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New Units For The Guard

THE Army's plan for realigning and reorganizing its Reserve Forces will have one significant peripheral effect on the Army National Guard that has not yet been widely discussed.

This is the further reduction it will bring in the proportion of *combat* elements in the Army Guard to those with *support* or *service* missions. It wouldn't be wholly accurate to say that this altered mix of units will drastically change the character of the Guard, because the injection into the Guard structure of larger numbers of service-type organizations simply continues a trend that commenced nearly two decades ago. It would be equally misleading to believe, though, that all such units can be absorbed into the Guard structure as easily and effortlessly as can units of a type with which Guardsmen already are familiar.

Many of the units which will make their first appearance in the Guard are assigned to military roles which require a higher degree of specialization, for the units themselves and for individual members, than organizations of more orthodox types. These pose training requirements and recruiting techniques peculiar to their own missions. Because of the nature of their wartime assignments, many of them likewise must maintain close and continuous contact with the Active Army agency responsible for their professional guidance.

If the realignment plan is accepted and implemented as initially envisioned, the Army Guard soon may be introduced, for example, to such unusual organizations (unusual to the Guard, that is) as Intelligence units, Training Divisions, Civil Affairs Companies and USAR Schools, to name but a few. All of them hitherto have been administered by the U.S. Army Reserve.

Apprehensions have been voiced by individuals associated with some of these critically-important mission areas that units such as these may tend to become "lost" amongst all the more conventional components of the Guard. Others have expressed concern lest the interjection of State command and control elements serve to weaken the close working relationships they have developed with appropriate Army agencies.

The number of Guardsmen involved in the traditional fighting Arms—Infantry, Artillery, Armor, Engineers—still will be great enough, and so widely distributed, that they will tend to attract a major share of the Guard's attention. For identical reasons, the Active Army likewise must devote a sizeable share of its attention and effort to the combat forces. For the selfsame reasons, though, responsible Guardsmen must make a special effort to acquaint themselves with the unique needs and requirements of units which can not effectively adapt themselves to the traditional training patterns.

Change and innovation are not strangers to the National Guard, of course, and its frequently-demonstrated flexibility should lessen some of the apprehensions that were felt initially by men responsible for units such as those cited above. Special Forces, Linguist Companies, Eskimo Scout Battalions, and Harbor Boat organizations offer several cases in point. These, too, were totally unfamiliar to Guard leaders when they were introduced to the Guard structure several years ago, yet they were absorbed with a minimum of turmoil, and today function with such effectiveness and mutual understanding that they are sources of pride to the Army, the Guard, and their home States alike.

When realignment commences, then, all that remains to be said to members of these new and varied additions to our force is: "Welcome to the Guard! We expect to learn much from you and hope that there are ways in which we can help you attain our mutual goal—full military effectiveness." ♦



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