Contributed Article

# Jarhead and Deskilling in the Military: Potential Implications for the Australian Labour Market

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## **Abstract**

This paper uses a popular culture medium to examine the notion of deskilling in one particular sector, viz., the military. Jarhead was released to cinemas in 2005 and follows the experiences of United States Marine, Anthony Swofford, in the first Gulf War of the early 1990s. We witness the central character undergo intensive training to become one of the Marine's highly skilled employees — a sniper. We observe Swofford and his colleagues' increasing frustrations with their inability to 'ply their trade'. While the sniper was a highly skilled, indeed élite, fighter in earlier conflicts, technological developments have left this skilled artisan as a bystander in modern set-piece warfare. This paper adds to our understanding of the tensions between traditional skilled occupations and technological development, in addition to the tensions between military skills and non-military employment. Using the Hollywood movie Jarhead as a lens, the audience witnesses the manner in which technology leads to a divergence in workplace skills. Finally, this paper considers the implications for the Australian labour market.

## Introduction

Jarhead, released to cinemas in 2005, follows the experiences of Anthony Swofford (Jake Gyllenhaal) and is based on his bestselling memoir of the first Gulf War entitled Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles (2003). Nicknamed Swoff, Jarhead's protagonist is a young man who, as with many Marine Corps enlistees, comes from a Marine Corps family. He is a third-generation enlistee. Upon signing up, Swoff is sent to the mandatory Marine

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Corps boot camp, where he becomes a 'Jarhead'. As Swoff explains, this is the self-imposed Marine Corps moniker referring to 'the resemblance to a jar of the regulation high and tight haircut', in addition to the status of the raw recruit as 'an empty vessel' ready to acquire new skills. Indeed, Swoff does acquire new skills. He becomes one of the Marine Corps' élite, a sniper. Snipers have traditionally played a substantial and significant role in combat owing to their highly developed skills; however, *Jarhead* tells us a different story, with the highly-skilled craft-workers becoming obsolete in their chosen career because of technological development.

This paper uses a popular culture medium, viz., the 'Hollywood blockbuster' film, to explore the tensions between technology and the skilled worker. Furthermore, it examines the current position of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) as a major employer in the Australian labour market. There has been substantial media, academic and political debate in Australia about the lack of skilled tradespeople within the Australian labour market (Hall and Fenwick 2006). As one of Australia's largest employers, the ADF faces the same 'skills shortage' as that confronting private enterprise. This is particularly relevant to the Australian context at this point in time. Indeed, the ADF is currently facing substantial problems with recruiting new personnel, especially in view of former Prime Minister John Howard's announcement in August 2006 that two more infantry battalions would be added to the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), a total of around 2,600 men (Bartlett 2006). As a consequence, we suggest that the development, the maintenance, the use and, what is more, the transferability of skills is an important issue for the ADF.

This paper will first provide a synopsis of *Jarhead*. It will then investigate the notion of skills in the workplace, starting with the seminal research of Harry Braverman (1974) that ignited a substantial debate on the role that technology plays in influencing workplace skills. This done, the paper will explore the tensions within *Jarhead* when the highly-skilled craft-worker finds technology making their skills irrelevant. Finally, the paper will discuss military employees, with particular reference to the skills acquired in their training and the transferability of these skills to non-military labour markets.

# The Elite of the Elite - The Marine Corps Sniper

The Marine Corps boot camp is a dehumanising ritual made especially famous by Stanley Kubrick's brutal *Full Metal Jacket*, in addition to more light-hearted fare such as 1960s sitcom *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* Despite this, the boot camp also embodies the acquisition and development of specialist skills. Thus, as part of his

intensive Marine Corps training, Swoff learns the trade of the Scout/Sniper. The U.S. Marine Corps, which is larger than the armies of most countries, regards itself as an élite body. Indeed, it is known as 'The President's Own' (the Marine Corps supplies the President's helicopter) and is trained for highly specialised duties such as amphibious assault and helicopter insertion, the successful execution of which requires extensive training and intensive skills development. Moreover, the Corps is 'designed to project American power onto hostile shores' (Moskin 1979, p. 704), and thus acts as a mobile force-in-readiness, as it has done since the campaign against the Barbary pirates in 1805 (Selby 1972). Thus the snipers, with their additional combat skills, represent, at least from the Corps' perspective, the élite of the élite. As Staff Sergeant Sykes, Swoff's mentor, explains, 'It's an honour' and an 'opportunity' to be a Scout/Sniper.

With his companions, Swoff travels to the Middle East expecting to battle the forces of Saddam Hussein as part of Operation Desert Shield. Although Swoff and his comrades-in-arms initially expect to be on active duty for two weeks, he eventually spends '165 days, 14 hours, five minutes' camped in the desert waiting for 'his' war to begin. As we see, it never really does. Meanwhile, he *perceives* that war is being waged around him. The acrid black smoke of burning oil-wells is ever-present along with the thunderous tones of war in the distance. Importantly, the combat is so distant it is often beyond the reach of a sniper's bullet. Modern war is now technological war, or at least that is the point that *Jarhead* emphasises. What is more, the Marine on the ground is no longer necessarily 'First to Fight', the motto used since the First World War (Moskin 1979), but is now often a bystander in armed conflict.

The sniper is charged with one of the most dangerous, skilful and lonely missions, that is, hunting down enemy officers and targets of opportunity by means of stealth, and then escaping detection after claiming the target (Henderson 1988; Sasser and Roberts 1990). A sniper is also an extremely efficient killer. In Vietnam, for example, the average number of bullets used per kill by snipers was 1.3 to 1.7, while ordinary infantrymen expended more than 200,000 bullets to kill one enemy soldier (Sasser and Roberts 1990; Lanning 1998). Those snipers famously deployed in the mud of no-man's land during the First World War could stay motionless and without food for hours at a time, a constant menace whose impact on the course of the war was far more psychological than tangible. Sniping continued into the Second World War, as is witnessed in *Enemy at the Gates* (2001), which is set on the Russian front during the street-fighting in the Battle of Stalingrad and celebrates the exploits of two élite German and Russian marksmen (Gilbert 1997, pp. 94-95), and into the Vietnam era, where it plays an integral part in the second act in *Full Metal Jacket*, a film in many ways comparable to *Jarhead*.

In today's world, the sniper, as *Jarhead* suggests, is largely redundant in set-piece combat situations (such as Operation Desert Storm) where mechanical contrivances dominate the battlefield. Yet the sniper, as always, has an important role to play in drawn-out campaigns, or in counter-insurgency operations, where the sniper effectively acts as a force multiplier. It is a paradox that Swoff's expertise would have proved an invaluable asset in present-day Iraq, where the sniper's presence has again been used effectively to limit the success of Iraqi insurgence.

The core element of interest to us is the inability to use the highly developed skills acquired by Swoff and his comrades-in-arms in the Surveillance and Target Acquisition (STA) Platoon of the Second Battalion, Seventh Marines. We witness the rigours of the boot camp at Camp Pendleton and the incessant and demanding vigil of DI Fitch (Scott MacDonald), Swoff's transfer to the élite scouting unit described above, where Marine lifer Staff Sergeant Sykes (Jamie Foxx) further indoctrinates him in the ways of the Corps, and the close interdependent association formed by Swoff with his spotter Troy (Peter Sarsgaard), the other 'half of the sniper team' responsible for locating targets and providing cover (Henderson 1988, p. 5). Together, the sniper and his spotter, as Lieutenant General John H. Hay Jr. once pointed out, form a 'a carefully designed "weapon system" (Lanning 1998, p. 2). Swoff and Troy train to locate and terminate their targets with their specialised sniping weapons. These finely-honed and potentially lethal skills are rendered superfluous when precision-guided weapons use laser, radar and satellite technology as a means to increase the probability of hitting the target.

# Braverman, Deskilling and Divergent Skill Development

From an industrial relations perspective, *Jarhead* recalls some of the key tenets of Harry Braverman's *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (1974). In this provocative work, Braverman proposes that, within capitalist economies, there is a general tendency for work of all forms to become progressively deskilled, so that workers are essentially there to operate the machines, rather than apply well-developed manual skills to the workplace. Braverman considers 'skill' to be the knowledge contained within craft workers within their trades. He explains:

From earliest times to the Industrial Revolution the craft of skilled trade was the basic unit, the elementary cell of the labor process. In each craft, the worker was presumed to be the master of a body of traditional knowledge, and methods and procedures were left to his or her discretion. In each such worker reposed the accumulated knowledge of materials and processes by which production was accomplished in the craft. The potter, tanner, smith, weaver, carpenter, baker, miller, glassmaker, cobbler, etc., each

representing a branch of the social division of labor was a repository of human technique for the labor processes of that branch (1974, p. 109).

In Braverman's view, Taylorist methods of work organisation, which embody an extension of managerial control and the gradual separation of job conception and execution, came to increasingly dominate the workplace. Thus knowledge about job execution was stripped from the employees and became the preserve of management – part of what Braverman referred to as the 'degradation of work'. Braverman's approach to understanding skills in the workplace has been criticised for providing a romanticised view of craft work, for relying too heavily on an objective view of skill ignoring its political and social construction, for neglecting the gendered dimension of skill, and for paying too little attention to alternative managerial strategies that might be used to control employees (Bradley, Erikson, Stephenson and Williams 2000; Grint 1998, pp. 179-186; Noon and Blyton 1997, pp. 108-111).

There has been substantial research on the topic for those who support Braverman's thesis (e.g., Zimbalist 1979), and those who take a more critical stance (e.g., Wood 1982; Storey 1985). Although the notion of deskilling remains problematic, there is arguably enough a much less significant level of skill utilisation in many contemporary work situations. With the substantial and rapid growth of technology in recent years, we have witnessed – at the very least – significant *changes* in the skills utilised throughout various industries. The military is not immune to fluctuations in the labour market, nor is it immune to changes in technological development. Rather, by its very nature, the military in Australia and elsewhere are *more* likely to be at the cutting edge of technological development in particular areas.

Braverman re-invigorated labour process theory and the notion of deskilling in the 1970s (Thompson 1989). Yet many of his ideas stem from the work of Adam Smith. Smith suggested that economic development was based around the division of labour. The skills of a master pin-maker were neither as efficient nor productive on a purely quantitative basis as when the tasks were divided. It would therefore be far more efficient and productive if the tasks were divided and if different people were to perform different tasks. For example, with regard to the pin factory, one worker would draw the wire, another would 'head' the pin, and another worker would sharpen the pin, and so on (Piore 2002). Thus deskilling, by means of changing the structure of artisan trades and technological progress, was required in order to develop increased economic returns to the capitalist. Braverman (1974) developed this argument with a view to suggesting that it was more than strategy – in fact, it was in the nature of capitalist production to develop

technology that leads to the deskilling of the previously skilled tradesperson.

Brayerman's work was a product of its time and a typically Marxist approach to skilling in the workplace (Penn and Scattergood 1985; Sawchuck 2006). Many of the concerns regarding the role of technology in deskilling antedated the incredible level of technological development experienced during the last thirty years. It is important to bear in mind that we now have the benefit of hindsight and a wealth of data, both of which enable us to understand more clearly the impact that technology has in the workplace. These last three decades have witnessed substantial debate and much research on the actual impact of technology on workplace skills. The results of this research have been as diverse as the technology and skills investigated. For example, Osterman (1986) explored the change of skills required after computer technology was introduced to twenty different industries. Osterman found that the skills required by both low-skilled workers and managers had changed, which led to a reduction in employment opportunities for both groups of workers. Taking a more recent view of skills, Sanders (2005) argues that the position of low-skilled workers in the labour market has deteriorated significantly over the past three decades.

A number of other authors (e.g. Caroli and van Reenan 1999, Chennells and van Reenan 1999; Kaiser 1998; Machin 1996) have found, in their respective research, that technology requires the most skilled workers to increase their skills, yet has a negative impact on the skills required by the low-skill workers. In addition, there is a substantial body of research, conducted in a range of industries, that fails to find *any* clear evidence of the deskilling traditionally associated with technology (see e.g. Jones 1982; Martin 1981; Penn and Scattergood 1985).

We can see, then, that there is no simple explanation for what is occurring with workplace skills in recent decades. This body of research developed into a new model of skill and technology interaction that Penn and Scattergood (1985) denominate 'compensatory theory'. This neo-Marxist approach extracts some of the problems associated with Braverman's deskilling thesis and presents a range of propositions. These propositions include the recognition that technological change presents situations of *both* skilling and de-skilling, and that various occupational groups are disadvantaged, while others are advantaged. This approach is particularly relevant to our interpretation of the experiences of Swoff and his élite colleagues in *Jarhead* and, indeed, members of the Australian military.

*Jarhead* shows that élite soldiers such as U.S. Marines have become the subject of deskilling, as has occurred in other technologically advanced armed forces. Whereas Marines might once have employed their expert combat skills in the field,

they, like the common infantry 'grunts', who might be described as 'semiskilled workers' (Braverman 1974, p. 431), are simply used to occupy territory captured by sophisticated equipment such as tanks, cruise missiles and, of course, military aircraft. In the case of the first Gulf War, the initial air-strikes so destroyed the Iraqi capacity to fight that front-line soldiers, such as Swoff and his comrades-in-arms, found themselves in a theatre without any front line, or anyone to fight. One Marine is even prompted to wonder: 'Are we ever going to get to kill anyone?'

The movie begins with Swoff's learning that the abuse traditionally associated with training camps is, in fact, now his reality. He realises that joining the Corps might have been a mistake. Nevertheless, after months of dragging his pack-laden body through mud and other hostile training environments, with the constant haranguing of the instructors, Swoff and his companions become the élite of the élite – Marine Corps snipers – and are flown in to Saudi Arabia in preparation for the ground assault to come.

After almost 200 days of existence in an alien land, Swoff complains that his comrades do little more than patrol the empty desert, we hydrate, we navigate imaginary minefields, we throw hand grenades into nowhere, we fire at nothing ... and we hydrate some more.

When the members of the STA Platoon are called upon to engage the enemy, they merely wander about, with weapons at the ready, through the charred remains of civilians who have been bombed in their escape from the war-zone. The frustrations of the snipers are high at this point. They have spent months in training refining their expertise and months in camp maintaining their skills. Upon being 'zoomed' by a military jet, one Marine, as he digs his sleeping hole in the desert, is moved to exclaim: 'They're going to win the war all by themselves. And they'll be sleeping in their own beds tonight too.' Troy joins in to complain about the inability of snipers to use their skills:

This war's gonna move too fast for us. We can shoot 1000 yards. To go that far in Vietnam that would take a week. In World War One, a year. Here, it's gonna take about ten fucking seconds. By the time we have our rifles dialled, the war's gonna be about a mile down the road.

Indeed, Troy's frustration becomes even more relevant when he and Swoff are assigned a mission to locate and kill 'two high-ranking [Iraqi] officers' of Saddam Hussein's élite Republican Guard – the precise mission for which they have been trained. The sniper and spotter travel towards their target and find a location where they can execute their skills. Having received authorisation to carry out their orders, Swoff has his target sighted, and his finger on the trigger of his

M40A1 rifle. As the tension builds within Swoff, Troy and even the audience, an American officer, Major Lincoln, bursts in and orders the snipers to desist. He decides to call in air support to take out the airbase control tower where the Iraqi officers are located. Troy's frustration with his inability to use his skills is overwhelming. The scene proceeds as follows:

Major Lincoln: We got air, I'm calling it in.

Troy: We have permission to take the shot.

Major Lincoln: Tough break, you were just gonna shoot one guy, watch this, it'll blow your fucking minds ...

Troy: Requesting permission to take the shot, sir.

Major Lincoln: Request denied. You never know how many chances you're gonna get to see this.

Troy pleads with Major Lincoln to take the shot. But the officer, to Troy's increasing frustration, continues to ignore him.

Troy: We have the goddam shot. It's what we're here for .... It's my kill, that's my kill, that's my kill, you fucking desk-jockey .... You don't know what we go through to kill. He doesn't know.

While Troy breaks down and proceeds to cry, two jets lay a pattern of bombs and destroy the Iraqi-held airbase.

Later, Swoff, now mentally exhausted from his recent experience, complains that he 'never shot [his] ... rifle', to which Troy replies that he 'can shoot it now'. Swoff fires his rifle into the night-time sky, for want of any better target. This, more than any other aspect of the film, encapsulates the biting critique of deskilling that the film embodies. The finely-honed and potentially lethal craftsmanship of the STA Platoon thus counts for very little in a war where its skills are not required. Whilst *Jarhead* illustrates the story of the sniper, we could reasonably presume there are many roles within the military that have progressively been altered or superseded by technological developments.

In a poignant scene towards the end of the movie, the Marines are in a bus travelling through a welcome home parade in the United States. A Vietnam veteran, who is clearly suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), climbs onto the bus in order to congratulate the efforts of his fellow Marines ('You did it clean, you made us proud'), and then sits down. The audience is shown the possible

future of the Gulf War veteran through the Marines' brief connection with this vet. Swoff shares the experience by stating that 'every war is different, every war is the same.' It is not a bright future. Indeed, we see Troy's funeral, with the underlying assumption that his death was a suicide. This end, of course, is not one reserved exclusively for the repatriated Marine. However, we can conclude that the frustrations associated with being unable to perform their expert marksmanship in a hostile environment would be a contributing factor to a veteran's post-war experiences. This paper will now turn towards the Australian Defence Force and the role of skill-development within the ADF.

#### The ADF and the Australian Labour Market

The Australian Defence Force plays a substantial role in the Australian labour market. In fact, with almost 100,000 employees, the ADF is one of Australia's largest employers (ABS 2005), and, as explained previously, is set to expand in the face of the nation's increasing commitment to global peace-keeping operations and the ongoing 'war on terror.' At present, it employs approximately 50,000 full-time military personnel, almost 20,000 'Reserves' and almost 15,000 civilians (Defence Portfolio Budget Statements 2006-7). Changing labour market conditions do not influence only private enterprise. Indeed, despite its position as a behemoth of the Australian labour market, the ADF, before recent announcements regarding the recruitment of more combatant personnel, is currently faced with a shortfall of 1,500 employees based on projected employment rates.

While this labour shortfall is usually addressed through the use of increased civilian staff (Portfolio Budget Statements 2006-07), in 2007 the Australian government announced significant retention and recruitment initiatives. In total, the ADF is investing \$3.1 billion on retention and recruitment strategies throughout the next decade (Department of Defence 2007). Of this amount, \$371million is being used to reform recruiting processes, and \$71million is to be used to introduce a new ADF apprenticeship scheme (Department of Defence 2007). In addition, \$96million is to be spent on retention and completion bonuses for skilled tradespeople. That is, enlistees can receive up to \$10,000 per year after completing their trade training (Nelson 2006). It has been noted, at an international level, that there is an increasing desire on the part of the military to employ people with the requisite knowledge, skills and abilities to perform highly sophisticated tasks, something which has intensified recruiting competition between military and private sector organisations (Hindelang, Schwerin and Farmer 2004). Clearly, the ADF recruitment drive is a substantial one. What makes the issue of competitive recruiting even more salient is that it is taking place at a time when there is considerable political and media attention focussed on the 'skills shortage' within the Australian labour market (see, e.g., the Commonwealth government's website on the 'National Skills Shortage Strategy').

The ADF also recognises that there is a reasonably high level of exit intention with the defence force in Australia. Between 30 and 39 percent of ADF employees indicate that they are 'actively looking at leaving the service' (Department of Defence, 2007, p8). Currently, there is an actual separation rate of more than 11 per cent. Targeted retention bonuses and allowances and initiatives to improve conditions are aimed to reduce this turnover in an attempt to alleviate labour shortfalls. It is recognised, however, that turnover will occur, and the ADF has allocated \$125million for ADF members who are considering alternative careers to receive independent professional career advice (Department of Defence 2007).

While there is limited research on workplace issues within the ADF, we can draw some conclusions from a substantial North American literature. In the United States, the main reasons for joining the military among young men (16 to 21 years of age) are money for education and job training (Hattiangadi, Lee and Quester 2004). Hence the development of skills that can be used across workplaces is one of the two primary reasons for young men to join the military. This also seems to have been the case for Swoff, who seems to have joined the Corps on the way to college – Marine lifers are rarely caught reading Camus in the latrines. In addition, we witness the following exchange between D.I. Fitch and Swoff:

D.I. Fitch: What the fuck are you even doing here?

Swoff: Sir, I got lost on the way to college, sir!

It is therefore easy to understand the frustrations that arise when young men (primarily) join the various arms of service in order to learn skills, train extensively with a view to developing the acquired skills, and are then unable to *use* these skills in the workplace. As a consequence, re-enlistment becomes problematic when employees feel that they spend so many hours training to 'do nothing'. While more than 50 per cent of ADF personnel view their opportunity to increase their skills as 'sufficient' (Department of Defence 2007), the inability to use many of these skills would be contributing to up to 39 per cent of the ADF personnel actively seeking to leave their current defence employment.

Two other issues further complicate employment matters for the military. First, while the military operates within the same labour market as private enterprise, the military has a closed and internal labour market for senior positions (Bartle 2002). Thus, in the event of a recruiting shortfall and problematic retention rates, there will be fewer employees (and of potentially lesser quality) to promote to

higher rankings (Dadeker and Paton 1997). With such a specific culture and managerial strategy built around the requirements of the battlefield, recruiting managers from the private sector is simply not possible.

The second issue relates to retirement. The defence force has a retirement system based on length of service rather than age. In view of this, military personnel often 'retire' or transfer to civilian life in their mid- to late forties (Spiegel and Shultz 2003), while the common civilian retirement age ranges between 60 and 65 years. This means that the military must place a high priority on factors that impact a person's decision to re-enlist rather than return to civilian life (Hindelang, Schwerin and Farmer 2004). We argue that the development, maintenance and *utilisation* of skills would be a significant factor in the decision to remain with the armed forces.

Skills development and employee retention are clearly areas of importance for the ADF. Whilst *Jarhead* shows us the story of the sniper – the frustrations of highly-skilled military operatives being placed in a state of flux - there are no doubt more stories of similar frustration. Herein lies the paradox for the ADF and other military organisations throughout the world. Particular skill sets are required and consequently developed. The organisation may never be sure, however, when these skills will be deployed or operationalised. One might well ask: how does the organisation retain, and therefore collect a return on its investment in skills, especially if the employees are unable to utilise their skills, become jaded, and then wish to leave the organisation? For the employees in question, we need to ask: how many of their skills are directly transferable to the civilian community and are the transitionary support mechanisms adequate? Tradespeople and administrative staff within the ADF might be well placed, and indeed better trained than equivalent staff outside the ADF, but personnel trained for combat duty are obviously more problematic.

At the present time, the ADF does provides a substantial program for transitional employees - soldiers leaving the military for retirement or retraining in order to join the civilian workforce. From a labour market perspective, more research is required, and many issues need to be examined. These issues include the transferability of skills, the success of transition for employees, and the impact that recruitment of former ADF personnel has on the destination organisation. Labour process theory and, indeed, *Jarhead* tell us that there is an ongoing development of skills within our labour force. Technology can remove the skill previously required for some tasks and increase the skill requirements of others. Just as importantly, specific skills may still be required. The use of those skills might need to be relocated within the production process, however, as is the

case with the use of snipers in the current counter-insurgency operations within Iraq. More important is that skills transferability should be built into our rapidly developing and technology-based workforce. The Marine Corps and the ADF as organisations, in addition to the Australian labour market, are not immune to the changing nature of skills within society.

#### Conclusion

This paper has used a popular culture medium to examine the notion of deskilling in the military, a prominent and oftentimes controversial sector of the workforce. Jarhead, the 2005 'Hollywood blockbuster,' tells the story of U.S. Marine, Anthony Swofford, in the first Gulf War of the early 1990s. After intensive training to become one of the Marine's most highly skilled employees, Swofford and his colleagues become increasingly frustrated with their inability to 'ply their trade'. Technological developments, as least as *Jarhead* portrays them, have rendered the sniper, an élite fighter in earlier conflicts, largely redundant in battles such as those encountered in the first Gulf War. This paper has sought to contribute to our understanding of the tensions between traditional skilled occupations and technological development, and the attitudes of those who find themselves and their expert human skills replaced by faceless technological development, something which is manifest in the seminal research of Harry Braverman, who ignited a substantial debate on the role that technology plays in influencing workplace skills.

Finally, this paper drew on the current labour market implications for the Australian Defence Force, one of this nation's largest employers. For the ADF, tensions exist between the recruitment and retention of employees and the manner in which employee skills are utilised within the ADF, and beyond into civilian employment. *Jarhead* thus serves as a cinematic representation of the angst felt by those skilled workers made redundant by technology, even if it ignores the fact that snipers (including those of the Marine Corps) continue to play a valuable role in modern warfare in certain situations. It also represents a statement regarding the difficulties of repatriating soldiers with skill-sets that have no immediately obvious civilian application. These are issues that current defence forces – including the ADF – must face in tighter labour markets if they are to realise their recruitment targets and promote military service as an alternative to civilian career paths.

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