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Abstract INTERVIEW ONE OF A SERIES CONDUCTED IN CONNECTION WITH A DISSERTATION ON THE HISTORY OF THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD COMPLETED BY MR. GROSS WHILE A DOCTORAL CANDIDATE AT OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY. FOLLOWING MILITARY SERVICE, PESCH JOINED THE MAINE AIR NATIONAL GUARD, BEGINNING A LONG CAREER THAT CULMINATED IN HIS APPOINTMENT AS DIRECTOR OF THE AIR NATIONAL GUARD IN APRIL 1974. HE RETIRED IN FEB 1977. INTERVIEW BRIEFLY REVIEWS MILITARY CAREER, THEN CONCENTRATES ON QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE NATIONAL GUARD; I.E., MOTIVATIONS FOR JOINING, SUMMER CAMP, DEVELOPMENT OF THE GUARD, AIR FORCE SUPPORT, RESOURCES, AND PERFORMANCE.

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U. S. AIR FORCE

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

K239.0512-1210

Maj Gen John J. Pesch

23 June 1978



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Air Force Logistics Command Oral History

Interview #17

Of

Major General John J. Pesch
(ANGUS, Ret.)
Director, Air National
Guard, 1974-1977

by

Charles J. Gross

Date: 25 June 1978
Location: Arlington, Virginia

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October 2, 1978

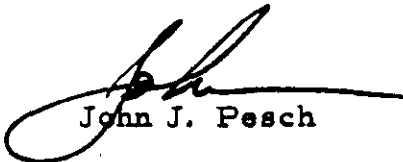
Dear Charles:

I have corrected the interview. Thank you for providing me that opportunity.

I place no restrictions on its use. You may cite and quote from it as you please. Do with it what best serves your interest.

Good luck on attaining your goal.

Warm regards,



John J. Pesch

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INTRODUCTION

John J. Pesch was born in Mespeth, N.Y., on July 20, 1921. He entered military service in February 1942 as an aviation cadet. In March 1943, he received his pilot's wings and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the U. S. Army Air Corps. Following an assignment at Marianna Field, Florida, he served a combat tour with the Eighth Air Force in England in 1943. He was separated from military service in October 1946. In February 1947, he joined the Maine Air National Guard, beginning a long career that culminated in his appointment as Director of the Air National Guard in April 1974. He retired in February 1977.

This interview was one of a series conducted in connection with a dissertation on the history of the Air National Guard completed by Mr. Gross while a doctoral candidate at the Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio. The interview took place on 25 June 1978 at General Pesch's office in Arlington, Virginia.

General Pesch, like other interviewees, was permitted to review the draft transcript and to make necessary changes or corrections. For that reason, the wording of the transcript sometimes differs from that of the tape.

The interviewer is indebted to the members of the DCS/Comptroller Word Processing Center who typed intermediate drafts of the manuscript and prepared its final form.

CHARLES J. GROSS
Historian
AFLC Office of History

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Major General John J. Pesch
Interview

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AFLC Oral History Interview #17
With Major General John J. Pesch
Conducted by Charles J. Gross
25 June 1978

Mr. Gross: Would you mind briefly reviewing your military career?

General Pesch: Well, I was discharged from the old Army Air Corps in 1946 as a Major. I joined the Maine Air National Guard on the 5th of February 1947 when we were forming a P-47 squadron. It was formed in Bangor, Maine with a group headquarters in Augusta, Maine, with the 67th Wing, the parent unit in Boston, Massachusetts. That wing consisted of units in Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. All [were] fighter units, all P-47 units. My original assignment was squadron operations officer. In 1950, I became the squadron commander of the Maine unit. In '51 I took over the group as group commander, and the group consisted of units in Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. We then were flying different types of aircraft. In Maine we were flying P-80's. Vermont was still flying P-47's as was New Hampshire. We were mobilized for Korea in '51 with the group headquarters and subsequently moved to Manchester, New Hampshire, as did the wing headquarters. I then was assigned as a lieutenant colonel to the wing headquarters as the Wing D.O. Sometime in early '51, I was transferred to 12th Air Force in Germany and I was in the Tactical Fighter Branch in Germany and served my 21 months in Europe as a Tactical Fighter Branch Officer. When I was discharged in November '52, having completed my tour, I returned to Maine and returned as the Wing D.O. I

PESCH

stayed as the Wing D.O. until '59 when I came on active duty in the Department of the Air Force, Headquarters United States Air Force at the Pentagon. I was assigned to the Director of Operations in the basement of the building. I served four years in the basement as a full colonel having been promoted in 1956 to colonel. In 1963, I was transferred to Aerospace Defense Command at Colorado Springs, Colorado, and I served as the Director of Operations Liaison Officer with the Air National Guard from 1963 to 1966. I then was transferred back to the Pentagon, this time to the National Guard Bureau and filled the position which subsequently became the Deputy Director of the Air National Guard. I was promoted to brigadier general in 1970 and then promoted to major general as the Director of the Air National Guard in 1974. I retired with 35 years of active/Air National Guard service in 1977 in February.

Mr. Gross: That was a pretty long career.

General Pesch: Yes, 35 years.

Mr. Gross: Why did you join the Air Guard after World War II? What prompted you?

General Pesch: Well, I think most people who had served in aviation units in World War II enjoyed flying. I liked the flying and here was an opportunity to continue flying and continue an association with the

military establishment, to be with people who shared common interests. Most of our pilots were college students--as was I. I went back to the University of Maine in '46 to complete my education that began in 1939. It was interrupted by World War II. I think there were two reasons--one you enjoyed flying, and two, you wanted to continue the association with the kind of people that you had been associated with while you were on active duty.

Mr. Gross: Were these kinds of motivations very widespread?

General Pesch: Oh, I think so. Yes, the money in those days, of course, was not a great inducement. If you flew, you had to insure yourself. There was no such thing then as federally funded insurance. The GI bill was what most of us lived on. [It was] 90 or 120 dollars a month depending on whether you did or didn't have children and whether you were single or you were married. So, when you looked at four days pay a month with a low pay scale, money was not a great inducement. As a major you were very fortunate on a drill weekend if you made \$50. If you had a family and a sense of responsibility and provided your family with insurance, the premiums you paid generally more than offset your drill pay.

Mr. Gross: We were talking about some of the motivations of the individuals who joined the Air Guard.

General Pesch: Yes, I think the motivation was the love of flying and appreciation of the kind of people that were doing it and a desire to maintain that association.

Mr. Gross: What about your enlisted men, your junior people perhaps who hadn't seen military service before?

General Pesch: Back in those days, many of your senior NCO's were rather young. The war permitted them faster promotion through the grades. Promotions were faster than we have had in peacetime, certainly. You had master sergeants and tech sergeants in their 20's. This was unheard of prior to World War II. It took 20 or 25 years to get four stripes on your arm and here were six stripers that were 25, 26, 27. Individuals who, because of World War II, were drawn into close association by a single objective, to win the war. This engendered in them a liking for the military. It was successful. We did win the war. They came into the Guard for some of the same reasons--comaradarie, for an opportunity to perhaps augment their income and to be with people of common interests. I'm sure money was always a consideration, but not a driving consideration. All the fellows, the mechanics who maintained the aircraft, the armorers who pumped the bullets into the guns--they were all fascinated with the flying machines. It's kind of old hat today; it wasn't all that old in those days. It was new and exciting. We participated in that excitement and enjoyed it.

Mr. Gross: Did you have any difficulty recruiting people into the very junior grades, the airmen basics?

General Pesch: Yes, I think we did. It's difficult to think back now and identify specifically where we had the difficulties. But you always had

difficulties recruiting. You didn't wait for them to walk through the door. You had to go on out and talk to them. In those days, the military was accepted by all levels of society, so to speak. Even the educators welcomed you into the high schools and into the universities. We used to have free access to the youngsters. We could tell them what we had to offer, provide them with a challenge, which many accepted. We didn't have recruiters--who had a quota to accomplish. Everybody was a recruiter. If you had a buddy downtown, you would try to talk him into coming out and joining. You probably had more of a family feeling then of the National Guard. "Why don't you come on and join us and be part of us?" That kind of feeling was more prevalent than it is today.

Mr. Gross: Yes! It seems that your morale was probably fairly high.

General Pesch: It was high! You had difficulty convincing youngsters that they ought to give up a couple of weeks in the summer and go to summer camp--but once having experienced summer camp, it became an inducement. We enticed people into the Guard--because we went to Massachusetts, Cape Cod, for two weeks. While we flew and worked hard, we also made certain that the chaps had enough free time to enjoy what Cape Cod had to offer. There were beautiful beaches and excellent fishing. There were recreational facilities that most people would have paid and did pay dearly to enjoy. Here you could enjoy it at minimum cost and still be a member of the Guard. People looked forward to it. They

saved money all year long so they could go down to Cape Cod and enjoy themselves. That kind of deployment served as an inducement supplement.

Mr. Gross: Sir, in looking at some of the articles about the Air Guard units in the early days, and some of the official histories, there were considerable problems in terms of their readiness for the immediate M-day type assignments. What is your recollection and assessment of the readiness of the units that you were associated with on the eve of the Korean War?

General Pesch: Well, it depended on the type of unit. If your unit was an air defense unit, you had very little difficulty in being ready. It was a relatively simple mission. Tactical fighter units had a much more difficult time. If you recall before Korea the entire Air Force was in difficult straits. Very little of the defense budget was spent on tac air. Most of the defense budget was in support of SAC and in air defense. Some of it in airlift and what was left over supported tactical air. This happened prior to Korea and again post-Korea. Only about six percent of the defense budget was being spent on tactical air power. This meant you didn't have units that were properly equipped or properly trained. The type training you see today in the Air Force with Red Flag* was nonexistent. The tac fighter units in the Air National Guard and the

* Red Flag is a highly realistic training program instituted by the Air Force during the 1970s to prepare aircrews for possible combat with Warsaw Pact Air Forces.

Air Force Reserve receive training that is almost revolutionary when you contrast it to what took place then. To answer your question, yes, there were some poorly trained units. We weren't immediately ready to go into combat. The individual pilots, the individual mechanics, etcetera, were highly qualified people, but they weren't molded into a fighting machine.

Mr. Gross: In looking back on your entire career with the Air Guard, considering what units were then and contrasting it to where they are now--what strikes you as the major factors that accounted for the change in the status of the Air Guard?

General Pesch: Well, a number of things. Probably the most important one is the tremendous support that the active Air Force and the Congress have given the reserve components. If I were going to pick a time, I'd probably pick 1964/65 as the beginning of a new era in the Air Force--when they recognized that they had a valuable resource in their reserve components. One proviso, that they equip them properly and with that equipment permit them to train up to the level of their potential. This began in 1964/65 and has carried through to today.

Today the United States Air Force expends more of its time and effort on its reserve units than any of the other services. There isn't any doubt about that. The equipment we received was leftover components from the active force. That's not all bad because the equipment that we received generally had a usable life period remaining. It generally could

do a job, but it's only recently that new equipment has been purchased for the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve. This accounts for a great deal of the increased combat readiness of the reserve components. It's only recently that the Air Force thinks in terms of its entirety, Guard, Reserve, and the active force when they program. When you look out in the future program documents you see where they program F-16s, program A-10s, they program A-7s, brand new aircraft into the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve.

Mr. Gross: They are all brand new aircraft you're talking about?

General Pesch: Right off the production line into the reserve components. Now, there's a reason for that too, in my opinion. Because, as I said, the Air Force recognizes this valuable resource. They also recognize that, when you look at our total force and you break it down, a substantial percentage of the Air Force capability rests with the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve. The reserve forces commander converts the resources of men and material into combat ready units that not only are available, but they are also immediately usable. It would be of little value to have a force that's available, but not trained properly. Commanders are recognizing that the Air Force has many eggs in their basket more than half of which are reserve component eggs and these must be brought to a high level of readiness. The Air Force is expending effort and dollars supporting the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve.

Mr. Gross: It seems, well not odd, but almost ironic because throughout the history of the Air Guard there has been that kind of potential there, but somehow this change of thinking has come around only recently.

General Pesch: We never fought a war where the active forces, talking air now, where the active forces didn't think they had enough equipment, enough units to satisfy the wartime requirement, the war plan. True, that in time, as attrition took its toll, they saw a need for the Guard and the [Air Force] Reserve. But that was down the road away. Today, its entirely different. Today, if you're going to win a war, to be successful it's recognized that both the Guard and [Air Force] Reserve must be employed immediately because they fill a specific wartime role in the war plans on D-day, not D+180, but on D-day. We have rapid reaction forces that have to be in place and capable of fighting within 72 hours. This was unheard of years ago. We couldn't get them over there in the first place. The P-80s didn't have air refueling. Our P-47s had to island hop or you had to stack them on [aircraft] carriers. There wasn't a sense of urgency or a feeling of need for those units except at some postponed or later date. I think that's accounted for the Air Force taking a new look at us.

There isn't any doubt in my mind that commanders like General [Robert J.] Dixon; like General [Paul K.] Carlton, when he had MAC; like [General] Dougherty, when he had SAC. . . recognized that they couldn't meet the war plans and fulfill their responsibilities unless they

had combat ready Air Guard and Air [Force] Reserve units. These units had to be considered as part of the first team, not substitutes. These major commanders were busy making certain their units, Guard and [Air Force] Reserve, were mission capable.

Mr. Gross: What impact did the adoption, I believe it was in 1960, of the so-called "gaining command concept" have on the readiness of the Guard units at that point in time?

General Pesch: Well, prior to the "gaining command concept", one command, CONAC,* gained all the reserve units. Upon mobilization CONAC turned the Air Guard units and Air Force Reserve units over to TAC, SAC, MAC, and ADC for employment. These commands, since they played no peacetime role in their training, knew nothing about the leaders, the units, the combat potential. With the advent of General [Curtis E.] LeMay's** "gaining command concept", Air Guard units were assigned in peacetime to the commands that would employ them in wartime. These major commands were charged with the responsibilities of supervision of training, inspection and safety. The "gaining command concept" has resulted in a close union of active, Guard and [Air Force] Reserve units. It was a giant step forward.

* CONAC was established on 1 December 1948. It was responsible for the air defense of the continental U.S., tactical air forces, and the USAF air reserve forces. The command was disestablished on 1 August 1968.

** General LeMay was Air Force Chief of Staff from 30 June 1961 to 31 January 1965.

Mr. Gross: Why was this plan, or this requirement, generated initially within Headquarters U. S. Air Force?

General Pesch: Well, I think, here again, there was recognition by the staff that we had a sizeable force whose muscles would atrophy if someone didn't do something. We were known to some as 48 different air forces when we had 48 states in the Union. Some labeled us as "48 [Little] Air Forces".

Mr. Gross: In that 1949 article in Air Force magazine?

General Pesch: To that effect! Well, probably with good reason. There wasn't anybody tying this whole force together, and the support from the Air Force was somewhat minimal. The Air Force was in the early '50s, mid-'50s, tied up with a major war in Korea. Its leaders were preoccupied priority-wise. They had to relegate reserve components to the back-burner. They did first things first. It carried over. Then after Korea, you know what happened? The military might of this country was stripped. General Wimpy Wilson was asked, "How many units can you form?" "We have all these airplanes-- 80s, 84s, 94s."

Mr. Gross: This is after Korea?

General Pesch: Yes! Mid-'50s. "How many can you accept?" "How many units can you form?" The question was a valid one since you must recognize that the states pay a part of the tab in the Air Guard for their forces. The Air Force, or the Department of Defense, could not form "X" number of units in a state without the consent of the Governor. They did

ask and the states responded, and there were on paper over 100 units in the Air Guard.

Mr. Gross: Flying squadrons?

General Pesch: Yes! And, as you know, it settled out at 92 and then two squadrons were combined on one base in California and the result was 91. Congress has determined there will be 91 fighting units in the Air Guard. That's some of the reasons I believe the Air Force was a little slow in recognizing the contribution we could make. One, they had plenty of aircraft themselves. They built up for Korea. Two, they were occupied so deeply in that war they didn't have enough time to spend with us.

Mr. Gross: In some of the articles that have been written about the Air Guard, and in Jim Dan Hill's book on the National Guard, the argument is made that the Air Guard was mobilized--for Korea, they did a very fine job, and, as a consequence of that, the Air Force said, "you guys are marvelous, and we are going to give you better training and better planes and better missions." I haven't been able to find much of that myself.

General Pesch: Well, I don't think so. I think again, of course, as I mentioned before--you equip your Air Guard as a result of a fallout from the active force. After Korea, there was a tremendous fallout of aircraft from the active force and the number of Air Force units were reduced drastically. When that occurred, the equipment had to go someplace,

either to the "boneyard,"* or into the reserve components. Defense poured it into the reserve components. When you look at your first defense budget that I could recall in 1950, it was about a \$15 billion dollar defense budget. The Air Guard share of that was in the area of \$115 million- -somewhere around that. You went from that level to the post-Korea level. From an all propeller force to an expanded force of jets. You went from aircraft that burned 30 gallons an hour to ones that burned 500 gallons an hour. You had to build big facilities to accommodate the ever-increasing complexities of these aircraft. You found yourself now with a budget that was a sizeable budget.

We built up demands on resources to the extent that more and more people were focusing in on whether or not we were provided the country with the combat forces capable enough to satisfy the defense needs. I've noticed, and I'm sure many other people have noticed, that as a program grows with the dollar figure, it also grows in terms of scrutiny. More and more people look at you. More and more people take an interest. More and more want to make certain that the taxpayer gets what he's paying for. I think all of those things played a key role in the Air Force recognizing us. Today, as you know, you've got an Air Guard with three major appropriations that cost the taxpayers well over a billion dollars. That's a lot of money.

* The Military Aircraft Storage and Disposition Center (MASDC) at Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona.

Mr. Gross: This is certainly a different kind of history of a reserve program than the other services, particularly your Army counterparts, have experienced after World War II.

General Pesch: Yes, and there's a big reason. It's easy to say you're the best, and I think we are. There's a reason for it too. One, it's that you've got a good mission. It's a mission that even today draws more youth to it since it's airborne, since it's more active than certainly the tough mission that the Army has. It's a mission that permits full participation by all of its people. And it's a mission that's being performed 365 days a year, 24-hours a day. The mission takes aircraft and people in and out of this country. Missions are performed daily. That's not true in the Army. The Army needs tremendous land masses to train on. They can't move their equipment for the one weekend to those places. So, much of it is simulated or classroom training that you don't keep an interest. You don't generate an interest and then, even if you were successful at generating it for a period of time, it would be almost impossible to maintain. And, what do you do with an infantry division in New York City? It is a difficult task for a commander to keep his troops motivated. You don't have that problem in the air. So, it's a mission that's more easily accomplished, more easily satisfied.

Mr. Gross: Still, there's something really about the nature of the beast that lends itself to its success.

General Pesch: Oh, yes, very definitely!

Mr. Gross: I've seen a lot of facile comparisons between the Air Guard programs and problems and the Army Guard and [Army] Reserve programs and their problems. A lot of those comparisons really don't address the kinds of basic factors you are talking about here.

General Pesch: And, it's very unfair to make the comparison in many of these areas because of difference in the nature of the beast.

Mr. Gross: In looking back on your career, particularly your initial period at Headquarters U. S. Air Force in '59 to '63, what impact did the performance of the Air Guard units that were mobilized during the Berlin crisis and sent to Europe have on planning and reserve policies?

General Pesch: Well, of course, we had F-86H units that went to Europe, and we had F-104 units that went to Europe. They performed well, but, here again, there was such a waiting period from the time they were mobilized until the time they deployed that you lost quite a bit of the support of your people.

Mr. Gross: There were people in the units?

General Pesch: Yes! Let me say that they were somewhat discouraged by the long delay after mobilization in committing them to fulfill their mission. Maybe we didn't understand the requirements. We took the wings off the F-104s and transported the F-104s in C-124s to Europe. We deployed two squadrons into Germany and one squadron into Marone, Spain. The F-104s flew many many hours in Europe. Again, attesting to the capability of the guardsmen. The F-86Hs were flown

over and back without accident or incident. We opened up some old bases in rather austere places in France. And so, here again, we proved we had the ability to man and operate and function from, if not a bare base, almost a bare base. It proved again what many of us knew, we could do a job and do it professionally. And I think it demonstrated to the Air Force too, as well as to the Germans, to the French and to the Spanish, that we had an augmentation force that was truly a combat capable augmentation force. In that sense, the mobilizations were beneficial from the Air National Guard viewpoint. How the Air Force looked at it retrospectively, I don't know.

Mr. Gross: Was there much conversation in Headquarters U. S. Air Force at that time, or immediately thereafter? Were there any major changes made in the Air Guard programs as a consequence of that experience?

General Pesch: Yes! I'd say it this way. Again, the officers and airmen we came in contact with on active duty, who later got into positions of influence, were favorably impressed. You had people who saw firsthand and experienced firsthand the professionalism of the Air Guard officers and airmen.

Mr. Gross: Folks in the field?

General Pesch: Yes! Now, some years later these same individuals are in positions of authority in the Pentagon, in positions of authority in the major commands. They have an input into the decision-making process

and they positively influenced the growth and capability of the Reserve components. So, in that sense, our mobilization was meaningful too. You know many of the benefits were intangible, difficult to put your finger on. But I can recall in my experience people coming up to me and saying, "We served with your units." "They were first-class units." "They are great people." "They are capable people." Almost as if, "My God, I never thought they could do what they did." What most of them forget is that we all came from the same mother: Mrs. Air Force. We were trained by Mrs. Air Force. We went to the same schools, identical undergraduate pilot training programs--tech schools, professional schools, etcetera. No one knew the identity of the students.

Mr. Gross: I'm sure they didn't.

General Pesch: That's correct! We were all trained the same, within the same system. Why shouldn't we be similar in skills and capability? We lit a lot of lights in the minds of many active Air Force people.

Mr. Gross: Perhaps more so than those who were removed [from flying operations] at the Air Staff level during a period. . . .

General Pesch: That's right! It's very difficult to tell a person how good your units are had he not experienced observing it firsthand. Now, I can tell him the Air Guard is capable if he happened to be along on an exercise where we flew missions--put bombs on target--and did it professionally, without incident or accident. Now, when I tell him

something, he's more apt to listen to me. It helped us in the system in the Pentagon.

Mr. Gross: I remember a year or so previous to the time of the Berlin mobilization there was a very infamous comment by General LeMay. I don't know the exact date or the exact quote, at this point, but basically it was to the effect that reserve and Guard- -"We don't think they can hack it because things are just too complicated for them to take care of on weekends." "Maybe we better reassess the whole program."

General Pesch: They are continuing to reassess the program. There are always studies on the way. In fact, there's one now on "Roles and Missions of the Reserve Components." There will always be people challenging us, and it's good. We kind of welcome it because here's another opportunity to open more eyes. We have nothing to fear in those kinds of studies.

We have a stable force because the people who are serving in the reserve components are for the most part a cut above "Joe Citizen," the average citizen. If he weren't a cut above, he wouldn't give up his time. He does it voluntarily. There are inducements. The dollar may be one. There is nothing wrong with that. But there are inducements beyond the dollar. A chap in the Air Guard usually does the same job year after year. He improves on the way he does that job. He finds new ways of doing it, easier ways. When you put him under conditions of stress with all that experience, it's almost habit for him to react in a precise correct manner.

We know that, if you give us any competition whether it's William Tell or whether it's SAC bombing, or Red Flag, no matter what, I will wager that eighty percent of the time we will win. I'll wager that. A stable force is the reason.

Mr. Gross: Pretty incredible! Not incredible. Impressive!

General Pesch: I've always maintained we are specialists in the reserve components while the active people are generalists. The active officer may today be flying wing on an airplane, tomorrow he may be in R&D, the next day he may be an instructor at the Air Force Academy, or he may be at the War College, or he may be in communications. Not so in our system. In our system an individual who is flying an F-105 may still be flying that F-105 ten years later. Well, you can imagine how much better he is at flying that F-105 than some active youngster who has only been flying it for two years and maybe one of those two years was six years ago.

Mr. Gross: In looking back on your career, do you feel that the Air Guard, through its representation with the Guard Bureau and the 8033 and 265 staff officers,* gets sufficient input into the planning process to be able to sell this capability and maintain it?

* These are reserve or National Guard Officers serving fixed terms of extended active duty with the active forces to advise them on reserve components' matters.

General Pesch: The opportunity is there and on almost an individual basis. The 8033 or 265 officer may be the only Air Force Reserve or Air National Guard representative in the entire command. Much depends on his personality, his competence, and his experience. But the opportunity is there. The door is open. He won't get through that door unless he has capability himself, and they won't listen to him unless he has established credibility. So, the system itself is a good system. You must make certain that you put good people into it.

Mr. Gross: When you were serving out at Air Defense Command, what kind of impact or opportunity for that...?

General Pesch: Tremendous opportunity! I worked for Maj. Gen. Tom McGhee who later became Commander of Aerospace Defense Command. When he was dealing with a problem that had impact on the reserve components, he would always include me in his group of officers that were discussing the problem and sought all of our recommendations. If he found they were good recommendations, he followed them.

No, as I say, the system is a good one, and I think we had a great impact. We have gradually taken over the major part of the Aerospace Defense Command aircraft alert requirement. The Air Guard has more air defense fighter units than the active force. That has been true for some time. We began to accept more and more of that responsibility as it was offered in the time period of the '60s.

Mr. Gross: Historically in most institutions when you have a situation like that, the institution that has the established predominance, or the wealth or power, is very reluctant to give it up. What moved the Air Force to give up this prominent position in the active air defense of the United States? Why did it reallocate its priorities?

General Pesch: Resources certainly did it. When you have a force structure in the active Air Force that's more costly this year than it was the year before, you reach a point where you don't have resources to do all the things today that you were doing yesterday. The Air Force finds itself with but only two choices: purge it right out of the system or transfer the mission and the equipment to the Air Guard. Air Defense has always been a natural mission for the Air Guard. It certainly has been a mission which Air Guard units have always excelled.

Mr. Gross: The traditional militia image?

General Pesch: Yes! Whether that's true or not I would not debate. I think defense was probably the best mission available to assume greater responsibility, but it was driven by resources, no other thing. Nothing else! Something had to go. It was unthinkable in the days of [Gen.] LeMay and [Gen. John D.] Ryan to offer up the KC-135s. The only way they would come into the Guard or [Air Force] Reserve was to be driven from the active Air Force. That driver was the lack of dollars. We couldn't continue to support all the missions in the active Air Force on the resources that the Defense Department allocated.

When you talk of the rise of the Air National Guard, you can't deny the part that Congress has played in supporting with dollars these increased responsibilities. They could have taken a different tack regardless of what the services wanted. We could of had an inferior Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard, but the Congress has supported and recognized the value of the Reserve components and put the dollars on the line to have us in a position of meeting our responsibilities.

Mr. Gross: In- -I believe it was 1967- -RAND Corporation came out with a study at the request of the Air Force that indicated basically the Air Force should reexamine missions that the reserve forces were involved in, and there were a lot of opportunities to expand those missions, to maintain a very viable set of forces. Do you know what moved the Air Force in the first instance to commission that study and to what extent they have really fulfilled it?

General Pesch: Well, it's extremely difficult to say that the changes that have taken place in the reserve components are due to the RAND study.

Mr. Gross: Sure!

General Pesch: I believe that they are due more to resource constraints.

Mr. Gross: Total force?

General Pesch: Due more to total planning on the part of the Air Force that said, "We can't support all of the active units we have today and all

of its missions." "Let's take a look at the requirements and determine what can best be satisfied by Guard, [Air Force] Reserve and the active Air Force." "Having done that, put it all together and do as much of the total requirements as we can, and stay within the fiscal constraints imposed on us." While the Air Force Reserve and the Air National Guard have different appropriations, there is only one Air Force budget. While we depend on the Air Guard personnel appropriation, operations and maintenance appropriation, and construction appropriation, it all comes out of the wallet of the United States Air Force. The Air Force recognizes that, and they demand the most for the buck. And the way that they get that is, they do it as total planning--total force planning and programming.

Mr. Gross: Do you feel that this is indeed a reality now rather than just a term that people like to use?

General Pesch: Oh, I think so. And again, you always have to keep in mind that you're still somewhat the hind legs of the dog. You are no longer the tail, you finally got down into the leg portion. But you can never have a strong [Air] Guard, a strong [Air Force] Reserve, unless you have a strong active Air Force. If the day ever comes when we think we can have a strong [Air] Guard, a strong [Air Force] Reserve, and reduce the active Air Force to a low point of capability, we are due for a rude awakening. Much of our capability is drawn from the active Air Force. R&D, logistics, threat evolution, tactics, modifications, requirements, plans, training--both professional and technical--all of these functions

are performed for the Air Guard and the Air Force Reserve. We have a strong, extremely capable, United States active Air Force. We, therefore, with proper support, can and do have strong, capable, combat-ready Air Guard and Air Force Reserve units.

Mr. Gross: In looking at the total Air Force, particularly, the Air Guard part of it, how would you assess the role of the Guard Bureau, itself--beyond the administrative and logistics parts?

General Pesch: Well, you have a dual mission--federal and state. It's the one reserve component that does. It has a responsibility to the state, and it has a responsibility to the nation. The only way you can serve that responsibility, as I see it, is through a single agency. That agency is the channel of communication between the several states and the Departments of Army and Air Force. You deal so frequently with many agencies. You deal with Civil Service, with FAA, with the Department of Defense and all of its lower echelons. The narrow neck of the funnel for which all of the information must flow to be filtered, to be evaluated, to be decided upon, is the National Guard Bureau. Were it not there, you would find the active Air Force and the active Army swamped with the kinds of problems that they are not now prepared to cope with. It would be very difficult, in my opinion, to establish the kind of rapport with the states that would permit them to cope with problems without great friction. And, the National Guard Bureau plays an extremely important

role not only in defending the budget, which it does in those appropriations that I mentioned for both the Army and the Air National Guard, but as a bridge of understanding, a bridge of contact between all of these agencies and the several states.

Mr. Gross: But what impact does the Guard Bureau or its Air Force and Army components have on the programming and policymaking within your respective services?

General Pesch: Quite a bit, because, you know, again the law states that sixty percent of the officers in the National Guard Bureau must be regular officers. Only forty percent, no more than forty percent may be Guard officers. Now, that does a number of things. It provides both the Chief of Staff of the Army, and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force with a management arm that extends right into the National Guard Bureau through these key Air Force and Army people. I might add the sixty percent requirement pertains to each rank, i.e., only forty percent of your colonels, lieutenant colonels, etcetera, may be Guard Officers. This influence of the regular officers impacts directly on the decisions of the Directors of both the Army and Air National Guard.

Mr. Gross: How do these guys do it?

General Pesch: These are outstanding officers who have served twenty, twenty-five years in the active Air Force. They are assigned to the

National Guard Bureau. They now look through a different set of eye glasses at the total problem. They can see firsthand what our strengths and limitations are. God knows we have both. And they can make known those strengths and limitations to the people in the active force.

The active Air Force is a board structure Air Force. Its decisions are not reached by one man talking to one other man. You have thirteen panels, the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve has a seat, voting member, on those panels. They have an Air Staff Board of Major Generals--the Air National Guard and the Air Force Reserve, the Directors, sit on that Air Staff Board. They have access to the [Air Staff] Council which is chaired by the Vice Chief of Staff, United States Air Force. You have access to the Chief and you have access to the Secretary of the Air Force.

If there is a decision made or about to be made in which you disagree, there is an avenue that you can travel that's well-lighted and paved to make known your dissent. This opportunity is available to all levels whether it be Panel, Board, Council, or Chief. It's there. My experience has been that the leaders of the Air Force want you to travel it. They want you to participate. They want the best decision possible. And the only way that they are assured of getting the right decision is to permit each participant to bring his tube of knowledge into that body. They won't always agree with you. But as a staff officer, you never lose.

I feel that way. Because, again, you are only bringing forth a tube of knowledge. You don't have the broad knowledge that that body will have once they listen to everybody. But you have that opportunity to bring your views into focus.

Mr. Gross: So, you are fairly satisfied with that opportunity?

General Pesch: Very much so. The Air Force leaders are objective, highly intelligent people, and very reasonable people. You don't always agree with them, but there is an old saying that, "If you and I always agree, one of us isn't needed." That is true. The vast majority of their decisions are good decisions.

Mr. Gross: You had mentioned in the comments a few moments ago that all of us have strengths and all of us have limitations. And, we talked a little bit about--about some of the strengths of the Air Guard. What, in your view, are some of the limitations that you saw particularly in your period of service in the Guard Bureau?

General Pesch: Well, obviously, one of the limitations would be frequent mobilizations. It wouldn't be long before the employers would tire of supporting their employees in an organization that takes them away from the job too frequently. That's a limitation. We have limitations in that you don't always get the best people in the entire system in the most responsible positions. You are tied to state boundaries. It's also a strength, but it's also a weakness. It's the best available choice. It isn't

the best qualified necessarily. It's qualified, but not best qualified. There comes a time when a stable force becomes a stagnant force. That's a weakness. I might also point out that there have been cases, many cases, where we have good people ROPA'd* out of Air National Guard units. You didn't have a slot for them. That is a weakness. It's one of those man-made things and could be corrected. One in which the active Air Force has taken a part in helping to correct. Another weakness, in my mind, results when an Air Guard unit experienced in one mission such as tac fighters suddenly finds itself programmed to receive the KC-135. The tremendous experience gained through years and years of operating fighters must now give way to the task of learning and mastering an entirely different mission in an aircraft totally unlike the previous one.

Mr. Gross: What about limitations on types of missions that the Air Guard can perform? Are there limitations there?

General Pesch: Well, there would be, if you had missions again that require frequent rotations. As I mentioned before, this would fit into the same category as frequent mobilizations.

Mr. Gross: Perhaps [I could ask] a couple of personal questions that I have been considering. The first one was, you went back on active duty, I believe in 1959. Why did you make that decision at that time?

* Promoted out of available positions in their respective units under provisions of the Reserve Officer Promotion Act.

General Pesch: Well, we talked about stagnation. When you do a job, the same job, for a great number of years, you can do that job pretty well. You can do it pretty easily. The demand on effort and the challenge isn't there. I was looking for a new challenge. The 8033 positions were relatively new. We had very few. General Wilson, who was the Director of the Air Guard then, was in need of getting Air National Guard officers in key positions throughout the Air Staff. He had asked for people to apply. I applied. I was screened and was accepted. It was a challenge. I had been the Director of Operations back in Maine working for an excellent man. I worked for him for twelve years. He was only two years my senior. I would probably have been doing the same thing in 1975 that I was doing in 1955. That had little appeal to me.

Mr. Gross: What, if any, direction or suggestions did General Wilson give you when you did come on board as far as your own function there was concerned?

General Pesch: Well, he gave the same directions that I gave to all the people that later worked in the system when I was Director of the Air Guard. And that is, when you go down there, you are working for the Air Force. You are a Guard officer, but you are working for the Air Force. Your loyalties are to that man. If he tells you that this is confidential, keep it that way. Our system is strong. You don't have to betray him. You are working for him. And there isn't any doubt that that was good advice. I would not have acted any other way.

Mr. Gross: Were there any particular objectives that he had, or that you had at that time, when you came on board in Washington?

General Pesch: The objective was singular and that was to convince the people that I came in contact with that we were a professional force. That was the objective. There were a lot of "doubting Thomases." Again, harking back to the days when both the Air Force and the Air National Guard were very young immediately after World War II, we performed our service in the Air Guard as if we were in a game. It isn't a game. It's a business and that is what we were trying to convince the Air Force, that we recognize that difference.

Mr. Gross: How successful did you feel you were during your four years there?

General Pesch: Oh, I think we were successful. We were given new missions. We received the first transports, C-97s, C-124s--that was a new mission. Due to General LeMay, I might add. He made the decision against the recommendations of key members of his staff. There was a statement that we couldn't handle it. It was too complex. It required too many crewmembers. We couldn't get all of those crewmembers integrated as a team because of the diverse occupations and nature of the reserve components. Well, LeMay said we could. And it was under LeMay that we got our first six units of C-97s. General Wimpy Wilson, head of the Air Guard, accepted the mission and, like the great leader he is, saw to it that we satisfied it.

Mr. Gross: This was after the Berlin crisis?

General Pesch: This was in 1961/1962, somewhere in there.

Mr. Gross: It seems somewhat uncharacteristic of him, LeMay!

General Pesch: No, I don't think so. I think. . .he had to be convinced.

Mr. Gross: Well, he had a reputation for being dubious about the reserves.

General Pesch: He was responsible for the management change. He was responsible for that decision and others that strengthened both the [Air Guard and [Air Force] Reserve.

Mr. Gross: To be in command?

General Pesch: Yes! He was responsible for letting our folks fly the ocean in the Berlin crisis. We staged, yes, but there were people who thought there would be nothing but splashes all across the Atlantic. He didn't believe that. I didn't know the man that well, certainly, at the level that I was at. But what I did know of him, he was a hard driving and objective individual who wanted again to give the nation the best he could give them for the amount of resources that he had at his disposal. He wanted to be sure. And, he had great pride in the active force. It was alright. We had to prove ourselves to him. And I think that we did. But, no, I don't agree with those people who said that General LeMay was anti. He wasn't anti-anything. He was pro a lot of things. And, you had to prove that you could get on that pro side for the ledger. He was a tough commander.

Mr. Gross: So, basically you felt that General Wilson would be able to prove the professional capability of the Air Guard to him?

General Pesch: Yes, we felt so, and undoubtedly we did because he was responsible, to a great degree, for many of the innovations that later led to the increased capability of Air Force reserve [components].

Mr. Gross: How about some of his successors? What is your assessment of their contributions?

General Pesch: I don't think we ever had, in my opinion, a chief whose objective was to detract from the reputation of the reserve components. So much depended on the times. How much of his thinking and judgment could be spared towards solving some of our problems? General Ryan was intimately involved with Vietnam. The man had an awesome responsibility at a time in history when things were not all bright. The amount of time he spent on his reserve components was probably not nearly as much as General [David C.] Jones has spent on them. The timing is so different.

General Ryan, again, put things in an order of priority. You and I would probably have done the same thing. We mobilized only 14 units of the Air Guard in Vietnam. That was all. He spent a lot of time developing and improving the active forces. Not that he totally neglected the Reserve components. He didn't. General Jones, I think, has spent proportionately greater time on his reserve components. He considers them right along with his active [forces]. You can't ask for more than that.

Mr. Gross: Looking back at the Vietnam period, what was the position of the Guard Bureau about the possibility of mobilizing the Air Guard and using it?

General Pesch: We thought then, and we think now, that it was perhaps the greatest mistake made by an administration--not to mobilize us. You would have had your "grassroots" support of that action to a much greater degree than we did. If you had every community in this country involved, in one way or another, directly involved, in Vietnam, it would have been a different outcome. I believe that.

Mr. Gross: Was there ever any official or unofficial explanation offered to you in regard to why this decision was made not to mobilize the reserves?

General Pesch: There was a feeling that the political restraints placed on the military would maintain the activity at a level which could be handled by the active force through the draft. It always seemed strange to many of us that all these years we've been paid to maintain a level of competency and capability to be used in circumstances such as we were in and yet all training, all that money we spent in equipping, was just left unused.

Mr. Gross: How receptive was the active force, particularly the Air Staff, the Chiefs of Staff, whatever, to the National Guard's desire to be part of this thing?

General Pesch: Well, I don't know if anyone ever expressed it that way. It was a decision of the administration. The services lived by it. My own opinion is that they would have preferred to see us used, but they certainly were in no position to criticize the decision. Military leaders do not act contrary to the President's decision.

Mr. Gross: Oh, yes, I am not suggesting that. I just wondered whether there was any resistance within the Air Staff itself?

General Pesch: To use them?

Mr. Gross: To the idea of using them.

General Pesch: No, I think that they would have welcomed the use of them.

Mr. Gross: Moving to 1968 when there was a limited use of them, what reason was given at that point in time?

General Pesch: Pueblo! There was a fear that the North Koreans would enter the war as you recall from the Pueblo incident.* The mobilization kind of offset a shifting of forces--of the active forces.

Mr. Gross: Were there active forces moved?

General Pesch: Yes! And the original plan in '68 was to mobilize 300 aircraft. 300 aircraft of different types with different missions. Included

* The seizure of the USS Pueblo, a U.S. Navy intelligence gathering vessel, by the North Koreans in 1968.

were RF-101s, F-100s and an aeromed [ical evacuation] C-121 unit. There were transport units. The original idea though was to mobilize those units that were capable of bedding down in South Korea and in other locations to operate bases that were austere manned and austere equipped. When Pueblo didn't develop into a conflagration involving North Korea, other uses had to be made of those forces. And, it took time. That hurt morale. We mobilized doctors, teachers, lawyers, students, etcetera, and then didn't use them for months. They remained in their hometowns which raised questions about the need for mobilization.

Mr. Gross: Yes!

General Pesch: It was both frustrating and fortunate. The alternative for their immediate use, war plan wise, would have involved us again in another war with the North Koreans. Thank God that didn't happen. So, thank God our forces only had to pay the price of sitting still and not the price of activity and death and all of the other horrors that are involved in war. As you know, later we did deploy units. We deployed recce units in and out of Japan--three units. We deployed F-100 units over to Southeast Asia and some into South Korea. We put some F-102 pilots on duty in the Far East. We only mobilized eight of them. Sixteen pilots of our St Louis unit volunteered for Vietnam duty.

Mr. Gross: Why was that decision subsequently made to move some of the units over there anyway--in Southeast Asia?

General Pesch: Obviously the requirement existed. Since they were on active duty they were no longer Air National Guard forces, but were, in fact, active forces. There was a requirement overseas for their kind of capability. You cease to be an Air Guardsman the day you're mobilized. You are now a member of the active Air Force. The personnel policies in being at that time apply.

Mr. Gross: What is your assessment of their performance?

General Pesch: I think General Brown, George Brown, said it as well as anybody. What he said in essence was that they were some of his best units.

Mr. Gross: I've heard that from many different sources, including people who've been over there who weren't in the Guard. That was quite a thing for them.

General Pesch: Yes! Here again you go back to the stability factor that I've talked about. You had personnel that were highly capable in all areas not only in cockpits although that certainly was true. Our people were able to maintain their aircraft, to arm them, to maintain the fire control systems--to blend all the functions into a combat ready force. They were ready.

Mr. Gross: One or two more questions and I'll let you go. I appreciate the time. In looking back at your own career, what would you say were the

things that you did that you feel were the most important contributions or the most satisfying things?

General Pesch: Beyond a doubt, I was most proud of being a part of a system that finally was recognized as being a highly capable professional combat-ready force. Being part of a system that demonstrated that capability by deploying entire units back and forth across the Atlantic and Pacific without incident or accident. Being a part of a force that flew aircraft with such professionalism that they had the lowest accident rate in the history of the Air Guard. Fighters who were awarded the Daedalian trophy for that accomplishment in 1976. Being part of a force, too, that has made significant contributions to our national defense. The National Guard has a proud history. There was immense satisfaction in seeing a partnership of active, Guard, and Reserve come to full fruition.

Mr. Gross: Thank you! Are there any comments or areas you'd like to talk about that we haven't covered here?

General Pesch: I believe we have covered the waterfront.

Mr. Gross: We certainly have. I certainly appreciate your taking the time and effort.

GLOSSARY

| | |
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| ADC | Air Defense Command |
| CONAC | Continental Air Command |
| D.O. | Director of Operations |
| FAA | Federal Aviation Administration |
| MAC | Military Airlift Command |
| ROPA | Reserve Officer Promotion Act |
| SAC | Strategic Air Command |
| TAC | Tactical Air Command |

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