

Major General William E. Ingram, President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### HOW NOT TO CUT ARMY FORCE STRUCTURE

Given the political climate in the nation's capital and in the country at large, it seems inevitable that Congress will refuse to go along with the levels of defense spending proposed by President Reagan in his budget. This will not mean an actual "cut" in defense spending, since almost all federal spending increases every year. What it will mean, however, is that choices will have to be made at the Department of Defense and in Congress about defense priorities.

Such choices are difficult. They are not made easier, either, by the pressures on harassed congressmen from their constituents and from various special interest groups on a wide variety of issues, a strong national defense being only one of them.

Former members of the joint chiefs of staff have noted that this maelstrom of issues and pressures sometimes forces those concerned with how to spend defense dollars to oversimplify. These decision-makers allocate the money to the squeaky wheel rather than seriously evaluate how to achieve the best defense for the dollar; i.e., what mix of forces actually offers the best deterrence against the inclinations of our enemies.

So it is with "cutting" defense. To put it simply, there are three ways to save money in the military. One is to not buy hardware. There are two problems with this approach, leaving aside the fact that modernization and fully equipped units are needed. One is that procurement tends to occur over a period of years, so that dollars saved in any one fiscal year are modest. Second, stretching out procurement doesn't really save money in the long run; it actually wastes money. If you build two F-15s a month, it is almost like custom building them. If you build eight a month, it achieves

assembly-line type economies, the lesson Henry Ford taught us eight decades ago with the automobile.

A second way to save defense money is to cut the operations and maintenance (O&M) accounts. This was done with some frequency during the early and mid-70s. The joint chiefs of staff strongly rebelled against the O&M cuts of several years ago on the grounds that when operations money is cut it results in units that can't train in the field, planes that can't fly and ships that can't steam since there is no money for fuel. It also means that training ammunition, growing ever more expensive, has to be cut to the bone.

The third way to cut defense spending is by reducing the size of the force. This is discussed increasingly on Capitol Hill. Last year, when it appeared Congress might cut the end-strength of the Army, a planning conference generated a proposal to cut strength in the active force, placing those spaces in the Guard and Reserve. No doubt about it, cutting 21,000 persons from the full-time military would save big money in a hurry. But that does not mean, based on the strength of that argument by itself, it is a very good idea. The 24-division Army force structure, 16-minus active and eight-plus Army Guard, was developed for good reasons. Force structure is developed in response to what is perceived as the requirements for military forces in various contingencies.

This year's impending budget actions may force Congress to cut military end strength. If this occurs the Army may be forced to make changes in force structure. It is under that contingency that the reserve components should be ready and willing to take on additional force structure.

Which brings us to the "how-to"

aspect of such a decision. There are at least two ways to shift forces from the active component to the Guard. One, the more traditional of the two, is by dealing with battalion and larger-size organizations. Although the Guard and the Army Reserve have separate company-sized units, they typically are specialized combat support or combat service support units and not combat arms units.

This brings us to the second method, the one under consideration by some force planners today. Their scheme would be to deactivate one artillery battery from an active Army artillery battalion and reestablish such a battery attached to a Guard artillery battalion. That battery then would be a "round-out" unit to the active Army element and probably would carry the active unit's letter and number.

There are a couple of things wrong with this approach. First, the Army conducted a test of this concept about a decade ago and found it to be impractical. Let's not repeat that mistake. Second, this is a far cry from the traditional National Guard concept of organizing and training units for mobilization and service as units. Since doctrinally the Guard is to be organized as units, trained as units and sent to war as units, then this proposal has no place in the Guard. It also would jeopardize command and control arrangements. The degree of control the active Army battalion and perhaps brigade or division commander might want to exercise over the Guard unit would, in fact, reduce state control to an illusion, and weaken the Guard's ability to meet requirements imposed by individual states.

Such a means of force structuring is simply not in the best interests of the Total Force.

1878



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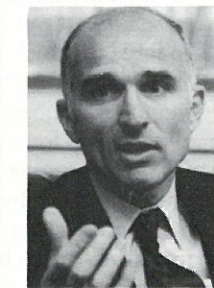
# NATIONAL GUARD

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11



14



20



26

### Features

#### 11 NEW BLACK HAWK ARRIVES

Kentucky Army Guard takes delivery of the first UH-60A Black Hawk utility helicopter for the Guard in Frankfort ceremony.

#### 14 ASSISTANT DoD SECRETARY SPEAKS OUT

Dr. Lawrence J. Korb, assistant secretary of Defense for manpower, reserve affairs and logistics, talks to NATIONAL GUARD about women in the Army, budget issues.

#### 20 RED BOOK SUMMARY

NGAUS' focus in Congress this year will be on state control of the National Guard in peacetime. Equipment procurement remains a top priority.

#### 26 FLOOD, DIOXIN, HURRICANE IWA, VOLCANO

Major natural disasters in Missouri, Louisiana and Hawaii prompted those states' governors to mobilize the Guard for state duty.

### Departments

President's Message	Inside Front Cover
Views from the Field	2
Washington Tie-Line	4
Newsbreaks	6
Guard Stars	9
View from the Hill	10
People	31
Posting the Guard	35
Notebook	40



COVER: A paratrooper of the Army's Jumping Ambassadors bails out over South America from West Virginia Air Guard C-130. The drop was part of Panama rotation mission. Photo: SSgt. Mike Ferrell, 167 TAG, WVANG. Cover Design: Johnson Design Group.

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