



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### AN ASSESSMENT OF "ADD ONS" TO THE FY83 DEFENSE BUDGET

In a reflection upon the National Guard's contributions to the nation's accomplishment in the past, President Ronald Reagan addressed the years yet to come, in these words: "I have no doubt that future historians will chronicle your own proud contribution to the security and welfare of the nation." This was in the context of a message which the president dispatched to the 103d NGAUS General Conference.

Our own observation is that the National Guard, as an institution, will never let the country down. As each generation of leadership has picked up the mantle it has been concerned above everything else with the *sine que non* of combat readiness.

It can be understood, therefore, that the NGAUS was quite pleased that the president's message paraphrased our own views in stating that, "A fully manned and well equipped National Guard is a national priority and continues to be necessary to maintain the security of our nation."

The National Guard—all of you out there—has taken a long step toward providing a "fully manned" force. At the last count the Air Guard was nearing the 100,000 mark (its virtual wartime requirement); the Army Guard had attained 400,000 for the first time since 1975, was talking optimistically about reaching 417,000 by the end of FY 1982 and was setting a new timetable for achievement of wartime strength of 448,000. The "fully manned" force is no longer mere speculation.

The second element of the president's comment is more elusive—"well equipped."

First of all, what is "well equipped" as opposed, for example, to "fully equipped"? We would submit that well equipped means equipped well enough to be capable of carrying out one's mission. As a consequence we believe there is little difference between "well equipped" and "fully equipped"—but at the moment the National Guard is neither.

The Department of Defense Authori-

zation Act of 1982 requires that an annual report on National Guard and Reserve equipment must be submitted by DoD to the Congress on an annual basis. The first such report was due on February 15, 1982 and its contents were for the most part classified.

An unclassified executive summary (see page 9) points out that the shift of Guard and Reserve role from back-up to immediate augmentation force as envisioned under the Total Force Policy suggests that the historic method of equipping the Guard and Reserve with "hand-me-down" equipment not needed by the active forces is no longer acceptable because of the risk it imposes upon mission accomplishment.

The report commented accurately on today's real world situation when it stated that: "In a war today... the reserve components would have to fight with the equipment it has on hand, even though it may be less effective, and may not be supportable, plus any other equipment that *may be* (emphasis added) immediately available."

We make this point to reemphasize the primary goal of NGAUS in 1982—to continue to seek the modernization and equipping of the National Guard to insure that the Guard is capable of carrying out whatever missions may be required in connection with support of the U.S. national strategy.

We will continue to push this thesis—even at the risk of irritating some of our friends. It is a risk we are willing to assume because we feel so keenly the nature of the balance between the increased reliance that has been placed upon the Guard vis-a-vis the continuing struggle to equip the force to insure success on any future battlefield.

The path is strewn with difficulty and frustration, complicated by the tenuous economic health of the nation.

We are tempted to quote the words of Clarence Darrow that "History has a way of repeating itself; that is what is wrong with history." Well, it's not

so much a matter of anything being

wrong with history, per se, but we do seem doomed to go through the same gyrations time after time—even after events have proven there is a better way.

Just about one year ago, results of the NGAUS initiatives for improving the equipment status for the National Guard were to be found in "add-on" packages to the FY82 authorization. But after the summer recess, the Congress returned and in response to prodding from the administration the word went out on Capitol Hill that all "add-ons" were doomed. Without them the NGAUS initiatives were stymied. There was a tense week while the joint committee struggled with the matter and at the end some of the "add-ons" for the Guard were retained—to the tune of about \$584 million—because of members of Congress who recognized that without the add-ons there was *no* new equipment procurement for the Guard.

One year later we feel a certain sense of *deja vu*. Once again, very substantial "add-ons" for National Guard equipment have been adopted by the Senate and the House committees. But faced with what most members of Congress regard as an insufferable budget deficit, there is—once again—a beating of the jungle drums to signal the message that "add-ons" may be the target in the pruning of the defense budget which appears to be on many congressional minds.

We believe Congress is aware of the need to rebuild our defense forces after all too many years of neglect. We believe that most Americans want a stronger defense but that they are looking closely at the "trade offs" which might threaten programs of local importance. It is therefore of prime importance that we utilize every means at our disposal to make the Congress—and the public—aware of the fact that a "fully manned and well equipped" National Guard is the best insurance policy—for the money—that this country can buy.

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