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GUARDSMAN

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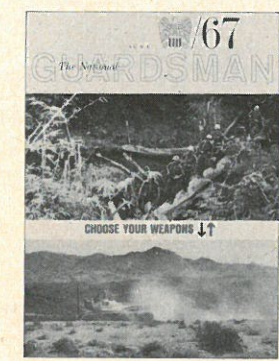
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Who knows what will be the best weapons for another war in another environment? Different geography may impose different requirements.

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MORE than two years after launching its ill-fated proposal to merge, realign and reduce the Army's Reserve Components, the Department of Defense finally is preparing to drop the other shoe.

It is ordering a realignment and reduction *without* a merger, obviously hoping that abandonment of the unpopular merger feature will make its proposal more palatable to Congress.

The new plan, which DoD planned to unveil sometime in late May, contains several aspects which will find favor in the National Guard. It pegs Army Guard strength at the 400,000 level which we regard as necessary if we are to satisfy State as well as Federal emergency requirements. As formulated in Department of Army (and this could undergo alterations by the time final endorsement is given), it allots all combat and combat-support units to the Army National Guard, thus perpetuating a Guard tradition of long standing.

Furthermore, it sets the manning level of all units at 90 or 100 percent—full TOE strength for the SRF, 90 percent for all others. This level of manning admittedly is difficult to maintain but it is one that enhances our ability to meet short-notice deployment schedules.

Finally, realignment from the first has presupposed a fuller measure of material support—equipment, funds, Technicians, etc.—than that to which we have had to accommodate ourselves in the past.

On the other hand, the new plan contains several bitter pills for Guardsmen to swallow.

It dooms 15 of the Guard's remaining 23 combat Divisions to extinction, along with the teamwork, experience, traditions, *esprit de corps* and invaluable command-staff relationships which they have developed in years of working together.

It will end the Guard careers of at least 4,500 officers, perhaps more, right at a time when the need for leaders is greatest. In addition, it may leave empty armories in some undetermined number of American communities, despite efforts to place a unit in every town where one now exists. This is brought about by the net loss of at least 1,000 units from the Guard for which the plan calls.

Thoughtful Guardsmen are not comforted by Defense assurance that removal of 15 Divisions from the active rolls will not weaken America's defenses. Even conceding that massed land warfare of the World War II type is the least likely of the contingencies for which we must be prepared, we wonder what kind of hat the Department of Defense will pull new Divisions out of, if, for example, the Viet Nam conflict spreads into Laos or Thailand—or Communist China decides to commit troops to the Southeast Asian arena—or if either of the Communist giants decides to provoke new Viet Nam-type outbreaks.

Thus, realignment has its plusses and minuses. But, however much we would like DoD to forget the minus factors and retain only those which we favor, we cannot let ourselves become the victims of wishful thinking. We must remind ourselves of two inescapable points:

First, some version of the realignment plan inevitably will be implemented. DoD is obdurate in its intention of reorganizing the Reserve Components along lines that blend with its strategic plans, and Congress has shown no inclination to interfere with force structure determinations, beyond forbidding a merger.

Second, in an age when changes in strategy and weaponry are having a revolutionary impact, the National Guard cannot hope to be exempt from the effects of these changes.

We can voice our opinions. We can exert our influence, when conscience tells us to. We can even fight to the bitter end to avoid unwanted change. But the power of decision rests with others. ♦



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National Guard Association
of the United States

Defense Drops The Other Shoe