

GUARDSMAN

The National

NOVEMBER xxvii 10

TRAINING FOR READINESS:

A VITAL TEST FOR THE GUARD	2
"THE BEST TRAINING AVAILABLE"	4
UNIQUE UNIT EARNS "BOUQUET"	5
"THE GREEN LIZARDS" VS. "THE BLACK BULL"	6
A TRIP TO REMEMBER!	8
ITALY CHARMS ARIZONA UNIT	10
PHOTOS OF ANNUAL TRAINING	12
ENLISTED GUARDSMEN'S GROUP MEETS	22
MANAGEMENT: KEY TO SUCCESS	24
<i>Air Guard Commanders get the latest word.</i>	
THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT TO THE NGAUS	26

DEPARTMENTS

WASHINGTON REPORT	14
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW	20
LETTERS	23
POSTING THE GUARD	32
PENTAGON PARAGRAPHS	40

COMING NEXT MONTH

COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE OF THE NGAUS' 95TH
GENERAL CONFERENCE

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"...Unacceptable Risks..."

IN the near future, we are going to see the Pentagon launch a deliberate move to make drastic reductions in the National Guard and Reserves.

This comes at the worst possible time. The Active Military Forces of the Nation are at their lowest ebb. They have undergone a series of sharp cuts in strength. Their readiness is compromised by post-Viet Nam turbulence and by their struggle to maintain strength in a no-draft environment.

The National Guard, on the other hand, has reached the highest level of combat readiness in its history and has almost fully recovered from its earlier losses of men.

Our great concern is that the reductions we'll soon hear about stem at least in part from pressures to reduce defense spending rather than from National security considerations.

The National Guard strongly opposes any reduction in the size of our organization or of any of the Reserve Forces. We believe most earnestly that such reductions will expose the Nation to unacceptable risks. We believe that in the case of the National Guard, they also will bring about a serious deterioration in the ability of the States to cope with natural disasters and other emergencies.

Already, the Active Military Forces of the Nation have been reduced to a level that only marginally satisfies the Nation's defense needs. The Army, for example, has been reduced to barely 800,000 from a Viet Nam peak of 1-1/2 million men, and sizeable additional cuts are being seriously considered. Additional cuts have been proposed and debated in Congress.

Leading officials in the Pentagon have told us on several occasions that, with such large slices being taken from the Active Forces, it was imperative that the Guard and Reserves be maintained at high strength and readiness levels. I feel certain that those statements reflected their best military judgment. It seems inescapable, therefore, that the Reserve Forces reductions now being studied reflect political and economic pressures, more than sober military assessments.

Additional cuts in the Active Military Forces will subject this Country to risks that prudent men should not be willing to accept. If cuts also are imposed on the Guard and Reserve, we put the Nation in even greater peril.

We have taken some very significant steps in the past two years to reduce Cold War tensions and reach a sensible level of accommodation with Russia and China. The prospects are good that we can make further progress toward real peace through such initiatives as the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction negotiations.

But all further progress inevitably will stop if this Nation unilaterally reduces its military strength to the point that there no longer is any need, from Russia's viewpoint, to negotiate. It is strength, not weakness, that deters war.

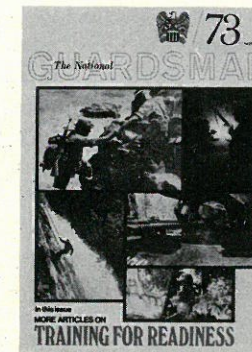
The National Guard has passed through a time of trial, generating the capability and momentum to maintain our prescribed strength levels on a purely volunteer basis, with no draft to assist us. Now, the worst of our problems are behind us. Instead of losing men, we are now showing steady gains. The Army National Guard today is only 12,646 men below the 400,000 traditionally authorized, or a mere 3.1% shortfall. The Air National Guard's shortfall is only 2.7%, or 2,500 men below its recently-increased authorized strength of 92,000.

We now feel certain that we can maintain those strength levels, with a little help from the Federal Government in the form of some additional membership incentives. And we are equally convinced that those strength levels are a military necessity, that reductions at this point will subject the Nation to greater risks than informed, thoughtful men would be willing to accept.

The Guard wants to reduce defense costs as much as anyone else. We, more than professional soldiers and airmen, are civilians at heart, aware of the heavy tax burden Americans carry. But there is a limit below which further reductions represent wishful thinking and foolhardiness rather than a reasoned assessment of our National security needs. ♦



Henry W. McMillan
Major General, FLARNG
President
National Guard
Association of
The United States



THE FRONT COVER:
Training, Army Guard-style (from top left, clockwise): Florida Guardsman helps buddy after landing from LCM in Panama Canal Zone... Photo by SP4 Jimmy Hair snaps a Guardsman of 30th Inf Div during test exercise... Tight squeeze for a North Carolina ARNG Tank driver... 42d Inf Div soldier "communicates"... Oregonians got unusual training in Alaska.

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