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The Terrible Trade-Off: Credibility for Expediency

or apt to become available "will not allow us to implement fully all needed programs."

In other words, the Administration, Defense and Army apparently do not intend to buy additional equipment to accommodate the POMCUS expansion. Instead, they will obtain what is needed by taking it away from units whose readiness already is reduced by equipment shortages.

What has led us into such a predicament, that we must sacrifice long-term security to satisfy short-term requirements? The reasons are many, and on some our views are widely at variance with those of Defense leaders in the current Administration. There was the Vietnam war, for example, with its prodigious consumption of equipment and other essentials, including depletion of our war reserve stocks. Then there was a succession of Middle East crises, prompting the U.S. to ship huge stores of replacement equipment to various participants.

More recently, U.S. defense leaders have focused their efforts so narrowly on military preparations for a short, extremely violent NATO war, that they have virtually ignored the possibility of a more protracted NATO conflict, or of other conflicts elsewhere in the world. It is that almost exclusive emphasis on a short war concept, coupled with an unwillingness to fund for such a concept, that places us in our present box.

Objective is to win

This Association, too, is concerned lest we and our NATO partners be unable to stand against a sudden, massive attack from the East. We, too, believe that our forward defense line in Europe must be strengthened. But what have we gained if we manage to survive those first few weeks of destructive, high-intensity combat only to find ourselves exhausted and lacking the ready, deployable, equipped Guard/Reserve forces that would enable us to carry on as long as is necessary, to win? If the threat is as real and as serious as defense leaders say it is — and we think they have been assessing the situation more accurately than many are willing to give them credit for — why can't this nation afford the arms and equipment that are essential to

its security?

Secretary Brown recently told a reporter that it's a matter of priorities. "Until we are in a much better position with regard to in-place forces or rapidly deployable forces — I mean one or two weeks — we'd be mistaken to ease off on that and work on the long-term, or six-month, issue."

All right. But, what happens in the meantime to the *one-half* of the Army's deployable forces that are contained in the Army Guard and Army Reserve? The answer is plain. First, training will be weakened. Second, enlistment and reenlistment programs will be hampered by what appears to be a downgrading of Guard and Reserve units. Third, the time frame in which our units can deploy to NATO will be lengthened still further.

(It seems probable that early-deploying Active units would be expected to leave their equipment behind for Guard/Reserve units to take possession of. But even with some kind of guarantee from the Army, there's little assurance that the equipment would not be diverted to other uses before it ever reached Guard divisions. And anyone who has ever gone through such a transfer under the hectic pressures of a deployment know that it's a stopgap system at best.)

Perhaps more seriously, the Guard's credibility as a viable, first-line force will again suffer a blow, of a kind and severity with the harm resulting from the Johnson-McNamara decision not to mobilize the Guard for Vietnam.

This doesn't attempt to delve into the broader questions surrounding an expansion of POMCUS. Vulnerability to Soviet capture or destruction has been repeatedly debated. So has the unwisdom of making at least half the Army's combat equipment unavailable for use outside Europe.

We recognize and support the need to improve our ability to halt a sudden, Soviet *blitzkrieg* into Western Europe. If a weighing of the available options results in a national policy decision to expand POMCUS stocks, so be it. But expanding pre-positioned stocks without programming and funding for replenishment equipment poses a greater risk than the nation should accept. In our view, it's no more than a poor expedient.

The Army National Guard has been so intent on trying to overcome readiness-sapping manpower shortages that another serious threat has crept up almost unnoticed. It's the Department of Defense/Army decision that Guard and Reserve units must give up some of their scarce equipment to help bolster pre-positioned equipment stocks in Europe.

General Bernard W. Rogers, Army chief of staff, first unveiled the plan in public at a meeting last Fall. It is absolutely essential, he said, that we "improve our forward defense" in Europe against the possibility of a short-notice, Soviet-led Warsaw Pact thrust. Similar comments have been made, before and since, by other U.S. defense leaders, most particularly by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown.

In the Army view, that means expanding our POMCUS stockage from two to five division-size equipment packages. "POMCUS", for those unacquainted with the esoteric shorthand of the Pentagon, stands for "Pre-positioning of Materiel Configured in Unit Sets." If refers to the equipment, assembled in division packages, maintained in West Germany in readiness for immediate use by troops hastily airlifted from the United States in the first days of a NATO-Warsaw Pact confrontation.

The needed equipment for a POMCUS expansion would have to come from stocks presently held by U.S.-based units — Active, Guard and Reserve — or by diverting deliveries earmarked until now for the Guard and Reserve. General Rogers said resources currently available

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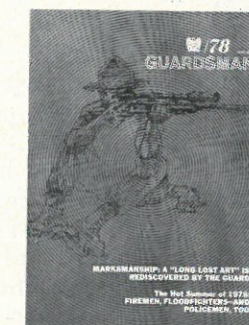
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