

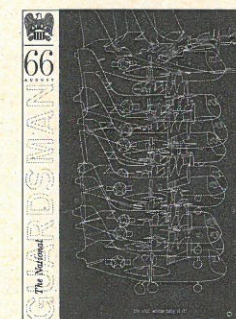
GUARDSMAN

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Up, Up, and Away—It's the VTOL—the promise of the aerial future.

MILITARY leaders in Washington and Saigon are speaking with greater optimism and confidence these days. They are suggesting that the darkest days are past, that while the frustrating conflict in South Viet Nam still is far from being won, the odds have shifted to our side. Through our buildup of power in Viet Nam and at home, we have gained the initiative.

This is an appropriate juncture, then, to re-examine the numerous contributions made by the Reserve forces, and by the National Guard in particular, and to assess the implications of our performance for the future.

Three points need to be stressed:

First, by reason of a high degree of military effectiveness achieved prior to the beginning of the buildup, many Guard units were able to contribute *directly and importantly* to the American military effort right from the beginning, even though they remained in a peacetime, unmobilized status. This is typified by the Air Guard's heavy transport Squadrons, whose crews have become "commuters" to the war zone, hauling priority military cargo to Viet Nam and other overseas bases on a parttime basis while continuing to pursue their normal civilian careers.

Second, by adjusting their training programs in every conceivable way, other units have been able to take over a host of minor responsibilities from overburdened Active Army and Air Force complements here at home. This has released many men from the Active forces for more critical duties overseas. Guard units have been able to do this because of the intensive effort they have made in recent years to increase their year-around operational competence.

Third, and most significant of all, they have created a powerful striking force, well-trained and proficient, to serve as a reconstituted Strategic Reserve in case of need, and they have done this at home stations, without the disruptive consequences of a mobilization.

Today, in its so-called "beef broth" units, the Air National Guard can muster a potent jet strike force of 13 highly ready Groups—fighters, reconnaissance and radar control elements—and it can have them at their bases, ready to move to a war zone, in days, or in some cases, hours.

By a tremendous outpouring of time and effort, the Army Guard has elevated the combat readiness of three Division forces, six Brigade forces and numerous smaller units to such a high level that they can be mobilized with a mere seven days notice, and prepared for shipment to a combat theater with only a few weeks of intensive post-mobilization training. Contrast this, if you will, with the long, perilous months required to perform a similar task during World War II and the Korean conflict.

No reserve military force in our history has ever attained so high a level of military readiness except by mobilization and fulltime effort!

In performing this feat, Guardsmen in these super-priority units have given the Nation's military leaders a degree of flexibility to deal with the Viet Nam affair which they could have obtained from no other source.

The cost has not been small. Units of lower priority have had to contribute trained manpower, scarce equipment and other assets to the SRF, and thus have been compelled to relinquish much of their own laboriously-acquired readiness. Individual Guardsmen have made heavy personal sacrifices of time, energy and income to make the higher readiness possible. Units assigned to the Selected Reserve Force have trained at a pace which cannot be maintained indefinitely.

But in making these sacrifices, Guardsmen and their fellow Reservists in high priority units have given the nation a critical military margin of safety. Simultaneously, they have demonstrated the validity of a revolutionary new concept of what reserve forces can and must be in this dangerous age.

By their accomplishments, they have added an entirely new dimension to U.S. military power. ♦



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Guard Adds A New Dimension

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