



THE GUARD AND "REALIGNMENT"

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

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 this point), and the whole thing unveiled with the usual Pentagon press agency. 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 inference, the Governors of the States, and leaders of the Guard, have been portrayed as men fighting to retain "obsolete" 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 professional, never will be needed—or can be built more economically from scratch if the need arises?

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

Because the Guard has been through 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 be-all, end-all plans on the strength, morale and effectiveness of its own units.

Because it has noted the even 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 unmilitary environment of an American community, than the "pros."

Finally, because they believe, like Brig Gen J D Hittle, (Ret), the knowledgeable ex-Marine who heads the VFW's National Security and Foreign Affairs activities, that "a Division is something 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 tens, or hundreds, of thousands of individuals who have

passed through its ranks;" that a Division, in Gen Hittle'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 onto obsolete units—every unit it carries has been at the Army's request, and, almost on a week-to-week basis, when the Army's requirements change, the Guard has quietly made conversions, 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 900 units, the new structure was touted as the *ne plus 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 it's accepted, negotiation and consultation may produce more changes still to eliminate some of its most glaring weaknesses.

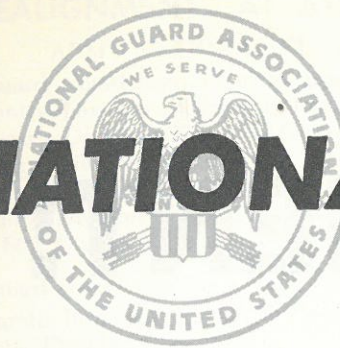
With the product that finally emerges, the Guard will do its best, as it always has.

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 whose military application has been woefully 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, but 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 can match the professionals in intelligence and patriotism; it certainly excels them in knowing the ins-and-outs about the care and feeding 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 respect, 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!

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Inside Front Cover

SPECIAL REPORT:

- REALIGNMENT! . . . . . 2  
Pentagon finally unveils "The Plan"; now it's in the laps of the Governors

ARTICLES:

- MISSION TO KABUL TAKES C97 AROUND THE WORLD . . . 6  
Oklahoma Guardsmen take cattle to Afghanistan
- OUTLOOK FOR THE ARMY GUARD . . . . . 23  
A glimpse at the years and months ahead
- THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD IN THE CUBAN CRISIS . . . . . 10
- FACE . . . FOREIGN AID . . . AND FOULED-UP GEAR . . . 19

NGAUS REPORTS:

- NEW CONTRIBUTIONS SWELL FUNDS . . . . . 15
- "WILLING WORKERS" TAPPED FOR COMMITTEES . . . . . 18

FEATURES:

- Washington Report . . . 12
- Pentagon Paragraphs . . 17
- You Ought to Know . . . 16
- Posting the Guard . . . . 20
- Letters to the Editor . . . . 32

DEAR GUARDSMEN: For omnivorous readers, the name "John P Conlon" may ring a bell. It has appeared many times in our magazine—and in a wide variety of other National magazines and various newspapers—below a picturesquely-phrased, free-swinging "Letter to the Editor."



Never taking himself too seriously (a self-styled "pore man's Clausewitz," or "streamlined Sp5"—he's one of the many ex-CWO's who've become "obsoleted"), John takes-off every time the spirit moves him, with a clattering of the old typewriter, to offer a commentary on things that deeply stir his Hibernian soul.

We figure that much of what he has to say deserves more prominence than the "Letters" column. So we propositioned him on doing a monthly column for us on whatever seems topical. He went along with the idea—though with a touch of buck fever, seems to us, for he replied: "Sometimes I am as full of ideas as Asia is types of dysentery, other times my head resembles the TV break for sale of pills; but I shall try." Moreover, he has the feeling that "quite a bit of the time you will look at the material and howl like a banshee with a sore toe."

We hope that you'll enjoy reading what Old Guardsman John has to say—even if you don't always agree with him. For this month's eruption, turn to page 19. —AGC