



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Most of us share a reassuring—but almost totally unjustified—sense that the first day of January each year is a new beginning and that we have been endowed with “a clean slate.” This is one of the grand illusions of life. We resist the reality of the fact that January 1—despite the afterglow of New Year's Eve and the glut of Bowl Games—is simply the day after December 31.

The importance of continuity cannot and should not be overlooked as we embark upon the troubled waters of 1982. If the pages of the New Year's calendar are yet to be filled, there is at least a proven reassurance that in very short order we will once again be dealing with the issues which came to the surface in 1981... because of events which evolved in 1980... and so forth.

The manning of our nation's military forces is one of the issues that will easily negotiate the transition into 1982. The problems of 1981 (and earlier) cannot be put into the “clean slate” category by any stretch of the imagination. What brings this to mind is a statement we have but recently seen attributed to an important and influential member of the U.S. national defense team.

In an important talk delivered in the waning days of the old year, he explained the “more global approach to our responsibilities” and went on to describe the doctrine essential to sustaining such a national strategy: “...it accepts the need to take action under periods of tension, which gives you an opportunity to use your reserve components, your Guard and your United States Army Reserve, as effective components of the nation's total deterrent power.”

We regard this as a strong reaffirmation by a qualified spokesman for the Reagan Administration that the Total Force Policy—as we know it—is alive and well.

But we cannot help but feel a sense of quivering alarm in the context of words which followed—words which state a conclusion that we in the National Guard Association came to

long ago—but which have been homogenized and molded into the kind of over-simplified rhetoric which makes us in the Guard villains rather than victims. We resent this.

This is the exact wording which we find to be of concern—not in terms of *conclusion* but in terms of *responsibility*.

“The three areas in which the volunteer force has been a failure are: manning the Guard, manning the United States Army Reserve and in providing a trained manpower pool. Seven years ago we had a million trained young men and women in a manpower pool that was available if we went off to war. Today, we have 200,000. So the gap that exists in the Guard, the Reserve and the trained manpower pool is the real gap as far as adequacy... is concerned.”

Around the time that this statement was made Army Guard strength stood at 392,000—its highest in many years; and the USAR was at a very respectable 220,000. There is no gainsaying the fact that the pool of trained manpower has largely dwindled away and that even with cosmetic “fixes” involving the plan for recall of retirees and other short-term measures it may be made to look better in theory.

The manpower inadequacy which is referred to cannot and should not be attributed to the Guard and to the Reserve. Bluntly and frankly, the trained manpower pool is no part of the force structure of the Guard or the Reserve.

We think some reminders are in order.

- For many years the National Guard and the Reserve have consisted of those who opted for a basically parttime military program.
- The great one-million man “trained manpower pool” was simply a bonus of the days when large numbers of men were being drafted and, in accordance with the law of the land, after two years of active duty they were placed in “reserve” status.
- For some reason, the trained man-

power pool, or IRR, began to assume a new importance that gave rise to its being looked at in some quarters, almost as a *third* reserve component. And somehow, the inability to sustain this trained manpower pool as the draft diminished in size and ultimately disappeared became part of a Guard and Reserve failure.

Yet... it was totally predictable. Without a draft to bring significant numbers of short-term soldiers into military service, coupled with a volunteer force that emphasizes *retention* of its enlistees, no great mathematical ability is needed to compute the time frame in which the trained manpower pool would cease to be a meaningful component of adequacy for U.S. military requirements.

In 1979, the NGAUS warned of the dangers inherent in the false illusion that an adequate peacetime manpower system, *and* one that satisfied wartime needs, were one and the same. We undertook, in every forum available to us, to point out that the lack of a trained manpower pool for wartime put the units of both the Guard and Reserve in great jeopardy of being mobilized to be... fillers. And the bottom line, we noted, was that this would quickly wipe out—at a minimum—50 to 60 percent of the forces needed by the U.S. to wage the envisioned NATO war.

Now, in a period of “increased global responsibility,” this issue is only exacerbated. Now, less than ever, can we afford to have our trained Guard and Reserve units surreptitiously eyed as fodder for the needed trained manpower pool. Now, more than ever, as we move into 1982, we must face up to the continuing question of manning our nation's military forces, and to put into perspective the process that is to be followed. And we restate our point that the inability to maintain a trained manpower pool large enough to sustain the nation's needs—is *not* a failure of the Guard or the Reserve.

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COVER: Senator John Stennis addresses the conferees at the 103d NGAUS Annual General Conference. Cover design by Tom Powers of Bill Duffy Associates. Photo by 2LT Mark Weilenman, MsARNG.

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