

Talk of reinstating draft persists

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/news/articles/0703draft03.html#>

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WASHINGTON - The Pentagon says no. The Selective Service System says no. And congressional leaders say absolutely not.

Yet talk of reinstating the military draft persists around the country, driven by the Internet, high-profile moves by the military to shore up its forces and fears that those reassurances could melt away if world events worsened.

Congressional aides say their offices receive a steady stream of telephone calls and e-mail messages inquiring about the status of the draft. Lawmakers themselves are regularly asked if Congress is preparing to re-establish the system, abolished by President Nixon 31 years ago.

At the offices of the Selective Service System, which in 1980 resumed registering men at age 18 in the event the draft was ever resurrected, inquiries arrive daily along with a barrage of requests from news organizations for interviews about the idea of restoring mandatory military service.

The anxiety can be traced to several developments, among them the Defense Department, which took steps to bolster forces thinned by service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Earlier this year the Pentagon issued an order requiring some soldiers to remain in uniform beyond their expected dates for leaving the service. This week the military announced that it would recall 5,600 former active-duty soldiers with certain skills who have time remaining as reservists. And Congress is moving to expand the size of the Army and the Marine Corps.

But top lawmakers, Pentagon leaders and administration officials say there are no plans to resume the draft and that the military is much better off relying on a substantially motivated volunteer force rather than on conscripts.