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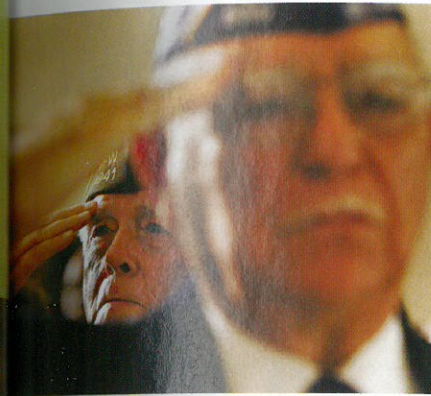


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# NATIONAL GUARD



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Inside

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## Features

**20 Another Conversation with Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum**  
*Change. The word has been synonymous with the National Guard during Lt. Gen. H Steven Blum's nearly three years as Guard Bureau chief. Today the Guard is busier, more joint and more capable than it was when he took over NGB in 2003. But the force is also smaller, more stressed and less certain of its precise role in future national defense. The general sat down with NATIONAL GUARD last month to discuss his NGB tenure and his thoughts about the Guard's future.*

**26 The Wait**  
*Active-component personnel can receive retirement pay right after they leave the service; so can Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) members. But traditional, part-time Guardsmen and Reservists must wait until age 60 to collect retirement pay. NGAUS leaders believe the current system is a relic and that Guardsmen, now part of an operational force, not a strategic reserve, have earned an earlier retirement-receipt age.*

**28 Soldier Stories**  
*The public is now closer to the battlefield than ever. This is thanks, in part, to the real-time connectivity the Internet provides. And not just big media is involved. Today, even individual soldiers are telling their stories over World Wide Web through "Web logs." These milblogs provide unprecedented insight into the daily experiences of troops overseas. But they also can be a headache for commanders.*

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