

The Army National Guard: An Agenda for the 21st Century

by

Major General Gerald T. Sajer, ret.

Former Adjutant General, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

The United States enters the 21st Century more secure, more at peace and more prosperous than at any time in the 20th Century. That Century, the bloodiest in human history, saw the nation fight four major wars, persevere through a costly and a stressful Cold War of almost fifty years, and engage in other military actions. The peace the nation now enjoys came at a very high price in its sacrificed youth and human treasure. The nation has emerged as the sole superpower in the world with no military peer competitor in sight for the next twenty years. In that posture, the nation now pursues a foreign policy of global engagement, engaging nations around the world to preserve the peace among them, to foster the spread of democratic institutions and values, to promote trade among nations, and to seek collective solutions to the many common problems. It is obvious that this policy is far more engaging than one based on a narrower formulation of “national interest”. The broad implications of the policy in peacetime has made it difficult for the national military leadership to adapt a military strategy which it can execute without jeopardizing what it perceives as its paramount mission: to defend the nation and fight and win its wars. The requirements of the one are seen by some as inconsistent with the other; furthermore, the peacetime demands of the one are regarded as an unwanted and burdensome distraction from the “true” mission of preparing to fight the nation’s wars.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in November of 1989 ended the Cold War. It was obvious that the national military strategy with its sole focus on the Soviet Union would have to undergo radical change. It also meant that the large standing active military forces could no longer be justified and that the force structure would have to be reduced. Thus, overtime, the active army divisions were reduced from eighteen to ten. Less clear was the role of the Army National Guard combat forces in the new emerging strategy. Some

thought that as the size of the active forces was reduced greater reliance would be placed on the guard. Some saw the large standing army of the Cold War as an aberration in our history and with the end of that war, thought the nation would revert to its traditional role as a fundamentally militia nation relying on the Guard. It was also less clear whether the Cold War division structures and equipment would meet the requirements of future missions and warfare. At the same time new technologies were emerging and the military leadership was aggressive in seeking to capture the military benefits of them.

The first steps in the change in military strategy necessitated by the end of the Cold War seemed clear to all. The large garrisons maintained on the frontiers of Europe could be withdrawn to the homeland but a forward presence of lesser forces would be maintained in areas of importance to the United States and its allies. This meant that principal reliance would be on the projection of the main forces from the homeland into the disputed area. This capability rested solely in the Air Force and the Navy. The Persian Gulf War presented the nation with the opportunity to demonstrate the ability of its forces to carry out the power projection strategy. It took six months to place a force of 200,000 men, their equipment and materiel on the ground. From the Gulf War experience, the military leadership drew certain conclusions. It had no warning that Iraq would invade Kuwait; it therefore concluded that future wars would be no-notice wars. As a corollary to that, it determined that only those forces that could be ready to respond on short notice were needed in the force structure. It concluded that the eight combat divisions of the Guard could not meet the short response criteria it had established, assigned them no wartime missions and sought their conversion or inactivation. At a more fundamental and far reaching level, this meant the military leadership had decided that the United States could no longer be the historical militia nation it had been since its founding as, in its view, only active combat forces were capable of responding in its new, no-notice, short wars.

In developing a vision for its future, the Guard must address the challenge of the army's "new thinking". It is not only pivotal to the survival of the Guard but it will determine the extent to which the Guard can make a contribution to our nation's military

strategy , the defense of the homeland, and the support of the states. It is the crux of the issue and is addressed as the first point in this statement of an agenda for the 21st Century.

First Point. All units of the army Guard must be assigned warfighting missions. This is the most fundamental issue facing the Guard; all others must be subordinated to it. At stake is the survival of the guard and its historic militia tradition. The focus is on the eight combat divisions of the Guard. In 1994 these divisions were taken out of the Defense Planning Guidance which assigns wartime missions. Since then, the national military leadership has sought their conversion or inactivation. It influenced the Commission on Roles and Missions to recommend their inactivation. It followed that up with the Quadrennial Defense Review of 1997, which opined that there were no warfighting missions for the divisions and assigned them to a nebulous strategic reserve. This was rather remarkable because giving them a wartime mission need not have added a single dollar to the budget but would have improved their effectiveness. Neither DOD nor the Army has stated why it felt it had no need for the divisions.

A fair reading of the Goldwater-Nichols Act would interpret that law to mean that all units of the guard and reserve must be assigned to the warfighting CINCs. The specific language states: “(a)ASSIGNMENT OF FORCES...the Secretaries shall assign all forces under their jurisdiction to unified and specified combatant commands...Such assignments shall be made as directed by the Secretary of Defense, including direction as to the command to which forces are to be assigned...” 10 USC Sec. 162.

It seems clear that this is a legislative mandate. The Congress has exercised its constitutional power to raise armies and has directed that those it has raised be assigned to its warfighting chiefs. Of course it could be that there is a paper in a drawer in the Pentagon in which such assignments are made but that would hardly comply with the intent or the letter or spirit of the mandate. It is now for the military leadership to assign them wisely as the international situation might indicate from time to time. In any case, the Guard must forcefully advocate in all forums that all of its forces be assigned warfighting missions.

There are many very good reasons for apportioning all Guard and reserve units to the warfighting CINCs for incorporation into their war plans. The wartime mission focuses the unit; it allows the development of a realistic METL, guides the training, equipping, and operational activities of the unit. Knowledge of the area and the terrain, participation in exercises with the CINC and other assigned units develop relations that build confidence among the leaders and their units. Members of the unit can take advantage of training opportunities with the gaining command as their budgets permit. It reduces post mobilization training and deployment times. As a program, it will do far more to the integration and development of “The Army” than the other programs presently pursued to achieve that objective. It prepares the units better for war and makes better use of the budgeted dollars allocated to them. In sum, it makes for a better Army. These units should be properly resourced to perform their mission; they should be technologically superior to any enemy they may confront.

Second Point: The preponderance of the Army’s heavy forces should be in the Army Guard force structure. Given today’s world environment, peacetime and wartime, it is clear that the first responders will be other than the heavy forces. They will make the entry and establish the lodgment for the follow on heavy forces. This is a mission for which the active army must be especially capable and fashioned. Their units should consist of younger soldiers than are found in the Guard, they should be fit and ready to go on short notice. Guard units are peculiarly adapted for heavy forces. Their crews and squads have a stability and continuity not found in active units. This allows them to gain a high degree of competence in their equipment and their functions. Their personnel can be older and not have to meet the physical demands of lighter forces. Their maintenance personnel also tend to serve a long time in the same units and to acquire a good range of maintenance skills.

Third Point: Army Guard units can be made as ready as their mission requires. For almost a decade, the Army has claimed that Guard combat units cannot be ready in time to meet deployment schedules. It is said that Guard units only have 48 drills a year and two weeks of annual training which is not sufficient time to be ready. Some admit

that smaller units can be ready but that it takes more time for larger units, i.e. brigades and divisions. It is also said that mastery of division level operations is difficult in the limited time available. Two recent and very rigorous studies by the 49th Armored Division and the 28th Infantry (Mechanized) Division done with IDA provide a firm basis upon which to build valid response times.

The fact is that Guard combat units can be as ready as their wartime missions require. That can be accomplished only if the decision -makers abandon old paradigms, old thinking and look for ways to make the units readier. The Army must change its thinking as must the Guard. There are specific means to make Guard units readier. Many of them have been thought of or used in the past. They must be tried to determine their degree of effectiveness in reducing post mobilization training time. These are presented in ascending order of their cost.

First, it has been suggested that given wartime missions and assignment to a CINC will in itself reduce post mobilization times and increase readiness. This can be done at no added cost as it focuses the units training, operational and logistic activities, making them more effective and responsive to the requirements of the mission.

Second, a better national “heads up policy” should be put in place. This would be helpful in reducing post mobilization time and would be even more effective if units were assigned to the CINCs. Under this policy units would receive early notice of a possible deployment which would allow the unit to begin preparations. This should become routine and applied in virtually all situations except where diplomatic sensitivities would warrant precluding it. The notice could also specify tasks to be accomplished within certain timelines. This can be implemented at no additional cost.

Third, the heads up policy can be supplemented with the selective reserve force policy of two drills a month. However, this should not go beyond six consecutive months because of the strain on the soldier, his family and his employer. This policy was highly effective during the Viet Nam period and with specified tasks, can increase readiness and

reduce post mobilization times. There is an added cost based on the number of units involved.

Fourth, divisions and brigades can be placed in a three year readiness cycle, with one third of the force receiving additional monthly drills and a third week of annual training, with the second in the cycle receiving additional drills, and the third in the routine drill / annual training pattern. This is a pattern that soldiers, their families and employers can adjust to without undue stress. Based on the studies of the 49th Armored and the 28th Infantry it will be possible to fairly accurately determine their readiness posture and the time still required for deployment. The brigade that completes the intense training phase of the cycle should be able to complete individual and crew tasks, and to progress to company level and battalion task force exercises.

Fifth, all combat units should undergo three weeks of annual training. Since these are the units that need the most training, they should be required to go to annual training for three consecutive weeks. They should progress to company level training. Because of Army policy, these units are training at the squad and platoon level. This is insufficient. All should progress to company /troop level with artillery at battalion level. This is the most expensive of the alternatives presented. Again, using the 49th and the 28th studies, a fairly accurate impact on readiness can be determined.

Sixth, the Guard can create Minuteman Combat Battalions to be at least the equal of any in the active forces by going to forty percent of full time manning, with seventy-five percent of the officer and senior NCO positions manned by full timers, and the remaining sixty percent manned by part timers. With rigorous standards and a demanding training program, these units should be able to match the deployment standards of active units and certainly be as ready. Armored and armored cavalry units should be able to meet the standard; direct support artillery battalions may require only 25% full time manning; mechanized infantry should follow the 40% manning model. These units while far more costly than the traditional Guard units, will meet or exceed the demands of like active

units, but at considerably less cost. To the extent that the Army requires ready heavy units, this will accomplish the task while allowing considerable savings.

These are suggestions that will make a readier Guard. It will require two or three years of experimentation and experience to get it right and to assess the effects. Many of these ideas have been discussed in the past, some have been tried. To meet the challenges of the 21st Century, the Guard must be willing to seize the initiative and be the force the nation can count upon as it has in the past.

Fourth Point: The present end strength of the Guard must be maintained. Given the inability of the active Army to meet its recruiting goals, and, given the mission demands upon the Army, it is clear the Army must divest itself of some of its missions. Those, for the most part, will go to the Guard. Further, as the active Army is stressed to meet its peacetime commitments its capability to meet wartime mission demands is reduced. This delta in mission capability can only be closed by the combat forces of the Guard. In addition, the growing domestic missions of the Guard in homeland defense along with its role in drug interdiction and state emergency operations, all require the Guard's combat forces. It would be unwise to further reduce the end strength of the Guard, at least for the next several years.

Indeed, the Guard today is making a greater contribution in executing the national military strategy than it has in the recent past, and it has the potential to do far more. There are some who argue that the Army's budget is too small to afford the Guard. They overlook that the Guard is the most cost-effective force available and that considerable budget savings could be realized by increasing its capability and missions. There is money in the Army budget to pay for a stronger, more effective Guard. The money will come from eliminating any infrastructure that is in excess of the needs of the nation.

The Guard continues to provide the most for the defense dollar. There is no rational justification for any further attempts to reduce the size of the Guard. The funding of the

Guard is but a very small part of the defense budget and the additional resources required to increase its capability can be offset in other areas without reducing defense capability. In a phrase we must get rid of the fat not the fighters.

Fifth Point: The Army Guard can be the most effective peacekeepers if the mission is properly managed. As the sole superpower and leader of the free nations the United States is expected to play a positive role in assuring the peace. It is not the province of this paper to argue whether our military forces should be used to feed a starving nation, or to prevent wholesale genocide, or to prevent ethnic cleansing and other unspeakable horrors. Those are decisions to be made by the responsible elected officials. The task of the military is to salute and carry out the order. It is clear that deployments stress the Army which is essentially a married army, with a significant number of single parent households. Deployments also stress the budget and impact upon readiness for war time missions. The Guard can relieve some of that stress by accepting peacekeeping missions and it has done so successfully. In calling upon the Guard for these missions, the Army must recognize that there are limiting factors that do not apply to active units. Every traditional guardsman has three critical relationships: family, employer, Guard. These require a careful balancing like attending to three parking meters. Overstaying at anyone of the three can adversely affect the other two. In the recent missioning of Guard units for peacekeeping operations, this has been neglected.

Guardsmen are particularly suitable for peacekeeping operations. They are usually, older, more experienced, more mature than active soldiers. They have a better understanding of communities, their functions and interrelationships. Because they have civilian occupational skills, they can perform a much wider array of tasks than their normal MOSs. Quite often, they are recognized as civilian soldiers, not professional army soldiers, and more easily develop the trust of the local populace. The problem with their deployment is the three parking meters.

Recently, Guard units have been mobilized for 270 days, the maximum allowable under a presidential call up. This is a gross violation of the three parking meter rule.

Families with a good family support program may be able to sustain themselves. The difficulty is with the employers. For the successful guardsman with a good job this is a career breaker; it is simply far beyond any parameters that an employer can accept. No employer and no Guardsman should be put in that position where there is no emergency. This is not to say that the Guard cannot perform the mission. But the commander of the unit or his next higher must have the discretion to manage the personnel going on the mission and the length of time they must be there. Some type units or subordinate units or some type missions may require a unit that has trained together and must work as a unit or a team within the unit. But even this type unit can be formed with the unit cadre and volunteers with a train up period so they can work as a unit or a team. This has been done successfully in the past. Other type units may require that certain key positions be manned for the duration of the mission. Other positions may require lesser periods of time on mission. The commander of the mission should be permitted to make his personnel analysis, and within certain parameters, manage the personnel, working out the schedules of rotation, etc. While this may add to the overall cost of the mission, especially in terms of the number of persons who will have to be trained up for the mission on an ongoing basis, it is a far more desirable and workable method than that now employed. The Army must overcome its fixation with mobilizing units, and its objections to what it calls "pick up" units. The Guard can field solid units of persons who want to be there and who will perform to the highest standards.

Sixth Point: As part of its state mission, the Guard can manage emergency operations along with homeland defense, drug interdiction and other domestic missions; however, these should not detract from the Guard's basic combat mission. There are those who see the world today as one of uncertainty and growing dangers: the spread of missile technology, the proliferation of nuclear weapon capable countries, of state sponsored and non-state sponsored terrorism, of drug cartels, of cyber terrorists, and vindictive dictators. All pose a threat to the homeland. It is not at all clear as to how to confront the threats. Many of these are threats within the purview of law enforcement agencies in which the Guard can only play a supportive role. Others are for address by the highest councils of

nations. For these reasons the Guard should not be pushed out on the cutting edge of the homeland mission. There are some things the Guard should study.

This is an area where there is a great need for clean lines of communications and authority. To the complexities arising from federal/state relationships, constitutional inhibitions, the large array of interested bureaucracies at the federal and state level, extraordinarily difficult organizational lines tend to overwhelm thinking and action. Every effort must be made at the federal and state level to streamline lines of authority and communications. Old paradigms must be broken. The number of players in the loop must be reduced, with dotted lines running to those that are relevant. While they may have missions of some importance, they are on call responders and not the decision-makers. The Guard of the various states must take the lead to assure that the organizational structure is simplified and that a very adequate command and control system is in place with the needed communications and informational systems; this should be federally funded and should satisfy all of the emergency operational needs of the state.

There are some twenty-four (24) states in which the Adjutant General has responsibility for day to day emergency operations. In some states, it means control of the state's emergency management agency; in other states it also means control of the state police. In the other states, emergency operations are controlled by an independent state agency; this may or may not include responsibility for civil disturbance operations. Most informed opinion finds that emergency operations are best conducted when under the day to day control of the Adjutant General. This should be an area for study by the Adjutants General. If, as appears to be the case, more missions will be assigned to the TAGs in homeland defense, they will find it to be a more effective and responsive organization if they are responsible for emergency operations on a day to day basis.

Homeland defense may well be an area of mission creep but since it will be subordinate to the basic combat mission, it should be within the competency of the guard. At present there is an overemphasis on consequence management. The significant role of

the Guard is more likely in the area of prevention management. Border and coastal patrol, surveillance of ports of entry, overwatch of critical installations all done in support of law enforcement agencies could add to the security of the homeland and are missions for the Guard.

There are many commentators who dwell on the uncertainty of our times, bemoan the lack of what they call a “cohesive strategy,” decry the number of deployments, and long for a simpler world. To all of this the Guard will adjust and adapt. What it cannot do is to allow its strength to be reduced, its force structure tinkered with unnecessarily, and its resources reduced so as to become a hollow Guard. An agenda for the future is needed. The Guard cannot be put in a reactive mode after the decisions have been made. We must decide now and make our case for what the Army Guard should be in the 21st Century. The Guard is one of the best institutions in the country. The task of its leaders is to present the case for the Guard in as many forums as possible. In this paper, suggestions have been made. It is said there are no new ideas under the sun; we only see them for the first time today. That may be true of this paper. It is an effort to focus the Guard on what the writer perceives to be the most critical issues and how to confront them. Let the discussions begin and an agenda be adopted.

This paper is submitted in response to a call for papers issued by the Minuteman Institute for National Defense Studies, Washington, DC.