

A Time for Action

THERE appears to be general agreement at higher Pentagon levels, and among National Guardsmen and Reservists themselves, that manpower recruitment and retention is our biggest challenge.

There likewise is a broad consensus that it will be more difficult to maintain Reserve Components strengths in a no-Draft era than it will be to keep an all-volunteer Active Force adequately manned.

The National Guard was one of the first to recognize the magnitude of the problems that would arise in an all-volunteer age, and likewise one of the first to launch some positive, self-help efforts to revitalize its recruiting and retention processes. From the beginning, we accepted the necessity of doing all we could for ourselves before we could expect much help from others.

Starting as early as 1969, while the all-volunteer idea still was being debated in high Government circles, we initiated our own studies and attitude surveys, and started assembling groups of working Guardsmen to pick their brains for fresh ideas.

This Association prepared reports on what to expect in a draftless future, conducted seminars for senior Guard leaders, and used every means at its disposal to make Guardsmen aware of the urgency of the looming crisis. The NGB developed full-scale recruiting programs, built an expanded recruiting structure in the States, created and conducted training courses for recruiters, and broadened its production of advertising materials aimed at today's youth market. In all of these, we were well in the forefront of the other Reserve Components.

Equally important, the NGAUS was among the first to propose and sponsor legislation which would provide new Federal incentives for the Reserve Forces.

We intend to accelerate and improve our efforts. In our most recent move, the NGAUS sponsored a two-day meeting of top Guard leaders and Pentagon officials at Camp Blanding, Florida, to evaluate our position and determine where next to direct our efforts.

We have made significant progress. Army Guard strength today is only 12,000 below the prescribed level. The Air Guard enjoys a satisfying 103 percent. ARNG reenlistment rates for first-termers have shot up from nine percent to nearly 27 percent. Prior service enlistments have climbed steadily. Only in non-prior service enlistments are we still falling short.

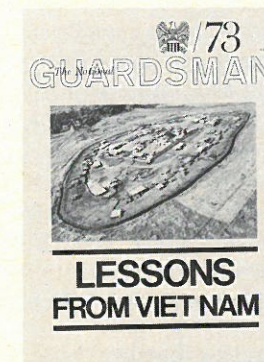
But the toughest days are just starting. Draft calls have been discontinued and small losses in the ARNG and ANG in recent weeks foretell a downward turn.

We therefore urge the Department of Defense to give more *vigorous* and *timely* support to our efforts to obtain new Federal incentives from Congress. Defense officials already have gone on record in favor of virtually every incentive we ourselves believe will be most effective, but it is going to take more than a mere endorsement to convince a dollar-conscious Congress that our need is real and urgent.

Defense leaders have leaned heavily on the Reserve Components to produce the level of readiness required by the more critical missions now assigned to us. If Total Force is to have real meaning, however, the Department of Defense must display the same energy in seeking badly-needed resources for the Reserve Components as it has exhibited in obtaining those resources for the Active Services—meaning recruiting and retention incentives, quickly, before we lose more of the experienced men, and potential new members, on whom our combat-readiness rests. ♦



Henry W. McMillan
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National Guard
Association of
The United States



The front cover shows the Plei Mrong Ranger border base in South Viet Nam, never penetrated by the enemy in more than eight years.

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