

The Picture Brightens

A month ago, the prospects looked bleak. Force structure cuts had been announced for both the Army National Guard and Air National Guard, and more were in the offing. Hopes of averting the inactivation of many units appeared dim.

Today, the picture is a great deal brighter, thanks to some discerning Congressmen who have insisted that Department of Defense provide better justification for the inactivations than a mere statement that "they no longer are required." Thanks also go to the energetic efforts of Guardsmen in many States who have exerted themselves to explain the full impact and significance of the proposed reductions to National, State and community officials.

Pentagon witnesses at manpower and posture hearings on Capitol Hill have met a barrage of probing questions from members of the Armed Services Committees. Are force reductions warranted in the face of steadily-growing Soviet military power? Wouldn't it be wiser to convert any outmoded Guard units to new and essential missions rather than to abolish them outright? Why cut the component that has so dramatically demonstrated its ability to maintain high manning levels in an adverse environment?

Opposition to the proposed cuts also has commenced to mount among Governors, State Legislatures, Mayors and citizens' groups. They are expressing deep concern over the loss of not only a valuable National defense asset, but of a significant capability to deal with major disasters and other emergencies at State and local level.

A large group of State Governors comprising the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety of the National Governors' Conference endorsed a resolution challenging the proposed cuts. They also directed that a delegation of Governors call on Vice President Gerald Ford to state their case against any Guard force structure or strength cuts. Gov. David Hall of Oklahoma, Chairman of the National Guard Subcommittee, was scheduled to testify before the House Armed Services Committee posture hearings alongside Guard witnesses.

Several of NGAUS' sister organizations likewise have spoken out forcefully in opposition to the Defense proposals, among them the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Association of the United States Army, and the Air Force Association.

The case being made by all opposition elements against further reductions in U.S. military strength in general, and against cuts in the National Guard and Reserves in particular, is similar to our own stand. It rests on three basic arguments:

—That there has been no change on the international scene, as yet, to warrant further unilateral reductions in U.S. military forces.

—That the inactivation of experienced, time-tested National Guard units represents the wastage of a valuable National defense asset that it took years of laborious effort, and millions of U.S. tax dollars, to create.

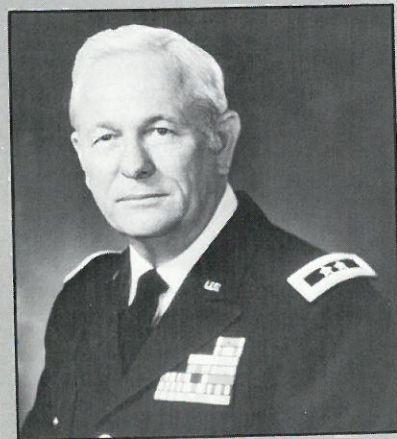
—That it makes a great deal more sense to convert units that have become outmoded to new and essential missions than it does to just abolish them.

And there are important, necessary missions in which such units can make themselves proficient, quickly and at relatively low cost.

On the Air side, for example, Air Defense Interceptor units have been earmarked for inactivation, while there still is an unfilled Joint Chiefs of Staff requirement for additional Tactical Fighter and Tactical Transport Squadrons, not to mention a number of other missions the Guard can perform economically and well.

On the Army side, brains are being racked on the Army staff to find ways to create three new combat Divisions within resources currently available. Some of the combat elements within those Divisions could be provided easily by conversion of existing Army Guard units no longer required by contingency plans.

Today, the message is getting through to Defense leaders loud and clear. It's coming from a variety of powerful, credible sources. Its gist is: Don't discard proven assets so precipitously! Instead, give them missions that will add to, rather than subtract from, America's defense capability. ♦



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The United States

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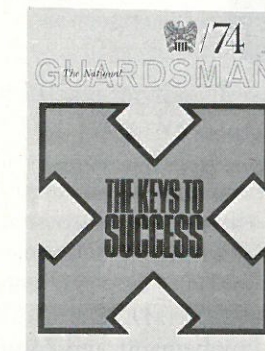
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The spread of "recruiting fever" to the four winds is symbolized by this month's front cover, a fitting introduction to a look at how several States turned recruiting failure into success.

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