



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

GIRDING FOR BATTLE: THE CAMPAIGN FOR EQUIPMENT

Fifteen years have passed since a Secretary of the Army spoke out on some harsh realities and drew certain, inevitable conclusions which bear repetition. Then Secretary Stephen Ailes admitted that Army procurement could equip only the high priority elements of the Guard and Reserve. In effect, he noted, there was no prospect of procurement for 45 percent of the reserve forces in being.

"Our present position," he explained, "is logistically out of balance—and out of balance with the contingency war plans. Obviously, it makes no sense to maintain, in a ready status, forces that are not equipped and are not required."

At the time he made these comments, it might be noted, there were 23 combat divisions in the Army National Guard force structure and 10 combat divisions in the United States Army Reserve. Now, 15 years later, there are eight combat divisions in the Army Guard and none in the Army Reserve. But in terms of authorized paid drill strength, the Army's reserve components are still in about the same ballpark as in 1965, when a force of about 540,000 was estimated as the nation's need to satisfy contingency war plans. Only then there were actually 700,000 in paid drill status!

What happened, of course, was that through "reorganization" and "realignment" the force structure was shuffled around to put a supposedly supportable number of people into a mix of units needed in the event of a mobilization. This set the stage for the emergence of the total force policy in the 1970's with the stated conviction that a force had now been tailored in the Guard and in the Reserve which was needed to accomplish the nation's war-fighting strategy and that it would be supported with all of the necessary resources—including equipment.

As we have pointed out in the pages of this magazine on many occasions, the Guard (and the Reserve) have never been "resourced" to anything like that

which is necessary for combat. Once again, a system of priorities has influenced the procurement and the distribution of equipment needed to make the Guard combat ready.

There is clearly an irony to the situation. Once again, the question arises as to the wartime mission of units for which no equipment is available. The words of Secretary Ailes return to haunt us: "Obviously it makes no sense to maintain, in a ready status, forces that are not equipped and are not required."

What is different, we maintain, is that the Total Army—which includes all of the elements of the active Army, the Army Guard and the Army Reserve—is today needed to field a fighting, wartime Army. All of the current Army Guard structure is required. The Guard and Reserve, if mobilized, constitute at least 50 percent of the capability of the wartime, deployed Army. But it is a sham if part of that force has no likelihood of access to the quantity and quality equipment needed to fight. And this, in a nutshell, is why the National Guard Association of the United States has made the subject of equipment procurement our very highest priority for action in the months and years ahead.

Despite the increased Defense budget, which has been widely reported in the media throughout the nation, the dollars it will take to fully and properly equip the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard figure to be hard to come by. We suspect that by the time the budgets are subdivided by the Services there will be scant visible evidence of increases which will impact favorably upon the readiness of the Guard.

This Association has been successful—and fortunate—over the past several years. It will probably serve all of us well to review the bidding. We sought very significant add-ons to the Defense budgets in each of the past several years. But, in effect, what we accomplished was largely successful

because we were seeking what Congress was seeking—increased attention to national defense.

Has the attitude of Congress toward national defense changed? No way. The congressional leadership has made it quite clear that it considers the buildup of United States military power to be a matter of the highest concern.

What is different is that first the outgoing Carter Administration and the new Reagan Administration both submitted FY82 Defense budgets which encompassed tremendous increases—upward of \$20 billion additional dollars in FY81 and going up to better than \$30 billion additional in FY 82.

With these substantial increases in hand, Congress may be reluctant to consider further "add-ons."

But the fact remains that there does not appear, even in the enhanced Defense budget of the new Administration, to be any provision for the substantial procurement of modern equipment which is so sorely needed if National Guard units are to be maintained intact, to fight alongside their active counterparts.

Thus it appears most likely to NGAUS that it is once again by means of clearly articulated add-ons that we must seek the Congressional support for the procurement of critically needed equipment. In terms of 1981 dollars this means about \$2.6 billion for the Army Guard and \$7 billion for the Air Guard.

We will, over the course of the next few months, do everything we can, muster every bit of muscle that we can, mobilize our grassroots support and—in short—do all that we know how to do in an effort to prevail in this effort.

We will press our case to the fullest—and with a good deal of help from our friends, to paraphrase the song—we hope to prevail starting with the authorizations for FY82. For all of the reasons which we have outlined, we may not be 100 percent successful. The stakes are too important to accept even the possibility of anything but eventual success.

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8



20



22



26

Features

8 BILOXI

Mississippi readies itself for the NGAUS 103d Conference.

11 A ROUGH ROAD FOR THE MEDICAL OMNIBUS BILL

Congress takes up the issue of providing more medical coverage.

14 A GUARD OPTION TO BEAT INFLATION

A low interest option for eligible Guardsmen.

20 MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE

History of the day itself and four men to be remembered.

22 ARE YOU PROMOTABLE?

A description of the Air National Guard officer promotion process.

26 THE CAPTAIN IS AN UMP

Texas Guard Captain James Evans discusses the life of a major league umpire.

30 SAC SAFETY

Air Guard units lead SAC in flight safety.

Departments

President's Message	Inside Front Cover
From Washington	2
Newsbreaks	4
View From the Hill	19
People in the News	32
Posting the Guard	36
Memo for the Record	40



COVER: A composite sketch of Guardsmen, yesterday and today, who are honored for their service. Art by Tom Powers of Duffy and Associates.

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