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## NATIONAL GUARD

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Volume 57, Number 4  
www.ngaus.org

### Features

#### 24 Back To Panama

A rotating band of 400 Guardsmen are traveling to Panama this spring as part of "New Horizons," a humanitarian exercise designed to provide assistance to Central America and the Caribbean. This year's foray onto the isthmus, however, carries a heavier diplomatic weight. It is the first time significant numbers of U.S. troops have returned to the country since the U.S. military closed its last base there in 1999.

#### 28 Next Battle

On the heels of a quick shooting war in Iraq, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld finally revealed details of his plan to reorganize the military when the Pentagon delivered "The Defense Transformation for the 21st Century Act" to Congress. But liberating Iraq might prove easier than winning support for the plan, which gives the Pentagon unprecedented flexibility to manage the armed forces—including the National Guard.

#### 30 Pain of Separation

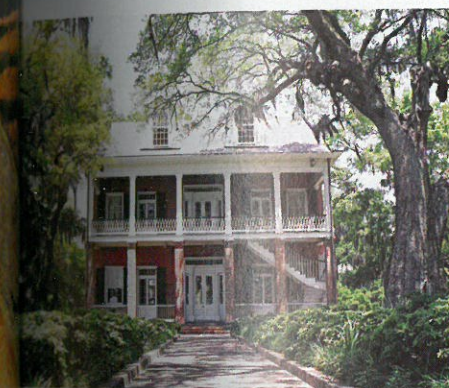
When thousands of Guardsmen deploy overseas, their families are left behind to cope with not only the temporary loss of a loved one but the fear and uncertainty about their safety. For children, the process can be particularly troublesome. But experts do have some ideas that might ease the pain for these families until their loved ones finally return.

#### 32 Mississippi: Playground of the South

The NGAUS 125th General Conference and Exhibition returns to Biloxi, Miss., Sept. 14 to 17, after a 10-year absence. But those who attended the 1993 gathering will find a changed host city and state. New casinos, golf courses and other attractions have turned a sleepy beach resort into one of the nation's fastest-growing tourist destinations.

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