The
best
sales-pitch
is a
well-trained
unit

EADEERS of the National Guard and Reserves have been saying emphatically that the Reserve Compe-
nent needs help—now! Maxpower levels have been steadily falling for more than two years. In the Army Guard, one of the hardest hit, for every 10 individuals our units enlist, 11 to 12 others end their periods of service and fail to re-enlist.

Specifically, we need some selected recruiting and re-
tention incentives and an expanded Reserve recruiters and career counselors. It's extremely competitive out there where Guard/Reserve recruiters must beat the bushes for new members. They're faced with a reviving civilian job market, and an aggressive force of active ser-
vice recruiters carrying a whole bagful of enticing incen-
tives.

The help we seek requires federal funding. It isn't
free.

Our request is not unreasonable. It's easy to say, as
some have, that we can't solve our manpower problem by simply throwing more money at it. The fact remains that the Department of Defense has provided no new incen-
tives at all to bolster our recruiting and retention with the sole exception of Serviceman's Group Life Insurance, which Guardsmen and Reservists pay for themselves.

From the Department of Defense has come only repeated
avowals that more study is required to make sure we
make the best choice! I believe the Guard and Reserve
can be pardoned if they view the idea of more study with
more than a little cynicism. The specific incentive is
which we're referring have been under study for five
years or longer! What assurance have we that they can
produce the data needed in a few more months if they
haven't been able to do it in five years?

Nevertheless, we shouldn't ignore the view that the
money is not the sole solution to our recruiting and reta-
tion problems. Among the endless multitude of studies
that DoD is so fond of, are several showing that we lost
more members to boredom and a feeling that their time
wasn't being well-utilized than to any other factor.

Recent National Guard Bureau analyses suggest
strangely that the biggest motivator we could offer
Guardsmen for continued service would be exciting,
productive, mission-oriented training. That's something
we can do on our own. The problem is probably great on
the Army side than on the Air. With a large proportion of
their force working full-time at being a Guardsman, and
with outstandings cooperation and support from their
"gaining commands," Air Guard commanders have many
assets to conduct first-class training. With units scat-
tered far and wide, and at most two technicians per unit,
however, the ARNG problem is more difficult.

That's why National Guard is seeking DoD and Congress-
ional approval of full-time training NCOs for each com-
pany. So far, the effort has availed them little. DoD
turned the proposition down for FY 1977 and '78, but

will be proposed again for FY 1979. At some point, the
proposal must prevail because it makes sense.

Nevertheless, there is much that commanders and their
junior leaders can do right now, without that addi-
tional assistance, to make training more interesting and
more fruitful.

There's an extension of the principle of self-help that
deserves consideration, as well. It can best be expressed,
I think, in these straight-from-the-shoulder terms: Letter-writing is great, to insure that public officials are
acquainted with our needs, but the best "sales pitch" we
can make is good, well-trained units.

We have good units in the Guard, but none are so good that they need no improvement. And many of them still
have a long way to go to attain the readiness level re-
quired for short-notice mobilization and overseas de-
ployment into a combat environment, most particularly in
the ARNG.

So while we're seeking help in the form of recruiting
incentives and more recruiting, we also must continue to
push ahead on our own. We must improve our training on
our own. We must produce better units, utilizing our own
extensive experience and know-how.

But, having said all that, we repeat our initial pre-
crease. The Guard and Reserve need help—now! If it is
delayed a little longer, the help will come too late!

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