



MG Robert F. Ensslin Jr., President, NGAUS

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## THE FUTURE THREAT

As was eloquently pointed out by our colleague, MG T. Eston Marchant of South Carolina, in the August issue of this magazine, the size of US military forces since World War II has been predicated mainly on the danger of the Soviet threat. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in December 1989, that threat has changed.

What does one do, then, to define a new threat dangerous enough to justify a large standing army? This is the dilemma currently being faced by Department of Defense planners. One can hear of all sorts of innovative and unusual uses for military forces being proposed.

From our perspective the view is focused more narrowly. It is directed toward keeping intact the force structure of today's Army and Air National Guard. We believe very strongly that a good case can be made for this because it is in the best interests of all concerned. It provides the States with the forces needed by the governors, as proven over many years; it provides significant value at the national level. Our force structure is a powerful and cost-effective alternative to the Standing Army the nation cannot budget for in peacetime.

To understand the cyclical nature of Defense spending, this essay must begin with the end of World War II 46 years ago. Two facts are paramount. First, the United States moved to demobilize its military very quickly—as quickly as the units could be brought home. The Army had 90 divisions in the summer of 1945 as the war came to a conclusion. By 1947, it had one combat division (although a number of additional "occupation" divisions were on duty in Germany and Japan). Second, the Army had moved aggressively, beginning in 1944 under the cold hand of GEN Lesley G. McNair, to disestablish the National Guard after the war.

In 1948, the Berlin Blockade was the first episode in the Cold War. However, even by 1950, when North Korea invaded and nearly overran

South Korea, the United States was woefully unprepared to resist such aggression. Between 1945 and 1947, Americans had become so convinced that little national defense was needed, that President Harry S Truman's decision to demobilize the Army was widely supported politically and electorally.

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What are the parallels between the late 1940s and today? Two suggest themselves. First, we have just concluded a successful war. Of course, the two wars were very different both in length and, to a lesser degree, in outcome. But the goals of the two were very different, too.

Second, and probably more to the point, the perceived threat diminished in 1989 and 1990 in a way very similar to 1945 and 1946. With the unification of Germany and the counterrevolutions in Poland and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the threat of a Soviet invasion of Germany west of the Rhine has shrunk to near zero. At the very least, the warning time for such an invasion has been greatly extended.

However, an interesting thing happened on the way to the peace dividend that disconcerted many Americans. This was the coup attempt against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev that nearly succeeded. Had the hard-line Communist leaders who nearly seized power in Moscow succeeded, we could have been plunged back into some version of the Cold War, albeit without the Red Army's proximity to the Rhine that existed before—even considering the fact that several hundred thousand Soviet troops remained and remain in former East Germany. However, what this coup attempt and the chaos, secessions and threats of a Russian civil war demonstrate is that we live in an unstable and dangerous world. The United States is the world's great power. However, even a diminished Soviet Union shed of a few of its republics remains a dangerous military force that demands some deterrence.

Some DoD leaders argue that the Guard and Reserve forces historically dedicated to NATO should simply be deactivated, as the active Army, Navy and Air Forces are drawn down.

Our answer, however, is "not so fast!" for a couple reasons. First, it takes perhaps six months to create an active component unit from scratch, but it takes five years to organize and train a Guard unit. It is imperative that the nation have a better handle on the future threat(s) before moving to deactivate Guard units that could be needed two or three years from now, as they were in 1950, for example.

In 1948, the perceived threats to the United States' national security interests were small. The Soviet Union and China had been wartime allies. Our World War II enemies were prostrate. From what possible direction could any threat come that would require substantial military forces? We did not predict well in 1948-50.

In January 1990, the emerging truth was that the Soviet Union was in disarray internally and retrenching externally, with the Warsaw Pact collapsing. Yet, just seven months later the fourth largest army in the world, Iraq's, was on the march; its military dictator, the megalomaniacal tyrant Saddam Hussein, had a vision of a Greater Arab nation under his rule, a third superpower that, with ample oil money to buy arms, would rule the Middle East from the Mediterranean to India and from the Soviet Union to the Arabian Sea.

On the heels of this, of course, was the coup d'etat by the gang of eight in the Kremlin. Given that event, short though it was, the United States can ill afford to disarm.

We don't hear much about the "peace dividend" these days; it may have been a casualty of the Persian Gulf War. However, the early '90s sentiment to cut Defense by a third and spend the money on domestic concerns remains strong in many quarters.

Just as it was in 1948.

*National Guard*

# NATIONAL GUARD

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### Pacific Memorial Planned 16

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the United States' plunge into World War II. To honor all National Guard veterans who have served in the Pacific, the National Guard is developing a memorial at the Punchbowl Cemetery in Honolulu, Hawaii.

### Exploring the National Guard 22

Across the country, more and more National Guard Explorers posts are cropping up as the number of youths interested in a Guard career increases. Here NATIONAL GUARD Magazine visits two such posts.

### Developing Air Tactics 26

DESERT STORM may be behind us for now, but those at the schoolhouse for teaching weapons and tactics for the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve in Tucson, Arizona, continue to plan curriculae around lessons learned.

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Milton Atchison Reckord, although less well-known than other Maryland military figures, left a deep imprint on American military policy and helped save the Guard from extinction following World War II.

### Sam Houston and His Fight 34

Sam Houston, for whom the famous Texas city is named, was already a legend when the Civil War broke out. Author Bruce Brager looks at Houston's fight against Texas secession in 1861.



## COVER:

Brandie "Sam" Brown, a member of Mississippi's National Guard Explorers Post 2108, rappels down a tower owned by Boy Scouts of America. There are more than 80 National Guard Explorers posts throughout the country. Photo, Maj Jean Marie Beall. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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