



THE GAP BETWEEN PLANS AND ACTUALITY

IT never would make a "best-seller" list. It's "heavy," it lacks a flashy dust-jacket, and it contains no illustrations. But, for the man who's interested in gaining a comprehension of defense problems in the Space Age, the printed statement of Secretary Robert S. McNamara to the House Armed Services Committee on "The Fiscal Year 1964-68 Defense Program and 1964 Defense Budget" is highly-informative and illuminating.

The reader who will take the time to pore over its 152 pages of text and nine supporting financial tables will get a comprehension of the unbelievably vast number and variety of programs which make up an enormously complicated and costly package. He will gain sympathy for any Secretary up against the superhuman task of making momentous decisions between and among programs.

But the statement is not complete in itself. The program it sets out is one thing. The actual product is another. Unfortunately, there is an enormous gap between the two—at least for the Army Guard and the Air Guard.

True, in its context of a five-year period, the outlook is bright and hopeful. But Guardsmen have been told of other pie-in-the-sky programs, for years and years, while confronted with harsh reality. And this is so once more.

IT makes superficially pleasant reading to find that plans call for an influx of modern equipment for the Active Army, of which unspecified quantities of some specific items will be pegged for "a portion of" the Guard's high-priority organizations.

But scant solace is offered when one learns that the schedule being worked-on at the Indian level in the Pentagon is geared to deliveries in 1965 and later. And that this can be upset by another emergency cry for materiel aid to India, Viet Nam, or who-knows-where.

It's nice to know that the "realignment" and discard of four Divisions supposedly is balanced by elevation of six Divisions among those remaining, to an "elite" status, hopefully capable of deployment in a matter of weeks.

But it's disquieting to learn that even those priority Divisions are to be bob-tailed—each of them short of Aviation or HONEST JOHN units. It's even more cause for concern, to learn that justification for the bob-tailing is lack of aircraft and missiles. And that it's impractical to count on getting the use of Active Army aircraft for training once in a while.

It doesn't boost morale to be told that the gap between "haves" and "have-nots" is to be broadened by a redistribution of what minimal materiel already is on hand, taking from "low-priority" units to fatten-up the "high-priority" outfits.

It makes a good public impression to justify reorganization on the basis of creating self-propelled Artillery Battalions in place of "obsolete" towed Battalions. But it's hard to reconcile that against the knowledge that many of the Guard's newly-designated "Self-Propelled" outfits must continue to tow their WW II model pieces behind "six-bys."

It's quite a compliment—and well-earned by performance in the Berlin Crisis—to know of the Defense Dept's reliance upon the Air National Guard. But Guardsmen who left their craft behind in Europe for the Active AF wonder how they're to respond if the whistle blows in the next 18 months—the earliest estimated time until they start getting replacement jets.

It makes one wonder what happens to plans for higher training levels, and four- to eight-weeks readiness for deployment, when things like this happen: Service school funds cut by \$4,000,000 in the face of reorganization and its consequent re-training requirements; no funds provided for "Van Fleet Plan" weekend staff sessions on mobilization planning; an elaborate 25-meter smallarms range program laid-on—without money to support it.

FACTS such as these have to be fitted between the lines of the Secretary's statement and the numerous Madison Avenue-style press releases periodically issued through DoD, in order to gain a balanced appraisal of the actual situation.

They need to be known in order to avoid letting ourselves—and Congress, and the public in general—in for a nasty surprise in the event of another major emergency. They need to be known in order to support efforts to obtain the funds necessary to remedy weaknesses which otherwise might be camouflaged behind catch-phrases indicating combat-readiness.

We're all for a fully-adequate Defense program for the long haul. But we also are for a thorough knowledge of hard facts—not glib Pentagon press releases—upon which to base our efforts toward closing the gap between plans and actuality.

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CONTENTS

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MARCH, 1963

EDITORIAL Inside Front Cover

SITUATION REPORT:

- THE NATIONAL GUARD: HOW IT FITS INTO "THE BIG PICTURE" 2
- The Army National Guard in "The Big Picture" 6
- The Air National Guard in "The Big Picture" 10

ARTICLES:

- "IT'S NO SECRET" 14
- Prize-winning recruiting articles
- "GET FIT—STAY FIT!" 20
- CALIFORNIANS FLY "GIFT LIFT" BELOW EQUATOR 22
- "THE BUREAU'S" POINT OF VIEW 23
- NGB's comments on General Conference Resolutions
- EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES? LOOK IN THE TOY STORES! 30

FEATURES:

- You Ought to Know . . . 13
- Pentagon Paragraphs . . 27
- Washington Report 17
- Posting the Guard 28

DEAR GUARDSMEN: We hate to think how long ago this was, but, anyway, in our younger days our outfit had what was known as "The Backbone Club." Members were the NCO's and the name stemmed from the fact that the noncoms were regarded as the backbone of the unit—and they still are, by anyone who has the perception to recognize the fact. This semi-formal, quasi-official organization sparked many a constructive idea for the good of the Regiment, and it contributed immeasurably to the cultivation and maintenance of high esprit.

The general idea, if not the name, is carried on today in some units, as is proven by a letter we received recently from SSgt Clyde E. Chapman, President of the NCO Club of Btry B, 2d AW Bn (SP), 263d Arty, in Easley, SC. He sent us a check covering 20 subscriptions to "THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN," adding that the Board of Directors had voted to include our magazine as one of the benefits of membership in the Club. "We felt that our members needed this in order to stay abreast of happenings in the National Guard," Sgt Chapman added.

That's a point on which we heartily agree, and we sincerely welcome Sgt Chapman and his comrades to our circle of dedicated readers. We're sure they won't mind at all—and neither will we—if other units imitate their good example.

OUR COVER: If you haven't already seen it, you will, on posters, car cards, etc.—the National Guard Bureau's representation of kinds of Guardsmen who exemplify the recruiting slogan: "The Home Team Is Ready!"