



Major General William E. Ingram (Ret.), President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SENIOR COMMANDERS: ELIMINATE TRAINING DETRACTORS

In the last issue of NATIONAL GUARD, I provided you with some of my views on how the National Guard was currently being challenged to assume its proper role in the Total Force as an integral part of the conventional force structure.

I stressed that before we could fully assume this role, two things had to be accomplished. First, we had to be properly equipped. Currently, the Army National Guard is equipped at about 69 percent of its wartime requirements and the Air Guard, while ostensibly fully equipped, frequently finds its flying squadrons authorized fewer aircraft than active Air Force squadrons that are otherwise identical. Department of Defense officials estimate it would take about \$17 billion to fully equip the reserve components with deployable equipment to meet wartime requirements. That does not take into consideration the necessary war reserve stocks to replace equipment destroyed in combat.

The second item that I said we had to accomplish was "to prove ourselves." The M-1 and M-60A3 tanks, Black Hawk helicopters, Bradley Fighting Vehicles, F-16 fighters, and other items of equipment that are currently being fielded in the National Guard are being viewed by many as a test—a test to determine if the National Guard is deserving of the commitment of resources on a scale necessary to resolve our shortfalls. The challenge to successfully meet this test, as I see it, lies primarily with our company and battalion commanders, because the solution is training oriented. Our soldiers and airmen must be MOS/AFSC qualified and our units must be trained to standard. This means well-thought-out yearly training programs that are vigorously executed during the training year. I have every confidence that our young commanders can meet this challenge.

With this as background, I would now like to turn to the role that senior

commanders and their staffs must play in assuring that the Guard meets this challenge. If our companies and battalions are to be trained to standard to meet the various ARTEP/CAPSTONE/RDF-A/ORI mobilization requirements, their higher headquarters must insulate them from what a former Army chief of staff, General Edward C. Meyer, referred to as "training detractors." Each wing, brigade, group and division commander, as well as each adjutant general, must review in-house requirements placed on company, squadron and battalion commanders to insure all the training detractors are removed.

In the past few years, I have noted an increasing tendency to task our subordinate units with requirements that could be accomplished at the higher headquarters, or, in some cases, need not be done at all. Often this is done under the guise of decentralization. I fully support the stated principles of decentralization, but think we senior commanders need to review each action we push down to the companies, squadrons and battalions to make sure that we aren't, by the additional workload on our subordinate units, detracting from their primary mission-training.

After assuring we have done that, the next step is to review the procedures employed for tasking subordinate elements to comply with requirements generated externally to the brigade, group, etc. Are those things that can be done at wing, brigade, group, division and at state level being done, or are the requirements being merely passed along with a suspense date?

I am convinced that the average National Guard colonel would be very surprised at the number and range of programs and activities we require our young commanders to be actively involved in. They include such things as recruiting and retention, human

relations, equal opportunity, alcohol and drug abuse, battalion training management system (BTMS), skill on the job training (SOJT), skill qualification test (SQT), physical fitness, training management, operational security (OPSEC) as well as various maintenance and supply programs and too many others to list here. Many of the requirements associated with these programs, as well as the programs themselves, did not exist when I served as a company and battalion commander, and I'm sure that most didn't exist when the majority of the colonels in the Guard served as company or flight commanders. Now, please don't misquote me on this—I think these programs, and the many others not listed, serve a very useful function and are needed, but times have changed. The requirements currently facing our unit commanders have been developed to meet or solve specific problems associated with this change. In fact, they are not just useful, they are necessary. I am not convinced, however, that it is necessary that they be done completely at the company, squadron and battalion level.

I have challenged the company, squadron and battalion commanders to train to standard, now I challenge the wing, brigade, group and division commanders and their respective adjutants general to free their unit commanders of "training detractors." Don't allow questionable requirements to be passed to subordinate units with a cover letter and suspense. Do everything possible to resolve the requirements at your level. This will mean more work at the higher levels, but will probably mean that the programs will be better administered. I am also confident it will result in the Guard fielding better trained units, a necessary ingredient to the fulfillment of our role in the Total Force.

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COVER: The Bridge Platoon, 286th Engineer Company, Washington Army Guard, spans the mighty Columbia River during Exercise LASER MACE. Story on page 20. Cover Design: Johnson Design Group. Photo, SFC Joe Zambone.

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