



/73

GUARDSMAN

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7

RECRUITING SUCCESS STORIES 2

Army Guard recruiters tell how units made or exceeded their authorized strength.

HOME-MADE, WEEKEND WAR 24

"Free State" Army and Air Guardsmen show the way to really dynamic training.

"OKC IN '73" 27

Everything's big in the "Sooner State", site of the 95th NGAUS General Conference.

AIR GUARD UNITS AND
AIRMEN EARN HIGH AWARDS 28

DEPARTMENTS

WASHINGTON REPORT	10
VIEW FROM THE HILL	13
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW	22
POSTING THE GUARD	30
RECRUITING NEWSMAKERS	38
PENTAGON PARAGRAPHS	40
LETTERS	40

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Readiness Has Many Faces

A TEXAS Army National Guard Lieutenant chides the NGAUS, in a letter, for over-emphasizing "fringe benefits" (meaning recruiting and retention incentives) as the solution to our No. 1 problem, manpower.

In his view, "our greatest challenge in the Guard is to provide better training at Guard drills" if we are to attract and keep good men and women.

I cannot find fault with his belief that productive, interesting training is a major factor—perhaps the *decisive* factor—in individual decisions to enlist and reenlist. Men who feel that their time is being wasted in a sterile, thought-deadening "re-hash of the same old hash", as the Lieutenant terms it, will leave the Guard at the first opportunity and will deter others from joining, regardless of financial rewards.

But two points need to be better understood by working-level Guardsmen, as the Lieutenant's well-reasoned but incomplete observation demonstrates. First, the Guard's most fundamental objective is *combat-readiness*, of which manpower procurement is only one factor among many, all equally essential. Second, within the narrower confines of the manpower problem, training too is only one influence among many. Just as essential in the attainment of high readiness levels, and in our ability to get and keep the right kind of men and women, are such critical ingredients as ample quantities of modern equipment, efficient administration, fair personnel policies, competent leadership, well-conceived recruiting/retention programs, good maintenance, and *adequate financial reward for individuals*, to identify only the most significant. None can be slighted. And improvements are needed in each area, not in the Guard alone but throughout the Armed Forces.

A great deal already has been done to invigorate training, to which the NGAUS has contributed substantially through its sponsorship of studies, conferences, committees and think sessions. Army Guard units are gaining from closer affiliation with similar Active units, with the talents and resources of each available to both, under the mutual support system. Army Guard officers are contributing to the work of the innovative Combat Arms Training Board at Ft Benning, and made substantial contributions to the "Steadfast" reorganization plan, under which much specialized Active Army training assistance soon is to be channeled directly to Guard/Reserve units. The Air Force provides specialist cadres to help the Air Guard make difficult conversions to new aircraft. Army Guard thinking is reflected in CONARC's new multi-level training concept, which will reduce repetition in training and elevate training levels. The NGAUS and the National Guard Bureau jointly sponsor leadership and training studies whose results eventually are felt further down as they are refined and implemented.

The incentives we seek are an important tool to help us attract and keep the right kind of men and women. They already have proved their effectiveness in the Active Forces. They are not the *only* solution to our manpower problem, but we recently have given them priority because they are badly needed *now* to prevent continuing losses of highly-trained men. Without them, too, junior leaders are compelled to spend too much time on recruiting and retention—time that could be better spent on preparing and presenting worthwhile, imaginative training.

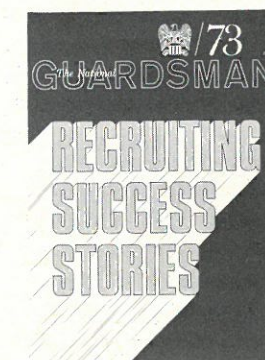
I commend our Texas correspondent on the dedication and solid reasoning displayed in his recent letter. I hope others like him will take the time to make their thoughts known to the NGAUS and to the National Guard Bureau. Making the Guard a more effective military organization is a job which we all share, individually and collectively.

In the future as in the past, the NGAUS will attempt to serve as the catalyst which encourages others to take the actions which it cannot itself undertake.

Better training? By all means. But better recruiting tools, too, plus improved administration, maintenance, leadership, personnel management, and all the other elements which will lead to our ultimate goal, improved combat-readiness. ♦



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National Guard
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The United States



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