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# Defense Report

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## The President's Commission on Military Compensation—It May Be Saying Too Much Too Soon

The President's Commission on Military Compensation was established to take a hard look at a very complex subject in a relatively short time. They have pursued their goal diligently and have pledged to have their final report on President Carter's desk by the March 15, 1978 deadline.

The subject of the commission's work is obviously of great interest to military personnel in all the services and in all ranks. The commission's recommendations will most likely carry great weight in the design of legislation to change the way military pay levels are set, to reaffirm or abandon the present system of allowances and to quiet current arguments over the military retirement system.

To the commission's credit there have been a number of public meetings in Washington and at military bases across the country. Some commissioners are even traveling overseas to get the opinions of military personnel there. There has been no apparent effort to hide anything the commission or its staff are doing. Service newspapers have carried detailed accounts of the testimony before the commission, including recommendations made to the commissioners by the staff.

Some of those recommendations have been alarming, to say the least. The staff proposal to eliminate 20-year retirement hit military people like the shock waves from a very large bomb. And the shock was intensified by the fact that they came from a body that will have such direct impact, not from some irate individual member of Congress whose ideas would have to pass muster before several committees before having any weight.

The commission staff was just doing its job, to be sure. They exist to make the detailed analysis the individual commissioners, as occasional participants, do not have time for and to draft the recommendations the commission will ultimately approve to be forwarded to the President. But one wonders if it might not be better to delay the public presentation of those recommendations until the time they have the full weight of commission approval behind them.

Based on strong support for the retention of 20-year retirement made before the commission recently by the Chiefs of Staff of the Army and Air Force and the Commandant of the Marine Corps the commission could very well turn against the staff recommendation and support the present system. In the meantime, however, military morale has been shaken by the public staff recommendation and many military people are prepared to believe that the commission will ultimately do irreparable harm to the compensation system.