

## A crucial role

IT is worthwhile, periodically, to renew our dedication and sense of purpose by reminding ourselves of the crucial role our Association has played in creating today's modern, professional, well-supported National Guard.

It wasn't always this way. President Harry S Truman used to delight in reminding young Guardsmen that he received no drill pay when he belonged to a Missouri artillery unit before World War I. In fact, he paid a small sum for the privilege of drilling each week, with the contributions going for the care of the horses and the armory.

Guardsmen today tend to take for granted the far-reaching federal support they receive. They forget that the vast sums of money appropriated for the Guard each year, the huge inventories of equipment, the modern armories and facilities, the skilled technicians, and the substantial financial rewards that individual Guardsmen receive for their services, have all come to us in the past few decades. It is no exaggeration to say, also, that most of those resources came to us only after long and often-bitter battles waged by the NGAUS in Washington, supported by the states.

The Guard is unique, with features (like state control in peacetime) that do not permit it to fit precisely into the conventional patterns so cherished by the active military establishment. Consequently, it has found it necessary to conduct an almost ceaseless struggle since the early 1900s:


- To firmly establish itself as a first-line component of the federal military establishment.
- To preserve its identity and cherished state affiliation.
- To obtain the support so essential to an effective military force.
- To obtain the same financial rewards and benefits for its members, proportionately, that are granted to the active services.

The NGAUS has served both as the spearhead and the unifying force in this long struggle, developing a consensus from the often-disparate views of Guardsmen in the states, and conveying the consensus to Washington officialdom. The results of that century of struggle are worth recalling:

*Federal mission and funding?* Attained in 1903, strengthened in 1908 and 1933. *Armory drill pay?* Achieved in 1916. *Technicians?* Introduced in 1924, expanded year by year into the force of 50,000 we depend on today. *Guard/Reserve retirement?* Enacted in 1948 after several years of NGAUS effort. *Federal funding for armories?* Launched in 1950, again after long NGAUS effort.

The litany is long. *Parity with the Active forces on pay scales* — firmly established in the 1960s after repeated Pentagon attempts to pay Guardsmen at a lesser rate. *Re-employment rights for REP trainees* — 1960. *Medical care for Guard retirees and their dependents* — 1956. *Post exchange privileges* — granted for year-round use in 1973, broadened in 1974. *Fulltime Serviceman's Group Life Insurance* — 1974. And these are only a few examples among many.

Almost as numerous are NGAUS' successes in averting undesirable actions. Several stand out: establishment of an Army Guard strength "floor" of 400,000 in 1959 that has held firm for 17 years against Pentagon assaults; defeat of attempts to reduce Air Guard strength and eliminate flying units; elimination of many of the most harmful features of several major Army Guard reorganizations; rejection of Administration proposals to rescind \$161 million in FY 1975 ARNG/ANG funding.

The NGAUS has been successful in its endeavors because of the wide support it has always been given by the National Guard officer corps. In FY 1975, to illustrate, 98 per cent of the Army Guard's and Air Guard's active officers were paying members of the NGAUS. Our goal in FY 1976 will be the other 2 per cent. 



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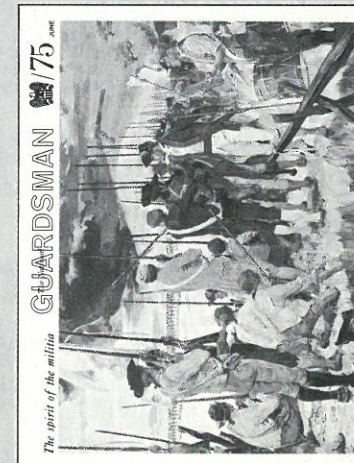
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The spirit of the militia — depicted on this month's front cover by colonial militiamen who twice turned back the red-coated British tide in The Battle of Bunker Hill.

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