



President's Message

Maj Gen John L. France (ret.), President, NGAUS

Toward Maintaining the Technician Force

The National Guard Association of the United States has been struggling for the past several years with the issue of full-time manning for our units. Budget year 1995 (for FY96) is shaping up as a critical cycle for this vital subject.

Last year, this Association and the Guard's leadership were successful in blocking an administration move to cut the Guard's military technician force by 20 percent over five years. Such a cut would have been and will be catastrophic if allowed to stand. What actually was happening was a double hit on the Guard's full-time structure. We have absorbed the legitimate reductions associated with force structure draw-downs. However, the administration's proposal—a part of Vice President Al Gore's Reinventing Government Initiative—sought to reduce "civilian" federal employees across-the-board.

Beginning in 1980, the Congress has consistently supported an adequate level of military technicians for the Guard. That was the year that the Carter administration sought to do much the same thing: reduce the number of our military technicians in connection with an effort to reduce the Department of Defense civilian work force.

As we have said before in this space, our military technicians should not be considered when such civilian reductions in force are proposed. This is because they are not civilians. They are members of our units,

and they function as a piece of the readiness equation of any unit. The National Guard Technician Act of 1968, which created our military technician system, tied itself to the Civil Service System solely to provide a fair and uniform basis of pay and retirement to the full-time force. This was long before the AGR program was launched by Congress in the late 1970s. There were no "green card" full-timers in those days.

The justification for rejecting this

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Reinventing Government argument in 1995 is much the same as it was 15 years ago. Perhaps what we really are seeking to avoid is reinventing the wheel. The Guard's units are insufficiently supported by full-time help as it is, the opposite of the cuts proposed here. In the Army Guard, full-time manning never reached even 70 percent of the validated requirements. Today, it has slipped to about 60 percent on average, with the lower-tiered units now sitting at about 50 percent of required.

An ancillary issue regarding our military technicians also has surfaced. On May 1, an advertisement was published in several major U.S. newspapers suggesting several

billions of dollars could be saved if all the AGR full-time force was converted to technician. We have at least two problems with the assertions contained in this ad. First, the amount of savings is not accurate. The figure given is approximately what would be saved if the AGR program was abolished

completely and all the personnel eliminated—and not replaced with military technicians. Second, this is no time for these organizations to be making such an attack. The Guard's leadership is seeking to speak with one voice this year on obtaining full-time manning, and we have been doing a pretty good job of that. The same should be true of technician unions.

We also are supporting several other pro-technician initiatives this year. The first is two proposals to provide Civil Service credit for title 32 AGR duty. This credit would apply to a Guard full-time person who was converting from AGR to technician, or who had previous title 32 AGR time.

The second initiative is a proposal to provide more "leave" time for military technicians who are deployed on numerous or lengthy overseas missions. One example is the 29th Infantry Division's Special Operations Battalion. Another is the frequent two- to three-week aerial refueling and airlift missions routinely undertaken by the Guard utilizing volunteers. If one of our Sinai soldiers is a technician (and assume at least one is), they run out of military leave (15 days) and ordinary leave (30 days) in short order. The proposal would permit additional leave while the individual is on active duty. We also know that such a provision would apply to many Air Guard flight crews that are only to find themselves gone for several weeks at a time when things get hot.

This year, the Guard leadership has three fairly simple messages. One is to maintain and support our technician force. Preserving our technician force is improving its benefits is a major part of this. The technician force is the backbone of a major part of the Guard's readiness posture. The second message should be a vital interest to all of us.

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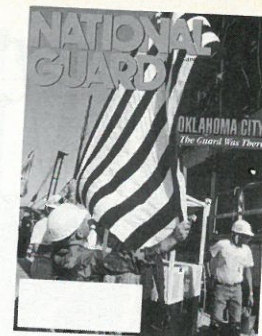
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June 1995. The NATIONAL GUARD MAGAZINE (ISSN 0893-3945) is published monthly, by the National Guard Association of the United States, 1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Telephone: (202) 789-0031. FAX: (202) 682-9358. E-mail: ngaus@aol.com. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 1995 by the National Guard Association of the United States. All rights reserved. All members of the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard are \$20 per year. The bulk rate for orders of 100 issues or more is \$1.50 per issue. The editor welcomes original articles on national defense, with emphasis on the National Guard. Send them to NATIONAL GUARD, One Penn Plaza, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.

NATIONAL GUARD

June 1995, Volume XLX, Number 6

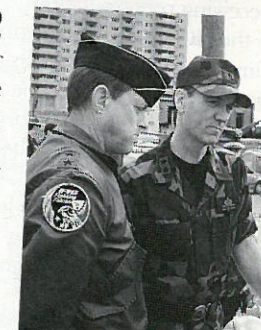


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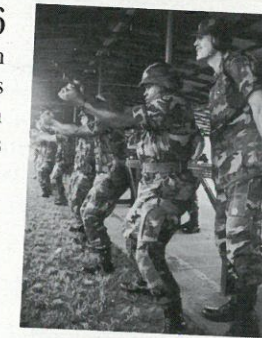
Army Guard Responds to Tragedy	14
An Oklahoma Army National Guard vehicle moved down a rubble-strewn street. This was not Kuwait, it was the downtown area of Oklahoma City, the heartland of America. Army Guard members, who have responded to tragedy on many foreign fields, now responded to tragedy in their own neighborhoods. Guard members were among the first relief workers at the bomb-ravaged Alfred Murrah Building. As military police (MP) secured the area, Guard generators provided power that allowed the rescue effort to continue 24 hours a day.	



Air Guard Is the Pentagon's Eyes and Ears	22
In response to the Oklahoma City bombing, the Oklahoma Air Guard provided photographic coverage of the bomb site to the Pentagon's Joint Combat Camera Center. "Sooner" MPs staffed a shelter, safe from the media's prying eyes, where families could wait for news of their loved ones, or, with the help of National Guard chaplains, begin to grieve. While MPs kept curious onlookers at a distance, Guard forensic experts helped authorities identify the victims and notify the families of those trapped inside.	



The Guard's Classroom Is all Grown-Up	26
The LaVern E. Weber National Guard Professional Education Center (PEC), Little Rock, Arkansas, continues to expand its educational capabilities in response to the Guard's needs. From its humble beginnings 20 years ago, when the first class was conducted in a trailer, PEC has grown into a modern and well-respected training and conference center. Recently, the center was reorganized into five separate training centers, this, along with expanded use of distance learning teaching methods, has expanded the accessibility of the Guard's classroom for all Guard members. It's time for school!	



Keystone Air Guard's Eye in the Sky	30
The Pennsylvania Air Guard's communication whiz-kids perform a mission that is unique to the Air Force. Since 1967, the 193d Special Operations Group (SOG) has conducted psyops (psychological operations) missions that have transmitted all over the world. Their mission, Coronet Solo, has taken the Keystone Guard members around the globe. The mission's importance, and the 193d's ability to get the job done, have made the 193d a unit whose services are utilized not only by the Air Force, but by the Army, Navy and NATO, as well.	

