Fifteen years have passed since a Secretary of the Army created some harried realities and dirgue certain, inevitable conclusions which bear repetition. Then Secretary Stephen A. Whitney, in 1968, admitted that Army procurement could equip only the high priority elements of the Guard and Reserve. In effect, he noted, there was no prospect of procurement for 45 percent of the reserve forces in being.

"Our present position," he explained, "is logistically out of balance—and out of balance with the contingency war plans. Obviously, it makes no sense to maintain, in a ready status, forces that are not equipped and are not required.

At the time he made these comments, it might be noted, there were 23 combat divisions in the National Guard, along with 10 combat divisions in the United States Army Reserve. Now, 15 years later, there are eight combat divisions in the Army Guard and none in the Army Reserve. But in terms of authorized combat strength, the Army's reserve components are still in about the same ball park as in 1965, when a force of about 540,000 was estimated as the nation's need to satisfy contingency war plans. Only then there were actually 700,000 in paid drill status.

What happened, of course, was that through "reorganization" and "realignment" the force structure was shuffled around to put a supposedly supportable number of people into a mix of units needed in the event of a mobilization. This set the stage for the emergence of the total force policy in the 1970's with the stated intention that a force had now been tailored in the Guard and in the Reserve which was needed to accomplish the Army's new war fighting strategy and that it would be supported with all of the necessary resources—including equipment.

As we have pointed out in the pages of this magazine on many occasions, the Guard and Reserve have never been "resourceed" to anything like that which is necessary for combat. Once again, a system of priorities has influenced the distribution of procurement to make the Guard combat ready.

There is clearly an irony to the situation. Once again, the question arises as to the wartime mission of units for which no equipment is available. The words of Secretary Ailse return to haunt us: "Obviously it makes no sense to maintain, in a ready status, forces that are not equipped and are not being used.

What is different, we maintain, is that the total Army—which includes all of the elements of the active Army, the Army Guard and the Army Reserve—is today needed to field a fighting, wartime Army. All of the current Army Guard structure is required. The Guard and Reserve, if mobilized, constitute at least 50 percent of the capability of the wartime, deployed Army. But it is a sham if part of the Guard inventory of arms and equipment has no likelihood of access to the quantity and quality equipment needed to fight. And this, in a nutshell, is what the National Guard Association of the United States has made the subject of equipment procurement our highest priority for action in the months and years ahead.

Despite the increased Defense budget, which has been widely reported in the media throughout the nation, the dollars will take to fully and properly equip the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard figure to be hard to come by. We suspect that by the time the reports are submitted to the Appropriations Committees there will be scant visible increments which will impact favorably upon the readiness of the Guard.

This Association has been successful—and fortunate—over the past several years. It has, probably more than all of us well to review the bidding. We sought very significant add-ons to the Defense budget in each of our efforts.

But, in effect, what we accomplished was largely successful because we were seeking what Congress was seeking—increased attention to national defense.

Has the attitude of Congress toward national Guard and Reserve change? No way. The congressional leadership has made it quite clear that it considers the buildup of United States military power to be a matter of the highest concern.

What is different is that first the out-going Carter Administration and the new Reagan Administration both submitted FY82 Defense budgets which encompassed tremendous increases—upward of $20 billion additional dollars in FY81 and going up to more than $30 billion additional in FY 82.

With these substantial increases in hand, Congress may be reluctant to consider further add-ons.

But the fact remains that there does not appear, even in the enhanced Defense budget of the new Administration, to be any provision for the substantial procurement of modern equipment which is so sorely needed if National Guard units are to be maintained, to fight alongside their active counterparts.

Thus it appears most likely to NGAUS that it is once again by means of clearly identified add-ons that we must seek the Congressional support for the procurement of critically needed equipment. In terms of 1981 dollars, this means about $2.5 billion for the Army Guard and $7 billion for the Air Guard.

We will, over the course of the next few months, do everything we can, muster every bit of muscle that we can, to keep our case before our grass-roots support and in short—all that we know how to do in an effort to prevail in this effort.

We hope to prevail starting with the authorizations for FY82. For all of the reasons which we have outlined, we may not be 100 percent successful in each of our efforts but too important to accept even the possibility of anything but eventual success.