

Major General William J. McCaddin, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

LEARNING TO DEAL WITH THE WORLD AS IT IS

A hate-filled, angry old man in Iran may have performed a service for the United States (quite unintentionally, you can be sure) that Americans themselves have been unable to achieve.

The Ayatollah Khomeini and his terrorist "student" shock troops may have helped free us from our morbid preoccupation with Vietnam and forced us to concentrate on the future, and on our proper role as a major world power. We think Henry Fairlie, a perceptive British journalist, may have hit the nail right on the head when he recently wrote that the Vietnam war is "now over in the American mind."

"Perhaps nothing more important has happened as a consequence of the gross events in Iran," he concluded.

The shameful, contemptible chain of events in Tehran provoked a national sense of outrage in this country. The acts of the Ayatollah and his followers awakened and united Americans like nothing else in recent years. It rekindled a sense of national pride and national purpose, and made such terms as "national honor" and "God Bless America" respectable again.

Of equal importance, a more realistic attitude toward military power and its uses appears to be developing among Americans and their elected leaders as an outgrowth of the prolonged crisis in Iran. If that is indeed the case, it may turn out that the Ayatollah and his radical supporters produced a benefit for this country that will far outweigh the harm he caused, over the long term.

There has been growing sentiment in Congress for strengthen-

ing our defenses, particularly the so-called conventional forces of which both elements of the National Guard, Army and Air, are a major part. But it was far from being a universal attitude, and the Administration could not be described as enthusiastic over the prospect. Pressure from legislators like Senator Sam Nunn (Ga) to strengthen our conventional power as the price for approval of SALT II brought anything but firm commitments from Administration leaders.



But the Ayatollah, with his hatred of all things American and his criminal antics, changed all that. The Administration defense budget that went to Congress in mid-October (a month earlier than normal) was substantially higher than envisioned earlier. President Carter told the nation in defending the higher budget that "American power is of central importance to world peace," and

that "military weakness would inevitably make war more likely." In a statement that clearly reflected the strain to which the Iranian affair had subjected him, President Carter said:

"We will hope and work and pray for a world in which the weapons of war are no longer necessary, but we now must deal with the hard fact—with the world as it is. In the dangerous and uncertain world of today, the keystone of our national security is still military strength—strength that is clearly recognized by Americans, by our allies and by any potential adversary."

We can only applaud the sentiments thus expressed and the improved defenses which they seem to portend.

The nation's conventional military forces are dangerously weak. They are understrength, yet we have failed to maintain the absolute essential pool of pre-trained manpower that we'd need for a mobilization, and have allowed the Selective Service System to deteriorate. Many units still are under-equipped or are equipped with weapons and vehicles that simply couldn't survive in a sophisticated battle environment. We're even drastically short of so basic an item as ammunition!

The Ayatollah very likely will disappear into the trash bin of history before much time has passed. But he will have served us well, much against his own inclinations, if by his hatred and his outrageous behavior, he drove home the lesson enunciated by President Carter—that we must deal with the world as it is!

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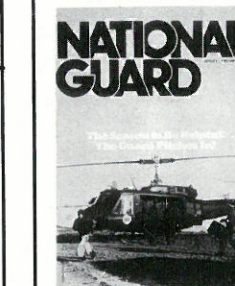
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