



Michigan COMMENTARY

MAJOR GENERAL VERNON J. ANDREWS,
DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AFFAIRS AND
ADJUTANT GENERAL OF THE MICHIGAN NATIONAL GUARD

by Don Weeks

The Department of Military Affairs (DMA) is the third smallest department of Michigan state government, following the departments of Civil Rights and Civil Service. Its budget for the current fiscal year is just \$21.4 million¹ [compared with \$270 million for the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and \$4.2 billion for the Department of Social Services (DSS)] and it employs only 323 people. (The DNR employees, 2,700; the DSS, 13,200.) Yet the director of the DMA, Major General Vernon J. Andrews, says the department and its mission are vital to state residents. In this report, he discusses his role as director of the DMA and adjutant general of the Michigan National Guard.

They are dual roles, really, with dual bosses. The director of the DMA is appointed by the governor (with Senate confirmation) and serves at his pleasure. In his other role as adjutant general of the Michigan National Guard, Andrews is also under the governor's control during peacetime. Article V, Section 12, of the Michigan Constitution states that "the governor shall be commander-in-chief of the armed forces and may call them out to execute laws, suppress insurrection, and repel invasion."

In wartime, however, the president becomes the commander-in-chief of all state National Guard units, which may be called to serve along with the country's active forces. Even without a declaration of war, the president has the authority to call as many as 200,000 guardsmen to active duty for up to ninety days. The Michigan National Guard has a daily obligation to the federal government to recruit, train, and maintain military forces to be used in the defense of the country. This is why the Michigan National Guard's \$180 million budget, and \$9 million of the DMA's budget, comes from the federal government.

General Andrews has no doubts, though, about whom he serves. "There's no question about it," he says. "Governor Jim Blanchard is my boss; I serve at his pleasure. If he were dissatisfied with my performance, he could simply say, 'General Andrews, that's it, I'm replacing you,' and I would say 'Yes, sir' and I'd step aside for my replacement and help him out until he got on his feet. . . . I work for the governor."

Working for a governor while helping to carry out the defense policies of a president puts many adjutant generals around the nation in an uncomfortable position. Several governors, concerned about states' rights and opposed to

¹Includes federal monies.

President Reagan's Central American policy, have recently objected to the training of their state guardsmen in Honduras, near the Nicaraguan border.

General Andrews says Governor Blanchard is concerned about the Central American training and wants to know if and when Michigan troops are to be sent to Honduras. But so far, Blanchard has not made it an issue. "I have advised him," Andrews said, "that I feel it is necessary for the Michigan National Guard, on an occasional, limited basis, to get training there. So he, basically, has left that up to me. It is my decision, in the interest of training the troops, which is my responsibility."

No Michigan guardsmen are training in Central America now, but Andrews expects to be asked to send some engineers in 1989 to build roads. Such requests come from the National Guard Bureau in conjunction with U.S. Army Forces Command. Andrews has refused requests to send troops to other countries before and will again if he believes the guardsmen will not be doing work that will help develop their skills as soldiers.

General Andrews is accustomed to dual roles. He began his military career in 1953 with a commission in the U.S. Army, and he has been in the National Guard since 1958. Yet he has also been successful in civilian life, with business investments and a law practice in Lansing. "But I've always been a soldier," Andrews said. "Since I was 17 years old, and even before that, I just had a real love for the military, I guess because of WWII. . . . I can remember listening to Pearl Harbor on the radio on December 7, 1941, and I guess I was just enamored of the military." Andrews has also been enamored of leaders like John Kennedy, Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, and General Mark Clark. He quickly adds one more: "John March, the Secretary of the Army . . . I guess he could almost be a hero of mine."

Governor Blanchard appointed his friend and neighbor in 1983, just as Andrews was contemplating retirement after 27 years of practicing law. His love for the military and his quest for new challenges helped him decide to postpone his retirement and accept the appointment. He has not regretted that decision. "I love every minute of it. It's an exciting job, probably the best job in the state," Andrews says enthusiastically.

He says it's a time-consuming job, requiring 60-80 hours a week. Much of that is ceremonial--presenting awards and going to retirement functions, promotion parties, and receptions of the various units. "There's a lot of that and, believe me, that's work," says Andrews. But basically, the job involves administering a small state department and a large contingent (16,000 soldiers and officers) of the National Guard.

The Army's system of centralized planning and decentralized execution means that the training requirements of the 16,000 soldiers and officers under Andrews' control are set nationally and are the same for all similar units in the active and reserve forces. The Army establishes an Army training and evaluation program (ARTEP) for each kind of unit. An infantry unit has one ARTEP; an amphibious unit has another. It is up to Andrews and his unit commanders to design a training program that will teach soldiers the skills necessary to pass an ARTEP.

Although Andrews doesn't personally design the training programs, he is very much involved with securing facilities and equipment to be used in training. This is also where Andrews has the most discretion with the budget, much of which is earmarked for salaries, construction, and veterans' programs.

He frequently travels to Washington to lobby the National Guard Bureau for more units, more armories, and newer equipment, which bring more federal money and jobs to Michigan.

His efforts have paid off. More units are being assigned to the state; some of the Army's latest equipment is used by Michigan guardsmen (new M-1 tanks will soon replace Michigan's M-60 tanks); and the federal government spent \$180 million here this fiscal year to train and equip the Michigan National Guard.

Camp Grayling, the Guard's 150,000-acre training site in northern lower Michigan, is scheduled to get a \$20-million multi-purpose range complex (MPRC) in 1989 or 1990. The only other MPRC in the National Guard is under construction in Idaho. The active Army has just three MPRCs nationwide. Andrews says Camp Grayling's MPRC will really put the Michigan National Guard on the map.

"We'll have people, not only from the Guard and Reserves training on it," Andrews predicts, "but we'll also have active forces from time to time because it is probably one of the most perfect training opportunities they can get." The MPRC will allow whole battalions to train simultaneously in a concentrated area. The range will create a very complex, computerized environment with realistic targets that simulate actual combat situations.

Andrews has not been quite as successful in securing a new bombing range for the Air National Guard, which contends that its existing range at Camp Grayling is inadequate. The Guard had tried to acquire a 31,000-acre site in Presque Isle County from the Department of Natural Resources for a new range. Local opposition, however, prompted Governor Blanchard last year to order Andrews to wait for results of a Pentagon study on the need for new training sites.

That study, according to Brigadier General Arthur P. Tesner, the assistant adjutant general for the Air National Guard, is going nowhere. There's a slight possibility it could be completed this year, but Tesner doesn't expect to see results any time soon.

Residents, local governments, and business owners near the proposed site fear that the range would cause safety problems and environmental and economic damage. These concerns are also behind opposition to expansion or increased use of Camp Grayling. The camp has some extraordinary environmental restrictions because portions of it are the only known nesting spots in the world for the Kirtland's warbler, an endangered species. The area is also home for some endangered bald eagles, threatened common loons, and osprey.

Most of Camp Grayling is on state land leased from the Department of Natural Resources. Lease violations and an apparent lack of control over some of the troops using the camp have led DNR Director Gordon Guyer to suggest that the Guard's future use of state land is in jeopardy.

Andrews is bothered by the public airing of differences between the two departments (DMA and DNR), but he is confident the differences can be resolved. "We have to train someplace," Andrews said, "and Grayling is a beautiful place to train. I assure you we'll do everything we can to preserve it."

Andrews and his lieutenants are apparently doing something right in the training of the troops. The Phelps Collins Air National Guard Base at Alpena was named the best support unit in the Air National Guard in 1986. It competed with over 250 other units in the country for the award given each year by the National Guard Association of the United States. The rest of the units in Michigan do well, too. Yearly evaluations by the Fourth Army Command of each Michigan National Guard unit usually result in a "T" rating, meaning "trained." A few units get an "A" (additional training needed). On very rare occasions, a Michigan unit will be rated "I" (intensive training required).

General Andrews has presided over dramatic changes in the Michigan National Guard, which has been transformed from a small group of weekend warriors, best known for helping communities after floods and other disasters, into a well-trained group of men and women that with the rest of the U.S. Guard makes up 46 percent of the combat-ready forces in the Army. The Guard is still called upon to help with natural disasters and domestic conflicts, but since the early 1970s, when the draft was eliminated and the active army was cut to 780,000 soldiers, the Army has been beefing up its Guard and Reserve forces. "More and more missions are coming to the Guard; more and more equipment is coming to the Guard. We're doing more overseas training, and we're training right alongside our active brothers and sisters," Andrews proclaimed. "They will not go to war without us."

As General Andrews begins to discuss dangers in the world and the need for a strong American defense, he interrupts himself to apologize for "sounding like those guys that have been on TV lately," referring to Oliver North et al. "Not that I have any antipathy or disagreement with most of the things that Ollie North had to say," explained Andrews. "But I think some of their actions . . . in retrospect . . . should have been looked at a little closer before they did them."

Andrews emphasized that in his Army a lieutenant colonel would not have as much latitude as Colonel North apparently had on the National Security Council. "I try to be involved in as many things as I can," said Andrews. "I'm sure there's something happening someplace right now that I wish weren't happening, but I certainly try to avoid it. I select good people to do a job for me and delegate responsibility to them and hold them accountable. And I think, by and large, they're doing a tremendous job."

General Andrews says that military life has been good to him, but he is ready to retire to another good life. Since becoming AG in 1983, Andrews has spent only 14 days on the Grand Cayman Islands in the Caribbean, where he has a home and some business investments. He is supposed to serve until age 62, but the 57-year-old Andrews is going to ask Governor Blanchard to replace him when he reaches age 60. He and his wife of 34 years then plan to spend at least six months a year in the Caribbean, pursuing investment interests and working on his hobbies of scuba diving, snorkeling, sailing, and flying his airplane. "The good life," says Andrews, "you have to smell the roses and enjoy the good life."

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