

The President's Report to the 89th General Conference



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BY any measure, the past year again has been a time of trial and challenge for the National Guard. It has been a year of worthwhile accomplishment, but just as surely a period of frustrations and problems. As I deliver this annual report, I find that my feelings reflect both the accomplishments and the frustrations, for they are feelings of pride mixed with resentment, satisfaction intermingled with impatience.

I am proud because you and the National Guardsmen whom you represent have performed all the difficult tasks assigned you, and overcome difficult problems, in such a magnificent manner. Your accomplishments are a source of deep satisfaction to all of us who represent the Guard in Washington.

In the SRF and the "Beef Broth" force, you have produced the most effective Reserve Force this Nation has ever seen. In the less-favored, lower-priority units, you have worked training miracles with the meager resources placed at your disposal. In virtually every instance, you have produced results that have far exceeded anything that might have been reasonably expected.

National Guardsmen have labored as never before to produce, in their units, a capability for quick mobilization and rapid deployment overseas if needed. Concurrently, we have been confronted by a frightening rise in violence and turmoil in many American cities. Together, these developments have placed unprecedented burdens and responsibilities on Guardsmen at every level. To satisfy these new and heavier responsibilities, Guardsmen have expended prodigious quantities of time and energy and thought. Only Guardsmen themselves can appreciate the price they have had to pay, as individuals and citizens, for this surge of effort. I'm sorry to say I can't believe that people in important places have aggressively made these facts known.

Thus, I cannot help but feel resentful and impatient because the National Guard has not always received the recognition it deserved, and because it frequently has found its efforts impeded by unnecessary obstacles, unfair and unjust criticism.

In the Army Guard, for example, we have been saddled with the fruitless labors and the uncertainties of an on-again, off-again reorganization, in which the backstage maneuvering has perplexed and confused us. In the Air Guard, we have hauled cargo all over the world for MAC, furnished a sizeable share of the Air Defense force, and prepared ourselves to serve as an instant backup for TAC. Yet even as the Air Force was praising us for these accomplishments, it was telling us in the same breath that many of our units would be eliminated in the coming decade and others might be shoved off into a limbo which they call the "Associate Unit Concept."

REALIGNMENT

As I make my report to you, I hope you will listen, not as Army Guardsmen or Air Guardsmen, but only as Guardsmen, for the difficulties that beset the Army Guard today contain within them the seeds of trouble for the Air Guard tomorrow, and vice versa.

First, there is realignment. Nearly three years ago, we accepted, not without reluctance and some reservations, the merger/realignment proposal. None of us liked that part of the plan which called for elimination of 15 of our Divisions, but we went along with it because we saw no way to cut through the Defense Department's unyielding insistence that the Divisions be deactivated. For nearly 10 years pressure

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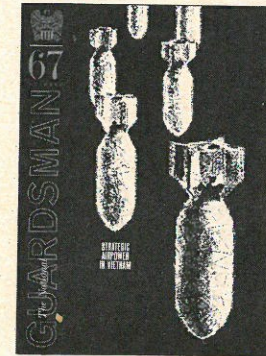


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