



MG Charles M. Kiefner, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE TOTAL FORCE IN THE 1990s

Almost 20 years ago, the changing world situation and pressure to reduce the Defense budget resulted in development of the Total Force Policy. Similar circumstances exist today with the changing geopolitical environment, the growing call for military force reductions and the reality of smaller Defense budgets.

It is time to revisit basic objectives of the original Total Force Concept of then Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. In his August 1970 memo, Secretary Laird stated: "The president has requested reduced expenditures during fiscal year 1971 and extension of these economies into future budgets. Within the Department of Defense (DoD), these economies will require reductions in overall strengths and capabilities of the active forces, and increased reliance on the combat and combat support units of the Guard and Reserve."

After indicating that the service secretaries should provide the necessary resources to balance development of active, Guard and Reserve forces, Secretary Laird went on to say that emphasis will be given to concurrent consideration of the total forces, to determine the most advantageous mix to support national strategy and meet the threat.

We have now come full cycle through the Defense buildup of the early 1980s to constrained budgets and potential drawdowns of the 1990s. Our national defense goal is no different today. We must determine the most advantageous mix of active, Guard and Reserve forces necessary to support national strategy and meet the current and anticipated threats. At no time in recent history has that been a greater challenge than in today's turbulent period—a result of both the evolving threat and the increasing pressure to rapidly decrease the level of Defense budgets.

But developments over the past two decades make it relatively clear that there is no better way to achieve that goal than to continue to nurture

and apply the Total Force Policy. As a low-cost, peacetime deterrent force, the Guard and Reserve cannot be matched. Their readiness and capability as an initial and primary source for augmentation of the active forces, if called, even in emergencies requiring rapid deployment, has been shown in recent events in several areas of the world, including Panama. Twenty years of application of the Total Force Policy has had the intended positive result.

Of course, at this point there are a number of unanswered questions about the future.

With evidence of continued modernization of Soviet strategic nuclear systems, we can assume a continued emphasis on modernization of at least some of the same programs in this country. We also can assume there will be pressure to continue emphasis on research and development of new systems to be able to meet any future threat. At the same time, there are calls for a reduction in production of what many consider redundant and costly high-tech advanced conventional and strategic systems. A partial absorption of budget reductions will most likely fall in these areas.

As a result of anticipated decreasing budget levels in the FY90 Defense Authorization Act, the Congress directed the secretary of Defense to convene a study group to review and make recommendations on the operation, effectiveness and soundness of the Total Force Policy; the assignment of missions to the active, Guard and Reserve components of the armed forces; and the force structure within those components. The final report is due by December 31, 1990.

The National Guard Association believes the DoD study will be the most crucial review of our nation's defense forces since the beginning of the Cold War era. With an increased perception of a changing threat, extended warning times, higher probability of low intensity or limited conflicts and reductions in Defense resources, neither Congress nor the

general public will be satisfied with a simple, fine-tuning of current forces or a token reduction of costs.

At a turbulent time like this, those who are responsible for the defense of our nation want to ensure that sufficient forces are maintained to respond to a possible reversal of the perceived movement toward a lower threat. So it is a difficult time to step back and reevaluate requirements and make finite force decisions. But it is also a time when such decisions must be made—to achieve not only short-term budget savings, but to maintain adequate forces.

The DoD study can accomplish that goal, provided it considers all factors and takes an open-minded look at long-term requirements. While the national defense strategy and the Total Force Policy may need some refinement, they have been successful in bringing us to an apparent time of peace. No doubt, significant force realignments will be undertaken to meet the changing threat. There is little doubt that such realignments and the impact of shrinking budget targets will require changes to the force structure of all the military components. But all actions should recognize the proven success of the defense strategy and Total Force Policy of the past 20 years.

The study is a significant undertaking and the time restriction placed on it may be too severe to accomplish such a comprehensive goal. If necessary, the time restraint should be eased rather than compromise the quality of the final product.

It is time now to capitalize on the lessons learned from 20 years of the Total Force Policy. The DoD study should help to define the least costly, most effective realignment of active, Guard and Reserve forces necessary to provide our nation with an adequate defense through the 1990s and beyond. We have a greater opportunity to realign and improve our Total Force posture than at any time since the beginning of the Cold War. We must make sure we do it right!

National Guard

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Members of the Congress, officers of the National Guard Bureau and members of the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) joined MG Charles M. Kiefner, NGAUS president, and MG Ansel M. Stroud Jr., chairman of the National Guard Memorial Building Committee, in laying the cornerstone for the new Memorial.

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COVER:

Members of the 107th Armored Cavalry Regiment, Ohio Army National Guard, transition train on an M-1 tank during one of the many courses offered at Gowen Field in Boise, Idaho. Photo, Lynda Yezzi. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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