



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THANKS, CONGRESS

Recently, one of our colleagues reported a conversation with a senior action officer on the Pentagon staff. Their discussion concerned an issue that had been resolved in a manner which could be construed as hurtful to the reserve program. Our colleague noted that the issue might very well come back to the Pentagon in the form of an inquiry from a member of Congress.

"That's what's wrong with the reserves," was the immediate reply. "As soon as there is a little disagreement you run to Congress." Exactly.

A long series of events over many decades has taught—not just those of us who labor in the vineyards today, but generations of predecessors in the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) leadership—that the U.S. Congress is the best and most reliable friend the National Guard has.

Over the years we have had "alliances" that have ebbed and waned with the shifting of interests, but Congress has been a staunch and steadfast supporter.

NGAUS, no more and no less than any other association in the Capitol Hill environment, exerts no secret pressure on the members of the Congress. But when there is a problem of any sort we will get a fair hearing and our side of the story will be told.

What brings this rather dramatically to mind as this issue of NATIONAL GUARD goes to press is the fact that the House/Senate Conference Committee on the fiscal year 1983 Defense Authorization Bill agreed upon add-ons to the tune of more than \$539 million for the Army and Air National Guard. To be candid, this is in the neighborhood of about 45 percent of what NGAUS identified as a minimal priority program to help the Guard obtain the resources needed to attain desired levels of combat readiness.

Notwithstanding the immense shortfalls we all know so well, the action of the second session of the 97th Congress including these add-ons to the FY 83 Authorization is an important article of faith and a significant testimony to congressional commitment to the worthiness not merely of the National Guard, but of the Total Force Policy.

Last month in this space we sounded the alarm that the first signs were beginning to emerge that the Total Force Policy was coming under attack. This remains a matter of serious concern and there is nothing to be gained by adopting an ostrich-like posture.

There is good and sound reason why the preponderance of Congress supports the National Guard and supports the Total Force Policy. It may be useful, from time to time, to review the bidding.

Our nation has become—like it or not—a world power, with a world power's obligations. Among these obligations we regard the most essential to be the ability to secure and to maintain the best interests of the United States. This has become a truly complex matter in a complex world.

Despite the many blessings that have been bestowed upon our land, we have learned something of the incredible costs involved in global responsibility, and we have learned something of the limitations that must be placed even on this nation with its enormous wealth and abundance of resources.

Among the things we have learned, for example, is that we cannot sustain on a full-time basis the range of active forces, which would be needed to sustain the various scenarios in which U.S. forces might be called upon to fight to protect U.S. national interests.

How fortunate it is that in the original expressions of the federalism that

characterized the birth of this nation, the Founding Fathers saw the potential debilitating effect of huge standing armies and expressed a preference for a system that would provide for the use of militia, thereby insuring the involvement of Americans from all walks of life in great American undertakings.

The genius of the Total Force Policy is that it began—back in the summer of 1970 and to start going into effect in fiscal year 1971—to tailor the U.S. military strategy to the U.S. national psyche and the U.S. national spirit. It took cognizance of the need for a national consensus to insure public support of goals to protect the freedom of the U.S. and at the same time to sustain western civilization, culture and values.

Each time the Congress lends its name to "add-ons" to help improve the combat readiness of the National Guard, it is recognition of the "real world" role that has been prescribed for the National Guard. We believe it is also recognition of how much more the Guard could be expected to do if the necessary resources were provided within established DoD programs. And it is a reminder that although what we call the Total Force Policy is a product of our time it is the implementation of a notion, which goes back to the infancy of our republic.

When Alexander Hamilton, writing as *Publius* in "The Federalist Papers," wrote of the need for "good militia," he had in mind trained soldiers of the states who in comparison with regulars would be "little, if any, inferior to them in discipline and the use of arms, who stand ready to defend their own rights and those of their fellow citizens."

It is upon such sturdy ground, not the mere rhetoric of the day, that the Total Force Policy is based—and this more than anything is why it has the support of the Congress.

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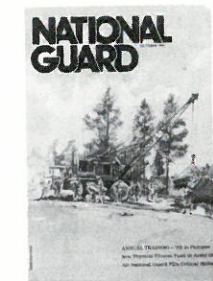
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COVER: Annual Training 1982 provided a wide variety of training to enhance the Army and Air Guard's readiness. Here, the 31st Engineer Company of the Alabama Army National Guard lifts a pontoon bridge at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. Cover photo by Sergeant First Class Felix Dudley, 131st PAD, A1ARNG.

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