age 62.¹³ Army and Navy officers so retired were to receive 75 percent of their active-duty pay.¹⁴

In 1862, at Navy Department urging, Congress authorized admirals in the Navy and expanded the Navy’s officer rank structure: ensign, lieutenant, master, lieutenant commander, captain, commodore, and rear admiral. Promotion was to be by appointment by a board of officers, with those selected promoted according to their seniority until the new grades were filled. (The act established for the first time the

¹²William A. Ganoe, *The History of the United States Army*, Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1942, p. 260.

¹³Similar legislation was enacted in July 1862 for the involuntary nondisability retirement of Army officers.

¹⁴R. A. Holmes et al., *Military Retirement: The Role of Youth and Vigor* (Technical Report No. 370), Volume II, PRESEARCH Incorporated, Arlington, VA, February 1978, Appendix A.

relative rank of Army and Navy officers.) Also in 1862, Congress provided, albeit hazily, for a new source of future officers. In turning over federal lands to the states for land-grant colleges, the Morrill Land Grant Act provided that military tactics were to be among the subjects taught.¹⁵ In 1864, Congress turned again to promotions within the Navy. Henceforth, all officers below the grade of commodore had to pass an examination before a Navy board of senior officers to qualify for promotion to the next highest grade.

The Morrill Act was supplemented on several occasions after the war. In 1866, Congress authorized the President to detail 20 officers to the land-grant schools to teach military science. In 1870, it authorized the provision of surplus small arms and ammunition to the schools. The numbers of officer-instructors were gradually expanded, from 30 in 1876 to 100 in 1893.¹⁶ In 1889, the War Department arranged with a number of the land-grant schools that students be required to wear uniforms when training and that training be mandatory.

Nevertheless, nearly all of the regular Army and Navy officers for the rest of the century came from the two service schools.¹⁷ West Point became a school for all branches of the Army, not merely engineers, in 1866. Other advanced Army schools appeared (or reappeared and were given permanent status) over the next 30 years. The state militias remained beyond federal influence and control. The governing legislation at the turn of the century was still the Militia Act of 1792.

The Civil War reforms had limited impact on a promotion system that, in both services, was still heavily based on seniority. The regular Army dropped from a wartime peak of over one million men in 1865 to a strength that averaged less than 30,000 before the Spanish War in 1898. The smaller force meant fewer vacancies in the upper ranks, but promotion opportunities were also hamstrung by the way the Army was organized. Army officers generally remained in the same regiment throughout their careers; promotion depended entirely on vacancies occurring within the regiment. Moreover, an officer who

¹⁵The Morrill Act failed to provide much specificity, however. Left unclear were whether military training was to be optional or mandatory, the length and content of the study program, who would administer it, and whether graduates of the training could receive commissions in the regular military forces. See, e.g., John W. Masland and Laurence I. Radway, *Soldiers and Scholars: Military Education and National Policy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1957, pp. 79–83.

¹⁶Weigley, 1967, p. 283.

¹⁷Neither Congress nor the War Department provided that records be kept on who took training under the Morrill Act; Weigley's account noted that "perhaps the program helped provide officers for the Spanish War, but it is impossible to be sure" (*ibid.*).

transferred from one regiment to another normally lost seniority rights. At the War Department's urging, Congress provided some greater flexibility in June 1890. Promotion below the grade of brigadier general would now be within each branch or department of the Army instead of within individual regiments. Each branch was authorized a certain strength in each grade to which promotions were then made as vacancies occurred. The legislation also required that officers below the grade of major take examinations for promotion.

Promotion opportunities in the Navy were stymied by the Civil War "hump" of 868 Naval Academy graduates between 1861 and 1865. Many stayed in a sharply reduced postwar Navy officer corps, so that the top graduates of the class of 1868 remained lieutenants for 21 years.¹⁸ Although the Navy promotion system had stronger elements of selection than the Army's, it, too, was still a seniority-based system. "That system of scoundrelism—of selecting officers for promotion"¹⁹ enjoyed no great endorsement by the Navy's upper ranks. Congress sought to ease the problem by reducing the size of the Naval Academy's student body in 1882. Continuing protests and resignations by junior Navy officers forced the issue (somewhat) nonetheless. A Navy Department board, convened to "report upon the present stagnation of officers in the line of the Navy," recommended in 1882 that more senior billets be authorized and that a new system of forced retirement, or "plucking," be established to weed out captains who had not established sufficient ability to be promoted to flag rank.²⁰

Retirement provisions fluctuated in the postwar period. In July 1870, Congress enacted the first 30-year retirement law for Army officers. Upon approval of the President, voluntary retirees were to receive 75 percent of the pay of the rank at which they retired. (The 1870 legislation also provided for one year's severance pay for Army officers who were honorably discharged.) Navy retirements were more restricted. By separate legislation in July 1870, Congress limited the pay of Navy officers on the retired list to 50 percent of the highest pay of the active list in the same grade. In March 1873, Congress mandated that no Navy officer could retire for nondisability reasons before reaching age 62. In June 1882, it adjusted the Army's voluntary nondisability retirement to require 40 years of service but also pro-

¹⁸Hayes, 1978, p. 75.

¹⁹An admiral at the time, quoted in Peter Karsten, *The Naval Aristocracy*, The Free Press, New York, 1972, p. 284.

²⁰Congress ignored the "plucking" proposal for over a decade. A House committee reported favorably on the idea in 1894, but it was not formally endorsed until the Naval Personnel Act of 1899.

vided for mandatory nondisability retirement at age 64 (retirement pay in both cases was 75 percent of active-duty pay). In August 1890, Congress for the first time specified that no officer on the retired list of the Army or the Navy could draw or receive a pension under any other law. In legislation in March 1899, to draw down the Navy officer corps following the war with Spain, Congress allowed for the voluntary nondisability retirement, at three-quarters of the sea pay of the next higher grade, of captains, commanders, and lieutenant commanders, without regard to age or length of service.²¹

A final piece of legislation was directed at an old source of controversy in the Navy promotion system. Before 1846, Navy staff officers (surgeons, engineers, pursers) had no rank equivalency with officers in the line. This was partly corrected in 1846 (in the case of surgeons) and 1859 (regarding engineers).²² But Navy engineers, who had become a central part of the steam-era Navy, did not hold congressional “commissions” as did line officers, nor did they carry specific naval rank.²³ A Navy board, convened in 1898, recommended that the Navy’s engineer corps be abolished and amalgamated into the line.²⁴ Congress responded favorably by merging the two in the Naval Personnel Act of 1899.

The 1899 Naval Act was also intended to open up the senior officer grades to allow for more promotions of juniors. It authorized the Secretary of the Navy to keep a list of “applicants for early retirement” as a means to accelerate the flow of promotions in the ranks. If the number of volunteer “applicants” needed to create vacancies did not materialize, the secretary was empowered to convene a board to select senior officers (chiefly captains) for retirement. (This was the “plucking” board initially proposed in 1882.)

²¹Holmes et al., 1978, Appendix A.

²²In a precursor of the later “running-mate” system, Navy surgeons of the fleet and surgeons with more than 12 years of active service were to rank as commanders; surgeons with less than 12 years’ standing were to rank as lieutenants; those eligible to become assistant surgeons ranked below lieutenants; and assistant surgeons were to rank below masters. (Engineers were granted similar rank equivalencies in 1859.) Nevertheless, there was a catch. Navy surgeons sought “positive rank”; the line was willing to yield only “relative rank.” In 1863, Congress came down on the side of the line (Hayes, 1978, pp. 57, 60).

²³Kenneth J. Hagan, *This People’s Navy: The Making of American Sea Power*, The Free Press, New York, 1990, p. 118.

²⁴In the board’s view, “Every officer on a modern vessel in reality has to be an engineer . . . everything on such a vessel goes by machinery, and every officer, whether dealing with the turrets or the engine room, has to do with engineer’s work” (Charles O. Paullin, *Paullin’s History of Naval Administration 1775–1911*, U. S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, MD, 1968, p. 460).

EXPANSION, EXPERIMENTATION: 1900–1917

In the period between the Spanish-American War and the U.S. entry into the war in Europe in 1917, new sources of Army officers were experimented with and expanded, federal authority over the militia (and its officer corps) was extended, and an Army reserve officer corps was established. The Navy formally (if not yet fully) embraced a system for promoting officers that was both centralized and selective, and Congress for the first time explicitly linked retirement provisions to the selection/promotion system.

Throughout this period, the Navy continued to rely on its Naval Academy as the source of nearly all of its regular officers.²⁵ The shortcomings of this approach became evident shortly after the Spanish war. The postwar Navy drawdown was short-lived. Theodore Roosevelt took office in 1901 committed to a substantial expansion of the U.S. fleet. By 1905, Congress had approved construction of 28 battleships, 12 armored cruisers, and a variety of auxiliaries. The gap in the scheme was an acute shortage of officers to keep the ships manned. Proposals to promote enlisted men to the officer ranks ran into Navy opposition on the twin grounds of inadequate numbers of “qualified” enlisted personnel and “social problems” attendant to their elevation.²⁶ The fallback was to expand the size of the incoming classes at Annapolis. In March 1903, Congress authorized a doubling of the incoming classes at the Academy for the years 1903–1913. The solution, however, served only to parent a later problem: a new “hump” in the middle and upper ranks 15 to 20 years later, not unlike that following the Civil War.

Officer procurement in the Army was entangled in the larger, longer issue of regular versus militia (or professional versus amateur). Advocates of a professional “expansible” Army officer corps (notably, Secretary of War John C. Calhoun in 1820 and Major General Emory Upton in the 1870s) dismissed the militia as, at best, a home guard to “garrison our forts and to act in the field as light troops.” In

²⁵Congress established a national naval reserve in 1900, but this was clearly subordinate to the regular establishment. Indeed, legislation enacted in 1916 (discussed later in the main text) severely limited promotion opportunities for naval reserve officers by requiring minimum periods (two years) of full-time service afloat to qualify for selection for promotion. The Naval Academy was still the major source of U.S. Navy officers at the start of World War II. (In the hundred years between the Academy’s inception in 1845 to the end of World War II, Annapolis produced a total of 17,513 graduates.) See Edward L. Beach, *The United States Navy: A 200-Year History*, Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston, 1986, p. 492.

²⁶Park Benjamin, “Naval Promotion from the Ranks,” *Independent*, April 25, 1901 (cited in Hayes, 1978, p. 103).

Calhoun's words: "[T]o rely on them beyond this, to suppose our militia capable of meeting in the open field the regular troops of Europe, would be to resist the most obvious truth, and the whole of our experience as a nation."²⁷ The argument was reinforced by an advisory opinion of the Attorney General in 1912, which concluded that "the militia while in U.S. service might pursue an invading force beyond the U.S. boundary as part of repelling an invasion, but in general cannot be employed outside the United States."²⁸

Congress, however, continued to favor a citizen-army led by citizen-officers. Some in the Army, notably Chief of Staff General Leonard Wood and then-Captain John McAuley Palmer, were sympathetic to this view. In Palmer's assessment, an expansible regular Army was both impractical (it would be either too large to be politically acceptable in peacetime or too small to be militarily effective in mobilization) and "incongenial" to the American political system.²⁹ To ensure the place of the amateur in any future war, Congress, with mixed enthusiasm from within the Army, took a series of steps.

- In the Dick Act of 1903, Congress formally established the state National Guard as an organized militia, specified its drilling requirements, provided it with federal arms and equipment, and prescribed that Regular Army officers were to be detailed to Guard units.
- In the Volunteer Act of 1914, to get around the Attorney General's 1912 opinion on the constitutionality of militia service overseas, it allowed individual guardsmen to volunteer for federal service outside the United States and required the War Department to preserve intact organized Guard units, three-fourths of whose members volunteered.

²⁷Quoted in Weigley, 1967, p. 140.

²⁸Richard B. Crossland and James T. Currie, *Twice the Citizen: A History of the United States Army Reserve, 1908–1983*, Office of the Chief, Army Reserve, Washington, D.C., 1984, p. 23.

²⁹John McAuley Palmer, *America in Arms: The Experience of the United States with Military Organization*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941, p. 135. Woodrow Wilson also later declared in favor of the amateur. Shortly after the U.S. entry into the war in 1917, Wilson remarked, "This is an unprecedented war and, therefore, it is a war in one sense for amateurs. . . . The experienced soldier—experienced in previous wars—is a back number so far as his experience is concerned. . . . America has always boasted that she could find men to do anything. She is the prize amateur nation of the world. . . . Now, when it comes to doing new things and doing them well, I will back the amateur against the professional every time" (Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1959, p. 166).

- In the National Defense Act of 1916, it provided that the Guard receive federal pay for drills, gave the President authority to prescribe the kinds of units to be maintained by the states, and required guardsmen to take a dual oath to their state and to the United States.³⁰

The 1916 act advanced the citizen-officer concept along two other lines as well: it created an Officers' Reserve Corps for the Army and it formally established the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) as the successor to the earlier Morill land-grant programs.³¹ Finally, it signaled Congress's intent that the nation's traditional two-Army structure (regular/militia) be more closely integrated in the future. The act defined the U.S. Army to be "the Regular Army, the Volunteer Army, the Officers' Reserve Corps, the Enlisted Reserve Corps, the National Guard while in the service of the United States, and such other land forces as are now or may hereafter be authorized by law."³²

The Army, it should be noted, had fewer difficulties than the Navy with the idea of elevating enlisted personnel to the officer ranks. A number of Army officers had in fact been so commissioned as a result of service in the Spanish war and the subsequent Philippines insurrections. Also, the Army had fewer hesitations about alternative sources for the war expansion of its regular officer corps. In this vein, it quietly endorsed the private "preparedness" campaign pressed by (then-retired) Leonard Wood and others. Part of that campaign was the private training of future officers. Forerunner of the later Officer Candidate School (OCS), a summer camp program was initiated in 1913 wherein students paid their own expenses to receive military training. Expanded at Plattsburg, New York, in 1914, the program

³⁰In response to regular Army concerns about this second army, the 1916 act set standards for all Guard officers receiving federal pay and also assured Regular Army control of the Guard in war by limiting Guard officers to grades no higher than major.

³¹The land-grant program continued to be underutilized. An Army War College study in 1915 reported that from 1905 to 1915 a total of 287,952 men had participated in the program, 44,629 had graduated, but "only a few" of the graduates would ever be "trained officers" (Hayes, 1978, p. 98). Its ROTC successor was slow in implementation (chiefly because of funding delays), so that the transition from Morill to ROTC had barely begun when the United States entered the war. Still, between 1916 and 1919, senior ROTC units were established in 144 colleges. Most of their graduates would not normally receive Regular Army commissions in peacetime (they formed instead the core of the new Reserve Officers' Corps), but all were theoretically available for activation in war and emergencies.

³²Such a merger (for war purposes only) in fact took place in mid-1917. The Regular Army, the National Guard, and the "national" army of draftees were consolidated into a single "Army of the United States."

eventually received federal funding in 1916. Over 12,000 men attended the Plattsburg camps before the war.³³

The prewar Army continued to embrace the seniority-within-branch promotion system established in 1890.³⁴ The Navy took a different tack. The system of “plucking boards” was unpopular with Navy officers in the middle ranks. But it was also ineffective, in that promotions piled up in the lower ranks as well. Either the Navy would need to “pluck” at every rank or it would have to restructure the promotion system directly. The latter was embodied in legislation enacted in August 1916. By its terms:

Hereafter all promotions to the grades of commander, captain, and rear admiral of the line of the Navy, including the promotion of those captains, commanders, and lieutenant commanders who are, or may be, carried on the Navy list as additional to the number of such grades, shall be by selection only from the next lower respective grade upon the recommendation of a board of naval officers.³⁵

The statute set minimum time-in-grade criteria and maximum age limits, all designed to promote the “best fitted” officers and ease out the others.³⁶ The first clear break with earlier promotion philosophy, the 1916 provisions were nevertheless watered-down to a degree in actual operation. The Navy allowed some officers to be judged merely “fitted” and promoted rather than eliminated.³⁷

The 1916 Navy act was also the major retirement policy reform during the prewar period. By its terms, captains, commanders, and lieutenant commanders, upon reaching age 56, 50, and 45, respectively, and not selected for promotion according to the new procedure, could retire with 2.5 times their shore-duty pay for each year of service, the total of retired pay not to exceed 75 percent of shore-duty pay. The mandatory retirement age of all Navy officers, not otherwise affected, was increased from 62 to 64.

³³Weigley, 1967, p. 342.

³⁴It did, however, break with tradition in one important respect during the war. In previous conflicts, politically connected individuals were awarded commissions for wartime service as officers. In 1916, the War Department ruled that all of the upper ranks in the Army would be filled from within by career officers.

³⁵39 Stat. 590.

³⁶The act provided that “on or after June 13, 1920, no captain, commander, or lieutenant commander shall be promoted unless he has had not less than two years actual sea service on sea-going ships in the grade in which serving.”

³⁷See, e.g., Ed Gates, “Putting Up-or-Out in Perspective,” *Air Force Magazine*, April 1979, p. 64.

THE INTERWAR PERIOD

Demobilization following the war was not only rapid, it was also steep. The Army officer corps dropped from 130,485 in 1918 to 19,000 in 1919 and the Navy from 23,681 officers to 10,642 in the same period. In January 1919, the War Department asked Congress to fund an interim army of 509,000 officers and enlisted men “until such time as the United States could determine the shape of the postwar world and formulate new policies accordingly.”³⁸ Congress responded, in the National Defense Act of 1920, by authorizing a maximum Regular Army strength of 280,000, plus another 435,000 in the National Guard (the act restored and organized into divisions the National Guard and the Organized Reserve, which had been absorbed into the Army of the United States during the war). As a means to select out inefficient officers, the act further required that henceforth all Regular Army officers were to be categorized in class “A” or class “B.” Class A officers were those considered to be “satisfactory” and would be kept on active duty. Class B officers were to be separated with severance pay or mandatorily retired if they had more than 10 years of commissioned service.

The new authorized strength, it became quickly evident, was a chimera. In an economy move in 1921, Congress cut the Army to 133,240 officers and enlisted men (the Navy was cut from 133,000 to 94,000). One thousand Army officer billets were explicitly eliminated, promotions were stopped, and 800 officers were demoted to their next lower grade. In June 1922, Congress reduced the Army’s commissioned strength further. To ease the removal of class B officers, it prescribed a scale of departure benefits: those with less than 10 years of service were to be discharged with one year’s severance pay; officers with over 10 and under 20 years of commissioned service could be mandatorily placed on the “unlimited retired list” (with retirement set at 2.5 times active pay multiplied by the number of complete years of service); those with over 20 years could be mandatorily retired at 3 percent of active pay multiplied by the number of complete years of service (with retirement pay not to exceed 75 percent of active pay in all cases).

Although rank equivalency between the Army and Navy had been established during the Civil War, Congress had not explicitly provided for pay equivalency. This it did in August 1922. The 1922 legislation established uniform pay scales for both services (six pay levels devel-

³⁸John Dickinson, *The Building of an Army*, Century Co., New York, 1920, p. 324.

oped for grades below flag/general officer), formalized longevity pay, and established credit for National Guard service for pay purposes.

“Equivalency” took another turn in the establishment, in 1926, of what came to be known as the “running mate” system within the Navy. Prior to the Equalization Act of that year, each Navy staff corps had a separate promotion list governed by an independent grade distribution. Accordingly, officers commissioned in the same year might at a later date have widely disparate ranks. The 1926 legislation for the first time linked promotion of staff officers with promotion of officers of the line of a similar time in service.

Legislation in March 1925 explicitly applied the Navy’s selection for promotion (“up-or-out”) system to the Marine Corps and linked retirement provisions to promotion pass-overs.³⁹ The Navy promotion system was further tightened in 1931. Captains, commanders, and lieutenant commanders, upon completion of 35, 28 or 21 years of service, respectively, and not recommended for promotion, were to be involuntarily retired; all lieutenants who reached age 45, completed more than 20 years of service, and were found to be not professionally qualified by reason of examination were also to be mandatorily retired.⁴⁰

By the early 1930s, the Army’s Officers’ Reserve Corps had grown to about 100,000, but few of these were on active duty. (Echoing Calhoun and Upton, the Army still viewed its career officers as the nuclei around which greatly expanded wartime forces would be organized.) The Military Academy was the principal source of regular officers. ROTC instruction was provided in 52 institutions, and all but relatively few of the graduates were commissioned as reserve officers on inactive status.⁴¹ The National Guard never reached half the strength envisioned in 1920, but it did achieve one important (though not immediately useful) gain in 1933 when Congress amended the National Defense Act of 1916. Technically, the Guard had entered federal service in 1917 through the drafting of its members as indi-

³⁹A Marine Corps officer who failed promotion would be mandatorily retired at 2.5 times base pay multiplied by number of years of service (not to exceed 75 percent) as follows: lieutenant colonel at age 50 and major and company-grade officers at age 45. Colonels not on the eligible list for brigadier general were to be mandatorily retired at age 56.

⁴⁰Additional legislation in July 1935 provided for mandatory retirement of Navy lieutenants and lieutenants junior grade after completing 14 and 7 years’ service, respectively, and not being selected for promotion.

⁴¹Approximately 100,000 of these men were, however, called up in World War II (Masland and Radway, 1957, p. 88).

viduals, “a system which might permit dispersing the individuals to every corner of the Army.”⁴² The 1933 amendment ensured that the Guard henceforth would be activated as units by providing it with a new kind of dual status. After 1933, Guard units would be state militia under the militia clause of the Constitution and a permanent reserve component of the Regular Army under the Constitution’s army clause.

“As anything more than a small school for soldiers,” Weigley later wrote, the Army of the interwar period “scarcely existed.”⁴³ By 1933, there were no funds for Army maneuvers. Numbers of regular officers were transferred to establish and administer the Civilian Conservation Corps (unemployed Army reserve officers were recruited to manage CCC camps). In March 1933, the pay of all ranks was cut by 15 percent. As an additional economy move, President Roosevelt asked Congress for authority to furlough Regular Army officers at half pay, saying that he intended to order 3,000 to 4,000 officers off active duty. Army Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur publicly urged the measure’s defeat. In MacArthur’s view, if reductions must be made, they should be taken anywhere *but* in the officer ranks.

If you have to cut everything out of the National Defense Act, the last element should be the Officer Corps. If you had to discharge every soldier, if you had to do away with everything else, I would still professionally advise you to keep these 12,000 officers. They are the main-spring of the whole mechanism, each one of them worth a thousand men at the beginning of a war. They are the only ones who can take this heterogeneous mass and make of it a homogeneous fighting group.⁴⁴

Roosevelt’s furlough proposal did not pass, but Congress substituted for it indirectly in July 1935 with a more liberal retirement system. The 1935 legislation allowed the voluntary retirement of Regular Army officers with not less than 15 nor more than 29 years of commissioned service at 2.5 percent times active-duty pay multiplied by the number of years of service.

In 1926, the Military Affairs Committees of the House and Senate had set forth two “principles of the Army personnel system”:

[T]he paramount object is to maintain an adequate, virile, and efficient commissioned personnel as the highly professional nucleus of a war

⁴²Weigley, 1967, p. 401.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 402.

⁴⁴*Army and Navy Journal*, May 6, 1933, p. 711.

army; . . . [T]he object can be attained only by causing a steady flow of well qualified young men into the service, and by maintaining a steady flow of separations from the active list sufficient to allow the flow of promotion required.⁴⁵

This was scarcely the case in the 1930s. The Army's "B" board process proved to be ephemeral. Between 1931 and 1940 only 350 officers resigned, retired, or were dismissed. According to General Eisenhower, after the war

Our promotion system [was] unsatisfactory. Until we got to the grade of general officer, it was absolutely a lock-step promotion; and short of almost crime being committed by an officer, there were ineffectual ways of eliminating a man.⁴⁶

Promotion in the interwar Army was by seniority alone in the lower grades, by selection only to grades above colonel. The officer personnel system operated under fixed statutory limits for each grade (second lieutenant to general).⁴⁷ Owing to limited vacancies, it was not uncommon to find 14-year-in-grade lieutenants and 52-year-old lieutenant colonels. Legislation in 1935 was intended to break some of the logjam. It permitted automatic advancement of junior Army officers, in order of seniority, after completion of a certain period of active commissioned service: to first lieutenant at three years, captain at 10, major at 17, and lieutenant colonel at 23. Earlier congressional controls on the numbers of Army officers in these grades were dropped (the numbers would now result solely from the operation of the promotion system). Promotion to colonel existed only if vacancies occurred (which the Army's small size and the failure of the B boards kept down) and the officer had a minimum of 28 years of service.

In September 1939, the 190,000-man regular U.S. Army ranked nineteenth in size in the world, between those of Portugal and Bulgaria; as a percentage of population under arms, it ranked forty-fifth. Expanding the regular Army in 1940, Chief-of-Staff General George Marshall, who had himself waited 32 years to achieve colonel rank, got the approval of Roosevelt to purge an officer corps heavy

⁴⁵U.S. Congress, Senate and House of Representatives, *A Study Presenting the Salient Features of the Promotion and Retirement Systems, United States of America*, Military Affairs Committees, Vol. 2, 69th Cong., 2d Sess., 1926, pp. 130, 131.

⁴⁶U.S. Congress Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Officer Personnel Act of 1947*, Hearings, 80th Congress, 1st Sess., July 16, 1947.

⁴⁷The Army maintained separate lists for the limited promotion of medical officers and chaplains. The remainder of Army specialists—lawyers, engineers, and public information officers—were included with line officers for promotion purposes.

with colonels in their sixties (“on the brink of retirement”) and to more rapidly promote junior officers by ignoring seniority (Dwight Eisenhower was jumped over 350 senior officers when picked to be U.S. commander in Europe).⁴⁸ Authority to further purge the ranks of inefficient officers was provided in the “Army Vitalization Act” of July 1941. “Inefficient” officers with less than 7 years of service were to be discharged; those with over 30 years would be retired at 75 percent of their active pay; all others were to be retired according to the 2.5 percent times years of service formula noted earlier.

The Navy was in generally better condition than the Army entering World War II, though its backsliding on the “best fitted” principle of up-or-out is reported to have resulted in a number of “second-class officers who were not much of an asset” during the war.⁴⁹ Congress authorized a naval ROTC program in 1926, which provided flexibility for the later war expansion.⁵⁰

The Navy continued to employ its centralized promotion system during the war. Army promotions were more haphazard. Given the vastly expanded size of the war Army, promotions by branch were no longer practical, but neither was a centralized system. Accordingly, promotions up to the grade of lieutenant colonel were largely decentralized and left to the determination of specified field commanders. To be advanced, an Army officer had to serve in a position vacancy and demonstrate his ability in that position. Consequently, a lot depended on the happenstance of assignment. Army officers in commands with higher grade vacancies were promoted more rapidly than officers in commands where vacancies were fewer or opened up less frequently. Both services widely used temporary promotions during the war (permanent promotions in the Navy were discontinued in 1942). To deal with the superannuated Army reserve officer corps,

⁴⁸The “aging” situation was all the more problematic in the National Guard. In June 1941, fully 22 percent of the Guard’s first lieutenants ordered to duty were over 40 years old. Of the 6,800 activated National Guard officers who had completed courses in the service schools, most had completed them “many years in the past” (Hayes, 1978, p. 121).

⁴⁹Gates, 1979, p. 64. In 1938, concerned that too many junior officers were being forced out to meet grade limitations in the lieutenant and lieutenant commander ranks, Congress formally sanctioned the “fitted” officer exception to the “best fitted” rule.

⁵⁰In 1926, Congress and the Navy took additional steps in the direction of more “centralized” promotions. Previously, each Navy staff corps had a separate promotion list governed by a separate grade distribution. The “Equalization Act” of 1926 substituted a “running-mate” system, whereby promotion of staff officers was tied to promotion of line officers with the same tenure. In 1931, the basis on which Navy officers were separated from service was changed from age in grade to service in grade.

the Army substituted regulars for virtually all National Guard officers above the rank of lieutenant colonel and for a high percentage of those in the lower officer ranks as well.

POSTWAR ADJUSTMENTS

Efforts to establish a permanent military establishment in the years immediately following the war were dominated by three (not entirely consistent) themes. One was greater “uniformness” between the Army and the Navy (and after 1947, the Air Force). The theme was reflected in everything from the drafting of a “Uniform Code of Military Justice” to the struggle to establish a single “military establishment” (1947) and a single Department of Defense (1949). In matters of personnel management, it was reflected in Congress’s decision to consolidate separate Army and Navy legislation into a single “Officer Personnel Act” (OPA) in 1947.⁵¹

The second theme, echoing the Military Affairs Committees’ “principles” of 1926, was to emphasize a “young and vigorous” officer corps for the future. This was to be done through the interaction of three measures: the Navy’s up-or-out officer promotion system would be extended (up to a point) to the Army and the Air Force, tenure of a “successful” regular officer career in all services would be set for officers below flag rank at 30 years, and voluntary retirement would be automatically provided upon reaching 20 years of commissioned service.⁵²

Third, the peacetime military establishment would emphasize “remobilization” capability. This meant retaining the largest possible number of middle-ranking officers to take charge of greatly expanded forces in the event of another large war.⁵³ Whereas in 1945 there were approximately 1.3 field-grade officers (colonel/captain, lieutenant colonel/commander, major/lieutenant commander) for every 100 enlisted personnel, by 1950 the ratio stood at 4.0 to 100 enlisted.

⁵¹P.L. 80-381, August 7, 1947, Ch. 512, 61 Stat. 795. The two bills that were consolidated in OPA were HR 2536, which provided for the “procurement, promotion and elimination of Regular Army officers,” and HR 2537, which regulated the “distribution, promotion and retirement of officers in the Navy and Marine Corps” and provided for the advancement of enlisted personnel to commissioned grades.

⁵²Reserve officers serving on active duty could also retire at the 20-year mark but had no tenure.

⁵³The theory, in Luttwak’s characterization, was that “while military enlisted men and junior officers could be turned out quickly from the training bases and officer schools, their seniors obviously had need for more prolonged career preparation” (Edward N. Luttwak, *The Pentagon and the Art of War: The Question of Military Reform*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1988, p. 161).

That this concept did not fully square with the emphasis on “youth and vigor” did not seem to be especially troubling at the time. The way to reconcile peacetime economy (a small officer corps) and mobilization flexibility (a nucleus sufficiently sized for emergency force expansion) was a system with two characteristics. Permanent numerical ceilings would be established for each field grade, but “temporary” promotions would be allowed for at least ten years to meet security requirements in excess of permanent grade limitations. Also, officers with reserve commissions would be continued on active service to meet temporary overstrength requirements. Lacking tenure, these officers could be easily cut from the force in the event of future draw-downs.

The first postwar retirement legislation was enacted in February 1946 and applied only to the Navy and the Marine Corps. By its terms, any regular or reserve officer, upon completion of 20 years of active service (at least 10 of which were active commissioned service), could apply to be retired in the highest rank held at 2.5 times active-duty pay multiplied by the number of years of service (not to exceed 75 percent of active pay). This was followed in April 1947 with similar 20-year voluntary retirement provisions for Regular Army officers. (The National Security Act of July 1947 established the Department of the Air Force and provided that all retirement provisions of the Army be applicable to personnel of the Air Force.)

The major piece of immediate postwar legislation was OPA. In the terms of its preamble, the act was intended to serve three purposes:

- Provide in law an adequate number of officers in the proper grades and of the proper ages to meet the needs of the services;
- Authorize grade distribution that would provide a sufficiently attractive career so that high-caliber people would be attracted to service; and
- Eliminate the weak officer as early in a career as possible.

Recognizing “the continuing need for many thousands of temporary officers for years into the future,” Congress established in OPA a bifurcated sizing and promotion formula. The act imposed statutory ceilings on the number of regular officers who could be in each of the services (and established a percentage system for distribution of these officers among the various grades on a permanent basis) but then gave the Secretary of Defense authority for temporary promotions whenever the number of officers in any regular grade above second lieutenant was less than the number authorized, and whenever, un-

der authority of Congress, the number of regular and reserve officers on active duty was more than the authorized strength of the services.⁵⁴ In the words of the House Armed Services Committee, the act “provides a permanent career plan for Regular Army and Regular Navy officers, and yet, at the same time, authority is provided for carrying along 30,000 to 40,000 temporary officers for some years.” Congress expected to reduce the officer corps over the course of the next decade.⁵⁵ In such reductions, untenured temporary officers (essentially those with reserve commissions serving on active duty) would be cut so as not to “compel the release of qualified career officers.”⁵⁶

OPA’s other major provisions concerned promotion and forced separation, and here the impact was greatest on the Army. The Army proposed, and Congress endorsed, the end of commissioning officers in each of the several branches; henceforth, Army officers would be appointed and promoted “in the Regular Army.”⁵⁷ The Army also sought authority to adopt a version of the Navy’s up-or-out promotion system. In General Eisenhower’s words, “[I]t is merely a question . . . of keeping the outflow at the top so as to keep your vigorous body underneath.”⁵⁸

OPA extended the principle of up-or-out across the board. Promotion was to flow along a normal pattern after so many years of service in

⁵⁴At the time, total active-duty commissioned strength in the Army was close to 100,000, only 37,500 of whom were regular officers. In the Navy, not more than 27,000 regulars were represented among the 40,000+ officers on active duty (*House Report*, 1947, p. 1648). OPA established fixed percentages in each grade regardless of total officer strength. For the Army and Air Force, these were 8 percent (O-6), 14 percent (O-5), and 19 percent (O-4). For the Navy/Marine Corps, the percentages were 6 (O-6), 12 (O-5), and 18 (O-4).

⁵⁵Congress in 1947 contemplated an eventual “peacetime” strength of about 35,000 line officers in the Navy, 30,600 officers in the Army, some 7,000 in the Marine Corps, and some 27,500 in the Air Force.

⁵⁶U.S. Congress, House, *Officer Personnel Act of 1947*, Report No. 640, Committee on Armed Services, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., June, 1947, pp. 1647, 1648. The 1947 Congress hoped that by 1957 adjustments would have been made, “humps” would have been smoothed out, and the officer corps of each of the services would be made up predominantly of regulars.

⁵⁷Congressional acquiescence was less than automatic. The House Armed Services Committee commissioned a special study because of protests from the Army Corps of Engineers and the Judge Advocate General. “[A]fter reexamination of the matter . . . it was concluded that the Army is sound in its contention that branch appointments, while providing protection for the branches and insuring continuation of the traditions of the various branches and corps, nevertheless is subject to the greater disadvantage of imposing upon the Army too rigid a structure which cannot be readily responsive to changing military needs” (*ibid.*, p. 1652).

⁵⁸Senate Hearings, 1947, p. 11.

each grade, but each officer was required to go through a selection process for that promotion. Officers would move through various grades in cohorts (normally year groups) and be considered for promotion at various points in their careers in accordance with norms established in the act. The act provided that officers twice passed over for promotion would, after a certain number of years, depending upon their particular grade, be separated from active service and, if eligible, be retired. But the system was not quite as uniform across services as this might imply. Army promotions under OPA were virtually guaranteed at set intervals except for the “unqualified.”

Although the same word “selection” is used throughout the Army and Navy promotion systems . . . the two programs actually correspond very little at present in the application of selection below colonel and captain grades. In the lower grades, the Army “selection system” . . . is in actual effect an eliminations system whereby all officers who are qualified will be selected up, with only the unqualified selected out. By contrast, the Navy system promotes only those officers who are best qualified, in order to fill a limited number of vacancies.⁵⁹

This was not a great concern to Congress at the time.

There are excellent reasons for this difference between the programs at this time. The foremost is that the adoption of selection by the Army is so novel an undertaking, with such far-reaching effects on the careers of tens of thousands of officers who have grown up under a seniority system, in use throughout the Army’s history, that the Army of necessity must proceed with caution. Because of this and other basic differences between the services at the present time, the Army selection system, in grades below colonel, is expected initially to force out incompetent officers only, whereas under the Navy system, beginning in the grade of lieutenant commander, about one of every five officers in each grade must be eliminated, when the system stabilizes, in order to preserve the required distribution of officers and to maintain the proper age levels in each grade.⁶⁰

Of great concern to some members of Congress was the idea of forcing out of service officers who might still be “at the height of their usefulness.” This was the 30-year tenure provision for “successful” officers. According to Senator Guy Cordon:

It may be that some of the restrictions of the bill are justified [the 30-year retirement] for combat units, but I feel strongly that they are inadvisable for the technical services. [T]he retirement of colonels after

⁵⁹*House Report*, 1947, p. 1647.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*

they have completed either 5 years of service as permanent colonels or 30 years of service, whichever is the later . . . would mean that the average officer, figuring that he received his commission at age 22, would be forced to retire at 52 years of age. This seems to me to be a most wasteful and illogical requirement, particularly for the technical services.⁶¹

Not greatly at issue at the time (though it would be very shortly) was the effect that the earlier postwar retirement legislation (voluntary retirement at 20 years) would have on the actual tenure of much of the officer corps.

REVISITING (SOME) ISSUES

In its commentary on the 1947 act, the House Armed Services Committee underscored the uncertainties that lay ahead.

It is . . . premature to contend that this legislation is the conclusive answer to the promotional needs of the services. Some 5 or 10 years hence it can be better determined what, in detail, those needs will be.⁶²

In June 1945, there were approximately 52,000 lieutenant colonels/commanders/colonels/captains and 10.8 million enlisted personnel; on June 30, 1952, there were 41,000 officers in these grades and 3.2 million in the enlisted force. In OPA Congress had imposed tight controls on permanent promotions, but there was no congressional control over temporary promotions in the Army and Air Force, and the statutory limitations that did exist on temporary promotions in the Navy and Marine Corps were viewed by many in Congress as far too liberal.⁶³ In fiscal years 1953 and 1954, Congress reacted by establishing limitations through amendments to the budget (“Davis Amendments”). But annual adjustments were clumsy and destabilizing. In March 1953, a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee undertook a review of temporary promotions that concluded that, while there was no overexaggerated grade structure in the armed forces, there were sufficient instances of senior officers occupying billets that more properly could be filled by junior officers

⁶¹Senate Hearings, 1947, pp. 5–6. Senator Morse commented, “I cannot vote for the bill unless those objections are taken care of” (p. 6), and Senator Byrd noted, “That seems to me mighty early to retire a man, at 52.”

⁶²*House Report*, 1947, p. 1648.

⁶³According to Congressman Leslie Arends in early 1953, “[T]here is growing concern in the Congress with respect to temporary promotions and the number of officers holding high grade compared with the number that were in existence in World War II.”

and vice versa.⁶⁴ The full Congress responded in 1954 with the Officer Grade Limitation Act (OGLA).⁶⁵ OGLA imposed statutory limitations on the number of regular and reserve officers who could serve in the grades of major and above (and Navy equivalents) and repealed provisions of the 1954 Defense Appropriations Act affecting promotion and retirement.⁶⁶ OGLA established grade tables for the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps (except for medical officers and dentists) that provided maximum grade authority for the entire officer corps (in the case of the Navy, where there already existed limitations on temporary promotions, OGLA applied direct controls only to unrestricted line officers).

The 1954 act did not repeal the 1947 legislation. In effect, after 1954, temporary promotions were regulated within the OGLA ceilings, while permanent promotions were made under the permanent regular limits prescribed by OPA. In the Army and the Air Force, the law and policy provided for two separate selections, one for temporary (“insignia change”) promotion and the second for permanent (“regular”) promotion (which governed the length-of-service expectation).⁶⁷

OGLA had one other provision of note. Concerned about too many officers voluntarily retiring (at half pay) at the 20-year mark, Congress set limits on voluntary retirements (the Van Zandt amendment) in the 1954 Defense Appropriations Act. Assuring the Congress during hearings on OGLA that there would be no wholesale retirements in returning to unrestricted 20-year departures (“It is probable that, in the future, the privilege of voluntary retirement after completion of 20 or more years of service will be exercised little. . . . The service has long accepted 30 years of faithful service as being the normal tour of duty”⁶⁸), the military services won repeal of the restriction in section

⁶⁴House Hearings, 1953, pp. 2480–2482.

⁶⁵P.L. 83-349, May 5, 1954, Ch. 180, 68 Stat. 65.

⁶⁶Unlike OPA, which fixed set percentages for each grade regardless of the size of the officer corps, OGLA established a sliding scale based on the range of officer strength (excluding medical, dental, and general officers and certain others). At an officer strength of 212,500, the percentages would be 5.85 (O-6), 12.95 (O-5), and 19.16 (O-4). At an officer strength of 313,500, they would be 5.0 (O-6), 11.75 (O-5), and 19.95 (O-4).

⁶⁷Again, there were service differences. In the Navy and Marine Corps, law and policy provided for a single selection for advancement to both temporary and permanent grade, with promotion as vacancies occurred under the respective statutory limitations. Also, the Air Force’s OGLA limits were set substantially lower than the Army’s and Navy’s because the Air Force had a relatively junior officer corps in 1954.

⁶⁸U.S. Congress, Senate, Officer Grade Limitations Act of 1954 (H.R. 7103), Hearings, Committee on Armed Services, April, 1954, p. 8.

402 of OGLA.⁶⁹ The services' predictions at the time that most successful officers would pursue a full 30-year career proved to be off the mark. In 1975, officers retired at an average age of 46 with about 24 years of service.⁷⁰ Fifteen years later, in FY 1990, officers still retired at an average age of 46 (mode = 43) with 24 years of service (mode = 20).⁷¹

THE LAST PASSAGE

The House Armed Services Committee expressed the belief in 1947 that in time "basic differences [between the services] which now must necessarily exist will gradually fade away."⁷² This was not, in fact, the case. Between 1959 and 1966, the Air Force was granted by Congress temporary increases in the numerical grade limits prescribed by OGLA (in 1972, the 1966 relief was extended to 1974). The 1947 and 1954 acts operating together created a "dual" promotion system wherein officers were promoted twice to each grade: first temporary, later permanent (Army and Air Force officers in fact went through the selection process twice). The regular officer limits of OPA, combined with a need for consistently larger officer forces, led to reserve officers serving continuously on active duty for careers of 20 years or more. The Army/Air Force and Navy/Marine Corps promotion systems were still sufficiently different to provide different career opportunities and expectations between the services.

In 1960, the Department of Defense impaneled an "Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act" (the Bolte committee). The intention was to "achieve uniformity whenever practicable in officer career management systems."⁷³ Among other things, the committee recommended a uniform percentage to be applied to the total numbers of regular officers in each service to determine the numbers who may serve under permanent appointment in each grade and urged a requirement for a minimum period of service in each

⁶⁹Senate Hearings, 1954, pp. 10, 26, and 36.

⁷⁰General Accounting Office, *The 20-Year Military Retirement System Needs Reform*, Washington, D.C., March 13, 1978, p. i.

⁷¹Defense Manpower Data Center, Office of the Actuary, FY 1990 Statistical Report.

⁷²*House Report*, 1947, p. 1661.

⁷³U.S. Department of Defense, *Report of the Department of Defense Ad Hoc Committee to Study and Revise the Officer Personnel Act of 1947* ("Bolte Report"), December 1960, p. 1. "The Committee believes that all officers on active duty, whether Regular or not, should be treated with equality in their personal career patterns except insofar as their tenure requires differences in the management of their careers" (p. 4).

grade before eligibility for promotion to the next. A uniform (modified) up-or-out promotion system should be established. By its terms:

- First lieutenants/lieutenants junior grade twice failed of promotion would be discharged with severance pay;
- Captains/lieutenants twice passed over would be discharged with severance pay but could be continued on active duty by a selection board for not less than two or more than four years, with eligibility for additional periods through completion of 20 years;
- Majors/lieutenant commanders passed over twice but having completed 20 years would be retired;
- Twice-passed lieutenant colonels/commanders would be retired at 20 years but could be selectively continued to a maximum of 26; and
- Twice-failed colonels/captains would be involuntarily retired but could be selectively continued to a maximum of 30 years.⁷⁴

Legislation based on the Bolte committee's recommendations was submitted to Congress by the Department of Defense in the early 1960s, but Congress did not act on it, and it was subsequently withdrawn in 1966. In 1972, concerned that the armed services still had too many senior officers and troubled by the need to provide annual grade relief to the Air Force, Congress directed the Secretary of Defense to submit a written report "regarding limitations on the number of officers who may serve in the various commissioned grades . . . [and] include . . . such recommendations he deems appropriate for legislation to establish new permanent [grade] limitations."⁷⁵ The resulting "Report on Officer Grade Limitations" essentially set forth the provisions to be included in DOPMA. DOPMA's path to passage was protracted. It was approved by the House twice (in 1976 and 1978), but the Senate on both occasions failed to act. In 1979, the Senate Armed Services Committee and later the full Senate approved its own version of DOPMA, but the House (and also the Defense Department) disagreed with its terms and held to the view that no legislation was better than the Senate's version. In mid-1980, however, a compromise effort was spearheaded by both Armed Services Committees. DOPMA passed that November.

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 128–130.

⁷⁵P.L. 92-561, October 25, 1972, 86 Stat. 1175.

The principal issue throughout this period centered on familiar questions of promotion and separation, specifically, up-or-out. In 1976, the Defense Manpower Commission concluded that the up-or-out policy was “one of the most controversial subjects in the personnel management arena . . . [and] has created morale problems . . . has caused personnel turbulence and general hardship” and is “failure oriented.”⁷⁶ Senator Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), a key blocker of the House bill, argued that it is expensive to force officers up through the ranks and a waste of experience to get rid of others. The Department of Defense nevertheless held firmly to the up-or-out system. The compromise—DOPMA—was the result.

⁷⁶Defense Manpower Commission (DMC), *Defense Manpower: The Keystone of National Security: Report to the President and the Congress*, Washington, D.C., March 1976, p. 261.

Appendix B

SERVICE DRAWDOWN PLANS

Table B.1
DOPMA Provisions and the Planned Defense Drawdown,
FY 1991–1995

Provision	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Total
Voluntary early release (YOS ^a						
1–20)						
Army	600	600	600	600	600	3,000
Navy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Corps	0	0	0	0	0	0
Air Force	600	0	0	0	0	600
TIG/ACS waiver (YOS 20+)						
Army	200	200	200	200	200	1,000
Navy	0	152	132	149	151	584
Marine Corps	25	50	50	50	50	225
Air Force	180	227	199	150	125	881
Probationary board for regular						
officers (YOS 1–5)						
Army	0	39	0	275	0	314
Navy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Corps	0	0	0	0	0	0
Air Force	0	0	0	0	0	0
Promotion/Reserve RIF/ augmentation non-						
selections (YOS 1–6)						
Army	0	0	0	0	0	0
Navy	235	260	216	216	227	1,154
Marine Corps	75	75	75	75	75	375
Air Force	16	331	391	10	10	758
Promotion and augmentation						
nonselections (YOS 7–15)						
Army	0	0	0	0	0	0
Navy	403	453	485	680	645	2,666
Marine Corps	25	25	25	25	25	125
Air Force	58	466	488	457	349	1,818
Reserve RIF (YOS 7–10)						
Army	1,446	923	569	250	343	3,531
Navy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Corps	0	0	0	0	0	0
Air Force	0	1,295	1,531	0	0	2,826

Table B.1—continued

Provision	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Total
Regular RIF (YOS 7–20)						
Army	1,260	1,074	1,017	662	919	4,932
Navy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Marine Corps	0	0	0	0	0	0
Air Force	0	0	0	0	0	0
Selected early retirement (YOS 21+)						
Army	456	688	473	517	655	2,789
Navy	442	400	400	400	400	2,042
Marine Corps	115	100	100	100	100	515
Air Force	511	633	247	624	356	2,371

SOURCE: Service March 1991 submissions to ASD (FM&P) based upon ASD memo dated 16 January 1991.

^aYOS—years of service.

Table B.2

**Planned Involuntary Early Retirements and Separations,
FY 1991–1995**

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Total
Involuntary separations before retirement (YOS ^a 1–20)						
Army	3,506	2,836	2,386	1,987	2,062	12,777
Navy	638	865	833	1,045	1,023	4,404
Marine Corps	100	100	100	100	100	500
Air Force	854	2,319	2,609	617	484	6,883
Selected early Retirement (YOS 21+)						
Army	456	688	473	517	655	2,789
Navy	442	400	400	400	400	2,042
Marine Corps	115	100	100	100	100	515
Air Force	511	633	247	624	356	2,371
Total involuntary separations						
Army	3,962	3,524	2,859	2,504	2,717	15,566
Navy	1,080	1,265	1,233	1,445	1,423	6,446
Marine Corps	215	200	200	200	200	1,015
Air Force	1,365	2,952	2,856	1,241	840	9,254
DOD total for all services	6,622	7,941	7,148	5,390	5,180	32,281

SOURCE: Service March 1991 submissions to ASD (FM&P) based upon ASD memo dated 16 January 1991.

^aYOS—years of service.

Table B.3
Actual and Planned Promotion Opportunity, FY 1989–1995

Service	Year	O-6	O-5	O-4
		DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%
Army	89	45	70	79
	90	44	70	73
	91	45	70	55
	92	50	70	80
	93	50	70	80
	94	50	70	80
	95	50	70	80
Navy	89	55	70	80
	90	55	70	80
	91	55	70	80
	92	55	70	80
	93	55	70	80
	94	55	70	80
	95	55	70	80
USMC	89	50	65	70
	90	50	65	70
	91	50	65	70
	92	50	65	70
	93	50	65	70
	94	50	65	70
	95	50	70	80
Air Force	89	55	75	90
	90	55	75	90
	91	55	75	80
	92	55	75	80
	93	55	75	80
	94	55	75	80
	95	55	75	80

SOURCE: Service March 1991 submissions to ASD (FM&P) based upon ASD memo dated 16 January 1991.

Table B.4
Actual and Planned Promotion Timing, FY 1989–1995
(years and months)

Service	Year	O-6	O-5	O-4
		DOPMA = 22	DOPMA = 16	DOPMA = 10
Army	89	22-6	17-5	11-8
	90	22-8	17-3	11-9
	91	22-3	17-4	11-9
	92	22-3	17-3	11-8
	93	22-3	16-8	11-7
	94	22-3	16-5	11-3
	95	22-3	16-3	11-1
Navy	89	21-4	15-4	10-0
	90	21-5	15-4	10-0
	91	21-9	15-1	10-1
	92	21-6	15-2	10-3
	93	21-3	15-2	10-4
	94	21-1	15-1	10-4
	95	21-1	15-2	10-6
USMC	89	21-9	16-9	12-2
	90	21-7	16-9	12-3
	91	21-6	17-1	12-3
	92	21-9	16-8	11-7
	93	21-3	16-8	11-2
	94	21-0	16-6	11-0
	95	21-0	16-3	10-9
Air Force	89	21-5	16-3	10-9
	90	21-9	16-2	11-0
	91	22-0	16-8	12-4
	92	22-1	16-2	12-6
	93	22-2	16-2	12-6
	94	22-1	16-1	12-3
	95	21-6	16-3	12-2

SOURCE: Service March 1991 submissions to ASD (FM&P) based upon ASD memo dated 16 January 1991.

Appendix C
OFFICER INVENTORY PROJECTIONS,
FY 1991–2008¹



Fig. C.1—Navy Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991–2008

¹These projections are not based on the service drawdown plans in Appendix B but are made on a basis similar to the one for the Army in Section 4 to show the future effect of not allowing involuntary (or increased voluntary) separations.



Fig. C.2—Marine Corps Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991-2008

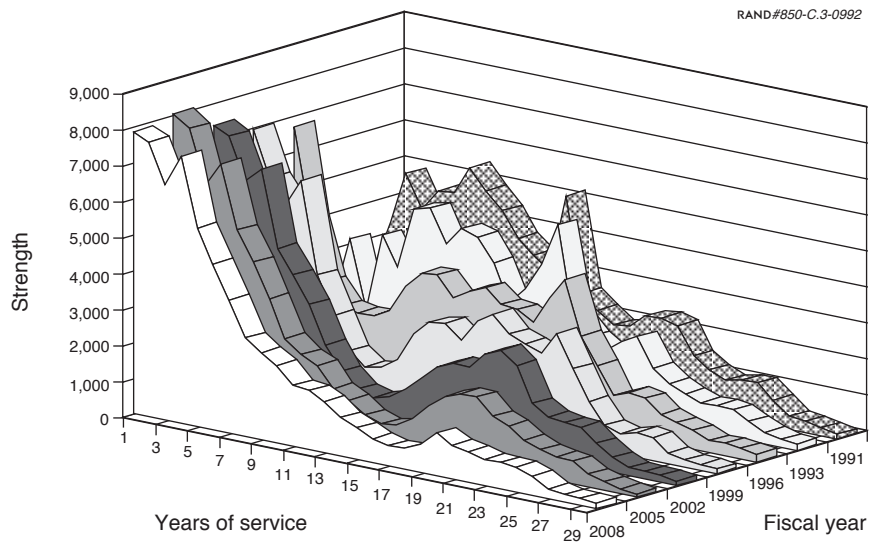


Fig. C.3—Air Force Officer Personnel Inventory—No Involuntary Separations, FY 1991-2008

Appendix D
PROMOTION HISTORY, FY 1979–1990

Table D.1
Officer Promotion Opportunity

Service	Year	O-6	O-5	O-4	Service	Year	O-6	O-5	O-4		
		DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%			DOPMA = 50%	DOPMA = 70%	DOPMA = 80%		
Army	90	46%	73%	79%	USMC	90	51%	65%	71%		
	89	45%	70%	80%		89	48%	66%	70%		
	88	47%	73%	78%		88	49%	70%	79%		
	87	49%	77%	82%		87	55%	69%	79%		
	86	51%	NB ^a	75%		86	60%	75%	80%		
	85	62%	86%	87%		85	61%	73%	80%		
	84	59%	85%	86%		84	60%	75%	80%		
	83	57%	87%	87%		83	60%	75%	80%		
	82	60%	77%	87%		82	60%	75%	80%		
	81	51%	72%	75%		81	60%	75%	85%		
	80	53%	72%	74%		80	60%	75%	85%		
	79	59%	75%	79%		79	55%	70%	80%		
	Navy	90	56%	72%		86%	Air Force	90	55%	74%	89%
		89	55%	70%		80%		89	55%	75%	NB ^a
88		56%	72%	82%	88	NB ^a		75%	90%		
87		57%	74%	83%	87	56%		75%	89%		
86		57%	74%	83%	86	60%		73%	90%		
85		58%	76%	86%	85	57%		77%	91%		
84		60%	75%	84%	84	55%		75%	90%		
83		61%	80%	85%	83	55%		75%	90%		
82		70%	82%	90%	82	55%		75%	90%		
81		70%	85%	95%	81	55%		75%	90%		
80		63%	80%	90%	80	50%		75%	90%		
79	60%	70%	97%	79	50%	70%	80%				

SOURCE: OASD (FM&P) (MM&PP) (O&EPM), August 19, 1991. Average opportunity for all competitive categories, computed by totaling all officers due course, above, and below zone promotions and dividing by the number of officers in zone.

^aNB—no board.

Table D.2
Officer Promotion Point

Service	Year	O-6	O-5	O-4	Service	Year	O-6	O-5	O-4		
		DOPMA = 22±1	DOPMA = 16±1	DOPMA = 10±1			DOPMA = 22±1	DOPMA = 16±1	DOPMA = 10±1		
Army	90	22-7	17-2	11-4	USMC	90	21-9	16-10	12-1		
	89	22-7	17-7	11-10		89	21-10	16-11	12-2		
	88	22-4	17-8	11-2		88	21-10	16-6	11-1		
	87	22-1	17-2	11-7		87	21-11	16-4	10-10		
	86	22-6	17-6	11-1		86	21-8	16-8	10-11		
	85	22-0	16-8	11-4		85	21-6	16-0	11-3		
	84	22-3	16-8	11-2		84	22-0	16-0	11-1		
	83	21-11	16-5	11-7		83	21-9	15-10	10-4		
	82	21-8	15-11	11-5		82	21-11	15-0	10-9		
	81	21-7	15-10	11-2		81	22-2	15-3	9-8		
	80	21-7	15-11	10-11		80	22-4	15-3	10-0		
	79	21-9	16-2	11-0		79	22-5	16-4	10-5		
	Navy	90	21-9	15-4		10-2	Air Force	90	21-9	16-2	11-0
		89	21-4	15-4		10-0		89	21-5	16-3	NB
88		21-1	15-2	9-10	88	NB		15-11	9-10		
87		21-0	15-1	9-8	87	21-0		16-2	10-8		
86		20-11	15-6	9-6	86	21-1		16-5	10-8		
85		21-0	15-3	9-5	85	20-5		16-4	11-0		
84		21-3	15-1	9-4	84	20-8		16-3	11-7		
83		21-5	14-9	9-2	83	20-6		15-9	11-8		
82		21-6	14-9	9-2	82	20-6		15-9	11-10		
81		21-5	14-8	9-0	81	20-8		15-9	11-9		
80	21-5	14-9	9-3	80	20-8	15-8	11-7				
79	21-9	14-10	9-3	79	21-2	16-0	11-9				

SOURCE: OASD (FM&P) (MM&PP) (O&EPM), August 19, 1991. Average promotion point for all competitive categories is the number of years and months of active commissioned service plus entry-grade credit at which officers are promoted to a particular grade.