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Callups And Complaints

THE National Guard has undergone three partial mobilizations in less than two decades, and from these can be drawn one conclusion whose implications the Guard has been slow to recognize.

It is this: Partial mobilizations, for crises like Korea, Berlin and Viet Nam, differ vastly from all-out mobilizations of the World War II type, and the problems they pose demand fresh thinking and new solutions.

The differences are evident in many areas, but two deserve our especial consideration because they inevitably arise, their adverse effects are readily predictable, and only the Guard itself can produce satisfactory solutions. These are separate but related matters of unit integrity and undesirable personal attitudes among Guardsmen themselves toward disruptive callups.

Unit integrity is an article of faith to the Guard. It produces stability, continuity and personal loyalty. Men join the Guard because they believe this will enable them to serve and fight with friends and acquaintances from their own communities. Through shared backgrounds, shared training and shared hardships, they develop a teamwork and an esprit de corps which can be produced in no other way. These, and the concept in which they are rooted, are positive values to which we attribute major importance.

But the traditional answers don't always suffice in a partial mobilization, as we learned from the callup to which many of our units responded earlier this year. In piecemeal buildups of strength like those in Korea and Viet Nam, flexibility in manpower utilization frequently becomes a critical factor in our ability to maintain adequate forces. Thus, Army and Air Force leaders considered it more beneficial to use highly trained individual Guardsmen in a replacement role, in many cases, than in the unit role.

Virtually all of the Guardsmen thus reassigned after callup have performed effectively and well, at Bases all over the World.

From this point forward, however, we must look at unit integrity in a more realistic light, as an important principle from which deviations nevertheless may have to be made, upon occasion.

Related to this is the need to make the Guard's role and responsibilities better understood by Guardsmen themselves. Our reputation again has been tarnished by the complaints of a few disgruntled individuals.

We never will be able to eliminate all such complaints. Every organization seems to have its quota of individual members for whom no answer ever will suffice. We can do much more in the future than we have in the past, however, if we provide thorough, imaginative and continuous orientations of all Guardsmen through an effective Command Information program.

For three consecutive years, the NGAUS Committee on Public Relations has made such a recommendation, emphasizing the key role played by individual Guardsmen as the Guard's best salesmen—or its most harmful critics. The validity of their recommendation was never more apparent than at present.

Those of us who have devoted a lifetime to the Guard recognize its importance to the Nation. We take pride in its accomplishments because we have the yardstick of our own long experience against which to measure those accomplishments. We understand our individual responsibilities as Guardsmen because we have borne those responsibilities throughout our lives.

Obviously, we have not been wholly successful in transmitting our own understanding and awareness to all of the young men who now fill our ranks. In the coming months, all of us—at the National Guard Bureau, at NGAUS and in the States—should give serious thought to ways in which we can overcome this information gap. ♦



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