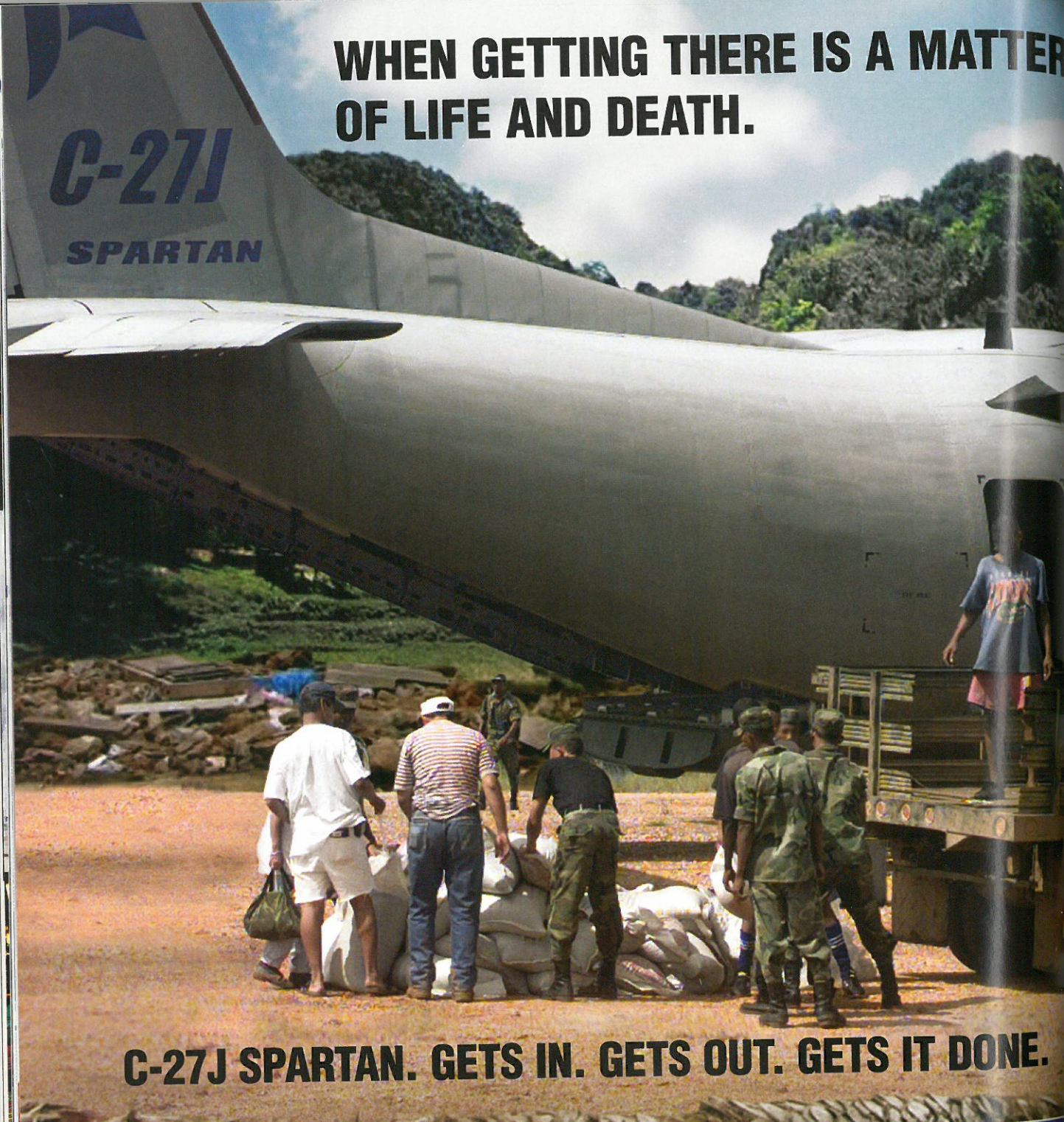


WHEN GETTING THERE IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH.

NATIONAL GUARD

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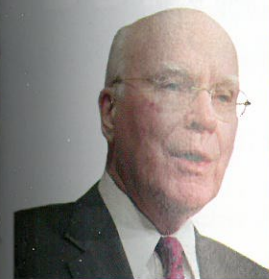
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While the Army Guard gets a 9.8 percent spending increase in the president's fiscal year 2008 budget request, the increase is lower than that of the overall military. Meanwhile, the Air Guard faces a tight fiscal belt that doesn't keep pace with inflation in the coming year.



30 Critical Mass

Congress has always loved the Guard, but with the war on terror, changing missions and equipment shortages, the attitude on Capitol Hill has switched from kind support to urgent advocacy. As a result, lawmakers continue to weigh in on an expanding variety of Guard issues.



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From the Battle of Blue Licks, Ky., to battles in Baghdad, history is the guide through which Rep. Ike Skelton, D-Mo., chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, tackles defense issues. He sat down with NATIONAL GUARD to share his thoughts on the nation's past—and future.



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Will the Pentagon support efforts to get the National Guard what it needs as demands on the force grow? How will the Air Guard's budget cut affect its ability to operate? Even with recruiting successes, equipment shortages—and expenses—remain at the forefront.

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