THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TOTAL FORCE POLICY

In 1986, a most important accomplishment from any standpoint was adoption in Congress of the "Montgomery Amendment," to clarify the fact that the nation's ability to undertake overseas deployment training (ODT) in peacetime. Retaining this new law in the face of a governor's lawsuit and an effort in the Senate to repeal it is a task that is bound to occupy our attention during the next two or three years.

Equally important, as NGNUSA members are asked to influence the legislative process starting at the local level, is understanding how we evolved into an essential element in the Total Force, where we are today, and where we have come from in the past 10 to 20 years.

To begin the process, let us start with a short review of the genesis of the Total Force Policy 17 years ago. For it is that policy and all its implications that have changed the National Guard from the "backup" force it was during most of the first 330 years of the Militia to the combat-ready, early deploying Guard we know today.

It is necessary to go back to the early months of 1970 when Richard M. Nixon was president and Melvin R. Laird was secretary of Defense. The Vietnam War, which was a major issue during the 1968 presidential race, was in its later stages, and the administration was looking at the likely posture of national defense after withdrawal of U.S. forces from Southeast Asia.

What Secretary Laird saw, he realized, was a fiscal squeeze that would be vastly reduced. This, he concluded, would require a very substantial reduction in active duty forces in order to save money. However, except for extraction of 500,000 soldiers from Indochina, the United States' national security commitments would not change. Indeed, the Vietnam War recessionism, a certain kind of war, was, in U.S. forces stationed in Europe, a situation requiring remedy. The president was eager to turn off the draft and start the transition to an all-volunteer Army.

At the same time, the administration was facing the prospect that active duty forces would be drawn down to levels far below those that existed from 1950 to 1965—basically, the Cold War period. The political backlash from Vietnam would result in this, and there probably was nothing Nixon administration could do about it, given the Democrats' majorities in Congress and the general political disdain for Defense spending. What to do?

The Department of Defense settled on the Total Force Concept, which Laird promulgated in August 1970. Whether we knew it at the time or not, this has turned out to be one of the watershed days for the National Guard in this century. It has dramatically changed the way we do business in the Guard.

Prior to the Total Force, most Guard units had, at best, a vague idea of their wartime missions. They had some equipment for training, but it was seldom first-line stuff. There was no notion of obtaining a full manpower documentation equipment fill in peacetime. Commanders hoped, in the main, to have sufficient equipment for training. Indeed, if the commander of an armored division had received everything on his Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) in those days, he would have been overwhelmed.

Another facet of the pre-1970 National Guard was that mobilization and deployment times were so lengthy that few of us believed C-1 or C-2 status was in the cards. With the exception of some members of the Selected Reserve Forces (SRF) units of the late 1960s, most commanders thought in terms of two, three, or four months of training, cross-training, personnel augmentation and equipment issue before deployment overseas. Few units thought of being in theater in 30 days or less.

To say that 1987 is different is to understand it to the extreme. For beginning resource on this saga read MG Joseph W. Griffin's article, the January 1986 National Guard where he talks about "then and now.

Given the relatively restrained state of the active Army and Air Forces, and early Cold War years, the fact that our national defense strategy remains global—more even more encompassing than before—It was inevitable that the national command would no longer consider the National Guard as part of the allied strategy of defense. When 'deterrence' is no longer considered, many Americans think, aptly but rather in terms of nuclear weapons. Instead, they are a part of deterrence.

Conventional forces also are a part of deterrence. The 300,000 men and women stationed permanently in Europe deter a similar deter a similar deter an invasion by North Korea.

During the pre-1965 Cold War, the National Guard and the other reserve forces employed for these purposes were active duty forces. The National Guard and the other reserve forces would deploy for training and, indeed, if the commander of an armored division had received everything on his Modified Table of Organization and Equipment (MTOE) in those days, one would have been overwhelmed.

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The president's message, which is the subject of this review, is timely and necessary. As the Guard faces the challenges of the future, it is important to understand the implications of the Total Force Policy on our ability to meet these challenges.