

**UNCLE SAM DOES *NOT* WANT YOU TO ORGANIZE:
THE 1977 SENATE ARMED SERVICES
COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON OUTLAWING
MILITARY UNIONIZATION**

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ABSTRACT

From 1975-1977, the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) made preliminary plans to unionize the U.S. military, which led to the introduction of a bill in the U.S. Senate in March 1976 to outlaw military unionization (S.3079). Because it was impossible to schedule hearings during the election year, the bill died, although in January 1977, a similar bill was introduced before the Senate (S.274). This article outlines the major arguments in opposition to military unionization presented by the Senate Armed Services Committee members as well as U.S. military leaders during the March and July 1977 hearings on S.274. In addition, an analysis of then-AFGE President Blaylock's testimony before the committee is given. After presenting empirical evidence on the two closest equivalents to U.S. military unionism (i.e., U.S. police unionism and Western European military unionism), the article concludes by arguing that even if military unionization had not been outlawed in 1977, the AFGE probably would not have been able to successfully organize the U.S. military at that time.

On June 27, 1975, the American Federation of Government Employees' (AFGE) interest in unionizing the military became public when the *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article detailing the union's plans. Shortly after the article's publication, a variety of individuals and organizations, including military commanders, U.S. senators, and professional military associations, expressed vehement opposition to potential unionization of the military [1, p. 50]. Although

the AFGE had no immediate plans for enrolling military personnel as union members [2, p. 3], according to Cortright and Watts, the union's "military organizing project" was "perhaps the most revolutionary departure in the history of U.S. labor, certainly the most radical since the formation of the CIO" [1, p. 57].

What motivated the AFGE's interest in unionizing the military? The union's interest can be traced back to 1971 with the establishment of the "comparability" principle, which linked the pay of the military with that of civilians employed by the federal government. In practice, this principle enabled military personnel to obtain the same percentage salary increase that the civilian federal employees achieved. Since military servicemembers were obtaining the same increases as the AFGE members without paying dues or contributing to the union, many within the union felt that it was time for military employees to "pay their way." This sentiment resulted in then-AFGE President Clyde Webber appealing to military servicemembers to become active in the union's fight for increased wages. After the distribution of 50,000 leaflets to the GIs, the union claimed numerous soldiers participated in the campaign through writing letters to Congress supporting the AFGE's drive for a pay increase [1, pp. 48-49; 3, p. 106].

From the standpoint of the rank-and-file soldiers, the conditions appeared to be ripe for unionization. According to Moskos, beginning with the end of the draft in early 1973, the U.S. military began to move from an institutional mode—where military service was viewed as a "calling"—to an occupational model—where the marketplace determines the rate of remuneration [4]. Consistent with the occupational model's emphasis on obtaining "fair" wages for the work performed is the organizing of trade unions. Besides being concerned that their wages and benefits were falling behind comparable employees in the civilian sector, other major job concerns were pushing military personnel in the direction of union organizing during the mid-1970s. For example, military employees were worried about proposals for reduced pay raises, pensions, and health benefits, as well as the possibility that commissary and base-exchange privileges would be eliminated. Other concerns included 1) potential staffing reductions that might reduce job security, and 2) the arbitrariness, discrimination, and difficulty in obtaining promotions [2, pp. 4-5].

Because of the positive reaction the AFGE received from military personnel during its letter-writing campaign to Congress, the AFGE modified its constitution at its biennial convention in September 1976 to permit military servicemembers to join the union. When news of the convention's decision, carried in military newspapers, reached military personnel, soldiers at a number of bases including Fort Devens (Massachusetts), Fort Benjamin Harrison (Indiana), and McGuire Air Force Base (New Jersey) contacted AFGE locals and expressed strong interest in unionization [1, pp. 52-54; 3, pp. 106-107].

At a meeting of the AFGE's National Executive Council Military Committee in December, 1976, union leaders began to plan for the implementation of the actual organizing drive. However, on the morning of December 9, the *Washington Post's*

front-page headline stated “Campaign is Set by AFGE Union to Enlist Military” [1, p. 54]. The accompanying article incorrectly reported that AFGE Local 1778 at Fort Dix was actively recruiting soldiers. In addition, the article falsely connected the union to a rank-and-file support group, the Enlisted Peoples Organizing Committee (EPOC), and the Quaker-sponsored Friends Military Counseling Group, which gave the impression that radicals and pacifists were involved in the organizing of GIs [1, p. 54].

In the wake of this negative publicity, instead of seizing the moment and proceeding with their original plans, the members of the AFGE’s National Executive Council tabled the military unionization motion and postponed the making of a decision until March, 1977. This delay allowed the opponents of military unionization, including members of Congress, to mount a counterattack from which the indecisive AFGE never recovered [1, pp. 54-55].

In March, 1976, the opposition to military unionization culminated in the introduction of a bill by Senator Strom Thurmond to outlaw military unionization (S.3079). Although the bill had twenty-four cosponsors, the bill died because Thurmond was not able to schedule hearings during the election year [5, p. 21]. In January, 1977, the senator introduced another bill (S.274) with thirty-three cosponsors that not only prohibited military organizing but also severely restricted most forms of military counseling. In addition, the bill included criminal penalties for both civilian and uniformed personnel engaged in attempts to unionize the military and provided courts with the power to fine organizations found guilty of such practices [5, p. 21].

During March and July 1977, the Senate Armed Services Committee conducted hearings on the bill. In September, the bill sailed through the Senate on a 72-3 vote, and shortly thereafter the House of Representatives passed the bill as well [1, p. 55].

When reading the contents of the proceedings of these hearings, it becomes quite clear that many members of the Senate Armed Services Committee were openly hostile to the possibility of military unionization. While a number of committee members claimed they supported the rights of employees to unionize and to engage in collective bargaining in other settings, they raised many objections to military unions. However, as is demonstrated below through a detailed examination of the reasons presented by the Senate Armed Services Committee and many witnesses for opposing military unionization, the committee held the view that military unions would operate in a manner similar to the militant paramilitary unions of police and firefighters found in the public sector rather than operate according to the model of federal employee unions in other U.S. governmental agencies.

This article is presented in the following manner. The first sections outline the major arguments in opposition to military unionization presented by the committee members and U.S. military leaders at the March and July, 1977, hearings. Following these sections, AFGE President Ken Blaylock’s conception

of military unions expressed at the hearings is presented. Next, empirical evidence concerning the effect of U.S. police and Western European military unionism is discussed because it has been argued that these types of unionism would be the most similar to the emergence of a U.S. military unionism. The concluding sections analyze whether the AFGE's unionization drive could have been successful even if Thurmond's bill had not been approved.

UNIONIZATION WILL DISRUPT THE MILITARY CHAIN OF COMMAND

A major argument against military unionization that committee members and witnesses at the hearings expressed was that military unionization is inconsistent with the military chain of command. According to Sen. Stennis, chair of the Armed Services Committee, military organization cannot be democratic and the presence of a union would provide "an alternate allegiance" for military personnel, which is untenable [6, p. 5]. Since the military command demands "the total allegiance of its members," the presence of any other organizational structure requiring allegiance would undermine allegiance to the military command [6, p. 82].

Then-U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown argued that collective bargaining was inappropriate for military personnel because the relationship between members of the Armed Forces and their commanders does not constitute an employer-employee relationship. He believed this employer-employee relationship did not exist because military servicemembers "require specialized management and a uniquely high degree of discipline and sacrifice for the proper performance of their duties" [6, p. 38]. And since Brown viewed this characteristic of military work requiring "the need for an unencumbered command control system," collective bargaining, which involves bilateral decision making, would interfere with the necessity of having "an undivided command authority" [6, p. 39]. Then-U.S. Army Chief of Staff General Bernard Rogers agreed with Brown, arguing that collective bargaining and its correlates (e.g., arbitration and joint decision making) would interfere with "an unencumbered chain of command" [6, p. 87].

Then-Secretary of the Navy Graham Clayton, Jr. expressed Brown's and Roger's concerns in more concrete terms on how a union would affect the command structure on a daily basis:

Well, I think one could say that if we had a shop steward on board ship, which is the usual procedure for implementing collective bargaining, and if the shop steward was going to come up with a list of grievances to take to the commanding officer from time to time, this automatically introduces into the whole command structure a divided authority, a divided loyalty. . . .

To me it is that type of thing that would seriously decrease the ability of the ship to operate as an effective military unit [6, p. 46].

UNIONIZATION IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH ARMED FORCES DISCIPLINE

The argument that military unions are incompatible with the discipline needed in the Armed Forces is related to the “disruption of the military chain of command” argument. According to Stennis, discipline must be administered by the military command “without internal conflict or outside interference” in order “to have an efficient fighting force” [6, p. 5]. Tower saw the presence of unionization as ultimately leading to the collapse of discipline, which could endanger the lives of individual servicemembers [6, p. 8]. Sen. Goldwater argued that discipline would be harmed which would lead to the reduced effectiveness of the military [6, p. 273], while Sen. Garn viewed military unions as further eroding military discipline [6, p. 286]. Retired U.S. Army General Maxwell D. Taylor believed tactics such as strikes and work slowdowns aimed at achieving union demands would be incompatible with the maintenance of military discipline [6, p. 129].

UNIONIZATION WILL INTERFERE WITH COMBAT READINESS

Stennis claimed the presence of a union in the military would impair combat readiness because union procedures could prevent the military from “respond[ing] quickly” in domestic and international crises, which would threaten both U.S. property and lives [6, p. 5]. Tower agreed with Stennis’ assessment, arguing that military unionization would reduce combat effectiveness and subsequently threaten American lives [6, p. 8]. Rogers argued that even if union representation occurred only during peacetime and were abandoned during wartime, military personnel would have developed high levels of confidence in their shop stewards, which would continue in a combat situation and thus interfere with combat readiness [6, p. 88]. Chief Master Sergeant Thomas N. Barnes, Admiral Watkins, and Major General Greenleaf claimed collective bargaining, which includes the possibility of both strikes and work slowdowns, even if only practiced during peacetime, would interfere with training of military personnel for combat [6, pp. 111, 156-157, 264].

CONDUCTING STRIKES AND THE VIOLATION OF NO-STRIKE CLAUSES

Connected with the argument of interfering with combat readiness is the concern that military unionization could lead to strikes of military personnel. According to Thurmond, such strikes would threaten the security of the United

States [6, p. 9]. Sen. Goldwater argued that military unionization conducted under the auspices of the AFGE could definitely lead to the occurrence of strikes in the military because the AFGE constitution does not contain a no-strike clause [6, p. 66]. Sen. Garn believed that even if unions in the military were to agree to no-strike clauses, the unions would still violate them without concern for national security. As supporting evidence for his position, Garn referred to strikes by other public sector unions, particularly the paramilitary unions of police and firefighters, even though these unions had agreed to no-strike clauses [6, pp. 124, 287].

THE ROLE OF A UNIONIZED MILITARY IN LABOR DISPUTES

Both Stennis and Rogers argued that a unionized military would be reluctant to become involved in violent labor disputes because the military would not want to take action against other unionized workers [6, p. 150]. McKinney claimed that during a strike, unionized military personnel would be ineffective in terms of “protect(ing) property and life and maintain(ing) law and order” because they would have a “divided loyalty” between the federal government and the striking union [6, p. 251]. In addition, McKinney expressed concern about who would counter military strikes, if and when they occurred [6, p. 262].

THE CONTROL OF FOREIGN POLICY BY A MILITARY UNION

Thurmond viewed military unionization as potentially leading to the union’s control of foreign policy. Thus, union leaders would be able to provide indoctrination to military personnel by telling them “to disobey the President and the Secretary of Defense” when the union disagreed with the administration’s foreign policy [6, p. 77].

MILITARY UNIONIZATION WILL INCREASE THE DEFENSE BUDGET

Thurmond stated that military unionization would lead to an increase in the defense budget [6, p. 77] and implied collective bargaining would lead to higher wages and benefits for military personnel.

BLAYLOCK’S RESPONSE TO ARGUMENTS OPPOSED TO MILITARY UNIONS

As the AFGE national president at the time, Mr. Kenneth Blaylock had an opportunity to testify before the Senate Armed Services Committee on July 26,

1977. In response to committee members' questions, Blaylock attempted to address the members' concerns over military unionization. However, Blaylock was not the only union leader to testify before the committee at that time. Both David A. Sweeney, then director of legislation and political education for the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, and Vincent J. Paterno, then president of the Association of Civilian Technicians, made statements before the committee and answered committee members' questions.

Blaylock argued the AFGE believed military unionization "would strengthen military morale, order, and discipline, especially in the context of a volunteer Army" [6, p. 277]. He made it clear the union would address only "peacetime living and working conditions outside combat command channels" and during wars or the "declaration of a national emergency by the Congress," there would be a suspension of the union's recognition by the military [6, p. 277].

Blaylock stated the AFGE was in favor of Congress placing severe restrictions on both collective bargaining and the composition of the bargaining units in the military. He argued collective bargaining would not include any issues that would disrupt either military discipline or loyalties. In fact, Blaylock said the AFGE representation would be limited to only three primary areas. For the first area, the AFGE anticipated it would represent soldiers' grievances on issues involving *only* noncombat working and living conditions such as housing, dress, hair codes and equal opportunities. A second area in which the AFGE would provide representation is in legal matters connected to the Uniform Code of Military Justice proceedings but also including special and general courts-martial and various administrative board proceedings. Finally, the AFGE would provide soldiers with representation on issues such as pay, fringe benefits, insurance, and retirement before the executive and legislative branches of government [6, p. 277].

A number of committee members (Stennis, Thurmond, and Garn) expressed concern that a unionized military would participate in strikes and ultimately endanger the security of the United States. In response to these senators' questions, Blaylock clarified the union's position on this issue saying the "AFGE will not condone strikes in the civilian work force" until there is a change in the legislation that makes such strikes legal [6, p. 283].

When Thurmond asked Blaylock for the reasoning behind the removal of the no-strike clause from the union's constitution, Blaylock responded:

The reasoning behind that, Senator, was the delegates felt that as a labor union we should not be constitutionally opposed to strikes, the delegates were much aware of the fact that taking that provision out of the constitution did not change the law in any form and our members and our organization—it is a law-abiding organization. Until such time we have legislation that would allow that, this organization will not sanction strikes [6, p. 283].

Upon further probing by the committee members concerning the possibility of strikes with the onset of military unionization, it appeared they wanted Blaylock to grant them an ironclad guarantee that unionized soldiers would never strike or engage in job actions such as sick-outs. Sensing that the senators misunderstood how strikes and/or job actions originated, Blaylock responded that unions or union leaders did not create strikes but that strikes were the result of unsettled problems in the workplace when the rank-and-file union members felt they had no other recourse for resolving the workplace problem [6, p. 283]. He also told the senators that job actions as well as strikes can occur and have occurred in the military *without* the involvement of a union, reminding them that strikes took place in Vietnam and on board two Navy ships without the presence of a union [6, p. 297]. Blaylock stated that if the AFGE successfully unionized the military he would do everything in his power to discourage both strikes and job actions from occurring. However, if military personnel actually engaged in a job action, he argued he did not have the “physical authority to send troops in there or . . . have a goon squad . . . sen(t) in . . . (to) physically restrain them” [6, p. 303].

Although the committee members seemed to believe that military unionization would ultimately lead to strikes and the disruption of the chain of command, Blaylock argued that military unions would bring about greater cooperation between commanders and their troops as well as helping commanders maintain discipline. Blaylock stated:

Cooperation between a military commander and a union can be mutually beneficial in identifying sources of friction and irritation and resolving them before they grow into a large disciplinary or morale problems or cause the loss of well-trained personnel.

A strong union can also aid a military commander in achieving military discipline among the members of the union because the union is concerned with the standards, prestige, status and public reputation of its members and is also committed to living up to agreements reached in any negotiations with management on behalf of its members [6, p. 277].

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON POLICE AND WESTERN EUROPEAN MILITARY UNIONS

The unions most similar in structure and function to a U.S. military union are U.S. police unions and Western European military unions. One of the concerns expressed at the hearings was that even though police unions have agreed to no-strike clauses, this has not eliminated police strikes. While it is true that a number of police strikes have occurred in the United States, commonly referred to as the “blue flu” [7, pp. 85-88], it should be noted that there have not been any strikes of Western European military unions, or for that matter, of any military unions in the world. Cortright and Watts reported there has been only one

threatened strike by a military union, and it occurred in Sweden, the only nation where military unions *have* the legal right to strike [1, p. 72]. In 1971, when negotiations over wages with the government broke down, the Swedish officers' unions pronounced that certain middle-level officers would engage in a restricted walkout. However, in response to this announcement, the Swedish government did not arrest the officers who threatened to strike but instead ordered a lockout of approximately 3000 regimental officers. Because of the possibility that the military would be paralyzed, the Swedish Parliament passed an extension of the old wage contract, granting the officers their wage demands [5, p. 23]. However, after the occurrence of this dispute, the Swedish officers' unions have voluntarily restricted their ability to conduct strikes by submitting any potential job action to a government labor board, which will determine the action's probable impact on Sweden's national security [8, p. 224].

Although this was the only threatened strike of a military union, it should be noted, however, that there have been disruptive collective actions by non-unionized U.S. military personnel. For example, Cortright reported several of these collective actions occurred among U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam War. On Christmas Eve 1969, approximately fifty soldiers, many dressed in uniform, assembled in JFK Square in downtown Saigon and passed out leaflets encouraging other GIs to end all fighting and to "declare a cease-fire during the Tet holiday on February 6" [9, pp. 33-34].

Two similar incidents of collective actions among U.S. soldiers in Vietnam took place during 1971. Soldiers in Chu Lai organized an "Independence Day Peace Rally" for the upcoming July 4 holiday. Although more than 1000 soldiers showed up for the demonstration, the rally was not very well organized, so the planned political demonstration degenerated into a large picnic and pot party. In September 1971, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) conducted a more successful collective action among military personnel in the Saigon area. A group of sailors began to distribute a petition, destined for Congress, which expressed "opposition to further United States Military involvement by air, sea, or land forces in Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, or other countries of South East Asia." Due to the diligent work of a number of sailors and with the aid of the VVAW national office in New York, the petition effort expanded to include soldiers and airmen in other locations, e.g., Pleiku and Cam Ranh. Several hundred signatures were obtained in only a few weeks in the Saigon area alone and, with the possibility thousands more being obtained in the other areas, military officials broke up the effort through arrests, discharges, and other types of intimidation and harassment [9, pp. 33-34].

Concerning the municipal equivalent of U.S. military unionism, one researcher discovered that police unionism did not negatively affect the operation of local governments [10]. Two other researchers arrived at a similar conclusion after a detailed study of police unionism:

. . . (T)he (police) unions have narrowed management discretion, they have fostered the development of management by policy, they have protected employees against arbitrary or inconsistent treatment, and they have shown that management had better begin diverting greater intellectual and organizational resources toward dealing with this new power center in its midst . . . we too found the beginnings of cooperative relationships and a decline in the number of relationships with intense conflict [7, p. 150].

And some of the fears that have been expressed concerning how unionization will negatively affect the military command structure and the “esprit de corps” of the military have not been borne out with the presence of unionization in police departments that exhibit a similar command structure and encourage a high level of group cohesiveness among their members. In a study attributed to Stern and his colleagues:

Collective bargaining emerged in the police service despite a hierarchical structure and strong management-rights views. . . . The comparison between the chief in a parliamentary, pyramid-shaped, authoritarian organization such as the police and a commander in the military is inescapable.

Collective bargaining emerged despite an alleged acceptance by police recruits of a military command structure which demanded unquestioning obedience and imposed rigid discipline. . . .

Groups exposed to stressful and dangerous situations tend to become cohesive; the police reputation for group cohesiveness has aided the growth of shared decision making [cited in 11, p. 133].

Based on several studies of Western European military unions, it appears that the unionized Western European armies are not less effective because of the presence of unions [5, p. 23; 8, p. 222; 12, p. 156]. Cortright and Watts elaborated on this point:

The military unions of Europe have a solid record of accomplishment. They have achieved large financial gains and have reduced the arbitrariness and inequity of military life. In many respects these efforts are completely acceptable to the command and have even helped to oil the military machine. Through their representation on promotion boards and in wage negotiations, for example, the unions serve as partners in personnel management [1, p. 71].

And a colonel and faculty member at the U.S. Military Academy in the 1970s, pointed out that Western Europe’s experience with military unions, by and large, has been positive:

One cannot argue that unionized American military personnel would strike when the European analogies show that the unionized military do not strike. One cannot argue that where European military personnel have unionized, standards of appearance related to discipline have degenerated; . . . to prove

conclusively (and causally) that mission capability has degenerated . . . would be an impossible and counter-productive undertaking [cited in 8, p. 222].

In terms of individual Western European nations' unionized armies, the Swedish military unions have evolved into "near partners in personnel management" [8, p. 224]. In Germany, the Bundeswehr Verband (the German Servicemen's Association) has established "close and cordial relations" with the defense ministry [8, p. 225]. And in the Netherlands in the mid-1970s, the unionized Dutch Army "scored highest among allied forces during NATO maneuvers in West Germany" [8, p. 227]. In addition, according to a report from the Dutch assistant minister of defense for personnel, then-U.S. General Alexander Haig stated that Dutch soldiers performed best in NATO during military exercises in the mid 1970s [8, p. 227].

Finally, from an historical perspective, Bell argued that Austria's unionized, all-volunteer army from 1920-1934 was highly effective in all of its missions, which included serving in both the Burgenland border war and the 1934 civil war, as well as controlling riots in Vienna in 1927. During this period, Bell stated in all of its activities Austria's unionized army "did as it was ordered and succeeded when employed" [13, p. 88].

Therefore, from the limited amount of empirical evidence in the operation of U.S. police and Western European military unions, a few conclusions can be drawn. Even though strikes have occurred among unionized police forces in the United States, there have been no instances of strikes of military unions throughout the world, even in Sweden, where it is legal for military unions to strike. However, it is not a prerequisite that a nation's military be unionized for disruptive collective actions to take place, even in times of war, as was discussed above concerning a number of actions among U.S. soldiers during the Vietnam War.

Furthermore, the presence of police unions and Western European military unions has not negatively impacted the efficiency or the functioning of police departments and the Western European armies. And, at least with respect to U.S. police unionism, Juris and Feuille implied unions might even aid in improving police department efficiency through the development of cooperative relationships between the union and police management. Former AFGE President Ken Blaylock was (essentially) arguing the same position as Juris and Feuille during the 1977 Senate Armed Service hearings: a military union would help to increase the level of cooperation between the soldiers and the commander, as well as aid in the maintenance of discipline among the troops.

Is it possible that Blaylock did not really advocate the position he argued before the Senate Armed Services Committee in 1977 but merely said what the committee wanted to hear? It is possible but not highly probable. According to Cortright, although the AFGE is not a "company union," it has a history of supporting government national security programs and has continually advocated

constructive labor relations with the federal government [8, p. 228]. It is unlikely the union would have deviated from its nonmilitant, conservative approach to federal labor relations in the organizing of military personnel in the mid- to late-1970s.

THE HEARINGS' EFFECT ON THE AFGE'S MILITARY ORGANIZING PLANS

From the AFGE's viewpoint, the movement in favor of outlawing military unionization separated the union from its Senate allies, and the union became concerned that its legislative program, particularly a bill that would grant formal collective bargaining rights to federal employees, was in trouble. Because of this perception, the AFGE began to back away from its original plans to organize the military [1, p. 56].

The AFGE's military organizing came to an end when the votes of a membership referendum asking union locals in summer, 1977, "Should the national office commence military organizing?" were tabulated. The union leadership did not endorse the proposal, so it was hardly surprising that the winner-take-all poll of the AFGE's 1566 locals resulted in the proposal's defeat. The margin was nearly four to one against the proposal, with locals representing 38,764 members voting "yes" and with locals representing 151,582 members voting "no" [1, p. 56-57]. The six major reasons provided by AFGE local officers on why the union membership voted overwhelmingly against the proposal were: the "adverse effect on service rendered to present members, the fear of adverse effect on military preparedness, the transience and mobility of military personnel, the monetary cost of organizing the military, the probability that union resources would be spread too thin to represent the military, and the need to focus organizing campaigns on civilians not now in locals" [3, p. 112].

COULD THE AFGE HAVE ORGANIZED THE MILITARY IN THE MID-1970s?

Cortright and Watts argued the military could have been successfully organized in 1976 *if* the AFGE had taken the right approach. These two researchers claimed the AFGE was focused on organizing the officers, or "career types," where there was less support for military unionization rather than among soldiers from the lower ranks, where there was much stronger support for unionization [1, p. 59]. In addition, Cortright and Watts claimed the AFGE national office received more than "10,000 unsolicited letters and petitions" from active-duty military personnel in the lower ranks [1, p. 58]. Because of these factors, Cortright and Watts argued that "(a) union drive in

fall 1976 probably would have produced immediate, overwhelming success” [1, p. 60].

Although there was strong sentiment among soldiers in the lower ranks for unionization, I believe Cortright and Watts were too optimistic concerning the potential for the success of military unionization in the mid- to late-1970s. If representative surveys conducted among the armed forces during this period are examined, one sees significant support among lower-level soldiers for unionization, although it was hardly overwhelming.

In a study conducted by Manley, McNichols, and Young among officers and enlisted airmen at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio, the researchers found that 37 percent of enlisted air personnel were in favor of joining a union, while 30 percent were opposed to joining a union, and 33 percent were undecided. However, among officers the percentages were: 16 percent in favor, 63 percent opposed, and 21 percent undecided [14].

Carlton and Enderlein discovered that, among a sample of U.S. Army reservists, support for joining a military union was inversely correlated with a soldier's grade. Fifty percent of reservists classified in grades E-4 to E-6 were willing to join a union, while only 25 percent in grades E-7 to E-9 were willing. These percentages dropped to eight percent in grades O-1 to O-3, and 11 percent in grades O-4 to O-6, respectively. Therefore, although half of the lower-grade military personnel were in favor of joining a union, three-fourths of the senior NCOs and nine-tenths of the officers opposed such an idea [15]. Finally, Segal and Kramer's study of combat troops at Fort Benning (Georgia) indicated that, across all ranks, approximately 33 percent of the military personnel were in favor of joining a union [16].

While these studies demonstrate that substantial support existed for military unionization, especially, among lower-ranking soldiers, support for unionization hovered between 33 and 50 percent, which is hardly overwhelming. To obtain exclusive recognition under Executive Order 11491 in the early to mid-1970s, the AFGE would have had to demonstrate it had obtained majority support from military personnel through conducting a secret ballot election in which the union received at least a simple majority of the votes cast [17, p. 22; 5, p. 27]. Since many private sector unions are reluctant to file a petition for a National Labor Relations Board certification election unless they have collected authorization cards from at least 60 percent of the eligible employees in the bargaining unit, it is likely the AFGE would have been unable to obtain the necessary percentage of authorization cards and thus would not have even attempted to obtain an election. In addition, since research has indicated that approximately 80 percent of employees have stable anti- or pro-union inclinations and thus vote as they said they would prior to the certification election, it is unlikely that the AFGE would have been able to obtain exclusive representation for military personnel in 1977 [18].

CONCLUSION: DOES OUTLAWING U.S. MILITARY UNIONS STILL MAKE SENSE?

As shown in this article, evidence has been presented to show that the U.S. (paramilitary) police unions and the Western European military unions have neither interfered with the effectiveness nor the efficiency of their respective organizational command structures. Since most of this empirical evidence was available at the time of the 1977 Senate Armed Services Committee hearings, why was there overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate (as well as the House of Representatives) for outlawing military unionization?

The answer to this question, I believe, can be found in the U.S. foreign policy at the time. Since the end of World War II until the collapse of the Soviet Union in December, 1992, U.S. foreign policy had been based on containing the Soviet Union and preventing the spread of Communism throughout the world. And it goes without saying that the U.S. military played a key role in the implementation of this policy. Therefore, the real fear concerning unions in the U.S. military may have centered on how such an institution would affect the balance of power in the U.S.-Soviet Union relationship. This analysis is supported by a comment by Krendel, who pointed out why the experience of the Western European unionized militaries might not be directly applicable to a unionized U.S. military:

The most significant and inescapable distinction between the European military experience with trade unionism, and analogies with the armed forces of the United States, lies in the differences in the strategic roles of the respective forces. A hesitation in the command and control capabilities—or a lapse in the effectiveness of the combat arms of a European democracy—might bring comfort and delight to Soviet planners, but it would likely have little influence on the dynamics of the United States-Soviet military confrontation. Evidence of similar hesitations or lapses on the part of the United States might provide an invitation to Soviet military adventures and perhaps to Armageddon [12, p. 155].

Such logic might appear rational to policymakers who were obsessed with the Soviet threat at the height of the “Cold War” in 1977. However, with the collapse of Soviet-style Communism throughout the vast majority of the world by the early 1990s, the United States is clearly the dominant military power in the world at the dawn of the 21st century. Without the current presence of a military power in the world comparable to the United States, it appears that unionization would not adversely affect the functioning of the U.S. military.

Nevertheless, considering the current state of U.S. labor law and the U.S. trade union movement’s increasing difficulty in getting pro-labor legislation passed during the last decade, it is unlikely that the legislation outlawing military unionization will be repealed in the near future. Even if the law were changed, it is unclear whether military personnel would actually unionize. However, under the

present situation, does it still make sense to deny over one million federal employees their right to choose, if they so desire, collective bargaining rights?

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