



Major General William E. Ingram, President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### PHYSICAL FITNESS— A YEAR-ROUND NEED

There once was a time, probably longer ago than many in the National Guard would like to believe, when physical fitness wasn't considered too important. Except when a young Guardsman underwent basic training or a person went through officer candidate school, getting into shape and staying in shape, didn't occur that often.

Guardsmen are beginning to get the message today that physical conditioning is important to the individual soldier's well being and ultimately to the physical fibre of the Army. Actually, any debate on the issue is over, and the decision has been made at the highest levels. Our Army will be physically fit. There are several reasons why this is so and why Guardsmen must support and comply with the new program.

The Army is enforcing new physical fitness standards in part because of the direct connection between an individual's stamina and his or her ability to be effective in combat.

This is not new; the Army has had a PT test for many years. Some years ago, it was the five-event test that considered the soldier's ability to low crawl, run an irregular course, negotiate the horizontal ladder, throw a hand grenade 40 meters and run one mile. The new three-event PT test, which is being introduced into the Army National Guard this year, involves sit-ups, push-ups and a two-mile run. Active Army troops have been tested under this new criteria for two years.

At the time of the old five-event PT test in the active Army, the Army National Guard was administering a relatively simple physical fitness test that mildly tested Guardsmen. It could be administered in a few min-

utes at the unit's armory.

At the time of the five-event PT test in the active Army, the Department of the Army approved the use of the four-mile forced march as the standard of physical readiness for Guardsmen and Reservists. The four miles had to be negotiated in one hour. Walking four miles in one hour, while a fairly brisk pace, still does not present a rigorous challenge to many Guardsmen, particularly if they are young. Even over-weight Guardsmen who rarely exercised on their own could generate enough energy once a year to comply with this requirement.

The new standards for physical fitness will not be met with such a relaxed regimen nor attitude. Rather, they will require a year-round conditioning program to build up stamina and strength to "max" this test. It will require Guardsmen to work out physically on their own, at their homes, nearly daily. Certainly weekly.

There are at least two reasons why this must be so. First, since Guardsmen train as a unit just two days a month, no physical training program at drill will guarantee physical fitness. Commanders may encourage their troops to work harder during the month on their own by conducting rigorous PT periods at drill. However, without the individual's commitment to assume responsibility for his own well-being, establishing his own physical conditioning program on "his" time, the required standards will be elusive.

Perhaps more important, however, is the growing awareness among many commanders that there simply isn't time enough during any future mobilization to get troops into shape if they aren't well on their way to such physical readiness already.

Major General Herbert R. Temple, director of the Army National Guard, makes an interesting point about this mobilization-training time in his talks around the United States about Army Guard training. He is talking about training readiness and the time available after mobilization for such training. But this point translates perfectly to the physical fitness arena, too.

He notes that even a unit like a National Guard division won't have as much time to prepare for combat after mobilization as it thinks. For example, such a division might have 58 days between M-day and combat. However, Temple points out that all but 11 of those days are eaten up by transportation (aboard ship in many cases), the time between alert and actual reporting to the mobilization station and other such non-training activities. The same thing is true of the time required to physically condition a Guardsman.

In recent months, a test has been under way in Georgia and Wisconsin Army Guard units of the new three-event PT test. Preliminary results show the Army Guard generally is in poor physical condition. That is not surprising and certainly not encouraging.

What is plain from these preliminary results is that Army Guardsmen now will be required to change their lifestyles sufficiently to include physical conditioning as a regular part of their routine. Without it, they will not be prepared to meet the challenge of the new PT test when it comes to their unit. More important, they will not be in the physical condition required to make the Guard a credible force prepared for mobilization.

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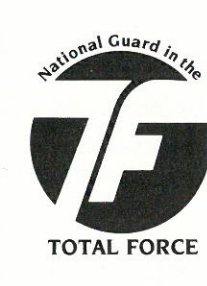
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COVER: Washington Army Guard's ocean-going boat, the FS-313, plies its way up the Pacific coast toward Alaska while on a training run to Juneau. Photo, Joe Zambone.

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