

Major General William E. Ingram (Ret.), President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### THE NATIONAL GUARD IN 1984

Many people connect the year 1984, now only a month away, with a book written by George Orwell, which was published 34 years ago. Thankfully, many of the predictions Orwell made in that best-selling work of 1949, considered ominous at the time—but still a year far off—have not come true.

One reason why that is so is because of American vigilance toward the United States' role as the leader of the Free World since World War II. The condition of the world is not necessarily better now than then. But it is infinitely better than it might have been had we not worked with vigor to ensure freedom was safeguarded by the provision of a strong national defense for the United States and its allies.

The support of a strong national defense has taken an even higher priority as a result of recent events around the world. Probably the most dramatic was the destruction of the Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 by the Soviets. This event has riveted the attention of the American people to national defense issues. No single event has shown without the cover of pretty wrappings or protective rhetoric the true nature of our adversaries. This is true no matter which interpretation of the Korean Air Lines event one chooses: intentional act or tragic mistake.

The threat to peace continues in other areas, too: the Soviet presence in Afghanistan continues; the war between Iran and Iraq near the strategically important Persian Gulf continues without an end in sight; Lebanon, with its corrosive civil war, remains unsettled; the unrest in Central America grows. Though America is at peace, the great danger that one or more of these affairs may escalate into something much more serious remains.

As I head into the second year of my presidency of our Association, I can report some progress in improv-

ing the condition of national defense through improvements in the combat readiness of the Air and Army National Guard.

Looking back, 1983 was a good year for the Guard, as NATIONAL GUARD magazine has reported on several occasions. The defense authorization bill signed into law by President Reagan in late September contained several provisions vital to the well-being of the Guard. One was an amendment that guarantees state control of the Guard in peacetime. This provision is the very embodiment of the militia clause of the U.S. Constitution.

Another important provision of the authorization bill was enactment of one of the NGAUS' long-time priorities: portal-to-portal medical protection for Guardsmen traveling to and from weekend training or other inactive duty training.

The year 1983 also saw improvement in the personnel strength of the National Guard, Army and Air. The greatest numerical gains came in the Army Guard, which reached an end strength of 417,000. The Air Guard is at wartime strength of 102,000, although shortages of personnel in critical skills remain.

It is, however, in the area of recruiting and retention that defines for us our most important task for 1984 besides the continued procurement of modern, deployable equipment. The year 1983 saw the end of the most serious economic recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s. That recession, we must all admit, created a favorable recruiting and retention climate—for economic reasons—but one we hope we won't see again for those same reasons. Therefore, I believe our highest non-budget priority for 1984 must be enactment of the GI Bill of educational benefits for the active military, Guard and Reserve to provide a necessary inducement to prospective

recruits. Such a bill (H.R.1400) seems to be getting favorable consideration in Congress.

A second non-budget priority must be the enactment of H.R.1497, a bill to provide medical protection for Guardsmen who become ill during drill or as a result of activities at drill. Previously, although this proposal has been pushed by the NGAUS, we have not been able to get much attention for it either within the Department of Defense or Congress. Now, however, with the emphasis put on physical fitness and weight control in the Army and Air Guard, it takes on a much higher priority. National Guard Bureau has determined that we cannot even require Guardsmen over age 40 to take a stress test during drill weekends unless H.R.1497 is enacted. This bill will give them medical protection in the event that such a stress test might trigger a heart attack itself. The desire of many commanders to require physical training on drill weekends provides additional incentive to push the enactment of H.R.1497.

Being physically fit is vitally important. It is a key ingredient in combat readiness in the Army and Air Guard. But without medical protection, it is difficult for commanders to demand physical training on drill weekends when it might result in illness.

1983 was a good year for the National Guard, and my expectations for 1984 are very high. As I move into the second year of my term as the NGAUS president, I am hopeful it will be a year of continued legislative support and equipment modernization. Since these areas are largely out of our hands, "hopeful" is as descriptive as I can be. I am also expecting improvements in our training and combat readiness, but of these I am confident. I am confident because the Guard is responsible for training and combat readiness, and the Guard meets its responsibilities.

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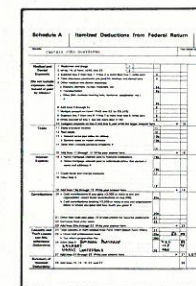
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# NATIONAL GUARD

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COVER: An infantry squad skis uphill into the brilliant sunset at Camp Ripley, headed for warm barracks. Photo, SFC Dennis P. Connor, 112th PAD. Design, Johnson Design Group.

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