1960 - YEAR OF EVASIONS?

Once again, the issue of Dollars for Defense is before Congress and the Public, as it has been many times before.

This time, however, there is a much greater evident uneasiness and a reluctance to accept at face value the statements made by the Defense Department, which would make it appear that all's well: we're so modern, we're so scientific, we're so militarily strong, that once more we safely can cut back our active and reserve forces, throttle down our missile development, stretch-out production of modern missiles.

Unfortunately, many of the uneasy feeling that the truth is being badly stretched, there are glaring inconsistencies between one day's testimony and the next, that policy is so changeable that no one can tell which end is up. Doubt is cast as to whether such terms as "military necessity" and "requirements" mean just that—or whether they're bent to follow the curves of a dollar sign.

There's a great deal less than complete frankness in the picture as presented by responsible leaders. Congress is told that the Joint Chiefs of Staff have approved of an enormously complex and detailed Defense Budget to which, in its final form, they have had but 24 hours' access. It is not explained how it can have the unanimous concurrence of the members, jointly, while each, individually, has indicated grave reservations whether the amount portioned-out for his own Service will permit it to accomplish its own heavy mission.

For example, the Army's Chief of Staff, Gen Maxwell D Taylor, has indicated a requirement for $15,000,000,000 to be spent in a five-year period for modernization of the Army's weapons and equipment. Arbitrarily, only a token amount is provided. Without the needed "tools," the vast 14 Divisions of the Regular Army can be only phantom versions of the vaunted powered-packet Pentomic Divisions convealed in the press.

The Army National Guard can be the first example of the substance.

The Army National Guard provides an example of Defense leaders' failure to "play it straight" with either Congress or the Country. Most glaring is the failure to meet guarantees that the Guard would be maintained in this Fiscal Year at an average strength of 400,000. As explained elsewhere in this issue, the Guard started below that minimum strength and has been going down ever since, largely, because in another breach of faith and defiance of Congressional will, Defense authorities have refused to turn in funds for the Guard to the extent of $4,000,000. For six months trainees. Spokesmen have admitted that they have had to get in their program or they might release them only at the last minute. Less frankly, they have given Congress the impression that the Guard is over-strength. Their words have been chosen carefully: pressed to explain why the Guard's paid drill strength has been let slip, they have noted that there are 40,000-some men in the inactive National Guard. They are temporarily not participating in training. They are akin to the hod-carriers or the non-paid Army Reservists who are not considered in the paid drill strength of the USAF. Nevertheless, the effect is to attempt to divert Congressional attention from evasion of DOD's commitment.

Credibility is strained, too, by contradictions in other fields. As all will cleverly remember, only recently strong pitched were made to the effect that a 600,000-man Army Guard was a requirement for adequate defense; that more, not fewer, units were needed; that the Guard's training left something to be desired; that it needed immense numbers of six-months trainees. But the Guard has been forced down to fewer rather than more units; its strength has been pushed back, and will be dropped still further if Defense planners have their way, it will get fewer RFA trainees. Why? The new policy line is: the Guard is so much better trained that the loss of 40,000 men won't hurt its capability; it's not desirable to have too high a proportion of six-months trainees!

At the moment of this writing, virtually all units are going through the upheaval of drastic reorganization pressed upon them as a matter of urgent military necessity. This plan is based upon a strength of 400,000. Each unit in the Troop Basis, and its strength as related to its required degree of mobilization-readiness, has been carefully calculated against that figure. Yet even before the reorganization is well under way, the same Defense authori ties who urgently called for that reorganization, propose to throw it into further turmoil by cutting the basic strength to 360,000. Evidently, if that were to be carried through, there would be one of two courses open: eliminate still more of the reduced numbers of units, or trim still further the strength of many units. It would be understood by what rationalization the Defense leaders then would have to make in maintaining the National Guard and defense of the Nation again were being strengthened!

The Commander-in-Chief, in opposing Congress-imposed "cuts" under Guard and USAF strength, and even more vehemently objecting to partial extinction of such "cuts" to the Army and the Marines, has stressed the need for flexibility and the disadvantages of rigidity.

Recognizing that they can not be frozen forever into one volume, they are working hard to have in battle six months trainees. Spokesmen have admitted that they have held back their prompt in the hope that they might release them only at the last minute. Less frankly, they have given Congress the impression that the Guard is over-strength. Their words have been chosen carefully: pressed to explain why the Guard's paid drill strength has been let slip, they have noted that there are 40,000-some men in the inactive National Guard. They are temporarily not participating in training. They are akin to the hod-carriers or the non-paid Army Reservists who are not considered in the paid drill strength of the USAF. Nevertheless, the effect is to attempt to divert Congressional attention from evasion of DOD's commitment.

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