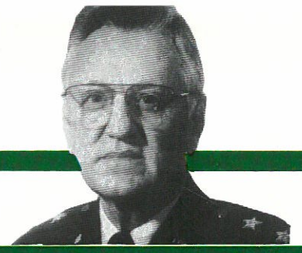

Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

1981: THE NATIONAL GUARD AS A NATIONAL DEFENSE PRIORITY

A new Administration in Washington, a spirit of new direction and the search for new initiatives to strengthen U.S. defenses prompted us to propose "The National Guard as a National Defense Priority" as the theme of our 103d General Conference this month.

It is more than a footnote to the above that in this, the first year of the second decade of the Total Force philosophy, we see a logical and sensible timeframe for taking stock of where we are—and for considering where we might be headed.

All in all, it has been a very tough decade for the National Guard. We can see many areas in which we have come a long, long way. We see tangible evidence of the ability of National Guard forces to accomplish the tasks imposed upon them by the policy of 'increased reliance" which was articulated by Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird in August, 1970. We also see many frustrations because of unfulfilled promises coupled with our own sense of high expectation.

We have been—and continue to be—hung up on an extraordinary and perplexing dichotomy. Since the end of the draft era, we have been struggling to maintain an approximation of what Guard strength ought to be. But commanders are also keenly aware that even if units were at 100 percent strength, the current procurement programs simply do not provide for a sufficient distribution of equipment. Consequently, this lack of distribution does not permit Guard units a very high assurance of going off to war, if the need arises, with anything like the quantity—or quality—of equipment needed to fight. Would we, or the nation, be any better off with units manned at 100 percent—and yet still confronted with the incredible restraints on resources which have dwindled away in the process of attrition, modernization and the extensive U.S. foreign military sales program? This condition has characterized the facts of life in the Guard for most of the years since WWII and Korea.

There is no doubt that the Reagan Administration means to improve the U.S. defense posture. In terms of what dollars will buy today, the new Administration commitment to defense is dramatically illustrated by the fact that the FY82 budget provides 30 percent more buying capability than was provided in the defense budget only two years ago. We would be less than honest if we did not admit to a rather ardent parochial interest in attempting to determine what impact all of this will have upon the National Guard.

For a variety of reasons—some of them more intuitive than based on evidence—we think the signs are good.

It seems to us quite significant that this Administration, certainly in the context of the defense issues, is not turning its back on the wisdom of the critics who provided valuable insights during the 1980 presidential election campaign. There seems to be strong evidence emerging from the statements of current Pentagon leaders of intentions to take the needed corrective actions which were recommended to hasten the return to a position of military significance on par with the forces of the Soviet Union.

In 1980, a bi-partisan group of approximately 30 Senatorial and Congressional staff members with expertise in areas involving national security and foreign policy produced a book titled, "A Program For Military Independence." It was a book which was, at the time of its appearance, commented upon favorably in this space. It is a book which is being read with great care these days within the policy-making areas of the Pentagon. It is a book—it should be stated from the outset—which challenged the imbalance of a situation in which almost $500 billion was spent on social programs and general government but only $45.3 billion on investment in military strength.

The authors set forth the contention that the Army, during the 1981-1985 timeframe—should be increased by five divisions. Today we are starting to hear references to a 28-Division Army with two of the new divisions to be in the Guard (which would be an increase of four divisions). The authors postulated that the current Air Force is too small to meet potential mission requirements and recommended that four new tactical fighter wings be added—two of them to be in the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve.

It was also stated in this same thesis that:

- **Failing to equip reserve component units is a breach of faith with the soldiers manning these units and contributes significantly to low morale in many poorly supplied and neglected line companies in cities and towns throughout the country.**
  And that....
- **There should be no illusion that reserve component units would not be needed in the event of a major military emergency.**

What the perceptive authors of "A Program For Military Independence" set down on paper a year ago strikes us today as being something very close to a blueprint for tomorrow.

What about the National Guard as a National Defense Priority?

It seems more than likely that what will come out of the new initiatives is more responsibility, increased challenge and broader opportunity for the Guard. It seems likely that both the Air Guard and the Army Guard will be enlarged. It seems likely that the Army Guard will be challenged (and we hope provided the resources) to

(Continued from page 38)

NATIONAL GUARD

Official publication of the National Guard Association of the United States
October 1981 Volume XXXV, Number 10




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Features

Departments

COVER: The Canadian Air Reserve Otter is just one type of many aircraft in its inventory to meet its mission. Design by Tom Powers of Duffy & Assoc.

NATIONAL GUARD, October 1981. The NATIONAL GUARD Magazine (ISSN 0163-3945) is published monthly, by the National Guard Association of the United States, with editorial and advertising offices at One Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Telephone (202) 789-0031. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. All members of the NGAUS receive NATIONAL GUARD. Nonmember subscriptions: $4 per year domestic; $5 per year foreign. Bulk rate for 100 or more copies of one issue to the same address: 25¢ each. Single copies 50¢. The Editor welcomes original articles bearing on national defense, with emphasis on application to or implications for the National Guard. Manuscripts and artwork must be accompanied by return postage; no responsibility is assumed for safe handling. Opinions expressed by authors do not necessarily represent official NGAUS positions or policy. Likewise, publication of advertising cannot be deemed an endorsement thereof by this Association or its members.