



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A NATIONAL FIXATION: IS BIGGER ALWAYS BETTER?

From all appearances it seems that we in the Guard, along with other service personnel, will soon be saying "so long" to an old friend who has been in the inventory so long as to be almost a member of the family. The Pentagon announced not long ago it was seeking a 9mm replacement for the standard .45-caliber pistol which has been in the Army since 1911.

The famed Colt .45 (actually the brainchild of John M. Browning) came into the Army because of the experiences of U.S. fighting men in the Philippines. It was observed, during the period when Army troops were engaged in putting down the Insurrection, that when the tough Moro tribesmen were hit by .38 caliber bullets they frequently kept right on fighting. What was needed was a handgun that would put an adversary out of action the instant he was hit.

The Browning design was adopted by the Army, after intensive testing under all sorts of conditions, as the Army's official handgun in 1911. It was always said, axiomatically, that the average soldier with average training could hit what he shot at with a Colt .45. Improvements in the automatic feature by WWI brought it to the stage where a well-trained individual could snap off 21 rounds in 12 seconds. (In this operation, the recoil of each discharge would eject the empty shell and load in a fresh one.)

Nearly half a million of the Colt .45s had been produced by the time the U.S. entered WWI. Guardsmen carried the official Army handgun to the Mexican border in 1916 and to France in 1917 and 1918. It was primarily a weapon for officers and NCOs, particularly in units where it was likely that an enemy target would be engaged at the range of 25 yards or so. At that range, a shooter in a combat situation cannot afford anything but the best—and that is precisely what the Colt .45 has been for a full seven decades.

It is said that the Army is looking for a lighter weapon, and one that will use the same ammunition as the predominant weapon in the NATO inventory. Aside from the stirring question as to the role of a handgun in modern warfare, there seems to be in all this the nagging reminder of the old adage that—"if it ain't broke, why fix it?"

But the fact of the matter is that there is a great national propensity for research and development (R&D). We are constantly drawn to new and exotic equipment and weapons concepts which might, in the words of James Fallows, author of *National Defense*, "give ten Americans the strength of ten thousand." This may indeed be a laudable goal. But it is nothing to cheer about when costs are driven so high that procurement is severely limited by the fear that something better will come along and make a given system obsolete in mid-stream.

There is a special problem for the National Guard in all this. Limited procurement goals—the hedge against new systems being overtaken by newer technology—is quickly translated into procurement for the active force only.

One military association publication recently noted that in a discussion of post-mobilization equipment redistribution management, an Army logistician stated: "the forecast for equipment fill of shortages (in the Guard and Reserve) is not good." Procurement objectives, it seems obvious, are not designed to buy equipment for Guard and Reserve on the same basis as active force requirements.

We are caught, it would appear, between the rock of the high cost of new equipment, and the hard place of galloping high technology.

Obviously, we aren't going to lay claim to any special "smarts" in these issues. We simply feel it is essential to go back to the basic notion that at any given moment the entire force—and this includes the

National Guard—must be equipped with an adequate supply of combat standard, mission-capable weapons and vehicles. The nation, it seems to us, cannot afford to run the risks which are inherent in having so substantial a part of the wartime force as the Guard waiting around for the much-heralded "cascade" of today's equipment when tomorrow's comes into the active inventory.

To look facts squarely in the eye, there will always be some part of the force waiting for "the newest and the latest" to be delivered. But everyone has to fight. And all the fighters need to have fighting equipment which can be used on the battlefield. This is a long-winded way of saying that we doubt there ever will be a time when everyone is equipped with exactly the latest equipment at the same time.

Even as the new M-1 tank begins to come off the production line, it is evident that the M-60, in some form, will be around for many years to come. *Defense Week* recently quoted the Army Chief of Staff on the importance and significance of the fact that foreign sales programs were keeping the M-60A3 production line open. He evidently regarded this as important to the readiness of the Army.

On the Air side, there is talk from time to time of forming a strategic airlift flying unit through the acquisition of supertransports not now needed by big commercial carriers that have cutback flying operations. This is the sort of ingenuity which could give the RDF a major shot in the arm.

Throughout the system we need to identify items which, with product improvement, can be slated for expedited production so that troops can be equipped now and not at some vague time in the future.

Bluntly, we cannot wait for that day—which will probably never come—when all of our forces, including the Guard and Reserve, will receive 100

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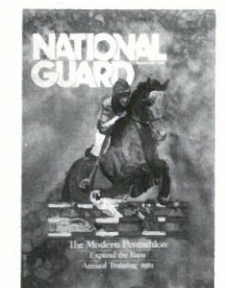
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COVER: Michael Burley, in practice for the Modern Pentathlon, takes his horse over a jump. Art by Tom Powers of Bill Duffy Associates.

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