

Major General William J. McCaddin, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

G eneral Bernard K. Rogers, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, surely has earned an additional measure of respect from his military colleagues and from Americans at large by saying, recently, what so badly needed saying by a person of national stature about the fatal flaw in our capability for mobilization—lack of an effective Selective Service.

Speaking to an audience where his words could heavily influence national policy, a U.S. Senate Armed Services sub-committee, General Rogers eschewed the temptation to sugar-coat his warning. It is absolutely essential for us to restore the Selective Service System to an operational capability, he said, and thus restore our manpower base for mobilization. The Army's top general told the Senators:

"We should have brought Selective Service out of deep freeze some time ago, in my opinion. We should not hesitate, in my opinion, (in) bringing it out and starting registration just as soon as we can. Once we have become accustomed to registration, then we should (start to) classify just as soon as we can...The next step, in my scenario, is (that) we must draft for the IRR. There is no solution that we have today, either in operation or on the horizon, that will provide us the means to overcome that major deficiency, of the shortfall in the IRR, which means that we do not have a manpower base for mobilization, which is so essential." That lack of a mobilization base of trained and available manpower has been described by numerous defense officials as our single greatest defense weakness. Here is a greatly over-simplified explanation:

Recruiting for the Active forces has commenced to sag, even for the Air Force. At the next level, the Selected Reserve (organized National The Army Chief of Staff— And the Virtues of Saving What Needs to be Said

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> -General Bernard K. Rogers March 13, 1979

understrength, particularly the Army Guard (ARNG) and Army Reserve (USAR). The ARNG has fallen to 347,340 and the USAR to 188,990, or a combined total of 165,000 trained people below their wartime requirement of 701,000.

In response to senatorial questions, General Rogers estimated the Army requirement for a major conflict at 700,000 trained individuals. As of the end of 1978, its total strength was 182,000! His estimate of 700,000 was based on the need to flesh out understrength Active, Guard and Reserve units on M-Day, replace the heavy toll of combat casualties that Guard and Reserve units) are grossly could be expected in the early weeks sible in the extreme to ignore it.

of a high-intensity NATO war, and provide a nucleus for new units, to give the Army a capability for combat beyond those early weeks.

With IRR strength now standing at one-fourth of the requirement—and many of the existing number not reachable, or no longer qualified, or not in the needed MOS-there is only one alternative. ARNG and USAR units are the IRR for the time being. For a major mobilization, they'd all be mobilized, but most units would be stripped of trained personnel, to be used as fillers and replacements in other units. That would destroy most Guard and Reserve units, and with them destroy the Army's ability to fight beyond the first few weeks.

Drafting for the IRR would also produce the bonus, as General Rogers told the senators, of influencing young people to enlist voluntarily in units of the Active forces and Guard/Reserves.

Department of Defense officials talk confidently of recalling hundreds of thousands of retired personnel and veterans, but military and Congressional specialists regard that as mere wishful thinking. They might become a military asset later in a conflict, but not in its opening weeks, as DoD contemplates.

That's the story. It explains why General Rogers felt deeply enough to state his views in stark, uncompromising terms, without submerging his warning in the usual Washington euphemisms and equivocations. It's what NGAUS and other organizations of like mind have been saying for sometime. We are delighted, and proud, to find ourselves in the company of someone of General Rogers' integrity and stature.

His concern—and ours—is not unfounded. It is not the jingoistic rhetoric of military hard-liners. We are confronted by a real problem, posing real peril, and it would be irrespon-



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COVER: The helicopter lift of the B-24 is a Kansas Army National Guard photo by Colonel Donald J. O'Toole. The background is from a photo courtesy of the U.S. Air Force Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. The design is by Bill Duffy.

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