

# Is SNU's leadership within our reach?

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L'Armée de Terre dans la société

**One of the key elements that will condition the feasibility of universal national service (UNS) is that of staffing.**

**The short analysis that follows is simply intended to establish a few orders of magnitude and to evaluate, as a first approach, the part that the armies could take, focusing on the summer period, which should be the most delicate to manage.**

Apart from the starting point (number of personnel in an age group), the figures that follow are neither official nor scientific in nature; they are the result of reasoning and calculation hypotheses that are necessarily questionable; they must be handled with circumspection.

## **1. An estimate of the annual effort to be produced**

One age group today represents an average of 760,000 people (figures for classes 96, 97 and 98).

Born in 1996: 382,380 men and 366,173 women; total 748,523 / Born in 1997: 383,494 men and 365,361 women; total 748,855 / Born in 1998: 395,752 men and 377,822 women; total 773,574.

They already notice at this first stage of the analysis:

These figures are from the census; they may be slightly below the overall total due to a few people who managed to escape the system;

They obviously do not include foreigners, or migrants, even those "destined" to be naturalized later; a provision imposing the SNU on new French citizens at the time of their naturalization (up to an age limit to be set) would be worth considering.

What rate of exemption? It was of the order of 10% at the time of military service, mainly for medical or psychological reasons. But fitness for military service and fitness for the SNU are two different things... Taking this 10% attrition as a basis for calculation, for lack of a better estimate, the number of people who would live in the SNU each year would be in the order of 650,000 to 700,000.

Another remark: among those exempted, those who fall through the census net or the "refusers", are not precisely those who would "need" the UNS the most, who are in danger of finally escaping from it?

In order to manage (and probably also to support, including administratively) these numbers, a management ratio in the order of one to four to one to five is generally considered 'reasonable', although this may still need to be verified: what was valid for "getting the classrooms up and running" is not necessarily valid for monitoring the United Nations system... With this ratio, a simple rule of three indicates that approximately 130,000 to 175,000 managers from the contributing departments would need to be mobilized per year... With this rate, a simple rule of three indicates that approximately 130,000 to 175,000 professionals from the contributing ministries would have to be mobilized per year, each of them assigned to this mission for a period of one month (assumption of duration in line with the announcements made), i.e., some 11,000 to 15,000 permanently mobilized public servants.

How much would the armed forces contribute to this supervision and support mission? The other "high-staffed" ministries likely to be involved could only be the interior and education. However, since a large part of the work will be carried out in the field, it is likely that the majority of the work would involve military officials. The armies could be required to contribute 40 or 50 per cent of the personnel... This would mean that the armies would have to provide an average of 6,000 personnel on a permanent basis. But these 6,000 managers currently have a job! Moreover, they would have to be chosen rather young, but experienced, and out of a certain number of priority functions. In fact, the pool of managers meeting these multiple criteria would be very small and, as a result, the burden on this limited population would be unbearable.

Even if other ministerial departments have this experience in outdoor activities: police, gendarmerie and civil security for the interior, intervention teams for health, NFB for agriculture, sports instructors for national education...

One might even think that the type of activities proposed by the United Nations system gives priority to young contact officers from the land forces for the mission: in this case, the contribution in relation to their numbers alone would be significantly greater, when their supervision rate is already relatively low.

However, as the service to be provided also covers support tasks, it is likely that a small part of the staff could be made up of non-commissioned members (former master corporals, etc.). Reservists would probably be called upon, even if they are by nature a resource, already heavily used by Sentinel). These two contributions could lighten the bill a little in terms of active cadres...

In any case, for the armies, as for the other contributors, this would be a new mission, of a

permanent nature, which should result in additional manpower.

An important point to be made at this point in the demonstration is that the armies would be faced with a very high level of permanent structural absenteeism. Two issues will have to be addressed in order to deal with it:

Would the armies be strengthened to meet these needs, so that the "missing" personnel do not penalise the execution of operational missions?

Would "rotating" personnel, or specialized cadres, be used to pay the bill, and would they be permanently assigned to the United Nations system? This second option would run the risk of recreating a "two-tier army" ...

## **2. A summer peak?**

What is the active/student distribution within these age groups? More than two thirds (65% of men and 70% of women) are students. Educated from September to June, the vast majority of them may wish to "do the SNU" during the summer. All the more so as the practice of outdoor activities will seem more bearable to them in good weather... Assuming that we manage to smooth out this peak effect a little, we could have as many as 300 to 350,000 people to incorporate in July and August.

It would therefore be necessary, still on the same basis of calculation, to find for the months of July and August of the 12,000 to 15,000 military personnel per month, potentially up to 20,000. This means that nearly a quarter of the officers or non-commissioned officers of the three armies could be concerned by this summer training mission. While the other missions of the armies continue, and families are counting on deserved summer leave.

Another peak effect: there would potentially be 200,000 people, executives and conscripts (if this name is retained), to simultaneously house, possibly clothe, feed, transport, administer and medically monitor. All this while France is on holiday. ... and other difficulties: assuming that we can find and make available infrastructure to house 1,000 people, we would need 200. It would be much more for smaller facilities...

## **3. What do these figures say?**

Without any rigorous mathematical pretension, these figures have only one merit: that of giving an idea of the scale of the effort to be made in terms of human resources.

This is a real challenge, the feasibility and acceptability of which cannot be taken for granted. Caution must therefore be the order of the day... It may consist, for example, in testing the system on only part of the population concerned, or over a shorter period of time, before deciding on its generalization. It may also involve alternative approaches, such as a significant increase in the capacity for voluntary military service (VMS) and adapted military service (AMS) in order to "absorb" part of the "overflows" of personnel ...

**In any event, these figures show that the armed forces alone are not in a position, in their own right, to "absorb" part of the "overflows" of personnel. In any event, these figures show that the armed forces alone, in their present format, are not able to**

**provide this mission to the level of a truly universal service.**

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