

Why we fight

THE National Guard fights with vigor and determination for the measures it regards as essential to mission performance and against proposals that would hamper its ability to respond rapidly and effectively when needed.

The intensity with which we wage our efforts, pro or con, is not always understood or appreciated by those with opposing views. Perhaps it will serve a useful purpose, therefore, if I recap the reasons we fight so determinedly on issues affecting the Guard.

First, we believe that the imperatives of national defense demand our best effort. Under the Total Force doctrine, the Guard's share of U.S. military power is so substantial that U.S. interests cannot be defended successfully unless the Guard is able to carry its assigned share of the burden. (The Guard provides 16 per cent of the nation's total organized military forces, 46 per cent of the U.S. Army's quickly-available combat power, and an equally significant portion of the U.S. Air Force's combat capability.) The threat to U.S. interests worldwide has not abated, but instead has increased, as objective analysis of Soviet Russia's growing military capabilities makes plain.

Second, events have shown repeatedly that Washington planners and decision-makers are not infallible. They are subject to honest, well-meant errors in judgment like other human beings. When those errors in judgment will detract from the Guard's ability to perform its assigned missions, we have no hesitancy in speaking out forcefully in opposition. We would be doing the nation a disservice otherwise.

This year, there are a number of positive legislative objectives to which we should be devoting major attention. These include several recruiting incentives, topped by tuition assistance and survivor benefits. They also include a number of measures in which we would be supporting Department of Defense/Army/Air Force goals, such as adequate funding for development and purchase of new equipment.

But unfortunately, we'll have little time to spend on positive measures because most of our effort will have to be exerted in battling an extensive array of hurtful, readiness-destroying proposals which have been introduced. Typical are these:

- Eliminate administrative duty pay.
- Eliminate the misleadingly-named "dual pay" for federal employees attending annual training in military leave status.
- Reduce many individuals or units from 48 to 24 drills a year.
- Cut the number of additional flying training periods in half, for both the Army Guard and Air Guard, and increase their length from four to eight hours.

• Make a similar switch in all other Army Guard additional drills. These are classic examples of actions that would appear to have merit, to the uninitiated, but which are immediately obvious to knowledgeable individuals as counter-productive in the extreme! They'll produce maximum damage to recruiting and training, and minimum savings in cost.

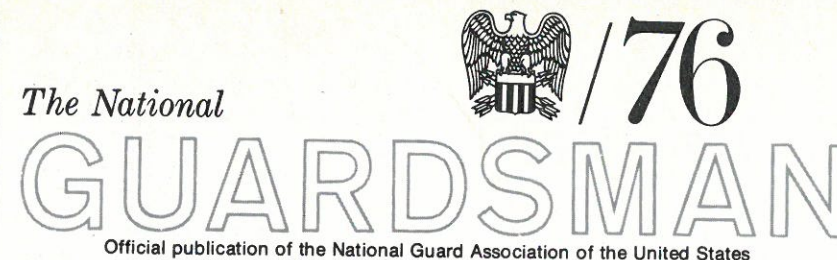
Why do we fight? Because we refuse to accept the premise that "father always knows best." Sometimes he doesn't, and there's too much at stake for us to accept bad decisions if we know them to be bad. Let me extract a paragraph from the policy statement our members adopted last September:

"The National Guard exists primarily to defend the nation, as a component of the Armed Forces. It alone, among the Armed Forces, bears another important responsibility, that of providing emergency assistance to civil authorities in the states. Its basic peacetime objective, therefore, must be to maintain the capability, professional skills and readiness to perform those critical missions."

We fight, openly and without malice, for the policies and resources we need to fulfill our responsibilities. To do otherwise would be to let the nation down.



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Bust of George Washington at National Guard Memorial conveys the courage and will that sparked the spirit of the militia.

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