

President's Message

Maj Gen John L. France, President, NGAUS

Be a Part of the National Guard's Future

Last month, in my inaugural message to you, I covered a variety of issues that I believe are important to the continuance of the National Guard Association as a leader in serving the needs of today's National Guard. One of the issues called for you to become more active in your state associations. Over the past month, those words came back to me in even louder tones.

What prompted me to include that point was the Association's ongoing efforts to encourage company grade participation in our activities. Prior to the 116th General

It made me reflect. These weren't dedicated soldiers or airmen suddenly leaving the Guard in droves; these were part of what we've come to know as the "Vietnam spike." Whatever their reason for joining then, the bottom line is that a great many found purpose in the Guard and made it a career. Now, these same people are closing out their careers. The spike is on its trailing edge.

I recalled back to my own Vietnam experience, one that I had shared with many of these colonels, lieutenant colonels, chiefs and sergeants major. I remembered how often our older, grizzled, white-haired commanders annually exhorted us to support "the Association." I remember questioning one commander about why we should belong to any organization that "just took our dues, sent us a magazine and tried to sell us insurance."

"If you want some control over our destiny, if you want to have some positive impact upon your organization and the people who serve in the National Guard, you need to look no further than your state association...Be a part of the future. Support your National Guard Association today!"

I half expected him to take my head off. Instead, he looked me straight in the eye and, in a tone devoid of anger, explained. "Because you are the future of the National Guard," he said. "You're tomorrow's leaders. Some of you will be commanders, general officers, even the adjutant general. Someday you will be the Association."

There was no way any of us could have known where our future would lead that day. For me, however, it didn't matter. Something in his words suddenly made membership in the Association perfectly logical to me. I renewed immediately and, eventually, became a life member.

Now, as I look over the shoulders of those who are hanging up their uniforms, I see faces—young faces—dedicated and eager to serve. I do not, however, see them supporting or being active in their state associations. Instead, I hear the versions of the old question: "Why should I support them? What have they done for me lately?"

The answer today is still as simple as it was back then. Those of you who are just starting your careers in the National Guard are its future. The question was never what your Association had done or was doing for you. Your drill pay, benefits and the equipment you work with today, are part of a long list of examples that are the answers.

The questions, instead, are: Where is the Guard going in the future that will be a part of your life? How much of a role will you play in shaping the direction it takes? If you want some control over our destiny, if you want to have some positive impact upon your organization and the people in the National Guard, look no further than your state and national association.

I'm not saying you will take the world by the tail. Learning the process of change in the political spectrum takes time. You'll have to learn more about state and federal responsibilities; work on committees; and prepare resolutions. You'll also have opportunities to develop your ability to visualize and consider new concepts, as well as prepare to defend them in public forums.

This is the citizen part of the citizen-soldier equation. In my opinion, it's one of the best parts of being a member of the National Guard. That's why I urge all of you—lieutenants, captains, even newly promoted majors—to build the future not for yourselves, but for those who will follow you in the decades to come.

Generations of Guard men and women paved the way for us. Generations yet to come now count on us to keep the road open. Be a part of the future. Support your National Guard Association today!

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Features

Doing More With Less

The hot topic at the National Guard Association 116th General Conference seemed to be: What can the National Guard expect in the future? As the size of the force is drawn down, the defense budget shrinks and the call-ups increase, legislative, administration and Pentagon officials try to answer the question: "What's next for the National Guard?"

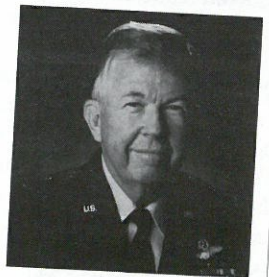
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The President's Annual Report

Maj Gen John L. Matthews gives Association members his last report as president of the National Guard Association of the United States. General Matthews has retired after a successful term as Association president, and at the Conference outlined some of the Association's accomplishments during his tenure and discussed what he would like to see for the National Guard and the Association in the future.

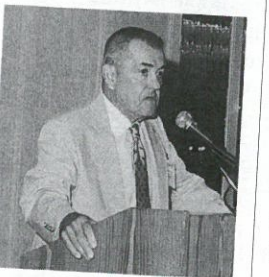
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Meetings of the Old and New in Boston

Former and future leaders of the National Guard Association gathered to discuss matters of concern to them. Former leaders gathered to discuss their still important role in the mission of the National Guard Association. The Company Grade Caucus selected their area representatives and stressed the importance of improved company grade communication to have their concerns better addressed.

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Ain't Recognition of...

One of the highlights of the NGAUS General Conference every year is the presentation of awards to deserving individuals and units. This year was no exception, with Senator Robert Dole (R-Kansas) being presented the Harry S Truman Award, the Association's highest individual award. A unit from New Hampshire received the distinguished Spaatz Trophy and units from Virginia, North Carolina, Louisiana and Utah were honored with the coveted Milton A. Reckord Trophy.

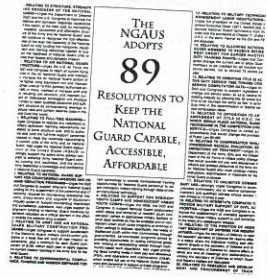
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116th General Conference Resolutions

The NGAUS Annual Conference is conducted every year to establish what the legislative priorities of the National Guard will be for the coming year. Resolutions are passed at the Conference and outline these priorities. A complete list of the resolutions passed at the 116th General Conference will let the membership in the field know what their Association is going after for the benefit of America's National Guard.

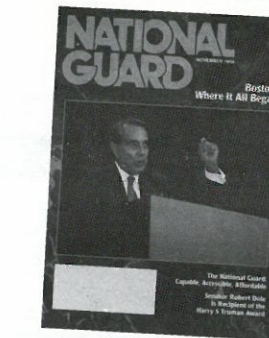
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RESOLUTIONS TO KEEP THE NATIONAL GUARD CAPABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE

Cover:

At the NGAUS 116th General Conference, conducted in Boston, Massachusetts, Senator Robert Dole (R-Kansas) discussed the important role that American leadership will play in the post-Cold War world and the dangers of downsizing. Photo by Massachusetts National Guard. Cover by Dennis and Sackett Design.



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