

# **The Athletes Social Security System Construction in China: Use for Reference of Military Social Security Practices**

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**Abstract:** Countries all over the world have generally built a relatively perfect social security system for military personnel, considering the specialties of military as an occupation. Like the military personnel, athletes are also a special category of professions, with high intensity of work, high risk of injury and illness, and face career transformation after retirement. Based on literature review, several successful practices of military social security are summarized from the aspects of military occupational welfare, social preferential treatment, comfort and compensation, employment placement and promotion, and military insurance. Through comparative analysis, combined with the current situation of China athletes' social security, some suggestions are put forwards: establish and improve the laws and regulations of athletes' social security; strengthen the collaboration between government, society (enterprises) and individuals in athletes' social security; establish positive social security for athletes through employment policy; construct the demand-oriented social security for athletes; develop various kinds of commercial insurance for athletes; strengthen the service and support for athletes' social security. In general, drawing upon the successful practices of military social security system, improving the social security system for athletes in China can help protect the rights and interests of athletes and promote the sustainable development of competitive sports in China.

**Keywords:** Athletes Social Security; Military Social Security; System Construction; Laws and Regulations; Career Transition

## **1. Introduction**

Countries all over the world have generally built a comparative perfect social security system for

military personnel, considering the specialties of military as an occupation. Like military personnel, athletes are also a special category of professions, with high intensity of work, high risk of injury and disease, and face career transformation after retirement. Unlike foreign athlete training system, under the national system, China's athlete training is mainly based on state investment. There is a large degree of separation between athlete training and school education, and most athletes are not well educated and have serious injury and disease problems which resulting in difficulties in re-employment after retirement. Drawing upon the successful practices of military social security system construction, improving the social security system of athletes in China can help protect the rights and interests of athletes and promote the sustainable development of competitive sports in China.

## **2. The Military Social Security**

The military social security is to protect the basic rights and interests of military personnel and their families from political, economic and social aspects in accordance with laws and regulations, and its content mainly includes military occupational welfare, social preferential treatment, Comfort and compensation, employment placement and military insurance, etc.

### **2.1 Military Occupational Welfare**

For active military personnel, countries all over the world generally provide them with various professional benefits, including professional allowance, life insurance, free medical treatment, housing treatment, shopping concessions, leave and vacation subsidies, etc. Russia provides state housing for army officers, and Russian officers enjoy 30-45 days of leave per year, with an additional 15 days of leave for service in hardship areas. The U.S. military has more than 400,000 free housing units, officers are free to

choose the location of their housing, and military personnel and their families can enjoy inexpensive military supply and marketing goods[1].

## **2.2 Social Preferential Treatment**

Social preferential treatment for military personnel mainly includes income tax exemptions on salary income, transportation benefits, and various subsidies and benefits. In Britain and the United States, military personnel can enjoy a certain percentage of income tax deductions for various allowances other than basic salary and for wartime salary income. Military personnel generally enjoy preferential treatment in transportation, for example, Switzerland, Poland and other countries offer half-price discounts for military personnel on airline tickets and bus and boat tickets. Some countries also provide many welfare subsidies for military officers for weddings and funerals, childbirth, children, moving, etc.[2]

## **2.3 Comfort and Compensation**

The comfort and compensation arrangement for casualties is an important part of military security. In the United States, in addition to a lump-sum pension, survivors of servicemen who die on duty are entitled to lifetime survivor's pension benefits according to their rank. Servicemen who are disabled on duty are entitled to benefits in the areas of living, health care and employment according to their degree of disability[3]. For example, servicemen with a disability rating of 30% or more are eligible for retirement treatment, and those with a disability rating less than 30% are eligible for discharge from the military. Disabled servicemen and their families receive monthly disability payments, disability allowances or living allowances according to their disability rating. In Germany, Orphans also receive an orphan's pension of 12% of the deceased's income if one parent is alive, and 20% of the deceased's income if both parents are deceased. In the case of a work-related death, the orphan's pension can be up to 30% of the deceased's income.

## **2.4 Employment Placement and Promotion**

The employment placement of military personnel after retirement is the focus of military security policies of various countries. The U.S. Army has established retirement policies for veterans, which allows

non-commissioned officers to retire as veterans and receive monthly pensions after 20 years of service, and discharged soldiers with less than 20 years of service can receive a one-time military severance pay and re-employment assistance services. To solve the employment problem of veterans, the U.S. government has set up veterans affairs departments and military family support centers to provide veterans with assistance in job placement, housing, education and other areas, and outstanding veterans can enjoy priority employment policies. German military establishes the employment promotion service department to provide education counseling and training helping veterans back to occupation market[4]. Russia has a policy of allocating jobs for retired military officers, while India reserves vacant positions of security officers and administrative officers in government departments and the private sector for the retired military officers.

## **2.5 Military Insurance**

There are many types of military insurance, including pension insurance, medical insurance, casualty insurance, and unemployment insurance, and etc. The expenditure of the insurance is paid by the government, the military, the social pooling fund or individuals. The Swiss government has set up a special military insurance bank to provide insurance services for military personnel in health, life, and accidental injury. In Russia, 2% of the annual defense budget fund is used to fully pay military pension insurance premiums. In Canada, the government and individuals bear 85% and 15% of the servicemen disability insurance respectively. Military insurance premiums and conditions usually enjoy preferential policies, and the amount of compensation received by military personnel is often higher than that of local personnel. China promulgated the Military Insurance Law in 2012 and established a sound social security system for military personnel composed of preferential treatment, retirement and resettlement, and military insurance[5].

## **3. The Development of Athletes Social Security System in China**

In China, athletes are a special group of talents indispensable to the development of sports, especially the development of competitive sports. They have been engaged in arduous training for a long time, endured injuries and

illnesses, made tremendous efforts and sacrifices for the development of sports, and often face livelihood problems after retirement.<sup>[6]</sup> Based on the characteristics such as high work intensity, high risk of injury, and high difficulty in career transition, athletes and military personnel are highly similar. Therefore, the construction of China's athletes' social security system can draw on the successful practices of the military social security system.

In 1951, the "Regulations on Labor Insurance of the People's Republic of China" was introduced, which clearly provided basic old-age, medical, and work-related injury insurance for athletes. In 1980, the General Administration of Sport issued the "Provisions on Disability Insurance for National Team Athletes", providing a basis for athletes' disability insurance. In 2001, the General Administration of Sport issued the "Opinions on Further Improving the Settlement of Retired Athletes", providing guidance for the settlement of retired athletes. In 2006, the "Notice on Further Strengthening Social Security Work for Athletes" first explicitly included athletes with institutional posts into the local social insurance system, requiring the establishment of social security files, standardization of social security relationship transfer procedures, and coverage of old-age, unemployment, and work-related injury insurance. In 2010, the "Guiding Opinions on Further Improving the Security Work for National Excellent Athletes" proposed to promote the system of career transition transition period, provide employment training and academic education support for retired athletes, strengthen the connection of social security relationships, and avoid security "vacation periods". In 2017, the General Administration of Sport issued the "Key Points of Athlete Security Work in 2017", mainly proposing: to closely integrate with the process of improving the social security system, continue to solidly do a good job in connecting athlete security and social security, fully implement athletes' old-age insurance benefits; continuously improve the athlete career counseling system, continue to carry out athlete employment service projects, cultivate the "Internet +" thinking, and do a good job in comprehensive service security work to build and improve the long-term mechanism for athlete security. In 2022, the revised "Sports Law of the People's Republic of China" added

Articles 44, 45, and 90, strengthening athletes' right to education, registration choice rights, and disability insurance system, and expanding the subjects responsible for social security. In 2023, the "Opinions on Further Improving the Security Work for National Excellent Athletes" proposed to refine employment assistance measures for retired athletes, link social security subsidies with vocational skills training, and encourage localities to set up athlete care funds. Currently, China's sports and social security system has formed a security framework with local social insurance as the foundation and career transition support as a supplement.<sup>[7]</sup> In practice, China's athletes' social security system still faces many problems and challenges. The main problems currently faced include: low legal status of the athletes' social security system, imperfect athletes' social security system, and weak implementation of the system. The main supporting force for athletes' social security is the government, lacking a multi-dimensional support system. The increasing pressure of athletes' retirement resettlement has made administrative employment resettlement unable to effectively solve the problem of athletes' re-employment after retirement. The diversified needs of athletes for social security have not been effectively met. Given the high similarity between athletes' and military professions, drawing lessons from the successful practice of the military social security system can further improve China's athletes' social security system.

#### **4. The Construction of Social Security System for Athletes in China: Use for Reference of Military Social Security Practices**

Since the promulgation of 'the Opinions on Further Improving the Employment and Resettlement Work of Retired Athletes'(2002) and 'the Notice on Further Strengthening the Social Security Work of Athletes'(2006), Chinese government has attached great importance to athletes' social security work, and has now initially established a social security system for athletes, including social insurance, career counseling, educational subsidies, employment placement and special assistance. However, the problems of retired athletes' lack of medical treatment for injuries and diseases, employment difficulties and poverty are still relatively serious. Drawing on the successful

practice of military social security system, it is of more important practical significance to improve the athletes' social security system and its functions in China.

#### **4.1 Establish and Improve the Laws and Regulations of Athletes' Social Security**

A perfect social security system for military personnel provides strong support for the military rights and interests protection and the military construction. Take the U.S. military social security as an example, the United States has built a fairly complete system of social security laws and regulations for its military personnel, such as the Veterans Bill of Rights, the Veterans' Preference Act of 1944, and Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, which make extremely detailed provisions for the occupation welfare, preferential treatment, employment and resettlement of military personnel. Athletes have made significant contributions to the development of competitive sports in China, and the establishment of a sound social security system for athletes is an important component of the construction of a leading sporting nation. At present, the social security system of athletes in China is still in the stage of establishment and improvement. The social security system of athletes only appears in the form of departmental regulations and rules, and has not been clearly incorporated into the framework of China's social security regulations. Therefore, the legal status of the social security system of athletes is not high. The social security system of athletes is not perfect and the implementation of the system is weak. Currently, the current rules and regulations of athletes' social security should be improved as soon as possible, and special laws and regulations on athletes' pension, medical and disability protection should be established. Athletes' social security should be brought into the legal track, so that athletes' social security affairs have the effective laws and regulations to go by.[8]

#### **4.2 Strengthen the Collaboration between Government, Society (Enterprises) and Individuals in Athletes' Social Security**

Multi-cooperation in social security has become an important path for countries to reduce the pressure of government social security and enhance the power of social security support[9]. Even in countries with welfare social security

system, the responsibility of social security is being transferred to society and individuals. Along with the marketization and professionalization of sports and the professionalization and specialization of athletes, the social security system for athletes in China should be built within the framework of a multidimensional structure of government, society/enterprises and individuals. The society/enterprises can give more supports of resources for athletes' pension security, medical security and employment security. The professionalization and marketization of sports provide the possibility and necessity for the society/enterprises to take more responsibility for social security and become a powerful support for athletes' security. The long-standing administrative management system has weakened the awareness of athletes' social security responsibility. With the reform of sports management system, individual athletes, as the main beneficiaries of social security, should take more responsibility for social security.

#### **4.3 Establish Positive Social Security for Athletes through Employment Policy**

The social security is transitioning from passive security to active security. Providing employment security is considered to be the fundamental solution to social security problems.[10] The career transition of athletes is a major issue in the social security system of athletes in China, which is related to the sustainable development of competitive sports in China. The increasing pressure of athletes' retirement and employment placement has prompted China's athletes' employment security to gradually move from "administrative employment placement" to the employment security system mainly composed of "administrative employment placement", "financial compensation and monetary placement", "continuing education placement" and "career counseling". Drawing on the practical experience of military social security construction, in order to promote the employment of retired athletes, in the aspect of administrative employment placement, the government can include private enterprises into the administrative employment placement channels for retired athletes through measures such as tax exemptions and policy preferences. In terms of encouraging retired athletes to start



their own business, the government can consider providing start-up capital, low-interest or subsidized credit support for retired athletes to start their own business.

#### **4.4 Construct the Demand-Oriented Social Security for Athletes**

In China, due to the special sports management system, athletes, as a special group of people, have different social security needs from those of the general population. For example, athletes are prone to injuries in training and competition, and athletes have a strong demand for medical and disability security in service and after retirement. Athletes' educational level is comparatively low, so athletes have a greater need for education during the transition period and after retirement. The employability of athletes is relatively weak, and athletes have a great need for employment security. Therefore, the construction of social security for athletes should start from the needs of athletes and take Chinese realities into consideration to build a comprehensive and effective athlete protection system that meets the needs of athletes.

#### **4.5 Develop Various Kinds of Commercial Insurance for Athletes**

In addition to the basic social insurance, developing various kinds of commercial insurance can provide more comprehensive protection services. Take U.S. military insurance as an example, in addition to basic social insurance, there are various types of life insurance, disability insurance, education endowment insurance, war risk insurance, loan insurance and other types of commercial insurance. At present, the social security of athletes in China is mainly based on traditional social insurance, and commercial insurance is still relatively lacking. In order to achieve more comprehensive protection for athletes, the government and relevant departments and insurance companies can specifically design life insurance, medical insurance, disability insurance, education insurance, unemployment insurance, retirement insurance, etc. for athletes according to their special conditions, so as to provide athletes with a commercial insurance package covering health, medical care, education, employment, retirement, etc.

#### **4.6 Strengthen the Service and Support for Athletes' Social Security**

Due to the diversity of social security needs, current social security has more service and support functions, such as medical care, education and training, etc. In view of the diversity of athletes' social security needs, Chinese athletes' social security needs to add more services and support for athletes' employment, education and medical care in addition to the traditional economic security functions, and strengthen the security for athletes' employment recommendation, vocational education, medical care and disability nursing. In addition, the period of certain securities can be extended for athletes beyond retirement. For example, like U.S. military disability security, the lifelong medical and disability nursing securities can be provided for athletes according to their medical and disability rating, so as to effectively solve athletes' worries.

#### **5. Conclusion**

As an occupation, athletes and military personnel are highly similar based on the characteristics of high work intensity, high risk of injury, and high difficulty in career transition. The successful practices of the military social security system can be a good reference for the construction of China's athletes' social security system. Some effective measures are put forwards on establishing and improving the laws and regulations of athletes' social security, strengthening the collaboration between government, society (enterprises) and individuals in athletes' social security, establishing positive social security for athletes through employment policy, constructing the demand-oriented social security for athletes, developing various kinds of commercial insurance for athletes, and strengthening the service and support for athletes' social security. Further studies should be focused on the effectiveness of athletes' social security system, based on the multi-case analysis.

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