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Prospects for the New Year

AS the National Guard closes out another busy, hectic year, it would be comforting and pleasant if we could look forward to a respite from the turbulence and frantic pace of our recent past. A period of relaxed pressures and relative stability would give us an opportunity to digest all the changes and innovations of our post-World War II years, and an opportunity likewise to make an unhurried evaluation of our prospects for the future.

Such a period of tranquility, however, is not to be—not now or, most likely, not ever again. Urgency and change have become a way of life, not for the National Guard alone but for all branches of our Armed Services. The threat to World peace has not waned nor has the pace of the technological revolution slackened, and we have no alternative but to keep in step with events.

Thus, as we enter 1966, many difficult problems of the past still remain to be solved, and new problems already are crowding in upon us. It may be useful to enumerate some of these so that each and every Guardsman can take a part in the search for solutions.

In both the Army and Air National Guard, our major problems can be stated most succinctly, I believe, as readiness, recruitment and reorganization.

With a sizeable portion of our organization committed to a high-priority effort to boost their combat-readiness, the training requirements alone place a burden of unprecedented magnitude on our shoulders. But training is only a part of the story. As the training pace is accelerated and the training hours lengthened, other problems raise their heads: manpower retention, employer cooperation, morale, the intensification of logistics and maintenance requirements to name but a few.

One begets the others, and solutions must be found not just for one, or two, but for all, else the goal—peak readiness—is lost.

Our task is complicated by several additional factors. The Training Centers are crammed as the Army enlarges its own force, and the Army Guard must fill its requirements for trained men the hard way—by searching out men who've had prior service or, perhaps, by operating its own recruit schools. The merger/realignment plan still awaits a final decision, and as long as there is no meeting of the minds between Congress and the Department of Defense, uncertainty and doubt will hamper our efforts to attain full readiness, not just for the Army Guard and Army Reserve but for the Air Guard and Air Force as well.

Air Guardsmen face uncertainties that are no less intense and frustrating than those which confront their Army brethren. Of most immediate concern is a threatened reduction in units assigned to the airlift mission, under MATS.

Despite this gloomy recital of problems, though, we still can look forward to 1966 with confidence and high expectations. Problems as difficult as these have confronted us before and never yet have we failed to find solutions. We will solve them because the security of the Nation demands their solution. They will succumb to the same influences that have made the Guard what it is: hard work, thought and imagination, teamwork, and our deep and abiding faith in the unique military system of which each of us is a contributing part.

Nineteen-sixty-six can be the Guard's greatest year. Let all of us dedicate ourselves to making it so, in fact. ♦

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