



Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## HIGH-LEVEL ATTACK ON TOTAL FORCE POLICY

When the prestigious organization known as the Atlantic Council of the United States speaks, Washington tends to listen, and carefully. Over the course of a year the council—established 21 years ago to promote (as it says in its literature) “mutually advantageous ties between Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand”—publishes *Policy Papers* that are widely acclaimed for their scholarship and acumen.

They have, in the past year, examined “U.S. Energy Policy and U.S. Foreign Policy in the 1980’s”; “The Successor Generation, Its Challenges and Responsibilities”; and “U.S. Policy Towards Canada: The Neighbor We Cannot Take for Granted.”

These are weighty and serious subjects—as is their most recent product, “Toward a Consensus on Military Service,” an offering of the council’s Working Group on Military Service headed by General (Retired) Andrew J. Goodpaster and Lloyd H. Elliott, the president of the George Washington University. This *Policy Paper* is actually a stalking horse for a book to be published by the council this month (September, 1982).

The appearance of the *Paper* attracted the attention of the media because it delves deeply into two favorite controversial topics: (1) the perception of racial imbalance in the all-volunteer force, and (2) the suggestion for a return to conscription.

But the underlying purpose of the *Paper* appears to be a signal attack on the Total Force Policy. The *Paper* bemoans the shift of some Army structure from the active to the reserve forces and strongly suggests, at the bottom line, that the time has come (“the only adequate remedy”) to increase the authorized strength of the active Army by 200,000.

This review of the current national strategy calls cautionary attention to

the current role of the Guard and Reserve (“unprecedented and crucial reliance on the timely availability of reserves”), notes the high percentage of ground combat forces that come from the Army National Guard and gloomily concludes: “It is far from clear that the reserve forces as presently organized, equipped and trained, can meet that requirement.”

This Association has on many occasions called attention to the crisis of equipment. And it is evident that the Reagan Administration is trying to do something about this shortfall, for without adequate equipment units of the Guard and Reserve probably cannot meet the requirement. (See “View From the Hill,” page 12).

The *Paper* succinctly summarizes the cornerstone of the Total Force Policy. It notes that “the Army’s ability to perform its basic mission will thus depend largely on the strength and readiness of the organized units in the Selected Reserve. But in both components of the Army Selected Reserve, the National Guard and Army Reserve, manning levels have fallen substantially short of their wartime requirements and equipment training has been far short of adequate.”

Inexplicably, the *Paper* takes two sides on one issue. In one place it says: ● “For the Army reserves as a whole, it appears on balance that there will be significant shortfalls from stated requirements for the foreseeable future under present manning policies.”

In another place, it notes: ● “Despite impressive gains in the Army Selected Reserve strength, we find no program that will bring it to adequate trained strength before 1990.”

The first conclusion is a flat untruth; we find the second to be unreportable. The *Paper* offers no evidence to sustain either of these ludicrous conclusions—in the light of Guard and Reserve recruiting success in

1981-82. But having dismissed the ability of the Guard and Reserve to attain “adequate trained strength” the *Paper* states in its No. 1 “finding” that DoD should “reexamine the Army’s immediate and major reliance on its reserve components in a defense emergency.”

We also find it interesting, if somewhat appalling, that a “dissent” signed by several members of the Working Group makes an even stronger case for abandonment of the Total Force Policy.

The “dissent” notes that “the Army reserve forces are incapable of adequately fulfilling their rapid reinforcement role. The *Policy Paper* implies that this deficiency may be remedied without changing the current distribution of units between the Army’s active and reserve forces. This is wishful thinking. The problem is not fixable without structural changes because the problem is congenital, and because it stems from the limitations on training and facilities which necessarily characterizes the reserves. These limitations particularly apply to certain types of combat units, especially (but not exclusively) those of more than battalion size.”

It must now be assumed that the warning shots have been fired across the bow of the Total Force strategy. The authors of this proposal to turn back the clock have not made a very impressive case but they have a very impressive publicity capability. On the issue of enlarging the size of active forces at this moment in history, we think they would do well to heed some of their own words taken from the foreword of their paper:

“The United States today needs a broader and deeper consensus on the West’s strategic position and on the role and needs of the military service in deterring war and protecting our vital interests.”

To this we can only add—Amen.

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10

## Features

### 10 LTG WEBER GIVES PARTING COMMENTS

Former Chief announces his new position with FORSCOM.

### 13 AIR GUARD COMMUNICATORS TEST NEW ORI

Air Guard communications squadrons developing an operational readiness inspection.

### 20 GUARD COMMANDS ACTIVE COMPONENT UNITS

Increased reliance on Guard means increased Guard command and control.



17



22



26

### 17 GUARDSMAN AT MILITARY MEDICAL SCHOOL

Second Lieutenant Gayle Northcross is the first Guard student at the Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences.

### 22 OCEAN AdVENTURE '82

Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands Guard units participate in Caribbean Basin exercise.

### 26 NATIONAL GUARD AT GALLANT EAGLE

California's 40th Division provided the opposition forces to face the 82d Airborne Division at GALLANT EAGLE

## Departments

### President's Message

Views From the Field 2

Washington Tie-Lines 4

Newsbreaks 5

View From the Hill 12

People in the News 31

Posting the Guard 35

Memo for the Record 40

### Inside Front Cover



COVER: The Army Guard from Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands and California joined the Air Guard from several states in two major Joint Chiefs of Staff exercises this year that included testing troops from the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. Design by Geo. W. King Co.

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