



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT MANNING THE FORCE

The jungle drums of Washington are surely one of the most devastating—and effective—means of transmitting signals ever devised by man. And in these hot, muggy days in the nation's capitol, the message going around where defense issues are studied and debated is that, following a period of "benign indifference", the newborn program of draft registration may be allowed to lapse.

We find a strange dichotomy in all this. On the one hand, there is no doubt of this Administration's dedication to the proposition that the U.S. defense posture must be strengthened. The Reagan Administration, working with the Congress, has committed itself to something like \$1.5 trillion for defense over the next five years.

To field the enhanced force, which is apparently envisioned by the President and his defense advisors, it is said that we will probably see the authorization of four new Army divisions, 150 ships to be added to the fleet and five more Air Force wings.

Since it seems to flow rather easily from the evidence at hand that such an enlarged force would require far more manpower than the all-volunteer force concept has yet been able to produce, it seems sensible to conclude—as many superficial observers and wishful thinkers apparently have concluded—that the Administration is pursuing a path which leads to resumption of the draft to produce the needed manpower.

But the fact of the matter is that every signal emanating from the White House and from the spokespeople for the Administration tends to emphasize the fact that the President and his closest advisors remain firmly opposed to resumption of the draft.

There are three bills in the Congressional hopper this year which point to the Congressional concern in this vital area. We have already commented on them and, as an association, we

support Congressman G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery's proposal for continued registration plus examination, classification and the actual draft of enough young men to insure the reconstitution of an Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) of sufficient size to meet current needs.

Some of the reasons for concern must be restated from time to time even if it seems wearisome to review the same numbers. The fact is that



this is an urgent matter which cannot easily be put aside. Nor will it be solved by ignoring it.

The Total Army—Guard, Reserve and active—is some 280,000 short of the requirement for wartime manning for the initial stages of mobilization and deployment. There are no more than 200,000—if that many—remaining on the rolls of the IRR. Until some wise man comes up with a way to close the gap from 280,000 to zero—every organized troop unit of the National Guard and the Army Reserve remains a hostage to the urgent requirement which will exist on M-Day for pre-trained military manpower.

Merely continuing registration of each year-group of 18-year-olds is no panacea. But without this program it would mean we would be unable to register even the first person until the

28th day of mobilization! Because registration has been resumed it is possible, within the 28-day window, to induct and start to train about 100,000 men.

Further, the fact that we have registration serves notice to the effect that we are cognizant of the need that may arise. To cease registration would be a signal of entirely the wrong sort. It would be a signal that we are not really ready to commit ourselves to a serious undertaking in the best interests of the United States.

According to the influential *Newsweek* magazine, a poll, which it conducted, shows that U.S. public support for the draft "has dwindled" and that now only 43 percent of Americans favor its return.

At the outset, we said that we thought there was a very profound dichotomy in all this. This is how we see it.

We have the utmost respect and admiration for what the President and his Administration are seeking to do to strengthen U.S. defense. We nevertheless believe that an unwillingness to confront the realities of manning the force could negate the entire effort.

We believe that if indeed public support for a return to the draft has dwindled to 43 percent (after the peak support indicated by the polls during the hostage crisis in Iran and at the time of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), then it is up to dynamic American leadership to convincingly tell the public what we need and why we need it.

Without access to a more broad-based cross section of military-age men, we would have to doubt very seriously that the U.S. will ever be capable of meeting the ambitious goals that the Administration is in the process of establishing as the foundation for the new U.S. defense strategy.

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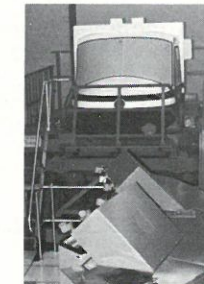
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COVER: A carrier moves troops participating in BORDER STAR '81 into mock battle. Photo by 129 PAD, SDARNG.

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