

The best sales-pitch is a well-trained unit

LEADERS of the National Guard and Reserves have been saying emphatically that the Reserve Components need help — now! Manpower levels have been steadily falling for more than two years.

In the Army Guard, one of the hardest hit, for every 10 individuals our units enlist, 11 to 12 others end their periods of service and fail to re-enlist.

Specifically, we need some selected recruiting and retention incentives and an expanded force of recruiters and career counsellors. It's extremely competitive out there where Guard/Reserve recruiters must beat the

bushes for new members. They're faced with a reviving civilian job market, and an aggressive force of active service recruiters carrying a whole bagful of enticing incentives.

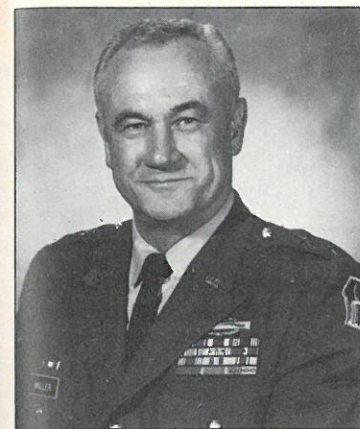
The help we seek requires federal funding. It isn't free.

Our request is not unreasonable. It's easy to say, as some have, that we can't solve our manpower problem by simply throwing more money at it. The fact remains that the Department of Defense has provided *no new incentives at all* to bolster our recruiting and retention with the sole exception of Servicemen's Group Life Insurance, which Guardsmen and Reservists pay for themselves! From the Department of Defense has come only repeated avowals that more study is required to make sure we make the best choice! I believe the Guard and Reserves can be pardoned if they view the idea of more study with more than a little cynicism. The specific incentives to which we're referring have been under study for five years or longer! What assurance have we that they can produce the data needed in a few more months if they haven't been able to do it in five years?

Nevertheless, we shouldn't ignore the view that money is not the sole solution to our recruiting and retention problems. Among the endless multitude of studies that DoD is so fond of, are several showing that we lose more members to boredom and a feeling that their time is not being well-utilized than to any other factor.

Recent National Guard Bureau analyses suggest strongly that the biggest motivator we could offer Guardsmen for continued service would be exciting, productive, mission-oriented training. That's something we can do on our own. The problem is probably greater on the Army side than on the Air. With a large proportion of their force working full-time at being a Guardsman, and with outstanding cooperation and support from their "gaining commands," Air Guard commanders have ample assets to conduct first-class training. With units scattered far and wide, and at most two technicians per unit, however, the ARNG problem is more difficult.

That's why NGB has been seeking DoD and Congressional approval of full-time training NCOs for each company. So far, the effort has availed them little. DoD turned the proposition down for FY 1977 and '78, but it



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will be proposed again for FY 1979. At some point, the proposal must prevail because it makes sense.

Nevertheless, there is much that commanders and their junior leaders can do right now, without that additional assistance, to make training more interesting and more fruitful.

There's an extension of the principle of self-help that deserves consideration, as well. It can best be expressed, I think, in these straight-from-the-shoulder terms: Letter-writing is great, to insure that public officials are acquainted with our needs, but the best "sales" pitch we can make is good, well-trained units.

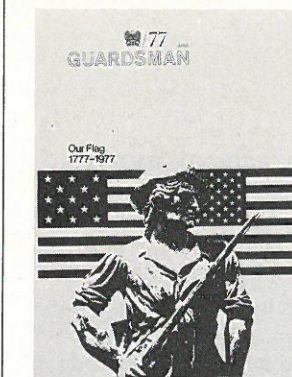
We have good units in the Guard, but none are so good that they need no improvement. And many of them still have a long way to go to attain the readiness level required for short-notice mobilization and overseas deployment into a combat environment, most particularly in the ARNG.

So while we're seeking help in the form of recruiting incentives and more recruiters, we also must continue to push ahead on our own. We must improve our training on our own. We must produce better units, utilizing our own extensive experience and energy.

But, having said all that, we repeat our initial premise. The Guard and Reserve need help — now! If it is delayed a little longer, the help will come too late!

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