

# The President's Page

## DEATH VERSUS ECONOMY

THE Executive Council of the National Guard Association held its semi-annual meeting at headquarters in Washington last month. For three and one-half days, the Council, together with the Association's Standing and Special Committees, considered many problems incident to the postwar National Guard. The agenda covered a wide range of subjects, and deliberations, for the most part, concluded with the reports and recommendations of the Standing and Special Committees to the Council.

The report of the Air Advisory Committee by its chairman, Brig. Gen. Frank Allen of Illinois, literally shocked the Council. For summed up, it cried out: Death versus economy.

Some background is in order to bring us up to date. It will be recalled that when Congress passed the Fiscal 1950 appropriation for the support of the Department of Defense, it directed the Secretary of Defense to make certain savings. This, the Secretary proceeded to do and, as a result, the Army, Navy and Air Force found the amounts Congress had appropriated to them reduced by administrative action. It followed naturally that the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard would be subject to this same administrative cut. We do not quarrel with these cuts for what is sauce for the goose certainly is the same for the gander. But like the Air Advisory Committee, we find ourselves in total disagreement in one area in which a cut was applied. This is in the area of flying time for Air Guard pilots.

The Air Advisory Committee of this Association informed the Council that the Secretary's office had directed that Air Guard pilots occupying combat T/O&E positions would be restricted to 110 hours for Fiscal 1950 and all other pilots would be held to 80 hours for the fiscal year. This directive was issued in October, after the annual field training period in which many pilots had averaged 50 and more hours of flying time for 15 days. As anyone can see, this time, added to that already flown from the start of the fiscal year last 1 July, left little available for the balance of the fiscal year, for the directive was retroactive to the start of the year. When it became apparent that this was unjust, the directive was modified to permit Air Guard pilots to fly an average of 110 or 80 hours, depending upon their assigned position. And to carry out the terms of this modification, each State, Territory and the District of Columbia was given a gasoline allotment.

Someone made a drastic logistical error in computing this allotment. Brig. Gen. Leonard E. Thomas, the Commanding General of the 62d

Fighter Wing in California, who is a member of the Air Advisory Committee, made a detailed study of his fuel allocation and came up with the information that pilots in his Wing would have to be restricted to TWO HOURS of flying in each month for the balance of the fiscal year. The story was the same elsewhere.

Now it is common knowledge that as flying time increases, so does the proficiency of the pilot and the unit and at the same time, the number of accidents decreases. Every flying safety survey shows the direct relationship of proficiency to accidents. The more a pilot flies, the more proficient he becomes and the less vulnerable he is to accidents. This is fact and the records to prove it are available in the Pentagon and the Air Force Office of Flying Safety at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia.

The reduction in flying time for the Air National Guard would save an estimated \$4,000,000. Mark that figure well. To save it, the Air National Guard may lose a number of fine young men. Lives are at stake here. How many lives are worth \$4,000,000? To save lives, the Section 5 Committee on Air National Guard policy recommended 180 hours as the minimum necessary for every Air Guard pilot. This coincided with Air Force's own estimate in its training directive of December, 1946.

The Air Guard presently is going into intense transition from conventional aircraft to jet aircraft. The major accident rate for jets is substantially higher than the current Air Guard rate. In the light of this, Air Guard pilots should be getting more flying time, not less. Under no consideration should they be allowed fewer than 125 hours per year.

In Fiscal 1949 Air National Guard accidents claimed 50 lives. If the present restriction continues in effect, the Air Advisory Committee estimates that 12 to 18 more pilots will be killed in Fiscal 1950.

Disregarding the fact that every jet aircraft wrecked will cost an average of \$166,500, ask yourself this question: Are 12 or 18 lives worth \$4,000,000?

We believe that \$4,000,000 can be saved somewhere else and we believe, too, that when this matter is called to the attention of the Secretary of Defense, he will agree it is false economy to gamble with the lives of Air Guardsmen.

*E. Walsh*

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## CONTENTS

The President's Page	Inside Front Cover
Artillery Captain to the White House	2
Washington Report	6
How to Skid-Proof Your Mortars	7
Uncle Sam's Army Camels	8
Practice Makes Perfect	12
Wings for the Airman	14
Room for improvement	15
Pentagon Paragraphs	16
The 48th Infantry Division (23d in a Series)	18
Fire the Recoilless Rifle Indoors	20
Sentinels of Stone	22
Model Gun Battery	23
Posting the Guard	24
Sound Off!	32
As We See It	Inside Back Cover

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*Dear Guardsmen;*

The scores of Christmas cards we received from privates and generals and National Guard units and others certainly brought a touch of color into our establishment, and, tastefully ornamenting the base of the Christmas tree, got an attentive viewing from all hands at the office Christmas party.

And we're delighted to receive, and to pass on a unique greeting, "From the NCOs of the French Foreign Legion to our comrades of the war years." That part of the greeting was written in English, fortunately, for we were having trouble getting past the printed part about "Les Sous-Officiers du 3me B.E.P. adressent a leurs camarades," and so on. The card came from Sgt. Chef von Schneider, 3d B.E.P. SETIF, Constantine, Algeria.

\* \* \*

Right at this moment, we're looking for that "ivory tower" where, they say, editors seclude themselves. For a construction and moving spree is under way, and it's hard to collect our thoughts.

The 'phone just went dead. Installers are moving the switchboard and they've cut the cable that now snakes across the reception room floor like a tripwire for unwary feet. A couple of men are grunting and heaving the teletypewriter into a new location.

A plumber is dissecting a Rube Goldbergish contrivance of pipes and valves, preparatory to relocating the water cooler.

Our thoughts are pulled from the typewriter by a new, grating noise: an additional desk is being shoved into our cubicle.

There's a sudden banging practically under our feet: a workman is breaking through the composition flooring, so that he can fish out some 'phone and squawk-box wires.

Two delivery men plunk huge crates of steel partitions and fixtures smack in the middle of the floor, out in the big room where most of the Association and publication staff do their stuff. That's the tipoff; we've been through the erection of partitions before. If you can imagine 10,000 dental drills boring simultaneously into your jaw, you can imagine what it's like when the bandsaw starts screeching through that metal. We have business out of town; it's going to keep us there until the job's finished!

*The Staff*

### OUR COVER

Never before have we repeated our cover picture, and we're not trying to set a precedent now. But the so-called "Militia Clause" of the Constitution is the rock on which the National Guard has been built. And it's tied so closely with the sentiments expressed by General George Washington, that we feel it's worth restating in the month of our first President's birth.

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