

The only choice

INFLATION has eaten a huge hole in the ability of the armed forces to defend the nation. It has gobbled up about \$10 billion of the funds appropriated for defense, for FY 1975, meaning that Congress would have to appropriate another \$10 billion just to carry out the programs that were seen as rock-bottom requirements as recently as a year ago.

Lest the serious implications of this development for the National Guard be unclear, it should be pointed out that Guard funding has been eroded to a comparable degree in the same one-year period, perhaps as much as \$100 million.

With national concern over inflation and the state of the economy as great as it is, there's virtually no chance that the Administration will seek additional funding or that the Congress would approve such a request if submitted. It appears very probable, therefore, that the current level of effort may have to be reduced. Any effort to make further reductions in defense spending would have what can only be described as a meat-ax impact on the armed forces—Active, Guard and Reserve. It would bring our ability to accomplish national strategy objectives into serious question.

Thus, the ringing in of the New Year also may signal the beginning of a period of retrenchment such as the military establishment has not seen since the dismal days before World War II. And it's not too early to predict that there'll be almost irresistible pressure to reduce defense spending still further when the FY 1976 budget comes up for consideration next spring.

The implications of these developments for national security are frightening. Already, our military forces have been pared down to a size that world power analysts regard as risky in the extreme. Already, a substantial proportion of the equipment with which our forces are armed is obsolete by modern standards, particularly in the National Guard and Reserve. Yet those are the two areas that inevitably will bear the brunt of any further spending cuts.

The problem of inflation is serious and urgent. But making further reductions in our ability to defend ourselves cannot be an acceptable solution, especially since defense outlays represent only 18 per cent of total public spending from tax revenues. U.S. military power already has been reduced to a level that is perilous when one takes into account the steady growth in Soviet military power and the probability that this will tempt them to take a more aggressive stance in world affairs.

Most assuredly would reductions in the force structure, manning, equipment flow or training support of the Army and Air National Guard be ill-advised, for these are the most cost-effective of our military forces. The Guard provides more combat power *per dollar* than any segment of the armed forces. Granted, Guard units cannot achieve the same degree of combat readiness in 39 training days a year that fulltime forces can attain in 365 days. However, our experiences to date under the Total Force philosophy gives assurance that Guard units can produce an acceptable, credible level of readiness, sufficient to satisfy realistic mission requirements, if they are adequately supported with modern equipment, training assistance and additional recruiting support.

Concurrently, they provide vital emergency services in community and State disasters as a low-cost by-product of their military activities. This makes them doubly valuable and doubly cost-effective.

Thus, if the pressure to reduce defense spending becomes too great to resist despite the obvious dangers in such a course, then a realignment in the "force mix" of Active, Guard and Reserve elements offers the best alternative. In fact, it appears to us to be the *only* choice that can be made, given the destructive effects of inflation on the one hand and the growing disparity between Soviet and United States military power on the other. ♦



Duane L. Corning
Major General, SDANG
President,
National Guard
Association of
The United States



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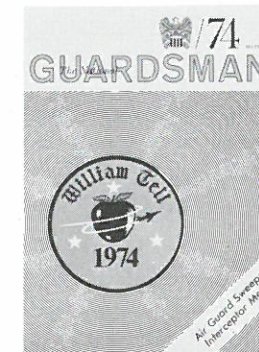
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It was only fitting that the 1974 William Tell patch was designed by a Guardsman, TSgt Don Schmidt of Oregon's 142d CAM Sq. For when the dust settled at Tyndall AFB, Fla., everyone knew that the Guard was squarely on target.

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