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Reduction of the Terms of Active Military Service
and Problems of Manning the Armed Forces

by

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One of the most important aspects of the Universal Military Service Law adopted 12 October 1967 at the Third Session of the USSR Supreme Soviet is the reduction of the term of active military service by one year.

The new terms of active military service established by the law for soldiers, seamen, sergeants, petty officers, and military construction troops are the result of the great achievements by the Soviet people along the path of a half century of socialist reforms in our country and are an important event in the development of the Soviet Armed Forces.

The terms of active military service, as one of the main elements of the system of manning the forces, depend directly on the numerical strength of the armed forces, the availability of draftee contingents within the country, and also on various factors of a social-economic and military nature, among which great importance is attached to the level of development of military equipment and armament, as well as to the qualitative state of the draftee contingents.

The annual requirement of the army and navy for young replacements is determined by the numerical strength of the armed forces and the terms of active military service. Naturally, reducing the terms of service leads to an increased need for draftee contingents. The following example can be used to corroborate this. When the army numbers 300 thousand soldiers, and the term of service is three years, it is necessary to replace annually one-third of the soldiers, i.e., 100 thousand men. In switching over to a two-year term of service it will be necessary to replace annually not just one-third, but 50 percent, i.e., 150 thousand men. Thus, when the term of active military service is reduced by one year, the need of the armed forces :50X1-HUM draftees is increased by 50 percent annually.





Considering this circumstance, we could raise the question of reducing the terms of active military service in the Soviet Armed Forces only if there were a sufficient number of draftee contingents available for the yearly manning of the forces.

Yet in the postwar period right up to 1964, in connection with the decrease in the birth rate in the years of the Great Patriotic War, we could not allow any changes whatsoever in the procedure for manning the armed forces. We were compelled to wait until the citizens born after the war began to enter military service.

The second condition concerns the quality of training of the young people drafted for military service. It is known that the profound economic and social transformations that have taken place in the life of our country, the increased level of political development, as well as the growth of the general educational and technical training of Soviet youth, have had decisive importance when the question of reducing the terms of active military service was studied.

The practice of providing our forces with personnel convincingly confirms the successes obtained in training our young replacements. For example, in 1966 almost all the young people who entered the armed forces had better than a seventh grade education, while 70 percent of the youth assigned to the Strategic Rocket Forces had higher, secondary, or secondary technical education.

In accordance with the new Law that went into effect on 1 January 1968, a two-year military service term has been established for soldiers and sergeants of the Soviet Army, shore-based units and aviation of the Navy, and Border Guard Troops and Internal Troops. All soldiers and sergeants of the Strategic Rocket Forces, Ground Forces, Air Defense Forces of the Country, the Air Forces, shore-based units and aviation of the Navy, troops of the Ministry for the Protection of Public Order of the USSR, and troops of other ministries and agencies having troops under their jurisdiction, will finish their service in two years.

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For seamen and petty officers assigned to warships, noncombatant ships and shore-based combat support units of the





Navy and to seagoing units of the Border Guard Troops, a three-year term of service has been established. Under the new Law, a one-year term of service in the armed forces has been retained for soldiers, seamen, sergeants, and petty officers of the Soviet Army, Navy, and Border Guard Troops and Internal Troops who have higher education.

The new Universal Military Service Law makes no mention of the terms of service for military construction troops, but by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, "Procedure for applying certain provisions of the Law of the USSR on Universal Military Service", the term has also been set at two years for military construction troops. This same decree has established that time of service in the military construction detachments for military construction troops counts as active military service, as longevity in the Armed Forces of the USSR, and in the labor record.

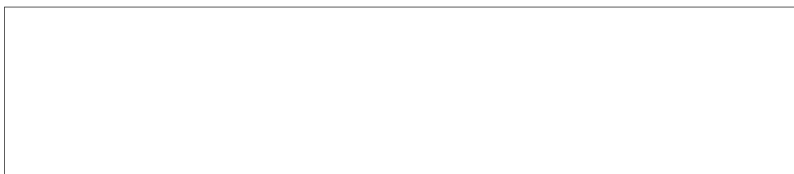
The changeover of the Armed Forces of the USSR to reduced terms of military service touches upon many problems concerning the manning of the troops. First of all it will be necessary to ensure the high combat readiness of units and large units is maintained while the army and navy make the transition to the new terms of service, to increase the training of the necessary number of noncommissioned officers and specialists as well as the training of young replacements, and to establish the procedure for manning units and subunits stationed in areas of the Far North and Far East.

In order to fulfil this important task of the State systematically and in a well-organized manner, the Soviet Army, Navy shore-based units and aviation, Border Guard and Internal Troops, as well as the military construction detachments will make the transition to the new terms of service during 1968 and 1969.

On warships, noncombatant ships, and in the shore-based combat support units of the Navy, the transition to the new terms of service will be carried out during 1968 to 1970.

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The aforementioned time periods for the transition of enlisted and noncommissioned officer personnel to the new terms of service have been established in accordance with the combat





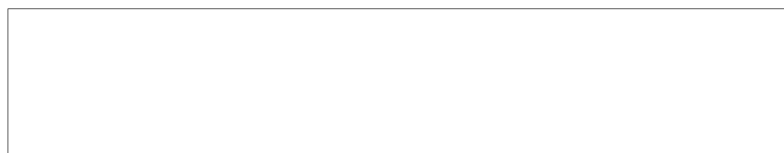
readiness requirements of units and ships, and also based on the necessity for ensuring the gradual replacement of personnel, while maintaining uniformity in manning troops and ships with sergeants, petty officers, soldiers, and seamen in accordance with the times they are to be called up for active military service.

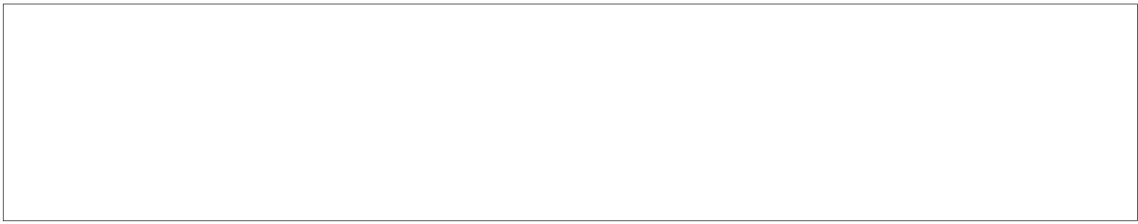
By the time the Law goes into effect, units and large units making the transition to the two-year term will have in them on active military service conscripted sergeants and soldiers drafted in 1965, 1966, and 1967, with approximately one-third of them having been drafted in each of these years. On warships, noncombatant ships, and in combat support units of the Navy which are converting to the three-year term of service, on active service will be petty officers and seamen drafted in 1964, 1965, 1966, and 1967, with approximately 25 percent of them having been drafted in each of these years.

In this connection, we are faced with the task of organizing a systematic replacement of conscripted soldiers, seamen, sergeants, and petty officers in such a way as to, on the one hand, not lower the combat readiness of units and ships, while on the other hand, have forces manned in an orderly fashion in accordance with the call-up times by the time the transition period is completed.

For a military unit converting from the three- to the two-year term of service, these situations can be successfully settled in the following way. Let us take a unit manned uniformly by sergeants and soldiers drafted in 1965, 1966, and 1967. When converting to a two-year term of service, the unit in 1968 will have to carry out discharges into the reserves as follows: in May and June, 33 percent of the sergeants and 25 percent of the soldiers drafted in 1965; in November and December, 17 percent of the sergeants and 8.3 percent of the soldiers drafted in 1965, and 17 percent of the sergeants and 16.7 percent of the soldiers drafted in 1966. In 1969 this unit must discharge into the reserves: in May and June, 33 percent of the sergeants and 16.7 percent of the soldiers drafted in 1966 and also 8.3 percent of the soldiers drafted in 1967; in November and December, 33 percent of the sergeants and 25 percent of the soldiers drafted in 1967.

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Naturally, to replace those being discharged, the same number of draft-age citizens called up for active military service will enter the unit, and by the time the transition to the two-year term of service is completed, each of the following draft dates will have provided the given unit with 33 percent of its sergeants: May and June 1968, November and December 1968, and May and June 1969. Regarding soldiers, each of the following draft dates will have provided 25 percent of them: May and June 1968, November and December 1968, May and June 1969, and November and December 1969.

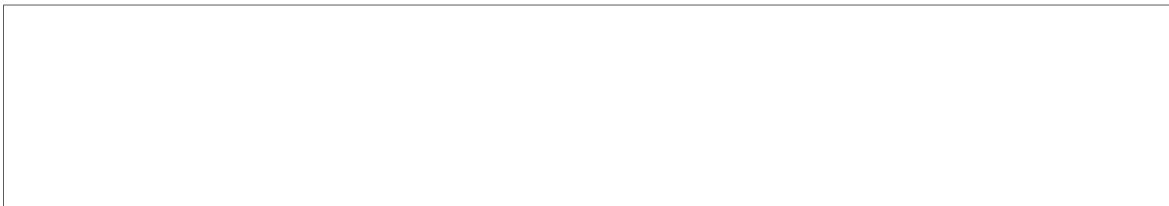
As pertains to a navy ship in transition from the four-year to the three-year term of service, it will be uniformly manned each of the draft years if every half year, over a period of three years, it discharges into the reserves 20 percent of its petty officers and 16.5 percent of its seamen.

One of the primary tasks during the transition of large units, units, and ships to the new terms of service is to adhere to a uniform discharge of noncommissioned officers and specialists so that not only in large units, units, and ships, but also in each squad, crew, or group we maintain required manning levels according to the main military registration specialties.

In connection with the reduction of the terms of active military service, we are going to have to accomplish difficult tasks in dealing with the problems of providing the armed forces with sergeants, petty officers, and specialists. Before the new terms of service were introduced, the training of sergeants, petty officers and specialists in schools, training units and detachments lasted from three months to a year. Accordingly, a unified approach to the organization of the training process was lacking and plans and programs varied greatly. We can observe this in the following facts.

In training programs much time has been devoted to the study of theoretical matters which repeated secondary school programs, and also to subjects not connected with the training of specialists. Several programs have provided for the study of various types of combat equipment and weapons although in subsequent service, graduates of the schools dealt only with a single type of equipment or weapon.





In accordance with the new tasks, we must introduce substantial changes in organizing and conducting the training of sergeants, petty officers, and specialists.

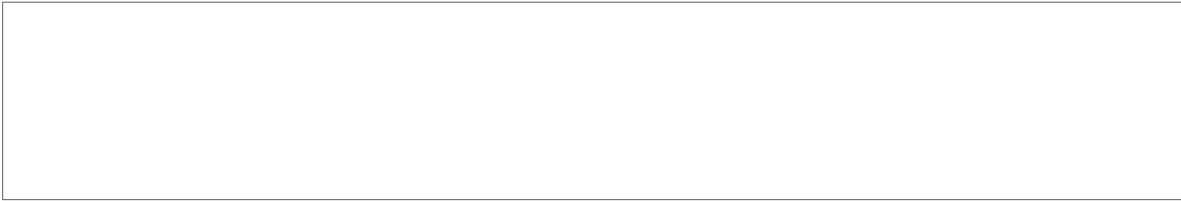
When developing the programs we must, in our view, proceed from the fact that sergeants, petty officers, and specialists need, above all, solid skills in the employment of armament and special equipment, and also a knowledge of the rules for their operation, maintenance, and repair under field conditions. The study of theoretical situations should be provided for only to the extent necessary for proper understanding and fulfilment of practical operations using the armament and combat equipment.

Experience has shown that the most important condition for improving the system of training sergeants, petty officers, and junior specialists is the further centralization of training in training large units, units, and schools which have good training materiel resources.

Therefore, under the new conditions the training of sergeants, petty officers, and specialists will best be carried out in existing training divisions and units, detachments and schools whose tables of organization must be brought into conformity with the new tasks. In this connection, a new list of positions for the sergeants, petty officers, and specialists who must be trained in the schools, training units and detachments, acquires great importance.

Taking all of this into account, and also the further improvement of the quality of work of the military commissariats in selecting draftees to man the schools, training detachments, and units, it is recognized that the training of the majority of petty officers, sergeants, and specialists can be carried out over a period of 5.5 months, so that two classes will be turned out per year. We make an exception only for specialists of the submarine fleet and individual specialties in the rocket forces and air forces, where we intend to establish the length of the training period at eight to nine months. This procedure for the training of sergeants, petty officers, and specialists will ensure that the troops and ships are maintained at constant combat readiness and, at the same time, will allow us to accomplish this task in the most economical manner, since it will not require a great increase in the number of training units and





schools.

It is stipulated that the manning of the training large units, units, schools and training detachments with trainees be conducted through the military commissariats twice per year: in May and June, and in November and December. Since the draftees will immediately enter the schools and training units, the screening and study of them is entrusted to the military commissariats, which then will select the men who are the best educated, exemplary in conduct, and with high volitional qualities for the positions of commanders of squads and crews.

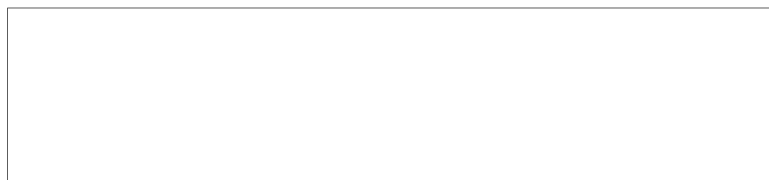
While resolving the practical problems of reorganizing the training procedure and improving the quality of training for sergeants, petty officers, and specialists with reduced terms, we shall inevitably encounter a number of other problems. For example, we must not lose sight of the improvement of the training materiel resources and also the need to carefully select the officer and noncommissioned officer personnel for training units and schools.

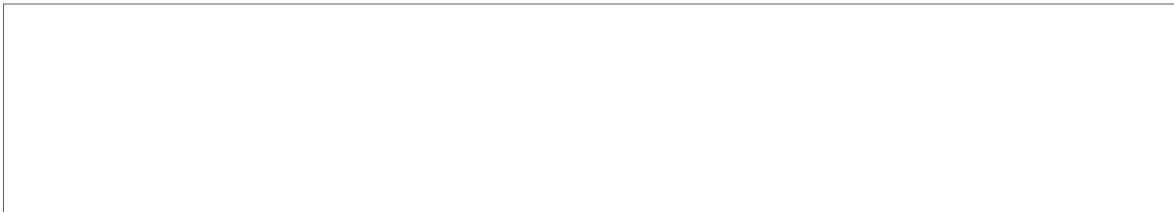
Reducing the terms of active military service will also require new solutions in organizing the basic training of young replacements for troops stationed abroad.

Previously, before being sent to their places of service, young replacements went through one month of basic military training in the troops of the military districts. As a rule, the training was conducted in two cycles. Thus, counting the time needed to send replacements to the basic training location and then to send them abroad, the manning of groups of forces took at least three months. Under the new conditions, this time period must be reduced.

It will be no less an acute situation to provide personnel to units stationed in Kamchatka and other places that are distant and difficult of access.

Under the old terms of service, the call-up was carried out in June for the aforementioned units so as to deliver the young replacements during the period of navigation and bring back on the return trip the sergeants and soldiers being discharged in the reserves. Under the new two-year term of service, if we



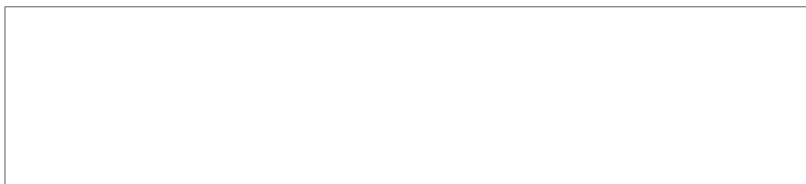


retain the previous procedure for supplying units stationed in distant areas, then we will simultaneously replace 50 percent of the soldiers and 100 percent of the sergeants, which undoubtedly will affect the level of combat readiness. If we have two call-ups per year, then the young replacements drafted in May and June can be sent to distant areas earlier than under the existing procedure. But how can we send them in November and December, when navigation is already closed? Some express the view that it is necessary to considerably expand deliveries by using aircraft from the Civil Air Fleet. However, a definitive study of this question has not yet been made.

Up to now incoming replacements always underwent basic military training independent of troops already in service and only after completing the training were they sent out to the subunits to their T/O positions. If such a procedure is maintained under the semiannual draft, then we would have to conduct basic training twice annually for the young replacements. This would require us to allocate to the combat training programs, not one to one and a half months as occurred before the new Law was adopted, but two to three months. Naturally, under the new terms of service this is not desirable. Therefore, it is extremely important that before our young people are drafted into the army, they acquire the military skills and knowledge which will allow them to join the ranks of their squads and crews without basic military training and to undergo training through a single program.

In order to accomplish this important task, under the new Universal Military Service Law basic military training has been established for young people in general education schools, secondary special training institutions, and schools of the professional-technical education system. The training program will correspond in its scope and divisions to the training program for young soldiers which existed before the new Law was adopted.

The basic military training being established by the new Law will permit young people to acquire the necessary military knowledge before they are drafted into the army, and also will be conducive to developing in them a spirit of discipline and efficiency.

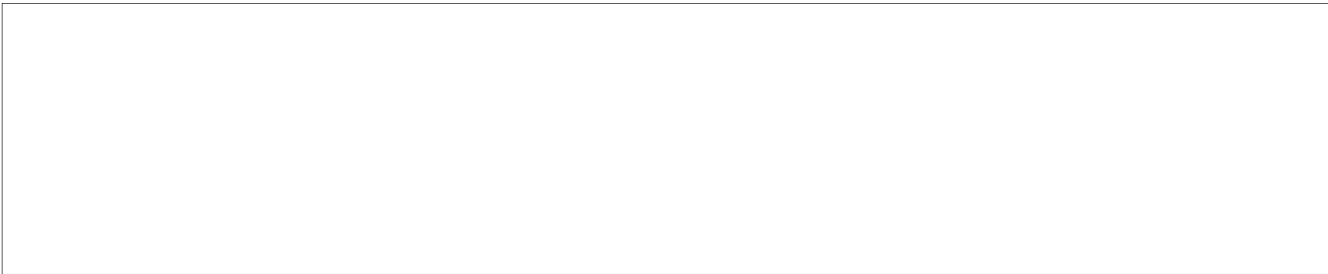




Under the new conditions the army and navy have a growing need for military technical specialists. In this connection, the scope of the training for these specialists is being increased considerably in DOSAAF training organizations and in training institutions of the professional-technical education system. This applies above all to motor vehicle drivers, driver-mechanics of tracked artillery prime movers, and communications specialists.

In conclusion, we must state that the implementation of the new Universal Military Service Law adopted by the third session of the USSR Supreme Soviet has levied on staffs of all levels, unit and large unit commanders, and military commissariats, great and complex tasks whose accomplishment will require much work and energy. In so doing, all measures associated with reducing the terms of service must be carried out without sacrificing troop combat readiness.

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