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How a Volunteer Army  
Can Imperil the Republic

To the Editor:

The sad and dramatic events occurring in Washington in recent months, which generated a very real constitutional crisis as well as a question of confidence in the orderly conduct of government, bring another critical consideration to light.

It is obvious, chillingly obvious, that the current plan of promoting the concept of a "voluntary" Army is inimical to our democratic institutions.

An Army composed entirely of "volunteers" recruited by the attractions of money and "career" alone is frighteningly unsound.

Without the benefit of the continuing conscription of civilians into the military (who serve, however unwillingly and at whatever individual inconvenience and sacrifice) places the Republic in grave jeopardy.

Over a period of years a "volunteer" Army will become more and more isolated from other elements in our society. It will attract those who are less educated, who are unable to find a place in the mainstream of our social, cultural and commercial life. This nonrepresentative Army will become increasingly insulated and separate from the total American experience. In essence it becomes a mercenary force. A great big hired gun.

The prospect of a future President, unresponsive to the law, unmoved by the will of Congress, calling upon such a force as its "Commander in Chief" is not pleasant. For those who question the probability with the usual "it can't happen here": It could.

The tragedies of Germany in the thirties and Italy in the twenties as well as similar agonies through history were not caused by something innate in the German or Italian national character that produces such calamities.

It didn't happen because they were Germans. It happened because they were men.

YUSTIN WALLRAPP  
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