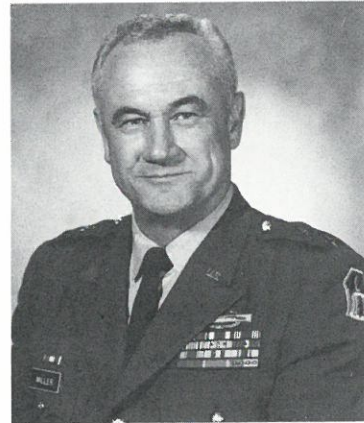


ANNUAL meetings often seem to produce more platitudes and self-congratulatory reports than real meat, but it's doubtful that will be said of the 1978 conference of State Adjutants General. The May meeting in Hershey was marked by a great deal of down-to-earth discussion of real-world problems. It was also liberally laced with cogent and thought-provoking commentary on important military issues by an impressive array of guests.

These included such eminent individuals as Assistant Secretary of Defense John P. White, strategic thinker Frank R. Barnett, Army Generals Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. and Frederick J. Kroesen, Air Force General William G. Moore, Jr. and Lieutenant General Abbott C. Greenleaf, and the defense-oriented Tennessee Congressman Robin L. Beard.



Major General
Richard A. Miller
Oregon National Guard
President,
National Guard
Association
of the United States

Taken in toto, their observations reinforced our own deep concern over the downward trend in U.S. military power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. This essay, however, is restricted to an examination of two statements that focus narrowly on the National Guard and reserves. Those statements, one by Assistant Secretary White, the other by General Kerwin, clearly point up the dilemma that confronts the reserve forces as they strive for resources and support in the Washington arena. General Kerwin declared that, for the Army, there has been no lessening of emphasis on the Total Force idea. He then went on — and comments from several areas in his speech have been extracted: "The need for the reserve forces should not have to be repeated and restated at any time . . . It is there, it is something that should be accepted just like their dedication. George Washington, Lee, MacArthur, Eisenhower, Pershing — none of those individuals would have ever questioned the need for a reserve force . . . They all knew we were dependent on civilian citizen soldiers . . . You don't have to convince the Army of the importance of the Guard and Reserves . . . one-half of the deployable forces belong to the reserve forces; one-half of all the Army's combat forces belong to the reserve forces . . . Your challenge is to get out there in the civilian community and convince those people, the American people, what the actual need is, that it's absolutely essential for the security of the United States!"

We think General Kerwin is right. We shouldn't have to resell each generation of Americans — and each generation of Washington officialdom, by the way — on the absolute indispensability of a sizeable and effective reserve force. But unfortunately, it seems that we must. It may be, as General Kerwin also says, that "Americans treat all history as ancient history," that they forget, or attach little importance to, the dominant role

The Dilemma: Are We Trying To Prove The Unprovable?

our National Guard and reserves have invariably played in American defense down through the centuries. After the memories of a war commence to fade, Americans tend to forget that military unpreparedness is the major cause of war. We ignore George Santayana's dictum that, "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it." In any event, keeping Americans informed on imperatives of national defense, and on the absolute necessity for effective Guard and reserve forces, is indeed a continuing and important responsibility of the Guard and Reserve, particularly its leaders.

Assistant Secretary White made somewhat the same observation but with a slightly different focus. He said: "We really do have a serious problem. The national leadership and the Secretary of Defense are required, based on their judgment, to allocate (resources) as they do every year. In order to be convinced that they ought to allocate more of what are truly scarce resources to the Guard and Reserves, we are in a situation where we have to display to them that . . . the Guard and Reserves are a good investment."

He sums it up by noting that "we are in kind of a Catch 22 situation in reverse. You need the resources to be ready, but there are lots of people who are reluctant to give you the resources unless you can convey that you are ready."

Dr. White is all too correct in his reading of our dilemma. We must prove that we will make good use of the resources before they'll be allocated, but we must be given additional resources before we can prove, unequivocally, that we can make good use of them!

And we have learned to our chagrin that empirical judgments by senior leaders of reserve forces, based on years of experience, mean little in this computerized, systems analysis-oriented age. It has to be quantified, and expressed in statistics, or it's not valid evidence!

This suggests that equally important to making American citizens better-informed about reserve forces is a companion responsibility, that of making public officials — in the Pentagon, in the White House and on Capitol Hill — more aware of just how much military capability and readiness past investments already have been produced in the reserve forces through resources already expended. Even in units that are not as ready as we'd like them to be, a great deal of military capability and readiness exists. In most cases, a completely acceptable readiness level could be achieved with only relatively small additions in resources and support.

Maybe it's the most important message we'll ever try to convey to the national leadership — that military readiness cannot fairly be described in such mutually exclusive terms as good and bad, ready and unready — that past investments have produced a very substantial amount of mobilization capability and deployment-readiness in the Guard and Reserve — but that we can get so "hung-up" on absolute, statistically unchallengeable, quantifiably provable evaluations of Guard and Reserve effectiveness that all further progress comes to a grinding halt!

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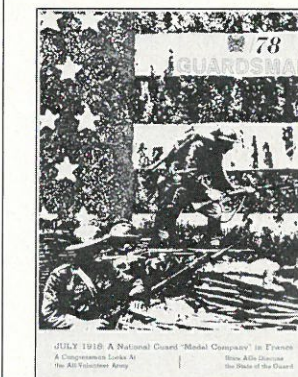
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COVER: Summer of 1918 and National Guard in France with AEF, design based on National Archives photos, by Promographics of Baltimore, Maryland.

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