

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Short War/NATO Strategy Shapes Defense Policy Although U.S. National Interests Remain Global

The National Guard is not a wholly disinterested party in the on-going debates over such critical national security issues as the so-called "short war strategy," the 1½-war force structure, SALT II, and the size of our defense budget. We are concerned because the wrong decisions can place the nation in jeopardy. And we have a more parochial concern, because the size, structure and future viability of the Guard rests on the outcome of the debates.

We see much to make us uneasy over the direction our military policies are taking us. United States strategy is focused almost solely on NATO Europe—just as it was in 1950, when the North Koreans caught us flat-footed! Just as it was again, in the Sixties, when our strategy was oriented toward Europe...and our troops were fighting and dying in Southeast Asia! And yes, just as it was in 1941, when Pearl Harbor, and an Asiatic enemy, took hundreds of thousands of Americans into combat on a score of battlefields in the Pacific, in China-Burma-India, and the Aleutians, in addition to Europe.

Today, virtually our entire defense effort again is aimed at Western Europe, to the exclusion of other potential arenas. Our strategic thought is concentrated on Europe, and our forces all are trained and equipped primarily for the NATO environment. Will we again be rudely surprised by a war we aren't prepared for?

The emphasis on prepping only for a NATO war is rationalized with the official line that troops prepared to fight effectively in Western Europe can fight effectively anywhere. Surely, Vietnam, Korea, and countless World War II island battles taught us the fallacy of that notion! Besides, a major share of the Army's war equipment soon will be stashed away in POMCUS sites in West Germany. How can it be retrieved and moved quickly to another area? The answer is that it can't.

There's another twist to our current strategy that is equally open to



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question. It's the notion that a NATO war, if it comes, will commence with little warning and will be fought with such violence that the decisive phase will be over in just a few weeks. As part of this new gospel, Guard and reserve commanders are told that units which cannot mobilize and deploy to Europe in a very few weeks—well-manned, equipped and trained—are of little consequence in today's environment. In the words of the Pentagon *gurus*, a sizable share of Guard/reserve units are merely "a hedge against the possibility of protracted war." As such, they receive very low priority in the allocation of resources, thus making it almost impossible for them to acquire a rapid deployment capability. In a period when manpower shortages are a severe deterrent to readiness, they cannot use cash recruiting-retention incentives like the early-deployment units may.

We can only be apprehensive about a policy that focused our defense efforts so narrowly, on a single section of the world and a single kind of threat, to the exclusion of other possibilities. We cannot but be fearful about defense policies on which cost and economic factors have so great an influence.

It's hardly profound to point out

that military power is the solid basis on which effective foreign policies are conducted, especially for a world power like the United States. It makes our diplomatic efforts credible. And reserve forces of sufficient size and capability are an important element in that military power—the least expensive element!

Relationships between world powers are not static. Hence, strategy cannot be static. Could it have been predicted, a year ago, that a staunch Middle East ally, Iran, would today be in turmoil? That Soviet warplanes would have penetrated deep into Iranian air space with impunity? Or that Taiwan would be set aside in favor of Mainland China, an enemy of three decades? Who can now predict the outcome in other vital places—Rhodesia, Ethiopia, Cambodia, and South Korea, to name a few.

There are no ideal alternatives. Congress and the Administration are rightly interpreting the public mood as being determined to do something about high government spending and heavy taxes. But this understandable resistance to big spending does not alter our ever-perilous relationship with other nations. It does not reduce our need for a military establishment that is credible to all.

As a minimum, however, we can take such steps as rebuilding our dwindling Individual Ready Reserve, and breathing some life back into a moribund Selective Service System. Moreover, it is essential that we retain the present Reserve Component force structure and make steady improvements in its mobilization/deployment capability. It means regaining the momentum we had achieved a few years ago toward providing modern tools of war for Guard and reserve units—for all of them, eventually, not just a short-war force.

Perhaps then we can stop talking about such desperation measures as "come as you are war," and focus realistically on preparing ourselves to fulfill our national commitments worldwide.

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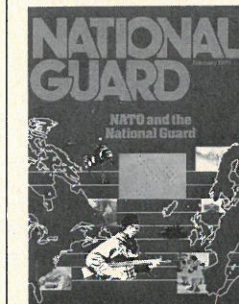
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COVER: The NATO Scenario depicted by Bill Duffy includes photos from recent maneuvers which included reservists. SHAPE Photographs except for color insert of mixed South Dakota ANG-Norwegian Air Force formation from SoDak Air National Guard.

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