

# "What are we going to do when the well runs dry?"

**RECRUITING — RETENTION.** Those two words encompass the National Guard's biggest problem in a draftless, all-volunteer world.

How can the Guard — and the Reserves, where the problem is even more critical — recruit and retain enough qualified young men and women to keep the ranks filled?

Old timers are retiring. Young people are leaving, after their first enlistment, faster than we can replace them. On-board strength is dipping lower and lower, jeopardizing combat readiness. The Guard, with a Herculean effort by commanders and non-commissioned officers, kept manning levels high longer than the other reserve components, but even the Guard has slipped severely this past year.

What's at the root of our problem? Is there a clue for us in the song title? Is the well running dry?

We think not — not the manpower well. There are still enough young men and women reaching military age each year who could be persuaded, with just a little more motivation, to volunteer for part-time military service. It's not that the manpower well is drying up. It's just that the recruiting and retention pump needs to be primed with some well-chosen financial incentives.

The active services already have a wide and varied array of inducements to hold out, ranging from family medical care, through commissary/PX savings, and low-cost on-post recreation, to generous housing and subsistence allowances, selective bonuses, and a variety of special pays for scarce specialists and hazardous assignments.

By and large, few of the incentives cited above are available to the Guard and Reserve except in exceptional circumstances. Yet we must compete in the manpower market with Regular recruiters, and their bag of valuable inducements. Is it any wonder that we're running into trouble on the recruiting/retention front?

Financial gain is not the major motivator for military service, particularly in the Guard and Reserve. Comradeship, patriotism, learning opportunities, community pride, an itch for adventure — all are intangible factors that may play a larger

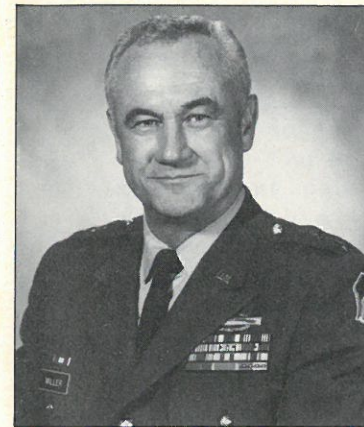
role than dollar gain.

In addition, dynamic and interesting training is an essential factor in retaining quality people. Recruiting and retention is easiest in units where training is realistic and challenging. Conversely, boring, time-wasting training probably drives more people out of the Guard and Reserve than any other factor.

Another element that plays hob with retention is the shortage of modern equipment and the uncertainty over when it will become available. Guardsmen and Reservists are told repeatedly of the urgency of their missions and the increased importance of their role under the Total Force Policy. Yet much of their equipment is too outdated to be effective on a modern battlefield, while the up-to-date equipment they so badly need is shipped off in massive lots to friendly foreign nations. Guardsmen and Reservists can hardly be faulted if they view the prospect of a "come as you are" war with some anxiety under those circumstances.

Even when you accept the influence of such factors on recruiting and retention, however, it does not lessen the need for tangible financial incentives to attract new members into the reserve forces and induce present members to stay longer. In general, the Active Army and Air Force agree with this reading of the situation. They have repeatedly agreed that some additional incentives would be needed to maintain high strength levels. The prestigious Defense Manpower Commission likewise agreed, and said so in pointed terms.

In recent weeks, the Department of Army has drawn up a Readiness Improvement/Recruiting Enhancement package designed to bring a turn-around in Guard/Reserve recruiting and retention. Among the range of steps it proposes are three promising financial incentives — educational assistance, Federal income tax exemptions for the first \$1,500 of Guard/Reserve pay, and a test of enlistment/re-enlistment bonuses. The program could help us reverse our downward strength trend and recover our losses. Already, however, the hatchet squad is at work, threatening to emasculate the Army program before it gets out of the planning stage, burying its posi-



Maj Gen Richard A. Miller  
(Oregon Army Guard),  
President,  
National Guard Association  
of the United States

tive proposals under a torrent of negative PBDs (Program Budget Decisions).

The strength problem was clearly visible a year or more ago. All of us — the Administration, DoD/OMB, the Congress, the military departments, the Reserve Components and associations like our own — should have been working in cooperation to provide new resources and avert the losses. Instead, DoD fired its array of destructive proposals over to Congress, and the reserve community had to spend the rest of the year beating those proposals down. This left no time for positive efforts in support of the Guard and Reserves.

Let there be no mistake as to our intentions as we prepare for the 1977 legislative year. NGAUS will be seeking to convince the Administration and Congress of the critical need for some recruiting/retention incentives. We expect to have the active help of all of the Reserve Components, and a number of other military/veterans associations, in that effort.

If proposals again are made that will destroy readiness and reduce Guard/Reserve take-home pay, like last year's array, we will oppose them with all our strength. If this occurs, we again will look to Guardsmen in every community and at every level to help us convey the real-world effect of such proposals to Congress.

Meanwhile, we in the Guard must take those steps that we alone can take to improve the retention atmosphere — improve our training, economize and use our assets wisely, and cooperate fully with those in the Army and Air Force who are working to make Total Force a reality.

## Features

<b>The Air Guard Overture</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>ANG "apple-splitters" dominate air defense weapons meet — again.</i>	
<b>The Battle of Trenton</b>	<b>8</b>
<i>Washington overcomes the elements and the enemy to win his first great victory.</i>	
<b>Annual Training '76</b>	
<i>In pictures</i>	<b>24</b>
<i>Texas Style</i>	<b>26</b>
<i>In Italy</i>	<b>28</b>
<i>Tell the brass . . .</i>	<b>29</b>
<i>They are just soldiers . . .</i>	<b>30</b>
<i>In England</i>	<b>31</b>
<b>Dateline: Disaster</b>	<b>32</b>
<i>Guardsmen perform emergency service.</i>	

## Photo contest winners

## back cover



## Departments

<b>Washington Report</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>View from the Hill</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>NGAUS Travel Service</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Letters to editor</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>You ought to know</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Recruiting newsmakers</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Posting the Guard</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>People in the news</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Pentagon paragraphs</b>	<b>40</b>

**Cover:** Montana ANG pilot Capt Rex Tanberg gets a victory embrace from fellow Guardsman Capt Bruce Bramlette after returning from the final flight which clinched Montana the F-106 category title at William Tell '76.

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**Notice:** THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN was not published in December due to a strike at the printing plant. We now are back in business. Thank you for bearing with us.  
— The Editors

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