



MG Ansel M. Stroud Jr., President, NGAUS

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## CUSHIONING THE RIDE DOWN THE BUDGET ESCALATOR

The first six years of the 1980s decade have been a very gratifying ride up the budget escalator for national Defense. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected in substantial part on the issue of strengthening the nation's defenses by dramatically increasing Defense spending. This was in reaction to the neglect of the 1970s, when little modernization occurred in the wake of the Vietnam War.

As with most dramatic changes, the swing from too little defense spending to large expenditures has brought with it a pendulum effect. Although we in the national Defense arena know that the modernization we require is incomplete, as political observers we also know public support for additional large increases in Defense spending is waning among our friends and neighbors. In part, this is in response to federal deficits, which many taxpayers see as a threat to our long-term national well-being.

There may be little that we can or should do to change this public sentiment. Swimming against the political tide that produced Gramm-Rudman-Hollings may be futile. Thus, our mission may be changing during the last three years of the 1980s. Rather than pushing for add-ons for National Guard procurement, or new and better troop benefits, perhaps we should consider how to ensure a continued place in the Total Force budget.

In the FY87 Defense Authorization Act, report language was added to the National Guard military construction accounts suggesting that in the future the Guard should receive 10 percent of the total Army and Air Force military construction budget. This language was a response, in part, to our continued pleas that the backlog of major

Guard construction projects continues to grow.

The 10 percent figure may be arbitrary and subject to further refinement. However, the principle it suggests is a good one, particularly in a time when Defense spending may be headed for a plateau, or worse. It is easy to join the bandwagon of something on its way up to great success. The danger of the opposite is being cast off as extra weight on the sinking craft when reductions are occurring.

The NGAUS has sought for several years to win a specific reaffirmation of the Total Force Policy in the same forceful terms it was promulgated by former Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird as a "concept" in 1970 and cemented as a "policy" by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger in 1973. A recent White House document states this:

**"The United States must maintain effective and robust Reserve and National Guard forces, trained and equipped at levels commensurate with their wartime missions . . .**

**"On the manpower side, the Total Force Policy established in the early 1970s places increased responsibilities on the reserve component(s) of U.S. forces. Today, fully 50 percent of the combat units for land warfare are in the reserve components. Reserve units perform important missions and support functions on a daily basis.**

**"Their priority for manning, training and equipment modernization is not based on their peacetime status as forces 'in reserve,' but on the basis of their direct integration into the nation's operational plans and missions. In many cases, the se-**

**quence of deployment in the event of conflict would place reserve component units side by side, and sometimes ahead, of active duty forces."**

These statements by President Reagan in *National Security Strategy*, January 1987, should set to rest any contrary assertions that the Guard and Reserve can be shortchanged budgetarily at any future time. The Guard and Reserve are no longer "forces in reserve," a theme preached by the Reagan administration from the beginning. They are forces in being, ready and prepared for mobilization and deployment into the zone of any future conflict.

But to be combat ready, the Guard and Reserve need and must have their proportion of the national defense budget. If 10 percent is the appropriate figure, as suggested by last year's Defense budget, then it should be 10 percent of whatever Congress provides. That might be the greater figure recommended by the current administration. It might be 10 percent of some other figure recommended by a future administration, Democratic or Republican.

We must not return to the lean times, as epitomized by some of the NGAUS exertions of the early 1970s, when the Guard and Reserve were threatened with the brunt of the budget sacrifices—indeed, when the Guard was a part of the Total Force in word, but too often not in deed.

Today, most all would agree that the Guard is an integral part of the Total Force. That is demonstrated daily as Guard units deploy worldwide to participate in military exercises and maneuvers in support of the nation's national security policy. There can be no turning back.

*National Guard*

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### COVER:

SGT Tom Hall, an aircraft mechanic at the Springfield, Missouri, National Guard Aviation Classification and Repair Depot (AVCRAD), works on a C-7 Caribou in for repairs. AVCRADs have the responsibility for major repairs on the Army Guard's aircraft. Photo, Belinda Reilly. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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