

GUARDSMAN

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Riots in U.S. cities could see helicopter landings of troops in city parks.

THE commencement of a new year is the time to wipe the slate clean and to start fresh, and so it must be with the National Guard.

We suffered disappointment and setback in 1967, and it would be easy to carry our frustrations over into the months ahead. But we likewise registered some notable accomplishments and it is these upon which we must build. With imaginative thinking and positive, aggressive action, we can reinforce the Guard's position as a uniquely American, uniquely effective State-Federal military force.

When we run through the list of problems for which we must find answers, four obvious areas immediately come to mind: public relations and public respect, career status for Technicians, future missions for the Air National Guard, and improvement of our capability in the field of disaster and civil disturbance operations.

The National Guard Association of the United States already is taking the first steps, in close harmony with the States, the National Guard Bureau, and especially qualified Guard officers, to find new and practical solutions to these problems.

Early in December, for instance, the NGAUS brought a panel of public relations professionals to Washington to tackle the urgent job of countering the effects of persistent press criticism. It isn't enough to say that the criticism largely has been inaccurate and undeserved. What matters is that millions of Americans have read and heard the derogatory, often spiteful comments of our detractors. The damage must be undone. The special panel will work with the NGAUS and the NGB public affairs staffers to develop effective counter-measures. Soon, commanders at every level will assist in this critical effort, for it is at the community level that the public image and the underlying reality of the Guard are merged.

We suffered a major setback when the Senate Armed Services Committee unexpectedly decided to delay its consideration of the measure giving Civil Service status to our fulltime Technicians. Last-minute misgivings were voiced about the effect the proposal would have in the always-sensitive area of Federal-State relationships. This, coupled with concern over its complex cost calculation, was enough to push it back to the next Congressional session. The NGAUS already has moved to assemble a task force of knowledgeable officers, to find alternative solutions which will satisfy all the diverse elements whose approval is necessary.

Leading Air Guardsmen, working under NGAUS auspices, won a reprieve for a number of Airlift Squadrons that were pegged for elimination, and thus gave the NGB time to find productive, new missions for most of the threatened units. Now, our Committee on Air National Guard is scheduled to meet, early in the new year, to direct its attention to other mission areas in which a similar threat exists.

Finally, we must reestablish our supremacy in the field that always has been exclusively ours: State disaster and civil disturbance operations. Much of the criticism we received after Detroit was undeserved and poorly reasoned. We moved promptly and aggressively to eliminate the deficiencies that did exist. But much remains to be done if we are to be fully prepared for any new outbreaks. In this, the Guard and the States must take the initiative.

Our problems are numerous and complex, but we can and will find solutions. That is the Guard way. ♦



JAMES F. CANTWELL
President
National Guard Association
of the United States

A New
 Year...
 A Fresh
 Start