



Major General William E. Ingram (Ret.), President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### WHY WE MUST HAVE NEW AIR GUARD FIGHTERS SOON

Unlike the Army Guard, which has only about 70 percent of its authorized equipment, the Air National Guard is fully equipped to the levels indicated in Air Force equipping documents. However, as the results of two recent aerial competitions indicate, this may not be good enough. Further, while all the equipment issued is deployable and capable of war-fighting, a look 10 years down the road indicates the potential exists for serious problems. Let me explain.

In 1980, the Air Force revived its air-to-air competition, WILLIAM TELL. This competition, held at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, involved the hottest fighter units in the Total Air Force. The Air National Guard from California flying F-106s won.

About a year later, in late 1981, the Air Force revived its air-to-air ground competition. This contest, GUNSMOKE, held at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, involved the best of the air-to-ground units in the Total Air Force. Again, the Air National Guard, this time from Colorado, won the competition, flying A-7 attack jets.

However, as two new generations of fighters have come into the Air Force inventory, the Air National Guard has not continued to prosper in these competitions. Two years later the Air Guard and the Air Force again went to Tyndall for WILLIAM TELL '82. Air Guard F-106 units again did well; however, not as well as the active Air Force's F-15 fighter pilots. That's not particularly surprising considering the differences in flying and fighting capability between the F-106, which is still flown by a few Air Force and Air Guard units, and the F-15, which is replacing the F-106 and F-4 as the air-to-air fighter of the future.

The results were similar in GUNSMOKE '83, also held at Nellis (see article, February 1984 NATIONAL GUARD). The 1981 GUNSMOKE winner, the 140th Tactical Fighter Wing from Colorado, re-

turned to Nellis for the competition. In fact, the unit produced a higher score in 1983 in total quality of weapons delivery on target than it had two years earlier. So one might conclude that it actually is better at its mission now than in 1981.

However, this time the 140th didn't even come close to winning; in fact, it finished fourth. Finishing above the 140th were three active Air Force F-16 units. The F-16, a multiple-role fighter that happens to be well-suited to the air-to-ground mission, captured first, second and third places. Again, no surprise. The A-7 is a Vietnam-era aircraft, as is the F-4, while the F-16 is the multiple-role fighter of the future.

The Air Guard has its first squadron of F-16s in South Carolina, and another will be delivered to the Texas Air Guard later this year.

But this is hardly enough for several reasons having nothing to do with winning competitions. It's a question of readiness and warfighting capability. There simply is no comparison between the F-15 and F-16, the fighters of the 1980s and 1990s, and the F-106 and A-7, the fighters of the 1960s and 1970s. Yet, the Air Force is able to procure only a limited number of those fighters each year because of their cost.

In the fiscal year 1984 Defense Budget, the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) was able to influence the submission to the extent that money was added for a 24-aircraft squadron of F-16s for the Air National Guard. This is progress, but more is needed.

If the pilots of the Air National Guard are to survive and prevail on the modern battlefield, they must be equipped with the latest in aircraft technology. We will always have a high-low mix of aircraft, some in the air-to-air role to provide aerial superiority and some in the tactical support role to influence the ground battle through air power. What must be kept

in mind is that this mix must be kept modern.

The A-10 is the most modern aircraft for the ground mission; better suited than the F-4, which fulfilled that role in Vietnam. The F-4 also is capable of the air-to-air mission, but it is not nearly as capable as the F-15. The F-16 is capable of both missions when properly configured. The F-106, on the other hand, is an aging and non-replaceable air-to-air fighter, and neither the Air Guard nor the Air Force can maintain it for many more years.

Even though the F-4 will be with us for quite a few more years, we must begin to make progress towards its replacement. A large number of F-4s were procured during the 1960s. Many of them are in Air Guard units today; more are coming. However, there is a limit to how long they are sustainable or maintainable. The danger is bloc obsolescence in the 1990s if the speed of procurement of F-15s and F-16s is not increased significantly.

Further, to achieve the goal of a 40-wing fighter force by 1988, it will require procurement of 276 fighters a year, compared with the 216 programmed for procurement next year. That is where we in the National Guard can help the Total Force.

The goal should be a Total Air Force capable of gaining and maintaining air superiority while providing close air support to the Army troops on the ground. To do that, we have to insure that the active Air Force, Air Guard and Air Force Reserve, have adequate quantities of the modern types of fighters required to fight and win on the modern battlefield.

To do that, we must accelerate the procurement of modern fighter aircraft for the Total Air Force, wherever they go, so the Air Guard of the 1990s is fully combat capable and so the Total Air Force is fully equipped with the most modern aircraft possible.

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April 1984

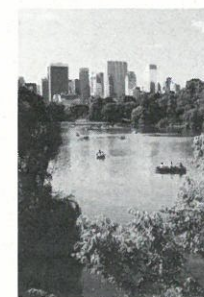
# NATIONAL GUARD

Official publication of the National Guard Association of the United States

April 1984 Volume XXXVIII, Number 4



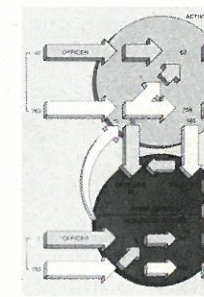
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COVER: The sun sets over the New Mexico landscape while an Air Guardsman climbs a 40-foot Confidence Climb, an event in the Air Force's international security police competition, PEACEKEEPER CHALLENGE '83. Photo, 1Lt. Jean Marie Brawders, Design, Johnson Design Group

NATIONAL GUARD, April 1984. The NATIONAL GUARD Magazine (ISSN 0163-3945) is published monthly, by the National Guard Association of the United States, with editorial and advertising offices at One Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Telephone (202) 789-0031. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 1984 by the National Guard Association of the U.S. All rights reserved. All members of the NGAUS receive NATIONAL GUARD. Nonmember subscriptions: \$4 per year domestic; \$5 per year foreign. Bulk rate for 100 or more copies of one issue to the same address: 25¢ each. Single copies 50¢. The Editor welcomes original articles bearing on national defense, with emphasis on application to or implications for the National Guard. Manuscripts and artwork must be accompanied by return postage; no responsibility is assumed for safe handling. Opinions expressed by authors do not necessarily represent official NGAUS positions or policy. Likewise, publication of advertising cannot be deemed an endorsement thereof by this Association or its members.