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DEAR GUARDSMEN: Here are a few thoughts off the top of the head, for those who regularly—or maybe only once in a long while—get involved in getting news (including pix) into THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN.

"Deadline" is one of the first things to keep in mind, after general newsworthiness. Ours is the first of the month preceding date of publication; for example, 1 Jan was the deadline for this (Feb) issue. Now, it's true that some extraordinarily interesting or timely item might get in a few days later, but, by-and-large, we've got to have the book just about wrapped-up by the first of the month.

And linked with deadline is the "timeliness" angle. An item that's tied definitely to a specific occasion has to reach us right away even to be considered. With so much lead-time involved, it must be fairly obvious that if something with a Christmas angle doesn't get to us by 1 Jan it can't get into the Feb issue, and any later than that, it's real dead. Who's interested in Santa Claus in March? —AGC

OUR COVER: The flavor of the past, when Muster Day served a practical rather than commemorative purpose, and troops on the battlefield responded to the unmusical bray and clatter of bugle and snare drum rather than to radio and flare, is captured in this Muster Day "still life" of Civil War equipage photographed for NGB by Herbert Lobel of NY—"props" from the USMA Museum.

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DO YOU KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOUR SIX-MONTHS
TRAINEES—OR DO YOU JUST

FARM 'EM OUT AND FORGET 'EM?

ASK any Army Guard Commander to single-out the one flaw in the six-months training program that causes the most trouble at the working level, and you'll usually get a reply like this:

"They don't train 'em like I ask 'em! I ask for a Supply Technician and I get an Infantryman. I sign-up a new man and mark him down for training as a Tank Mechanic but he comes back from his six months with an ordinary Driver's MOS. So I have to start all over again looking for a Mechanic—or train one myself. How does the Army think I can run my outfit right if they don't train my men in the specialties I ask for?"

Does the Guard Commander have justice on his side? Do the impersonal and anonymous "They" who run the Army Training Centers capriciously switch recruits from one training channel to another without regard to local needs?

The answer, from top level Guard sources as well as from the Training Centers themselves, goes like this: Yes, men earmarked for training in a specific MOS sometimes *do* wind-up in alien fields—but not in appreciable numbers and certainly not through mere caprice. In many cases, say these same sources, the switch in training grows out of poor judgment or faulty processing back at the Armory.

Not that the Army itself, and its Training Centers, are blameless. No operation as immense and far-reaching as the so-called "Take Six" program—meaning the compulsory period of six-months active duty training given all new

recruits in the Reserve Components—functions without error. Despite the best of intentions, orders *will* be miswritten, classes misscheduled, and men sent to the wrong post at the wrong time for the wrong course of study. The only wonder of it, say the men responsible for making the system work, is that the snafus have been so few in an operation with so many built-in opportunities for error.

214,000 GUARDSMEN "ALUMNI"

"Take Six" was born in 1955, by-product of the Reserve Forces Act of that year. Since then, approximately 214,021 National Guard recruits have signed their enlistment papers, then gone off to one of the Army Training Centers to learn their military ABCs. A smaller, but still imposing, number of Army Reservists have gotten their initial training at the same source. Out of the impressive total, says a National Guard Bureau spokesman, the overall picture is one of solid accomplishment—thousands of green recruits pouring into the hopper at one end of the Take Six Machine and six months later flowing from the spigot on the other end as soldiers with a good working knowledge of the military role assigned to them. The man you tab for Company Clerk usually winds up at Clerk's School; likewise the Mechanic, the Driver, the Rifleman and all the other more common categories.

But a small number go astray and most of them, says the same NGB source, are among the handful of men who must be trained in not-so-common or highly-specialized fields.

The training program is three-phased—Basic Combat (eight weeks); Advanced Individual, which is MOS training (eight weeks), and Basic Unit training (six weeks), where the combat soldier, the rifleman and the gunner, learn to function as members of a team. Specialists requiring longer periods of MOS instruction receive this training by extending the advanced individual phase. This results in a reduction in the length of the unit training phase for these "hard-skill" specialists.

Approximately 80% of the Guard recruits are trained in a basic branch MOS—Infantry, Artillery, Armor, or Engineers. Here, the demands of the training are widely understood, educational prerequisites usually are modest, and the Training Centers are geared to handle thousands of men with assembly-line precision. Mistakes, therefore, are few in number.

By contrast, men earmarked for training in a highly-specialized field—jobs like Helicopter Mechanic, Cryptographer, Electronic Repair Technician, Photography, to name only a few—must be separated from the great central flow of trainees and diverted into seldom-travelled byways where the processing techniques are not so well-rehearsed. Usually, they must be sent from the Training Center to some other post, where their prescribed course of study is given. Courses start at widely-varying intervals, not weekly as with the common specialist courses. Not



Surest way to prevent those annoying changes of course in mid-training is a thorough interview of each potential new recruit before he's signed up to make sure he's suited to the training, and later the duties, of the job you want him to fill. "Mistaking" is the single greatest cause of Training Center foulups, says NGB. —(DCARNG Photo)

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