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What Has Happened In Ohio National Guard Since May?

By DON RANDY

What has happened within the National Guard since Kent State?

There has been no additional riot control training — although Guardsmen interviewed by the Beacon Journal say there is a need for more.

The Guard still is not equipped with "nonlethal" weapons — although nearly everyone from the top brass on down has agreed that the M-1 rifle should be replaced for riot duty. (Efforts are under way, however, to find suitable "nonlethal" weapons.)

THE BEACON JOURNAL talked to some 20 men of the Akron-based 145 infantry. They asked that their names not be used. There are 880 enlisted men and 35 officers in the 145th.

Some of the enlisted men interviewed were at Kent State on May 4 when four students were killed and nine wounded by bullets fired from M-1s. All have seen duty in at least one civil disturbance — at the Hough riots in Cleveland in 1966, or Akron's Wooster av. disturbance in 1968, or elsewhere.

Some of the men said the Guard should be overhauled — if it is to be continually called up for civilian disorders — with the emphasis changed from combat to riot training.

A sergeant, a veteran of 4½ years, said, "There should be a major change in the training. We're pressed into service so many times, not just here, but about the country. Changes had better come about and people should be giving thought to this."

TOP GUARD officers don't share that view.

Maj. Gen. Winston P. Wilson, chief of the National Guard Bureau in Washington, says:

"I don't think a total overhaul is needed at all. When you look at the result in the 200 places where the Guard has been used in civil disorders since 1968, looking at the incidence of injury or death, I think the results have been proving that the training and equipment have been satisfactory."

Added Lt. Col. Raymond Galloway, commanding officer of the 145th:

"Riot control is a secondary function of the Guard. The training is adequate. We could train forever and ever and still don't know what would happen the next time."

BUT RANK-AND-FILE Guardsmen here remain unconvinced.

Since Jan. 1, 1968, Ohio National Guard units have been called out 32 times, including 23 times to quell civil disorders. The other 16 were during periods of natural disasters.

On the other hand, only three times since the end of World War II have units been activated for combat purposes — once in 1952, again in 1961 and in 1968.

Yet training remains predominantly oriented toward combat duties.

GUARDSMEN are on active duty for six months, then must attend once-a-month weekend training sessions of 38 hours for the remainder of their total period of obligation — six years.

During the initial six months, 32 hours is devoted to riot training; after that, 16 hours a year.

Summer camps, lasting two weeks, are given to mock combat exercises.

"Our primary mission," says Gen. Wilson, "has always been to augment the Army and Air Force when there is a need." He noted Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird's efforts to reduce the active military forces and said this increases the need for combat-ready reserve forces.

This does not detract from riot control capability, he insists.

NEVERTHELESS, the critics of training procedures were among the most severe that the local Guardsmen issued.

Said one:

"Training is antiquated . . . World War II tactics and techniques, such as digging foxholes at Summer camp." In his four years of service, he has seen "only two or three films pertaining to riots — and they were dated, probably made in the 1950s," he said.

Here are comments from some of the others:

A FIVE-YEAR veteran of Company B — "Ninety pct. of the training received has been on combat. We use movies on riot control. In the movies, the crowds move back, but in a real disturbance it's not like that. There are no actors."

—"The Guard is trained for warfare against an enemy . . . run up hills, assault fire, assault that, respect officers and superiors. But when the Guard is called out for a riot, Guardsmen are given the same task as police officers who are trained from duty. You can't do the same thing with the same person."

'Should be major change in training'

— Sergeant

—"Guardsmen were not considering students at Kent State as a fellow Americans, but as enemies. They should not be looked upon as enemies. There's a lot of difference between a combat soldier and a police officer. Police don't look upon demonstrators as enemies."

—"AT CAMP this Summer, one unit built a fence and walkway to its own. Pretty soon, everyone had to do this . . . to pretty up the place. And this is supposed to be tactical training? It's ridiculous!"

—"In the 16-hour weekend training sessions (eight on Saturday and eight on Sunday) there's probably not one hour's worth of constructive training. Most guys sleep or sneak out of the classes. Training involves map reading, World War II type, and different crap."

—"If they made as many changes in training as they do regarding haircuts, we'd be up to snuff on riot control." He explained that much attention is given to the length of hair and on one weekend one man had to get "two or three" haircuts before he was "acceptable."

—"WE SPENT a lot of time cleaning up the Armory grounds from private organizations which have used the Armory. We shouldn't have to be outside picking up cigaret butts!"

A medic — "The only constructive thing I did one weekend was to give four physicals."

One Guardsman suggested that Guard units not be sent into their "home" areas when trouble erupts, but that outside units be brought in.

His reasoning was that at Kent State, for example, many of the Guardsmen had attended the university, they know many of the students personally and this makes it "harder" for the Guardsmen to take action against their friends.

WITHOUT admitting that any of the criticism is justified, Col. Galloway says there is one thing he would like to add to riot control training. That is to "prepare the men psychologically".

"I don't know how it could be done," he added, "but it would help to prepare the men to be able to stand there passively while they're being hit by rocks, spit upon and cursed at."

He suggested perhaps top-notch psychologists or psychiatrists could develop training courses to help prepare the men "to be mentally at ease."

"WE DON'T like to be called in," he added. "We don't get any glory out of it. You are never right, but somebody has to do it.

"How do you get a man to stand there and take the abuse?" he asked.

Other than the psychological aspect, Galloway said he had no recommendations to change the riot control training.

Galloway, who took over command of the 145th last April, noted that enlistments in the Guard are remaining stable and "as soon as there is an opening it is usually filled."

ON THE MATTER of weapons and equipment, there was considerable more agreement between enlisted men and officers on the need for change.

Even the two major reports on the May 4 tragedy at Kent State — prepared by the President's Commission on Campus Unrest and the special state Grand Jury — both concluded that M-1 rifles are "not appropriate" weapons for quelling campus disturbances. The reports differed on most other aspects of the tragedy.

Local Guardsmen made it clear they do not want to go into a trouble area without some sort of weapon. And they agreed that the M-1 is not the proper weapon.

Said one, "We can't function in a civil disturbance with combat weapons. You can't shoot to wound with an M-1 rifle. That weapon was made to kill."

WHILE the M-1 is the weapon on the normal Guardsman is equipped with shotguns are available in all the states, according to Gen. Wilson.

The National Guard also has recommended to states that face shortfalls, buttons and bird shot be used in civil disorder. States vary in their adoption of these weapons because that money sometimes has to come from state funds, appropriated by legislatures.

"It depends on the situation as to what type of force to use," Wilson said. "The states have the flexibility to select the appropriate weapon."

"WE KNOW the M-1s aren't right," said Galloway. However, he added that the Guard here has "just a few" shotguns available and that it would be at least two months before there would be enough to go around during a confrontation.

He said he hopes to have 250 shotguns in two months. The federal government will pay for these. In the meantime, if the Guard were called out to duty or near week it apparently would have to use the M-1.

"Slowly but surely we're getting them (shotguns)," Galloway added.

Galloway also said face shields are available, but they are stored in Columbus. If needed in this area, they would have to be flown here.

'Riot control secondary Guard mission'

— Col. Galloway

TEAR GAS used by the Guard has mostly been ineffective, some local enlisted men said. They noted that on windy days a person can breathe right through the gas. They suggested possible use of a vomit gas. The type of tear gas canisters used at Kent State enables students to pick them up and throw them back at the Guardsmen.

Gas masks issued to Guardsmen are "bad," one said. A man who wears glasses can't wear them under the mask, he explained, adding that the regular Army has prescription glass in its masks for men who have to wear glasses.

Gen. Wilson said, "We are working on a way to get lenses ground. I know that some people have been able to wear glasses with a gas mask, but we have had complaints and we do recognize the problem."

MEANWHILE, the directorate of military support, Department of the Army, is attempting to develop nonlethal weapons for both Guard, and regular Army use.

Chemical Mace was studied and discarded. Tear gas is still used. Some states have equipped their Guardsmen with pepper fogguns—an aerosol mist that stings like pepper and can cover a 20-yard distance with one shot.

If the guard should ever be ordered back to Kent State, it should be better prepared as far as planning is concerned, said Galloway, (he was in a pilot instructor's school at Ft. Rucker, Ala., at the time of the KSU May disturbance.)

"WERE in constant liaison with city and university officials," he said. Weekly sessions include reports on outsiders coming on to the campus and bomb threats, and the variety of maps of the city and campus.

'Don't send Guardsmen into home areas'

— Guardsman

"We're not watching over anything. We're just sitting in, making no comments, but just listening. We don't want to be caught unaware," he said.

Galloway also said the 145th Infantry now has the planning responsibility for Kent and KSU in case anything breaks out in the future. Below last May, this was the responsibility of Guard units outside the Akron area.

DESPITE their criticism, some enlisted men question whether the Guard should be used at all for riot control. Said a 20-year-old soldier discharged this Summer after completing his Guard requirement:

"It (riot control) is not their responsibility. Maybe we should have a sturdy police force, with the men trained as auxiliary policemen."

He added: "But as long as the Guard is called out, it should know what to do. Shoot if your life is in danger is a vague value judgement.

"There will be panic," he continued, "but there shouldn't be. You could help overcome this with proper education and training. The Guard just can't go in there and be policemen.

"You don't get scared if you know what you are doing or are supposed to do. More training would inspire confidence when you're in front of a crowd. It would keep panic to a minimum, maybe keep someone from getting shot."

Greek Group Backs Ayres

The Hellenic-American Political Association, a group of Greek businessmen, has endorsed Rep. Ayres for reelection.

Also endorsed were: Mark Ravenscraft, (D), Summit County Commissioner; Robert Herberich, (R), Summit County auditor; State Sen. Robin Turner, (R), state treasurer, and Summit County Prosecutor James Barbuto, (D), for Summit County Common Pleas Court.

George Avdellas, owner of Dependable Real Employment Service, was elected president of the association.

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