



NGAUS
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Notes

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New Air Force Chief Takes Charge, Predicts Change

Gen. Norton A. Schwartz became the 19th Air Force chief of staff during a ceremony in Washington, D.C., this week, pledging to “return the vigor and the rigor to all the processes and missions ... for which we have been entrusted.”

During the ceremony, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Schwartz’ goal “is to recommit the Air Force to the high standards of excellence that have always been its hallmark. He is one who has lived the core values of airmen and women: integrity first, service before self and excellence in all we do.”

Gates tapped Schwartz for the job after

asking Gen. T. Michael Moseley to step down earlier this year. Gates had lost confidence in Moseley after incidents related to the security of the nation’s nuclear arsenal, among other issues.

Schwartz, who was U.S. Transportation Command boss before taking his new job, said he knows there is work to be done to restore the service’s trust.

“Knowing our nation expects our very, very best, we certainly have some things to fix, some fences to mend and some challenges to overcome,” he said. “We will show ourselves worthy of the sacred trust our leaders, our joint brethren and

the American people place in us, because this business is all about trust.”

He said the Air Force’s ability to return 2,000 Georgian soldiers serving in Iraq to their homeland this week was evidence “we know how to operate, and we continue to support the joint team in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

He said the service “will work with a vengeance” to fix areas that are substandard.

Schwartz began his military career in 1973 after graduating from the Air Force Academy with a bachelor’s degree in political science.

Veterans Struggle with Alcohol Abuse

A Defense Department study revealed a troubling number of troops returning home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan abuse alcohol. The study was done by the Naval Health Research Center in San Diego and was published this week in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

The study, which included self-reported responses from almost 50,000 participants, found a higher rate of alcohol abuse among National Guard and Reserve members and more problems among younger service members.

Of responders, 4.8 percent of active-component members and 7.1 percent of reserve-component members reported the onset of alcohol-related problems after a deployment’s end. Six percent of active-component members and 8.8 percent of reservists and Guardsmen reported that they had begun heavy weekly drinking.

In addition, 26.6 percent of active-component and 25.6 percent in the

reserve components reported post-deployment binge drinking.

Dr. Michael Kilpatrick, the Military Health System’s deputy director for the force health protection and readiness programs, said the findings appear to show service members are using alcohol to self-medicate in response to psychological or physical issues experienced during their deployments.

New information provided in the study will help the Defense Department do a better job of education and referral for treatment when alcohol issues are identified on post-deployment health assessments, he said.

Family support and education programs can be refocused, he said, to address the problems with alcohol.

The National Guard is currently placing a director of psychological health in all 54 states and territories to help Guard members with a variety of readjustment issues and reintegration concerns.

Joining is Just the Beginning

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State Association Visits to NGAUS

Aug. 21	Maine
Sept. 10	Tennessee
Sept. 18	Nebraska
Sept. 23	Hawaii

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Confidential Reporting of Sexual Assault Considered

The U.S. military is considering a plan to allow sexual assault victims in the National Guard and Reserve to report the attacks anonymously. Currently, reserve-component members have to fill out a form to report a sexual assault.

This destroys all confidentiality, said Dr. Kaye Whitley, director of the Defense Department's Sexual Assault and Prevention Office.

After such a program was begun in the active-component, she said, about 1,800 sexual assault victims came forward.

"I believe that is 1,800 people who

would not have come forward otherwise," Whitley said. "These 1,800 people got counseling, medical care and assistance."

A change now being considered would eliminate the need to fill out the form to report a sexual assault, she said.

Her office is also preparing to institute a plan that would encourage service members to look out for each other to prevent sexual assaults. Whitley called it "bystander intervention."

"It's very similar to what they do on the battlefield," she said. "You look out for your buddy, so let us look out for our

buddy in other ways, as well."

The new program will be implemented in October 2009.

These and other issues were discussed last month at the department's annual sexual assault response coordinators' conference in Tampa, Fla.

"I would go so far as to say that the program is only as good as the sexual assault response coordinator," Whitley said.

She said, too, the successful program for preventing and reporting sexual assault relies on support from the command.

Claim Excess Baggage Fees on Official Travel

Service members traveling for official business, including deployments, will continue to receive full reimbursement for authorized excess baggage fees.

An updated fact sheet from the Defense Department's Per Diem, Travel and Transportation Committee explains the policy in light of new charges by several commercial airlines for additional checked luggage. The new fees are just one way airlines are trying to make up the revenue lost to high fuel prices.

Some airlines waive the baggage fees for service members, but some don't. And the fees and policies can vary widely from airline to airline. A service member can claim the fees on the travel voucher if he or she is authorized on the travel orders. A receipt is required.

The excess baggage fee for service members raised the ire of George J. Lisicki, the national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. A news report of a deploying soldier being charged \$100 for excess baggage got his attention. He asked the Air Transport Association to negotiate an agreement with member airlines to exempt military personnel.

James C. May, ATA president and chief executive officer, said the airlines by law must set all fees and customer service related policies independently.

ASSOCIATION HISTORY

Delegates rejected a proposal to broaden NGAUS membership to include officers of the Naval Militia at the 98th NGAUS General Conference in 1976.

Maj. Gen. Joseph G. May of Iowa, chairman of the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, reported that his committee had considered an Illinois proposal to include Naval Militia officers in NGAUS, but was recommending against such a move.

He said only two states had reported having an active Naval Militia, with a combined officer strength of less than 700. Thus, the membership potential would be small.

THIS WEEK IN GUARD HISTORY

Aug. 15, 1944: Southern France - Operation DRAGOON, the Allied invasion on the French Riviera, is conducted by three American infantry divisions making an assault landing between Nice and Marseilles.

Two of these divisions, the 36th from Texas and 45th from Arizona, Colorado and Oklahoma are Guard units largely composed of combat veterans who saw hard fighting in Italy. The troops meet little resistance and quickly move inland to secure the road between Cannes and Frejus.

Over the next few weeks, they drive north and, by early September, link up with American forces moving out of Normandy into central and eastern France.

