

Rozman, Thomas (DOLI) [Thomas.Rozman@doli.virginia.gov](mailto:Thomas.Rozman@doli.virginia.gov)

Margaret Lough wrote an excellent piece to a vital purpose. As I think most of you would agree, she is keeping West Point current in the public's mind as a place some of our finest young people choose to attend to serve a calling greater than themselves.

She touches a larger issue in her commentary. I believe many of us have read the recent wave of comment concerning eliminating the service academies as cost savings. This is a theme visited more than once over the years. As always it oversimplifies and misses vital strategic officer procurement points while masking self-serving agendas not always apparent in the commentary (recent Washington Post articles for instance). Some points in bullet form that for the most part I think we are all aware of but worth revisiting.

- \* Currently the U. S. Army's officer corps access system through USMA, ROTC, OCS, and direct commissioning is very possibly one of the broadest and most egalitarian among the nations maintaining substantial professional armies. This assures an officer corps from all aspects and elements of our society--an officer corps that does not isolate from the law and people it is sworn to defend.

- \* Each commissioning source contributes unique positive input to our officer corps and its composition. The officer corps remains an establishment as much of the people as is possible in a complex and large society.

- \* Each commissioning source is subject to sustainment challenges as American society experiences its various mood swings concerning its security needs with the impacts such mood swings have on the Congress and budgets. Since more than a few USMA graduates have personally experienced the direct, OCS (to include state ANG OCS) and ROTC pre-commissioning programs as participants (to include the CTCs (Civilian Training Camps)pre WW I and WW II and the WW II aviation cadet programs), more than a few having been commissioned through those programs before accepting USMA appointments and as cadre or staff officers involved in aspects of officer procurement in peace and war for those programs and vice versa with ROTC and OCS graduates serving at the Academy, we well understand that no pre-commissioning program is immune to attack by certain political and other interests. Having been an ROTC scholarship cadet in a "robust" Land Grant state university program before attending the academy, then serving in an instructor group at another Land Grant school that had "once been a robust" program, I have first hand perspective. I have personally felt the treatment of an early PC (politically correct) faculty practitioner as a mid 60s ROTC scholarship cadet. I have seen and experienced the effects of faculty and student susceptibility to the reaction of much of American academia to Vietnam and other Political Correctness waves of perception/ideology.

Some of these were so extreme that ROTC cadet corps that had existed since formation under the Morrill Act of 1863 or since the post WW I National Defense Acts became severely reduced to less than 100 cadets (67 in the case of the university I was assigned to). So virulent were the forces at work that schools that view themselves as the "elite civilian national leadership

academies", i.e., Harvard, Yale, Princeton to name three had their ROTC programs come under siege such that in Harvard's case the program was driven off campus (the echo of earlier Rome in its late period). When the "elite leadership class as it were" opts out of the heavy lifting of placing itself in harm's way to share in leading the defense of the American Republic, something is just a little askew for our long term longevity as a state, especially when the same institutions have a significant historic track record of commissioned officer graduates back to the Revolution. Bottom-line, ROTC can suffer severe reduction of production when the faculty establishment or student body go negative on it.

\* Though we are for the foreseeable future not likely to see mass forces on the scale of WW II, the evolution of contingencies and global to regional developments will demand fairly robust force levels well into the future. This is especially true relative to access to needed resources and markets as well as security against some competing ideologies. Assuming a national and political will to sustain the American Republic, these aspects of geopolitical life will likely sustain the need for substantial and flexible forces. This need as previously stated will persist well into the future--unless the American Republic opts out of the essential business of engaging and competing in the sustainment of worldwide access to markets and resources. Though peaceful means are always preferred, it has been said more than once that competing interests that would deny access through any means must be convinced the Republic is fully capable of defending its interests.

And we should never rule out the need to significantly expand that force. The viability of this capability will always rest on the ground force. And that force's capability for function and projection rests heavily on the tactical, operational, and strategic competence of its leaders--especially the officer corps. The mix of tools and capabilities we have developed--USMA, ROTC, OCS and direct commission form a capability to assure expansion of the officer corps at will with assurance of acceptable competence in the expanded establishment. It assures lesser use of direct commissions and OCS during reduced force and less active operational periods with larger ROTC output to the organized reserve establishment. During the less mobilized periods the active force continues to receive the entire output of the academy.

Thus in lower OPTEMPO periods with reduced officer production needs, an assured source of new officers continues to support the Army regardless of where budgets or campus politics have placed the ROTC and OCS programs for the moment.

\* The oft made charge that the U. S. cadet is more expensive than an OCS or ROTC graduate is a bit specious but a quasi conundrum. Though we on the one hand do not want to over advertise the fact to many parents, etc. making it sound like the cadet is a "college student" in a specialized student situation--cadets are members of the United States Army. They are subject to the UCMJ when their conduct moves beyond the sphere of the cadet disciplinary system as with a criminal act as defined by the uniformed code. The cadet at the discretion of the service is subject to meeting the needs of the service as is any other soldier. This has been demonstrated more than once most notably in the WW I and WW II situations and is not beyond the realm of possibility for the future.

Cadets are soldiers on the establishment--I well understand the ramifications of that fact depending on how the point is delivered and to what audience but it is a fact. And the ROTC

cadet when honestly costed out, especially the simultaneous membership (SMP) cadet ultimately will cost the taxpayer as much, especially when that ROTC cadet's time as an MS II and MS IV cadet will count for service longevity for retirement and pay as a result of their service time with a National Guard or USAR reserve unit. The OCS graduate is not a low cost "freebie" either. The candidate is on the establishment as a candidate, agreed, to a much shorter period than 47 months. But since many graduates may be commissioned without degrees and for various reasons the Army has expected a BS to be completed by all company grade officers to be retained on active service, sometimes very generous service supported undergraduate degree programs have been supported by the Army such as the "bootstrap" programs used post Viet Nam in which case the 1st lieutenant or captain continued on active service at that pay and allowance rate accruing longevity against pay and retirement while attending school. The "green shades and charlatans" for whatever reason may present the cost however they like--but the taxpayer will pay one way or the other for an ultimate field grade officer of competence and education sufficient to be capable of handling what the service will demand.

To show what some 10 months of prior service as an ROTC Scholarship cadet is worth, a USMA grad who retired as an LTC in the early 90s at 21 years had incorrectly been given service credit for the year he was in the reserves as an ROTC scholarship cadet. The error was discovered at retirement and the amount was computed to be worth some \$25K in taxpayer outlay for the 20 years of commissioned service. Of several stated and implied points on cost, an Army National Guard SMP cadet on commissioning who proceeds to a 20 year or longer career will approximate the cost of the USMA graduate at retirement. The same may well apply to OCS graduates that are supported in completion of their undergraduate degrees while on active commissioned status--even if offset by the various versions of the GI Bill--all financial support at some point accrues from the taxpayer.

\* Though the academies have traveled away from some tenets of the "engineering degree focus" concept the service continues to be challenged in the business of acquiring sufficient numbers of officers with the hard degrees, i.e., science, math, engineering for example. Though the service isn't intending to develop "egg heads" in uniform, but effective troop leaders with the needed people skills and competence to function effectively as tactical leaders, ultimately at particularly field grade and general officer level the technical degrees become relevant and important. The very existence of the Academy as many of us know was driven by the national embarrassment during the Revolution and into the early national period of no schools of higher learning in the country that produced graduates trained as engineers. When we recall that Harvard and Yale began as essentially divinity schools and other college level schools at the time might best be characterized as liberal arts establishments, the need for technically degreed people with the attendant competencies was beyond desperate. In many ways one could say that USMA is the father of all engineering programs in the United States. And that role should not cease for the Army in the technical degree field through the ups and downs of service popularity, national political swings, defense budget cycles, periods of challenged recruiting, especially for an all volunteer force. Over any one to two decade stretch the winds of these various forces creates a weather vane effect on many institutions. ROTC that may look quite robust and viable in one period may suddenly find itself barely retaining presence on campuses in another.

\* Having developed over time a varied and very effective officer corps production system with four tried and found to be effective primary elements that can be tapped continually throughout the up and down cycles and that bring a varied array of talent and diverse population to our officer corps, I think it would be more than foolish to dismantle any one element of the system. To gravitate to any one source to produce the majority of the officer corps would be putting all our eggs in one basket--never a smart thing to do even in the worst of times.

\* Some detractors have overemphasized the high school graduate direct to the Academy as a negative as it produces young somehow less grounded and mature lieutenants on commissioning. When I did my month with an army unit on AOT my sponsor was a first lieutenant who had attended engineer OCS. He was 19 at the time. He had gone to OCS not too long after his 18th birthday. One might make a similar observation concerning ROTC.

Truth as we all know it is that there is significant leavening of all USMA classes with older more mature soldiers who have served in the ranks, some for four to five years, attended college most of whom participated in the ROTC program), as well as ex-commissioned officers.

Of the latter, my cadet company had two, one of whom had been a few weeks from his promotion to captain on resignation to accept appointment to USMA. Hardly a wet behind the ears crew. The same of course may be said of ROTC and OCS. None of our commissioning programs rely only on seasoned veterans or people direct from high school or too short beyond high school to commissioning. All place the aspiring officer on a course that not only educates and trains but evaluates and assess suitability and fitness to be offered a commission. No system is foolproof but to date our system has done a very good job overall. The vast majority serve very well and competently and they are able to think on their feet and act independently in the tough situations of leadership.

\* The Academy remains a beacon of opportunity for an arguably Ivy League quality of education (in my personal opinion superior to on a number of levels) and initial post school professional experience for many in our society who otherwise would not have such access. Though since WW II the nation has vastly increased the ways and means to access higher education and greatly expanded the higher education base through the state university, private university, and community college systems, the academy and its counterparts remains an exceptional professional training, education and career entry option for many who would otherwise not have such opportunity.

\* The Academy graduate, assuming retained health and fitness, minimally serves for five years. Some half or more will continue to 20 or more years of active commissioned service (keep in mind many with prior service). Many of those who leave active service will continue to serve long term in the National Guard or the Army Reserve. Of those who choose to pursue civil careers many rise to prominent leadership positions with industry and government bringing to bear their leadership training and experience to the great benefit of the organizations they serve, the economy, and the nation.

Sorry for the brain fart everyone--but after reading several pieces of late suggesting the Academy and its sisters are too costly, etc., and then reading Fred's daughter's piece I couldn't help myself.

I suspect all of you are somewhere in the same shot group. My Dad was a direct commission in the Philippines, my brother was ROTC, my son is ROTC and my daughter is USAFA as is my son-in-law. The wider family has other academy people, ROTC and OCS--for these and many other reasons, as all of us do, I respect every commissioning source and what it brings to the team--but it would be a great mistake and loss to our nation to do anything to fail to sustain our academies. To a degree, they are the nation in the spirit of national service they have come to symbolize.

To many Americans they are a cultural icon approaching the American Flag in their symbolic value. We must all work to keep them relevant to the critical purpose of replenishing a competent and cohesive officer corps that never swerves from duty, honor and country.