IRIS Public Record

Key Information

Main: WILSON, W. P.

Rcvd:		Rel	1982/06/22
Indexer ID: 20		Entered Date:	
QC ID:		QC'd Date::	
Scanner ID: 19		Scanned Date:	20040130
Acc ID		Acc Date:	

Document Type: **ORAL HISTORY INT**
Call Number: **K239.0512-1299 C.1**
IRIS Number: **01043876**
Accessions Notes:
Old Accession Nbr:
Title:
Beginning Date: **1929/01/01**
End Date: **1971/01/01**
Publication Date: **1978/12/18**
Classification ***UNCLA***
Media Roll #: First Frame: Last Frame: Linear Feet: **0**
Old MFlm Roll # Audio Rec:
NUMPAGE **160**
Title Extensions:

Abstract CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU; CONTAINS SUMMARY OF GEN WINSON'S MILITARY CAREER; DESCRIPTIONS OF PRE-WORLD WAR II NATIONAL GUARD AVIATION; POST-WORLD WAR II POLITICAL ATTITUDES TOWARD AIR NATIONAL GUARD (ANG); COMPETITION FOR AIRCRAFT ASSETS WITH THE ACTIVE FORCE; AF SUPERVISION OF ANG; ANG'S ROLE IN KOREA; MISSION OF ANG FOR NATIONAL AIR DEFENSE; POST-KOREAN WAR IMPACT AND ANG BUREAU PLANNING; PUEBLO INCIDENT MOBILIZATION; IMPACT OF SEA WAR ON ANG STRUCTURE; IMPACT OF DRAFT; SELLING ANG CONCEPTS TO AF; SECY OF DEFENSE MCNAMARA'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE ANG READINESS; MOBILIZATION TIMETABLES; LEGISLATION AFFECTING ANG SINCE 1950; COMPARISON OF ANG TO OTHER SERVICES' GUARD PROGRAMS; GEN WILSON'S SERVICE IN NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU; GEN WILSON'S VIEWS ON GUARD OF THE FUTURE; DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT STATUS OF ANG.

Descriptive Notes: OHI OF MAJ GEN WINSTON P. WILSON (ANGUS, RET), CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU, 1963-1971; INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY AFLC COMMAND, INTERVIEW NR. 19, BY DR. CHARLES J. GROSS, OFFICE OF HISTORY, AFLC AT FORREST CITY, AK, ON 17-18 DEC 78. HAS 5 EACH OH TAPES. DOCUMENT AVAILABLE IN ELECTRONIC OR DIGITAL FORM.

Title Added Entries THE MINUTE MAN IN PEACE AND WAR. A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL GUARD

Author:

Subject: MCNAMARA, R. S. NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU PUEBLO AIR NATIONAL GUARD, KOREAN CONFLICT AIR NATIONAL GUARD AIRCRAFT AIR NATIONAL GUARD MOBILIZATIONS

Major Command:

Doc Link:

Administrative Markings

Security Review Information:

U. S. AIR FORCE
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

K239.0512-1299

Maj Gen Winston P. Wilson

17-18 Dec 1978

DONATED TO THE

ALBERT F. SIMPSON

HISTORICAL RESEARCH CENTER

BY

AFLC/HO

ACCESS GRANTED	DATE	REMARKS/PURPOSE

Air Force Logistics Command Oral History

Interview No. 19

Of

Major General Winston P. Wilson
(ANGUS, Ret.)
Chief, National Guard
Bureau,
1963-1971

by

Charles J. Gross

Date: 17-18 December 1978
Location: Forrest City, Arkansas

April 13, 1980

Dear Charles:

First let me congratulate you on your position as Historian for the Air Force Logistics Command. I am sure that the work you did on your desertation came in handy in securing your position.

I have read the transcrip you sent me and I think that who ever transcribed the tape did an excelent job. I could make some changes but all I would be doing is saying the same thing in a little different way.

You have my permission to use this interview as a part of the Air Force's oral history collection.

I enjoyed very much meeting you and hope that you had a better understanding of the Air Guard after the interview.

Sincerely

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Winston P. Wilson was born in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, on 11 November 1911. He entered military service in May 1929, enlisting as an aircraft mechanic in the 154th Observation Squadron of the Arkansas National Guard. On 2 July 1940 he was commissioned as a second lieutenant. During World War II, he served in a variety of assignments including the 154th Observation Squadron, Headquarters Army Air Forces, 16th Photo Squadron, and the Far East Air Forces (FEAF).

General Wilson separated from active duty in July 1946 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He joined the Arkansas Air National Guard, serving both with the 154th Fighter Squadron and then on the state headquarters staff. He was ordered to active duty with the National Guard Bureau on 25 September 1950, beginning a long career with the Bureau which culminated in his appointment as its chief on 31 August 1963. He retired in 1971 with the rank of major general.

This interview was one of several that I completed in connection with a dissertation on the Air National Guard's history while a doctoral candidate at Ohio State University. The interview took place on 17-18 December 1978 at General Wilson's home in Forrest City, Arkansas.

General Wilson, like other interviewees, reviewed the draft transcript and was permitted to make necessary changes or corrections. For that reason, the wording of the transcript sometimes differs in minor ways from that of the tape.

I am indepted to the members of the DCS/Logistics Management Systems Word Processing Center at HQ AFLC who transcribed the interviewes as well as typed its intermediate and final drafts.

CHARLES J. GROSS, PhD
Historian
AFLC Office of History

Guide to Contents
Maj. Gen. Winston P. Wilson
Interview

AFLC Oral History Interview #19
With Major General Winston P. Wilson
Conducted by Charles J. Gross
17-18 December 1978

Mr. Gross: If you don't mind, I would like to talk a little bit about the beginning of your career in the Air National Guard when you joined the 154th Observation Squadron in 1929.

General Wilson: I joined the 154th Observation Squadron as a buck private in 1929. I stayed in it up through 1940. During the year of '40, there was opening for an aircraft observer. They had openings for two aircraft observers to fill their organization, and I was selected to participate as one of 10 candidates for those 2 positions with the understanding that the 2 top in the class would be appointed. I was appointed on the 2nd day of July 1940 as a second lieutenant. We went to camp, and we were told while we were in camp that we would be ordered to active duty for one year on September 16th. We came home, and I went on active duty at that time and stayed on active duty all during World War II and was relieved from active duty in July of '46. I went back and got in the Guard. At that time, I had been promoted to lieutenant colonel in the Air Force. The only position that was available in the Air Guard when I came back was a major. So, I took a bust from a lieutenant colonel to a major to get in the Guard and I became the operations officer at 154th Observation Squadron when it came back from World War II. We reorganized at that time and started out. Due to the fact there were airplanes galore after World War II, we became . . . . We had P-51s at that time and they called it a . . . . It wasn't a fighter squadron, it was a penetration squadron.

Mr. Gross: Penetration squadron?

General Wilson: We didn't even know what a penetration squadron was. So, it became a unit of fighters, and we trained as fighters. We were supposed to have 24 airplanes and, due to the fact they had so many, we ended up with about 60 P-51s on the ramp at Adams Field, Little Rock, Arkansas. The supplies came in by carloads. I remember one carload I helped unload at a drill. It was full of left

and right rudder pedals. That was all that was in it. They had enough rudder pedals to build a thousand airplanes. So, we junked them. Sold them for junk and put it in the squadron fund.

I stayed in the squadron, and we started out training as a fighter squadron, a tactical fighter squadron. We had a range at Adam's Field, with Camp Robinson which we used to shoot rockets, bombs, so forth. We had an acrobatics team, and we flew a lot. We had a great bunch of boys who flew there and we stayed that way until Korea happened.

And at that time, I had been promoted back to lieutenant colonel on the state staff in Arkansas as the Director of Operations. General Ricks was ordered to active duty to go up and take [Maj. Gen.] George Finch's place as the Director of the Air Guard or, [as] they called it then, the Air Division. [He was to be] Chief of the Air Division of the National Guard Bureau. He asked me to go with him so I went up there on September 13, 1950 to the Pentagon as his special assistant and, a year later, I was promoted to colonel. I was on boards all the time.

We had the great cutting of the pie as the Air Force called it. That was the dividing up of what units of the Air Guard for Korea would go to TAC, to SAC, to Military Airlift Command, so forth. No rhyme or reason. For example we were in a wing. Our wing headquarters was in Texas. We had two Texas squadrons and one squadron in Little Rock, all flying P-51s. Some of the other units had . . . . For example, the only jet fighters that we had in the Air Guard before that were the ones that we bought and they were in Florida and I believe in Massachusetts . . . . I believe Massachusetts had one squadron. They had a wing headquarters somewhere and squadrons that had never seen their wing headquarters before.

I was General Ricks' representative at the meeting where they tried to say this unit goes to TAC, this unit goes the SAC, these units go somewhere with no rhyme or reason at all. That was one of the things that caused Earl Ricks and me to come up with a program in which we said we are going to have to have

missions for these guys when they come home. We are going to have to have something definite for them to do, some organization that makes sense so that we can get some units that, once they are ordered to duty again, know each other, work together, so forth. That was the way we started and we spent that time.

I was his special assistant until 1954 when he died. At that time Gen. [Nathan F.] Twining was Vice Chief of Staff. He called me up to his office and said 'I'll give you a star if you will stay on.' I was supposed to come home in 54 because I had finished four years of active duty. We were ordered to duty for Korea for 21 months but, when I got to the Pentagon, they put me on a four year tour. I figured 'what difference did it make, twenty-one months or four years?' So, at the end of four years, I was planning on coming back to Arkansas and General Twining said 'I'll give you a star if you will stay.' I said 'that's the only way I could get to be a general officer in three weeks.' So I said 'fine.' I was appointed then as the Chief of the Air Guard. Then we reorganized and a year later they made what they had called a Deputy Chief of the Guard Bureau, that was after the 1952 act. Whenever the Chief [of the National Guard Bureau] was Army, the Deputy Chief would be Air Force and he would be two stars. About nine months after I was promoted to BG [brigadier general], I was made a major general as the Deputy Chief of the Guard Bureau. Then we had a brigadier general who was also assigned as Director of the Air Guard. I stayed there in that position until 1963 and was appointed by President Kennedy as Chief of the National Guard Bureau, the first Air Chief that had ever been appointed as Chief of the Guard Bureau. I was reappointed by President Johnson four years later in 1967. I finished my tour in 1971 and retired.

Mr. Gross: If we could get back a little bit to 154th Observation Squadron in 1929, what prompted you to join the organization?

General Wilson: Well you know the funny thing when kids used to hang around groceries stores and work on Saturday and Sunday, I loved airplanes and I was hanging around the Guard down there because that was the only place that I could get close to airplanes. In 1929 they had four Jennies and four DHs

[DeHavillands] and they had a waiting list to get in. You couldn't just join. So I had to show my interest by going down there and all the technicians got to know me. They would let me work around the airplanes and then, when they finally got a vacancy, let me in.

Mr. Gross: Was that kind of motivation fairly common for people who joined the Air Guard?

General Wilson: Yes! Yes! I was a buck private. I think I finally got promoted to a first class private about five years later but you almost had to wait till somebody died or got out of there to get promoted. In fact I was a corporal. I went from a corporal to a second lieutenant in 1940.

Mr. Gross: So even in those days there was a lot of longevity, a lot of experience and continuity . . . .

General Wilson: Oh yes, a lot of experience. For example the line chief that was there retired at age 65. He was there in 1925 when the organization started. The supply officer was the same way. There were about ten or twelve of the maintenance people that retired there. They stayed with it at all time clear to active duty in World War II. They came back and retired later on. We never had any trouble filling that unit.

Mr. Gross: Where did you get your pilots? What kind of backup did these people have?

General Wilson: Well your pilots came from the active Air Corps. They had been trained by the Air Force military flying school. Some of them were airline pilots. Some of them were pilots that had learned to fly themselves and had taken tests for the active Air Corps and gone to a school to qualify. We had a lot of people, just like they do now, who came from the Air Corps. They got off active duty, came down, and loved to fly. We had full squadrons in the 154th from the time I could remember.

Mr. Gross: What missions were they flying?

General Wilson: Well we were division aviation. The latter part before 1940, we had O-47s, we had O-38s, O-2Hs. I could remember sitting in the back end of an O-2H as an enlisted man, taking code, taking up messages from the Army. We were in direct support of the Army. In fact, when we were ordered to active duty on the year's basis before World War II when Roosevelt ordered the guard to active duty .... He was actually ordered them in state status you know, not as a declaration of war. He called them for one year in state status on a voluntary basis.

The aviation for the 45th division was the 120th Squadron from Colorado. They had so many airline pilots that they wouldn't volunteer to go on duty, so they asked the 154th if we would go on duty and we went on a 100 percent. We went to Fort Sill and became the division aviation for the 45th division of Oklahoma, and we stayed in Fort Sill until 1941, until war was declared. We were there for a year.

When war was declared, well of course, we had gone all the way into federal status then. For example, all the promotions and everything were confirmed by the state during that year just like they called them for their rides and so forth and they were still under state control. But we had a promotion program and the states promoted you and the federal government honored it. Actually it was the other way around. They said they would promote you if the state would promote you.

Mr. Gross: In 1941, were the units such as the 154th split off from their divisions?

General Wilson: Yes! In 1941, when the war came into effect, the first thing we did, we were moved to Pensacola, Florida. We pulled submarine alert out over the Gulf of Mexico and we were there for about six months. No, it wasn't that long. It was about three months and then they really disbanded the unit. They started pulling people from the unit to send to other jobs. These people had the experience and they were starting new squadrons. I ended up staying with the

154th up until about August of 1941 and then I was assigned to the Pentagon in the Air Support Branch of the Pentagon because I had a speciality of modifying aircraft. I had been an engineering officer in the Air Guard and I was given the job of modifying reconnaissance aircraft to send over to Africa. I was taken on TDY out of the squadron, out of the group, and was sent to the Pentagon. I stayed there until 1945 when I went to the Far East.

Mr. Gross: So would it be accurate to say that very early in the war that really these National Guard aviation squadrons ceased to exist as distinct units?

General Wilson: Well the squadrons stayed but they had all new people.

Mr. Gross: All new people!

General Wilson: All new people! All the squadrons stayed on duty and, for example, as you graduated people from flying school, they'd send in ten pilots and ten of our old pilots would go to other higher jobs.

Mr. Gross: So you really couldn't call them National Guard units anymore!

General Wilson: Unit integrity was completely done away with in 1941 after the war was there because they had to have the experience. The only place they could get it was from the Air Guard unit other than those they were training.

Mr. Gross: Did the Air Corps have any kind of reserve program at that point?

General Wilson: Well they had a reserve program and it was just people who had gotten off of active duty. They were strictly rosters. They had no organizations, no units, just rosters of people who still wanted to be a member of the reserve, and didn't do anything but would get promoted. You know, they would say 'I'd like to stay in the military in case something happened!' So there were no real organizations that were flying as individual units. It wasn't until after World

War II that they really got into the unit program. And if you go back and check the old law, it said that the only units that go in the reserve would be those that were not able to be formed in the Air Guard, in the National Guard.

Mr. Gross: Which laws are you refering to?

General Wilson: The National Defense Act 1916.

Mr. Gross: The Air Force, when it became independent service in September 1947, it really didn't have much experience with a reserve program at all.

General Wilson: No it really didn't and they were trying . . . . For example, they had formed a reserve unit in Little Rock and it was supposed to be a bomber squadron with B-29s but they never got anybody in it. I mean it was just there and people were there but they never had an airplane.

Mr. Gross: It was just on paper?

General Wilson: Just on paper! It was there and the people were there drawing the drill pay and so forth but they didn't have anything to do.

Mr. Gross: That's interesting because in some of the documents that I've looked at from the Air Force, not published documents but classified historial documents, one of the augments that they used in deciding what kind of airplanes that were going to go into the reserve programs was that we can't really give National Guard people a heavy bomber because it's too expensive and you can't get enough people together and this would never work.

General Wilson: But they had these at that time and they never did organize them because I think they thought that was the type of airplane that was available in surplus and they were trying to do something with them. They tried to tie them to organizations.

Mr. Gross: Were you at all involved with or familar with some of the planning that was done during World War II within the War Department and the Air Corps regarding the kind of post war reserve system that we were going to have?

General Wilson: Yes. They had a big board on that. The Guard Association participated a great deal, Ellard Walsh personally. [Maj. Gen.] Milt Record was on the board. In fact he came back from Europe before the war was over and was appointed to that board to come up with the policies for the post-war reserve forces, both Army and Air Force. Funny thing, the Navy never was in this thing. It was always the Army and Air Force as far as the Guard was concerned. And, there were many fights, many discussions, lots of arguments and I know that all that stuff is over in the Guard Association on that whole study that was there. I used to have a copy of it. I left mine in Washington [D.C.] up there. But it was a study done over a period of about a year and a half. The policies that the reserve forces were reestablished on were based on those policies established during 1944 and early 1945.

Mr. Gross: I think there was something that they published called 'Approved War Department Policies 45' or something like that. And, one of the things that is interesting to me about that is apparently the War Department initially and the Air Corps particularly didn't even include the National Guard at all in the discussions or the planning. Certainly, in the case of the Air Corps, they really didn't want a dual-component reserve system. They just wanted one reserve system under the Air Corps.

General Wilson: I think that's very true. When Stu Symington was Secretary of the Air Force, this was a job that was given to Lt. Gen. Pete Quesada but he didn't make it because he couldn't get the cooperation of the President in the first place. The President himself was the one that stopped that argument of doing away with the Guard and establishing in essence all one single reserve force.

Mr. Gross: This was in 1948 or 1949?

General Wilson: 1948 or 1949? It was just after autonomy of the Air Force, that law that set up the Air Force as an autonomous service.

Mr. Gross: So they were really resistant to this whole idea?

General Wilson: That's right! That's right!

Mr. Gross: Those must have been some pretty tough years for the Air National Guard?

General Wilson: No, it wasn't really. We were going right along and getting people. Congress was appropriating money. In 1946, 1947, 1948, they were appropriating money and they determined the strength of the National Guard. It is done by Congress, how many people they would have, how many technicians they would have, how much they would be paid. Even though all this fight was going on between the services, the Army was about the same way. They resisted the Army Guard too. Once the Congress decided and the President decided, all that stopped and then we got whatever we wanted. For example, there in 1950, 1951, we would figure our own budget. The Air Force gave us the units, how many they wanted, and that was based on the equipment that was available.

Mr. Gross: I was going to ask you about that. In looking at the records, it seems that the kind of force structure and missions you had was more a product of what kind of airplanes were available than of planning!

General Wilson: That's right! If you look in the early 1950s, you'll see that all the fighters in the Air Guard were air defense fighters. Why was that? Because they had air defense weapons. They had the F-89s, and the F-94s, and the early F-86s and so forth. They didn't have any units to put them in the active Air Force so we became a fighter interceptor outfit. About three years later, when jet fighters became available as tactical fighters, we started converting air defense units to whatever was available. A perfect example of this is that we had six air defense units that we really didn't have a mission for. They weren't located where they should be. I didn't think they should be in the air defense

mission although they had been flying fighters and, all at once, I saw where they were disbanding or modernizing the active Air Force and they were putting 48 C-97s in the boneyard.* Well, I started the paper to convert six fighter squadrons to C-97s and somebody said 'well how did you ever figure out the UE [Unit Equipment] of eight airplanes which is still the UE right now.' I said 'its real simple. Six of the forty-eight is eight.' So the Air Force turned it down but Mendel Rivers, who was having an airlift study done over on the Hill, heard about the problem, that these airplanes were going into the boneyard! He didn't like it because that was getting rid of airlift which he was trying to keep so he directed that the Air Force keep the airplanes in the inventory and that gave me a chance to go through the Air Staff with a study to try to get the C-97s in the Guard.

Mr. Gross: When was this taking place?

General Wilson: This was taking place in 1956, 1957, along in there. I put in my paper to them [i.e., the Air Staff] establishing this as a requirement and so forth. It got all the way to the Secretary of the Air Force and it was a nonconcurrence by [Gen. Curtis E.] LeMay. He said 'no, this was not a mission . . . that the Guard can never fly multi-engine airplane that had a multiple crew. You have got to have one member. You have to fly an airplane that only takes one crew member because they would never get the crews together'. And he recommended that the Secretary turn it down. Since it came from the Guard Bureau to the Secretary, he [LeMay] had to send it forward because, under the law, I was an advisor to the Secretary of the Air Force. So anything that was turned down had to go to the Secretary.

Jim Douglas** was Secretary of the Air Force at that time and I remember very well. He called me up. He said 'Wimpy I've got this study turning down the C-97s.' He said 'I read your memorandum. Do you really believe that?' I said 'there's no question in my mind. Yes, we can maintain and fly those airplanes.'

---

* Now known as the Military Aircraft Disposition and Storage Center (MASDC) and located at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona.

** James H. Douglas, Jr. was Secretary of the Air Force from 1 Oct 1965 to 15 Feb 1969.

So, he said 'come up to my office.' I went up to his office and we sat in there and I heard him pick up the phone. He said 'Curt this is Jim.' He said 'you know if you don't change your paper to approve those C-97s for the Guard, I am going to have to direct you to do it.' So the same guy that wrote the paper was back in my office about an hour later. He did a complete flip flop and that's the way we got the C-97s.

Mr. Gross: Was this kind of process fairly common?

General Wilson: In other words, we watched .... We always wanted more airplanes, better airplanes, more sophisticated airplanes, and more airplanes that would do a job for the Air Force. The way you watched it, you watched to see the changes that were happening in the active Air Force. For example, the F-89s, we had an air defense unit at Truax Field, Wisconsin. They were flying some F-94s. They were getting old. They were decrepit and I saw where they were going to cancel the F-89s squadron in Thule, Greenland so I put in a paper to get those and convert that unit in Wisconsin to nine F-89s. Well, I can remember again that was during General Twining's time when he was Chief of Staff. He said, 'Wimpy, you reckon they can fly-em?' I said, 'general, we'll go up and hire some people up there that are maintaining them in Thule because they are getting out of the service.' We hired them as technicians at Truax. That's what we did, and that's the way we got into the F-89 business.

Mr. Gross: Did you continually get a lot of resistance or questioning on the part of the active duty establishment, saying you can't do this?

General Wilson: Yes! 'You can't do it. There's no way you can do it. There's no way that a Guardman can maintain these things. They can't fly this sophisticated equipment.' I said, 'you know you miss the whole point. Who's flying them? They are Guardmen, but they are graduates of the active establishment, and that guy has been flying it on active duty all the time. He is getting 250 hours a year in active duty. We'll give him a 125 hours to stay current during the year. Don't you think he can do that? That's about 20 hours a month' I'd tell them, 'a little better than eight hours a month.' That's hard for the actives to

understand. If I were sitting there and had never been with these people who knew anything, I'd probably be in the same boat.

Mr. Gross: Why do you suppose though that they were so resistant to this argument? I mean it seems fairly obvious.

General Wilson: Everytime you flew an airplane in the Guard or Reserve, it cost the same amount per hour to fly as it does in the active. If they can get rid of that and the money is still available, they get more of the resources in the active force. I used to tell them, 'I'll get the money anyway from Congress and you can't use it. So, even if you didn't have me, you wouldn't get this money anyway. If you didn't have the Guard and the law, you wouldn't get this money anyway.'

Mr. Gross: So it was equally hard to convince them that you weren't a competitor?

General Wilson: For example, I remember in 1956, I think it was, we had the first William Tell* down at Tyndall Field, Florida. We put an F-86L unit in from Jacksonville, Florida. It was the first air defense unit that ever fired a perfect score and won that meet. I used to get a lot of complaints from the active Air Force. They said 'you know, you embarrassed the hell out of us.' I said 'what are you talking about? Weren't you glad you got some people that can fire the weapons?' 'Yes, but we spent 600,000 dollars to convert the L to a J [i.e., models of the F-86] because nobody could hit anything with it.' And, what it was was maintenance. It was understanding the system and maintaining it, which we had experienced people to do.

Mr. Gross: The Air Force constantly kept turning over these people?

General Wilson: And the Air Force keep turning over their people so . . and where were they going? They were coming to the Guard!

---

* U.S. Air Force fighter weapons meet.

Mr. Gross: What attracted them to the Guard?

General Wilson: They loved to be around airplanes but they didn't want it on a full-time basis. Don't like the moving every two years. They like to get their roots.

Mr. Gross: Let's go back a little bit to 1946. In that year, your first Air Guard unit, as we know it today, started to be formed. I think it was the unit out at Buckley Field [Colorado].

General Wilson: Buckley Field! The 120th was the first one.

Mr. Gross: It was the very first one.

General Wilson: It was the first one to be formed, yes.

Mr. Gross: How, since you were a veteran of the pre-war Guard, how did the post-World War II Air Guard differ from its pre-war predecessor? What were the main things that were different about it?

General Wilson: The main thing was the availability of what you might consider modern equipment at that time. You know P-51s and jugs [i.e., P-47s] were, boy, they were the latest thing. That was the thing that won the war and so you had hundreds of them. So you had equipment and you had people who still loved to fly, and you had people that wanted to get in them and wanted to fly. And the comradeship of the military, a lot of people liked it. You know World War II, everybody supported it! It was a supported war. People believed in it. We won it you know! Something we haven't done since then! It was supported and people liked to be connected with the military, and you had good equipment.

Mr. Gross: Did you have any trouble at all recruiting people?

General Wilson: No we didn't. We organized in the 154th. We set a date of 90 days for 100 percent strength and we were 100 percent strength from the time we

were organized till then. I think it was on January 1st, 1947 that we reached our 100 percent strength.

Mr. Gross: I take it most, if not all your people, were veterans of the war then?

General Wilson: Well not all of them. I'd say there was 85 percent of them, the other 15 were the kids who were coming in the lower grades.

Mr. Gross: How about your pilot experience?

General Wilson: Pilot experience was 100 percent.

Mr. Gross: So they all were combat veterans of the war?

General Wilson: Combat veterans of the war! Most of them had been flying P-51s and loved to fly the P-51 because it was a great airplane.

Mr. Gross: Were there any particular problems up in your unit?

General Wilson: We had so many more airplanes than we were supposed to have. Instead of having 25, we had about 60 and didn't have enough maintenance personnel to really keep this so we had to rotate them. We had maybe 15 or 20 mechanics. That was about all we had down here. So when they came for inspection, we would push them over and bring some of these that we had inspected in and kept rotating. Just keep working on them! That was that way. In fact, when Korea happened, all the Air Guard units had P-51s and they were given to the active Air Force. We flew our airplanes directly from our base to California and they were loaded on the carrier and went to Korea. We put 22 of them from the Air Guard in Little Rock.

Mr. Gross: In looking at some of the history of the immediate post-World War II period, there seems to have been quite of bit of difficulty putting together viable missions and training programs?

General Wilson: They had none! They had no training standards! They didn't even have . . like a penetration fighter. There wasn't even a book on what a penetration fighter was, yet that's what the War Department wanted us to be before the active Air Force came in 1946, 1947. That was the mission they gave us and they gave us P-51s. I had never heard of a penetration fighter and I was on active duty. So we used the airplanes for what we had to keep people current and flying, to bomb and shot and so forth because we had a range and people were allowed to do it. Nothing like getting to fly in low and drop a bomb or shoot at a target.

Mr. Gross: There was quite a bit of criticism though I think from within the active Air Force about the Guard. There were a number of efforts to assume command of the Guard by the Air Force.

General Wilson: That's right and it's been going on every other year ever since as long as I can remember. It has dwindled now because we proved that you have control. You know, you control the Guard by the money you get. In other words, the federal government puts out the money. If this unit is not producing, all you have to do is just say, 'no buddy, you don't have any money then! '

Mr. Gross: Well there was something that we talked about a little earlier, there was movement in 1948 or 1949 to eliminate the Air National Guard.

General Wilson: And it went clear to the President.

Mr. Gross: What was his attitude about that?

General Wilson: He said the Guard was here according to the Constitution and you all are going to live with it. No question, he stopped it right then.

Mr. Gross: Why was the Air Force so determined to push the issue to that level?

General Wilson: They didn't want to push it to that level. The Guard Association pushed it to that level.

Mr. Gross: Had the Air Force made its decision?

General Wilson: Oh they made the decision and they were trying to prove their point by going around and making surveys and trying to say that the units were no good. They can't fly. They can't do this. The accident rate is atrocious and so forth. But when they got around to it, the accident rate was better than the active Force and this was all proven to the President and he made any decisions.

Mr. Gross: Did you ever have the feeling in those days that really the Air Force wasn't particularly serious about its reserve programs?

General Wilson: We didn't know the Air Force. People in the units didn't know all this. They didn't know what was going on. You know, sitting down here for instance at Little Rock, Arkansas, all they knew was that there was a drill on Wednesday night. There was a two week encampment, and there were airplanes there with people to maintain them and to fly and you had an operations officer that was directing what the flight was going to be. They didn't get into politics. That was strictly on the upper level, at the Washington level altogether. Now, the National Guard Association would use the senators and so forth of the states who knew this to do their infighting and that's the way it got to the President.

Mr. Gross: To what extent though was the Air Force involved here at the unit level in trying to supervise training or set standards?

General Wilson: Well the Little Rock unit was under the Tenth Air Force headed by Harry Johnson in San Antonio, Texas. He made one trip a year up to the unit, and then that was all. We hardly ever saw him. We sent him letters, told him what we were doing and so forth. But, he didn't have any training. He didn't have the capability of writing the training programs.

Mr. Gross: Did you have any Air Force advisors?

General Wilson: Oh, we had an Air Force advisor. Yes you have to. Under the law, he has to certify the payrolls and a lot of the other things where the federal dollars are concerned, and federal equipment is concerned.

Mr. Gross: But did he have any impact at all as far as training and operational experience?

General Wilson: For example, we had a real fine tactical advisor who was a fighter pilot. He understood close air support and he, in my opinion, did more for setting up training directives that we used in the squadron than anybody in the active Air Force.

Mr. Gross: So you had a very good experience here as an individual unit. But, how common was that kind of experience across the nation?

General Wilson: I think you had it across the board. Of course you know there were only 19, actually there was 22, Air Guard units prior to World War II. Well there were 19 then 3 of them were organized during that year period making a total of 22. Now those were the ones that first came back. They had so many aircraft and everything. They were putting them in every state. Two and three squadrons here for example. Ohio ended up with about, I think at one time, about eight squadrons.

Mr. Gross: Got a bunch!

General Wilson: Yes! Pennsylvania had a bunch. It was done on a population basis because, they go back again to the law, which says the dollars will be proportioned among the states in accordance with the population, in the early days. So, according to the population, we decided and the facilities available, the airports and so forth. You put the units there.

Mr. Gross: That reflects an awful lot of Army thinking that's not always good for the needs of the Air Force.

General Wilson: Sure! That's right! Of course the Army was still up until 1948 . . . . The Guard was being organized in 1946 and 1947 and I think when that law passed on the autonomy of the Air Force for one vote in late 1947. But most of the units of the Air Guard had already been allotted to the states and

accepted. You see the states had to accept the allotment of units because they had to financially support their units.

Mr. Gross: How extensive was that or is that support?

General Wilson: I think in the early days it was about a 25 percent , 75 percent, 25 percent state, 75 percent federal.

Mr. Gross: Of the total cost of operation?

General Wilson: I'm talking about the facilities and the management area. Not the airplanes or any of that. That was all given to them, airplanes and equipment. It included the technicians or the caretakers as they were called in those days. But it was the operation of the facility, lights, water maintenance of buildings and grounds, the airports and so forth, that was all a state responsibility.

Mr. Gross: Physical facilities management?

General Wilson: Physical facilities and management, about 75 federal and 25 percent state. I think its dwindled down to about 15 percent, but there's still state money in there.

Mr. Gross: But the vast bulk of the total money, when you include operations and maintenance, would be federal money.

General Wilson: Federal money! That's right! Sure!

Mr. Gross: You indicated you were flying P-51s and P-47s after the war. How good were these aircraft by 1950? How capable were they of doing the job?

General Wilson: They were about the only thing they had. It was the latest thing they had until they came out with the jets and that was really not until Korea. Hell a P-51 was a great airplane. It won the war as far as the fighters were

concerned. The P-51 and the jugs and up there. The B-26s . . . . We had utility flights in each one of the Guard units. The only reason that we organized utility flights was to have some place to put B-26s to keep them operational. We had those in the Guard which were great airplanes to fly.

Mr. Gross: What kind of mission was your unit trained for immediately after World War II with the P-51s?

General Wilson: Fighters!

Mr. Gross: Fighters! Close air support?

General Wilson: Close air support, yes, and that was on our own. We did that on our own.

Mr. Gross: So you had to come up with your own training program?

General Wilson: Yes, came up with the air advisor and squadron commander and myself. We designed the training program to try to be a tactical fighter unit because we didn't understand what a penetration fighter did.

Mr. Gross: So you really weren't getting much guidance from the Air Force at all. You were just finding it out there on your own.

General Wilson: Oh they were tickled to death when they saw what we had. They put it, used it, as kinds of a model in some other places. There was a lot of competition between units. Tulsa had a P-51 unit. We used to meet and have air-to-air fights. . . . . We had a great big glorified flying club too.

Mr. Gross: I was going to ask you about that.

General Wilson: Because there wasn't anything . . . You know, you had to keep people current. We went to air shows. Put on demonstrations. People loved to see the airplanes fly and we did a lot of good for the military, in acceptance of

the military, by putting on these things. It wasn't a waste and all the pilots stayed proficient.

Mr. Gross: I was going to ask you about that comment because I had read somewhere . . . .

General Wilson: But the main reason was that there was no real, as there is now, prescribed training directives for the type of mission that you had in those days.

Mr. Gross: Essentially it was a matter of neglect by the active duty establishment.

General Wilson: That's right! But they didn't have enough people to take care of their own. You know they were going down. In fact, there wasn't even an organization in TAC except the headquarters. They didn't even have enough people to abolish them. Because, after World War II, you decimated the military. It practically went out of existence. We had five million men in service and went down to about less than a million I think.

Mr. Gross: I think 12 million was the wartime high point and it went down very very sharply. There was one point, I think in 1946 or 1947, where the Air Force only had one combat ready air group.

General Wilson: That's right! That's what I'm talking about! There wasn't anything, and where are these people? They are in the Guard.

Mr. Gross: Moving ahead a little bit, to the Korean War, why were you asked to go to the Guard Bureau with General [Earl] Ricks in 1950?

General Wilson: Well, I wouldn't have been recalled to active duty because they didn't take the state headquarters when the flying units were mobilized. Earl knew of my desire and we had talked many times about what we would do if we were running the [Air] National Guard and so he asked to come up here with him.

Mr. Gross: What kind of ideas did you take with you to Washington?

General Wilson: Missions, we wanted missions! We wanted adequate support technician-wise. We wanted gunnery ranges. We wanted bombing ranges where we could do this. But, most of all, we wanted definite missions which were required, which, not only we were capable of doing in the Guard on a peacetime basis, but also would help meet the total Air Force requirement.

Mr. Gross: Did you have any difficulty selling those ideas through the Air Force?

General Wilson: Well, of course, when we went into Korea, the units were partially mobilized which meant that about 80 percent of the Air Guard was on active duty because it all went in September, October and November of 1950. So, it was during that time, that we were planning with the Continental Air Command and other people what missions we were going to have after the war. For example, we started extending runways while the units were on active duty. That runway at Mansfield, Ohio, the first thousand feet of that extension was done while the units were on active duty because we knew what airplanes were going to be available and what we expected to put in Mansfield.

Mr. Gross: So this was established during the war?

General Wilson: This was established during the Korean War and was staffed through the Air Staff. They were tickled to death to have somebody doing some planning.

Mr. Gross: In looking at some of the records, I notice that there was a great deal of controversy that surrounded the recalls in 1951. You know a lot of reservists were being recalled who hadn't done anything in uniform since World War II while guys on drill pay status were staying home. There didn't seem to be any rhyme or reason to what happened in many cases. There was a lot of political heat on the President and Secretary of Defense Marshall.

General Wilson: Oh yes!

Mr. Gross: In your view, what impact did the political problems created by the recall have on the willingness of the Air Force to do something about its reserve programs?

General Wilson: Well, I think it had a lot to do with it and one of the ways they wanted to do was to get rid of it.

Mr. Gross: Get rid of it?

General Wilson: Yes! In other words, they wanted to get rid of the Air Guard just to have one reserve force mostly the way they wanted it under their control, under their command and so forth. Command control was their big problem.

Mr. Gross: This was still during the Korean War. They just wanted to get rid of the whole thing?

General Wilson: Well, for example, there were a lot of people . . . . You take at Little Rock, they called the fighter unit and left the utility flight there. They did this around the country. Some units, they didn't even call to active duty and left them at home. They drafted a lot of people and they should have called the whole thing [ie, reserves] and used it. But you get back to unit integrity, by then we had a law which said you'll call the unit by units and you'll keep it as a unit in a mobilization.

Mr. Gross: This was the 1952 act?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: But, prior to that time, a lot of people had been in actually split from their units.

General Wilson: Oh yes! There had been some split out of the units. Sure there had been some. There's no way you could leave unit integrity entirely during the whole thing because of the experience level of what you wanted.

Mr. Gross: In looking back now, the Korean War seems to have been kind of a watershed. I mean that there really wasn't much of a reserve program within the Air Force before that.

General Wilson: Well they had . . . .

Mr. Gross: What were the main changes that came out of the war in your view?

General Wilson: Well, the main thing is we got, for example, as I said, prior to Korea, the air reserve forces, both Guard and reserve, was a flying organization. That's all. Nobody was really looking at it to be sure it had a mission, to be sure that it was capable. We had no war plans, no inspection criteria other than administrative criteria to see that nobody was stealing the place blind . . . .

Mr. Gross: Sure!

General Wilson: To see that the people were going to drill, that they were actually there. You know, head counts and so forth. That's all you had and you called a bunch of people who were capable of flying the airplanes. That's what you had. Pilots and people that maintained them that were called up. Now they kept a lot of them together as units. You take the group from Texas. It went over to Korea with two squadrons. They converted to F-84s and flew in Korea pretty much as a unit. They were commanded by the same unit and so forth. The Little Rock unit went over too as part of that group. Went over to Korea. We had a lot of the B-26 units, utility flights that went together from a lot of states and formed a B-26 squadron and went over and flew in Korea. That's both Reserve and the Guard. You had some B-26 squadrons in the Reserve that went to Korea.

So the difference, in my opinion, the difference between pre-Korea and after-Korea was the fact that, after Korea, we organized into units that made sense. We knew the aircraft that were going to be available. We started planning for the return of the unit. We even started recruiting people for units before they came home so we would have a nucleus to take the airplanes and so forth. We didn't know how many people were going to come back with us.

Mr. Gross: How many people did you get back?

General Wilson: Oh I'd say we got . . . that came back and rejoined the Guard, I say around 50 to 60 percent.

Mr. Gross: So you had a heck of rebuilding job actually?

General Wilson: Yes, we had a rebuilding job. That's right! That's the reason we started ahead of time. We ran surveys.

Mr. Gross: What was your assessment, at the time, of the actual performance of these units and individuals in the Korean War? There really were quite a lot of them over there.

General Wilson: Well they performed as well as any other pilots in the active force did. I mean they knew how to fly the airplanes and knew how to use the equipment.

Mr. Gross: There was initially though a great deal of skepticism because the units, when they were mobilized, in most cases they were reequipped with different airplanes and had to be reorganized and retrained. You had manning limitations so you had to throw in a lot of fillers from the Air Force Reserve. And, I gather that the initial impression of TAC, for example, of these units was not particularly high.

General Wilson: TAC didn't have anything to judge it by. They didn't have any units. The Tactical Air Command, at the time of the Korean War started, didn't have a single unit, flying unit, in their unit. The only thing they had was the Guard units and the Air Force Reserve units which they put together. They converted them to different airplanes. They converted to different missions. We really didn't have any missions except being able to fly the equipment that was at home, that they took on active duty with them.

Mr. Gross: When you . . .?

General Wilson: And they weren't combat ready in the new mission because, just like in an active unit, if you start one, until you had some training programs, you are not combat ready.

Mr. Gross: We had talked earlier about the Air Force sort of doing up the pie.

General Wilson: That's right! The cutting of the pie.

Mr. Gross: How and when did this come about?

General Wilson: Well, it was a meeting shortly after September 13 [1950], after I got up on duty. Earl Ricks sent me to this meeting and here we had the list of all units in the Air Guard. TAC said I want this one at Denver and I want this one here, and I want this one, and this one, this one. MAC says I want this. I need this. I need this many pilots. We'll take this unit. So it was just cut up. People that had been under wings that no longer were there. People that had been under groups were no longer there. They left utility flights on. It was just cutting up the thing to make the best they could with what they had.

Mr. Gross: So there was no real rhyme or reason based upon the previous experience with . . .?

General Wilson: All it was, was who had the experience in flying the aircraft?

Mr. Gross: Perhaps that is the most difficult thing to come by.

General Wilson: That's the most difficult thing to come by!

Mr. Gross: That's amazing! Looking at things now, it seems such a terribly haphazard and wasteful kind of procedure.

General Wilson: You know, it really wasn't until we had Steamline Three that we really got the missions and got the major commands mixed up in the Air Guard.

Mr. Gross: If we can talk about that for a while, what caused that reassessment?

General Wilson: LeMay* was not satisfied with what was going on in the reserve forces and his idea was to steamline it. I don't know where the three came from but it was called Steamline Three. He had these people that made all these recommendations and the key thing that came out of there, in my opinion, and I think the Guard members of the board had a lot to do with it .... We had an awful time convincing the rest of the board members that we ought to do it and LeMay was the one who made the decision.

We said, 'look, we want to have units with missions that are required by the major commands, that have equipment to fulfill them, that are graded and that are programmed the same as that of active force. The ORIs [Operational Readiness Inspections] and so forth that you give the activity will be given to the Guard or Reserve at the same time. And, all management of the reserve forces will be with the major command to which these units are assigned. In other words, a TAC unit is under TAC for supervision of training and inspection. A MAC unit is under MAC. An ADC unit is under ADC. A communications unit is under communications. Weather units are under the weather- -all the way across the board. And to me, that was the thing that, in my opinion, that has had more to do with getting the units in the shape they are in today where they are able to participate with the active missions and the same skill and pass the same tests and get no credit for being a part timer.

Mr. Gross: The exact same standards as . . .?

General Wilson: Same standards! Same standards!

Mr. Gross: Hadn't that idea been kicked around for some time during the fifties? I seem to recall seeing somthing about that fairly early on.

---

* General Curtis E. LeMay, Air Force Chief of Staff.

General Wilson: Oh yes, we tried in the Johnson Board, the Stone Board, and the Bill Hall Board and nobody would accept it.

Mr. Gross: Why was there so much resistance?

General Wilson: We have got to have two standards. There is no way that a Guardmen or reservist can meet the same standard as somebody on active duty doing it everyday. I remember that Leon Johnson* said, 'Wimpy you're crazy!' It went all the way through to LeMay before we got the approval. That was that Steamline Three Board. That's when CONAC was taken out of the chain of command as a supervisor of training. Prior to that, CONAC wrote the training directives for TAC, for MAC, for ADC, for everybody. Hell, they didn't have the expertise to do it.

Mr. Gross: Was there resistance from the gaining commands in the fifties to the idea that TAC ought to be responsible for all this training?

General Wilson: Oh, they didn't want any part of it! That was too much work. 'You have got to give us more people to do it!'

Mr. Gross: How come that changed around in the sixties?

General Wilson: The boss said do it!

Mr. Gross: I see. No sudden triumphs of insight!

General Wilson: No, no.

Mr. Gross: The boss, being General LeMay, just said 'you do it.'

---

* Gen. Leon Johnson, Continental Air Command (CONAC) Commander.

General Wilson: That's right! The policy was established. He approved it. That's how the gaining commands set up came up.

Mr. Gross: But they seem to have adopted it rather wholeheartedly now?

General Wilson: Oh yes! No question about it. Everybody supports it and the reason why they do, they about realize it- -I won't say its hundred percent across the board- -that you can maintain a guy's currency [with] less than what you do in active. The guy that's got a 1,000 hours flying, flying an F-4, can maintain his currency in say 150 hours a year, where he couldn't do it if he had the 100 hours and was just learning about the airplane.

Mr. Gross: Are there any particular mission areas where that might not hold true?

General Wilson: Well, I can't think of any. You take SAC, where we are flying KC-135s. In MAC, we have been flying C-130s overseas and everywhere.

Mr. Gross: Would that also be true of something like the strategic bombardment mission and the air superiority mission?

General Wilson: Well, you can fly the F-15. There is no problem in that. I mean the F-15 is a fighter unit. Strategic bomber. I don't think they would ever put that into the reserve forces because of the atomic . . . because of the laws on the capability of atomic aircraft and the carrying of atomic weapons and so forth tied to where it's got to be in the active establishment. For example, SAC for years in their tanker force had to have a crew that was integral. I mean the pilot, the co-pilot, the navigator, the engineer, the tanker man and the boomers and everything had to fly as a unit. If one was out, they had to cancel that whole crew. We showed them that you don't have to do that. You can train ten tankers and he can fly with any crew. For right now that's what we're doing.

Mr. Gross: When did the Air Guard first pickup the tanker mission?

General Wilson: Oh let's see. We had some KC-50s in the late sixties. [End of Tape]

Mr. Gross: We were talking about the KC-97 and when you first got those. How did that come about?

General Wilson: Well that came about .... For the Air Guard to be capable we had to have inflight refueling. Then some KC-50s became available, and we started about four or five squadrons selected to maintain currency of our Air Guard units in air-to-air refueling. If they are going to have a fighter, they had to be able to do that.

Mr. Gross: This is the capability that they didn't really have much of in 1961 for example.

General Wilson: That's right! So then we got the KC-97s and we converted ... that was a bigger airplane. It carried more fuel and we put jet pods on them, made them KC-97s and then we were able to refuel most all fighters. It gave you the power to get off the ground with a full load at our bases. It met the Air Force requirement. We even refueled SAC bombers with it. The Air Force had, when General [David] Jones was in Europe in USAFE, had a big problem getting enough SAC tankers to qualify the fighters in England and Germany and France and Spain in air-to-air refueling and asked us if we would come over and try out air-to-air refueling of the fighters in Europe. So we went over on an interim basis. We sent six airplanes over there. We did all the maintenance back at the base. We kept them there two weeks, which was the active duty period for these crews. We kept rotating them among all of our squadrons and we were able to keep six airplanes at Rhine Main [Air Base, Germany]. We kept them there ten years and we were doing all the air-to-air refueling of the tac fighters. No greater training in the world could we get than by doing exactly, on an inactive volunteer basis, what we would be doing it if we were on active duty. And we would have a guy say, 'ok you got to be OR [operationally ready] or you can't go to Germany.' And they got a chance to go over there for two weeks and take airplanes over and bring the others back for maintenance. And we operated that way for 10 years.

Now we don't have to because we've got the KC-135s that you can go from here over there nonstop and do the refueling. They take active Air Force as well as Guard pilots on excerises overseas everyday. They used Guard money that was appropriated for the support and training of the Guard to meet active requirements.

Mr. Gross: And, the Air Force is really receptive to this?

General Wilson: Oh yes, the Air Force has to have it. You take NATO now. We joined NATO exercises. The Air Guard joined NATO exercises and has for about six or seven years because they are the units that have a mobilization assignment over there to participate with NATO. So they go over just like last year they were in Norway. We had two squadrons over there. They were on a NATO exercise. They worked right with the Norwegians. Communication units and Red Horse squadrons are over in Europe every year doing maintenance work, maintenance work on airports. Communications squadrons . . . sent them to Europe and they do maintenance work on the equipment and so forth. All of these things give us an added incentive to get combat ready so we can do these things.

Mr. Gross: These non-flying missions you have been talking about- -when did the Air Guard become heavily involved in using these kinds of organizations to support the on-going activities of the Air Force?

General Wilson: Well one of the goals that I sat about to do was to get into using the training dollar to help me to meet the total active requirement. And, we started this in the late 1950s and all through the 1960s. For example, when France threw out NATO, closed all our bases in NATO, when they decided they weren't going to be part of NATO and we had to close out, the Air Force did not have the capability of removing all the equipment. This was the first time our communications squadrons got a chance and they went over there and pulled out all the equipment on their training schedule, two weeks at a time. This unit two weeks, that unit two weeks, this unit two weeks, that unit two weeks, this unit two weeks. So they went over and we removed it. I'd say 85 percent of

equipment that came out of Spain [sic, France] in the communications area came out by the use of Guard and Reserve units.

Mr. Gross: This was something though that you really didn't see too much of until the late 1950s or the early 1960s.

General Wilson: That's right, 1950s and 1960s. We couldn't talk them into it. For example, the first time we got into the air defense business was back in 1950.

Mr. Gross: 1954?

General Wilson: 1954 and George Finch was up at CONAC. Earl Ricks and I made him a proposition since he was head of the training for the air defense units of the Guard. We proposed that Guard units would stand alert, one unit on the east coast and one unit on the west coast, P-51s. That was first unit where we stood alert for the active Air Force, Air Defense Command. That was the beginning of the air defense program which built up to where every unit that we had in air defense was on the alert program. Those units that had atomic weapons such as the F-89 with atomic weapons, the F-106s, so forth, got complete clearance through the atomic part of it, everything.

Mr. Gross: Did this proposal originate in the Guard Bureau?

General Wilson: It originated in the Guard Bureau through Earl Ricks, and talking to George Finch.

Mr. Gross: What was the initial reaction to the proposal?

General Wilson: The states' reactions were great! 'Gives us something to do.' And the active reaction, 'ain't no way you can do it.'

Mr. Gross: How were they able to actually sell that sort of experimental thing with the two squadrons?

General Wilson: Because they were able to do actually what the Air Defense Command wanted! The command became convinced that we could do it and then that's when they started expanding it to other units.

Mr. Gross: Were there any particular problems that they encountered in implementing it?

General Wilson: Well, yes. We had a lot of problems in being sure that everybody in the squadron participated, that it wasn't just a set group because these people were called to active duty for one day you know when they were on the alert.

Mr. Gross: Ok. I was going to ask you about that.

General Wilson: They were on active duty and we had to make it where nobody could stand more than one seven-day period for a month so that everybody had to participate in the programs. It ended up that it wasn't just five or six people on full-time active duty there.

Mr. Gross: Yes, you were concerned that it might be just a small number of people doing all of the flying, doing all the maintenance work.

General Wilson: Yes that's right! We had to make it where they could and protected those people from a hoging it up if you want to call it that.

Mr. Gross: In some of the correspondence, classified correspondence between HQ ADC and HQ USAF in the late 1950's, I believe 1956 and 1957, there was some indication that the Air Defense Command, which was really behind the program and staying behind it, changed its position with regard to equipping the Air Guard with all-weather fighters. They had, at least initially once the experiment worked out pretty well, said 'hey we have got to equip as many of these people as possible with the best airplanes we could get with an all-weather capability.' Yet, by 1956 or 1957, they apparently reversed their position. There was some fear that the Air Guard might run off with the entire mission.

General Wilson: That's right! That's exactly right!

Mr. Gross: Did you have a problem with that?

General Wilson: Well of course that was the problem but, you know one thing, you don't want the full mission in the Guard. For example, they tried to put all the F-106s about two or three years ago- -I heard this from John Pesch*- -in the Guard. We didn't want them all because, as soon as you get everything in the Guard, the active establishment loses interest. But, if you've got a part of the mission . . . . We needed [help] from the active people to come to keep modernizing our people. If you had them all in the Guard, you don't have the trained people getting off of active duty from those units to come into the Guard. And you'll find a lot of those people that got off of active duty would look at . . . . Say a kid wanted to go to graduate school and he had been in the Air Defense Command, he would pick a school where there was a Guard unit so he could help earn part of his livelihood by standing alert on a limited basis.

Mr. Gross: Why did they make virtually the entire Air National Guard in the 1950s an air defense outfit?

General Wilson: That was the weapons they had!

Mr. Gross: Just the airplanes?

General Wilson: The airplanes they had!

Mr. Gross: They really didn't need that large an interceptor force did they?

General Wilson: No, but that's what was available. Even the Air Force didn't want to put all those airplanes in storage. They would a lot rather fly those airplanes then, the old P-51s, so you changed the mission. So, it was all air defense at one time.

---

* Maj. Gen. John J. Pesch, Director of the Air National Guard, 1974-1977.

Mr. Gross: It doesn't seem that you can maintain all those airplanes and all those crews in a really high state of readiness where they would be ready to go right away.

General Wilson: Well then you could! You could maintain them. There's no question about it and they did.

Mr. Gross: But were all those units really up to snuff?

General Wilson: With the equipment they had!

Mr. Gross: With the equipment that they had?

General Wilson: With the equipment they had! They could fire it. They could shoot it. As I say, we participated William Tell.

Mr. Gross: Very successfully I might add.

General Wilson: Very successfully, yes.

Mr. Gross: Backing up a little bit to the Korean War, in some of the books and articles that I've read, in Jim Dan Hill's book* for example, the assertion is made that essentially the Air Guard was called up, you guys did a good job, which nobody would argue with, and that because of that mobilization performance there were a lot of changes in the way the Air Force thought about the Air National Guard and the missions they assigned to them and things like that. I don't see much indication of that and I wondered what your reaction to that kind of assessment is?

General Wilson: Well that wasn't exactly the true assessment of it. The Guard units did a good job with what they had and with the training that they had

---

* The Minute Man in Peace and War. A History of the National Guard (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1964.)

gotten prior to Korea. You really didn't have but maybe one or two units that flew as units regardless of what Jim Dan Hill said. The number was there sure. But, the people in that unit weren't all the same because Korea was just the same as anything else. They had to move people around to where they needed them. It wasn't really until the Berlin call-up and the Vietnam call-up where unit integrity pretty much maintained the same squadrons.

Mr. Gross: So mobilization performance during the Korean War was not really a factor influencing plans?

General Wilson: No, no! Now what influenced the planning, in my opinion, were the studies of the boards that we had while they were on active duty for Korea to correct the problems that we had when we had to the cutting of the pie so we didn't have anymore of that. Where we got the units organized in geographic together .... In other words, you don't have a wing headquarters in California and a squadron in Massachusetts, and one in Florida. You have three together in California that are assigned to TAC.

It was the planning, in my opinion, that gave us the support. Everybody agreed that they could fly the airplanes, that they had the capability of maintaining and flying airplanes. But, it wasn't until we could show how you could organize and get them to where you could use the organization as a unit [that we accomplished anything]. And, that happened during the planning while Korea was going on, in the 21 months that they were on active duty.

That's where we started recruiting, advanced recruiting, where we started building runways. We got about 20 million dollars added to the construction budget of the Air Guard by the Congress to put in runways, extensions. You know all of the airports were beginning to get jets and they loved to have us come in and extend the runway. It saved them having to pay for it, but it met our requirements. We were doing it for our requirements not their's, but they gave me a 25-year lease for free to put this in there. So, I got the lease to stay on the airports for 25 years and we helped them out in building runways that they could use for their commercial aviation that was coming up.

Mr. Gross: When General Ricks was originally called in to take over the air side of the Guard Bureau in 1950, there was quite a bit of ill feeling between the Guard Bureau and the Air Force.

General Wilson: Oh yes, oh yes! It was that fight between George Finch* and Cramer.** George Finch just wasn't going to take any orders from Cramer. Cramer was telling George what to do, telling George how to run the air. So the Air Force stood up for George. The Army stood up for Cramer. There was a big fight. They finally kicked George out and called old Earl Ricks in.

Mr. Gross: What kind of person was Earl Ricks?

General Wilson: Well, he was one of the best flyers . . . . I mean, he was one of my closest friends. He and I had been friends, both of us from Arkansas. He's from Hot Springs, and I've known him for years and we were very close. He was a hell of an administrator and a hell of a good pilot. He didn't go to flying school. He owned his own airplane. He was a millionaire, owned his own airplane and flew all the time. Flew everything that the Guard had- -fighters, transports, everything. And, he took me up there [to the National Guard Bureau] as his special assistant because I had had a lot more experience in the Guard than he had. He had come in relatively late in the Guard. He came in right before we were on active duty. Of course I'd been in it since 1929 and . . . .

Mr. Gross: Why was he selected?

General Wilson: He was a personal friend of General J.P. McConnell and they liked him. Knew he was a successful businessman. Knew he could get along with Congress. Knew he could get along with other people. He had a knack for being able to get along with people. He could get along with the Army people as well as the air. He never met a stranger and he got along with them.

Mr. Gross: That was basically why he was sent up there? Obviously, George Finch wasn't getting along with people at that time.

---

* Maj. Gen. George Finch, Chief, Air Force Division, National Guard Bureau.

** Maj. Gen. Kenneth Cramer, Chief, National Guard Bureau.

General Wilson: George still isn't getting along with people. He is still living, yes. I hear from him every once in awhile.

Mr. Gross: I didn't realize that! I tried to get a hold of him but I couldn't find an address on him.

General Wilson: He's in Atlanta, Georgia.

Mr. Gross: Atlanta, Georgia! Maybe I can get a hold of him through the Guard Bureau.

General Wilson: No, they won't tell you, but he's in the telephone directory in Atlanta, Georgia, George G. Finch.

Mr. Gross: Good enough!

General Wilson: And, he'll tell you about that fight between Cramer and him.

Mr. Gross: When General Ricks took over the National Guard Bureau on the air side of it in 1950, was the Guard Bureau really being effectively included at all in the Air Force planning as it effected that particular reserve component?

General Wilson: Well, I'd say [it was being included] as much as any other reserve component. It was something that had to be delt with. But, you know, they let this alone. We just wrote our own ticket really. In other words, we would find if aircraft were going to be available and go up and, rather than put them in the boneyard, they would say 'ok you can have them.' We would organize a squadron here in this state. If it didn't take root, we cancelled it and put it in another state. It was not like it is now where you have to go through a five year force structure review. We figured our own budget, sent it up and we would present the budget to the Air Force and then we'd go to DOD and they would either approve or disapprove or reduce it or whatever it was. Then we'd go to Congress. I remember when our budget used to go over there, it would be about oh maybe 35, 40 pages for 250 million dollars and now it's several volumes thick.

Once we got the money, the laws, then it goes to the Guard Bureau. The Air Force would just pass it down and we would administer it from under the policies of the Air Force right out to the states.

Mr. Gross: How long did this sort of free and easy process go along?

General Wilson: Up till [Robert S.] McNamara* came.

Mr. Gross: How did Mr. McNamara change things?

General Wilson: Well, he came in and changed it to the five year force structure. Every unit had to be approved by the Air Force. They had to be capable of doing this. Your strength and everything had to go up along with you. In other words, it was run just the same as an active Air Force unit.

Mr. Gross: Was that a great benefit to the Guard program?

General Wilson: Well, in one way it was a benefit. In another way it took a lot away from the Chief of the Guard Bureau in the management of resources which I think cost more money to manage it.

Mr. Gross: Who was doing the managing then?

General Wilson: Well, the budget people in the Air Force and the DOD.

Mr. Gross: During Secretary McNamara's regime there was quite an emphasis on building up the readiness of certain portions at least . . .

General Wilson: Certain reserve forces!

Mr. Gross: . . . of the reserve forces. We are getting a little bit ahead, but how did that impact on the Air Guard?

---

* Secretary of Defense, 1961-1968.

General Wilson: Well, that didn't effect the Air Guard too much because that was exactly what the Air Guard was doing. The Air Guard was leading the way for the reserve forces. In other words, the Air Guard was so far ahead on .... Well, we even were sending people to basic training. The [Air Force] Reserve wouldn't send them. You know, they would just enlist them. We made them go to basic training and the tech schools to get in the Guard. And, McNamara knew all of this. That's the reason he came up in 1960 and said convert everything from the reserve into the Guard.

Mr. Gross: Was this at his direction or his . . .?

General Wilson: Well no, it wasn't his direction. You know they had a group of people up there, the whiz kids as they were called up there in the Department of Defense in their studies program, and they came up with this as a cost effective way of doing things. [They said that the] most effective way of having a reserve force was to have it all in the Guard.

Mr. Gross: I know that there was a great deal of publicity about his efforts to merge the Army Reserve into the Army Guard.

General Wilson: And, it fell off on the air side but all the publicity was primarily on the Army Guard and that was the one that was causing the most stink in the states.

Mr. Gross: But the same kind of proposal was going forward . . . ?

General Wilson: The same thing was going on the air side.

Mr. Gross: And, the basic impetus was coming from the whiz kids?

General Wilson: From the whiz kids in the Army [sic, DOD]! Well, Wosely, who's Under Secretary of Navy, was part of that group.

Mr. Gross: I guess it got clear up through the Secretary of the Air Force who approved a proposal.

General Wilson: Approved a proposal! That's right!

Mr. Gross: But, it was never actually implemented.

General Wilson: No, it was never implemented because the Congress wouldn't let it. The Congress stopped it. The only time I was ever called a liar on the hill was based on the merger of the Guard and reserve.

Mr. Gross: What led to that?

General Wilson: Oh, it just was one guy that didn't believe me. He said I was lying to him.

Mr. Gross: About what?

General Wilson: Oh, it was pertaining to some paper or something that came out of the Guard Association. You see, I had told the Air Force 'this is a great idea but you are going to have one big problem, getting it through the Congress just like the Army is going to have one real problem.' Well, you've got so many Army reservists that are members of Congress. You've got the ROA [Reserve Officers Association]. You've got the Guard Association. You got the Air Force Association, so forth. They didn't want to rock the boat. They'd rather keep it like it is. It was just one big fight that McNamara took on that he didn't win.

Mr. Gross: What was your assessment, politics aside, of the military merits of the proposal?

General Wilson: Well, the politics of this were primarily . . . . Look, we've had the reserve forces, the Guard and the reserve for years and we aren't gonna change it regardless of how good it is, regardless of how much money is at stake, regardless of how much poorer one is than the other. It didn't make any difference. We just are not going to change! Well, you've got Strom Thurmond, Major General, retired, an Army reservist on the [Senate] Armed Services Committee and Barry Goldwater, Major General, retired, Air

Force Reserve on the Armed Services Committee. We've got [Senator Lowell] Wicker, a Guardsman on the Armed Services Committee. So you've got all the politics in there. You've got [congressmen] Mendel Rivers and Eddie Hebert . . . . Had lots of people in the reserve on their side. A lot of people [were] on the Guard's side. So, they said 'no, we are not going to lose friends on both sides. We are going to keep it as is.' Eddie Hebert told me one time, 'Wimpy, I know you told me that this was coming up,' and I did. And he said 'I told you then it wouldn't work' and it didn't.

Mr. Gross: About a year before McNamara made this proposal there was something called the "ready now" concept during the period of time when a couple of squadrons deployed over to Europe for their training. What was the "ready now" concept?

General Wilson: Well that was a concept of having units fully qualified, completely war . . . . Ready to go on ten days notice. We even made mock loads where they loaded their equipment and everything else on simulated airplanes to leave to go over to Europe. We are ready now, ready now whenever you call them.

Mr. Gross: Did they have a full manning?

General Wilson: Yes, full manning! They had to be, to be "ready now."

Mr. Gross: The reason I asked is there still some sort of limitation in effect?

General Wilson: Well, now that was up to the Congressional ceiling.

Mr. Gross: Oh, up to the Congressional ceiling but you didn't have your full 100 percent manning.

General Wilson: Well no, most of them were about 97 percent. I think we were running at about 98, 95 to 97 percent. Sometimes it was a little lower than that but to maintain a "ready now" status, they had to have maintained the Congressional ceiling that was authorized.

Mr. Gross: Oh, I see. In the early 1960s, after the Berlin mobilization, a great deal of the attention of the active establishment was focused upon building up tactical air capabilities and then on the war in Southeast Asia. I recall reading a comment in General Twining's book to the effect that by 1965 the Air Guard units were being cannibalized- -I believe he was talking about equipment- -to support that Southeast Asia buildup. What kind of impact was that having on the program?

General Wilson: Well of course it made a lot of ready units not ready any longer. For example, in 1965 for Southeast Asia, we were losing a lot of ground support equipment which did have an effect on readiness. We were losing other things that were short in the active Air Force, the full bill . . . their requirements over there. We weren't getting the modernization that we had expected to get because they were using the airplanes over there.

Mr. Gross: Slowing down those schedules?

General Wilson: Slowing down those schedules there! For example, you know Vietnam, Southeast Asia is the only war we ever had where they didn't buy airplanes. You know in Korea they brought F-86Ls. They brought F-100As and Bs. They brought RF-84Fs. So there were airplanes falling out [of the active force inventory]. They didn't do that for the South Vietnam thing. There was no other [source] than just the normal buy of aircraft because nobody thought it would ever go on longer than a year. I remember in September of let's see . . . when did Southeast [Asia War] get started?

Mr. Gross: 1964, 1965!

General Wilson: 1964 in September! I remember when the President [i.e., Johnson] came out and said that they were not going to call the reserve for duty in Vietnam. I went up to see Secretary Vance and told him . . . . I said 'that's the worst thing that you can do.' I was trying to get him to call the Guard because I said 'here people are in drill pay status and you are not using them and you are

drafting people to send to Vietnam. Its gonna hurt the Guard program, hurt the reserve program, and its certainly isn't gonna help the active establishment. You should use these people. That's what they we're trained for.' It wasn't until the Pueblo crisis happened that they called the units and sent them over there.

Mr. Gross: What was his response to this kind of argument?

General Wilson: The war is going to be over in a year's time. A country with three million men ought to be able to take care of a country the size of Vietnam in a year's time.

Mr. Gross: In retrospect it seems like a very arrogant attitude?

General Wilson: Maybe.

Mr. Gross: Didn't work out did it.

General Wilson: Didn't work out that way. I still think, and I made testimony of that fact to Congress, that's the worst thing that I think happened. That caused more hard feeling for the Guard. People [would say] you are drawing pay to be in the Guard unit . . . . They changed the law after Vietnam where they have to use the Guard and reserve [first].

Mr. Gross: Do you have any indication of why the President decided not to use the Guard and reserves?

General Wilson: No. He said he kept them as a standby. I think the whole thing was the fact that the planners at that time felt that they didn't need them, that they could win it with the active establishment.

Mr. Gross: What was the attitude that you encountered in the active establishment itself about this process?

General Wilson: Well, they understood. They wanted the Guard and reserve. They needed the capability and they knew that this was a policy.

Mr. Gross: So they had to go along against their better judgement?

General Wilson: Yes! I think the military people's recommendation was to call the reserves. In fact I was in several meetings when it happened. When they finally got to call them for the Pueblo crisis, when that happened, I remember real well just exactly what happened. I was having a dinner at my house where the Assistant Secretary for Reserve Forces and his wife were there. I got a telephone call about 9:00 [p.m.] to get to my office as soon as possible and wait for Gen. McConnell. When I got into his office, he said 'I've just been told by McNamara that I can order to duty seven hundred and twenty airplanes, not people, or a hundred . . . . 'I've forgotten the number but so many airplanes.

Mr. Gross: I see!

General Wilson: 'Wimpy,' he said, 'I want fighters, I want F-100 outfits. I want some air rescue outfits. I want some communications outfits. I want some AC&W [Aircraft Control and Warning] squadrons, and so forth.' We took that and determined the number of units that could be ordered to duty because of the number of airplanes that they had. We figured 25 airplanes plus 10 percent attrition. I think that amounted to something like that in the squadrons.

Mr. Gross: Was the decision made because they were afraid they might have a war on their hands with the North Koreans?

General Wilson: Yes! I think that had a lot to do with it. Yes!

Mr. Gross: Why did it . . .?

General Wilson: . . . because part of the troops went to North Korea, I mean, went to South Korea.

Mr. Gross: South Korea.

General Wilson: Yes! We had a whole wing that went to South Korea and the rest of them were down in Vietnam.

Mr. Gross: Why, in the light of the fact that they were able to mobilize very quickly, I mean within 24, 36 hours . . .?

General Wilson: . . . but they kept them [in the U.S.] for almost two months before they moved them over.

Mr. Gross: That's what I was going to ask. Why did it take so long?

General Wilson: I don't know. But they couldn't get clearance from the White House to send them in my opinion.

Mr. Gross: You were really certain of what was going on?

General Wilson: Not certain!

Mr. Gross: What was going on? There were a number of, or at least one reorganization, of the unit structure. Evidently TAC decided what they wanted. What the Air Guard had wasn't compatible with it.

General Wilson: Yes! Well no, it wasn't exactly that. We had to leave certain units at home, certain units within the units.

Mr. Gross: Yes.

General Wilson: Certain units within the units, we had to leave them home like a base support squadron. They didn't need that but they needed the base supply squadron so they left the base support squadron here, left the transportation squadron, left the facilities maintenance squadron. But they took the fighter squadron, the supply squadron, and the engineering squadron, ordered them to duty. But you know the thing about it, the TO&E's were designed for that

purpose so you could call up [parts of units]. And those were taken and kept as units. They stayed together.

Mr. Gross: It was my understanding that, as a result of lessons learned after the Berlin mobilization, they went to this cellular structure.

General Wilson: Yes! We went to this cellular structure for that very purpose.

Mr. Gross: But then why didn't they just initially call the people they needed instead of calling up some people that they didn't need? In some cases, they took them over to South Vietnam and divided them up among the regular Air Force units.

General Wilson: Well actually what they really did, the unit went over . . . let's take the base support squadron, it went over with the fighter squadron there. What they did [was divide up] the base support on that base at Cam Ranh Bay for example, where I was. They divided it up- -all those cells that they had. And, who was running the cells? It was the Guard people because of the experience level. So, they were pulled out of there, the base support unit, and used in these others but, when they came home, they came home as a unit, and they went over as a unit. But they were used and they were fussing about not working with the same people all day but they were normally in command.

Mr. Gross: What's your assessment of the active duty performance of these units in South Vietnam?

General Wilson: Well, they did a real good job. For example, I remember, I was over in 1968, right after they got over there. And I was with General George Brown who is the commander of the Air Force over there. And he said General Westmoreland was here the other day and was up visiting us at Cam Ranh Bay. And he said that he went up to see Colonel Robert C. Cherry who's the commander of 120th Tactical Fighter Squadron from Denver, who was at Cam Ranh Bay. They were talking and he asked Colonel Cherry . . .he said 'now you've been here five days, when will your unit be able to go out on its first

mission?' Colonel Cherry looked at him said 'well General, you see those two airplanes taking off, that's the 25th combat flight this week.'

Mr. Gross: How did they stack up against their active force counterparts?

General Wilson: General George Brown told me this. 'You know Wimpy, we had a different breed of cats when we got the Guard over here. You know these airline pilots that you got, they have been flying instruments all their lives. We have to spend a lot of time getting people the way they could fly. These kids that have 250 hours, we have to watch them like hawks. We don't have to do that with the Guard. We can turn them lose. They can go on because they can understand how to fly.' For example, he said 'the average pilot that you have there in the 11 squadrons I got in South Vietnam . . . .' He said that 'their [i.e. the Air Guard's] average pilot time in the F-100 is a thousand hours. In my squadron here, my average time in the F-100 is 150 hours.'

Mr. Gross: That's an enormous difference!

General Wilson: Yes, an enormous difference and that's where you got these people that had been flying them [for a long time]. We had the F-100s for five years before they went over there.

Mr. Gross: How did their maintenance and operational readiness rates stand up?

General Wilson: The same. They were just as good as the active [Air Force]. Once they got them on active duty, they did the same thing that the active force did. Normally they would come out in a little better shape because of the experience level. Of course it's hard for an active Air Force guy to really sit down and tell you that these Guard units are better than we are. The experience level put them ahead of someone. The Guard can't take over the active mission. Hell there's no way [they could do that] but they can maintain a capability by using the people from the active establishment and keeping them trained, bringing them up and keeping them available.

Mr. Gross: This was your major source, for example, of pilot resources?

General Wilson: Pilots, sure. Still is!

Mr. Gross: How about your technicians, do they mostly come from the active Air Force?

General Wilson: Well most of technicians come from ex-Air Force people. A lot of them come from kids that we have sent through the schools, and trained, and trained them all the way through to where they are just as capable. Many times they have been in as many schools as the active people have. We have a hell of a school program. You've been down to Knoxville to that school down there?

Mr. Gross: No I haven't yet. I hope to get down there soon.

General Wilson: Well, you ought to go down there. They've got a lot there, training people and that's all credited by the Air Staff of the Air Force.

Mr. Gross: A friend of mine at Ohio State [University] was an Air Force officer in Vietnam. I don't know which base but he was there when one of those [Air Guard] units came in and he said they [i.e., active Air Force people] were really quite surprised. These [Air Guard] guys were very competent. Their airplanes were clean. They were ready to fly and, according to what he told me, it wasn't very long before the particular unit that they had . . I don't recall which one it was . . had attained and maintained the highest operational readiness ratings of any unit in that particular Air Force wing. It stayed in that condition [while it remained in Vietnam].

General Wilson: That's what I'm talking about. That's the experience level of the maintenance personnel and that's the key to it. You take these old boys that have been doing it for twenty years, maintaining airplanes. . . .

Mr. Gross: You also don't have the turnover of personnel, transfers. Every time you turn around and you get new people in, that kind of consistency that the

regular the Air Force lacks. But, he was quite impressed by what he saw. I wondered if, once again getting back into the Washington level in the Air Staff. . . .

General Wilson: It made an impression there. I think its had a good effect on the feeling of the active establishment. That's the reason I believe that we are getting more of the mission. You have to demonstrate and demonstrate and demonstrate that you can do something. That's the reason I always insisted that we get into every competition that we could. We go in to win not just to particpate, but to win.

Mr. Gross: Were there any specific kinds of program and policy changes that came out of that mobilization performance in 1968 and 1969?

General Wilson: Well, I think here again that there were a lot changes made in the organizational structure to better taylor it to where it could be used better by the active establishment, to take care of a lot of gripes that they had by the people that just came back from what happened to them.

Mr. Gross: What kind of gripes were there?

General Wilson: Well, they weren't maintained as a unit. They were moved. 'We were told we would go over as a unit and yet I had to run this maintenance shop' and so forth. So those things had been kind of straightened out again. The active Air Force has actually changed its organizational structure for something on a limited emergency like that and we've gone along with them. It's been a joint effort.

Mr. Gross: Were there any complaints coming from the fact that, once these units were mobilized in January and March [1968], they just sat there for a while with nothing to do?

where they were going. They knew where they were going. They knew what bases they were going to but they didn't know when and people just sat. They wouldn't give them leave. They wouldn't let them go back to finish up. They called them on a moment's notice. They wouldn't let them get back and work four or five days at home because they didn't know when they were going to need them. All that kind of changed too and [when] we got some sense from the gaining command as to where [they were going], we let him kind of close out his business. This was one of the great problems that . . . . They shouldn't have called them that fast until they had the orders to move.

Mr. Gross: That kind of suggest's that they really didn't have the plans worked out particularly well.

General Wilson: Well, as I said, it all happened at a midnight one night and they were ordered to duty the next day.

Mr. Gross: Did general ever give you any indication of why they made that decision at midnight that one night?

General Wilson: I guess it was a decision made by the President [i.e., Johnson].

Mr. Gross: Some sort of diplomatic signal or something?

General Wilson: Could be!

Mr. Gross: Tell them were getting serious about the whole thing?

General Wilson: Could be! Could be! I imagine there was a lot of that going on.

Mr. Gross: It was never really explained to you?

General Wilson: No! Don't think you can find that anywhere except that they were ordered to duty.

Mr. Gross: Yes, yes you know, I keep digging but I don't find it.

General Wilson: I don't think you'll find it. I don't think you'll find it any reason as to why. They gave a big reason to Congress. In some hearings over there, they wanted to know why. They said these were the units we needed. We needed them now. I think the Senate Foreign Relations Committee had some classified hearings which talked about that.

Mr. Gross: But how did they explain that though? That's just like saying 'hey we need it.' I mean, why do we need it?

General Wilson: We were authorized to call them to duty. The President said 'do it.' We will do it.

Mr. Gross: If I was a Senator, I don't know that I would be terribly satisfied with that kind of explanation.

General Wilson: The Senate and so forth, in my opinion, was glad to see some reserve forces called to active duty.

Mr. Gross: Why's that?

General Wilson: Because they were getting so much static about people in a drill pay status at home while my son's getting killed.

Mr. Gross: Yes, I can understand that. Well, here, let me just a back up once again. In 1961 a number of units were called up and some of them went to Berlin [sic, France and the Federal Republic of Germany]. . .

General Wilson: Berlin that's right.

Mr. Gross: . . . for the Berlin crisis.

General Wilson: It's called Stair Stepping.

Mr. Gross: Operation Stair Step, yes. How heavily was the National Guard Bureau involved in planning that operation?

General Wilson: Well, we were involved in being sure that the units that were selected for that call-up . . . . That was a phased call-up as you remember. It wasn't all at one time. I mean [we had] enough advanced warning to be sure that they were equipped with the proper equipment to maintain the aircraft. All the ground handling, test equipment and everything was there in their overseas kits were available and so forth. And, we were working with the gaining command on the final training of what they wanted and the route training practice, all of the this. We did inspections. We were on teams that went around to check the units and so forth. And, I remember real well, I sat in a staff meeting one time and he [General LeMay] asked one of his officers who had made a very cursory trip around the units and came back and reported to the Air Council. I was sitting there. [That officer said] that there's no way that these units could ever get there. It would be the biggest fiasco that ever happened.

Mr. Gross: This was in August or September [1961] before they went over.

General Wilson: Yes, before they went over. General Gabe Disosway, the Commander of TAC, was sitting there and I was sitting in the auidence and they looked at me and says 'what have you got to say?' I said 'he is a God damn liar!' Gabe Disosway said 'Wimpy, I believe they'll get over there.' That was a four-star general. LeMay said 'ok, send em.'

Mr. Gross: In looking back on the operation Stair Step itself, the deployment was very successful. You didn't lose anybody. They got over there in a hurry and it was acclaimed to be very successful. However, I've looked at some of the private comments in the official [USAFE] history about what the people over in Europe- -that is the Air Force people- -thought about the operational capabilities and the problems of getting the units up to snuff once they got to their bases in France and Germany.

General Wilson: The problem is that the aircraft that they sent over there, those F-84s, they didn't have any of them in the theater. There was no base support

other than what the units took with them. The supply line hadn't called up with any spare parts and so the commanders were having a time fitting these airplanes into the picture in Europe. It's not like taking an F-100D where you have ten squadrons of F-100Ds over there to maintain them. These guys had to live off of what they brought for about the first six months. And they did a pretty dad gum good job to maintain the readiness level that they did even though it wasn't what the major commands or the commanders over there wanted. And a lot of it had to do with the lack of planning ahead of time to get the equipment to satisfy these airplanes because they were new to the theater. They had been in theater one time and were sent back and all the stuff sent back. So sure, they had trouble.

Mr. Gross: The bases that they went to, there really wasn't much there but runway and a few primitive facilities.

General Wilson: Runway, that's right! Yes, they didn't even have towers when they first got there.

Mr. Gross: How could they operate?

General Wilson: They couldn't. They put in mobile [control teams].

Mr. Gross: But, in looking at this thing basically you had a situation with aircraft that some would say were obsolescent. You had . . . .

General Wilson: They were!

Mr. Gross: . . . that you had air crews, many of whom had been trained in some nuclear delivery missions and now they had to learn to do iron bombs and bullets again. You had some problems with O.R. [operational readiness] rates because of maintenance.

General Wilson: That's right!

Mr. Gross: Shortage of spares.

General Wilson: That's what I'm talking about.

Mr. Gross: All this kind of suggests to me that really, that at least up to that time, essentially the Air Guard would be maintained in a training status and the plans must have been predicated on [the assumption that] 'well, when we mobilize, we will have some time to bring them up to snuff.' They weren't really into this idea of having a force that's ready to go right away.

General Wilson: Well, I think that's right. I think it has something to do with it for the planning in a theater, you normally send your equipment and everything ahead. You don't get your equipment over there before you get your spares and your things to maintain it. So you try to bring a stock level which you can maintain but you have got to draw on something. It's not like having . . . . And I think even the Berlin call up and the mass move over there . . . . I remember many meetings where we were trying to figure out how we could get the stuff over there before they got there. But it just wasn't there. Some of it had to be built because you were taking obsolete airplanes.

Here again, if you equipped the Guard with some of things like in the active [force] and you move a fighter squadron . . . . Say you had an F-16 squadron in Europe. You've got a Guard unit that can fly F-16 mainly. You move it to Europe, it can draw on the base supplies that are there. But the biggest problem I think in the Guard, even with all the readiness and everything that we got- -it is still flying 20-year old airplanes and there has been no program that has ever been devised by the active [force] to give the reserve forces part of the modern equipment or equip them with something that has a greater capability than the old 20-year old airplane.

Mr. Gross: Is this the biggest drawback then?

General Wilson: This is the biggest drawback in my opinion. You talk about you are going to fight a war and you are going to fight it. We've got these units . . . .

Some of these have, I think, under the classified thing, they have a very short period to get from here over there. But they haven't got the equipment to support it over there.

Mr. Gross: Because its old Air Force?

General Wilson: The old Air Force, yes!

Mr. Gross: So what good is it going to be?

General Wilson: They will be able to fly for a while until they run out of spare parts.

Mr. Gross: If they have a place to land in!

General Wilson: Yes! And, of course, you know that Berlin call-up was nothing but a political thing, a show of force.

Mr. Gross: Just to prove to the Russians that we could do something over there?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: They really didn't expect to fight a war with those guys.

General Wilson: Well, I don't know whether they might have. But, if it got to that, they could. But this is again a show of force factor.

Mr. Gross: But, in some of the documents [and] in histories that I've read, it indicated that essentially the major public crisis was over before the end of the year [i.e. 1961]. Why would they keep those units over there for so long? It was in the summer of 1962 before they came back.

General Wilson: That's right!

Mr. Gross: Why didn't they bring them back earlier even though I know they were authorized to be called up for a year?

General Wilson: They were authorized for a year, yes. They pretty well kept them for a year.

Mr. Gross: There was a major buildup of the conventional capabilities during that period of time. The recalled units were just sort of an interim thing [until active force conventional capabilities could be strengthened].

General Wilson: Yes, interim thing I would imagine. And, they kept them for about a year.

Mr. Gross: There's one aspect of this- -I've read bit and pieces about it- -that kind of intrigued me. I've never been able to nail it down. It appears that, because of a variety of circumstances, there were some very serious morale problems. One of those circumstances was just some really rotten living conditions that people found over there.

General Wilson: Oh boy! Especially in those units that went to France. Man they were terrible. You wouldn't even put a .... I mean it was the worst you can think of. No facilities. You know they had been closed [for years]. And, they opened them and had no heat. A lot of times, not even water. Sewers didn't work and it just took time to get everything operating. Sure, they had a lot of fussing.

Mr. Gross: There was one reference I came across, something about a Congressional investigation?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: What ever became of that?

General Wilson: Oh, not anything other than that they agreed, yes, that they had some problems.

Mr. Gross: But there were no real changes that came out of that?

General Wilson: None other than make your plans and get your equipment and get your bases. You know the Congress, unless we got into a big fight, it wouldn't make money available to maintain those bases all over the world. And you don't know whether you are going to need them or not. And, most times when you go into a area, even in Vietnam, you went in there pretty austere until you were in there and built your own. That's about the same thing that happened to them over in [France]. But you know people gripe anyway, you know that.

Mr. Gross: Well there's a larger question to this. It may or may not be a valid assertion but, in General Westmoreland's memoirs, in President Johnson- -I believe his autobiography- -there's reference in there in both cases to the experience that the Kennedy administration had with the Berlin mobilization in 1961 and especially the complaints, if I recall, by reservists and the guardsmen. And, according to the claims made in these two books, which was way after the fact and may or may not be accurate. But, they made the claim that the flak that the Kennedy administration received because of the complaints of recalled reservists and guardsmen during this mobilization made subsequent administrations, that is the Johnson administration, somewhat reluctant to call upon the Guard and reserve in Vietnam. I wondered if that has any substance at all to it or was it just an argument that people used?

General Wilson: Well, now I don't know. It seems to me that everytime I got mixed up in a in a recall it was late at night and things happened pretty fast. I think many times they were more political then anything else. I mean more doing something as a show of force. The decision was tailored by what would be best for them, an indication to the world as to what the hell they were going to do.

Mr. Gross: Using the reserves as a signal?

General Wilson: Yes! I think that had a lot to do with it especially in the Berlin thing and I think that there was no question about that. I think, in the Pueblo thing, it did too.

Mr. Gross: Isn't it sort of difficult for the average reservist to understand why he's sitting at home?

General Wilson: But that's what I say! If they called and used them, there wouldn't be any of this griping. Just call them and [have them] sitting at home when their jobs are working. Say a guy is making 10,000 dollars a year down here in his job and he comes as a buck private, or airman first class, and is making 500 dollars a month and sitting at home not being used. It doesn't make much sense. If you call him and send him over, you wouldn't have that trouble.

Mr. Gross: But I guess that was a major problem in 1961.

General Wilson: It was a problem, yes.

Mr. Gross: Did you have much of that also in 1968?

General Wilson: Sure we had some of that! Yes! Right there at Andrews Air Force Base, they called that unit. It sat there for three months and the President's son-in-law was in the unit.

Mr. Gross: Did they ever move them?

General Wilson: Yes! They moved them down to Langley Field. They didn't go to Vietnam. But his son went to Vietnam. I mean his son-in-law went to Vietnam. . . Lucy's husband.

Mr. Gross: Yes.

Mr. Gross: Was that Robb or Nugent?

General Wilson: Nugent, Pat Nugent.

Mr. Gross: Well, getting back to the Berlin mobilization itself, did the Guard's performance there, did that have any impact at all on policy or programming immediately after the guys returned home in 1962?

General Wilson: Well, I'm sure they did. It is bound to have had some [but] no more than usual after any mobilization. You take and see what happened and try to improve on what happened so you don't do it at the next one. And, here again, I think the cellular organization after the Berlin call, which we weren't in before, was one of the outgrowths of Berlin which helped out in the Pueblo crisis. And it's been refined since then again like they'll tell you at the Pentagon, completely reorganized to better improve that. You always learn by a mobilization. So, in your plans, you look at it while they are gone to see what you can do, what changes need to be made, start doing the staff work, and getting ready so when they come back you can reorganize and come out with a better organization to more nearly meet the needs of the active establishment.

Mr. Gross: When you were testifying before Congress in 1964 on the Air Guard's appropriation - I think for the fiscal year 1965 - you indicated that during the past three years the Air Guard had essentially changed from an organization that was oriented toward training as opposed to mobilization readiness to one that was achieving really a D-Day, ready-now status.

General Wilson: D-Day, ready-now capability!

Mr. Gross: What had accounted for those changes? [End of tape].

Mr. Gross: We were talking a little bit this morning when we started over here about improvements in readiness in the Air Guard and what elements you thought

were the most important during your experiences there with the Guard Bureau in improving readiness.

General Wilson: Well, as you know, the law stated that a drill period would be for a minimum of two hours a drill. Normally that meant, and the way it had been interpreted, that was two hours a week and most units as did the 154th [squadron] met normally on a Wednesday night from seven to nine. The pilots and the air crewmen and the maintenance personnel were primarily the full-time technicians. I mean, the maintenance personnel were full-time technicians. The pilots were all part-timers and they came out at night, after work, before work, at noon and on the weekends to fly as an individual. We had no way of a really having concentrated unit programs for teaching the missions of the Guard or maintaining the missions that we had. So we in the Arkansas Guard started out a program of having four drills on one weekend a month. And, that was later called the Texas plan of four drills on a weekend and that met the law.

We would have four, four-hour drills instead of two hours. They would come out on a Saturday morning and spend Saturday morning as one drill, Saturday afternoon as another drill, Sunday morning as one drill, and Sunday afternoon as another drill. That way we could be able to plan. We could write training programs and have the pilots and the crewmen and the maintenance people all there working and we got awful lot done. We just doubled, more than doubled, the time that we got for the same pay. Now these guys - granted they got four days pay for those four for those four drills - but the law said a minimum of two hours. So this was something that we started and other units picked it up and went on through [with it]. About that time our problem we were having was in the Air Guard with the accident rate.

Mr. Gross: What period of time are we talking about?

General Wilson: I'm talking about early 1950s.

Mr. Gross: Early 1950s. Ok! This was after the Korean War?

General Wilson: After the Korean War. Yes!

Mr. Gross: Ok!

General Wilson: And, we had it before too. The whole thing. It didn't really come together until after the Korean War. The Arkansas and the Texas plan of the weekend training did come before the Korean War.

Mr. Gross: You had initially started it?

General Wilson: We were doing that in 1947 and 1948 and 1949. But that was not a requirement at that time. It was strictly done on a voluntary basis by the units.

Mr. Gross: I see.

General Wilson: Then, after 1960 when we were getting more sophisticated airplanes, jets were beginning to come in the program . . . .

Mr. Gross: After 1950 or 1960?

General Wilson: Yes! I mean after the Korean War.

Mr. Gross: Ok!

General Wilson: After the Korean War, then our accident rate began to go up. Well, you control accident rates by frequency of flying and controlled flying programs. The Guard Bureau put in to the Department of Defense an authority to give crewmen 36 additional flying training periods. Each one of those had to be four hours duration of which at least two hours of it had to be in the air. They would be paid a day's pay for that. Same as it did in the other drills. But they were under a controlled program in which the managers at the base could tell pilot so and so 'you'll be here tonight for night flying or for instrument training' or something that was controlled because we were paying them. So, we

could tell them when to come rather than on a normal drill when they just came on their own availability. Well, our accident rate in one year dropped to half.

Mr. Gross: What had been the previous figure? Do you know?

General Wilson: Oh, I don't remember what it was. It was up in the twenties, or twenty or thirty accidents per hundred thousand and it dropped in half. And, [that was] primarily from the frequency of flying. You got people out there and they flew. And, the landings and take offs, of course that's where most of your accidents happen. And, that's [reduced] in doing it frequently.

Mr. Gross: When was this put in sir, this 36 additional [annual flying training periods] ?

General Wilson: Oh, I think it happened during the Stone Board. My dates are kind of hazy, but I'd say it was in 1952, 1953, 1954.

Mr. Gross: Something like that?

General Wilson: Somewhere in there.

Mr. Gross: I see.

General Wilson: And, that's still in effect. They are still doing that. And, that gives a the unit commander more control over part-timers because you pay them and tell them to come and fly. This was at the same time in the Guard when we were going from air defense into tactical fighters where we were diversifying our mission. Well, when you went into tactical fighters . . . . Air defense you could do all your training from home station. You did field training at your home station. I mean, it was there because that was where you would be flying from in the air defense mission. When you got into TAC you had to have bombing ranges, gunnery ranges. You had to have field training sites where all these things were available. So we started a progam at about the same time in the early fifties of establishing permanent field training sites across the country.

We got into this because we had to bring these units together at a site to train and it was cheaper to set up one base of equipment at a site and have lots of units use it rather than have everybody bring all their own equipment. So we set up motor pools, mess halls, barracks and everything at ex-Air Force bases across the country for field training sites and each unit brought its aircraft and its specialized equipment and had a field training period. They didn't have to bring all the trucks. They didn't have all the mess gear and all the other things that came along with it to survive two weeks. And we would run oh ten to fifteen thousand people thru those permanent training sites each year. For example, we had one in .... Well let's see if I could remember where they were. Savannah, Georgia was one. Gulfport, Mississippi was one. Ellington Field, Texas was one. We had Boise, Idaho. Up in northern Montana, we had one. Casper, Wyoming. We had one in Wisconsin. We had one in Alpena, Michigan. We had one at Syracuse, New York. We had one in New Hampshire. We had one at Otis Field, Massachusetts. And, all these sites were based where geographically those people from this area would go to this site. These people from this area would go ... where we've cut down the travel as much as possible.

But, we put in runways. We put up barracks. We put up mess halls. We put up squadron ops. We put up supply buildings, your transportation section all there so that units could come in. Not only could they use them on field training but they could use them on weekend training also during the year. So we could schedule them in there for training and dropping bombs and so forth. So that was another plus in getting operational ready where we had these facilities that were available for the training of the people so they could become OR [operationally ready]. And, those were some of the other things.

I think that the additional field training periods, the flying training periods, were a great help. Really, the weekend training was the biggest advancement and we had an awful time selling that to the Air Force Reserve. They didn't like it. They wanted two hours a drill.

Mr. Gross: Why were they so resistant?

General Wilson: Well they just didn't want a . . . I mean it took more time. But we found people would prefer to go one weekend rather than to go every Wednesday night or every Tuesday night or every Friday night. We had a greater participation in the weekend training. Sure, we gave guys all the chance to go to church on Sunday or we would have church there at the base. If a guy wanted to go, he could go. But it was the weekend training, in my opinion, that probably did more to advance the status of the training program in the Air Guard than anything else that we did in addition to some of the other things such as the flying training periods.

Mr. Gross: So, they were getting a chance to perform as units.

General Wilson: As units, that's right! Working as units. The maintenance people were working with the pilots. The supply people were working with the maintenance people. The transportation people were doing the transporting. The loading crews were loading airplanes which you couldn't do on a haphazard basis of one guy flying tonight at four o'clock and another flying at six o'clock in the morning.

Mr. Gross: And, these initiatives were coming from within the Guard itself?

General Wilson: They came from within the Guard itself, yes! Then, later on, it became standard throughout the Air Force. Even the Navy followed it. And, now we even got the Army on weekend training periods. I didn't think, when I was chief, I would ever sell that program. I had to get states to voluntarily take it before. Now they, buy it.

Mr. Gross: When did the states accept this for the Army?

General Wilson: Oh, I would say it was after I was chief which was 1967 and we had been doing it in the Air Guard for . . . . In fact, when the Reserve Forces Act of 1952 came out with a six months training program, it was very conspicuous that the Air Guard was left out. And, the reason was that we already had a program. Six months didn't match anything. In other words, the six months in the Air Guard didn't match our program at all.

Mr. Gross: What program did you have?

General Wilson: Well, we had a program where they went to basic training which is six weeks. Then, if a guy was going to be a maintenance man, he went to tech school that may run for seven months. Or, he might go a to an administrative school that lasted another six weeks. What we were doing was training a guy to his skill in his AFSC [Air Force Specialty Code] that he was going to use regardless of the time that it took.

Mr. Gross: Was this training program mandatory or voluntary?

General Wilson: Mandatory! Mandatory at that time. We voluntarily made it mandatory.

Mr. Gross: Ok. This was for non-prior service [personnel] ?

General Wilson: Non-prior service people! Yes!

Mr. Gross: When did that initially come into effect for the Air Guard?

General Wilson: Oh, in the middle fifties.

Mr. Gross: In the middle fifties?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: In the middle fifties. Ok.

General Wilson: After Korea.

Mr. Gross: Ok. Fine. Getting back to these permanent field training sites, when was that implemented?

General Wilson: I guess we completed the last one- -I'd say between 1955 and 1960.

Mr. Gross: 1955 and 1960! When did they initially go into effect?

General Wilson: We had to do them gradually across the country because you never get enough money to do it all at one time. I think we started the first one, as I remember, it was probably in 1953 or 1954. My dates are hazy but it was in about that time period.

Mr. Gross: What was the reaction of the regular Air Force to this proposal?

General Wilson: Well, they agreed. In other words, if you are going to use the units, you are going to train them properly. They had to have the facilities. They had to have the ranges. They had to have the things to go with it. So, they didn't have them and there was no place where we could take eight or ten thousand and throw them on an active Air Force base because they just didn't have that much room. And, of course, they were limited too in those days. They were reducing again after Korea. So, we were using a lot of the facilities but most of them were remote facilities and they were close to where we could get ranges that were already established like the Great Lakes. We had an Army range at Alpena, Michigan. We could use the Army National Guard camp at Grayling [Michigan] which had bombing ranges, artillery ranges and so forth for the dropping of bombs and setting up of a gunnery range.

Mr. Gross: Was this a fairly expensive process to set this up initially? Did you have to build runways for example?

General Wilson: Well, we had to extend runways to take care of jets. And, the airports were running five thousand feet. We had to get them to eight and nine thousand feet to take care of the jets. So, we extended the runways. It wasn't really expensive. It amortized itself from the lack of having to transport all the equipment up there for every unit that came to camp.

Mr. Gross: Now perhaps we could talk a little bit about the types of aircraft, specific types of aircraft, that were coming into the inventory after the Korean War and what some of their capabilities and limitations were.

General Wilson: Well most of them that were coming in were the F-86s, As, Bs, Es; F-84Ds, Es, and Fs. We had some F-89Js that were coming in from the active establishment. We had B-26s come back in. We had C-119s that came from Korea into the program. We had KC-97s. That was in 1960. Most of them were the airplanes that were surplus to the needs of the new Air Force at the time that they reduced.

Mr. Gross: This was when, in 1953?

General Wilson: 1953, 1954, 1955.

Mr. Gross: Were they fairly up-to-date aircraft?

General Wilson: For example, there were twelve squadrons of RF-84Fs that came right out the factory to the Guard which were brand new airplanes. The F-86s were great airplanes. The F-100s were just coming in the program. They were just in the active [force]. In the time period of the sixties, we got rid of the F-84Fs and got F-100As. Got a few [F-100] Cs as the Air Force got the more modern equipment in.

Mr. Gross: What problems did you have transitioning to these fairly modern aircraft at that time?

General Wilson: We had very little problem. We had to run training programs, transition programs. We put into the Guard units something we hadn't had and we got these. We put in flying training supervisors which was a full-time technician job for a pilot who was a complete OR pilot, operationally ready pilot, to train other pilots to meet the needs so that we had the training capability in the units. And, we eventually set up at two different places. Tucson, Arizona, for example, is a training base where we have A-7s, and we did have F-100s. We trained all the new pilots that are coming from the Guard pilot training program in there to get them operationally ready before they came back to the units.

Although most of our pilots came from the active Air Force, we still had some youths coming into the Guard program in the way of pilots and the Air

Force let us have certain spaces in the flying training command [i.e., Air Training Command]. Well, for example, I guess in the fifties when we had our biggest quotas, [the Air Force] was trying to keep the active schools filled. That was one reason. But we needed pilots too. For example, Boise, Idaho, there's not too many people that go back to Boise, Idaho. So, we would need eight or ten pilots a year from Boise. But in New York, we had lots of people so we didn't need that many pilots there. And, we used this on a basis of where we needed pilots to fill the organization.

Mr. Gross: How many pilots do you suppose you were running through on the average during the fifties?

General Wilson: As I remember, the maximum we ever had was 700 in the year.

Mr. Gross: That was quite a lot, really.

General Wilson: Yes! It was a lot. Yes!

Mr. Gross: To give me a better idea, what was your total pilot inventory that you were carrying, at least authorized, at that time?

General Wilson: Oh, I guess that pilot program was over 4,000 pilots.

Mr. Gross: 4,000! So, your running maybe 700 out of the 4,000 max.

General Wilson: That's off the top of my head.

Mr. Gross: Yes!

General Wilson: That's about what it would be.

Mr. Gross: Of course now that situation changed, did it not, in the sixties when we started building up the tactical component [of the Air Force] and you probably found yourself running short a little bit didn't you?

General Wilson: Yes we did but we were able to meet it with the pilot training program.

Mr. Gross: And, throughout most of this period, if not all, you were getting a lot of people from the active force.

General Wilson: Oh, we got people from the active. The biggest bunch of people from the active.

Mr. Gross: That would keep the experience level up but it makes it a little old.

General Wilson: Keeps the experience level but it makes it a little old so we got to have some youth to come up. Got to have a few second lieutenants in an organization.

Mr. Gross: Yes!

General Wilson: Got to have all first lieutenants or mostly all captains because, by the time they finish five years in the active [force] to meet their committment, they are Captains. So you got to have somebody to fill the lower ranks.

Mr. Gross: Well, there's a question that has concerned me, this whole question of stagnation. You promote people. If you have good people, you promote them and there are a limited number of field grade slots.

General Wilson: We promote them out of the Guard.

Mr. Gross: Yes! What happens to them?

General Wilson: They go to the [Air Force] Reserve in the standby reserve or in other reserve programs, individual programs in the reserves. But you still have to have that promotion. You can't have it stagnated with all fifty year old majors up here at the top. So, you got to have them coming and going. You've

got to have some input here. And you get your experience from the active [force] and the younger [people] you get through pilot training programs there in the Guard. And we not only have programs for pilots but we have administrative . . . . We have others. OCS [Officer Candidate School], we have an OTS [Officer Training School] program down at Knoxville which is the same program that the active Air Force uses except it's for Guardsmen.

Mr. Gross: Why have they made the decision to send them through Knoxville rather than going through the Air Force's own programs?

General Wilson: Couldn't get the [training] spaces that were necessary.

Mr. Gross: Couldn't get the spaces?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: It would just seem to me that if the spaces weren't available . . . .

General Wilson: And, we we trained people for the active [force] at Knoxville.

Mr. Gross: I see.

General Wilson: As well.

Mr. Gross: There's a related topic but not too much attention is given to it and that is the procurement of enlisted personnel. Now, do the bulk of your enlisted people, NCO's particularly, come into the Guard from the active duty Air Force?

General Wilson: A lot of them do. Normally if you get a guy from the active establishment . . . . You know we still have TO&E* positions in the enlisted grades same as we do in the active. And, a guy that finishes four years, there is

---

* Tables of Organization and Equipment.

no problem of placing him in the Guard. But a guy that comes out after eight or nine years as a master sergeant, we have problems putting him in there. And, so we depend there again on recruiting of non-prior service personnel to fill the lower grades and to come up and not have stagnation at the top. If you go to an average unit, you'll find that about probably 60 percent maintain a level of people from the active establishment.

Mr. Gross: And that's just officers and enlisted or just enlisted?

General Wilson: I'm talking about enlisted men. You are hiring officers.

Mr. Gross: Ok. Looking back on your career with the Guard Bureau, what significant changes, if any, do you see in the kinds of people, non-prior service people, that you would get in the enlisted ranks and particularly their motivations for coming in [to the Guard] ?

General Wilson: Well, of course, you had a motivation coming in, as everyone knows, that you could fulfill your military obligation during the draft period in the Guard. So we had people wanting to get in the Guard. No question about it. Because they weren't used, it gave us a bad name during Vietnam because they called it a draft haven for people. But the laws were written that way and, if the administration decided they didn't want to use them, it wasn't the guy's fault that got in there because he was susceptible to being called.

Mr. Gross: Looking at the functioning of the units themselves, what impact, if any, did this kind of draft motivation have on the morale and performance of the units?

General Wilson: Well then, I think it gave you a lot of very capable people who did a good job during the period they were there, the six years. You know that was for six years they were in there. When they came into the Guard, they took a six year thing otherwise they would be eligible for the draft if they got out before that. So, I say, sure we had people that were draft dodgers in there. No question, they didn't want to do anything. But most of those, we got rid of.

Units would get rid of them if they didn't perform, if they didn't fulfill their obligation. At least they couldn't miss more than three drills a year, excused drills, out of the 48. And these things, if they didn't do them, we would turn them right back over to the draft board and they were ordered to active duty.

Mr. Gross: During the Vietnam period, do you have any idea on the average how many people you lost that way?

General Wilson: No. We didn't lose many. We had a very well-educated group of people. I'd say that most all the people in the non-prior service .... We had very few people that were not high school graduates in the Guard, blacks and whites.

Mr. Gross: In talking several months ago with Brig. Gen. Hoover* in Ohio, he had been squadron commander of one of the units that deployed to France 1961 ....

General Wilson: France. That's right!

Mr. Gross: And, one of the problems that he mentioned that had stemmed from the draft-induced enlistments was that he had seven lawyers in his squadron who were serving as enlisted clerks.

General Wilson: Enlisted clerks. That's right!

Mr. Gross: And, he said it was difficult.

General Wilson: It didn't make sense to do that. And, of course, here again I blame that on the unit commander in taking them. You didn't have to take them.

Mr. Gross: Well, he said they were quick learners though.

---

* Brig. Gen. Paul E. Hoover, Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Ohio National Guard.

General Wilson: They were great people. They did a good job. But they'd prefer to be in a law office somewhere.

Mr. Gross: Oh yes! Yes! Rather than sitting in a tent in France.

General Wilson: Sitting in a tent doing administrative work. I can remember one Army National Guard unit that had 53 lawyers as enlisted men in one town. And, they went over to Vietnam and they did a good job. I visited them.

Mr. Gross: Well, it is time to turn to a few other perhaps more mundane subjects. Going back to the Korean War, one of the problems that the military services encountered when they mobilized some of the reservists during the early stages of the war was that a large number of people either claimed deferments on the basis of physical hardship, family hardship or some other reason, or that they were unable to pass physical exams. Do you recall how many or what percentage of Air Guardmen were excused from active duty for various reasons when they were called in 1950 and 1951?

General Wilson: Well, 1951-52 or 1951 when they were coming in, the states did a job of putting them on active duty. I'll give you a perfect example of one. The Secretary of the Air Force at one time was commander of a communications unit. One of the Secretaries, I am not saying which one. He was in Pennslyvania and his school tried everyway in the world of getting him- -he was also a teacher at the university- -getting him relieved from active duty. Pennslyvania put him on active duty but the Air Force, about two months later, relieved him. The states, as far as the Guard is concerned- -now that's not reserve- -the states know good and well that when that unit is called, they are going to put people on duty. And, I bet you we may have had one percent that didn't qualify for physical or their physicals didn't change since the last physical since it may have . . . . But I say it wouldn't be less than three percent of the units [sic, personnel] in the Air Guard that were excused.

Mr. Gross: You mean the individuals?

General Wilson: Individuals. Yes!

Mr. Gross: Ok! I had run across a figure that indicated that approximately 900 Air Guard officers lost their federal recognition in fiscal year 1951 and I didn't understand what that meant or why it came about.

General Wilson: Well, they could lose their federal recognition for many reasons. Hadn't completed their military obligations and gotten out or resigned from the Guard after they've completing your . . . . Then you have men promoted out of their organizations. So there are many reasons for losing the federal recognition. The federal recognition only meant that they lost their state status. That didn't keep them from being a reserve of the Air Force. See, as a Guardman, you have a federal recognition as an Air Guard of the United States, Air National Guard of the United States officer. Now that's only good in that the state status. You have a dual commission, reserve of the Air Force and Air National Guard of the United States. So, when you lose your federal recognition, you lose your Air National Guard of the United States [status] but you still have your reserve commission.

Mr. Gross: I see.

General Wilson: Yes! And, many of those are in the reserve. And, 900 lost their Air Guard status. I wouldn't be a bit surprised. That would be about right to lose it over a year's time, even now.

Mr. Gross: What criteria, if any, did the Air Force itself use in trying to perhaps screen out some people from active duty once their units were recalled?

General Wilson: Well, if they don't do their job . . . . But here again that's just like in the active establishment. They say they fired a commander. They don't fire a commander! They move him to another job.

Mr. Gross: Did much of this happen? This has always been a problem in American military history. You know the National Guard or reserve are

mobilized. Boom, they lose their commanders [i.e., those jobs are taken over by active force officers].

General Wilson: Well, you take right now. For example, it shouldn't happen, it may have happened in Korea some, sure. But right now you got the regulations that are standard where you treat a guy in accordance with the standard there. For example, we got the high standards in the Air Guard for promotion of any military service where a guy going from a captain to a major has to complete the squadron officers course. Going from a major to a lieutenant colonel, he has got to complete the Command and General Staff College. Going from a lieutenant colonel to a colonel, the Air War College. So, we have educational standards for promotion of officers in the Guard that they don't even require in the active establishment. So, that's the basis to try to get over this one thing of people not being [qualified to perform higher ranking military jobs].

Mr. Gross: At any rate, though, how do you answer critics from the active duty establishment like General LeMay, for example, who would say these things that we've been talking about in terms of standards really don't mean all that much because the Air Force doesn't get to choose the people who become officers in the first place. The inference being that some other kinds of criteria are going into the selection of officers.

General Wilson: That's simply because General LeMay just doesn't know what's happening now. That may have been true way back in the early time. But, the Air Force sets the standards now for the training. The physical standards, they got a meet the physical standards. Got to meet the educational standards before they can be taken in the Guard or promoted. So, I would say that his thinking is old line, that he would never change, that he's got that in his head and it won't make any difference what you do. You have everybody go to the Air War College and he said 'well, they weren't qualified.' Yet, they passed the course over there. As he said, 'I don't believe in the Guard and reserve.'

Mr. Gross: Well, he said, 'I believe in the reserve. I believe in one reserve force for the Air Force.'

General Wilson: Well, he really doesn't believe in the reserve but he knows he has got to have one.

Mr. Gross: How long has this been true, that is that the Air Guard officers have been meeting these standards, the same types of standards that you see for the active Air Force?

General Wilson: Oh, we've improved them since the Berlin crisis to where we got them mandatory and I imagine in the late middle 1960s forward . . . .

Mr. Gross: What was the situation in the 1950s as far as the selection and promotion of Air Guard officers?

General Wilson: Time and grade, capability and unit commander's recommendation.

Mr. Gross: What about initial selection?

General Wilson: Yes! The same thing.

Mr. Gross: Same thing? But you didn't have quite the same selection process.

General Wilson: No you didn't have quite the selection process becaue we'd tried to improve the caliber of the enlisted men as well as the officers.

Mr. Gross: Getting back to the planning that took place during the Korean War for the postwar shape of the Air National Guard once the units were brought back and demobilized, what kind of force was envisaged at that time and what factors went into determining what kind of force it was going to be?

General Wilson: There was one thing, equipment.

Mr. Gross: Equipment! No consideration of what sort of requirements you were going to have?

General Wilson: You didn't know what requirements you were going to have and what you had to depend on . . . . You couldn't say 'well, we need 200 squadrons of airlift.' Well hell, there weren't 200 squadrons of airplanes. What airplanes were available? What are you going to use the equipment to do? To have a viable Guard unit or reserve, you got to have something to fly and a mission to perform. So what do you do? You [can say] we'll need a total in case we have a war in Europe which is always the basis of what you're talking about. We'll need tac fighters. We got a thousand airplanes. We'll make squadrons enough to equal the number of airplanes.

Mr. Gross: How would it be possible during the Korean War with the Air Force expanding, things changing all the time, to project what the situation was going be equipmentwise once the war was over?

General Wilson: You didn't know exactly but you certainly could plan. You knew about what level you were going to have as far as the active establishment [was concerned] because you had the experience. And, then people were planning when the war was over what you are going to do. How many units you were going to have? What was going to be the size of the Air Force? What's the wing group structure of the active Air Force coming down too? What are you going to do with the equipment? [Are] you going to put it in storage or are you gonna put it in the reserve forces where it can be maintained even just maintained so, if the Air Force actually needs it, they can take it without even taking the units?

Mr. Gross: What was the Guard Bureau's role in planning for the postwar era?

General Wilson: Well, there were boards in the Air Force and we had representatives on it. The section 5 committee had a big study on it. The RFPB [Reserve Forces Policy Board]* had a big study on it and then they had, in addition to that, the Chief of Staff had studies on it. I had Guardmen on each of

* The board is composed of National Guard, reserve, and active force officers who advise the Secretary of Defense on reserve components policy. Each of the military departments has its own counterpart to the board.

those committees and each of those studies. They were making recommendations. What they were doing, they were putting my input into the studies from the Guard point of view.

Mr. Gross: But what was your input basically?

General Wilson: Well, my input was primary to to be sure that whatever program we had filled a partial requirement from the active establishment.

Mr. Gross: Real missions?

General Wilson: Real missions. That's right. Real missions.

Mr. Gross: That had been conspicuously absent prior to the Korean War.

General Wilson: Absolutely. It was just a bunch of flying units before the Korean War. It wasn't until after the Korean War when we got missions and they were grudgingly given to us. ...

Mr. Gross: Grudgingly! Why do you say that?

General Wilson: Well, because it took resources. You know, you were fighting for the dollar. For 250 million dollars that the active Air Force thought they could get .... They would prefer to have that in people and things in the active establishment you know. But they realized they had to have a Guard, they had to have a reserve. So they had to grudgingly give up what they thought was part of their money to support the Guard and [Air Force] Reserve in those lean years. And, I mean there were lean years after Korea.

Mr. Gross: Well, for the Air Force itself though that was sort of a golden time. I mean Ike's "New Look," massive retaliation. They were getting the largest share of the defense dollar.

General Wilson: Yes! But that was all in the strategic [forces] and tankers and missiles.

Mr. Gross: R and D [Research and Development] for missiles?

General Wilson: And, R and D for missiles and those things. It wasn't in tac fighters. No sir. You know that was during the time when they had an atomic policy. Everything was gonna be done in a hurry. They wouldn't have anytime to get over there for a normal conventional-type thing.

Mr. Gross: But wasn't the administration pretty serious about air defense as well? There were a lot of resources going into air defense.

General Wilson: A lot of these resources were going into air defense! They built the F-102, built the F-106, got rid of the F-86s and the F-89s, and they came to the Guard.

Mr. Gross: So, you were benefiting to some extent from that. That was all part of this strategic emphasis really. Now, you say that the resources were grudgingly given and it was certainly a lean time for tactical aviation in the Air Force. What compelled or who compelled the Air Force to grudgingly give those resources?

General Wilson: The Congress said 'you are going to have a Guard, an Air Guard. You are going to have an Air Force Reserve and they are going to be equipped with the best that you got to give them.' So, there's no question that they were going to have them. Funds were going to be made available regardless of what the active establishment wanted. Funds were going to be made to support them. And, they were.

Mr. Gross: So, you were really fighting with the active establishment on this whole funding issue?

General Wilson: No, we weren't fighting; we were asking for funds to do the job, and sometimes the active [force] didn't give what we thought was our proportionate share, and the Congress added money to it.

Mr. Gross: You'd have been in kind of bad shape without the Congress I would imagine?

General Wilson: We certainly would! Certainly!

Mr. Gross: When was the Guard originally scheduled to be converted to an all-jet force as far as the tactical end of it was concerned?

General Wilson: Oh, I guess that was after Korea because we got rid of the P-51s and the P-47s and the B-26s and got into the F-86s and F-84s and the F-89s, the F-80s, after Korea. We knew that coming home. Working with the Air Force, we knew that we were going to be in higher performance aircraft after Korea. That's the reason we started building runways while the units were on active duty so that they would have something to come when Korea was over. That's the reason . . . . We started pre-recruiting people because we knew we were going to have units at these locations and we had to have facilities and we had to have people to start it. So, we had advanced procurement of people and so forth waiting for the units to come home. We knew when they were coming home too.

Mr. Gross: Were there any other actions that were taken besides building runways and recruiting individuals to prepare the way for [the units] ?

General Wilson: Well, there was a lot of work done on supplies and maintenance with what was available, ground handling equipment, where it was coming from, what we had to pick up from over there, how many had to be brought back and so forth. Oh, in every area, you were working with the Air Force. Our people in the Guard Bureau, our maintenance people, were working with maintenance people in the Air Force. The supply people were working with the supply people in the Air Force. Our operations people were working on training programs so that we got ahead of the game once instead of being behind it. This is what we had the Guard Bureau doing. This is what [General] Ricks and I were doing,

getting these things started. And, we had a lot of support. General Twining* gave us support. General White** gave us support. Because, they knew we had to have a Guard and a reserve even though a lot of people under them didn't agree with it. The Chief knew what Congress was saying. They had to testify before Congress. They knew how the Congress felt about the reserve forces. And, the Congress has always been the best friend the reserve forces had.

Mr. Gross: One additional question about the Korean War. If I recall correctly, the authorized strength for the Air Guard went from something like 47,000 up to 79,000. What accounted for this vast increase in the authorized strength of the Guard during the war?

General Wilson: Well, it was primarily based on the equipment again, how much it took to operate it. For example, an air defense unit before Korea was about 400 people. When we got into the jets and so forth, it went up to 900 people to maintain an air defense unit. We were using the active establishment tables of organization. We had to have all these other support units so your strength went up. It was just primarily from the type of missions and units that were given. For example, a KC-97 unit took about three times as many people as a fighter squadron. And, it was done strictly on a basis of the manning documents that the Air Force was using for that type of unit. Here again we were standardizing.

Mr. Gross: You mentioned General Twining's interest and support of the reserve components. How would you assess, perhaps in a little more detail, his contributions to the Guard program during his tenure as Chief [of Staff] ?

General Wilson: Well, General Twining probably knew more about the the total requirements for reserve forces having been through the Korean War. He'd realize that we were going to have one and let's make a good one out of it.

---

* Gen. Nathan F. Twining, Air Force Chief of Staff, 30 June 1953 to 30 June 1957.

** Gen. Thomas D. White, Air Force Chief of Staff 1 July 1957 to 30 June 1961.

Mr. Gross: Is this kind of a first in the Air Force in terms of a person in that position?

General Wilson: Well, as I said, before Korea it was a thorn in their side and they just pushed it off and said you all go run it you know. [i.e., the Air Guard]. The Guard Bureau ran the program. The Air Force was glad to have its dumping ground to put all this equipment that they wanted to keep active but didn't want put in the boneyard or to destroy it. And then, as we gradually picked up to where we became in competition with the active establishment for missions and so forth, showed we could do things, it got more into the total force structure, the force structure committee of the Air Force, the budget advisory committee of the Air Force, the RFPB [Reserve Forces Policy Board] got into it. And, the Section 5 Committee got into roles and missions and everything began to . . . .

Mr. Gross: Was this a gradual process during the 1950s after the Korean War?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: My understanding is that the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, or his designated representative, the deputy for air, is statutorily an advisor to the Chief of Staff I believe?

General Wilson: Well, he's a dangling. The Chief of the Guard Bureau is a dangling office. He performs the same functions for the Army and the Air Guard. In other words, he goes direct to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and direct to the Chief of Staff of the Army. Now as the deputy Chief of the Guard Bureau, I performed those functions for the Chief because he didn't want to get mixed up in the air side as the Chief of the Guard Bureau. And, I attended all the meetings. I went to the the staff meetings of the Air Force. I sat in on the council meeting. I went to all the different committees that the Air Force had. I appointed people, representatives from the Guard Bureau, to these committees to make these studies. And, you had a study going all the time.

Mr. Gross: How effective did you feel that these inputs were through this mechanism? How did this change during the time that you were in the Guard Bureau?

General Wilson: Well, I think the Air Staff recognized that they had to use the information that was given to them by the Guard Bureau. That's the only place they had a chance of getting the information that they needed to make a proper decision. And, I think it meant a lot.

Mr. Gross: Last night, when we were talking, you had mentioned though that for some period of time decisions would be made without your input, that is without the Guard Bureau's input. And, you would come back and nonconcur and then have to go through the whole process of changing it. When did this kind of process change?

General Wilson: That's right! Then we'd have to go back and change it. That changed, I would say, about the time of the Berlin crisis [in 1961], just before the Berlin crisis. It was after Streamline Three when LeMay finally said 'well, why don't you come down to the staff meeting.' Because, I was sitting there writing a nonconcurrence on Air Force staff papers and having to go up and fight with ops [i.e., operations] and materiel and so forth to get it straight. Many times they were writing things that were completely illegal. The people that were writing them had no knowledge of the laws and so forth that were on board in support of the Guard.

Mr. Gross: What about their knowledge of the capabilities that Guard units might have, their legal status notwithstanding?

General Wilson: Well, they had some but not much. See, they had one agency, CONAC,* before LeMay put that Steamline Three together. CONAC was the

---

* The Continental Air Command was organized on 1 December 1948. It was redesignated CAC on 1 August 1966 and discontinued on 1 August 1968. HQ AFRES replaced it.

one agency that the Air Staff looked to. They didn't look to the Guard Bureau. They looked to CONAC to tell them what they were going to do with these certain units because it administered all the Air Guard and [Air Force] Reserve, Continental Air Command up at Mitchell Field, New York. And, they were the agency that monitored the programs and told the Chief of Staff. They couldn't get around to [all of the reserve units]. I don't know how many units were in the Air Force Reserve and the Air Guard. They probably never saw some of them in a year's time yet they were making decisions on what they were capable of doing. This was a thing that was absolutely necessary that if we were ever going to succeed and have a viable reserve- -getting out of CONAC and getting with the gaining commands who you are going to work for.

Mr. Gross: Were you able to sell General LeMay on the switch on that basis?

General Wilson: Yes! On that basis, sure. Single standard! The command that's going to monitor the program is going to use it so he certainly ought to be interested in what the hell he's got. Can they fly? Can they produce? Can they maintain? Can they administer? What's their safety record, so forth? And, they should be responsible for supervising the training since they were going to use them.

Mr. Gross: Now, I understand though that this proposal, or this type of proposal, had been broached several times during the 1950s, and there was a lot of resistance to it from CONAC and from the gaining commands.

General Wilson: Oh yes, absolutely! They didn't want it. Like I said last night, they weren't interested. That was another burden to them. They were having a hard enough time taking care of their active [force] people much less throwing a whole bunch of part-time reservists and guardsmen on their hands.

Mr. Gross: Once, though, they were directed in 1960 to take it up. How did it go?

General Wilson: It went alright. There was a period of a couple of years there where TAC Commander [Gen.] Gabe Dissosway, at one time, and [Gen.] Charlie Sweeney, at another time, called me down here and said 'God damn

Wimpy what am I going to do with this guy?' I said, 'what's wrong with him! [He said] 'well he's not producing.' I said, 'have you told the state the problem?' [He said] 'no, I haven't told anybody.' I said, 'well, how do you expect to get anything done if you don't tell somebody?' And, it was my job to keep TAC and the states of those units that had TAC together, talking.

Mr. Gross: Getting back to the Guard Bureau for a little bit, my understanding is that 60 percent of the officers in the Guard Bureau by grade, each grade assigned, are supposed to be active duty Air Force officers.

General Wilson: Active duty. That's right! That's right! They could be air reservists on active duty. They come from the active establishment.

Mr. Gross: Ok! With this fact in mind, why was there such a communication problem prior to 1960, or 1961, between the Air Staff, on the one hand, and the Guard Bureau, on the other, in regard to knowing what the laws were and what the Air Guard could do? You had these people in your organization that knew what the score was.

General Wilson: Well, but most of them were working for the Chief of the Guard Bureau. They were not in the upper . . . . The problem was never with the lower people. It was always in the top level- -the Doc Struthers, the LeMays, the people on the top level up here. We never had any trouble with the regular Air Force people. Hell, we had regular Air Force people flying with Guard units. They knew what they could do. And, they would tell people but they wouldn't believe them because they were hearing from the top level. You know it's a funny thing . . . . When the boss [says] 'I'm a windmill tilter' and he's got ten lieutenant generals sitting around in that same room listening at him, they become windmill tilters too you know.

Mr. Gross: Then why was there this mental blockage or at least inability to understand what the status and capabilities of the Air Guard were on the part of some of the top leaders?

General Wilson: Nobody in the active . . . in the top leadership could believe . . . . They are still having trouble doing it. They have to be convinced. In other words, somebody said 'what's your job as Chief of the Guard Bureau?' I said, 'hell I'm a salesmen. I'm a peddler.' He says, 'what do you mean by that?' Well, I says, 'all I do is sell the National Guard to the higher ups in the Air Force because, everytime they change, every two or three years they go to another assignment, you got another Director of Operations, you got another Director of Personnel. They don't understand the system so you are sitting there trying to keep them within the laws, within the rules, within the thing because it's different from the active establishment. There's no question about it.'

Mr. Gross: And, they just can't comprehend?

General Wilson: They don't have time to really study because they got so many problems of their own. They've got to learn these too. So, it takes a little time to educate them.

Mr. Gross: During your tenure in the Guard Bureau, did this sales job become any easier as the years went by?

General Wilson: Yes! The more successes we had, the easier it got. For example, after we won the William Tell meet down there with the F-86Ls, we had just practically no problem with the air defense.

Mr. Gross: When was that? When did that first happen?

General Wilson: Oh, I forget when that meeting was. It was back in the early 1960s I guess. I guess it was.

Mr. Gross: Ok.

General Wilson: We've won two or three meets since then too. North Dakota won one. The hooligans from North Dakota took the whole thing down there one year. They took the loading teams, the atomic loading teams, the whole air defense meet over the active [force], Canada- -all of them in the Air Defense Command.

Mr. Gross: What accounted for the great success? That was pretty outstanding.

General Wilson: Well, it was the hard work and real capable people. We had people that were flying these airplanes for years and flying against people that had been in the Flying Training Command [sic, Air Training Command] not too long ago.

Mr. Gross: One last question about the National Guard Bureau. Why don't we have a National Guard Bureau in the Air Force and a National Guard Bureau in the Army? It seems to be kind of an awkward creature to have sitting out there by itself so to speak.

General Wilson: Under the law of the land, the National Guard is part of each state and each state has Army and air [components]. So, you got to have somebody that can monitor- -be the go-between- -between the state and the active Air Force on the Air Guard matters and, on the Army Guard matters, between the states and the Secretary of the Army. So, the Guard Bureau is the agency that administers the Army and the Air Force program in accordance with the regulations prescribed by the Army and the Air Force and the laws provided by Congress.

Mr. Gross: Why couldn't the Air Force do that itself?

General Wilson: Well, because the laws are written in such a way . . . . If they wanted to so change the law, sure they can. But that's the way the laws are written. You can do a lot things if you wanted to go change the Constitution.

Mr. Gross: I mean strictly from a functional point of view would there be any disadvantages to the Air Force?

General Wilson: Well they don't have the knowledge as to . . . . They don't have the money. They don't have the budget. They don't have these things where you have to portion the money out in accordance with the laws of the land. And, it's just written in laws that there will be a Guard Bureau. In my opinion, if they ever have one reserve component in the Air Force, it would be in the Guard.

Mr. Gross: They tried that in 1965.

General Wilson: I know it. Oh that's not the first time they tried it. They tried it in 1948, with [Lt. Gen.] Pete Quesada.*

Mr. Gross: But that's the first time they tried to make the one reserve [component] the Guard, is it not?

General Wilson: Yes, the first time they ever tried to . . . . They always tried to put the Guard in the reserve. But I don't think that attitude is there now at all because of a demonstrated capability to perform a mission on a peacetime basis. In other words, you got a lot of semi-pro people in the Guard. I mean, hell, the units are semi-pro. I know people in units in the Guard that take jobs to give them a chance to participate more in the Guard. Of course, they get money for it by the way. If you take tanker crews, go over to Europe for two weeks and back, they can do that maybe a couple of times a year. That's active duty pay, all adding to their retirement program and so forth full time.

Mr. Gross: So the image of the weekend warrior is a little bit out of date when your talking about the Air National Guard.

General Wilson: Talking about the Air Guard. That's right! Because it's a going thing winter and summer. [Maj. Gen.] John Guice** told me the other day that

---

* General Quesada, Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff for Reserve Forces, headed an abortive Air Force project to merge the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve.

** General Guice was Chief of the National Guard Bureau at the time of the interview.

they got some people in Europe this month participating in some NATO programs over there.

Mr. Gross: At dinner last night, I think you mentioned that in the early 1950s or late 1940s the Air Guard had finally gotten statutory protection as a component of the total Air Force. When did this come about and why was it significant?

General Wilson: That was in the Reserve Forces Act in 1952. Because, when they had the separating of the services in 1947, they completely forgot the Air Guard and they wrote that there would be an Army National Guard under the Army and so forth. But, administratively, the President said that the National Guard Bureau would perform the same functions for the Air [Force] they performed for the Army. But, there was no legal status there. So, then, it was corrected in the Reserve Forces Act of 1952 and that was when the six months training program came out from the Army and all these others things that for the reserve forces established the ready reserve [and] the standby reserve. All of that was established in the Reserve Forces Act of 1952.

Mr. Gross: Why was this legal status important for the Air Guard?

General Wilson: Well, it solved the problem that General Cramer had with General Finch. And, it set up that there would be an Air Guard to give the report direct to the .... It didn't establish the rank of the Chief of the Air Force Division or of the Deputy Director of the Air Guard. It established it under the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. The Guard Bureau would report to the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and gave it the same legal status that they had in the Army Guard.

Mr. Gross: Now, you knew who was in charge.

General Wilson: He knew who was in charge, right!

Mr. Gross: Were there any feelings, particularly growing out of the episode with [General] Quesada in 1948 and 1949, that without this legal protection that the Secretary of the Air Force could administratively strangle the Air Guard? Do away with missions. Do away with money. Do away with personnel.

General Wilson: No, I don't think it was that. It was just more in the administrative area than anything else. Because, the Chief still had to function as head of the Air Guard even if the Act of 1947 said the National Guard means both Army Guard and Air Guard. But, it didn't specify the autonomy that the Air Force would have . . . . And, this law came about because of the fight between General Cramer and General Finch.

Mr. Gross: How, if at all, did that fight hinder the development of Air Guard programs in the field during that particular time?

General Wilson: Well, it didn't really . . . . That was during the period of 1947, 1948 and 1949. It didn't really . . . . Again I say, it was upstairs in the higher level, and it wasn't down with the people. [End of Tape]

Mr. Gross: In 1954, the Eisenhower administration announced a basic shift in American security policy and called it the "New Look." They were going to depend on massive retaliation and nuclear weapons. Less publicized, at least from the historian's point of view, there was evidently quite an effort, in the first term at least of the Eisenhower administration, to strengthen the reserve programs of all the armed services.

General Wilson: That's right!

Mr. Gross: What impact, if any, did this effort by the administration have on the Air National Guard?

General Wilson: Well, I think that was again where we began to go from the air defense into the more sophisticated missions to support the active Air Force in

TAC primarily. I think that played a part in the active establishment. You know, we started practicing with atomic deliveries of weapons that airplanes . . . . For example, the F-84s had a capability of dropping atomic weapons. The F-89s had atomic weapons in the air defense units. All these things, we began to get into where we weren't before. So, I think it has a bearing. It was a change in policy that was all the way down from the President clear on down through the Air Staff.

Mr. Gross: To what extent were Air Guard units involved in Air Force or joint service excerises during the Eisenhower administration?

General Wilson: Well, very limited.

Mr. Gross: Very limited?

General Wilson: They had never gotten to the point where they believed we could do anything. It was still strictly 'that's a training outfit.'

Mr. Gross: That was even with the runway alert program?

General Wilson: Well, that was just beginning. That just started in 1952. So, I imagine in 1954 we had just barely got it expanded. We had to do a selling job on ADC you know.

Mr. Gross: Well, I recall seeing a memo from General Twining in the late 1950s when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. I don't recall what the basic subject was but there was a comment made in there to the effect that essentially the Air Force, or the active establishment, saw the Air Guard participation in the air defense program as primarily a training mechanism and secondarily an augmentation of the air defense role. So, even then, despite the success in the runway alert program, despite the William Tell [exercise] later, there seemed to be a very limited impact.

General Wilson: It was very limited. That's right! It wasn't really until after 1961, in early 1960, that they were really getting into exercises, where we were

participating with the active establishment in exercises both here in this country and overseas.

Mr. Gross: What accounted for that change in emphasis?

General Wilson: Well, it's primarily that they needed more people to do them than they had. We had the equipment and the people and wanted to participate and show them that we had the capability to participate. I'm sure that a lot of people thought 'well here they are going to fall flat on their face. Let's let them do it.'

Mr. Gross: Was this tied, in any way, to the growing U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia?

General Wilson: No.

Mr. Gross: No.

General Wilson: This was before that.

Mr. Gross: Before that?

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: Before that. I understand that there was . . . .

General Wilson: It was at your Stairstep One* that happened in 1961.

Mr. Gross: 1961.

---

* Stairstep One was the first of two increments of Air Guard units that deployed to Europe during the Berlin Crisis in 1961.

General Wilson: That was actually a demonstration that they could fly from here to Europe and not lose anything. If we never did anything more than that, it got confidence in people that- -'look, by George, here's something we ought to look at!' That was the first time we had the chance to demonstrate [our capabilities] since Korea.

Mr. Gross: During the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, there were no Air Guard units mobilized.

General Wilson: No. We had a lot of units alerted but none of them were called. There were a few Air Force Reserve troop carrier units [mobilized].

Mr. Gross: Why is it that they didn't mobilize any [Air Guard] units at all?

General Wilson: Well, I think the President pretty well had it figured out what he was going to do. We had them alerted. Could have been called at a moment's notice. In fact, we had some air defense units . . . . The Jacksonville, Florida air defense unit pulled some alert from Homestead [AFB] during the time, but that was just their normal alert duty. They weren't ordered to duty.

Mr. Gross: There were some problems, were there not, in the wake of the Berlin mobilization in terms of you lost a lot of F-84s and you lost some people. The problems were with getting accurate supplies and whatever was replenished as a result of the active duty. Was there any difficulty [in restoring] the operational status of the [demobilized] units?

General Wilson: Yes! Once they came back- -we were a year getting back. For example, we even had some units fly the T-38s just for training until they could get the airplanes to come back.

Mr. Gross: How long did it take to get the units up to snuff?

General Wilson: Oh, it was a year, year or so.

Mr. Gross: What manning levels were they using at that time?

General Wilson: Well, as I said, we were recruiting people again. When people came back, they were using manning levels of about what they had before when they went on active duty.

Mr. Gross: Turning to the Kennedy administration, what impact did it, particularly Secretary McNamara's efforts to enhance reserve readiness in the early 1960s, have on the Air Guard?

General Wilson: Well, it made more funds available. He supported it better for a greater flying hour program. We had more technicians. It was easier to get the things necessary to give them capable units. Any time you had somebody pushing from the top for a program, you got better support.

Mr. Gross: So this was very significant. Why was the Combat Beef or Beef Broth program of full readiness adopted in 1965 for selected units?

General Wilson: Well, those were units that they established a priority [for] primarily here again on equipment that they would use in case of an emergency. In other words, those units that had the best equipment got the Combat Beef.

Mr. Gross: Did they get 100 percent manning?

General Wilson: Yes, they got 100 percent manning. Yes, that's right, 100 percent manning, 100 percent equipage. They were given the spares in their mobilization kits for 60 days operation from within their own equipment. We had practice. We had mobilization periods where we practiced loading, administration, and everything else. We actually moved the stuff out of the supply house on to the pallets to put on the airplanes.

Mr. Gross: Was this program at all tied to the fact that increasingly the active duty establishment was involved in Southeast Asia?

General Wilson: I think it had a lot to do with it. Yes! So, they had to do that to help meet their requirements other than Southeast Asia.

Mr. Gross: In effect though by 1966 or 1967, the selected reserve force both Army, Air Force and, presumably, Navy, was virtually your strategic reserve in the United States.

General Wilson: So it was! That's what it was! Yes!

Mr. Gross: And everybody else was a . . . .

General Wilson: Everybody else was involved.

Mr. Gross: During the Eisenhower administration, jumping around a little bit, your drill pay training was, I think, maintained about 80 or 83 percent . . .

General Wilson: 83 percent. That's right!

Mr. Gross: . . . . of your full manning. Why was it limited? Was it just money?

General Wilson: Money!

Mr. Gross: Money! What impact did this have on your post-mobilization training objectives?

General Wilson: Well, what it did . . . . You used that 83 percent to maintain 100 percent of your tactical crews, your maintenance personnel, and you let your transportation, your base maintenance organization, your police organization, be manned at 50 percent for example. But you kept the skills at 100 percent.

Mr. Gross: What did this mean in terms of your mobilization objectives? How long would it take . . .?

General Wilson: Well the Air Force had that all planned in as to how many they would have to have to fill . . . . They used those from the active reserve board to fill up those areas that we were limited to 83 percent.

Mr. Gross: What kinds of time frames were they thinking of in terms of how many days beyond mobilization it's going to take to get everything squared away so these units [would be ready to go] ?

General Wilson: Well, I think you are talking about a minimum . . . . On most of the Air Guard units of tac fighters, you are talking about a 30-day period.

Mr. Gross: Sort of M+30?

General Wilson: M+30, yes!

Mr. Gross: Ok.

General Wilson: Now, on a Beef Broth, that was M-Day you know.

Mr. Gross: Yes! You are ready to go right away.

General Wilson: That's right now. Yes! M+30. Some of them were M+60 but here again with priority type units.

Mr. Gross: Perhaps now is a good time to talk a little bit more about Streamline Three. In your mind it's probably a basic turning point in the history of the Guard and it was primarily significant because of eventual adoption of the gaining command concept in 1960. What impact, if any, did budget restrictions that the Eisenhower administration was going to impose, I think in 1957 before Sputnik, have on this study [i.e., Streamline Three] that General LeMay sponsored?

General Wilson: Well, of course it had an impact on a strength, 83 percent for example. It had an impact on technicians, the number of technicians that you

can get but here again we had to have priority on who we hired in those areas that took less people. There is no question that it had an impact on it, but we tried to make the impact where it would do the least damage if the units were called to duty.

Mr. Gross: General LeMay was quite outspoken as Chief of Staff. On several occasions, he was quite critical of the reserves particularly the Guard since it didn't fall entirely under his command and control in its non-mobilized [i.e., state] status. However, it appears that some very significant things took place during his tenure as Chief of Staff and Vice Chief that really enhanced the readiness [of the reserves].

General Wilson: Well, as I said, of all the Chiefs of Staff that were there, and I was under everyone of them except [Gen. Hoyt S.] Vandenberg* from the time of the Air Force until I retired in 1971, we made greater progress in my opinion under LeMay's reign than any other Chief of Staff.

Mr. Gross: Could you briefly review some of the highlights of that progress?

General Wilson: Well, what I'm talking about is readiness, and that was strictly the additional flying training periods, the continuation of the permanent field training sites when he was Vice Chief. Streamline Three which, to me, was the biggest thing that happened in setting up the standards which the reserve forces would try to meet. One standard! You are going to have a reserve force, why not use the same standard? If you are going to fight a guy, you ought to know what he's gonna do so the gaining command should know what that unit could do. It should know that, when he is ordered to duty, he is going to have to put 20 pilots in it, or he is going to have to put 20 maintenance people, or going to have to have 10 supply people. That left him with a reserve force that he had assigned to him the number of people assigned him where he could go fill them out. He

---

* General Vandenberg was Air Force Chief of Staff from 30 April 1948 to 29 June 1953. Gen. Carl A. Spaatz was the first Air Force Chief of Staff, serving from 26 September 1947 to 29 April 1948.

could make his plans to fill that unit out when it came to duty on a monthly-type basis if he wanted to and many of them did. So that, to me, was the biggest the thing that happened as far as [General] LeMay was concerned. We got more money to do all these things because we got more sophisticated airplanes. It took more maintenance personnel to go from an F-86 to an F-89, or from a F-84 to a C-97, or from an F-86 to a KC-97.

Mr. Gross: Was part of this growing sophistication of aircraft tied to at least a temporary reduction in the flying inventory of the active force?

General Wilson: And, the modernization of the active [force]. Yes!

Mr. Gross: Ok! Because I know that there were some plans that they were implementing prior to Sputnik to reduce the size of certain segments of the Air Force. Well, of the whole military establishment.

General Wilson: Whole military, that's right!

Mr. Gross: And, a lot of jets and other aircraft became available.

General Wilson: Became available! Yes!

Mr. Gross: Yes! right! Ok! That seems to be a driving force in what you can do with your reserve program throughout this post-World War II period.

General Wilson: There's no question about it. It is the equipment. What happens to it.

Mr. Gross: Yes! Ok. Perhaps the most significant single factor that we've been able to look at here [is the equipment].

General Wilson: And, we've never gotten the Department of Defense . . . . You know . . . I don't say that we need F-15s in the Guard, but we need an airplane . . . . They should modernize them somewhat. If you go into Europe,

you'll need a lot of different fighter units. You might take the F-16 which is relatively cheap or you might even take the F-5 which is another relatively cheap airplane which is modern. It's a mach two. It's a jet. It's new. It's capable. These airplanes . . . [we] should be programming them into the reserve forces so they don't have to worry either. Jesus, we haven't got any spares there in the active Air Force too.

Mr. Gross: In 1966 or 1967, Doctor Marrs was Assistant Secretary . . . .?

General Wilson: Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. Yes.

Mr. Gross: It was either when he was at the Defense [Department] level or prior to that when he was . . . .

General Wilson: . . . in the Air Force!

Mr. Gross: Same job in the Air Force. He helped generate a requirement for a study of reserve forces roles and missions into the 1970s I believe. And, it was done by the RAND Corporation. They basically looked at the different missions and suggested that reserve participation could be expanded in most of the mission areas with the possible exception of the strategic role and maybe strategic airlift.

General Wilson: Well, I delt with them many times. Spent many hours with RAND on that study.

Mr. Gross: Yes! What was your impression of the results of the study that they did.

General Wilson: I think it was pretty good study. A lot of people in the Air Force didn't agree with their findings.

Mr. Gross: And, could you elaborate on that perhaps?

General Wilson: A lot people at that time when those studies were run . . . . We still hadn't proved a lot of the capability that we have and there was still a prejudice by the active [force] because of not knowing that some of the roles and missions that they suggested in there . . . . They felt [those roles and missions] were clear outside the realm of the reserve forces. I think tankers were one that they recommended in that study. I think the reason did . . . . One of the boys that worked for RAND was in the 97th squadron at Van Nuys [California] and he had seen what they did. So, he was on the study group. He was actually a memeber of the Guard at that time. They tried to use his expertise in the study. So, it wasn't a bad study.

Mr. Gross: Did it have any impact at all in terms of actually expanding [the Air Guard's] participation in roles or whatever?

General Wilson: Oh, I think it helped me in that I was able to use it and say even your own study suggested we should be able to do some of these things.

Mr. Gross: Sort of a sales item then.

General Wilson: Sales item. That's right!

Mr. Gross: But when was this impact felt? I mean was it a matter of time . . . .

General Wilson: I don't think there ever was anything definite that came out of the RAND study that made a change in the program. It was just a selling program I think. People read it, and I heard some comments of 'Jesus Christ did the Air Force pay for this study to be made?'

Mr. Gross: Really! Was this in the Air Staff?

General Wilson: Yes! Some of this.

Mr. Gross: They emphasized, I believe in the study, the significantly lower sustaining cost of an Air Guard or Air Force Reserve unit. In effect, you are

saying, you can get a good deal of capability for a lot less money. Maybe 50 percent less money in some areas.

General Wilson: Well, you wouldn't get it 50 percent less. You know it costs as much to fly a P-51, or an F-100, in the Air Force as it does in the Air Guard. Costs just as much. Costs just as much to maintain one. So, you really get into the fact that you don't have 900 people, 365 days of the year. You got them only 48 days in the year. And you got certain ones there so you are saving on commissary, PXs, housing, police, all these other things that go into . . . . So, when you get around to it . . . .

I think the studies . . . . There were several studies run. RAND's was the big one. That showed that probably you could get . . . . I'm trying to remember what the figure was. If you use the Guard you get five for three, five squadrons of the same type airplane for three in the active about like that as I remember now. That's strictly off the top of my head. But the RAND study showed that there was a way of saving money. But, you can't put all the units in the reserve forces of a type because you lose the expertise from the active [force].

Mr. Gross: Did studies of this type have any impact, particularly during Secretary Laird's [tenure], when they were cutting back on the defense budget and they needed to find ways to stretch the dollar further.

General Wilson: I'm sure it had a lot of effect. I'm sure that that was one of the reasons that they came up with putting all the units in the Guard.

Mr. Gross: What was the National Guard Bureau position, if any, on the findings of the study?

General Wilson: We concurred in a lot of it and we wrote some nonconcurrences on certain portions of it. I don't remember what they were. I remember we took it, and we were given a chance by the Chief of Staff to comment on the study which we did.

Mr. Gross: It was never really implemented per se then?

General Wilson: In my opinion, it was an informational study.

Mr. Gross: Looking ahead to 1969 and 1970, the Department of Defense under Secretary Laird adopted something that came to be known as the total force policy.

General Wilson: Total force concept.

Mr. Gross: Concept first and then policy.

General Wilson: That was Ted Marrs' idea when he was in the Air Force before he went up there [to DOD] and was trying to get it. Here again the total force concept was 'if you need a total tac force, the Guard and [Air Force] Reserve should be participating with the active [force] in meeting that total force concept, that total force requirement.' That's where you got your force structure, the dollars and so forth.

Mr. Gross: So they should be in on the initial planning and programming.

General Wilson: Sure, that's right! And, that was the policy established then. It was good policy. It was used tongue-in-cheek.

Mr. Gross: Why do you say tongue-in-cheek sir?

General Wilson: In other words, the way way that Ted Marrs had it figured out, you got four squadrons of F-100s in the actives, three of them would be active and one of them would be Guard. And, this Guard unit would work with that wing in the active or the reserve or a transport unit and so forth. It never got to that point. It was accepted. 'Yes that's a great idea. We'll do it when we get the equipment, when we get the things to have them all on the same level. We'll do that. We'll do it.' You know its still that same way.

Mr. Gross: You still had the equipment constraints that you had all along?

General Wilson: Sure you did. Same thing. Yes!

Mr. Gross: Why was Secretary Laird receptive to the idea at least?

General Wilson: Well, it made sense if you could afford it but they were never willing to put the dollars into it to afford the equipment necessary to really make it work.

Mr. Gross: But they devoted substantially more money to it for a while at any rate.

General Wilson: Well, yes, but for things that were necessary to use what we had going. It helped. There's no question about.

Mr. Gross: I mean was this, in some regards, an effort to stretch the resources further in light of the reductions after Vietnam?

General Wilson: . . . . and having the Guard picking up more of the missions of the active establishment. For example, that's when they went from . . . . They used to have 12 F-86 air defense units and dropped down to, I think, 6 and 6 now. Six in the Guard and six in the active [force]. But that cost more money. Sure, there is one that's a total force. You know the air defense is the perfect example of the total force. Another one that's working pretty good now is the tanker force that we have in the Guard and SAC. They work right for TAC. The MAC units that we have, the C-130s, are tied into military airlift. They work right through their command posts. The missions that are assigned, other than training missions, are assigned to them from the active establishment and they participate everyday with them. So there's no question, it's had an effect.

Mr. Gross: Was the National Guard Bureau asked to participate in the formulation of this policy?

General Wilson: Oh yes! Oh yes sir! And, we had people working with Ted Marrs on that whole thing.

Mr. Gross: Dr. Marrs was, I believe, a former Air Guardsman from Alabama, I believe.

General Wilson: Well, he was the former Air Guardsman from Alabama. He was doctor. He was a medical doctor. He was a pediatrician and loved the military, and he was the flight surgeon for the Birmingham Air National Guard unit. Went over on [Operation] Stairstep. Took the medical detachment over to France during the Berlin crisis. He came back from the Berlin crisis, and I got him on active duty as a 265 officer, no as an 8033 officer* in the Surgeon General's office. And, then he was later appointed as Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. And, then, later on, we got him into the job of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Forces and he was the first under the law, under the amendment to the Reserve Forces Act, they established in 1969, I guess it was.

Mr. Gross: 1968. 1969. Something like that.

General Wilson: 1968. 1969. The Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff Reserve Forces who reported direct . . . . Worked under the Secretary of Defense on matters pertaining to the reserve and ROTC [Reserve Officers Training Corps].

Mr. Gross: Did this change strenghten the administration of reserve programs?

General Wilson: He was speaking for the Secretary when he talked and he had direct access to Secretary Laird at the Defense Department and he testified before Congress as Laird's man. And, I think Ted did a real fine job. He was our

---

* National Guard or reserve officers on extended active duty with the active duty forces to advise them on reserve components' matters.

eyes and ears in the Department of Defense. We knew what was going on. He kept the reserves of the services completely informed of what the position of Laird .... And, many times gave us a chance to write letters on policies that were about to be established. And, many times, we were able to get them changed.

Mr. Gross: In looking back on your career with the Guard Bureau, has there been any shift during the period from 1950 to 1971 I believe in the .... Well, I don't know how best to put it, but has there been any sense, in your mind, that a lot of the impetus for changes in the reserve programs may have shifted from the Air Force itself to the office of the Secretary of Defense? Has there been any change of that sort at all?

General Wilson: Well, of course there have been changes in which the Secretary of Defense, under the congressional directive of laws, was forced to have somebody to monitor the reserve program in his office. And, everything pertaining to the reserve and the ROTC went through Ted Marrs before it went to the Secretary of Defense. And, the law said he had to be a reservist to hold that job. Either a Guardmen or reserve to be in that job. And, so I think that that payed off. The biggest mistake that I made in the Air Guard was during the period of time when technicians wanted a retirement program and we finally got it under civil service but I didn't have the foresight to see the unionization of the military technicians by the civil service unions.

Mr. Gross: What impact has that had on the program?

General Wilson: Well, it hasn't had an impact yet but you have no place for a union in the military organization, not even a reserve organization. Of course the Air Force Reserve has had civil service unions with them for a long time. For example, they force you to keep a guy as a technician when you've thrown him out as a military member of the organization.

Mr. Gross: I didn't think that was possible.

General Wilson: Oh yes it is! Yes it is!

Mr. Gross: So a commander can't really exercise adequate control?

General Wilson: Inadequate control. He's losing a little control. We are going to try to get that changed in the legislature.

Mr. Gross: When did the unionization of the technicians begin?

General Wilson: It started in about 1969, or 1970, on very a limited basis.

Mr. Gross: Would you say that's the major problem now?

General Wilson: Oh, it's a problem. It's not the major problem, but to me it's something that I should have foreseen because I could have very easily at that time gotten an executive order which put the technicians, even though under civil service, under the same status as the GS [General Schedule] *, or the FBI, or the Secret Service, or members of Congress, and so forth.

Mr. Gross: For a while now, if you don't mind, I'd like to talk about some individual people. We've talked about General LeMay, his attitudes and contributions to the Air Guard. In looking at some of the Secretaries of the Air Force, are there any particular ones, in your view, that stand out in terms of their interest in and contribution to reserve programs?

General Wilson: Well, yes. Sure there was Jim Douglas who, in my opinion, understood the reserve program, both [Air] Guard and [Air Force] Reserve, and was a supporter- -was going to see that it was a success. Harold Brown, when he

---

* Salaried federal service employees.

was Secretary of the Air Force; Gene Zuckert. We made great progress on the administrative procedures and establishment of the promotion programs and so forth through Gene Zuckert. He had a lot to do with getting that approval through the Air Staff.

Mr. Gross: Is this the ROPA?

General Wilson: No! That that wasn't ROPA. That was the Reserve Forces [sic, Officer] Promotion Act. Of course, Jim Douglas, I believe, and Zuckert were tied into that ROPA thing which was the Reserve Officer Promotion Act which had a lot to do with establishing criteria for promotion and things like that. Jim Douglas, in my opinion, I consider him probably the best supporter that the reserve forces ever had.

Mr. Gross: Could you be somewhat more specific as far as his contributions?

General Wilson: I'll give you just one example for example. At the time we were trying to get the C-97s in the Guard program, 48 of them were going to the boneyard. The Air Staff had completely turned it down. He read my paper and called me and and said I'm going to support this in the Guard program. And, we ended up with the C-97s because he understood what I was talking about, and he also understood the necessity of keeping airlift in the active establishment.

A lot of people didn't believe we could do it. That was the first aircraft where it had a multiple crew, where you had a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, engineer and . . . . Let's see, there were five crew members . . . loadmasters in it. They all had to be on the airplane at a time. So, you had to have five people at a time. Jim Douglas understood it. He supported it. Of course, under the promotions and ROPA, I think Zuckert supported us because we could produce the programs that we said we could. And as long as we produced, he would go in for adequate support financial-wise for the programs that we had.

Mr. Gross: What about Dr. Brown's tenure as Secretary [of the Air Force] ?

General Wilson: Harold Brown, of course, he was there during McNamara's study and I believe it was Harold Brown that was working with Dr. Marrs as head of the staff to merge the Air Force Reserve and the Air Guard. He was working direct with Harold Brown. And, I think Harold Brown got his direction from McNamara and he was going to try to do it.

Mr. Gross: Was that whole proposal stifled when Congress turned down the Army Guard and [Army] Reserve merger early in 1965?

General Wilson: 1965, yes!

Mr. Gross: I see. Ok. Were there any other particular things about it?

General Wilson: Well no. Harold Brown insisted that we really have the capability. He believed in readiness the same as I did and he was willing to put the funds necessary to get it as long as we produced.

Mr. Gross: Did he meet resistance from the Air Staff on this? After all, you were competing with Southeast Asia.

General Wilson: Of course, he was there during all the riots in 1968, riots and stuff that we had during that time where the Air Guard was ordered to active duty, Air and Army Guard were ordered to active duty. They were state-controlled for the riots during the Vietnam war, riots after Kent State all through the country at that time.

Mr. Gross: Perhaps we could talk for a moment about the state role of the Air National Guard itself. It's not always clear to myself and other people who look at it how an organization that is very tactically oriented with fighters, and reconnaissance aircraft and things like that could really have a very valid state role.

General Wilson: Well, as you know, the states participate financially in the operation of both the Army and the Air Guard. And, the states are interested in . . . . Hell, they are no more interested in a 155 artillery piece. You couldn't use it in a riot anymore than you could a fighter aircraft. But you use the people who were disciplined and trained. And, they are training, both Army and air, in riot control. So what you are doing, you were getting disciplined people from the locality, be it Army or air, to do these things that were necessary to support the state in their missions of law and order within the state. Floods, snow, emergency, hurricanes, tornadoes, jail breaks- -there is not a day that goes by that you don't see somewhere in a paper that some state is using the Guard somewhere on some humane activity.

Mr. Gross: Is this primarily though the Army [Guard] ?

General Wilson: No! It all depends on where it is. For example, if it happened in Denver, most of it would be done by the Air Guard. If it happened in Pueblo, there's no Air Guard, so it would be done by the Army. It depends on where the people are located.

Mr. Gross: Do you have any indications, in terms of manhours or number of incidents of people being called out, how extensively the Air Guard was used in state functions during the 1960s?

General Wilson: For example, I know that, during the riots of 1968, everytime the federal government called the Guard to active duty, they called both the Army and air at the same time. When the post office was ruined in New York, they called all the Army and the Air Guard in the New York City area to run the post office. So, here again, it gets into the location, the locale as to who's there and what they needed. If they need trucks, weapons, you got a guy in uniform in the air as well as in the Army. And, they don't need tanks, or they don't need airplanes, but they sure need people.

Mr. Gross: Not to mention communications!

General Wilson: Not to mention communications! That's right! You need transportation, communications, and people with their weapons.

Mr. Gross: Looking at the other side of the coin for a moment, have you ever experienced difficulty in convincing or reminding a governor of a state that his Air Guard units have a federal mission?

General Wilson: Well, for example, yes. We had a very fine relationship with the governors. For example, in the air defense mission, all our units were air defense before the governor . . . . We had a written agreement with him and the air defense commander that, before he called that Air Guard to state duty, he first checked with the Air Defense Command to see if it was alright because they were on alert, standing alert on a runway alert. And, we had these agreements written between the Air Defense Command and the governors in the states. For example, at any time the commander of the air defense determined that an alert was necessary, he would call the governor and the governor would order his units into alert status.

Mr. Gross: So, there is no difficulty at all?

General Wilson: No difficulty at all!

Mr. Gross: In looking at the period immediately after World War II prior to Korea, it seems as if some governors and adjutants general would treat their Air Guard contingents as primarily sort of a private state Air Force and tend to lose sight of some of the larger national ramifications.

General Wilson: That's right because they didn't have any missions. Yes, really it was a fine flying club.

Mr. Gross: In looking back at your career with the Guard Bureau, what would you say are the most significant pieces of legislation that have affected it since 1950?

General Wilson: Well, the Reserve Forces Act of 1952.

Mr. Gross: ROPA?

General Wilson: That was passed. The technician retirement bill, even though that gave a retirement program for the technicians which they didn't have, even though I made the mistake of not taking care of the union end of it. It was still a piece of legislation that was necessary. I think the latest one that they had was the legislation that says that you will use the reserve forces before you go into the draft. But the President has to have congressional [authority] to call people to active duty for longer than 30 days, the War's Act of I think of 1973, or 1970. I've forgotten what the date was. Do you know what that was?

Mr. Gross: I know the piece of legislation you are referring to, but I don't recall . . . . It was the early 1970's. I don't recall the exact date. Why was that particular legislation enacted by the Congress?

General Wilson: Well, it was enacted because they didn't use the Guard and the reserve in Vietnam. They used the draftees instead of using people that were there in a drill pay status.

Mr. Gross: Were the National Guard Association and the Reserve Officers Association at all influential on that?

General Wilson: Yes, both! Yes!

Mr. Gross: What impact has the so-called Reserve Forces Bill of Rights in 1967 had on the Guard programs?

General Wilson: Well, it was supported in great strength by the Guard Association and straightened out a lot of the things that were bothering people. I don't recall exactly what it was except I know that I testified on it as a member of the Guard Association and from the Chief of the Guard Bureau. I'm trying to think . . . what the hell! You know the protection of the Guard and the reserve,

all the different laws came about because of the Congress willing to be sure there is a Guard and reserve and they understand and they have supported it. That one was to straighten out some of the things that they missed in the Reserve Forces Act also in the ROPA program. I just can't put my finger right on it.

Mr. Gross: In looking back at the history of the Air Guard, it appears to me at any rate that it has been very responsive as far as meeting changing Air Force requirements, organization, mission, training requirements, aircraft, whatever. You know it's no longer a collection of flying clubs or 48 little state Air Forces. It seems to be very well integrated into the active establishment. How was it possible to accomplish this very fundamental change without losing sort of the state character or does it, in fact, have much of a state character?

General Wilson: Well, it only has a state character then it's got people. It's got people, communications. The states could care less . . . . A lot of states would rather have transports because they could move some of the Army people to camp and so forth [doing] their state training missions of the Guard. The states realize that it's still up to the active establishment as to what kind of mission . . . . When you put a wing on a guy, you don't say you are going to fly fighters for the rest of your life. You fly whatever the mission requirement is. The states realize this.

Mr. Gross: But, I mean, you organize the way the Air Force tells you to.

General Wilson: That's right!

Mr. Gross: You select the people the way the organized . . . . You train the way they tell you to.

General Wilson: The Air Force says that. It goes right back to the Constitution which [says] these people will be trained and organized to the discipline of the War Department, not the state's requirements. But, the states have to accept the missions and they do it.

Mr. Gross: But it's difficult to really understand how it has maintained a separate organizational identity even though it does everything according to the Air Force way of thinking or training.

General Wilson: Well, the Army does the same thing. The Army does the same thing. There's no difference between the Army and the Air [Force] except that the Army has the same rules and they are under ROPA the same as the Air Guard. They were under the other acts and the six months training program would have given them a mandatory period of active duty for training. All of these things, it's the same thing. And the states want well-qualified people and they are willing to accept this. They believe that, if they can do it to meet the standards of the active Army and the Air Force, then they meet the standards of the state.

Mr. Gross: In looking at the Army for a moment, you were Chief of the Guard Bureau so you've had responsibilities for both. It appears to me, at any rate, that the Air Force and the Air Guard have been far more successful than the Army and the National Guard in training up to standards that they wanted and in integrating their forces with the active duty establishment. We talked about this at dinner for a while last night. I wondered if we could review what, in your view, accounts for the differences?

General Wilson: The difference is in the type of units. In other words, in the Air Guard you've got a wing. It's got three groups. There are all the same type of equipment and they are all concentrated in one location where they can perform their mission right at that location. They can fly right off the airport where they are located. An Army Guard unit is in a town. Let's take Forrest City, Arkansas right here has an artillery unit. All it can do is to play with that weapon because it's got to go clear to Fort Smith, Arkansas to Camp Chaffee which is the closest place it can go to where it can fire it. So, it has a harder time maintaining a high level of capability when you can't get out and use the equipment on a week-to-week basis or a month-to-month basis. Where, in the Air Guard, you are doing it everyday.

Mr. Gross: It also seems that the Air Guard had an easier time attracting the kind of the people that they wanted, both the numbers and the quality. What accounts for that?

General Wilson: Well, I think it's because of the fact that people like to be around airplanes. It's just a different breed of . . . . If you are going to be in the military, you like to be where it's going places, where something is happening. You can do it everyday and it's drudgery to sit around here and train for 12 months of the year on pulling that lanyard and seeing it go back and not being able to see what's coming out the other end. Where you work on a new airplane, you get work in the supply. You can get into the airplane and fly. You can get on them. If you have a multiple [engined] airplane, you can get in it and fly to another place. You just got people who believe in it and like it.

Mr. Gross: So, your motivation is different.

General Wilson: Motivation is different!

Mr. Gross: What about the organizational relationships? Was there anything comparable, for example, to the gaining command concept [in the Army] ?

General Wilson: Yes! The Army is now doing that. I forget what they call it. They've got five areas in the United States which were charged with a responsibility for training the Army Guard and Army Reserve. They have certain units that are identified with divisions such as a brigade that trains with the active Army during field training and that division is also responsible for them on their weekly training. They are coming along to a lot like the gaining command concept in the Air Force.

Mr. Gross: When did this start coming about? What year?

General Wilson: Well, I think it started coming back in the 1970s, 1968, 1969, 1970. We didn't get a weekend training [program] started. I finally got the [Army] Guard to accept the weekend training program.

Mr. Gross: This is for the Army?

General Wilson: For the Army, yes! I don't know. That was in 1968 or 1969. But, now they like it. But they wouldn't have any part of it at first. Then they hired . . . . The Army Reserve won't do it either even after Army Guard did it but now they do.

Mr. Gross: What about the technician compliment? Is it much higher in the Air Guard as a percentage [than in the Army Guard] ?

General Wilson: Oh yes! Percentage! Because, it takes so many manhours to maintain an airplane for one air-flight hour. So, you got to have those people available because you are flying the airplane an average of 125 hours per pilot per year. So, you got to have enough people to generate those flying hours. And, of course, your technicians run probably 25 percent of the unit. They used to. I don't know what the percentage is now.

Mr. Gross: In the Army, what is the percentage?

General Wilson: Well, for example, if you got a unit right here of about 120 people and they have five technicians.

Mr. Gross: That's a lot smaller. Would it help at all, given the nature of task, to have a higher percentage [of Army Guard technicians] ?

General Wilson: It wouldn't unless they had some place where the could use their equipment. No, the Army has established some weekend training flights where they can go, like we do, to the weekend training. And, at those sites, they have a higher technician ratio to maintain the equipment, to keep it up for the use of the Army people.

Mr. Gross: This is a question that I thought about and we may not be able to or be in a good position to answer it. But, most of the comparisons that we have drawn have been between the Army and Air Force programs. Do you feel that

you at all could make any comparisons with the way the Navy handled their reserve programs? I understand it's quite different but I don't know too much about it.

General Wilson: Well the Navy air program, they have a program of more of individually training people. They have units but they are individuals . . . . Take right over here at Billington. They have a naval training station over here at Billington.

Mr. Gross: Is it air training here?

General Wilson: [Yes]! Air training over there! They fly in people from all over Tennessee and Arkansas that come in there for a weekend's training. And, that's the only time they get trained. They don't have [an arrangement] where the guy can come out and fly on a daily basis or a weekly basis and so forth. They are too far away. And, I'm not really familiar with . . . . I know that they tried to go into the weekend training. They have the six months training program the same as the Army had.

Mr Gross: For the basic type [training] ?

General Wilson: For the basic type! And, they have a unit training program now. When they called the unit for the Pueblo crisis in the Navy, they had an awful time with them because of the equipment and the Navy didn't give them anything. Didn't have spares. The equipment was not combat ready. I think they finally released all the people and never did use any of them.

Mr. Gross: But they were organized and called as units?

General Wilson: They were organized and called as units, that's right!

Mr. Gross: But they really didn't have the kind of organized training then?

General Wilson: They didn't have organized training. They didn't have the continuity of training year-around that we had in the Air Guard.

Mr. Gross: How often did they meet?

General Wilson: Well I think they met one weekend a month and that was all.

Mr. Gross: But, so they couldn't come in during the week?

General Wilson: Couldn't come in during the week. They were in Little Rock and clear around the country.

Mr. Gross: Do they have technicians or something like that?

General Wilson: Well they had what they called storekeepers.

Mr. Gross: Oh my God!

General Wilson: And, I think they depended on the normal maintenance of the base to do the maintenance of the equipment using what they call storekeepers.

Mr. Gross: They are really entirely different [than Air Guard technicians].

General Wilson: It's entirely different. I know Ted Marrs was trying to get the Navy to completely revamp and, I think, after the Pueblo crisis, the Congress kind of limited the number of people in the Naval Reserve until they produced something. I know that there was some testimony on that over in the Congress on the Navy. They were having a pretty rough time because the units that they called were not used and they weren't used because they didn't have the capability to function as the units.

Mr. Gross: Were they short of people or was it just a matter of training and continuity?

General Wilson: I think it's continuity, and training, and the standardization of their equipment.

Mr. Gross: Was there ever any effort while you were in the Guard Bureau to look at reserve programs overseas, say, for example, the Israelis, how they did that?

General Wilson: Yes, we looked. For example, we had an exchange in the Home Guard of Norway and the National Guard of each state. I started that in 1969. We were sending troops over there and they are sending troops over here under a NATO arrangement. We train them. They train us over there. There's a lot going on in exercises between the two countries.

Mr. Gross: Norway?

General Wilson: Norway and Germany too. Italy.

Mr. Gross: What were your impressions of some of the reserve programs in Europe?

General Wilson: Well, for example, in Switzerland, every boy till age 45 has to give 30 days a year to the military. In Norway, they have a commitment in which they have universal military training with everybody, every male has as a requirement to participate.

Mr. Gross: How effective is this massive kind of a program?

General Wilson: Well, in my opinion, it's not nearly as good as what we have.

Mr. Gross: Why is that? Are you just getting people in there that you can't use? Too many [people]?

General Wilson: Well yes. You get people in there, and you get them one time a year. You just get 30 days a year. And, they don't even see anything at all you know. They are not in the military at all. Then they come for 30 days a year and I guess they do pretty good, but they don't have the equipment we have. They don't have the other things. And, in their antiquated way, they do pretty good with what they got.

Mr. Gross: Judging by recent history, particularly the 1973 war, the 1967 war, and in 1956, the Israelis seem to be the people who do the most with their reservists.

General Wilson: Oh man, they did a job! They did a great job!

Mr. Gross: What's you impression of their program?

General Wilson: I think they have a fine program. It illustrated what they can do, what the reserve can do, because that's who won that 1967 war.

Mr. Gross: Are there any lessons that you in the Guard Bureau or in the Air Force were able draw from their program that were applicable [to the U.S.]?

General Wilson: We didn't have the mandatory universal military training that they had over there. You know everybody is in the military, even women. They have certain standards for both male and female in the Israeli [military]. I don't know what they are right now, but we found that we had a pretty good system here in this country.

Mr. Gross: I think your service in the Guard Bureau, extending from the fall of 1950 until your retirement in 1971 I believe, was extraordinarily long. Why did you stay there that long?

General Wilson: Well [in the] first place I went up there for four years, and I was a Colonel. First place, I loved the Guard Bureau. I loved to work with the people. I loved to work with the states and I loved to work with the Congress. Nobody ever enjoyed a tour anymore than I did. I love to be in middle of things. And, you couldn't be in the middle of things more than being in Washington. And, I was appointed, as I told you, a BG [brigadier general] in 1954 after Earl Ricks died and then, when we had the Deputy Chief of the Guard Bureau established in 1955, and I was appointed as a major general in 1955 and stayed that way for four years, supposedly four years. Then I was the Deputy Chief, extended for four years.

The Chief of the Guard Bureau came up and I was asked by the Chief of the Staff of the Air Force to . . . . He thought it was about time that the Air Force had a crack at the Chief of the Guard Bureau. I said 'yes' and I was nominated by 51 of the 52 governors. You see, the Chief of the Guard Bureau is appointed under the law, under the National Defense Act of 1916, the Chief of the Guard Bureau is appointed by the President from a list of National Guard officers nominated by the governors of the several states in which he has to have been at least a lieutenant colonel and be promoted to a major general and he'll hold office for four years and can be reappointed to age 64.

Well, the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force- -as a joint agency, the National Guard Bureau being a joint agency- -sent out a joint letter to the governors of the states asking for nominations of a National Guard officer who met these qualifications to be appointed Chief of the Guard Bureau. And, I received 51 nominations out of the 52 states and territories as Chief of the Guard Bureau, and I was appointed by [President] Jack Kennedy. And, I remember in 1971 he said, 'you know General Wilson, you are the only guy I ever saw that had as many Democrats as Republicans in your support! '

Mr. Gross: Well, that's a kind of amazing. I mean, what accounted for that virtual unanimity?

General Wilson: Well, I hope it was because I had done a good job on the Air Guard side and a lot of people wanted to see some of the things we put in the Air Guard put in . . . . [End of Tape]

Mr. Gross: Well, what do you feel were your greatest contributions during your period of service as Chief of the Air Guard side?

General Wilson: Well, I think it was administering the Air Guard with the states and getting the states to accept new concepts of training, new concepts of organization, new concepts of reequipages, accepting programs that they had never done before which we were trying to get them to accept for the improvement of readiness and the willingness to accept the thing that we were

going to participate with the active Air Force in the fulfillment of a mission. In other words, the acceptance of the fact that we are spending millions of dollars a year and we should make that millions of dollars payoff in actual contributions to the overall defense.

Mr. Gross: Was there any difficulty in selling these things to the states?

General Wilson: Well yes. Some because it caused the states to do little more work than normal. Some of them were lazy but we got them all to accept.

Mr. Gross: How about the other side of the coin, your relationships with the Air Force and the Department of Defense?

General Wilson: Well I think a lot of these things that we were doing in the Air Guard had to be approved, before I could go to the states, by the Air Staff and the Chief of Staff and the Congress. So I had to sell it first to the Air Staff to get their blessing and then to the states.

Mr. Gross: It seems like this was a very tough job politically. You are in a position where you might offend people or step on some toes . . .

General Wilson: Oh sure! You step on some toes.

Mr. Gross: . . . anywhere you turn. How did you manage to be successful for so long?

General Wilson: Well, I don't know. As General Ryan* used to say when I came into the office, 'well, here comes the darling of the Congress.' I had lots of friends over on the Hill. Most of the people that came up to Congress know their National Guard. Most of them had been governors, or state legislators, or had been in something and know of the use of the Guard in the states and know that

---

* Gen. John D. Ryan, Air Force Chief of Staff, 1 August 1969 to 31 July 1973.

the Guards in the states are going to stay there and can contribute to the states. So, they have been very helpful. Without the Congress, we wouldn't have gotten anywhere the way that we have now. We won't be where we are now. Sometimes we had to get laws changed to do it. And, they were willing to do. Of course you know I remember real well one time we were having a hearing on the strength of the Air Guard and [Senator] Dick Russell wanted to cut it. And, so we were having the meeting and I got home, I got back to my office and I called the governor of the state of Georgia and he got some of Dick Russell's friends to call him and say 'on no, you better not do that in the National Guard.' And the next day . . . .

Mr. Gross: When was this?

General Wilson: It was back in the early 1950s.

Mr. Gross: I see, ok.

General Wilson: And Dick Russell said the next day 'gentlemen,' I can hear him just to this day, 'gentlemen I've heard from home and I've changed my opinion.'

Mr. Gross: You mentioned that, I think, General Ryan had made a comment to the effect that 'here comes the darling of Congress?'

General Wilson: Yes!

Mr. Gross: Was there some sarcasm or resentment implied in that comment?

General Wilson: No, I don't think it was resentment. No, because I got a commendation from him for the fact of an appearance over there [before Congress]. But I was always able to get those things that were necessary to support the Guard the way I think they should have been supported, the way the Congress wanted to support it in addition to the funds that were appropriated. In other words, we were able to get additional funds as long as I had a good solid program and could show that we needed it. We could get the support.

Mr. Gross: Was there ever any occasion when the President would call you in and ask your advice?

General Wilson: No. No, I was never called in by the President. That was always done between . . . . The Department of Defense worked with the White House. I didn't.

Mr. Gross: What about the Secretary of Defense?

General Wilson: Secretary of Defense, yes. I've been into see the Secretary of Defense on several things.

Mr. Gross: Could you recount some of those?

General Wilson: For example, I remember real well being there when, let's see, I don't know when. I think Watts was the first big burning of a city and they were calling the Guard from state status to federal duty and I was in there as to [discuss] what the legal ramifications were, what had to be done, how did we call them, what method were we using and so forth and those things. And, then I was reporting on an hourly basis to him, the number of people that had been called in, who was there, the commanders of the units, where they were stationed and so forth. Because that was all done in states status you know, but they were under federal control but were in state status.

Mr. Gross: How does that work out? I am not quite clear on that at all.

General Wilson: Well . . . .

Mr. Gross: I assumed they were federalized?

General Wilson: Well they were federalized but they remained in state status. You see the Guard is the only reserve component . . . . To get the reserve, you got to declare an emergency. The President has to declare an emergency to get the reserve. He doesn't have to declare an emergency in the Guard.

Mr. Gross: Ok.

General Wilson: He could order to active duty guardmen in their state status to perform a federal mission without the declaration of a national emergency, but he can't use any other reserve forces.

Mr. Gross: But, they are under the control of the federal authorities aren't they?

General Wilson: They are under the control of the federal authorities, but the states still have to promote them, have to order them to duty and so forth.

Mr. Gross: How does that vary from a situation such as you had in the mobilization in 1968?

General Wilson: Well, that was the declaration of emergency. The Congress gave him authority to call so many people.

Mr. Gross: So, the states are out of the picture at that point.

General Wilson: States are out of the picture, yes. The President takes priority over the states.

Mr. Gross: In those cases in 1968 and, before that in 1961, when they were mobilized, did the Secretary of Defense or the Chief of Staff call you in for advice or did they just say 'hey, we want to do this?'

General Wilson: Oh yes! No. They make up their mind what they were going to call. Where I got into it is which unit we call, which unit should be called, which unit has equipment, which is the best unit, which is .... It's going to be a partial mobilization. You want your best units in. So, they told me the type of equipment they wanted and I made recommendations as to which units. And, we go back to the OR, operational readiness, reports, their maintenance, their manning levels and everything else, and picked out the best units to go on.

Mr. Gross: Looking at the Air Guard today, what does the future hold for it?

General Wilson: Oh, I think it's got a great future. I think you are going to see it modernizing. You know, they are buying airplanes now. They are buying F-15s. They are buying F-16s. They are buying A-10s.

Mr. Gross: Well, not all these aircraft are going to go into the Air Guard, particularly the F-15s.

General Wilson: Well, the F-15s probably won't go in now, but later on they probably will. But there's some of the F-16s that are programmed into the Guard. The A-7s are . . . .

Mr. Gross: Direct buys?

General Wilson: Well, they are direct buys from the active Air Force. Some of the A-10s are direct buys that are going into the Guard.

Mr. Gross: In light of the political difficulties that stemmed from Vietnam- - tremendous uncertainty, resentment, and, ultimately, political frustration with the war- -and some problems involved in mobilizing Guardmen and reservists for a situation short of war, or limited war, where there's really not a total national commitment like we had in World War II, what kinds of contingencies do you see the Air Guard units being used for?

General Wilson: I don't think you're going to see another Vietnam. The Congress has pretty well tied the President's hands with the War's Act and is saying 'you are not going to go into a war and use it for more than 30 days without a declaration of emergency by the Congress.' And, what you are looking at- -your training, your Guard and reserve as part of the total force now to meet the total requirement of a war in Europe and another emergency somewhere else.

Mr. Gross: So, it could a be an all-out kind of thing?

General Wilson: Yes! In my opinion, there will not be another Vietnam unless the Congress decides it's going to be one.

Mr. Gross: But public opinion and politics have a way of changing in this country. I know, what was it, in 1941, in October and November, just before Pearl Harbor, the Congress came within one vote of eliminating the draft, sending the National Guard home despite what was going on in Asia and Europe.

General Wilson: And, we were on active duty at that time. And, I was on active duty at that time.

Mr. Gross: But that turned around in a hurry. But it took a, well, a national disaster to do it. Is it going to take a national disaster to get us to fight a war?

General Wilson: I don't know. It might. But it's going to be up to the Congress to decide. And, then they are not going to use a draftee until they have used all the reserve that have paid [drill] status.

Mr. Gross: They don't even have a draft system now.

General Wilson: Oh, we don't even have a registration system. I think that is what they are talking about now. The draft wasn't bad. I still think it should be instituted again. Maybe not using it, but at least the registration. It would take six months to get it going again.

Mr. Gross: And, it would probably be another six months before they have people through training.

General Wilson: We would have people ready to go. Yes!

Mr. Gross: We're in pretty bad shape manpower-wise.

General Wilson: I think so, yes.

Mr. Gross: You would start running out of people in a hurry.

General Wilson: The only ones you are going to have besides what's in the active, is what's in the reserve forces.

Mr. Gross: And, the Army Reserve and the Army Guard are way understrength right now. I guess the situation with the Air Guard is quite a bit better.

General Wilson: I just heard the other day, they were 97 percent of the authorized strength.

Mr. Gross: When you say authorized strength, are you talking about full manning?

General Wilson: Congressional authorized strength.

Mr. Gross: Ok. Now, what relationship does that have to the full wartime T&O?

General Wilson: It's about 95 percent.

Mr. Gross: So, there is 97 percent of that 95 percent. So, that's fairly impressive.

General Wilson: That's more than you got in the active [force]. For example, the active [force] last month in the Air Force, for the first time, failed to meet its quota on enlistments.

Mr. Gross: What about the supply situation- -spare parts, and tools, and things like that?

General Wilson: Well, for the equipment that we have, we have them.

Mr. Gross: What is your assessment of the equipment that they have? I mean, what kind of job could they do in what situations?

General Wilson: They've got a job you do but they would have one hell of a time using F-105s in Europe because there are no supplies there for what's in the Guard. F-4s are coming into the program. [There] still [are] F-4s in Europe. That wouldn't be bad. A-7s, there are still some A-7s in the active [force]. That's not bad. You know C-130s, there is no problem there because they are in the active [force] too. That's why some of this total force has worked you know.

Mr. Gross: In looking at the probable threat, Europe would be a very high threat environment to operate in. How successfully could F-105s and F-4s operate, the ones that you have today?

General Wilson: Those that they have today until they get modernized are the F-15 and the F-16. Next year or two, they are still very effective.

Mr. Gross: Well, those are the basic questions that I have. Are there any particular areas you think we ought to look into that are significant? We've kind of covered the waterfront here.

General Wilson: Well, I still think, as we always said, I think you found out that the controlling factor on the type of units that are in the reserve is equipment. And, the capability that can be gotten out of the reserve is the support that's given it from active establishment in case of emergency. In other words, sooner or later we got to come and really make this total force concept work by programming modern equipment for the reserve forces.

Mr. Gross: And, you are really not doing that it doesn't look like today.

General Wilson: No, we're still on a basis of fallout from the active [force].

Mr. Gross: So, that, to some extent, even in the Air Guard-Air Force relationships today, the sort of traditional competition between the reserve forces in the broadest sense and the active [forces], that competition and that tension that's characterized American military history is still there.

General Wilson: Still there, that's right!

Mr. Gross: It's much more subdued I assume.

General Wilson: It's much more subdued because their using the greater portions of it on a day-to-day basis. But it's still there. There is still competition.

Mr. Gross: Do the actives still see the Air Guard and the Air Force Reserve as basically a threat then to their control of resources?

General Wilson: No! They know that they are going to be there. They have tried over the years to limit them and they have been told we are going to have it. Now they accept it and they are making the best they can with it. And, I still understand why a guy that has never been in the reserves, an active officer who has never been .... You know, for years I couldn't even get into the Air War College to talk about the Guard or [into] the squadron officers course. And, in 1971, I finally broke in and I made a talk to every class of the Air War College, the Command and General Staff College, and the squadron officers course letting these young officers, the regular officers, know what they had in the reserve forces. And, it's payed off. It's an educational process. As I said, I was a peddler.

Mr. Gross: Yes! Do you ever get an opportunity or any of your staff get an opportunity to peddle things out of the Air Force Academy, get them when they are really young?

General Wilson: Oh yes! Oh sure! Yes! I went out there and I made briefings out there too.

Mr. Gross: How did the cadets react?

General Wilson: A lot of good questions and I think they learned that there was a lot of capability there.

Mr. Gross: Was that kind of a surprise to them?

General Wilson: I think it was. I don't believe they realized . . . . They just couldn't believe some of the things that we're doing. Like one guy said, 'do you mean you got tankers in Europe.' I said, 'yes we've been doing that for' . . . well at that time, five years over there. They are flying everyday. Well, 'I can't understand it. How does a guy get off from his job?' I says, 'he takes his vacation two weeks and we rotate the crews.' But it was an eye opening even in the Air War College. They didn't understand either. But we still continued. Right now, the head of the Air Guard goes to every class including the old Industrial War College now. We got three, I think John D. Guice was getting two or three quotas for the Industrial War College, a class. And he makes the talk over there.

Mr. Gross: Continued to educate and sell the active [force] on the program?

General Wilson: It's an educational program, that's right. Because, of course, you know you get rotations. Hell, I was there so long that people knew who I was, and knew what I was doing.

Mr. Gross: Well, that about raps it up as far as I'm concerned and I enjoyed talking to you. It's been very informative.

General Wilson: I hope it's done some good. [End of interview]

GLOSSARY

ADC	Air Defense Command
AFSC	Air Force Specialty Code
ANGUS	Air National Guard of the U.S.
CONAC	Continental Air Command
DOD	Department of Defense
HQ USAF	Headquarters, U.S. Air Force
MAC	Military Airlift Command
MASDC	Military Aircraft Storage and Disposition Center
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OR	Operationally Ready
ORI	Operational Readiness Inspection
OTS	Officer Training School
R+D	Research and Development
RFPB	Reserve Forces Policy Board
ROA	Reserve Officers Association

ROPA	Reserve Officers Promotion Act
ROTC	Reserve Officers Training Corps
SAC	Strategic Air Command
TAC	Tactical Air Command
TO+E	Tables of Organization and Equipment
UE	Unit Equipment
USAFE	United States Air Forces Europe

INDEX