



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

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## DEFINING MILITARY READINESS

Much dust has been raised around the country by the congressional report that alleges that military readiness has slipped, rather than improved, in the last four years. This conclusion has been "viewed with alarm" in some quarters, prompting defense-spending critics to question the Pentagon's spending priorities.

A close reading of this three-volume report reveals several things. The first is that so much has been deleted for security reasons that drawing very many conclusions at all about the state of readiness from the unclassified version is questionable. Some of the sweeping criticisms of readiness written by staff members of the defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee remain in the text, but the facts and figures that presumably back them up are deleted.

A second conclusion, pointed out by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger in his critique of the study, is that the statistics were assembled mostly in 1982, and to some extent in 1983, but the report wasn't made public for some reason until this summer. That makes much of the substantiating information three or four years old. We in the National Guard can sympathize with Department of Defense (DoD) officials, having suffered our share of slings and arrows about readiness and mobilization over the years based on outdated information.

However, the basic conclusion we form after reading this report is that DoD has absorbed a heavy dose of criticism for doing with its money just about what we'd recommend if asked: procure hardware and leave the "softer" supply items until another time.

In 1981, the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) decided to emphasize as its first priority the procurement of major end-items of equipment. We concluded that unless this equipment was on hand in units at the time of some future mobilization, it was highly unlikely that it would ever be

obtained during the decisive period of war or international emergency. We have not changed our thinking.

With this conclusion in mind, consider two of the major criticisms of readiness contained in this House report. The report criticizes shortages of war reserve stocks of ammunition, fuel and other supplies. And it criticizes the shortage of MOS-qualified personnel in all components, active, Guard and Reserve.

It is true that a lack of ammunition could be a war-stopper on the battlefield. What also is true, however, is that ammunition can be procured on much shorter notice than tanks, artillery pieces, fighters and other aircraft.

The report also criticizes the shortage of operations and maintenance money. There is no question that, given a finite amount of money provided by Congress for defense, choices have had to be made between procurement of major items of equipment and O&M funding. Commanders at all levels would like to see more money for training ammunition, more simulation devices, more flying hours, more frequent training in an NBC environment, more travel to good training areas and more major exercises.

The question here is one of choices. Given limited money, what should be done: buy equipment or spend money training troops and aircrews on aging equipment and systems, rather than replacing those systems? We submit the proper answer, unless Congress makes much greater amounts of money available, is to press on with equipment procurement.

\* \* \*

The House subcommittee report does one good thing: It focuses some attention on the current system of unit status reports, or C-ratings as we know them. Perhaps without intending to, the report points out some of the faults with the system, particularly in the active Army and Army Guard.

However, where this and the congressional report's comments about readiness fall apart—and this applies to the Air Force as well—is that C-ratings do not reflect the type of equipment on hand in units unless it clearly is rated non-deployable by Army or Air Force definition. This latter circumstance is why all nine Army Guard combat divisions are rated C-4 "not ready," a commentary not so much on their state of training as the fact that none of the divisions has deployable air defense weapons issued. And none are in sight.

Until Vulcan and Chaparral systems are procured and issued to these divisions, they will remain C-4 with no hope of an improved rating. Yet, these same units might be rated C-3 or C-2 if they happened to fall in on a full POMCUS set. (POMCUS being the Army's division equipment sets pre-positioned in Europe.)

How one evaluates readiness frequently involves a conclusion about whether the glass is half empty or half full. No one would say the United States has completely solved all the defense problems that grew out of the decade of neglect and defense-spending cutbacks that followed the Vietnam War. However, it is instructive to think back to the four years discussed in the Addabbo committee's report. That was the year of Army Chief of Staff Edward C. Meyer's "hollow Army."

For the Army Guard, it was long before the issue of M-1 and M-60A3 tanks, ITVs and the beginning of training cycles through the National Training Center. For the Air Guard, it was long before the first F-15s and F-16s were in sight, long before the first C-141s were announced and before the reengining of the KC-135. And it certainly was a significant psychological period before the Army Guard shot over 400,000 and the Air Guard over 100,000 in strength.

This report may be accurate statistically, but it is an accurate report of conditions in the late 1970s, not of trends in the mid-1980s.

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COVER: The backpack and M-16 adapted with an M-203 grenade launcher says it all for annual training '84. Army and Air Guardsmen have completed another year of training to meet their combat readiness requirements. Photo, LTC Bill E. Burk, TNANG. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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