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THE CHALLENGE WE FACE

PLANS for realignment of the Army's Reserve Forces took another long step forward in March when the Department of the Army handed each State Adjutant General a list of the units it is offering his State in the new all-Guard structure.

Likewise in March, the Preparedness Investigation Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee opened public hearings on the realignment proposal as a first step toward full Congressional consideration of the plan. Sometime in April, it has been indicated, a subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee will conduct similar hearings.

National Guard commanders cannot anticipate the outcome of these important hearings, or make any hard-and-fast assumptions about their effect on the overall reorganization proposal. They *must* assume, however, that: (1) An extensive reorganization will take place in the upcoming Fiscal Year; (2) It will affect virtually every unit and every individual in the Army National Guard to greater or lesser extent; (3) Both the prestige of the Guard, and the military effectiveness of its units, will directly reflect, for a long time to come, the caliber of the leadership which officers and non-commissioned officers provide during this period of transition.

The last-stated assumption may very well be the most important of the three, and most certainly it is the one which will have the most direct and personal significance for individual Guardsmen who wear the stripes and ornaments of leadership.

It is upon their shoulders, for example, that will fall the burden of giving full and accurate explanations of the realignment to each and every National Guardsman, and to Army Reservists who enter the Guard as the result of the proposed reorganization. These have been discussed in earlier issues of "THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN," and will be covered in more specific detail in briefing material being prepared for distribution at the appropriate time.

An understanding of the goals of the plan, and of its anticipated effects, by Guardsmen at every level, is essential if we are to maintain an effective combat posture through, and beyond, the period of transition. In turn, maintenance of a high degree of combat-readiness throughout the changeover, and elevation of Guard effectiveness to an even higher level in the wake of the reorganization, are major aims of the entire proposal.

Never in our history have Reserve Forces been assigned so critical a role in U.S. defense plans. Many of our organizations already are components of the force which would constitute this nation's initial response to a threat, and all of them, under the reorganization plan, will be a part of that rapidly deployable force. This is the basis for the reorganization itself, and likewise it is the factor which compels us to retain the fullest possible measure of readiness despite the debilitating effects that normally accompany major realignments.

In the process of adapting our structure to mission requirements envisioned by current contingency war plans, many fine organizations will disappear while others will take on forms at variance with missions they have come to regard as their right by tradition. Unless the full meaning of the reorganization is understood by the officers and men of such units, they will have a natural tendency to feel resentful. Unless their own individual importance as trained officers and soldiers is sufficiently impressed upon them, their attitude can quickly become one of "Who cares?" The resultant loss of morale and of *esprit d'corps* can, in a few weeks, dissipate the hard work of years.

Especially at annual field training will the tendency to "slack off" be an ever-present threat, not just to the continued combat-readiness of organizations as they now exist, but to the Guard's ability to organize new units which possess some degree of operational effectiveness right from the moment of their birth.

This, as much as the complexities of the reorganization itself, is the challenge that Guard leaders now have. ♦



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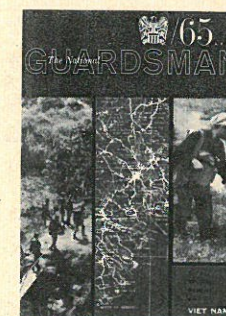
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