



# Unification of the United States Armed Forces: Implementing the 1986 Department of Defense Reorganization Act

*Jr., Douglas C. Lovelace*

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The prestige the U.S. military establishment enjoys today stands in sharp contrast with its reputation of a decade ago. Starting with America's military involvement in Viet Nam and culminating with the Iran hostage rescue attempt, the Beirut bombing, and the Grenada intervention, the U.S. armed forces endured a prolonged period of criticism. The experiences of that period, inter alia, convinced the U.S. Congress that the Department of Defense required a major overhaul. The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act was the most significant legislation for the U.S. Armed Forces since the National Security Act of 1947. The increased unification the Goldwater-Nichols Act was intended to bring to the Department of Defense was considered too extreme by some, but insufficient by others. In this monograph, Professor Douglas Lovelace assesses many of the act's major provisions. He describes the congressional motivation for passing the act, assesses the extent to which the act has been implemented, discusses its impact on the Department of Defense, and offers recommendations for furthering the purposes underlying the act. The author's critical analysis leads him to conclude that the Department of Defense and the nation have benefitted from the substantial implementation of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. As we approach its 10-year anniversary, however, Professor Lovelace finds significant room both for the Department of Defense to complete implementation and for the Congress to enact modifications to more coherently focus the act on its central purposes. His thought-provoking analyses, conclusions, and recommendations should fuel discussions of the extent to which the act has, or can, achieve its intended results.

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