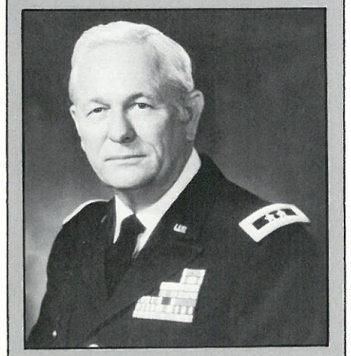

Henry W. McMillan
*Major General, FLARNG*
*President*
National Guard
Association of
The United States

# Unit Conversion: Yes! Strength Cuts: No!

IN late November and early December, I made a series of calls on senior officials in the Defense Establishment. These included the Secretaries of Army and Air Force, the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Army for Reserve Affairs and the Vice Chief of Staff, Air Force.

Our discussions covered a broad range of subjects but focussed primarily on two critical developments: proposals to eliminate units and/or reduce manning levels in the Army Guard and Air Guard, and Pentagon shilly-shallying over some badly-needed recruiting and retention incentives.

The central theme of the message I attempted to convey was this:

Total Force is a sound concept. It seeks to utilize all defense assets to their maximum potential. It already has done much to bring the Guard and Reserves into full, working partnership with the Active Services. It has fostered an immense improvement in the military effectiveness of the National Guard. It would be tragic, then, if the Pentagon were to place those gains in jeopardy now by continuing to withhold membership incentives or making ill-advised strength and structure cuts.

The discussions were conducted in an atmosphere of cordiality and mutual respect. The various officials with whom I talked have been highly impressed by the Guard's recruiting and retention accomplishments. They are aware of the massive effort we have been exerting to improve training and elevate readiness levels.

Through face-to-face talks, I hoped to make known to Defense decision-makers the depth of our concern over the two developments cited above, and to insure that Guard thinking receives thorough consideration before proposals are converted into actual directives.

The officials with whom I talked were aware already of strong Guard feeling on the two issues, thanks to the diligent efforts of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau. My own representations served to make it clear that Guard opposition to any reductions is unanimous and that the Guard solidly supports the need for additional incentives.

The Guard and Reserves very largely have been left to shift for themselves in the difficult arena of maintaining strength in a zero-Draft environment. Pentagon support for incentives on Capitol Hill has been lukewarm. Several of the most promising incentives, which the DoD itself initially proposed, never have ever been submitted to Congress. Among the items still bogged-down in the Pentagon after two years or more of "study" are educational assistance, improved retirement, survivor benefits, and removal of the 60-point ceiling on retirement credit for training sessions. I urged the various officials I visited to put the Pentagon's full weight behind those proposals so that their urgency would be better understood on "the Hill."

Congress itself has called for a review of the Guard/Reserve troop structure to insure that only those units are being maintained that would be urgently needed in the early stages of a future emergency. But the House Committee on Appropriations made its objective amply clear when it said: "This review will not be made to reduce the strength of the Reserve Components, but to free more dollars and manpower to support additional combat units and a higher state of readiness."

That likewise is the view I attempted to convey to the leadership in the Pentagon. Conversion of units no longer needed or of marginal importance to types that are important and needed: yes—as long as consideration is given to the disruption that reorganizations inevitably invite. Outright abolition of units, or manning, at a time when Active Force strength has been reduced to such perilously low levels: no.

And especially not the elimination of units, and men, in the only components of the Reserve Forces that are succesfully meeting their all-volunteer manpower objectives—the Army National Guard and Air National Guard! ◈


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# GUARDSMAN

*The National*

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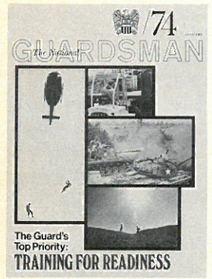


*THE FRONT COVER: Here are some more samples of the Guard's top priority, training (clockwise, from top left): Utah Special Forces troops rappel from hovering chopper . . . . Iowa Army Guardsman loads ammunition onto flatbed truck while training in Germany . . . . Tanks of 42d Inf Div demonstrate firepower on Cp Drum ranges . . . . Two Oregon Army Guardsmen trudge across frozen tundra on way back to Ft Greely, AK, bivouac area.*




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