

Military views amnesty as dangerous precedent

By EVE MARKOWITZ
Collegian Staff Writer

Carter's presidency was six hours old when the news spread that a quieter war had just ended. Amnesty had finally been granted, and "hell, yes!" the evaders could go back home.

Reaction was subdued in State College. An ROTC spokesman said that he couldn't comment without approval first from Washington. And that would take ten days at least.

A spokesman for a local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) responded to a reporter's query with a written statement: "We uphold the state and national position in opposing President Carter's position on blanket pardons for any persons refusing to serve their country during war or national emergency."

A local Vietnamese man said yes, he'd comment, but forgot to show up for both of his interviews.

The issue is not a comfortable one, especially for those who lost family in the war.

"Amnesty? It stinks," said a local

man who lost his brother in the war. "He says it stinks and we go along with that," his mother added. "I really can't put it into words."

As time passed, it was a little easier for people to express how they felt. ROTC Colonel Lieutenant G.F. Jackson said, "If we set a precedent of people leaving service when they're needed most — it could present a major problem."

Though the Justice Department has estimated the number of draft deserters to be about 100,000 men, Jackson advocates reviewing each offender's case separately.

"That might be a monumental job," he said. "But it was a monumental job to inoculate people against the swine flu. Maybe that's what you have to do."

A colleague of his, ROTC Captain H.A. Shartel, demonstrated the same unwillingness about granting pardon to deserters.

"As most military men," he said, "I'm opposed to the pardon. I've tried to be broadminded, but I feel it will have dangerous long-term effects on

conscripted, should that be necessary again."

"I do support Carter's excluding deserters. He at least did right in excluding them," added Shartel.

He emphasized that soldiers "must listen."

"That is the basis for effectiveness

in any military organization," he said.

The loudest chorus of objections to amnesty seem to be those who view the pardon as a kind of earth-shaking precedent. If you pardon evaders now, they ask, what will happen if they don't want to go when the next

emergency arises?

James Hevia (11-East Asian Studies), served in Thailand during the war. "I don't buy the argument that this will set a precedent," he said. "Amnesty has always been used only in special cases."

These "special cases" go back all the way to the administration of George Washington. In 1794, he declared amnesty to the participants of the Whiskey Rebellion.

"The New York Times" has reported that at least 12 former American presidents have exercised the same sort of privilege.

Mark Peattie, an associate professor of history teaching "War in the Western World" this term, cited the pardon of the confederate forces after the American Civil War as the greatest precedent yet for amnesty.

"There's a massive precedent in the Civil War," he said. "It's sheer foolishness to say Carter sets a massive precedent."

"They ended up saving American lives," said another veteran about the evaders. "If they hadn't protested so

loud and turned out in such large numbers they wouldn't have acted as a conscience for our country."

The veteran, who said, "If the war started again, I'd go back," defends the legality of amnesty.

"Carter ran on amnesty. He got a mandate from the people to do what he did. It was obvious more people were for it than against it."

One Vietnamese student said he wasn't bitter about amnesty. "People willing to fight in my country, I appreciate them. But it was not wrong for others to leave. You can show your loyalty for your country in 100,000 ways," he said.

Just as time has made people more and more willing to comment on amnesty, it will also heal bitter feelings about it, said Peattie.

"Time heals all wounds. The overall attitude will be entirely different in 1987 or 1997," he said.

Why? Peattie says, "The emotions on both sides will have subsided. Surely none of the VFW looking back today would say we should have kept all those Confederates in stockades."

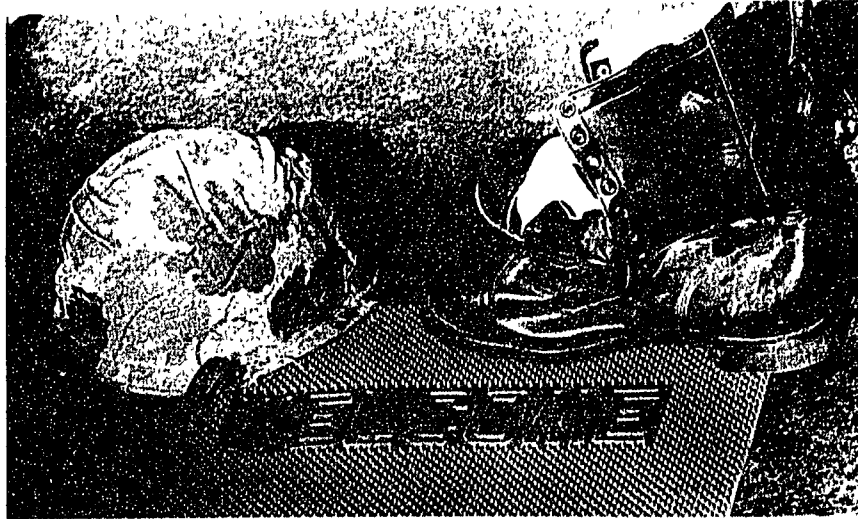


Photo by Eve Markowitz



ROTC: patriots, profiteers mix in 'uniform' duty

By GEORGE OSGOOD
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The various ROTC programs at Penn State have been on the scene for quite some time. They are many things to many people; misconceptions and stereotypes are rampant. But like all organizations, ROTC has its attributes and its drawbacks.

According to Lt. Cmdr. Frank Rouse, an administrator at Penn State's Navy ROTC program, one of the primary goals of ROTC is to give officer candidates an idea of the military hierarchy and the chain of command and to give them leadership training and responsibility.

"Mostly, the responsibility doesn't come until late in the midshipman's junior year," Rouse says. "We try to concentrate the responsibility assignments in the last two years of the officer candidate's program, so that the experience will be fresh to him when he goes on active duty."

Both the Army and Navy ROTC programs at Penn State are among the largest in the country, supplying hundreds of line officers and specially trained officers to each branch of the service. Not surprisingly, the ROTC stereotype held by much of the student population is invalid.

"To be sure, the gung-ho, might-makes-right conservative element is represented, but it is unfair and inaccurate to hold all ROTC people up to this image."

Jeff is a student enrolled in the Navy ROTC program. "To be truthful, the reason I'm enrolled in ROTC is because without ROTC I simply couldn't go to college," he says. "ROTC pays my tuition and lab fees, buys my books and gives me \$100 a month spending money. In short, ROTC supports me."

"I think this is the reason most people get into ROTC, or at least Navy ROTC," Jeff says. "They're sitting there in high school and they look in the bank and there's not enough money to get them a college education, except maybe at a low-rent community college. For a lot of people, ROTC provides a valuable alternative: a free college education and free spending money."

More than that, the job opportunities offered by the Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force are looked upon by many of the ROTC students as strong inducements in times when jobs are so hard to come by.

Barney, another ROTC midshipman, says "When we get out we're guaranteed good, fairly high-paying jobs and a tremendous amount of responsibility, plus we're not under any obligation to stay in the service longer than one hitch — if we want out, we can just leave. It's pretty well known, too, that an officer's experience is looked on by most civilian employers as a real asset and getting a civilian job is made much easier."

For Barney, ROTC is almost exclusively a pure business arrangement, a simple transaction between two parties that benefits both.

"Without ROTC I wouldn't be here, so I was really glad they accepted me," he says. "But it's a simple deal, really; I agree to give the government four years of my life, for which I'm well paid and getting a lot of experience, and they give me a college education in return."

Barney says that he hasn't ruled out a career in the military and that he won't be called on to make a decision like that for a long time. The ROTC training, no matter how good, doesn't approximate active duty and it is the quality and rewards of duty upon which a junior officer must make his career decisions, according to Rouse.

In the Navy ROTC program at Penn State the financial rewards are of more importance than in the other programs, but the qualifications for acceptance are much stricter.

More than 85 per cent of the Navy ROTC students are on the full scholarship described above. The catch is that 80 per cent of the Navy ROTC scholarships must, because of a quota system, go to students in science, math and engineering. The opportunities for liberal arts majors to obtain Navy ROTC scholarships are very few, because the Navy is equipment-oriented rather than personnel or troop-oriented and technical knowledge is required of more officers, according to Rouse.

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In Army and Air Force ROTC, the percentage of students holding full scholarships is much lower. Although the financial rewards are much more difficult to obtain in these branches, enrollment remains high. Army ROTC, though, is much less choosy about an applicant's field of study.

"Army ROTC is open to students in any four-year degree

program at Penn State," says Capt. Robert Carlson, an Army ROTC administrator. "We have no quotas — anyone who meets the standard Army qualifications is welcome to go through the basic and advanced programs."

Jack is a fifth-term engineering major enrolled in the Army ROTC program. He doesn't hold a scholarship, although he is about to "go on contract," which means the Army will give him 100 dollars a month as long as he agrees to enter the Army for three years active duty when he graduates.

"I'm in it because I think the Army has a whole lot to offer in terms of job security, medical benefits and good pay, he says. "At this point I'm not anticipating a career in the Army, but I'm not ruling it out, either — it's there if I want it. Besides, the experience I'll get during my hitch is really valuable in itself. You get a lot more responsibility and a lot more latitude in what you can do than in the private sector."

The ROTC programs are not roses without thorns, though. All of the programs make demands on the students time and some require students to take courses in particular subjects.

"The Navy makes ROTC students in its program take two terms of physics, two terms of calculus, a term of political science and a term of computer science, no matter what the person's major is," Jeff says. "For the occasional non-hard science major that goes through the program, the physics, calculus and computer science can be pretty scary."

There are punitive duties handed out in all programs for minor dress infractions, protocol mistakes or missing classes. According to Rouse, the extra duties are valuable in that they make the ROTC student more aware of how the military works and gives him (or her) the sense of regimentation and discipline necessary in the service. ROTC members may see the extra duties a little differently.

"Some of the s--- they make you do is really trivial and I can't see any value in it at all; it's just busy work, mostly," Jeff says. "It's the same type of stuff in all three ROTC programs, as far as I know. You have to go up to Wagner Building, in uniform, during your free time and polish some brass cannon shell for a couple of hours or punch holes in looseleaf paper. Diddy stuff like that."

Responsibility and valid leadership training can be a long time in coming. ROTC students may spend three full years in the program before getting any real responsibility, because of the rigid levels upon which battalions and other operational units are based, according to Barney.

"You spend a lot of time doing pretty insignificant things until it's your turn to lead," Barney says. "Until you get some responsibility you really don't learn many applied military skills. You're just a nobody under someone's command, just another uniform. But I guess that's the way it has to be — not every one can lead at once."

The lack of responsibility and leadership opportunity, through the first two years (and, sometimes, beyond) has caused some attitude problems in the programs, according to Barney. The problems are hard to pinpoint, but appear to involve apathy and a lackadaisical attitude, according to Barney.

"To combat this, the officers have been trying to get more people involved in their units — in drill teams, rifle teams, bands and intramurals, but these don't include leadership and responsibility, which is what we're supposed to be learning," Barney says.

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Because of the military dress codes, which stress maintaining "a military appearance at all times," ROTC members are among the most easily recognized members of the student body. The clean-cut, spit-and-polish image, though, may go only skin deep and doesn't affect the student's social life, according to Barney.

"The idea that we are all straight-arrow right-wingers is totally absurd," Jeff says. "In a group the size of ROTC there are all types of people with all types of political positions, including people who would wear their hair down to here and nice, scruffy beards if they could. But appearance is part of our job and whether we like it or not, we have to abide by the rules."

"We party, the same way anyone else does — we do exactly the same things, but maybe a little more discreetly," he says. "Really, we're students like thousands of other students, we just chose ROTC as one of our student options because we feel it has a lot of advantages to offer. But we're students, no more and no less, as long as we're here."