CUSHIONING THE RIDE DOWN THE BUDGET ESCALATOR

The first six years of the 1980s decade have been a very gratifying ride up the budget escalator for national defense. In 1980, Ronald Reagan was elected in substantial part on the issue of strengthening the nation’s defenses by dramatically increasing defense spending. This was in reaction to the neglect of the 1970s, when little modernization occurred in the wake of the Vietnam War.

As with so many dramatic changes, the swing from too little defense spending to large expenditures has brought with it a pendulum effect. Although we in the national defense area know that the modernization we require is incomplete, as political observers we also know public support for additional large increases in defense spending is waning among our friends and neighbors. In part, this is in response to federal deficits, which many taxpayers see as a threat to our long-term national well-being.

There may be little that we can or should do to change this public sentiment. Swinging against the political tide that produced Gramm-Rudman-Hollings may be futile. Thus, our mission may be changing during the last three years of the 1980s. Rather than pushing for add-ons for National Guard procurement, or new and better troop benefits, perhaps we should consider how to ensure a continued place in the Total Force budget.

In the FY87 Defense Authorization Act, report language was added to the National Guard military construction accounts suggesting that in the future the Guard should receive 10 percent of the total Army and Air Force military construction budget. This language was a response, in part, to our continued pleas that the backlog of major Guard construction projects continues to grow.

The 10 percent figure may be arbitrary and subject to further refinement. However, the principle it suggests is a good one, particularly in a time when Defense spending may be headed for a plateau, or worse. It is easy to join the bandwagon of something on its way up to great success. The danger of the opposite is being cast off as extra weight on the sinking craft when reduncies are occurring.

The NGUSA has sought for several years to win a specific reaffirmation of the Total Force Policy in the same forceful terms it was promulgated by the Secretary of Defense. In 1970 and cemented as a “policy” by former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger in 1973. A recent White House document states this:

“The United States must maintain effective and robust Reserve and National Guard forces, trained and equipped at levels commensurate with their wartime missions...”

“On the manpower side, the Total Force Policy established in the early 1970s places increased responsibilities on the reserve components, including U.S. forces. Today, fully 50 percent of the combat units for land warfare in the Reserve components. Reserve units perform important missions and support functions on a daily basis.”

“Their priority for training, training and equipment modernization is not based on their peacetime status as forces ‘in reserve,’ but on the basis of their direct integration into the nation’s operational plans and missions. In many cases, the sequence of deployment in the event of conflict would place reserve components units side by side, and at times under, of active duty forces.”

These statements by President Reagan in National Security Study Document January 1987, should set the bar for other considerations about the Guard and Reserve can be shortened, if possible, at any future time. The Guard and Reserve are no longer “forces in reserve,” a term which conveys no commitment to the future military role of the force. The force must be trained and ready to fight, and the Reserve must be a viable part of the total force, available for mobilization at any time. If subject to further loading by the Congress, the Guard and Reserve can be shortened similarly to other military forces. But to be combat ready, the Guard and Reserve need and must have their proportion of the national defense budget. If 10 percent of the national defense budget is allocated to the Army’s combat forces, the Guard and Reserve must be allocated a similar share if they are to be combat ready.

The NGUSA has long supported the concept of a National Guard/Reserve Management Team (ALMT) that would provide the Army with a single point of contact to allocate resources to the Guard. The ALMT would also provide the Army with a single point of contact to allocate resources to the Reserve. The ALMT would also provide the Army with a single point of contact to allocate resources to the Reserve.

A Good Company Commander is a Leader

The 1986 Success Story

The Army National Guard Lieutenant Management Team (ALMT) was tasked with finding eligible volunteers from the Army Reserve Duty list and steering them to the states for service. As it concludes in the second year, the ALMT can be called an unqualified success.

AVRADS Keep the Army Guard Flying

The Army National Guard Aviation Classification and Repair Division (AVRADS) provides the Army Guard with the best repair and maintenance for its aviation equipment. They also provide the Army Guard squadrons with the best maintenance.

A Study in Leadership

A story from the National Guard Aviation Classification and Repair Division (AVRADS) of the Army National Guard.

The Airmen’s mission is to provide the Army Guard and Army Reserve with the best repair and maintenance for its aviation equipment. They also provide the Army Guard squadrons with the best maintenance.

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