

# GUARDSMAN

*The National*

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*From the time the shooting started until the truce, Israelis carried the battle without pause. This is an article on depth of how these citizen-soldiers and airmen responded to peril in a manner that stirred the World.*

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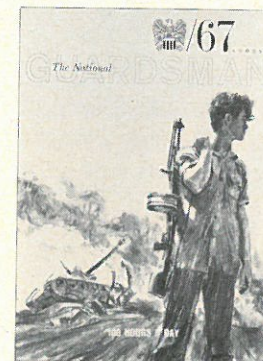
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*Regardless of the uniform — if any — which he wore, the Israeli soldier and airman knew he was fighting literally for his home and his country.*

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TWO announcements that seemed, on the surface, to conflict with each other were issued almost simultaneously a month ago. The Air National Guard had just flown its 1,000th cargo-hauling mission to Viet Nam, and the Air Force had cancelled the Guard's intensified participation in the Southeast Asia airlift.

It wasn't the quality of the Air Guard's performance that prompted the cancellation. Top officials have said repeatedly that the Guardsmen have done the job magnificently. But air cargo backlogs at U.S. air terminals had been reduced and the Department of Defense said enough commercial aircraft were available to handle Southeast Asia requirements without further augmentation by the Air Guard. Moreover, Defense spokesmen claimed, the airlines' turbo-jets could do the job at less cost, on a contract basis, than the aging piston-engined transports of the Guard.

In the 19 months of their assignment to the Southeast Asia run, Air Guardsmen each month flew at least 75 special missions in addition to their normal 110 overseas training flights which also carry military cargo and people as a by-product of their training. In 1,400 missions, of which 1,000-plus went to Viet Nam itself and the remainder provided direct support for Southeast Asian operations, Guardsmen hauled some 22,000 tons of cargo and 21,000 passengers. They gave up their normal vacations, wangled employers out of extra time off, and sacrificed much of the time they normally would have spent with their families, but they gave the Armed Forces that vital bit of support which was available from no other source.

On regularly-scheduled flights, as opposed to the as-needed, short-notice variety, the Air Guard operated as economically as anyone could desire, conceded the Department of Defense. But even these embassy support flights to South America, missile range missions, and junction runs have been withdrawn from the Guard and apparently will have to be taken over again by Active Air Force planes.

Guardsmen must view the cancellation of the direct support missions with mixed feelings. The drop back to an easier flying program will take much of the pressure off aircrews and support personnel, who have been straining to maintain the pace required by the Viet Nam flights. Units will be able to concentrate again on normal training needs, some of which had been shunted aside to accommodate the surge effort for Viet Nam. They can resume the traditional role of a Reserve Force.

But the Military Airlift Command still plans to scrap many of the Guard-Reserve Airlift units as part of what it describes as long-range modernization. Cancellation of the Viet Nam flights, with their emergency connotation, will weaken one of the most dramatic arguments we have been able to make against the proposed deactivations.

For two years, Congress has mandated the retention of all Airlift units and thus overruled the Pentagon. With Viet Nam requirements met in other ways, however, Congress may find that the reasons for their retention are less compelling. The picture is complicated still further by the Air Force's plan to adopt an "Associate Unit" concept. Guard Airlift forces would be satellited to Active bases, under this plan, without planes of their own.

But regardless of the clouds which obscure the future, Airlift Guardsmen for 19 months wrote a new and exciting chapter in the Air Guard's history. Without putting themselves, their units or the Nation through the strains of a mobilization, they flew critically-needed men and material to a war zone 8,000 miles away, operating at an amazing 60 percent of what would have been expected of them on full active duty.

They deserve the heartfelt thanks of their Nation. ♦



JAMES F. CANTWELL  
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of the United States

## ANG Ends Viet Nam Airlift