AJF America's defense muscles over have felt a sudden surge of pentane strength, they did in February in the form of roughly 23,000 new National Guardians and Air Guardians.

This almost incredible figure—enlisted during the 22 days of February culminating in Washington's Birthday—has bolstered the strength of the Nation's senior Component Civilian force far beyond the hopeful expectations of even NGB officials.

And as a result, the highest civilian and military officials of the Government, as well as the public at large, have had reason to sit up and take notice of a component that, frequently against odds, surges those who don't know it very well, by turning-in-smart performance in lieu of fancy promises.

It now looks as though the National Guard may reach its strength goal of 477,000—477,100 Army and 70,400 Air—by the end of this Fiscal Year, 30 June. The end of last January saw 442,01 on the Army and Air Guard's rolls, a figure indicating a/A steady increase from the slumpish Summer months.

A moderate note, however, has been sounded by some NGB officials. Taking inevitable attrition into account—drop-outs due to all kinds of causes (of which a major one is enlisted into the Regular Services)—they expect the month-end strength to show about a 12,000-man drop.

On the other hand, there are many indications that the effects of the "Muster Day" achievement will continue to be felt in the form of abnormal strength gains for several months to come, for evidence indicates that many who weren't in a position to join on the day of the drive itself, were "signed-up" in readiness for a further try.

One thing is certain: the National Guard's recruiting efforts have been felt, not only in the gain columns of strength reports, but by the whole Defense Establishment.

Significance of this impressive achievement extends far beyond the mere numerical totals, however.

The total Federal appropriation for recruiting support through the National Guard Bureau in this Fiscal Year is $3,200,000. This is an increase over the previous year's appropriation, which ran to $2,900,000. The increase, however, reflects the growing importance of the Guard as a regular force, capable of providing trained and equipped manpower in reserve or peacetime situations.

Contrasted with that is a direct allocation of somewhere around $800,000 for Air Reserve recruiting alone. (The Air Force Reserve has its own $300,000.) It is difficult to calculate how much that works out to, per "body," in light of complicating factors: large number of personnel inducted into the Reserve in the first few months of operation for which little or no planning was done, etc. A rough estimate is, that approximately 30,000 new inductees have been added to the Reserve to date.

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The Reserve force is now at a strength of 60,000, of which 70% are on active duty. The remainder are on a variety of reserve status, including full-time. The Reserve is now capable of providing trained and equipped manpower in a variety of roles, including direct support to the active forces, training, and other functions.

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