



MG Ansel M. Stroud, President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### FULL COMBAT-READINESS AWAITS MORE AND BETTER EQUIPMENT

It was a terrible headline, but there was an element of truth in the basic facts contained in a recent *New York Times* article on the readiness of certain Guard and Reserve units. While we may hate to admit that some Guard and Reserve units are not combat ready, we also must remember the phrase "Come As You Are War."

The article that appeared in early March described the annual report of the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB). This board is composed of a number of distinguished members of the Guard and Reserve, including four National Guard general officers. Appointment to this board provides the four Guard officers appointed to it an opportunity to provide "advice and counsel" to the secretary of Defense on matters that pertain to the efficiency of the Guard and Reserve.

First let's look at the headline and its implications. The *Times*' headline said, "Reserve Officers Warn Forces Are Unprepared." That is true. But let us consider that conclusion in light of the Come As You Are War concept.

We have heard about the Come As You Are War since the beginning of the Total Force Policy 17 years ago. In the early 1970s, as was discussed by several authors in this magazine in April, the Guard and Reserve for the first time were seriously considered a first-line part of national defense. That was true, in part, because there was no alternative. As the Vietnam War wound down, active duty strengths were cut by DoD and Congress. But requirements, at best, stayed the same, or actually became more demanding. Hence, the DoD shaped a new national strategy that placed increased reliance on the Guard and Reserve.

But, particularly in the 1970s, the new taskings all too often came without resources or additional equip-

ment. Guard commanders were told they would "come as you are." To many, it was a rather bleak prospect because many, perhaps most, battalion and larger unit commanders knew they were deeply mired at C-4 because of lack of equipment or the issue of nondeployable substitutes suitable only for training.

Until full implementation of the Total Force Policy, which began about 1979, there was a widespread notion among Guard commanders that they would have several months for additional training, equipment fill, personnel assignment, etc.

This concept has changed dramatically. But while we know we are expected to be deployed and in theater in 30-60 days—as a rule—today, we also know we don't have the equipment many times to make maximum effective use of battalion-, brigade- and division-sized units if deployed. This doesn't mean such units wouldn't deploy. But they might only be able to accomplish part of their mission.

Take two armored battalions. One has a full issue of 60 M-1 tanks. The other has 40 M-48A5 tanks. Both units are at 100 percent of authorized strength, and both are above 85 percent in MOS qualification. The first battalion probably would be C-2 (it is rare for any unit larger than a company/battery/detachment to be C-1 in the Army Guard). The second battalion would be C-4, nondeployable solely because of lack of sufficient deployable equipment. The M-48A5 is deployable and technically combat effective. But it is basically an upgunned Korean War-vintage tank that compares poorly with the M-1.

But while this second battalion is rated "not ready" by the standards associated with determining combat readiness, it would be useful on the

battlefield. Thus, in a Come As You Are War, it almost surely would be deployed as it is equipped.

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What does this RFPB report tell us that will be useful in the NGAUS legislative program? It tells us that notwithstanding the great progress made during the 1980s in reversing the decline in U.S. defense readiness, we still have a considerable journey before we are at a readiness posture where we are comfortable. The board reported, for example, that the shortage of equipment is \$16.8 billion. This shortage is becoming worse, rather than improving, despite the substantial procurement of equipment over the past nine years.

In part, this situation is exacerbated by the escalating costs of military procurement and by the fact that as the mission of Guard units expanded, a greater degree of equipment fill is needed, and to some extent, units become victims of the treadmill effect. Even with a \$300+ billion Defense budget, it is apparent that there is no "get-well-quick" plan that will work.

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Sometimes, it may appear that it is necessary for NGAUS to deal with the negative aspects of certain subjects in order to carry out the mandate of our membership to tell it like it is to the Congress. But we will not leave this subject on a bleak note that obscures our very real accomplishments.

All wars in U.S. history have been Come As You Are Wars to one degree or another, so we shouldn't expect a future war to be any different. The goal should be to get as combat ready as we can. Continued effort, this year and every year, is required. That is, in large part, the NGAUS mission now as it has been for 109 years.

*National Guard*

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## COVER:

Virginia Guardsmen from Company B, 2d Battalion, 116th Infantry, 29th Infantry Division (Light), participate in Exercise BLUE FOX during annual training in Norway. They were the only Army National Guardsmen to participate in the exercise. Photo by MAJ David Super, NGB Public Affairs. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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## PUBLICATION STAFF

MG Bruce Jacobs (ret.)  
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LTC Reid K. Beveridge  
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2LT Pamela A. Kane  
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Belinda Reilly  
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