THE CITIZEN-SOLDIER: THE NATIONAL GUARD'S GREATEST STRENGTH

force. The attraction to these pro-
grams comes from various sources. First
is the mission itself. Demand-
ing of time and skill, it is a jealous
mistress in terms of responsibilities.
Second is the attractiveness of the
programs themselves. By and large,
these are well-paying positions with
good benefits, ones that often allow
earlier and more lucrative retirement
than can be obtained in the private
sector.
As the programs grow in authorized
full-time strength and avocations
change to careers based on full-time
commitment, a highly skilled and as
devoted full-time work force emerges—a work force that can com-
plete any assigned mission and pass
with outstanding records the over-
lenging inspections levied by the Air
Force. It would be impossible today
to accomplish all this without the dedi-
cated, professional full-time force.
But let us take a look at the other
side of the ledger. What is happening
to the "weekenders" or "part-timers"
as Guardsmen are often, in today's
world, referred to?
If he or she is an aircrew mem-
ber and faced with a day-to-day flying
mission, chances are that by now they
have given up their full-time civilian
job and are dedicating their working
life to the flying mission. Or, they
have been forced through personal
decisions to leave the program.
Promotions, as well as command
positions, are unfortunately disap-
pazing for the part-time officer. The
promotion arises when command va-
cancies occur and part-time as well as
full-time records are reviewed and in
dividuals are interviewed. "Who will
be chosen for the command posi-
tion?" The answer always is, "The
most qualified man or woman." Good
answer on the surface, but when anal-
alyzed in depth, it almost always
means the full-timer who has had the
opportunity to attend special schools
and workshops and who has proven
himself through various courses of the com-
nander (who, most likely is also a full-
timer). So the system continues to
force the part-timers with fine educa-
tions and outstanding professional and
business careers out of the pro-
gram because the level of responsibil-
ity for their Air Guard careers will not
match the level of competence they
exhibit in the civilian sector.
We lose appreciation of the citizen-
soldier by his or her superiors not
sharing the difficulties of maintaining
a civilian occupation or profession
while jointly wearing the uniform on
duty days. We may develop a paroch-
ial view on military matters without
levels of influence from those who
do not understand the obligations in the civil-
ian sector. We become calloused to
the press of time demanded by a civil-
ian career. We become calloused to
the needs of the family, because our own
paycheck is delivered as an air techi-
nician without any concerns that are
often shouldered by the "weekend
warrior."
A career-oriented officer and
NCO must now ask: "Do I give up my
own career in order to progress in
the Air Guard?" This was a conten-
tion in previous years and should not be a contention for promo-
tion or advancement today. However,
it is.
... The citizen-soldier has served this
nation well in war and peace. It
stands to the very philosophy that our
founders fathers expressed in the
centuries. The citizen-soldier is an honor-
able concept, and should not be relegated
to a secondary position. The nation's
defense is of the utmost concern with
all of us who wear or have worn the
uniform. Let us not limit that participa-
tion now for those of us who take
the great pride in serving our country as
civilians as well as soldiers.