

# Guard needs help, not control

ONE obstacle has seemed continually to follow another, in the National Guard/reserve struggle for additional federal recruiting and retention assistance. In March, for example, two crises hurt our efforts.

First, educational assistance and re-enlistment bonuses were moving smoothly through the House Armed Services Committee approval process when a crippling amendment was adopted during subcommittee markup. It would have placed such narrow restrictions on eligibility as to largely defeat the intended purpose of the two incentives. The full committee voted down the restrictions, but it took more than a week of intensive effort by Guardsmen and reservists in Washington and across the country to acquaint committee members with the full implications of the restrictions. (See "View from the Hill," elsewhere in this issue, for details.)

Then, late in March, the House Appropriations Committee authorized the reprogramming of some \$23 million from FY 77 funds to bolster Guard/reserve recruiting, but tied so many new conditions to the shift of funds that it will have a severe, adverse impact on recruiting unless the committee modifies its stand.

In approving the request, the committee:

1. Cautioned against creating costly, new Reserve Component recruiting "management structures" that are "separate from, and autonomous to, the Regular Commands." Instead, it directed that reservists (and presumably Guardsmen as well) "called to full-time active duty for recruiting should be assigned to the Regular Recruiting Commands," then farmed out to their hometowns for duty.

In the view of some, that would leave control of recruiting in the hands of unit commanders, but this Association does not agree with such an interpretation. We think it would shift effective control of recruiters (and thus of recruiting) to the active services, to which Guard leaders and NGAUS object.

2. Going a step further, the committee said its approval of the shift in funds represents a "clear understanding" that providing additional production recruiters and recruiter support personnel "will eliminate the requirement for Guardsmen and Re-

servists to use paid drill periods to engage in recruiting activities."

"For this reason, no paid drill training time should be used to conduct recruiting, recruiting-related or retention activities by persons other than fulltime recruiters," it explained.

3. The committee flatly turned down NGB's request for full-time career counsellors to improve retention, emphasizing its belief that "primary responsibility for retention" rests with unit commanders.

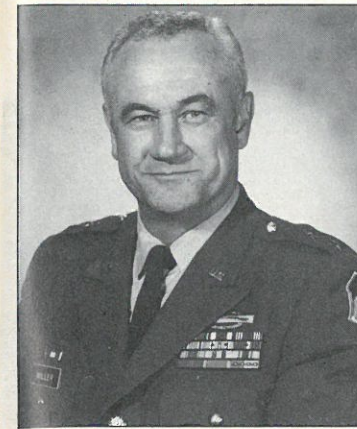
The Army Guard is to benefit to the tune of \$7.512 million out of the total of \$22.981 million. NGB had sought \$2.164 for additional full-time recruiters (boosting recruiter man-years from 900 to 1,284), and \$5.349 million for full-time career counsellors. The committee approved the full amount but said it all must go for recruiters.

Guard leaders share the committee's aversion to elaborate and expensive new management structures. They aren't required — for the Guard, at least. Through the years, the Guard by and large has been the most effective of the Reserve Components at the recruiting game. We have done this by making our normal command structure fully responsible for recruiting. We have officer "R & R" coordinators in each State, but unit commanders manage our recruiting programs.

We oppose any change in that well-tested system. Guard recruiting has always had a strong hometown flavor, built around the aptly described "buddy system." Guardsmen who like what they're doing bring in their friends to sign up. Recruiting for the active services is an entirely different proposition, and active recruiters find it difficult to adjust to the Guard's needs.

Moreover, shifting management of Guard recruiters to the Recruiting Commands will split the responsibility between the states, which have statutory responsibility to keep the Guard manned, and the active forces. Our system would lose some of its strong community orientation, and much of its effectiveness. What we need most is more federal assistance, not more federal control!

We agree with the committee that the number of individuals being diverted from training to perform recruiting chores should be reduced to an absolute minimum.



Maj Gen Richard A. Miller (Oregon Army Guard), President, National Guard Association of the United States

But the committee took an all or nothing approach that deprives the commanders of much-needed flexibility. Commanders need enough flexibility to supplement the full-time recruiting effort with whatever part-time recruiting assistance they can utilize effectively. It's a near-desperate situation that may require some extraordinary measures to reverse the trend. It's not the time to deprive commanders of any legitimate recruiting resource.

As for full-time career counsellors, it's more cost-effective to retain an experienced individual than to recruit and train a replacement. ARNG recruiters brought in 108,000 new members in FY 1976, an exceptional accomplishment. But in the same period, some 135,000 Vietnam-era obligors walked out the door. Guard commanders need experienced counsellors, to make one-on-one efforts to retain current members, as much as they need recruiters to bring in new people.

Our objective is to see the HAC ruling modified:

- To leave Guard recruiting and retention responsibilities where they've always been, in the Guard's hands at state and unit level.
  - To leave commanders with the flexibility to use part-time recruiters to supplement their full-time force, to reverse our present downward trend.
  - To re-open the door for full-time career counsellors.
- The Guard can handle its own recruiting and retention chores, and do it effectively, given some fully justified federal assistance.

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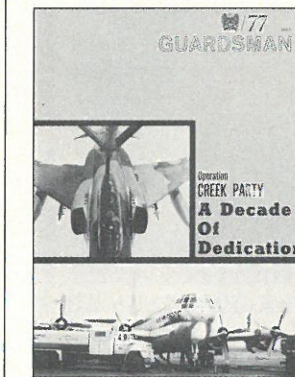
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Cover: An Air Force F-4C Phantom refueling somewhere over Europe and an Air Guard KC-97L tanker getting a refill at Rhein Main AB, Germany, depict the key aspects of the 10-year mission just concluded — Operation CREEK PARTY. —(KC-97L photo by MSgt Edward Lile, Utah ANG)

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