

A road map to national defense

THE Defense Manpower Commission has completed its monumental task of reviewing the whole spectrum of manpower matters, and recommending new approaches for the future.

The Commission's report touches on virtually every facet of manning our military establishment — Active, National Guard, Reserve, civilian — from recruitment to retirement. It provides what the Commission itself describes as "a road map to follow over the next decade."

The report is relatively unfettered by institutional constraints and parochialism. It criticizes, but balances its criticism with constructive suggestions for improvement. It cuts through to the real crux of most of the problems it addresses, avoiding entanglement in side issues. It should be required reading for all who are involved in the difficult task of keeping our defense structure manned effectively yet economically.

On the other hand, the report contains some assumptions and proposals with which this Association is compelled to take issue. Let me touch briefly on some of its major features.

The Commission rejects the views, popular in some quarters, that we can safely make further reductions in our military forces, and that conventional forces are of less importance in today's nuclear environment. It cites the continuing Soviet buildup and says it "does not foresee any relief from the necessity for the United States to maintain strong military forces" — meaning force levels of about the present numerical size. On the nuclear/conventional issue, it emphasizes that "Nuclear parity . . . does not deter conflict at lesser levels of intensity; rather, it creates a situation where conventional forces become the relevant element of military action." On both issues, this Association is in full accord with the Commission.

One of the report's virtues, from the Guard/Reserve point of view, is that it emphasizes the need to consider

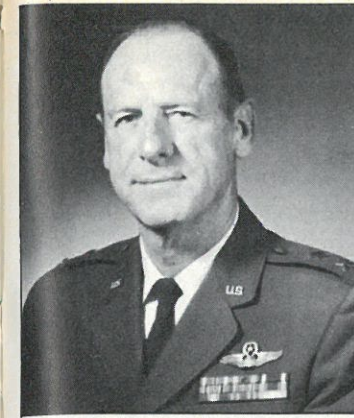
Guard/Reserve/Total Force implications in every phase of the manpower program. It recognizes the Total Force policy as the bedrock of our national security program. This theme is expressed in such words as these: ". . . The national security relies on the ability to mobilize our Reserve Components from a peacetime 'citizen-soldier' status to a combat-ready soldier status in a relatively short time."

Getting down to specifics, it suggests that "true integration of the Reserve Forces into the Total Force structure can occur only if every functional manager is made to enhance the Total Force as part of his responsibility."

The Commission likewise recognizes that the Reserve Components have been short-changed on "funds, staffing, emphasis and priorities" in the area of recruiting, with most of these resources thus far allocated to the Active Forces. It calls attention to the direct link between the state of the economy and the ability of the armed forces to maintain their all-volunteer posture. It sees trouble ahead, particularly for the Reserve Components, as economic conditions improve. It emphasizes that "a full commitment to the Total Force policy in the area of recruitment will require additional funds, new policies and priorities, and high level attention."

Among the specifics suggested by the Commission to strengthen recruiting are new enlistments options and incentives for the Reserve Components, and a DoD-funded educational assistance program for all components, proposals we endorse.

The Commission wrote off the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) as a dwindling asset that will be woefully inadequate after 1980, and took the Administration to task for destroying the only viable alternative — an efficient, functioning standby Selective Service System. An Administration proposal to strengthen the IRR by extending the military obligation to age 28, across the



Maj Gen Duane L. Corning
(S.D.) Air National Guard
President,
National Guard Association
of the United States

board, got short shrift from the Commission. It urged instead that the Selective Service System be restored to give it a capability to "commence inductions by M-Day-plus-30, and to deliver a total of 500,000 people by M-plus-180".

We think another Commission proposal deserves serious consideration, although it will provoke a great deal of controversy among Guard/Reserve technicians. It is a proposal that the technicians be converted from Federal Civil Service status to that of fulltime, active duty Guardsmen and Reservists. There are too many ramifications in such a move to explore them in detail here, but such a conversion appears to offer some major advantages both to the military establishment and to the individuals involved, provided that the States retain control of fulltime Guardsmen.

We strongly disagree with the Commission on several hard-core issues, however. One is an assumption that Army/Guard/Reserve forces cannot achieve and sustain higher than company-level training proficiency. Many Guard organizations have already demonstrated that battalion, even brigade, proficiency is attainable. What some have done, others should be able to accomplish, given adequate training assistance, good leadership, and more help with the time-consuming chore of recruiting.

We also challenge the Commission's recommendation that consideration be given to using ARNG divisions,
—Continued on page 36

Features

FIRST BATTLE OF CHARLESTON <i>Spongy palmetto logs absorb cannon fire and an apparent British victory turns into a rout for the Americans.</i>	2
A SMOKY DAY AT THE RACES <i>A cloud of dust, a puff of smoke, and the Kentucky Guard's a winner.</i>	7
DEFENSE MANPOWER REPORT <i>Are America's reserve forces the keystone of national security?</i>	8
HOW PROUDLY I WAVE <i>A salute to the flag.</i>	22
YUK YEK! <i>Women join Alaska Scouts.</i>	24
HERITAGE GALLERY <i>The latest facts and figures.</i>	26
DC IN 76 <i>A Guard guide to bicentennial Washington.</i>	28
AGAUS CONFERENCE <i>State AGs explore ways to improve the arming and training of today's militia — the National Guard.</i>	34

Departments

WASHINGTON REPORT	12
VIEW FROM THE HILL	12
NGAUS TRAVEL SERVICE	15
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	16
RECRUITING NEWSMAKERS	18
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW	20
PEOPLE IN THE NEWS	32
POSTING THE GUARD	38
PENTAGON PARAGRAPHS	40

Staff

EDITOR Capt Luther L. Walker
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Bruce P. Hargreaves
ADVERTISING Maj John E. Bibb
CIRCULATION Don DesJardins

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Using a makeshift flagpole, Sgt William Jasper hoists South Carolina's tattered flag, blasted to the ground by a British cannonball fired during the First Battle of Charleston. A sword from the governor and gifts from the citizens were his rewards. Based on a painting by Johannes Oertel.