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## Tell The Guard Story

**D**URING the nationwide debate that has raged since Secretary McNamara unveiled his plan to reorganize and merge the Reserve Components of the Army, one impression has emerged which causes concern to those of us who serve as public spokesmen for the National Guard.

This is that the Guard and its capabilities still are only imperfectly understood. Far too many Americans still think of the Guard as the kind of force it was 20, or even 30 years ago, before its role in national defense acquired such urgent importance. Far too many of our fellow-countrymen still are unaware, or are aware in only a fragmentary fashion, of the vast change that has been wrought in the Guard in recent decades as a result of its intensified Federal mission.

We have told the story of the "Missile Age Minute Men" as well as time and resources have permitted, but some of the discussion over realignment suggests that somehow, the message has failed to reach many Americans. Our performance as rescuers of disaster victims, and sometime maintainers of law and order, is recognized and appreciated, but there does not seem to be a comparably widespread awareness of the Guard's spectacular training innovations and achievements of recent years, of its dramatic advances in operational readiness, and its increasingly professional approach to the problems of national defense.

You can confirm this yourself. Explain the Air Guard's runway alert program to individuals whom you meet in daily life. Tell them of last Summer's precedent-setting "GUARDLIFT I," or describe the extent of the Army Guard's involvement in the NIKE-HERCULES network. Explain the Guard's compressed deployment timetables which both Army and Air Guard are training themselves to meet, or tell them that Guard airlift crews make some 1,300 flights overseas per year hauling defense personnel and materiel. The reply you most frequently receive will be: "Why, I didn't realize that the Guard was involved in anything so complicated as that!"

There seldom has been a period in our long history when the National Guard has played so crucial a role in national defense as it is playing today, nor has there been a time when it was discharging its responsibilities with greater skill and effectiveness. All that remains is for us to convey the full extent and complexity of our achievements to our neighbors and fellow-townpeople.

Tell the story of your own unit and its accomplishments whenever the opportunity offers, but put this story in its full perspective by relating it to Guard achievements nationwide. A West Virginia Air Commando Group recently completed six weeks of off-season field training in Panama, sending its officers and men down in three increments to learn, while simultaneously helping the Air Force carry on civic action programs across much of Central and northern South America. More than a thousand Army Guardsmen participated in the Active Forces "Exercise POLAR STRIKE" in Alaska in February, hundreds of them flown up from Stateside units. This Summer, Air Guardsmen and Air Reservists are airlifting some 11,000 Army Guardsmen to field training at sites spread all the way from West Germany and Fontainebleau, France, down through Puerto Rico, across the continent and out to Hawaii.

All these activities, and many more, have been or will be described in the pages of this magazine. Summarized and coupled with accounts of the training activities of local units, they offer an excellent means for giving Americans at every level a full and accurate picture of the modern National Guard—a Guard which can be categorized as skilled, well-trained, well-disciplined and militarily effective by the strictest Army-Air-Force standards. ♦



# GUARDSMAN

*The National*

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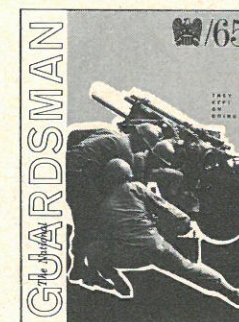
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Official publication of the National Guard Association of the United States. Publication office: Telegraph Press Building, Harrisburg, Penna. Second class postage paid at Harrisburg, Penna. All correspondence should be addressed to 1 Massachusetts Ave. N. W., Washington, D. C. 20001. THE NATIONAL GUARDSMAN welcomes original articles bearing on National Defense, with emphasis on the Army and Air National Guard. Manuscripts must be accompanied by return postage, and no responsibility is assumed for their safe handling. Domestic subscriptions for home delivery: \$2 per year. A year's subscription is included within NGAUS members' annual dues. Subscriptions to foreign addresses, \$2.50 per year. Single copies, 25¢. Copyright, 1965, National Guard Assn. of the U. S. All rights reserved.

JULY, 1965

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