



A WORN-OUT PHRASE VERSUS A RECORD OF PERFORMANCE

Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, speaking to officers and men of Massachusetts' 102d Tactical Fighter Wing in France, just a few days before Christmas:

"Your deployment has made military history . . . we are all proud of you and your magnificent performance . . . Chancellor Adenauer wrote President Kennedy that, in his opinion, the prime factor influencing Khrushchev in his slowdown on the Berlin crisis was the swift, decisive buildup of American forces."

A Regular Army Colonel, speaking of one of the Army Guard units which became a part of his Artillery Group following its mobilization:

"If we had war tomorrow, I'd be glad to have them with me."

Gen Curtis E. LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff, describing Air Guard units ordered to duty last Fall:

"These Guard units are ready. They can fight. They can be depended upon."

Mayor Chastaine Flynt, of tiny Flowood, Fla., praising Guardsmen who saved his town from extinction during a recent flood:

"Without the National Guard, all would have been lost."

Guardsmen themselves know better than anyone that these, and many other like them, are not mere words; that the praise represents solid achievement earned by the proverbial "blood, sweat and tears" of untold thousands of individual Guardsmen, in five wars or near-wars within the memory of living Americans, in countless local emergencies.

It raises our short hairs, then, when we pick up a newspaper or news magazine and read periodically some supposed expert's suggestion by innuendo that a great and important plan to build a more effective reserve system most likely will be torpedoed by the "politically potent" National Guard. The phrase itself is bewhiskered with age and overuse, and the implication it makes is about as applicable today as a good, rousing blast at government bumbling in the Spanish-American War. It was in the aftermath of that conflict that the Army and the Guard, working together, commenced reshaping the Guard along the lines it still retains, as modern, as progressive, as free from political taint, as a vital force of citizen-soldiers can be.

It all depends, of course, on how you define "politics" and "political potency." In the sense of political influence as it actually exists, Guardsmen will not merely admit but will boast that they make their views known, individually

and collectively, on matters affecting National defense. They're proud of it and equally proud that their advice frequently has been accepted, because so often their advice has turned out to have been right.

Governors *do* appoint State Adjutants General; but isn't the Secretaryship of Defense or any of the Services, "political" in the same sense? The Governors likewise appoint all Guard officers, Army and Air; but doesn't the President, in an exact parallel, make all Federal officer appointments, both Regular and Reserve? More important in the real military sense, don't National Guardsmen meet the same professional criteria, attend the same Service Schools, train by the same training programs, face the same battery of inspectors using the same yardsticks for competency as other components of the Army and Air Force? They do, and they show up year after year as what Guardsmen with a penchant for slogans honestly and accurately call "the *really* Ready Reserve." At the same time, the same body of men with the same problem of fitting Guard demands into crowded personal lives, turn out time after countless time to battle floods, fires, explosions and a host of other disasters in their own localities.

The Guard's performance, in war and peace, speaks for itself.

Why, then, the periodic references to Guard "political potency" in a context that suggests something slightly reprehensible? We confess, we don't know. It suggests thought processes that are 50 years behind, or lazy, or strongly influenced by bias.

We don't apologize for serving our respective States as well as our Nation. We think that from this service we draw the operational know-how, the experience in practical leadership—and yes, the grass roots support, call it "political" if you will—which helps us to maintain effective, combat-ready units year after year, decade after decade.

In today's World, this wide spread of units, trained in meeting disaster, trained likewise in Atom Age combat, is more important to National security than it ever has been in the past. If worse comes to worst, it may be the only force in existence with dispersion enough, discipline enough, equipment enough and know-how enough to hold our shattered Nation together in the aftermath of a nuclear assault.

We only wish that we could gather the coiner of that phrase, "politically potent," and all his contemporary copiers into a Guard Platoon (perhaps a Squad would suffice) and by some magic means run them through a Guardsman's full career in a few short days.

That, we're confident, would be the end of the slogan and of the ill-informed attitude which it represents. ♦

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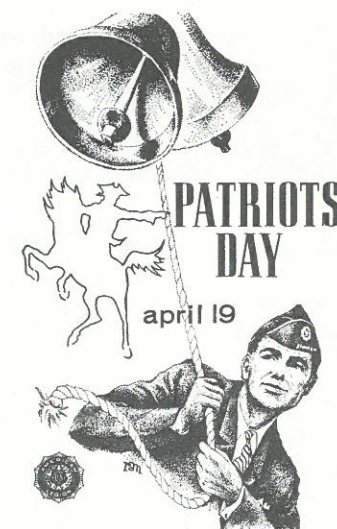
EDITORIAL:

"Politically Potent" National Guard? Inside Front Cover

DEAR GUARDSMEN: It was the forebears of today's National Guardsmen who, "alerted" by Paul Revere's immortal ride, threw back the Redcoats at Lexington and Concord on 19 April 1775. To this day, their memorable stand—a stand which played an incalculable part in the painful birth of this Nation—is observed in Massachusetts and elsewhere as "Patriots' Day."

The American Legion, Nationwide, will mark the observance this coming 19 April by ringing "Bells Across the Nation"—school bells, church bells, fire bells—bells of every kind and variety. "The bells will sound," according to National Commander Charles L. Bacon, "not as a new call to arms, but as a massive, voluntary demonstration that America is already armed—armed in unity, in spirit, and in deep moral conviction."

Guardsmen in more than 2,000 cities and towns from Puerto Rico to Alaska, conscious of their ties to those original Minutemen of Lexington and Concord and serving today actively or in "Ready Reserve" in defense of hard-won freedoms, well might join with local Legionnaires in publicizing the event and ringing their own "Bells Across the Nation."
—AGC



OUR COVER: Mobility: That's the byword in the Modern US Army—but the GIs just keep slogging-along through the mud as they have since Roman Legionnaires conquered Europe. Our cover photo shows Infantrymen from Wisconsin's 32d "Red Arrow" Division splashing through the pine forests of ever-damp Ft Lewis, Washington. (Story starts on next page).