EDITORIAL

**BIG PUSH**

WHATEVER is written or said about the Army Guard's falling strength and its need for a speedy injection of new manpower will tend to sound trite and repetitious. Periodically over the years since World War II, similar crises have arisen and the word has gone to the field: "Get men!" Letters, directives, and editorials such as this one, each time have been written and dispatched, as Guard leaders in Washington try to explain to Guardmen in the field what has happened and why larger and more effective recruiting is necessary.

But once the explanations have been given, responsibility for producing the required number of men shifts from Washington to Commanders on the scene, in Guard communities across the Country. All that the men at the top can do from that point on is encourage, prud, remind, suggest. The same true, same remedies, tend to be used over and over—leadership, "total" effort, "every man get a man," command responsibility, "the Guard has never failed to achieve the goals set for it," etc—because they're the only means available to the men in the Command Post for influencing the action taking place at the working level.

All of which brings us around to our point: that trite as the words may sound, remote as Washington and its pernicious crop of rhetoriticians may seem, the Guard's need for manpower once more is desperate and no one can deliver the badly-needed recruits except the individual Guardman who leads a prospect into the Army by the hand and signs him on the dotted line.

Many factors have combined to produce the Guard's decline, few of which can be blamed on the Guard itself. These have been enumerated and discussed elsewhere in this issue of "WASHINGTON REPORT." Some of the factors brought about the far heavier-than-normal loss rate which we've all been afflicted since last August; others made it difficult for us to sign-up a compensating flow of new men.

At this juncture, however, two points need to be emphasized:

That the blame for any failure inevitably will come to roost on the shoulders of the Guard, even though the fault is not ours.

That failures to surmount our strength problems now will very well may result in lower strength authorizations and smaller budgets in the years ahead.

Military Washington deals in actualities—in measurable results. Past performance tends to be forgotten quickly; tradition, prestige, dedication can't be measured or tabulated. There are two dozen hands waiting to grasp every dollar allocated to the Defense Establishment. The agency which fails to produce this year finds itself on a starvation diet next. When Army Guard witnesses go over to Capitol Hill to ask for a 400,000-man strength level and funds to support a force that large (and their turn comes later this month), they'll have to be able to point to an existing strength that's very close to that figure, or they'll never make the grade with the dollar-conscious Congressmen on the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees.

Moreover, they'll receive little support from the Pentagon. Some of the Guard's most bitter battles in recent years have been fought to prevent the Department of Defense from reducing draft and enrollment authorizations before the 400,000 level. This year, to accomplish by indirect means what they've never been able to achieve by direct onslaught, Defense officials have imposed new restrictions on Guard recruiting (less flexibility in Unit overlages, slightly higher intellectual standards). In addition, in the proposed FY 1964 budget, they've pegged the Army Guard at 375,000 men and requested funds to support only that number.

As long ago as last October, when ARNG strength still exceeded 380,000, Maj Gen William H. Harrison, Jr, NGAUS President, told Guard Commanders in a letter: "We shall find it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to persuade the Congress . . . to appropriate funds for a 400,000 level for FY 1964 if we continue to be substantially understrength."

With Guard strength currently standing at about 380,000, his warning takes on greater urgency.

Going back to the repetitions terms mentioned earlier, recruiting is a responsibility of command and only exceptional leadership will inspire rank-and-file Guardmen to beat the bushes for the men we need so badly. "Total effort does pay off, as the Air Guard proved when it reversed its own downward trend and registered a slight increase. Every Commander since Hannah probably has told his troops that their ranks would soon be filled if every man brought in just one recruit . . . but it's still as appropriate as any recruiting slogan we've ever heard. Even if it is only the leaders and warrant officers who can recruit one man, the Guard will reach its strength goal with a few to spare, Gen Harrison recently reminded. It's more than a mere numbers game. Many is the very essence of a military unit.

In questionnaires filled-out by non-commissioned officers of a Guard Division recently, Sergeant after Sergeant cited the difficulty of providing effective training when Squads and Platoons are thinly manned. "Halt-Squad" and "halt-Platoon" are barely self-supporting and are wholly ineffective from an operational standpoint. The Guard's reputation—and importantly its future well-being—is based on its ability to maintain Units that are self-sufficient and operationally effective.

That's the story. Army Guard strength is down—way down. It has to be brought up, rapidly. There's only one man who can do it—all.