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## The Simple Truth

**A** CREDIBILITY gap of major proportions has developed between Americans and their Military Establishment. The statements of military men, and information disseminated by the Armed Forces, are viewed with skepticism, particularly by younger Americans.

For the National Guard, there is another aspect to this unfortunate development which works to our disadvantage. Many Americans (again with emphasis on the under-30 generation) *know* less about the Guard, its dual role, its functions, and its crucial importance than we sometimes tend to assume. Thus, the skepticism is harder to overcome because accurate knowledge frequently is lacking.

This is ironic in a society whose very trademark is its extensive capacity for conveying vast quantities of information to virtually every citizen. Yet, it may be that this very capacity to deluge ourselves with words and ideas is at the root of our problem, at least in part.

Americans are subjected, daily and hourly, to such a barrage of words on such an endless variety of subjects, that they cannot digest more than a fraction of the total. Through newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, radio, television, direct mail advertising, billboards, posters, films, product labels and a variety of other means, we are bombarded unceasingly with information, ideas and opinions.

Thus the problem for the National Guard becomes, to some extent, one of cutting through the welter of words to make itself heard and understood.


The Guard's numerous, important contributions to the security of its society can be summarized in a few simple statements:

- The National Guard is the primary backup for the Active Army and Air Force when emergencies arise.
- The Guard gives the Active Services a capability for rapid surge build-ups when needed.
- It gives its parent Services the staying power they must have when armed conflicts erupt.
- It concurrently provides the States and local communities with the ability to cope with large-scale emergencies in the field of natural disasters and civil disorder.
- It satisfies these two critical needs—one for armed conflicts, the other for domestic emergencies—at far less cost than any feasible alternative.
- Its performance record shows that it does a good job in both areas of responsibility.

Those are simple themes, easily enunciated and readily understood. They may, by their very simplicity, offer a means of surmounting some of the problems created by the communications explosion. Perhaps an honest, frequent enunciation of these basic themes, expressed in simple terms, will serve the Guard better than mere word count in any effort to make our purposes better understood.

Nor should we exclude Guardsmen themselves from the need to hear these basic explanations of our contribution to the common welfare. Surveys show that they too know far less about the force to which they belong than some of us will concede.

The Armed Forces cannot long retain their vitality and their ability to defend the Nation unless they enjoy the confidence and broad support of the people they serve. Support comes from understanding which is, in turn, a product of knowledge. The problem, for us, boils down to one of conveying information to our fellow-citizens in terms that they will hear, understand and assimilate. It is a problem that we dare not leave unsolved. ♦



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