



MG Ansel M. Stroud Jr., President, NGAUS

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### GUARD HAS STAKE IN SAVING COMMISSARIES

It would be ironic, and quite unfortunate, if just as the National Guard has gained an effective commissary shopping privilege, the military "lost" its commissaries.

Is that too extreme a prediction? Perhaps, but there is little doubt that the commissary store system as we have known it in the military is under attack in Washington. That attack comes from a number of directions, but the principal objective commonly sought is to "privatize" the commissaries. A test of such a proposal may come as early as this year.

Commissaries, as the word implies, originated during the 19th century in the Army primarily as a way of providing for military personnel who were stationed in remote places. The Army of the 1800s, of course, was stationed, primarily on the frontier. Pay was extraordinarily low, and shopping at the commissary was established early-on as a major monetary benefit to the soldier and his family.

As a militia nation, of course, the standing Army in the United States was held at a very small size until World War II, except for wartime periods. The post-World War II military remained fairly large because of the deterrence policy required by the Cold War. As posts and bases were created, activated or expanded, commissaries were built or upgraded to serve the military stationed there.

The Guard and Reserve, in the pre-Total Force era, were never really given any effective commissary shopping privileges. Yes, we could shop during periods of active duty of more than 72 hours. But since annual training was about the only such period for most Guardsmen, this didn't amount to much of a privilege. Most Guardsmen ignored what little privilege they had.

Given the full implementation of the Total Force Policy in the 1980s, members of the Guard and Reserve increasingly sought a commissary

shopping privilege all during the year. This was sought, to include in a series of NGAUS General Conference resolutions, because if the Guard is to be a full partner in the Total Force, which it is, then we in the Guard deserve some measure of all the privileges and benefits afforded to any member of the military service.

This year-round commissary shopping privilege was included in the FY87 Defense Authorization Act. It provides 14 days of shopping any time during the year based on annual training days. We were quite satisfied with this benefit because, as a practical matter, about one day a month of commissary shopping is all the benefit that can be used by most Guardsmen and their spouses.

This commissary shopping privilege is one of the best troop benefits the Guard has achieved in a decade. When fully or efficiently used, it can result in grocery savings for Guard families of 25 percent. Many Guard spouses have been pleasantly surprised at what the commissary does for their grocery budgets. These spouses say that certain supermarkets may, from time to time, offer better individual prices. But on the average, a commissary will be cheaper, and significantly so.

Given those savings, it perhaps is no surprise that the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), the national association that represents retail grocers, would like to get rid of commissaries. They are unwanted competition with a lower price, just like the PX gas station. Particularly in metropolitan areas where large supermarkets are prevalent, the FMI would like to capture that business. FMI has suggested several scenarios for wresting the commissary system away from the services.

The principal one of these is called "privatization." This would involve a private company operating the commissary(s). The theory is that the same savings would accrue to the

military family as now do. However, it seems clear—particularly from a test several years ago—that for such savings to continue to be made available, a federal subsidy would be required. Congress is unlikely to provide such a subsidy to private enterprise over a long period of years. Thus, privatization should be opposed.

Before privatization is likely to occur, a "test" probably will be undertaken. Indeed, the FY87 Defense Authorization Act mandated such a test, which hasn't been launched to date. It may be this year. The military perhaps shouldn't oppose this test. The earlier test at the Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, was unsuccessful for the private sector. The company that undertook it went broke trying to provide the same level of service and the same prices as the federally operated commissaries now give.

\*\*\*

A major aspect of the attack on the commissary shopping system was the Grace Commission, appointed by President Reagan several years ago to study areas for saving federal tax dollars. Headed by J. Peter Grace, chairman of the W.R. Grace Co., this commission came up with a number of recommendations for savings, noting in some instances what was termed "waste." Military commissaries were one such area; at least, commissaries in CONUS.

This is a false argument, however. Commissary shopping is a part of total military compensation. If the military family has developed a food budget based on the savings available through commissary shopping, then abolishing commissaries amounts to a pay cut.

The commissary system is now a Total Force system. It is essential that it be preserved for the use of all components of the Total Force as we move toward complete integration.

*National Guard*

# NATIONAL GUARD

MARCH 1988

Volume XLII, Number 3



#### COVER:

Pilots and crew chiefs of the 140th Tactical Fighter Wing, Buckley ANGB, Colorado Air National Guard, ready their planes for inspection before takeoff during the 1987 GUNSMOKE competition. Photo, Paul Bower. Design, Johnson Design Group.

#### FEATURES

### Good Leadership—The Key to Readiness 14

Assuming command brings a host of challenges and responsibilities to the new commander. COL Lynn O. Walker presents the simple, basic principles that should be practiced by all leaders to produce loyal, combat ready troops.



### Expectations of a Warrior 18

Being a warrior is not easy. Warriors are expected to meet extremely high standards in appearance and accomplishments, and they are expected to ensure that other soldiers strive to attain their best.



### GUNSMOKE '87 20

Testing National Guard readiness is an important ingredient in its role as part of the Total Force. Competitions such as GUNSMOKE '87 help analyze where the National Guard is in respect to its goals for readiness and capability.



### Maj Gen John B. Conaway Speaks Out 28

Director of the Air National Guard, Maj Gen John B. Conaway, discusses GUNSMOKE '87 and its effects on National Guard readiness.



### 45th "Thunderbirds" Return to Germany 30

The 45th Infantry Brigade, descendants of the famed Thunderbirds, returned to Germany during REFORGER last year. They used light infantry skills during the exercise missions.



#### DEPARTMENTS

President's Message	2
Washington Tie-Line	4
Views from the Field	6
Capital Focus	9
Newsbreaks	10
Guard Stars	12
Membership List	12
Pentagon Paragraphs	36
People	38
Posting	42
Publisher's Notebook	46

#### PUBLICATION STAFF

MG Bruce Jacobs (ret.)  
*Publisher*

LTC Reid K. Beveridge  
*Editor*

1LT Pamela A. Kane  
*Managing Editor*

Capt Jean Marie Brawders  
*Assistant Editor*

Belinda Reilly  
*News Editor*

Col David A. McLaughlin (ret.)  
*Controller*

Don DesJardins  
*Circulation Manager*

NATIONAL GUARD, March 1988. The NATIONAL GUARD Magazine (ISSN 0163-3945) is published monthly, by the National Guard Association of the United States, with editorial and advertising offices at One Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001. Telephone (202) 789-0031. Second class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 1988 by the National Guard Association of the U.S. All rights reserved. All members of the NGAUS receive NATIONAL GUARD. Nonmember subscriptions: \$10 per year. The Editor welcomes original articles bearing on national defense, with emphasis on application to or implications for the National Guard. Postmaster: Send Form 3579 to NATIONAL GUARD, One Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001.