AS WE SEE IT

HOW CAN WE DO IT?

NATIONAL GuarDsmen can be proud of their performance in the Berlin Crisis. They have proven that mobilization claims of highest mobilization-readiness in the Nation’s history were supported by accomplishments. Time between M-Day and full functioning at Army bases hundreds of miles from home, air bases an ocean away, has been measured in months, not in weeks, but in weeks.

It is evident, however, that in the very highest circles, even higher levels of readiness are expected in light of World tensions that can be expected to last for decades—unless they snap first into all-out war.

Today, we’re doing more of the things that would have been thought impossible 25 years ago. How much more advanced will be our performance 5, 10, 20, 30 years from today? Guardsmen are the ones who know best what are our capabilities, as opposed to our limitations. Guardsmen are the ones who should take the lead in hard, constructive, imaginative thinking about how—not whether—we can pull ourselves up to higher levels of combat-readiness.

We’ve got no time to tinker with bad bases. Our bases, of course.

First: Strength. Obviously units maintained at 51% to 75% of wartime strength can’t be ready to go as quickly as those at 100%.

Second: Equipment. You’re not ready until you have your essential tools.

Third: Training. Every man fully-trained in his own job, many ready to advance at least one notch higher, the whole unit trained as a unit.

Now, at high levels, the approach toward solution of the problems gives us serious grins. First of all, it’s the money, as though it—that rather than National survival—were not the issue. It is an issue to be bound to the belief that the richest Nation on Earth, millions upon millions of whose citizens are living in a manner far beyond the needs that had been assumed, can’t afford to support Armed Forces at a level adequate for its defense. Aren’t we required, with a lack of strength in the GarD, to remove some of the Headquarters’ emphasis on a service President Kennedy has called for? This same line of thinking then suggests that the only way to get conscientiously ready to fight, is to abandon to us that which we have now, but at higher strength and equipment levels. It falls for the old fallacy that relatively small, but highly-trained forces counter the need for large armies. A Nation that had to scrape its manpower and manpower barrel in World War II should know better than that.

Be that as it may, we ought to do some thinking and planning along these lines:

First, again as always: Strength. Haven’t we pretty well established that an active Army National Guard of 400,000 men, 27 Divisions and their supporting forces, is a minimum in a time of continuing tension? Wouldn’t the tine lag between M-Day and readiness be eliminated or at least drastically cut by a plan such as Gen Harrison’s (see “Washington Report,” this issue) to have every unit carry in peace-time the number of ready-to-go Inactive National Guard “armors” it needs for a two-week strength? Equipment. Must we accept the reasoning that we can’t have the units we need because we can’t equip them? Why can’t we? Hasn’t the richest Nation on Earth come to a sorry pass if it can’t equip a Two-Division force without yanking material away from others? Has anyone really faced-up to the question whether the American people will pay the tax bill for the tools its fighting forces need? As both taxpayers and ultimate consumers of the goods of war, can’t we do our part toward getting this need across to our fellow-citizens and political leaders?

Third: Training. How much larger a chunk of the citizen’s time can we squeeze out of him for military training? How much more school can we get out of his training hours through ingenuity, imagination, better management, and development of better techniques and more advanced training devices? Can’t we take a hard look at some of the developments in the field of public education—things like “teaching machines” that are as far advanced of the blackboard-and-penetrator as the F104 is ahead of the "Jenry("? What are the possibilities of closed-circuit television? Application of color, plastics, animation, to put reality and a greater degree of the applicatory phase into extension course lemons? Photographing the recorded training films, slide films, films?

Fourth: Facilities—Fretted? Cost too much? Maybe. But can we “brainstorm” these and other ideas that spring to the tops of our heads? Maybe, as brainstorming has a way of unearthing an occasional gem that makes the mental effort worthwhile.

Finally, at what expense do we move to mass public opinion acceptance of the need for the host of measures that are essential to building the defenses we need? If we’re to demand more of the Guard’s time for training, we’re going to have to convince employers of the necessity (and it’s going to take as much, if not more, educational campaign to help swing it). If it’s going to cost a lot more bucks, the neighboring taxpayers who see us burdening the Armies must know that we’re going there on deadly serious business, and not have any lingering notions that we’re heading for a militarized beer joint. We’re the men in the best position to do this.

All in all, we said earlier, shouldn’t we take the initiative and go out and look for new, different things and come up with our own solutions to the greatest readiness problem?