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## Viet Nam And The Guard

UP to this point, the impact of Viet Nam on the National Guard has been relatively minor. True, Air National Guard Heavy Transport units have turned in a remarkable performance by boosting their monthly schedule of overseas, cargo-hauling flights to record levels, and Army National Guard units of every type have returned sizeable numbers of their own never-lavish stocks of trucks and field radios to the Army for redistribution to Active units.

But these have been peripheral contributions to our steady build-up in Southeast Asia.

Now, several decisions which relate to the Viet Nam situation will have an effect on the Guard more direct and more drastic than any which have confronted us since the 1961 Berlin Crisis. Our patience will be strained and our ingenuity taxed to its outer limits by the looming expansion of our responsibilities and the concurrent reduction of our resources. So much is at stake, however, that we must accept these new and heavier burdens, and must live up to the characterization which General Earle G. Wheeler, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, gave the Guard as an organization that somehow overcomes all difficulties and "always gets the job done."

First, and starting very shortly, training will be accelerated through the addition of two drills per month to the current four, and strength authorizations will be increased to 100% TOE, in hundreds of units across the country. Later, annual field training dates for those units may be advanced by several months. All this is designed, in the words of Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus R. Vance, "so that if a call-up of reserves should become necessary, we will have selected units which can respond even more quickly, particularly during the months it will take to activate and ready the new Active Army Division and three Brigades."

It should be pointed out that this step-up in training will be stacked right on top of the move toward longer drills and additional weekend assemblies which had been planned by the Department of Army even before the Viet Nam situation became acute.

Next, substantial quantities of equipment of virtually all types will be withdrawn from Guard and Reserve units, particularly those in the Reinforcing Reserve category, with which to outfit the new Division force, three Brigade forces, and numerous support-type units which are scheduled for early activation in the Active Army. In view of the marginal level at which our non-priority organizations currently are equipped, this may be the most damaging step of all as far as the training capabilities of the affected units are concerned.

Finally, the possibility of a partial mobilization has by no means been ruled out by the recent Presidential decision to rely, for the time being, on Selective Service for augmentations for the Army. Secretary Vance's statement, cited above, gives ample evidence that future U.S. moves will depend on what happens in Viet Nam in the weeks and months just ahead. Many months will be required to organize, and bring to full combat-readiness, the new Active Army forces whose formation has been directed. Events may not wait upon them and their availability for deployment.

The meaning of all this should be made clear to all National Guardsmen. They are in for some difficult days as they attempt to perform miracles in the way of training and recruiting, and to make precautionary, just-in-case preparations for a mobilization that may never occur.

And once again, as so often before, the effectiveness of their efforts will hinge very largely on a single factor: informed, energetic and dedicated leadership. ♦

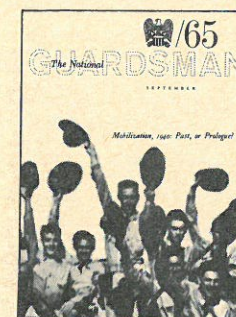
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