The National Guard

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Questions and Answers

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President
National Guard Association of the United States

NE point becomes abundantly clear when one tours Bases in the Far East at which mobilized Air National Guardsmen are serving. Wherever Air Guardsmen are stationed, whatever their assignment, however imperfect the conditions under which they live and work, they are doing their job in a manner that does credit to them, to the National Guard and to the Air Force of which they are a part, and with all the matter-of-fact competence you would expect of professionals.

In company with Maj Gen Winston P. Wilson, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and National Guard leaders from several States, I recently toured Bases in South Viet Nam, South Korea and Japan.

We talked with Guardsmen individually and in groups, to ascertain their most prevalent problems and to answer, where possible, questions that cause them the greatest concern. We made a special effort to seek out and talk with those who had been separated from their parent units and assigned elsewhere.

In addition, we interviewed Commanders at every level, Air Force and Guard alike, to identify problem areas for future study. We discussed the Guard's performance with such distinguished and busy military leaders as Gen Creighton W. Abrams, top U.S. Commander in Southeast Asia; Gen George S. Brown, Commander of Seventh Air Force in Southeast Asia; Lt Gen Thomas K. McGehee, Commander of Fifth Air Force in Japan; Korea and nearby areas, and Brig Gen Arthur Holderman, Air Force Commander in Korea.

We sat through many briefings, and from these sessions gained a new insight into the maze of problems with which military leaders must deal along Asia's Eastern periphery.

Some points emerged that are significant for the National Guard.

1. I have already mentioned the first of these: that Air Guardsmen serving in Viet Nam and Korea, two of the World's hot spots, are demonstrating a military competence that leaders at every level recognize and praise.

Guard Squadrions made their long, overwater deployments with smooth proficiency. Once in place, they commenced flying missions almost immediately, attaining full operational momentum even more quickly than most Active Air Force Squadrons. An officer at Phan Rang Air Base tells how Gen Westmoreland visited the Base two weeks after Colorado's 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron arrived, and asked Lt Col Robert Cherry when his Pilots would be ready to start flying. "Sir, we've just completed our 172d combat mission," the Colorado Colonel replied.

Air Guard Squadrons in Viet Nam habitually have set the pace for other Squadrons in their Wings. They have led their Wings by such significant yardsticks as total sorties flown, damage inflicted on the enemy, mission accomplishment, aircraft in-commision rates and low abort rates.

2. Virtually every Air Guard Pilot in Viet Nam and Korea is qualified as a Flight Leader—unusual in an Air Force beset by high turnover rates. Commanders of Active Air Force Squadrons comment enviously on the extensive flying experience of most Guard Pilots.

We found Guard airmen assigned to senior supervisory posts throughout each Base—a direct reflection of their individual competence and responsible attitude. So extensive, in fact, is this assignment of Guardsmen to key jobs that there is command concern over the void that will be created by their forthcoming release from active duty.

More than 2,000 Air Guardsmen are serving in South Viet Nam, another 3,000 or more make up the bulk of our Air Force structure in South Korea, and several hundred are assigned to Bases in Japan.

Several thousand of these went overseas as individual replacements, to fly non-mobilized Air Force units. These men deserve particular credit, for they have performed with dedication and skill despite separation from home-town friends and familiar associations of their own units.

It is regrettable that so many units were broken up, their laboriously-built teamwork disrupted. Under the circumstances of our Asian involvement, and

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