

Full-time Manning Concepts and State Control of the Guard

The fulltime manning systems of the National Guard and Reserves have been under intensive review in the Pentagon and on Capitol Hill.

Much of the scrutiny has focussed on the nature of the fulltime work forces, and much on their comparative size. It has brought to the fore such questions as: Should the fulltimers be civil service technicians, or Guardsmen and reservists on fulltime military status, or a mixture of civilian and military? If the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve can produce their high levels of readiness with 22 percent of their overall manning on a fulltime status, couldn't the Army Guard and Army Reserve (with six and four percent respectively) attain greater readiness by increased fulltime manning?

At the root of all of the concern, of course, is the need to attain greater readiness in the face of more urgent missions and tighter M-Day deployment time-tables.

The Defense Manpower Commission was the first to turn a spotlight on the problem when it recommended, in 1976, that the civil service technician structure gradually be converted to fulltime military status as a cost-saving move. A year later, the House Appropriations sought to launch such a conversion but couldn't gain the approval of the rest of Congress.

Early in 1978, the Senate injected the issue of unionization into the growing debate by voting to ban technician unions, but the House balked. Meanwhile, the Army's Stroud study made a strong case for increased manning, while the Department of Defense was making its own, extremely thorough study of "the fulltime training and administration of the Selected Reserve." The latter study stopped short of recommending conversion from civil service to military status, but declared bluntly that "union activities within the technician program have already impacted upon the military command authority, organizational effectiveness, discipline, and combat readiness of the Selected Reserve units."

Finally, in its last session,



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Congress endorsed an Appropriations Committee directive that Guard/Reserve elements conduct a limited test of full-time military manning next year. The test is to involve an unspecified (at the time of this writing) number of spaces. It is understood that some of them, at ANG field training sites and gunnery ranges, are spaces that were to have been converted to contract civilians while others, ARNG and ANG, are unprogrammed technician spaces.

That's where the issue stood as 1978 drew to a close.

Guard leaders have pointed out on many occasions that the fulltime work force exists for only one purpose — to enhance the operational capability of units to perform both federal and state missions. In a word, *readiness*. That's why we share the Congressional view that technicians must also be Guardsmen, whose military assignments are compatible with their technician duties.

We are convinced that the Army Guard's fulltime work force must be expanded if the desired readiness levels are to be obtained. We increasingly doubt that it is feasible in today's environment to attempt to expand the dual-status technician force. For one thing, the size of the technician structure currently is limited by a Congressionally-imposed ceiling of 53,100. It may be difficult to get that ceiling raised in the face of Congressional concern

over union influences. Complicating the problem even further is the presidential decision to fill only half of the civil service positions that are vacated in the months ahead.

For those reasons, among others, we believe the small-scale test ordered by Congress is a wise interim step. It should help answer several important questions to the satisfaction of everyone, such as: Can competent people in the required numbers be attracted to the Guard/Reserve program in fulltime military status? Are the apparent advantages of military status — medical care, commissary and post exchange, retired pay after 20 years, major tax advantages stemming from non-taxable allowances, and others — enough to offset the reductions in take-home pay that would apply at some levels?

In the meantime, it needs to be emphasized that, contrary to erroneous reports currently circulating, no technician will be compelled to switch involuntarily to military status for the test.

With the experience the test will provide, we should be able to determine not just what's best for the Guard, which must be our primary concern, but what's best for individuals in the fulltime structure.

Whether the active duty should be performed under title 32 (the Guard title) or title 10 (federal military title) of the U.S. Code, has been debated. It's more than a mere legalistic quibble. Under title 32, the states retain control. Under title 10, control rests with the Active services.

This Association insists, as it has throughout the century it has existed, that peacetime control of the National Guard must continue to rest in the states.

NGAUS therefore will give legislative priority to some remedial amendments to law, early in the 96th Congress, to assure that Guardsmen on title 32 active duty receive benefits matching their active duty status.

By this time next year, with the test results added to the extensive data produced by recent studies, there will be a solid basis for deciding which path to take.

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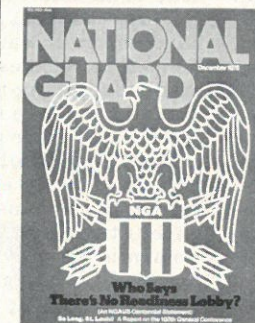
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