
Defense Report

AUSA



Training the National Guard—No Place For Political Game-Playing

In a move that can only be characterized as political posturing, a handful of governors recently vetoed training of National Guard units from their states when the training was to be conducted in Central America. In several cases the governors cited the danger to the soldiers engaged in field exercises in places like Honduras and Panama as the reason for their refusal. But others admitted that it was opposition to the Reagan Administration's Central America policies that prompted them to withhold their consent.

Reaction to the refusal of the state chief executives who have said, "Hell no, our troops won't go," has been mixed. The National Governors' Association voted unanimously to reaffirm their traditional peacetime control over the National Guard. Others, both in Congress and in the Defense establishment, have called for stricter measures, ranging from transfer of the Guard unit's mission to the Army Reserve, to complete withdrawal of federal funding of Guard units in the affected states.

In reporting out the FY 1987 Defense Authorization Bill the House Armed Services Committee "strongly urges the Chief, National Guard Bureau, to consider withholding federal funds from those states that: (1) continue to refuse to participate in overseas training associated with their wartime mobilization and deployment missions."

The most even handed approach yet is the amendment offered by Rep. G.V. Montgomery which says that the governors cannot withhold their consent for Guard training simply because they object to the location or purpose of such duty. The governors still retain total control over the other activities of the National Guard and a natural disaster or other emergency within their state would take precedence over this amendment.

This proposal is fair to all in that it faces squarely the reality that today's National Guard is not a second-string backup force but must be prepared to fight side-by-side with the active components. It also provides that, except in wartime, the governors will have this military force available to assist in time of disaster.

It is hoped that Congress will have the stamina to reinforce the credibility and reliability of the National Guard by removing partisan politics from these vital national security decisions.