

GUARDSMAN

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FOR some time there has been a growing concern among National Guard leaders about the matter of training, and its proper placement in the scheme of things. This has surfaced many times when and where Guardsmen congregate and give thoughtful consideration to priorities. Most recently, at the National Guard Bureau's Management Conference in Cheyenne, several Adjutants General rose to express concern again over the fact that, while training is and has to be the reason for the Guard's peacetime existence, it seems that more time is spent on management problems.

The need for good management, using modern techniques and systems, must be recognized as essential in our age of technology. Reporting systems, inspections, maintenance requirements, financial management, are just a few of the names that are used to describe the vast number of activities that go to help a commander and the Defense Establishment to determine how well the units and organizations are meeting certain objectives and to plan and program for the future.

But when a list of the large number of inspections and reports is reviewed, all of which are aimed at improving management, suspicions arise that they may be detracting from the main purpose of the National Guard: training in peacetime to meet readiness requirements. It appears that the primary mission is not being given the emphasis that it should.

The Air Guard is being inundated with inspections, many no-notice, which not only increases uneasiness among those being looked at, but tends to make the units spend more time anticipating the unexpected—and in preparation to meet inspection standards.

The Technician structure indicates that Training Technicians are fewer in number and lower in grade than other full-time officer positions at all levels.

Retention and recruiting has been set as the number one priority. This is followed by getting and maintaining new equipment, and military support. And reporting deadlines are inviolate.

The concern, then, about training and getting it into proper perspective appears to be well-founded. Several years ago MG LaVern E. Weber headed a committee appointed by the Adjutants General to study training problems. That committee came up with several recommendations for improvements in a report that contained many excellent ideas. Nothing much came of the report, mainly because the NGB does not have the responsibility for training, it residing with the Active Services.

There have been some encouraging signs. The affiliation program where Guard units are tied-in with Active units, the Army-appointed Board for Dynamic Training, and a permanent follow-on US Army Training Board, appear to be tackling the problems directly. The NGB recently injected itself into the picture by having four officers from the field study the problem. And the NGB/NGAUS are in the process of creating a long-range study group to look at training and other related areas of interest. The Army Chief of Reserve Components, Adjutants General and others recently have expressed much concern over the need for close-in training sites to facilitate weekend training. Out of all this many notable improvements may come.

If all of the techniques and procedures used and experimented with to improve the management of the Guard do, in fact, tend to deemphasize the primary mission of training in peacetime, then priorities should be reordered. All of the straight A's received for the management of men, money and materials are worthless if the subject of training is flunked. ♦



MG James F. Cantwell
President

National Guard Association
of the United States

Too Many Inspections?

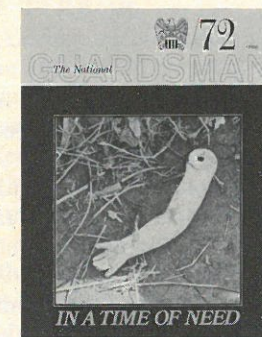


Photo of broken doll's arm captures pathos and tragedy Guardsmen faced while aiding victims of West Virginia flood.

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