THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN
The magazine of ... by ... and for National Guardsmen

EDITORIAL

THE GUARD AND "REALIGNMENT"

The wraps have been taken off of the Pentagon's plan for "realigning" the Army Reserve Component.

The Army Reserve has been directed to start reshaping its structure immediately. Very thoughtfully, since that's what the law requires, the Pentagon submitted the National Guard portions of the plan to the Governors and State Adjutants General, and urged them to accept it so that the makeover can start at an early date.

Old units have been eliminated or converted wholesale, new units created (only on paper, to point), and the whole thing unwieldy with the usual Pentagon press agentry. It's a better balanced force more capable of providing the rapid reaction to mobilization requirements . . . it will substantially increase the importance of the Reserve Components, it provides a 'higher degree of mobilization readiness,' and so on.

Openly or by scarcely veiled, the Governors of the States, and leaders of the Guard, have been portrayed as men fighting to retain "absolute" and unneeded units for selfish reasons.

Through all the press releases and the public utterances by members of the Department of Defense hierarchy have run, by implication, questions like these: Why does the Guard oppose the profoundly-reasoned "modernizations" prepared for it? Where do Monday-night soldiers find the gall to challenge the experts? Why does the Guard insist on hanging onto Divisions that, in the wisdom of the professionals, won't be needed—or can be built more economically from scratch if the need arises?

Any Guardman who has pondered a large share of his life and energy into this uniquely American military organization knows the answers:

Because the Guard has been there all this before—many times before, and has heard plan after grandiose plan extolled as almost Napoleonic in concept.

Because, Guardsmen have seen at first hand the debilitating effect of many of these bills, end-all plans on the strength, morale and effectiveness of its own units.

Because it has noted the even the more devastating effect of these yo-yo manipulations on the Army Reserve through the years—more devastating because the Army Reserve has no buffer to protect it from the ever-changing judgments of the Pentagon.

Because Guardsmen of long service think they know more about creating effective military units in the un災ity environment of an American community, than the "pros."

Finally, because they believe, like Brig Gen J D Hittie, (Ret), the knowledgeable ex-Marine who heads the VFV's National Security and Foreign Affairs activities, that "a Division commander that comes into being very laboriously and it is created out of many things—out of blood, sacrifice, and the effort and a good part of the productive life of ten, or hundreds, of thousands of individuals who have passed through its ranks," that a Division, in Gen Hittie's words, "is something that is very easy to strike off on a troop list tally sheet. But when you need a Division, when conflict begins, you can't bring it into being overnight. He might have said the same about a Battalion, or a Company.

The Guard does not resist change, as such. It does not hang unto obsolete units—every unit it carries has been at the Army Reserve's expense and almost on a week-to-week basis, when the Army's requirements change, the Guard has quickly made conservations, reorganizations, redesignations.

Less than four years ago, the Guard laboriously, gladly, altered all its 21 Infantry Divisions from "Triangular" to "Pentomic" and accepted wholesale and drastic changes of Branch among other units. In that "modernization," which cost the Army Guard more than 1000 units, the new structure was tested as the so far ultra of modern reserve structures. This time, another 400 units would go by the board, to the same old refrain: "modernization," "rapid reaction," and so on, and so on. Any question why there's some cynicism?

How "modern," and "responsive," and "combat-ready" can we become, under this method of achieving effectiveness, before we disappear entirely as an effective element of National security?

The 1962 plan handed to the Governors represents appreciable improvement over the version presented nearly a year ago. Before its acceptance, negotiation and consultation may produce more changes still to eliminate some of its most glaring weaknesses.

With the product that finally emerges, the Guard will do its best, as it always has.

But we'll continue to insist that "change" is not necessarily a synonym for "improvement," that true modernization can be achieved without such damaging assaults on stability—a quality which military application has been successfully neglected at the Pentagon.

One of the tragic aspects of this operation has been the ill-feeling that has been engendered—not so much by the plan itself, as by the way it has been handled, the mis-statements that have been made to justify it. It's so unnecessary! We've said it before, and we'll say it again. Guardsmen are willing, any time, to help develop any plan that holds promise of enhancing the Nation's defense. The Guard wishes in good faith and with its professional intelligence and patriotism; it certainly excels them in knowing the ins-and-outs about the Army's role and function of citizen-soldiers. If the planners only would concede those points and bring us into the planning from the earliest stages, in an atmosphere of two-way exchange of ideas, together we would develop sound plans that will work. This could be a true comradeship that would transfer "One Army" from a slogan into a reality.

We always can hope!