Major General Edward R. Fry, President, NGAUS

PRUDENT'S MESSAGE

FIXING THE FORCE STRUCTURE: THE GUARD AS A GROWTH INDUSTRY

The major activity of this Association, since our last Message, was the meeting of the Executive Council in late January to thrash out the details of the 1981 NGAUS RIO Book—our blueprint for legislative and executive action for the next 12 months. Like all blueprints, it is subject to further modification by the architects as the situation develops during the year.

The RIO Book, which was typed and assembled, will be sent to a mailing list of about 2,000. In addition to major headquarters, it is sent to the Army Guard battalion and Air Guard squadron level so that its contents—and the NGAUS game plan for the year—are available to commanders and other interested parties to assist them in their fund efforts to attain National Guard objectives.

There is nothing secret or confidential about the RIO Book. Unlike the playbook of an NFL team, it is an open book to anyone who cares to read it. Copies are provided to most of the Pentagon offices whose responsibilities encompass working with the National Guard and other service reserve components.

As in past years (this is the seventh edition), the 1981 RIO Book is subdivided into sections to provide the Army and Air National Guard in terms of current situation and outlook; the analysis is accomplished in terms of manpower, equipment, force structure, readiness and fiscal. A second major segment sets forth the legislative program.

The section on “force structure” is laid out for good reason. NGAUS rarely seeks to impose its “drudges” in this vital area upon folks who, with good reason to suppose, know better. In both the Army and the Air Force, we recognize that the force structure is a consequence of a sophisticated decisionmaking process by which the services determine the mix of forces—Active, Guard and Reserve—which is required for U.S. military components to carry out the national military strategy.

Within the end-product framework there are, we recognize, many considerations which must be pumped into the decision as to the mix of units in the National Guard. We are not so naive as to believe that we have access to all of the data which are necessary to tailor the troop lists needed for the various military contingency plans. Nevertheless, we are prompted to make several observations—and recommendations. If we correctly interpret the basic leaves with respect to the decision in which the new Administration appears headed, major new defense expenditures are likely to be in big and probably costly systems improvements. Coupled with the likelihood of increased expenditures for higher priority hardware, the demand is increasing for the National Tax Limitation Committee for severe fiscal restraints in the defense area. How this dichotomy will be resolved, if it can be resolved, is a matter for the new Administration to solve in its own way. But we are prompted to point out that the Army and Air National Guard are habitually and traditionally the most cost-effective elements in the conventional U.S. warfare capability.

Even with the enhanced budget that it would take to upgrade to this standard, there is nothing to indicate that any such outlay would equate the Army and Air National Guard to the TOE headquarters organization with assigned personnel—officers and enlisted; in short, a 24-hour-a-day headquarters dependent upon State HHD personnel “on call” for shipment upon the commitment of mobilization.

We further believe it would be prudent to give to the STARCA a second chance to become war-time combat division headquarters as a hedge against some future conflict. The current 24-hour-in-force would not be enough for sustained land warfare. This would seem a logical utilization of the STARCA after it completed its initial mission and had accomplished the mobilization of Army Guard.

These are, in our view, two aspects of our analysis of force structure—and but two examples of how the Guard is a “growth industry” for the nation’s good.

The Air Guard, as we see it, is the proper function of the Guard and Reserve. This will be the “bargain” for the nation.

The thought occurs to us that if much of the defense growth is to be counted in terms of sophisticated systems improvements, the organizational growth which may be necessary in order to equip the forces, will be a prerequisite for inclusion in the National Guard.

Somewhere, since the Vietnam war draw down and the end of the draft era, we have ceased to think of the Guard as a “growth industry.” We have been satisfied with modest growth in the Air Guard and trying to hold our own in the National Guard.

Looking at the National Guard, we believe that with its proven track record of maintenance strength, adapting swiftly and efficiently to overseas locations, the Air Guard is a rare national defense asset. For many years, we have accepted the expiration of 91 flying units as the right number and we have accepted the number of non-flying units without much question because we have accepted the USAF/DOD formulation of force structure. As long as it is the simplest in the possible terms, we do not see that there is anything sacrosanct about the number “91.”

As we see it, the Air Guard network needs new units to handle an expanding requirement, the Air Guard should be a leading candidate to get these units.

On the Army National Guard side, we believe that a worthwhile step would be to action now to authorize the conversion of each State Area (STARCA) to a TOE headquarters organization with assigned personnel—officers and enlisted; in short, a 24-hour-a-day headquarters dependent upon State HHD personnel “on call” for shipment upon the commitment of mobilization.


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National Guard

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