

A retreat from reality

UNITED States defense policies are increasingly being called into question for what many Americans perceive as a growing weakness in our military posture vis-a-vis expanding Soviet military power. The criticism is coming, not from a crackpot fringe but from respected and knowledgeable persons across the political spectrum. It appears to be based on a fear that political expediency and resistance to higher defense spending, rather than need, are being the real determinants of U.S. policy.

The apprehension was apparent in a little-noticed statement, in July, by Illinois Congressman Melvin Price, chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. After citing recent decisions to cancel the B-1 bomber, halt SRAM missile production, terminate production of Minuteman III ICBMs, and rescind funds for another nuclear carrier, Chairman Price said:

"It is rare indeed when any nation foregoes the development of the most advanced weapons systems it is capable of producing. It is wholly unique for a nation whose potential adversary is producing new weapons at an undiminished rate. . . ."

He went on to say: "I do not like to overstate the case and I would not agree with those who say we are practicing unilateral disarmament. But certainly it can be said that we are practicing unilateral arms restraint."

Apprehension also is mounting over what has been termed the "short war strategy" for defending Western Europe in concert with other NATO nations. It's a strategy based on a single eventuality—that the Soviet Union and/or Warsaw Pact forces make a rapid, intensely violent thrust across Europe aimed at destroying the NATO forces in, at most, 60 to 90 days.

What started out as one possible strategy for NATO among several has now attained wide acceptance among defense staffers, to the extent that in their preoccupation

with the short war concept, they have nearly excluded all other scenarios.

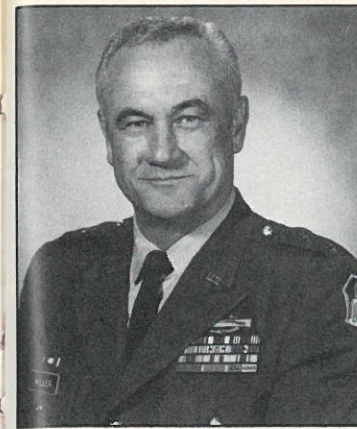
"Short war" has its attractive aspects to those who are unwilling to fully fund national defense. It can only make effective use of manpower that is trained, units that are ready, and equipment that is available, at war's outset. That almost insures it will be a low-cost war! It makes little concession to the possibility that whatever the outcome of a Warsaw Pact thrust, the conflict might turn into the protracted kind, and that staying power might become a critical factor in the outcome.

The controversy over defense policy rose to the level of a furor early in August when newspaper columnists Evans and Novak charged national security advisors with readying a "stalemate" strategy that would concede one-third of West Germany to a Soviet attack.

In a column purportedly based on notes made by a participant in a top-level White House session, Evans-Novak attributed a statement to Presidential National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski that "it is not possible in the current political environment to gain support in the United States for procurement of the conventional forces required to assure that NATO could maintain territorial integrity if deterrence fails; therefore, we should adopt a 'stalemate' strategy."

Brzezinski allegedly described a "stalemate" strategy as "a strategy of falling back and leaving the Soviets to face the political consequences of their aggression."

These are harsh allegations, damaging to U.S. credibility in NATO — particularly in West Germany — whether they are accurate in every detail or not. They were immediately denied by White House Press Secretary Jody Powell, by the State Department, by Brzezinski, and by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown,



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who had to face a highly concerned Senate Armed Services subcommittee the day the column appeared.

Secretary Brown presented a scholarly prepared statement on his recent efforts to make the NATO military alliance more effective. Of greater interest to the senators was the earlier allegation that we were secretly committing our nation to a pullback rather than an all-out defense of our NATO allies.

I believe most Guardsmen share Chairman Price's apprehension over our policy of "unilateral arms restraint." We likewise are worried over, as he described it, "the possibility of creating in the Soviet military mind the perception of a degradation in U.S. capability."

We have a deep-seated feeling that the "short war" strategy is nothing less than a strategic retreat from reality. We call to mind words recently uttered by senior Army officers that "we can't win a 'short war' — we can only keep from losing." Which appears to us to be a losing proposition from the start!

Beyond that, any policy that's based on a belief that Americans aren't willing to commit the necessary funds and resources to their own defense, and that of their allies, is a defeatist policy at the very best. If Americans aren't willing to provide funding for an adequate defense, it's because public officials and national leaders have not done an effective job of defining national defense needs.

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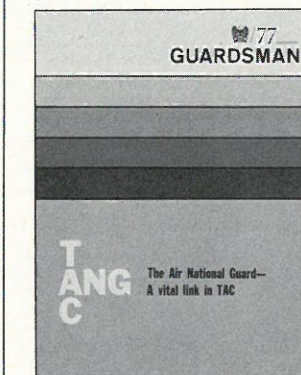
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