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ARI Research Note 90-88

AD-A226 718

The Sociology of Army Reserves: Final Report

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for

Contracting Officer's Representative
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Basic Research
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July 1990



United States Army
Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences

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UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
1a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified			1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS --		
2a. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION AUTHORITY --			3. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF REPORT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
2b. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE --			5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) ARI Research Note 90-88		
4. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S) --					
6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION Department of Sociology Northwestern University		6b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) --		7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Research Institute	
6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) Evanston, IL 60208		7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600			
8a. NAME OF FUNDING/SPONSORING ORGANIZATION U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences		8b. OFFICE SYMBOL (if applicable) PERT-BR		9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER MDA903-86-K-0011	
8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code) 5001 Eisenhower Avenue Alexandria, VA 22333-5600		10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS			
		PROGRAM ELEMENT NO. 61102B	PROJECT NO. 74F	TASK NO. N/A	WORK UNIT ACCESSION NO. N/A
11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) The Sociology of Army Reserves: Final Report					
12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S) Moskos, Charles					
13a. TYPE OF REPORT Final		13b. TIME COVERED FROM 85/12 TO 88/12		14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day) 1990, July	
15. PAGE COUNT 23					
16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION Contracting Officer's Representative, Michael Drillings <i>Military Department Specialist</i>					
17. COSATI CODES			18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)		
FIELD	GROUP	SUB-GROUP	Army reserves		
			Army National Guard		
			Military sociology		
19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number) → This report presents a conceptual framework of reserve components. The focus is on the Selected Reserves of the U.S. Army. The guiding principle of the report is that reserve components are more than just an organizational variation of active components. The core characteristics of the reserve components are highlighted by an organizational contrast with active-duty components and by a comparative contrast of American reserves with those of other Western countries. The following variables differentiate reserves from active-duty components: 1. Normative motivation is a significant factor; 2. MOS mismatch is a problem; 3. Family conflict is greater with seniors than juniors; and 4. Career development increasingly comes into conflict with the pressures of demanding civilian occupations.					
(Continued)					
20. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT ☒ UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT. ☐ DTIC USERS			21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION Unclassified		
22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL Michael Drillings			22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) (202) 274-8722		22c. OFFICE SYMBOL PERI-BR

UNCLASSIFIED

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE(When Data Entered)

ARI Research Note 90-88

20. ABSTRACT (Continued)

→ Comparative analysis identified the following as the unique elements of the American reserve system: (1) more training time; (2) reliance on reservists for full-time support; (3) career path (with a corresponding professional military education system) leading to senior positions; and (4) limited real vacation time.

The sum effect of these conditions is that American reserves face exceptional conflict between reserve duties and civilian employment responsibilities. Such conflict promises to become more severe as reserve components become increasingly integrated with the active force under Total Force concepts. This report makes policy recommendations based on the analysis.

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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE(When Data Entered)

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ARMY RESERVES: FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Heretofore the sociology of the military has been, in effect, the sociology of active-duty forces. This report presents a conceptual framework of reserve components. The focus is on the Selected Reserves of the U.S. Army. The guiding principle is that reserve components are more than just an organizational variation of active components.

The core characteristics of the reserve components are highlighted by an organizational contrast with active-duty components and by a comparative contrast of American reserves with those of other Western countries.

The following are identified as significant variables that differentiate reserve from active-duty components: (1) Normative or nonmonetary motivation is a significant factor in reserve recruitment and retention; (2) MOS mismatch is the basic problem in unit training and readiness; (3) Family conflict heightens rather than diminishes as one moves up the reserve career ladder; and (4) Career development and professional military education increasingly come into conflict with the pressures of demanding civilian occupations.

Comparative analysis with reserve forces in other countries identified the following as the unique elements of the American reserve system: (1) No other reserve system requires as much training time for its members; (2) No other reserve system relies on reservists for basic full-time support; (3) No other reserve system has a well developed career path (with a corresponding professional military education system) leading to senior command and staff positions within the reserve structure; and (4) In no other reserve system do reservists have such limited real vacation time.

The sum effect of these conditions is that American reserves are characterized by exceptional conflict between reserve duties and civilian employment responsibilities. Such conflict promises to become more severe as reserve components become increasingly integrated with the active force under Total Force concepts. Any long-term policy changes aimed to improve reserve forces must take this elemental fact into consideration. Policy recommendations based on this analysis are given. Minimally, a standard policy should be to evaluate all personnel proposals dealing with the active force in terms of their impact on reserve forces.

In sum, the sociology of the reserves is a subject that should be approached on its own terms and is worthy of study in its own right.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF ARMY RESERVES:

FINAL REPORT

What is termed the sociology of the military has been, in effect, the sociology of active-duty forces. Reserve forces have rarely been the object of theoretical analysis and, until very recently, of not much more empirical research. Yet current trends indicate that reserve components will take on an increasingly important mission in the American force structure -- both for budgetary and manpower reasons. The central assumption here is that the sociology of the reserves is worthy of attention in its own right for both social scientific and policy reasons.

This report breaks new ground by presenting an organizational and comparative analyses of reserve components. The focus here is on the Selected Reserves of the U.S. Army -- the drilling units of the Army Reserves and the Army National Guard. Although Army reserve components are the central concern, many of the findings have applicability to the reserve components of the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps. The guiding principle is that reserve components are more than just an organizational variation of active components.

The plan of this report is threefold. First is an organizational analysis based on observations in American reserve units. This allows for a conceptual typology that clearly distinguishes the social organization of reserve forces from that

of active-duty forces. Second is a comparative analysis of reserve systems in three Western countries based on examination of reserves in the Federal Republic of Germany, United Kingdom, and Israel. This allows for a specification of the unique elements of American reserve components. Suggestions of the ways in which basic research on reserve components can inform policy considerations make up the third part. The basic research reported here promises not so much solutions to specific problems, but some useful ways to think about them.

The Social Organization of Reserve Components

The "Total Force" means that many reserve units will be deployed almost immediately as integral elements of the active forces in the event of mobilization. Correspondingly, reserve components are increasingly held to training standards equivalent to those of active components. Indeed, many serving in the Selected Reserve are no longer "reservists" in the conventional sense, but actually augmentees who will serve side by side with active forces upon deployment. Two corollaries follow from this master trend. One is that career members of the reserve components are being required to devote unprecedented overtime -- some compensated, some donated, all voluntary -- to their unit. The other is that normative commitments outweigh monetary motives for most reservists.

Table 1 offers an assessment of the key social organizational distinctions between reserve components and

reserve components. The typology of variables presented allows, moreover, for a grounded basis for future research directions and policy recommendations.

[Table 1 About Here]

Training. We note first some of the most obvious training differences between reserve forces and active forces. Reserve components are officially allocated 39 days per year for training, normally two weeks of annual training and one drill weekend each month at a local armory or reserve center. The actual amount of effective training is often less owing to unit formations, administrative chores, and travel time between an armory and external training sites. Informed observers hold that reserve components train, at best, approximately one-fifth of the time that actives do. The lower level of time available for reserve training is aggravated immeasurably by the high level of discrepancy between a soldier's military occupational specialty and his reserve assignment. Such MOS mismatch is a minor problem in the active forces. In the reserves, however, an estimated seventy percent of reservists enter their units with an inappropriate MOS.

Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Motivation. Though normative inducements characterize both active and reserve military members, nonmonetary inducements in reserve components may in fact exceed those found in active components. For many

Table 1. MILITARY SOCIAL ORGANIZATION: ACTIVE VS. RESERVE COMPONENTS

Variable	Active Components	Reserve Components
Training Time	Year-round	39 days (aprx 1/5 of time for actives)
MOS Mismatch	Minor problem	Major problem
Recruitment	Nearly all non-prior service	Half prior-service: half non-prior service
Retention Incentives	Career benefits, salary, retirement pension	Extra dimension in life, retirement pension
Residence	Many on post, most others nearby	None on post, many coming from long distances
Family/Military Conflict	Moderate for all though less for senior members	Moderate for junior members; severe for senior members
Military Spouses	Much networking	Little networking
Employer/Military Conflict	Not applicable	Moderate for junior members; severe for senior members
Career Development	Structured and desired; little conflict with personal life	Unstructured and ambiguous: severe conflict with personal life
Role of Auxiliary Members	Not applicable	Central to unit

reservists, military training adds another dimension to one's life style. To view reserve duty principally as "moonlighting" behavior, as is common in much of the extant research, misses the basic point of reserve service. Indeed all straight-forward applications of the moonlighting theory of occupational choice have found only a small relationship between "primary-job" characteristics and reserve recruitment and retention. Still, most contract research on the reserves continues to treat nonmonetary factors as residual category.

Family. Conflict between family roles and military duty is almost expected. The differences in family conflict between reserve and active components are noteworthy, however. In general terms, military/family conflict in the active forces is likely to be more severe at junior levels than at senior levels. That is, coping processes reduce family conflict as a career member advances through the system. In the reserves the situation is the opposite. Time demands beyond the statutory 39 days are minimal for junior personnel, but become increasingly pronounced for career reservists. Thus, military/family conflict heightens rather than diminishes as one moves up the reserve career ladder.

Another difference in family life in reserve and active components requires comment. In the active force military/family conflicts are likely to be shared experiences because much of family life revolves around the military post. In the reserves, military/family conflicts must be worked out within the family

itself as there is little interaction between spouses of reservists. Unlike what occurs among wives of active-duty members, networking among wives of reservists is relatively uncommon.

The Double-End of Career Advancement. The truly critical conflict reservists face is that with civilian employers (and, to some extent, with co-workers). The fundamental organizational fact for career reservists is the inordinate amount of time that must be spent on reserve duty. Informed estimates are that the typical field-grade officer spends some seventy days a year on reserve duty. These extra demands take the form of administrative duties, military schools, workshops, conferences, overseas training deployment, and so forth. Some of these time demands are compensated for through various supplementary pay procedures. But the reality is that much of the overtime is simply donated.

The overarching trend to make the reserves comparable with active components shows up in career development, often with intractable problems. Among NCOs the demands of career development are most pressing in the need to take military courses required for MOS change and promotion eligibility. For officers, the move toward reserve/active comparability is even more striking. Schooling includes staff and war colleges and a multitude of specialized courses. The difficulty for career reservists -- whether NCO or commissioned -- with regular civilian employment is how to find the time to take such career

development courses.

The double bind affects those with the most demanding civilian jobs, especially if these demands are part of an upward career movement in civilian life. For such individuals, and they are often those with the most promise as future senior officers, time not money is the key variable. Even if a reservist does somehow find the time to attend a military school or devote extra time to his unit, he find his civilian work situation suffers correspondingly. Because of the double bind, a continuation of present trends could mean that future NCOs and officers in the reserve will likely come from a narrower band of civilian backgrounds than in the recent past.

Full-Timers in the Reserve. A critical element in the readiness of the reserve units are those who provide full-time support for unit training. In addition to civilian support staff, there are full-time military members in reserve forces who are responsible for administering, recruiting, instructing, and training in their units. These military members consist of three categories: (1) Active-Guard/Reserve (AGR) are Guard or Reserve members of the Selected Reserve who are ordered to active duty with their consent to serve as full-time auxiliaries with a reserve unit; (2) Military Technicians are federal civilian employees who provide full-time support while maintaining their status as drilling reservists in the same unit; and (3) Active Duty Advisors are active duty members assigned to the unit (though not part of the Selected Reserve). One outcome of the

Total Force has been the growing number of full-timers assigned to reserve units, most of whom fall in the categories of AGR or military technicians.

Less visible as a reserve social category than the full-time staff is what might be termed the "professional reservist" (or maybe "part-time professional"). Such individuals form an increasingly important factor in the calculus of unit readiness. These are reservists who manage to patch together scores of days on reserve duty beyond the normal 39-day requirement. Such professional reservists are often those with flexible work schedules and adjustable calendars. Interviews suggest that if a part-time AGR program were offered that allowed members to remain in their home locales, a large fraction of those who fall into the "professional reservist" category would take such an option, even if placed on a slow promotion ladder.

Reserves: A Comparative Assessment

Research was carried out in reserve units of the Federal Republic of Germany, the United Kingdom, and Israel. This report does not address itself to the substantial number of the more obvious differences between foreign and U.S. reserve forces. Rather a comparative methodology highlights salient organizational dimensions of the American case.

The German reserve system is based on a conscription system not unlike that of the United States in the pre-Vietnam era. German reserve components are essentially skeleton units,

permanently manned by an active-duty cadre, to be filled out by reservists in the event of mobilization. The United Kingdom has a reserve system based on a voluntary system similar to that of the contemporary United States. A unique feature of the British system is that recruitment and basic training of recruits are carried out by the local reserve unit. The Israeli military is based on a conscription system encompassing a citizen-soldier army with a reserve obligation that is long-term and demanding. In essence the reserves are the Israeli Defense Force.

The salient features of each country's reserve system along with those of the United States are indicated in table 2. This table presented comparative data with regard to organizational features, active-force interface, career progression, military occupational specialties, and societal interface. Table 2 allows extremely complex material to be reduced to its core elements. This sets the context for a specification of the distinctive qualities of the reserve forces of the United States.

[Table 2 About Here]

Training Time. American reservists commit more time to training than do those of any of the examined countries, whether officer or other ranks. Indeed, it appears that the time American reservists devote to training exceeds that of any other country in the world. Minimum training is 39 days in the United States (with two weeks of annual training); 27 days in the United

Table 2. RESERVE SYSTEM COMPARISONS

Variable	Federal Republic of Germany	United Kingdom	Israel	United States
Minimum Training Time of Lower Ranks	12 days every two years	27 days per year	30 days per year	39 days per year
Estimated Duty Time for Mid-Level Officers	30-40 days per year	40-50 days per year	50-60 days per year	60-70 days per year
Non-Prior Service Entrants	No	Yes	No	Yes
Promotion to Senior Rank Possible	No	No	No	Yes
Professional Military Education for Promotion	No	No	No	Yes
Retirement Pension for Career Reservist	No	No	No	Yes

Table 2. RESERVE SYSTEM COMPARISONS (continued)

Variable	Federal Republic of Germany	United Kingdom	Israel	United States
Full-Time Reservists in Unit	No	No	No	Yes
Active-Duty Cadre in Unit	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Special Handling of Technicians	No	Yes	Yes	No
Family/Military Conflict	Low to Medium	Low	Medium	Medium to High
Employer/Military Conflict	Medium	Medium	Medium	High
Real Vacation Time for Reservist	4-5 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	1 week or less

Kingdom (also with two weeks of annual training), and only 12 days every two years in Germany (usually completed in one stint). In Israel, 30 days annually is required for reserve duty (most often taken in one or two blocks of time).

Another significant feature of the American system, as previously noted, is the widespread use of full-time reservists to conduct reserve training -- AGRs and military technicians. In other armies, the training of reservists is either a responsibility of active-duty personnel (as in Germany and Israel) or is conducted with the strong input of active-duty cadre (as in the United Kingdom). In brief, where full-time staff in American reserve forces consists mainly of reservists, in other countries the full-timers are principally active-duty personnel.

Career Progression. The hallmark of the American system is that reserve officers occupy the command and staff positions throughout the reserve hierarchy. Senior reserve commanders are found only in the American Army. In turn and in contrast to other armies, the exposure of active-duty personnel to the reserve system is low in the American system. In Germany, and to a lesser degree in the United Kingdom, many active-duty officers are assigned to the reserve "territorial" army. In Israel active-duty officers command reserve units at higher echelons (not to mention that all reserve officers have had extensive active-duty service).

Table 2 shows crucial differences in compensation and career progression between the American reserve forces and those of

other countries. Only in the the United Kingdom and in the United States is compensation for reserve duty a supplement to one's civilian salary. In Germany and in Israel (as in most European countries), compensation for reserve duty is computed by formulas to make remuneration approximately equal to one's civilian earnings. That career reservists receive retirement pensions is yet another singularity of the United States.

MOS Mismatch. All four countries confront problems with matching the military occupational specialty (MOS) a soldier acquired on active duty with his assignment in the reserves. Such MOS mismatch is particularly acute with regard to technical skills. To help overcome this problem, Israel routinely carries overstrength technicians in reserve units, while the United Kingdom has "sponsored" units designated for a particular grouping of technicians. Germany has no special arrangements to deal with MOS mismatch, but its reserve MOS problem is largely one of combat arms shortages rather than technicians. MOS mismatch is aggravated in the American case by frequent geographical movements of reservists and, more recently, by the changing missions of reserve units.

Societal Interface. Table 2 also assesses the interface between the reserves and the larger society. Each of the four examined countries has some amount of conflict between family and reserve responsibilities, though this appears to be somewhat higher in the United States. Employer conflict is a definite problem across the board, but it is much more acute in the United

States. The reasons for the severity of employer conflict in the American reserves are complex. To some degree such conflict inheres in the higher training demands of the American reserves, especially for the career reservist, than is found in most other countries.

Perhaps the paramount factor contributing to family and employer conflict in the United States reserves is one that is rarely mentioned -- the American vacation system. The average worker in Germany enjoys a five to six week vacation (as is true throughout much of Northern Europe); this coupled with relatively low training requirements means the German reservist can reasonably expect to enjoy four to five weeks of real vacation each year. In the United Kingdom, the typical worker's vacation is four weeks; the tacit understanding being that an employer will absorb one week of a soldier's annual training and the reservist will use one week of his own vacation time. Even in Israel, the reservist's normal 30-day vacation is in addition to his annual 30-day reserve requirement. In sum, the reservist in other countries can expect to have a vacation period three to five times greater than his American counterpart.

Analysis

No typology can be so neat as to do justice to the complexities of social realities. The distinctions given in

tables 1 and 2 are not to be mechanically applied and may, upon further examination, require empirical modification. But even this provisional level of abstraction is a long step toward a conceptualization of reserve components.

Our organizational analysis identified the following as significant variables that differentiate reserve from active-duty components:

1. Normative or nonmonetary motivation is a significant factor in reserve recruitment and retention.

2. MOS mismatch is the basic problem in unit training and readiness.

3. Family conflict heightens rather than diminishes as one moves up the reserve career ladder.

4. Career development and professional military education increasingly come into conflict with the pressures of demanding civilian occupations.

Our comparative analysis with reserve forces in other countries identified the following as the unique elements of the American reserve system:

1. No other reserve system requires as much training time for its members.

2. No other reserve system relies on reservists for basic full-time support.

3. No other reserve system has a well developed career path (with a corresponding professional military education

system) leading to senior command and staff positions within the reserve structure.

4. In no other reserve system do reservists have such limited real vacation time.

The sum effect of these conditions is that American reserves are characterized by exceptional conflict between reserve duties and civilian employment responsibilities. Such conflict promises to become more severe as reserve components become increasingly integrated with the active force under Total Force concepts. Any long-term policy changes aimed to improve reserve forces must take this elemental fact into consideration. Otherwise, we may expect growing pressure to place active-duty NCOs and officers in key command and staff positions in reserve forces.

Several of the issues covered in this report are amenable to more systematic research. One is the vexing question of MOS mismatch. What are the trade-offs between assigning prior-service members with advanced technical training to special annual training or temporary duty at their MOS branch school (with correspondingly fewer drill unit responsibilities) compared to local units with mismatched MOS's (the present system)? Can a special reserve status be created that meshes with college/vocational training whereby selected individuals could alternate normal reserve duty with terms at either civilian or military schools for technical training? Might scholarship aid for reservists enrolled in civilian technical schools be cost

effective?

Another set of issues revolves around possible organizational adaptation to retain individuals with exceptionally demanding civilian careers. Can a control group of officers be established who would be allowed to step out of drilling units during periods of special demands in their civilian careers and then allowed the option of later reentry? Or, in another direction, can promotion opportunities for such individuals be enhanced by "buying out" certain superannuated reservists who have "stacked arms" and are waiting out their retirement? Is there a potential category of slow-track reservists -- perhaps along the lines of the "professional reservist" discussed above -- somewhere between the proverbial "weekend warrior" and the full-time auxiliary?

Perhaps most important, reserve components are not well understood in American society at large. That 1987 saw the number of soldiers in the Selected Reserve exceed those in the active components is a change of historic significance; yet it occurred with little public awareness of its ramifications.

There is a more immediate problem as well. Reserve components are not all that well understood by the active military. One way to promote such understanding is through visible promotions of active-duty personnel who have served in reserve components. Other mechanisms might be to set up familiarization tours in reserve components through

temporary-duty assignments and to make such assignments a variable in active-duty promotions.

The first step toward a recognition of the organizational qualities of reserve forces must begin with military analysts and policy makers. At the very least, future research on reserve recruitment and retention must incorporate nonmonetary factors as more than just a residual category. This also means being alert to the differences as well as similarities between active and reserve forces. For starters, a standard policy should be to evaluate all personnel proposals dealing with the active force in terms of their impact on reserve forces.

In sum, the sociology of the reserves is a subject that should be approached on its own terms and is worthy of study in its own right.

NOTES

Explication of the basic research and methodological issues as well as the references that form the backdrop for this report are found in: Charles C. Moskos, "The Sociology of Army Reserves: A Preliminary Assessment," Annual Interim Report -- Task 1, January, 1987; "The Sociology of Army Reserves: An Organizational Assessment," Annual Interim Report -- Task 2, October, 1987; "The Sociology of Army Reserves: A Comparative Assessment -- Task 3, November, 1988. Contract MDA903-86-K-011, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For their invaluable help in facilitating access to reserve units and their interest in this project, I am deeply indebted to the Honorable John D. Marsh, Jr., Lt. Gen. Frederick J. Brown, and Major Ben J. Gaines. For their insights and critical comments as the research moved ahead, I would like to thank Will Hill Tankersley, General Maxwell R. Thurman, Lt. Gen. Herbert R. Temple, Jr., Major General William F. Ward, Jr., Major General William R. Berkman, Colonels Benjamin W. Covington III, Richard McCrary, and Gus Moutos.

I learned much from discussions with and the writings of Mark F. Cancian, Robert L. Goldich, H. Wallace Sinaiko, Terry C. Willet, and Thomas C. Wyatt. For explaining the reserve systems in their home countries, I wish to express my special gratitude to Gwyn Harries-Jenkins, University of Hull, England; Ekkerhard Lippert, Bundeswehr Social Science Research Institute, Federal Republic of Germany; and Reuven Gal, Israel Institute of Military Studies. And last, but by no means least, I want to thank all those citizen soldiers in the reserves for the candor, hospitality, and good humor they showed a visiting professor.

The usual caveat that the author alone is responsible for any errors in fact or interpretation must be especially stressed.