The NGAUS: Catalyst and Forum

In November, the Executive Council of our Association held two days of meetings in Washington. One day was devoted to the NGAUS' own internal affairs and operations, the other to matters of broad, general concern in the National Guard at large.

For the latter, responsible officials from the highest levels in the Department of Defense, Army and Air Force, attended to make their views known to key Guard leaders and to seek, in turn, a consensus of the Guard's viewpoints toward matters of moment.

We saw this as one way of which the NGAUS can serve the Guard and its members most productively, by acting as a catalyst and by offering an unofficial forum where Guard leaders and top Defense officials can be brought face-to-face for friendly but frank discussions of significant problems that may enable us to develop mutually-acceptable solutions to major problems.

A valuable by-product of such meetings is that they help Guard leaders keep abreast of developments in Washington which will impact at some point on the Army and Air National Guard.

In January, the NGAUS will carry its effort a step further when it will sponsor a full day of detailed briefings and discussions covering two important areas: Guard legislative needs in 1971, and the recruiting and retention problems that will arise during the transition from a Draftee-oriented to a zero-Draft, volunteer environment.

Members of the NGAUS staff have been reviewing a broad array of significant defense needs and problems, as they relate to the Guard. They have consulted key officials in the Defense hierarchy and in the National Guard Bureau in an effort to define not just the problems but potential solutions as well. Some of the most promising steps suggested by this review will require Congressional consideration and action. Others can be accomplished by Defense-Army-Air Force directives based on the usual staff studies and coordinating actions. Still others lie within the authority and purview of the State Adjutant General.

Particularly in the recruiting and retention field is a joint approach indicated, because the zero-Draft concept represents a major shift in U.S. military policy which will impact drastically on all U.S. military forces—Active, National Guard and Reserve. There are steps which must be taken, and changes which must be made, at every governmental level, from the Congress and the White House, down through the Defense Establishment itself to the States and to lower command levels.

At the forthcoming meeting, scheduled for 29 January, the NGAUS Executive Council will play host to the State Adjutants General, who have been invited to key all-day meeting of their own for the preceding day, and to key their assistants in such fields as recruiting, information and related areas.

Briefings will be presented by knowledgeable Pentagon officials, potential courses of action discussed, and suggested State-level recruiting and retention programs debated. Out of all this, we hope, will come an effective, realistic and forward-looking approach to the Guard's No. 1 problem: manpower.

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