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The Guard's Disaster Role

INCREASING pressure on the Army and Air National Guard to attain higher levels of mobilization-readiness tend to push further into the background the importance of the National Guard as a force available to the States to assist in natural disasters and civil disturbances.

The splendid service of the Alaska National Guard following the devastating earthquakes in that State some weeks ago served to highlight the important service the National Guard is trained and equipped to render in any State. It was pointed-up by airlift and other assistance rendered by elements of the Guard in sister States. We do not, of course, overlook the assistance of the Active Services in that emergency, and I am sure the citizens of Alaska appreciate the efficient and speedy response of the Army and Air Force in the recovery mission. Indeed, the officials and citizens in that stricken area were fortunate that Active Forces were based in the immediate vicinity and readily available to help. This is not the situation in the majority of States.

I always have been concerned that the Department of Defense gives too little consideration to the States' requirements for their National Guard.

In recent months alone, the National Guard, as is pointed out in an article elsewhere in this issue, was called in a number of States to direct and carry out major rescue operations. Families were evacuated from flooded areas in Central and Southern Ohio and in the Ohio Valley region of Kentucky. Citizens were rescued from dangerous snow drifts in Texas and New Mexico. In addition to its rescue work, the National Guard provided local security against looting and assisted in traffic control, and in Texas provided emergency electrical power for some installations at Sheppard Air Force Base.

Many are reluctant to accept the dual status of the National Guard, questioning the ability of State military forces to serve effectively as an immediate reserve for the Nation's Active military forces. To those of us in the National Guard, of course, the dual status is meaningful.

The highest officials have placed great stress upon military assistance to Civil Defense being given equal priority with the combat role of all of the Military Services—Regular, Guard and Reserve. They have made Civil Defense a mandatory part of training programs. Time after time, the National Guard has demonstrated an operational rather than merely a classroom knowledge of what to do in disasters—and this without diminishing its capability of fulfilling its combat mission.

We repeatedly have proved our ability to provide the Army and the Air Force with effective augmentation, while at the same time rendering the kind of critical service that frequently is required in virtually every State.

GUARDSMAN

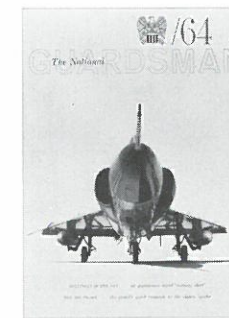


The National

May XVIII 5

CONTENTS

- SENTINELS OF THE SKY 2
Air Guard jets stand watch around the clock, poised to detect, intercept, identify, destroy, as part of NORAD's air defense force.
- THE BIG SHAKE 8
Guardsmen swing into action promptly to succor victims of catastrophic Alaska earthquake.
- DISASTER! THE GUARD AGAINST THE ELEMENTS 12
For tornado, flood and blizzard, Guardsmen turn out to aid their fellow citizens in Texas, New Mexico, Ohio, Kentucky.
- DOES THE AIR FORCE HAVE A FUTURE? 16
Emphatically "Yes," but for the foreseeable future, it will be rooted firmly to the ground, not in deep space, hints "Project Forecast."
- THE NATIONAL GUARD IN THE
NATION'S STRATEGY 22
As part of the quick-response "fire brigade," and as backup, the Army Guard has a firm and vital place in defense strategy.
- THE 22-DIVISION FORCE INSIDE BACK COVER
Are units of the low-priority "Reinforcing Reserve" being under-valued in current planning?



Air Guard pilots man sleek F102s, like the one on our cover, around the clock as a part of the strike force which would counter enemy attack on North America. See "Sentinels of The Sky" on Page 2.

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