# The State Mission of the Guard: "Public Protection" is not non-military



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A refreshing and long-overdue change is commencing to appear in the attitudes of Department of Defense officials toward the governors, in their role as peacetime commanders-in-chief of the National Guard. That change recently has been displayed in a greater willingness to consult with the governors on matters affecting the Guard, and to listen to the suggestions produced by those consultations.

A senior staff member for ROGAR II, second phase of a detailed roles and missions study of the Reserve forces, remarked casually one day that his group probably would not delve into the "non-military role" of the Guard until the final stages of the study, if then. The so-called "State Mission" simply wasn't considered to be a matter of major significance.

In a round of consultations involving the National Governors Association and representatives of five governors named to assist in the DoD study, that decision was dissected and several points were made.

First, "non-military role" is a misnomer. Augmenting civil authority in major emergencies is an accepted and important role for armies in nearly every modern nation. In this country, it most commonly is performed by the National Guard for three good reasons: (1) the Posse Comitatus Act greatly restricts involvement of active force troops in law enforcement activities; (2) The Guard, with its wide dispersion in every part of every state, can reach a disaster area or other emergency more quickly than someone coming from an Army post two or three states away; (3) Guard units are under the direct control of, and immediately responsive to, the governors, whose senior subordinates can best decide where and how forces can be most effectively used.

A working group representing the governors recommended to DoD officials that "public protection" is a far more accurate description of the State mission. They emphasized further that the Guard fights a war only infrequently but goes through more than 200 mini-mobilizations every year to help civil authorities cope with disaster. These range from a helicopter and three-man crew to rush a desperately ill child to a faraway hospital, to turnouts of thousands of Guardsmen in the face of natural disaster. Power outages, chemical spills, floods, train derailments, forest fires, plane crashes, firemen's strikes, medical evacuations, blizzards, prison security, and civil disorders all have figured in sizeable Guard callups in its public protection role this past year alone.

#### **DoD Consults Governors**

The governors (and NGAUS!) contend — and DoD now appears to agree — that this is important enough to deserve more than the cursory treatment that was initially contemplated in ROGAR II.

The apparent change of attitude originated last year in a major confrontation between DoD and the governors over an earlier stage of ROGAR II. DoD was going its own way, conducting a study of vital significance to the Guard in the utmost secrecy, and making quite apparent a complete disdain for gubernatorial opinion. The National Governors Association reacted with a heated resolution that demanded — not asked that the governors be consulted "before policy recommendations are forwarded to the Secretary (of Defense) and the President," that would impact upon the Guard.

The resolution cited a section of the

U.S. Code that says: "No change in the branch, organization or allotment of a unit located entirely within a state may be made without the approval of its governor."

Soon thereafter, the study was shifted to different hands and overall responsibility assigned to Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Re-Affairs Harold W. Chase. It probably is due mostly to Chase's initiative that a true working relationship soon commenced to develop between the governors and DoD. He made a special trip to Indianapolis to discuss the issue with Governor Otis R. Bowen, head of the Governors' committee that deals with Guard matters. The outcome was an agreement that DoD would consult regularly with a group of five governors, headed by Dr. Bowen, or with their designated representatives as the study progressed. Two such consultations have taken place and DoD representatives again will be present when the governors meet in late August in Boston.

It is too early to say that a complete transformation has taken place. One episode involving one Pentagon group does not offer that kind of assurance. But a notable start has been made, thanks to Deputy Assistant Secretary Chase, with his willingness to go more than halfway to meet the governors, and to Governor Bowen, whose calm determination made it clear from the start that the Guard's ability to respond to emergencies is not negotiable!

We hope most sincerely that the goodwill already developed by Chase and the study staff is permitted to grow, and to spread into those hidden corners of the Pentagon where the fate of the Guard so often is decided in complete disregard for state (and taxpayer) needs.

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STELOUIS
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COVER: A flight of four F-100s of the MoANG 110th Tactical Fighter Squadron ("Lindbergh's Own") sweep by the Gateway Arch, symbol of modern St. Louis. Photography by Lt Col John Springer; design by Promographics of Baltimore, MD.

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