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Interview With Maj. Gen. Donald W. Shepperd, Director, Air National Guard (ANG), by Charles J. Gross, PhD, Chief, ANG History Program.

Dr.Gross: What issues, trends and developments are you facing in for the Air Guard?

General Shepperd: First of all, we are in the time of massive and accelerating change having just come out of the Cold War into the new world order that is ill-defined. We are entering a period that appears to be a time of operations other than war at the same time we have to be prepared for conflicts and major regional contingencies. At the same time, we are faced with a total change in the world political situation, total change in the world economic situation, total change in the threat environment with the Berlin wall coming down and communism having gone away and you add in there a technological military revolution. We still worry about two major conflicts, one in the Middle East over the oil assets, and another in Southeast Asia having to do with Korea and we are facing an emerging an China all at the same time we are entering a period of drastically reduced budgets. These budgets, caused basically by the deficits and the debt, [mean that we] are going to have considerable less money for defense pure and simple. We are going to have cope with that as a nation. So what I worry about is how the military establishment is going to provide national security on a substantially reduced defenses budget for the future. I am absolutely convinced that the only way to do

that is to place much more reliance on our Guard and Reserve forces.

So the biggest problem on my plate is when we are reducing budgets out there [and] there is a tendency to want to take everything down including the Guard and Reserve. But, I think the Guard and Reserve will be a much more important part of the future pie. Now I do not mean that we will necessarily be bigger but we will be a bigger part of the pie that is left. So, what I am trying to do is get rid of the stuff we do not need and transfer to new missions that we do need that are relevant in the modern world. Those missions are space [and] information warfare. So I am trying to protect our units and protect our force structure because I am convinced we are going to have to bolster that force structure in the times ahead because we will not have the dollars to keep as much on active duty as in the past. So, my major thrust is basically preserving force structure for the world that I see ahead which will rely more on the Guard and Reserve not taking things down and having to rebuild them.

I am talking about units. I am talking about facilities. I am talking about that type of thing and trying to find alternate missions in space [and] information warfare - that kind of thing that I consider to be the trends of the future.

Dr. Gross: Do we have enough money and other wherewithal to keep up the force structure, however changing it might be, that we already have?

General Shepperd: It depends. One of the big questions we are asking ourselves of course is what is the force structure of the future going to be? Now there is a quadrennial strategy review that is coming up sometime in the spring of [19]97. That quadrennial review will decide what the national security policy is and what the military strategy that goes with that, whether it is a two MRC [i.e., major regional contingencies] strategy or something else.

And, out of that will come the force structure that we need to pursue for the new military strategy. And, once we make force structure decisions, then I will really know what to worry about there because we will decide, for instance, how many fighter wings we need, what the mix between the Guard and the Reserve and the active duty will be. These type of things will all be addressed as part of that strategy review.

Dr. Gross: Diversity is an ongoing concern. What are your thoughts on diversity in the [Air] Guard?

General Shepperd: Well, we are told that in the year 2025 [that] 40 percent of the work force will be minorities and women, so we have to work continually on increasing our minority and female representation in the work force in this organization. It is very tough out there. We are doing it at the same time that the propensity to serve in the military is becoming less and therefore you know it is a real struggle because qualified minorities have all sorts of opportunity out there, the military only being only one of them. We are in competition with [lots of other potential employers] especially in the minority area so our

thrust is basically to slowly increase our minority and female' representation in this organization.

Dr. Gross: What incentives or encouragement can you give the unit commanders who do the basic hiring of new folks?

General Shepperd: First of all I can make it visible to them. I can show them where we are, where we need to go and I can show them how we compare with others. Then a lot of it is up to them. In other words, it's constant jawboning, trying to put facts in front them, and constantly comparing them with other people in the active force and Reserves to make sure that we are progressing in the right direction.

Dr. Gross: What is your assessment of the future of air sovereignty/air defense as a mission with dedicated units?

General Shepperd: Well, this is an area that requires some real thought because there are a very few people left that understand the mission of defense and air sovereignty. First of all, we do not have on a day-to-day basis air defense of the nation. We have units dedicated to air defense of the nation should they ever be needed. We would grow into that air defense picture. But, what we have on a day-to-day basis is air sovereignty. We have a thin veneer of alert units spread around the periphery of the United States that are there to take off and intercept people that basically penetrate our air defense identification zone that are not identified.

Somebody has to do that whether it's dedicated air defense or general purpose [fighter] forces. That is

something we will decide after strategic review and what have you. Someone has to be responsible for controlling the air sovereignty borders of the United States which is our defense zone. We simply cannot open up our air borders any more than we can open our land or water borders and say anyone can come in or that we do not care who you are. So, somebody has to do it. If you want to call it dedicated air defense, fine. If you want to call it general purpose forces that are tasked to do it, that is fine too.

Dr. Gross: Well, there are those like Senator [John] McCain (R-AZ) who say we don't need dedicated units, do away with those units and task it out to the active duty, Air Force, Navy or whatever.

General Shepperd: Well, that's fine but it's much more complicated than that. All of the units are tasked to do something right now. Our strategy is two MRCs [i.e., major regional contingencies] and those units that you tasked to do that [i.e., air defense/air sovereignty] on a day-to-day basis go off to war. And when you go off to war, that is when you need to be prepared to posture for air defense of the United States. Somebody has to be dedicated to do that.

Now, whether its general purpose forces that stay home or whether you call them dedicated air defense forces is kind of a moot point. But, somebody has to do it and there are not enough general purpose forces out there to do the things they are tasked to do and also provide air defense. That's why we have dedicated air defense [units] today. Now, you could make those dedicated air defense forces general

purpose [fighter] forces and task them to do it. And, that may be the direction that we get down the line.

The other thing is that we have really drastically reduced our air defense posture from something around 2,600 [aircraft] then 1,400 airplanes on air defense. We are now down to 20 airplanes on air defense [alert] on a day-to-day basis, 2 airplanes [each] at 10 locations. Now, like any other unit, in a time of national emergency you can mobilize the entire unit. You can draw in people from the schoolhouses and that type of thing and deploy them outward to other alert locations and that is what air defense is about.

Dr. Gross: Where are we on the restructuring of the Guard and the headquarters in particular?

General Shepperd: Are you talking about our headquarters?

Dr. Gross: Our headquarters [in the National Guard Bureau] first and then we can talk about the field.

General Shepperd: First of all, what we have done in our headquarters is that we have taken some major steps in making the [ANG] Readiness Center and the [National] Guard Bureau one organization. We are at the final portions of that. Another portion that I am trying to work right now is integration of our staff at the MAJCOM [i.e., major command] level. We are seeking permission from OSD [i.e., Office of the Secretary of Defense] to get that done and I still have some steps to go through on that. But, we are essentially through with the basic restructuring of our headquarters which is to make us one organization.

Dr. Gross: How about the restructuring and reorganization in the field?

General Shepperd: [For the] restructuring in the field, the major steps have been taken there which are to standardize our state headquarters with ranks and positions. Also, to make all of our [flying] units wings. That portion is done. We have a few more steps that will be taken this summer that tie up the details but mainly the restructuring is done and over.

Dr. Gross: Can you say anything about the more sensitive matter, the issue of grade leveling?

General Shepperd: The business of grade leveling, the final positions on that are being brought to me probably in the month of July [1996]. Once that makes sense to me, when they sell it to me, then I will launch out selling it to the Adjutants General and to the field. The purpose of grade leveling is simply to get our organization We have a situation where we have not had a mechanism for deciding where rank goes and what the responsibilities are that define rank out there.

So, we have, over a period of time increased our percentages of the controlled grades well above anything that we can logically support. So I am trying to get a system we can support, figure out why we have rank there, without hurting the people that are on board. As we gradually reduce rank to something that I think is reasonable, we will provide transition benefits to our people and that type of thing. So I see the major steps in

this being taken this summer as far as defining what it means for the future.

Dr. Gross: Looking ahead a little bit again, can you talk about CYBERGUARD and what that means and where we are going in the future with that?

General Shepperd: CYBERGUARD is just a term that I am using to talk about everything I am doing to transform our organization for the 21st century because my thesis is and my thought on this is that almost everything we have learned to do for the 20th century will require us to change about 180 degrees for the 21st century. For instance, we are a functional organization. The problem with functional organizations is that they are boxes that fill up with people, rank, executive officers, first sergeants, administrative support. That will be gone in the 21st century. We will have flat organizations made up mainly of teams. So I am trying to change us from a functional organization into a teaming organization at a time when you still need the functional organization to relate to the Air Force and that type of thing. So it is mainly changing from a functional to a teaming organization. I am taking the initial steps to get that done internally.

Dr. Gross: Looking at future missions, you mentioned space and information warfare. Is there anything we should elaborate on as far as where we are going and how fast?

General Shepperd: We have our first space unit which is the Space Warning Squadron at Greeley [Colorado]. We took down a TACS [i.e., Tactical Air Control Squadron] unit and moved into the space warning system. We are looking at one other

mobile command and control system right now. I am looking at other missions that we could do because the future is in theater battlefield management and I should have mentioned that [earlier].

Space, information warfare, and theater battlefield management- things that have traditionally been done by combat communicators is now being transferred to the new area of theater battlefield management. That is another area that I am trying to work hard to define what it means and how we can take organizations such as TACS units and Combat Comm units and form them into new theater battlefield management organizations.

Dr. Gross: Is there anything else I should be thinking about as I prepare this look into the future?

General Shepperd: We are talking about an entire organizational transformation. We are talking about the way we are organized. I am talking about who we hire, minorities and women as well. I am talking about the equipment that we use, the worldwide web, the computers - this type of thing - CD ROM's, distance learning, laptop computers. I am talking about where the work is done. A lot of it will be done in the future by part-time employees working out of their homes. I am talking about the way we do education and training which, in a great sense, will be done by distance learning as opposed to the traditional school houses that we have attended or sending people off to schools, that type of thing. I am talking about the way we do work which is in a teaming as opposed to a functional organization. So I am really talking about how we do work, who does the work,

[and] what we do with it in the 21st century - dramatic changes!

Dr. Gross: Is this going to be that different from the active force? We have [almost] always been closely integrated with them and not that fundamentally different. Are they going down that path?

General Shepperd: I think so, absolutely! All of us will be doing it this way and we need to be prepared with the hardware and software and thought processes to rapidly adapt to these new ways of working. And, by the way, I think that what we have done both on our fiber optic network out there which we have got laid at all of our flying organizations, support organizations, really sets us up to receive anything fiber optically in the future which is the way we are going to be doing things in the future.

Dr. Gross: Well that's all the questions I have this morning.

General Shepperd: Good, thanks.