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## 'Geaux Guard' and the Shift to the All-Volunteer Force: The Economics of the Louisiana Army National Guard, 1973-1991

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‘Geaux Guard’ and the Shift to the All-Volunteer Force:  
The Economics of the Louisiana Army National Guard, 1973-1991

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of History  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
History

by

Titus L. Firmin

B.A., Rutgers University, 2014

May, 2018

*Dedicated to my daughter Evangeline  
and the memory of my MawMaw, Mayola Cheramie DiGiovanni*

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Titus L. Firmin  
Westwego, Louisiana  
March, 2018.

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## Abstract

After the Vietnam War, increased defense funds assigned to the Army National Guard stimulated and supported small communities in Louisiana. Recruits from economically depressed regions lined up to join the Guard because of the competitive pay and the generous education benefits it offered. In the mid-1980s, when a state budgetary shortfall threatened to limit the stream of federal funds and close local armories, communities in Louisiana rallied to keep the doors of their armories open. This paper examines how the readiness efforts of the Louisiana Army National Guard affected the economies of small communities as defense dollars increased following the shift from a draft army to an all-volunteer force and the implementation of Total Force Policy.

History, Cold War, Volunteer Army, Armories, Architecture, Economics, Conscription, Draft, War in Vietnam, Total Force Policy, First Gulf War, Education, Energy Conservation, Manpower



## Abbreviations and Acronyms

AD	Active Duty
ANG	Air National Guard
ARNG	Army National Guard
AVF	All-Volunteer Force
DOD or DoD	Department of Defense
FY	Fiscal Year
LANG	Louisiana Army National Guard
MVSB	Motor Vehicle Storage Building
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NG	National Guard
NGAUSA	National Guard Association of the United States of America
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OEM	Office of Emergency Management
TAG	The Adjutant General
UMT	Universal Military Training

## Introduction

Colonel Francis Thomas locked the door and hung a plastic clock face that said, “Will be back,” and set the time. Col. Thomas walked quickly to pick up a fried oyster po’boy from the Old Arabi Food Store on the corner of Royal and Friscoville. He worried that while he was gone somebody would stop by, waiting impatiently for him to return. There was something he had forgotten, something important but he couldn’t quite remember. He crossed back over Saint Claude, headed toward the exhibit of the two-man Renault tank out front of the Louisiana Military History and State Weapons Museum at Jackson Barracks. Thomas remembered what he had forgotten, a school field trip, just as he caught view of a group of twenty to thirty school age children. The students playfully waited out front of the dark red bricks of the old powder magazine. The red brick museum was one and a half stories, cheerful and brightly lit. Thomas led the schoolchildren through the museum that was home to over 2,000 historic items, including a 1765 British cannon, reputedly used at the Battle of New Orleans.<sup>1</sup>

Thomas’s personal interest was in World War II, so he led the children over to the exhibit of a German machine gunner and pointed to the uniform insignia. Thomas lifted his right sleeve and held his bare, disfigured bicep for the children to see. During the war he served with the famed 29<sup>th</sup> Infantry “Blue and Gray” Division, since D-Day on Omaha Beach until U.S.-Soviets forces met at the Elbe River. But in the last days of the war, a German machine gun team ambushed Thomas’s outfit from a haystack and wounded him in the arm. Even so, Thomas managed to return fire, killed the lead gunner, and forced the other surviving Germans to flee. Thomas bore the scars but the insignia of the man who shot him was now part of the museum. Thomas lowered his sleeve and told the children, “these weapons were used in wars to keep our

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<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Roehl, “Weapons Museum a One-Man Show,” *The Times-Picayune*,” March 02, 1986.

country free. They were made to maim and kill people. Take a good look at them and remember that we hope never to use them or any like them ever again.”

Colonel Thomas was not paid for his work at the museum. He was a one-man show, but Col. Thomas loved being able to work at the museum since he retired from the Guard. The museum accepted contributions but there was no admission fee since it opened in 1976.<sup>2</sup> Thomas had several employees to help, but authorization for their positions were eliminated by Guard leadership from the military department’s budget.<sup>3</sup> From 1982 to 1983, the military museum’s budget fell from \$13,000 to \$2,000 and in 1984 it was eliminated from the state budget altogether.<sup>4</sup> Even though the museum was no longer funded, Thomas was permitted to keep the museum open since he volunteered, and the electric bill of the old gunpowder magazine was relatively small. Thomas’s volunteerism and passion allowed the museum to remain open to the public, but it was not just the Guard’s museum that was affected by the budget cuts. By 1986, most of the Guard armories in Louisiana closed, putting at risk not only readiness and recruitment but also the Guard’s local economic footprint.

### Structural Framework

This paper will strive to understand how the readiness efforts of the Louisiana Army National Guard (LANG), from 1973-1991, affected the economies of small communities as defense dollars flowed for recruitment following the shift to an all-volunteer force (AVF) and the post-Vietnam policy of Total Force.<sup>5</sup> After the Vietnam War, increased defense funds assigned

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary*, Executive Budget, (FY 1983) Louisiana Documents, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

<sup>4</sup> State Budget FY84-FY87, Folder 25, Box 7, Ansel M. Stroud Jr. Collection, Louisiana National Guard Archives.

<sup>5</sup> The author will use various terms such as rural communities, small towns, local communities interchangeably in accordance with the United States Census Bureau’s definition of a Micropolitan Area or Urban Cluster, composed of at least 2,500 and less than 50,000 people. The Census Bureau identifies Metropolitan and Urban Areas as an area with 50,000 or more people.

to the Army National Guard (ARNG) stimulated and supported small communities in Louisiana. Recruits from economically depressed regions lined up to join the Guard because of the competitive pay and the generous education benefits it offered. In the mid-1980s, when a state budgetary shortfall threatened to limit the vital stream of federal funds, nine communities out of fifty-five in Louisiana rallied to keep the doors of their armories open. The armory closures demonstrated that the economic influence of the LANG was not as fundamentally significant as its leadership had purported. Yet defense spending on the Guard provided substantial support to communities.

This paper contains five chapters. Chapter One, “The State of the State” opens by describing the condition of the LANG during the 1970s following the implementation of the AVF. Chapter Two, “Economic Impact of the Armory,” provides an overview of the post-WWII history, cost, and construction process of National Guard armories. Chapter Two also observes the physical and architectural transformation of armories after 1973. Chapter Three, “Enlistment for Education,” examines the generous and intricate benefit packages the Louisiana Guard offered to enhance recruitment in the era of the AVF. This chapter also notes that when educational assistance was threatened with cuts, it was understood as more than a job benefit but a contractual condition of enlistment that the Guard and Louisiana had to honor. Chapter Four, “Armory Armageddon,” examines the widespread closure of armories throughout Louisiana due to a poor economy and cuts to the state budget. This chapter examines the economic value of armories in local communities and the perceived impact of a closure. Finally, Chapter Five,

“Resurrection” explains how a resurgence in the economy and campaigns to save Guard facilities resulted in the reopening of the armories.<sup>6</sup>

After reviewing the relevant background literature, this paper seeks to expand the conversation regarding the ARNG’s place in U.S. society. Historians have given little attention to the economic component in the Guard’s evolution. But before diving into the economic role of the LANG after the Vietnam War, this paper considers the historical relationship between the ARNG and American citizens of the United States.

### Historical Perspective

Whether called the militia, volunteer militia, or the National Guard, citizen-soldiers have served in citizen-based military forces prior to the founding of the nation with the colony of Jamestown in 1607. The militia system, as well as the fear of large standing armies, was inherited by the English settlers of North America.<sup>7</sup> However, British-American colonials in North America chafed under imperial authority; they especially found the uncompensated quartering of British regular soldiers in their public buildings repugnant. At the start of the American Revolution in 1775, the volunteer Minutemen fought the British alone at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill in Massachusetts. Yet by the war’s end, the Continental Army, American regulars (full time active duty soldiers) and state volunteers had fought most of the battles for Independence.<sup>8</sup> When the war ended in 1783, the Continental Army was disbanded, and the former colonies reverted to their reliance on the militia for the common defense.

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<sup>6</sup> In this work, use of the term National Guard encapsulates the subcomponent of the Army National Guard that is part of the larger military branches of the Army and National Guard Bureau; it should not be assumed to pertain to the Air Force component unless otherwise specified.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Reinders, “Militia and Public Order in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of American Studies* 11, no. 1 (Apr., 1977): 81-101, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27553270>.

<sup>8</sup> Edward M. Coffman, “The Duality of the American Military Tradition: A Commentary,” *Journal of Military History* 64, no. 4 (October, 2000): 967-980, accessed November 05, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2677263>.

The Militia Act of 1792 allowed for militiamen to be used to carry out federal law, quell rebellion, or repel invasions. The preference toward the militia over a regular army was from a fear of standing armies, in addition to the oppressive cost associated with it. After expelling the British crown and its redcoats, the founders of the U.S. did not have the political or economic will to maintain a standing military. After the War for Independence, the militia were held in high esteem and even after the War of 1812, their reputation received a boost despite performing unevenly. Ending the War of 1812 on a high note, the victory at the Battle of New Orleans under Andrew Jackson strengthened the view of the militiaman as an American Cincinnatus.<sup>9</sup>

After the War of 1812, service in the militia plummeted and mandatory training periods (commonly referred to as drill) was unenforceable. By the Mexican-American War in 1846-1848, most states had abolished mandatory militia service and urban volunteer militias replaced state militias. Volunteer units decided who could join, what uniforms to wear, what arms to bear, elected their own officers, and even established their own regulations. Volunteer militias drilled in rented space in private halls and buildings or had armories constructed through their own finances.

Following the Civil War, rapid industrialization and economic recessions took a toll on American workers and laborers. Strikes and protests were usually met with volunteer militia strikebreakers which quickly turned into riots, skirmishes, or massacres. The tumultuous struggles between capital and labor in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century resulted in scores of deaths and hundreds of millions of dollars in destruction. It was under these conditions that volunteer militias began to build fortified or castellated armories in cities with public

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<sup>9</sup> John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York, NY: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), 3. Cincinnatus was the Roman statesman that set down his plough and took up arms to defend his countrymen and the republic.

assistance. Armories were built to impose order and located in both the neighborhoods that the volunteers lived, sometimes crime-ridden areas. The proximity of armories to the homes of volunteers was not just convenient but crucial for mobilization. Should order break down, militiamen needed to be able to quickly report for duty. The armory movement and service in the volunteer militias initially was hampered by the Depression of 1873; but as the horror and carnage of the Civil War faded, public interest and funding for the militia increased.<sup>10</sup>

In 1878, following the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 and the official end of Reconstruction, the *Posse Comitatus* Act was signed into law. *Posse Comitatus* prohibited the use of federal troops to enforce domestic law but did not apply to the militia under state authority. The social upheaval caused by labor movements necessitated increased state military spending on rent and construction for armories, drill pay, training camps, uniform allotments, salaries for adjutants general, and state military bureaucracy. State governments made financial and administrative commitments to the Guard that had never been given to the regular or uniformed militia. Despite their involvement in labor unrest, troops in the volunteer militia during the late nineteenth century regained prominence as defenders against a fearsome central government, while regular soldiers were ordered to police the American frontier. Yet even at the edge of the borderlands, the regular troops significantly affected the socio-economic landscape of the American frontier.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Robert M. Fogelson, *America's Armories: Architecture, Society, and Public Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 4-5, 18.

<sup>11</sup> Michael D. Doubler, *I am the Guard: A History of the Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 2001), 104-5; Jerry Cooper, *The Militia and the National Guard in America Since Colonial Times: A Research Guide* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 84-5.



Erected in 1899 in Richmond, the First Battalion of the Virginia Volunteers typifies the castellated architectural style (courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

From 1849-1889, nearly \$60 million in federal money streamed into the forty-seven active duty Army forts, posts, or garrisons in the state of Texas via the Quartermaster supply system. Defense spending by the regular Army significantly affected the economic growth of local communities in Texas. This was the result of political leaders that courted and aligned themselves with the U.S. War Department to form what Thomas T. Smith calls a “military-commercial” cooperative in Texas. Some scholars suggest that this cooperative extended as far as California, where defense spending was initially based upon the needs of the military. But the dependence of California cities on defense spending influenced the military to make tactical and strategic decisions based upon the wellbeing of the community. In the twentieth century, the success of large cities like San Francisco and Los Angeles stemmed from their willingness to



participate in what Roger W. Lotchin refers to as the “metropolitan-military complex.” While a steady stream of federal funds sprung from troops of the regular military, service members in the reserve components began to siphon off defense dollars of their own.<sup>12</sup>

Founded in 1879, a year after the *Posse Comitatus* Act, the National Guard Association of the United States of America (NGAUSA) sought to lobby for legislation beneficial to the wellbeing of the militia. However, not until 1887 did the NGA achieve its first victory when legislation was passed that increased the National Guard’s annual appropriation since 1808, from \$400,000 to \$800,000 for weapons and training. The Militia Act of 1903 was the next significant piece of legislation to empower the state militia or National Guard as it began to be called. This was the first realistic revision to the Militia Acts since 1792. Prior to 1903, members of the militia served voluntarily, without pay, and most furnished their own uniforms.<sup>13</sup>

The Militia Act of 1903 increased the standardization process of the militia and improved readiness to better support the regular military during war, the act also stipulated when the state’s forces could be federalized. The law provided federal funding to the state militias for weapons and training under the supervision of a regular officer from active duty. The 1903 law defined the militia as being composed of two branches; the organized state militia, which could receive federal monies, and the unorganized militia, which included all males between the ages of eighteen to forty-five who might be liable to serve. The Militia Act of 1903 maintained the dual mission of the Guard to the state and the nation but initiated increased federal influence through funding. On the cusp of U.S. entry into the First World War, the National Defense Act of 1916

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas T. Smith, *The U.S. Army and the Texas Frontier Economy, 1845-1900* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 12-23, 174; Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Allan R. Millett, Peter Maslowski, and William B. Feis, *For The Common Defense: A Military History Of The United States From 1607 to 2012*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. (New York, NY: Free Press, 2012), 235. For further information on the history and influence of the National Guard Association of the United States of America, see Martha Derthick’s *The National Guard in Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

was passed and officially designated the National Guard as the primary reserve for the Army and labelled all state forces that met federal standards as the National Guard. The 1916 Act increased the amount of federally paid training periods or drills to forty-eight and fifteen days of field training. By the conclusion of the First World War, nearly 500,000 Guardsmen served. Yet by 1920, the strength of the National Guard plummeted to less than 60,000, though they quickly rebounded as economic conditions in the U.S. deteriorated after 1929.<sup>14</sup>

From 1929 to 1939, the Great Depression revealed the direct and indirect value of the National Guard to local communities. “An unemployed worker who was a private in the Guard earned \$75 a year by attending armory drills and summer camp” (nearly \$1,300 in 2018). Construction, repairs, improvements, purchasing contracts for armories and materiel also helped to stimulate the local economy. Prior to the New Deal in 1934, there were 866 armories in the U.S. From 1934-1942, the Public Works Administration and the Works Progress Administration under the New Deal provided funding for over 500 armories to be remodeled and constructed 400 new armories. Armories were not just hubs for economic activity but also social centers. During the Great Depression, most Americans lacked money for entertainment, but armories provided free social activities to the community; such as dances, concerts, shooting contests, horseback riding and athletic events. Essentially the Guard was a YMCA but with guns. During the Great Depression, the National Guard provided its members and communities with economic respite and social stability when they would have otherwise had neither.<sup>15</sup>

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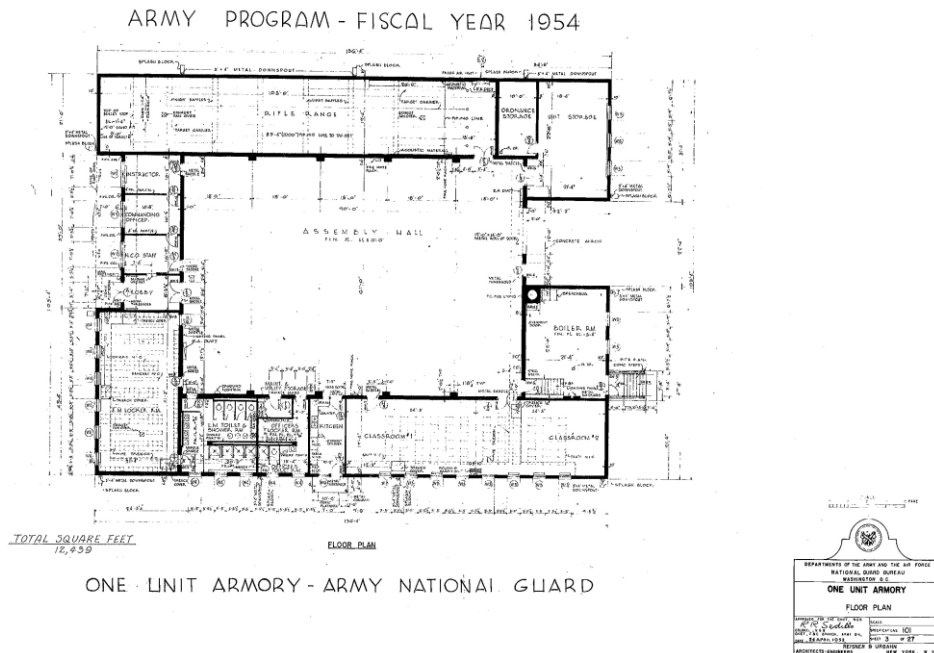
<sup>14</sup> Millett, *For the Common Defense*, 295-307; Michael D. Doubler, *Civilian in Peace, Soldier in War: The Army National Guard, 1636-2000* (Lawrence, KS: Kansas University Press, 2003), 140-1. Before the turn of the twentieth century, state militia as a term had fell out of favor and many states referred to their militia units as the National Guard.

<sup>15</sup> Michael D. Doubler, *The National Guard and Reserve* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), 56-8; Bob Haskell, “Building Boom,” *National Guard* 70, no.3 (March, 2016): 35.

After WWII and the dawn of the Cold War, the size of the ARNG exploded. With over 325,000 Guardsmen, increased strength requirements, equipment, reorganizations, and new unit designations demanded additional armories to support the force structure. For the first time, the Guard was assigned tanks, trucks, helicopters, jets, and engineering equipment that required additional storage space. By 1948, the National Guard Bureau (NGB) encouraged states to prepare for new armory construction and distributed designs prepared by the Army Corps of Engineers. The armory designs were intended to provide states that initiated their own construction programs with construction guidelines since federal funding had yet to be appropriated. The armory blueprints included a “One-Unit Armory,” a “Five Unit (Battalion-Size) Armory,” and a “Ten-Unit Armory”. The NGB distributed designs for aircraft hangars, warehouse buildings, ordnance and maintenance shop buildings, and motor vehicle storage buildings (MVSBS).<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Y. Scott Bell, “A Brief History of the Armory Tradition,” South Carolina National Guard, accessed December 8, 2017, <https://www.scgard.com/resources/historian/faces-of-the-guard/fotg-history/#fn18-3240>.



Blueprints such as this for a one unit armory were designed by the Army Corps of Engineers and distributed by the NGB to various states after WWII (courtesy of the South Carolina National Guard).

In 1950, Congress passed the National Defense Facilities Act, which called for federal assistance for new armory construction, expansion, and repair of the Guard's 2,316 existing armories. But Congress did not appropriate funding for the bill until two years later. In the meantime, states such as South Carolina could not afford to build new armories without federal assistance, but still needed institutional buildings to house weapons and other equipment. From 1948 to 1952, numerous MVSBs, which also operated as makeshift armories, were built in South Carolina based on cost-saving designs from local architects. After the appropriation of funds in 1952, the result was a second boom in armory construction for the National Guard to ensure its readiness to respond and mobilize for war or an emergency. During this armory boost of the 1950s, federal funds flowed to the Guard in unprecedented amounts, opening facilities in new communities throughout the country. The federal government provided significant financial assistance for new armory construction through a federal and state partnership. The federal

government provided up to seventy-five percent of the cost of construction while the state covered the remaining twenty-five percent.<sup>17</sup>



One of many of the Motor Vehicle Storage Buildings (MVSs) built in Louisiana post-WWII that also commonly served as armories (courtesy of LANG Archives).

The federal government maintained ownership of the armories and facilities for twenty-five years before they reverted to state possession. This meant the federal government also covered the utility expenses of these new armories for the first twenty-five years. In 1952, \$16 million were appropriated for new construction, repair, and expansion of the over 2,300 armories.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the post-Civil War armories that were intended to be impressive and strategically located, the armories built after WWII were designed to be functional and placed on the periphery of communities. From 1947 to 1948, over thirty armories were built in California at the cost of \$5 million. During a ten-year span in Georgia, from 1952 to 1962, over \$7 million were used to construct over sixty armories. From 1952 to 1956, \$65 million was spread over 737 projects. Alabama anticipated building thirty-two new armories as part of the \$65 million

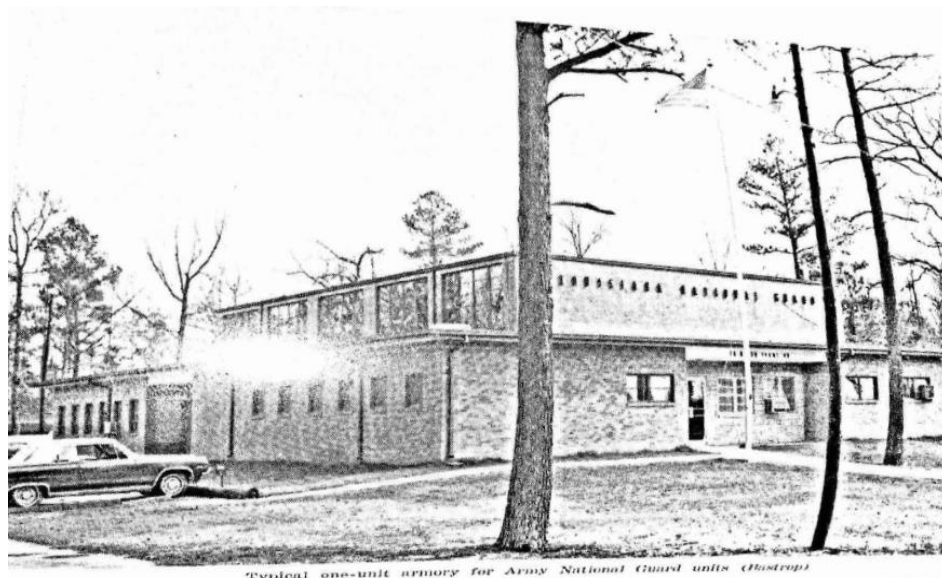
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<sup>17</sup> Doubler, *I am the Guard*, 200; Bell, “A Brief History of the Armory Tradition;” Haskell, “Building Boom,” 32-3.

<sup>18</sup> Doubler, *I am the Guard*, 200.

construction program in its state alone. Alabama sought to place an armory in “every county” of the state and was also “planned to be readily adaptable to general community use.”<sup>19</sup>

In Louisiana from 1947 to 1959, over forty-six Guard facilities were built for nearly \$5 million. From 1948 to 1973, both the state of Louisiana and the federal government spent nearly \$17 million on newly constructed facilities. In addition, a total of \$4 million was spent on repairs, modifications, and additions to Guard facilities in Louisiana. With more armories came more Guardsmen. From 1948 to 1977, the strength of the ARNG increased from 325,000 to nearly 347,000.<sup>20</sup>



An example of a typical one-unit armory built in Bastrop, Louisiana circa 1963 (courtesy of LANG Archives).

While the active duty side of the military projected U.S. power abroad with the peacetime draft for ground forces, the National Guard concentrated on its mission to the state. The armories constructed after WWII were intended to serve as single unit stations, but they also operated as

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<sup>19</sup> Robert P. Wieggers, *Missouri Armories: The Guard's Home in Architecture and History* (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2012) 102-109.

<sup>20</sup> Doubler, *I am the Guard*, 200; Doubler, *The National Guard and Reserve*, 61-6; Haskell, “Building Boom,” 33-4. *Biennial Reports 1948-1973*, The Military Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

command centers for civil defense or disaster response in local communities for rapid relief. During the Cold War, the LANG turned its focus from contending with communism to providing humanitarian relief after natural disasters. The ARNG's increased role in disaster relief coincided with the growth of federal aid after 1945 when states had begun to receive engineering equipment and aircraft. Yet the National Guard's domestic mission entailed more than just fighting floods.<sup>21</sup>

During the tumultuous 1960s, the ARNG was called out to quell countless civil disturbances, many originated from racial unrest and anti-war protests that shook the nation. Elected in 1968, President Richard Nixon rode to office on a wave of support garnered from campaign promises of "law and order" and ending the draft. In 1970, the Gates Commission declared the viability of ending the draft and initiated the military's move toward an AVF. For security purposes, Nixon and Congress agreed to extend the draft lottery until 1973. Meanwhile, military pay more than doubled and was followed by a cost-of-living increase from \$149 to \$321 a month for an enlisted private on active duty. Even with increased pay, service in the military was unattractive due to the austere lifestyle of service members and the threat of service in the Vietnam War.

The redefinition of military standards increased morale and interest in recruitment for the AVF. Public relations and advertising budgets increased more than 1,000 percent to promote the benefits of military service to recruits and their families. In addition to pay increases, an active duty private had few financial obligations since they received free food, healthcare, and

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<sup>21</sup> Rhett Breerwood, "From Containing Communism to Fighting Floods: The Louisiana Army National Guard in the Cold War, 1946-1965" (MA thesis, University of New Orleans, 2015), 45-6; Cooper, *The Militia and the National Guard in America Since Colonial Times*, 121.

lodging.<sup>22</sup> On top of their pay, a private-recruit received non-taxable pay allowances up to \$3.61 for subsistence per diem and between \$63.30 and \$110.70 a month for quarters.<sup>23</sup> These pay increases were substantial and applied to service members on active duty and in the reserve components.

For Guardsmen, the pay raise was substantial but on a smaller scale. The increased pay for Guardsmen was not as significant as soldiers on active duty but it was commensurate with the service they performed. The raised pay for soldiers increased recruitment and retention in the AVF but it also increased the defense budget. From 1971 to 1977, the annual cost increases attributed to the AVF increased from nearly \$90 million to \$3.1 billion; while the overall strength of the military decreased by over 640,000 service members (see Figure 1). While the active duty side of the military had a slightly easier time attracting recruits into the AVF, the exorbitant costs became inhibitive to the growth of the regular military.<sup>24</sup>

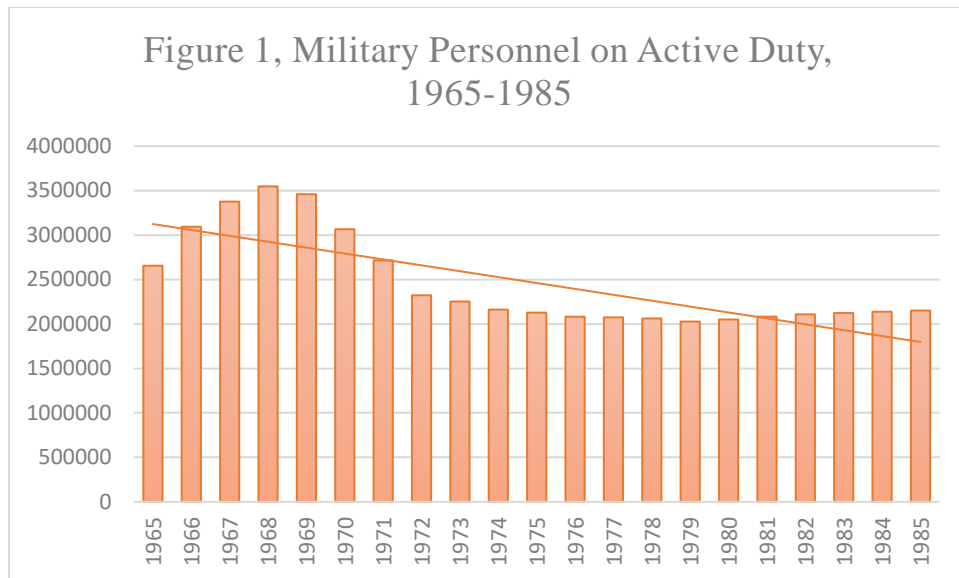
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<sup>22</sup> William A. Taylor, *Military Service and American Democracy: From World War II to the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2016), 114-7.

<sup>23</sup> Lee E. Sharff and Clint Tennill, Jr. eds. *1975 Uniformed Services Almanac: Special National Guard Edition*, 120.

<sup>24</sup> Comptroller General, Report to Congress on Additional Cost of the All-Volunteer Force, February 6, 1978, 95<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> session, 1978, accessed February 8, 2018 <https://www.gao.gov/assets/130/121185.pdf>; Guardsmen are paid only for the days and drill periods that they are marshalled. For the rest of the month and year they are not active Guardsmen do not receive pay. Guardsmen also receive allowances, but it is inconsequential since they only receive the daily rate while on duty.



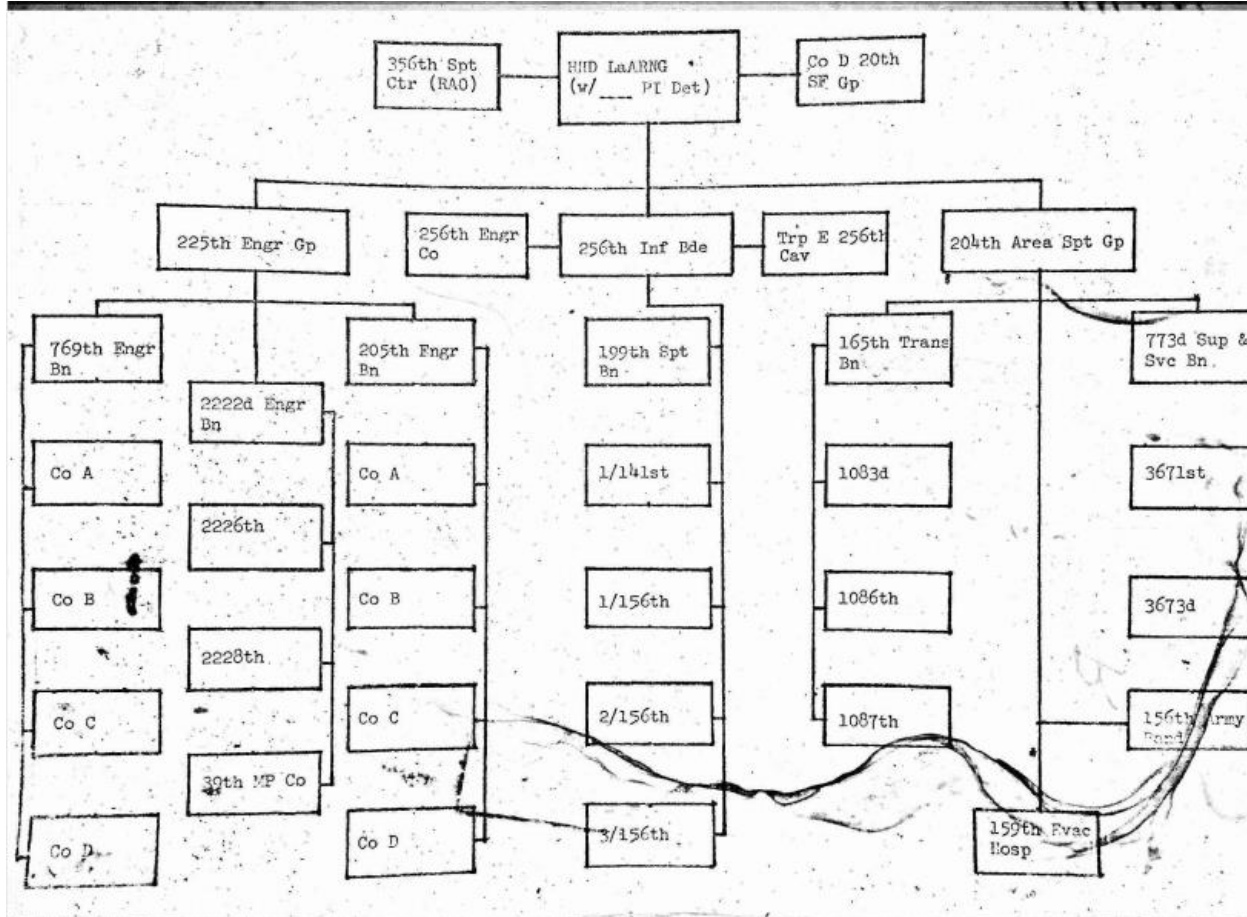


Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, “Active Duty Military Strength by Service,” Military Personnel, (Updated Monthly) Historical Reports - FY 1954 – 1993, [https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp\\_reports.jsp](https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/appj/dwp/dwp_reports.jsp) (accessed February 04, 2017).

The U.S. military’s response to the manpower shortage was the Total Force Policy, which aimed to better integrate the National Guard as a reserve force for active duty. Service in the ARNG was not as profitable as service on active duty but for the same reason, increasing the size of the Guard was cost-effective to Department of Defense (DoD) officials. The Total Force Policy reassigned support brigades to National Guard units to “round out” and support an active duty division.<sup>25</sup> The “round out” brigades increased the authorized strength of the Guard in their assigned states and increased the amount of defense dollars the Guard received. One of the National Guard units assigned as a “round out” brigade was the 256<sup>th</sup> “Louisiana” Brigade.

<sup>25</sup> Cooper, *The Militia and the National Guard in America Since Colonial Times*, 128-30.

## Chapter One: The State of the State



Organizational Structure of the Louisiana Army National Guard (including the 256<sup>th</sup> Brigade), circa 1971 (courtesy of LANG Archives).

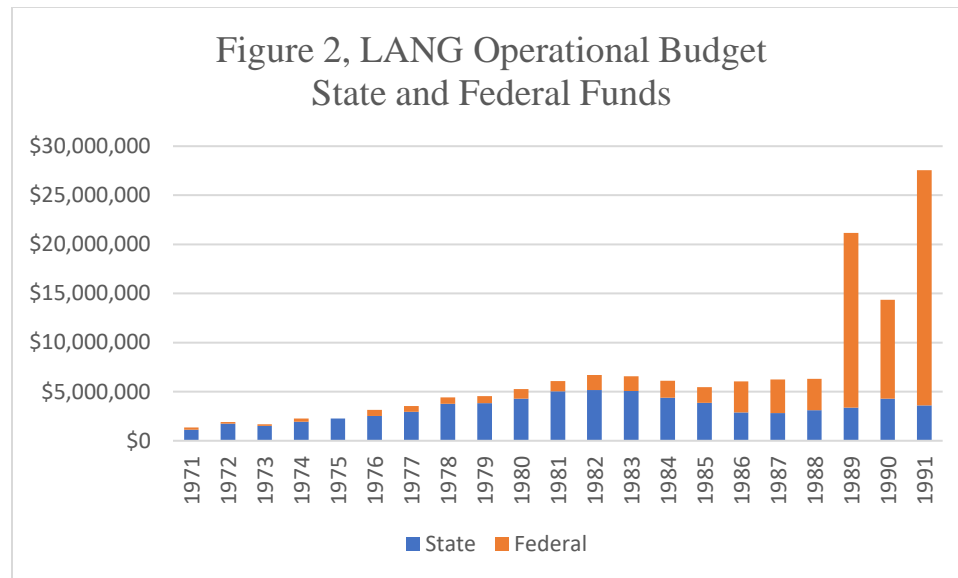
The only complete history of the LANG written is Evan J. Casso's *Louisiana Legacy: A History of the State National Guard*. Casso's book is an official history of the Louisiana National Guard that dates to when the region was colonized by the French in the seventeenth century until the middle of the Cold War in 1976. Used as a civics textbook in high schools throughout Louisiana, *Louisiana Legacy* offers limited but rich details of the ramifications of the AVF on the Louisiana Army National Guard.<sup>1</sup> *Louisiana Legacy* describes a renaissance of sorts that

<sup>1</sup> Breerwood, "From Containing Communism to Fighting Floods," 7; Evans J. Casso, *Louisiana Legacy: A History of the State National Guard* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1976), 3.

appeared to be underway in the Louisiana National Guard after the AVF. Serving from 1972-1980 as the Adjutant General (TAG), O.J. Daigle, Jr. initiated an extensive program of construction and renovations at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans (the LANG Headquarters) and Camp Beauregard in Pineville (the largest training facility in the state). Under Daigle, the LANG created and improved lakes, dams, roads, homes, office buildings, airstrips, deep water wells, barracks, clubs for soldiers, and post exchanges. Fourteen armories were constructed during Daigle's eight-year tenure as TAG. As the former commander of the 769<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, Daigle's ambitious construction projects were facilitated by the increase in federal funding (see Figure 2). However, Daigle was not alone in his mini-public works programs. In neighboring Arkansas, the 875<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion created a trade school for the areas' large population of high school dropouts to decrease local unemployment. However, without the pressure of the draft, the ARNG would have to work hard to fill the ranks as it came into direct competition with the active duty and the civilian labor market.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Evans J. Casso, *Louisiana Legacy: A History of the State National Guard* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company, 1976), 248; Armories, Vertical Filing Cabinets, Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. Collection, LANG Archives; Mahon, *History of the Militia and The National Guard*, 250.



Source: *Executive Budget: Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary* (FY 1970-1992), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

After the U.S. officially ended the draft, the military relied solely on volunteers rather than draftees. An estimated seventy-five percent of all Vietnam-era Guardsmen would not have enlisted had it not been for the draft. The LANG marketed itself as an indispensable part of the community to build support and attract recruits. Louisiana also offered generous educational incentives for enlistment in the ARNG, which young recruits seized upon. The economic opportunities offered by the LANG to young people in small communities translated into increased recruitment and retention.<sup>3</sup>

Generally, and economically speaking, the state of Louisiana has been a bit of an outlier. When the U.S. was prospering, the Pelican State was struggling and vice versa. One explanation for this inverted trend has to do with the dominance of the oil and gas industry in the Louisiana

<sup>3</sup> Mahon, *History of the Militia and The National Guard*, 249. Regarding the active components of the U.S. military and the AVF, see Beth Bailey's *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009). Bailey provides a thorough history of the AVF. Jennifer Mittelstadt's *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015) presents an overview of the history of the AVF. Mittelstadt focuses on the development of socially progressive entitlement programs in the military that arose to encourage recruitment and retention in the AVF.

economy. After being elected as governor of the Bayou State in 1972, Edwin Edwards raised the severance tax on crude oil by thirty percent, natural gas by fifty percent, and doubled the state income tax for corporations.<sup>4</sup> More significantly, Louisiana's severance tax on oil changed from one based on the volume of oil to one based on the value of oil when extracted. Though after 1975, Louisiana's oil production steadily decreased as oil reserves within the state dried up. The decrease in oil production went unnoticed since state tax revenues increased from the tax adjustment on oil.<sup>5</sup>

The 1973 Oil Crisis and the 1979 Energy Crisis drastically increased oil prices and subsequently raised state revenues for Louisiana. During 1979-1982, the deregulation of crude oil by Presidents James Carter and Ronald Reagan produced nearly \$1 billion in additional revenues for Louisiana. Flush with oil dollars, Governor Edwards reduced the state income tax, state sales tax on food, and eliminated the state property tax. State spending in Louisiana ballooned, with the first billion-dollar budget in 1973, which rose to \$4 billion by 1980. Governor Edwards generously increased funding for education, state parks, recreation, tourism, salary raises for state employees, hospitals and welfare programs. From 1972-1984, under Governor Edwards, state spending increased twice as quickly as inflation did.<sup>6</sup>

In his 1983 reelection campaign, Governor Edwards used the slogan *Laissez les Bon Temps Rouler* and most Louisianans were optimistic that the future for The Boot was bright. But as early as 1981, a global surplus of oil and gas steadily entered the market and decreased mineral prices. At the same time, oil and gas production in Louisiana moved offshore into

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<sup>4</sup> Bennett H. Wall and John C. Rodrigue, *Louisiana: A History*, Sixth Ed. (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014), 398-422.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory B. Upton, Jr., *Oil Prices and the Louisiana Budget Crisis: Culprit or Scapegoat? An Analysis of the Implications of the Oil Price Drop on the Louisiana Budget* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University, Center for Energy Studies, 2016), 7-12.

<sup>6</sup> Wall and Rodrigue, *Louisiana*, 398-9; Ty Keller, *Louisiana Fiscal Focus: Two Decades of State Tax Instability*, (Baton Rouge, LA: Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana, Inc., April 1991), 1.

federal waters in the Gulf of Mexico; this also reduced state mineral revenues.<sup>7</sup> To counter balance the effects of the Oil Glut and the lower revenues extracted from mineral production, Edwards proposed a whopping tax increase of \$1 billion. Though the legislature compromised with the governor and raised taxes by \$700 million. Despite the tax hikes, the Pelican State failed to balance the budget and the 1983-84 fiscal year (FY) concluded with a \$100 million deficit.<sup>8</sup>

From 1984-1990, while the rest of the U.S. enjoyed widespread prosperity, Louisiana experienced a major economic depression. The market price of crude oil dropped from \$35 a barrel in 1982 to just \$11 a barrel in 1986. With gas and oil as the pillar of Louisiana's economy, the Oil Glut forced layoffs of tens of thousands of workers. The layoffs also devastated the extensive support industries in Louisiana that catered to oil and gas businesses and their employees. In 1986, unemployment in Louisiana doubled from 121,000 in 1980 to 261,000.<sup>9</sup>

Workers fortunate to still be employed saw their wages fall with a decline in the total number of hours worked. The problems caused by the Oil Glut were compounded by changes in tax policy that appeared to do more harm than good. The oil and gas industry in Louisiana did not recover until 1990 when the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait caused a spike in prices to the benefit of the Bayou State. From 1984-1990, Louisiana's depressed economy was the result of the decreased price of oil and gas. The economic situation was exacerbated by structural changes in fiscal policy that shifted the tax burden from corporations and wealthy individuals onto small businesses and working and middle-class families. The Oil Glut, the depression, and state fiscal

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<sup>7</sup> Robert D. Hershey, Jr., "How the Oil Glut is Changing Business," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1981; Keller, *Louisiana Fiscal Focus*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> Keller, *Louisiana Fiscal Focus*, 4; Wall and Rodrigue, *Louisiana*, 406-7.

<sup>9</sup> Upton, Jr., *Oil Prices and the Louisiana Budget Crisis*, 5.

policies severely injured state institutions such as the LANG that depended upon state funding to operate.<sup>10</sup>

From 1973-1982, the price of oil boomed and Louisiana's contributions to the operating budget of the ARNG increased from \$1.5 million to nearly \$5.2 million. Federal funding for the LANG increased from \$194,000 to \$1.5 million under the AVF. During 1982-1987, Louisiana's appropriations for the Guard decreased from \$5.2 million to \$2.8 million, but federal funding for the LANG increased from \$1.5 million to \$23.9 million. This did not include the monies paid for federally employed Guardsmen, drill pay, annual training, special schools and many other incidental military expenditures. The financial difficulties of the Bayou State resulted in decreased state funding for the ARNG, but the federal government made up more than enough for Louisiana's shortcomings.<sup>11</sup>

After 1973, the LANG was unsure how the conclusion of the draft would affect recruitment and retention in the Guard. Since 1962, Fort Polk (near DeRidder-Leesville) sent more of its trainees to Vietnam than any other military training center in the nation. Louisiana contributed much to the war effort, but despite that Louisiana was a rather conservative and military friendly state, dissent from the Vietnam War was still present.

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<sup>10</sup> Greg Albrecht, *Tax History – Senator Jones Hearings: Louisiana Tax Revenue History 1970-2001*, 2000, accessed July 29, 2017, <http://senate.legis.state.la.us/Committees/Archives/TaxStructures/Presentations/Albrecht8-16-2000.pdf>; Wall and Rodrigue, *Louisiana*, 407-10. In a consumer-based economy, consciously or unconsciously, taxes levied on mass consumption effectively discourages overall economic growth, though it may generate the state revenue. From 1983-1991, a litany of tax changes were levied; such as personal income tax reductions were reversed, significant increases in sales tax were imposed, motor fuels tax double to sixteen cents per gallon, the franchise tax doubled, insurance premium taxes increased, excise taxes on tobacco and alcohol and the suspension of sales tax exemptions on items such as food and utilities. Corporate and business taxes were slashed but consumption taxes were imposed; this fell hardest on the working and middle-classes in Louisiana and hindered the growth of economic activity. Taxes can serve to either raise revenue, ensure fairmindedness and/or influence behavior.

<sup>11</sup> *Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary* (FY 1970-1992), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans; 1985 Letter to Public Officials on Economic Impact of Guard, Folder 7, Box 17, Ansel M. Stroud Jr. Collection, LANG Archives.

Significant demonstrations took place at Tulane University and Louisiana State University (LSU) with sizeable anti-ROTC protests. At Tulane and the University of Southwestern Louisiana (now University of Louisiana at Lafayette) protestors set fire to ROTC buildings on campus. More typical was the peaceful demonstrations at LSU in Baton Rouge on May 8, 1970, when more than 1,000 protesters marched from campus to the state capitol building. Louisiana faced additional unrest that originated from the struggle for racial equality. Though for many Louisianans, civil rights and desegregation served as the primary concern and consigned matters of foreign policy as secondary. When the Vietnam War ended, Fort Polk shifted from a basic training center to the home of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Division. With a substantial vested economic interest in the military, the struggle for racial equality, and an overarching political conservatism, support for the war rather against the war in Vietnam was far more typical in Louisiana.<sup>12</sup>

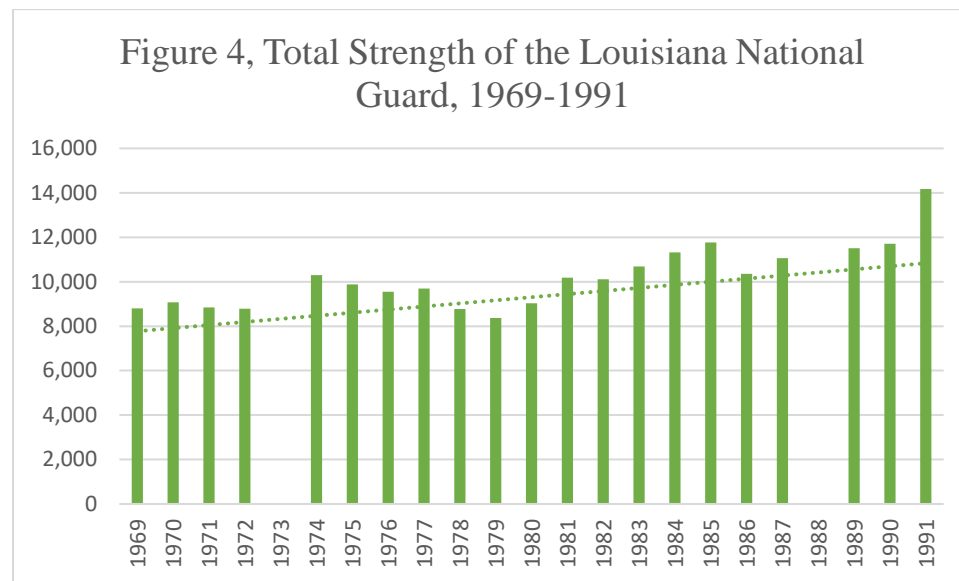
Following the war in Vietnam, generally the LANG declined in number while the economy boomed, but the strength of the Guard increased after the Oil Glut and the bust of the Louisiana economy (see Figure 4). Regardless, in 1979, four Parishes in Louisiana (Madison, East Carroll, Tensas, and Richland) were among the 100 poorest counties in the United States. That same year, New Orleans had the third highest rate of poverty for a metropolitan area with nearly thirty percent of its residents living in poverty. But in 1969, third highest was an improvement for New Orleans from being ranked the most impoverished city in the U.S. By the mid-1980s when the economy in Louisiana waned, the overall strength of the LANG again

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<sup>12</sup> Keith Finley, "Vietnam War in Louisiana," *Know Louisiana: The Digital Encyclopedia of Louisiana and Home of Louisiana Cultural Vistas*, accessed January 29, 2018, <http://www.knowlouisiana.org/entry/vietnam-war-in-louisiana>.



experienced increased growth. The economic hardships in Louisiana provided incentive for citizens to increase their perspective incomes through part-time service in the Guard.<sup>13</sup>



Source: *Executive Budget: Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary* (FY 1970-1992), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

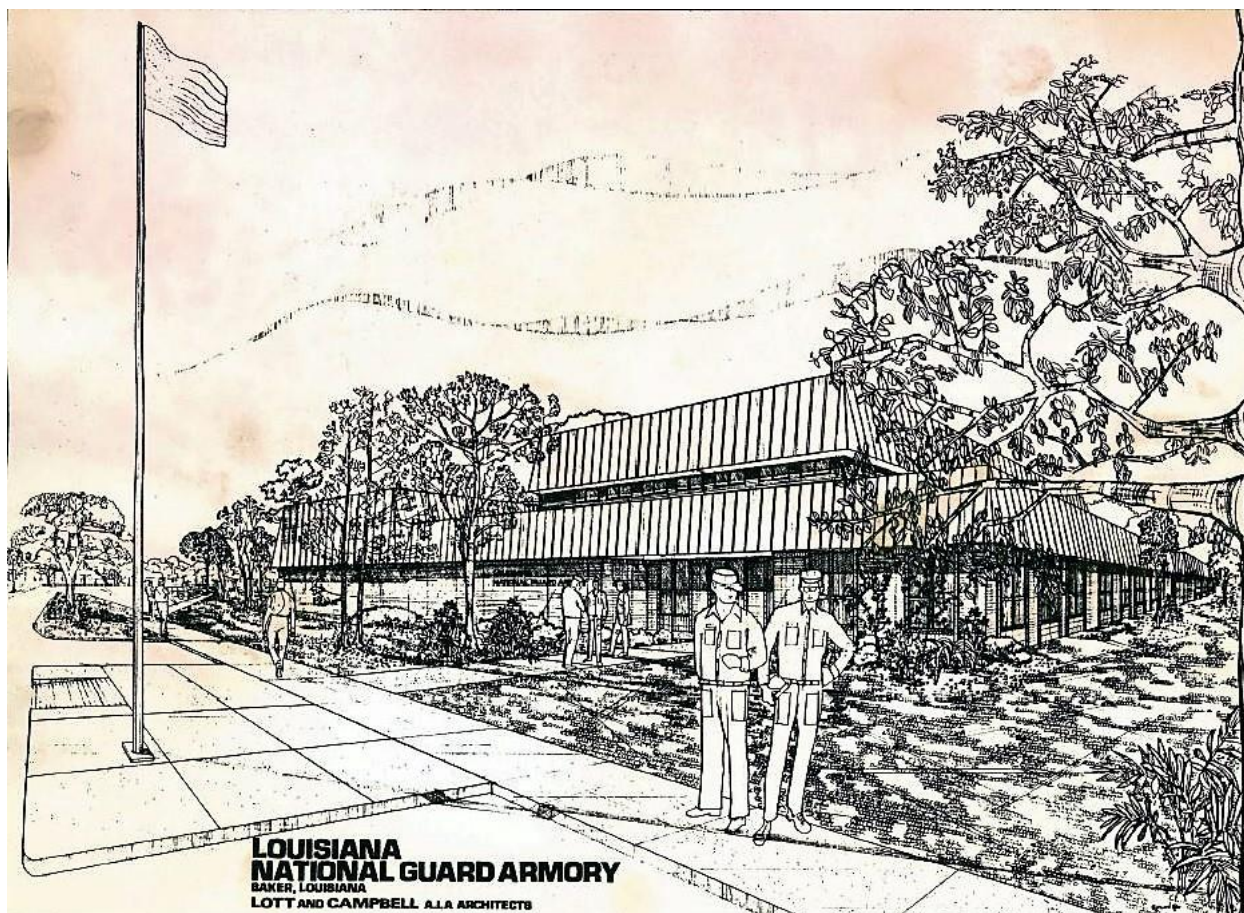
<sup>13</sup> “The 100 Poorest Counties in the United States: 1979-1989,” U.S. Census Bureau, accessed December 25, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/dec/cph-series/cph-l/cph-l-184.html>; “Poverty Rate of Persons in 1969, 1979 and 1989,” U.S. Census Bureau, accessed December 25, 2017, <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/dec/cph-series/cph-l/cph-l-185.html>; *Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary*, Executive Budget (FY 1970-1992), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

## **Chapter Two: Economic Impact of the Armory**

In 1979, Baker, Louisiana was a rapidly growing town of nearly 13,000 residents located just north of the state capital. A detachment of two officers and seventy-nine enlisted men from the 769<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion worked out of three basement offices in the Baker Municipal Center until an armory was constructed. Approved three years before, federal funds were finally allocated and bids for the construction of an armory were finally taken. The persistent efforts of Mayor Peter Heine and Councilman Duke Welch were instrumental in petitioning the state and federal government for funding of the proposed armory. The construction of the Baker armory was completed in 1984 with \$850,000 from the federal government and \$300,000 from the state, a combined total of \$1.2 million for the facility. The armory was designed by the architectural firm Lott and Campbell from Baton Rouge. The design included a large indoor assembly training area and a rifle range, classrooms, a kitchen, and a locker room, all on a 10-acre plot located west of the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad tracks in the industrial zone of Baker. The building was a far cry from the spartan MSVBs that were constructed after WWII as a quick fix but usually operated as armories long past their intended expiration date.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Socio-Economic Facts: East Baton Rouge Parish* (1980), Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans; Steve Culpepper, “‘The Guard Belongs’ in Baker,” *The Morning Advocate*, July 15, 1985; “Baker to Get National Guard Armory,” *The Observer*, July 22, 1982. All local newspaper sources that the author used came from the collection of newspaper binders at the LANG Archives.



Sketch completed by local architects, Lott and Campbell, portrayed the modern, futuristic design of newer armories constructed after the AVF (courtesy of the LANG Archives).

On July 29, 1982, public bids on the construction of the armory were taken by the LANG but several bidders failed to include a completion date, so all proposed bids were thrown out. The LANG then held bids a second time on September 9<sup>th</sup> and initially awarded the contract to Airline Construction Co., Inc., which submitted a bid of \$893,296. But one of the bidders, Ted Hicks of Baker, claimed the LANG “acted improperly when it awarded the contract to the [Airline Construction Co.] firm despite a \$30,000 difference between the line item and base bids” and filed an injunction that prohibited work on the armory. District Judge Julian Bailes agreed with Mr. Hicks and ruled in his favor, but Airline Construction Co. filed an appeal following the decision. In accordance with Judge Bailes ruling, the LANG sent Mr. Hicks the

contract for the Baker armory, which he promptly signed and returned. Despite Airline Construction's appeal of the ruling, Hick's attorney, John Olin Brown, advised him to "go ahead and get started. Under the law, if the ruling is changed, they have to pay him for the work completed." But Hicks admitted he had not immediately received permission from the Guard to proceed with construction, so the Baker armory was delayed further.<sup>2</sup>

On December 14, 1982, the LANG finally authorized Ted Hicks to initiate construction of the Baker armory by January 1983. Then on June 28, 1983, Airline Construction Co.'s appeal finally arrived before the First Circuit Court of Appeal. The Court argued that "because the low bidder was determined by the sum of the base bid and alternates...the individual component figures in the bid proposal were irrelevant." The Appeals Court reversed Judge Bailes ruling in a 3-0 decision and asserted that the LANG acted properly in awarding Airline Construction Co. the contract for the Baker armory. Since Hicks had already initiated construction of the armory, Airline Construction Co., Hicks and the Guard attempted to negotiate a buy-out or take-over of Hick's contract. Negotiations ultimately failed, and Hicks completed construction of the Baker armory in 1984. From 1985-87, Airline Construction successfully sued the Guard for \$59,576.00 for breach of contract and damages from loss of profits, while suing Hicks for wrongful use of the injunctive process.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> La R.S. 38:2212 mandates that all public work contracts exceeding \$5,000, for both labor and materials, shall be publicly advertised and awarded to the lowest bidder that abided by the contract, plans and specifications advertised; "Judge's Ruling on Armory is Appealed," *The Observer*, November 04, 1982; 434 So. 2d 1157 – TED HICKS & ASSOCIATES, INC. V. STROUD, accessed December 30, 2017, <https://www.leagle.com/decision/19831591434so2d115711330>; "Work on Armory to Start Despite Legal Challenge," *The Observer*, December 02, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> 506 So.2d 554 – AIRLINE CONST., INC. v. T. HICKS & ASSOCIATES, INC., *Court of Appeal of Louisiana, First Circuit*, accessed December 30, 2017, <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/us/5914c1d5add7b049347bbd38>; "Court Says Armory Bid Award Proper," *State Times*, June 29, 1983; 506 So.2d 554 – AIRLINE CONST., INC. v. T. HICKS & ASSOCIATES, INC., *Court of Appeal of Louisiana, First Circuit*.

A ceremony was held on July 14, 1985 to dedicate the new facility in memory of longtime resident and civic leader in Baker, the late Colonel Orren L. Pugh, Jr.<sup>4</sup> The total construction cost of the armory was \$942,000 (\$2.2 million in 2018), not including breach of contract and all legal fees.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Baker, with eleven separate bidders, the process of armory construction could be a hotly contested and drawn out process. While in Avoyelles Parish, the LANG received only two bids in 1985 for the \$948,430 contract to construct the armory in Bunkie.<sup>6</sup> Regardless, armory construction introduced large sums of federal and state dollars into the local economy and was profitable for local contractors.<sup>7</sup> Armories stimulated growth and spending from initial construction and continuing maintenance.

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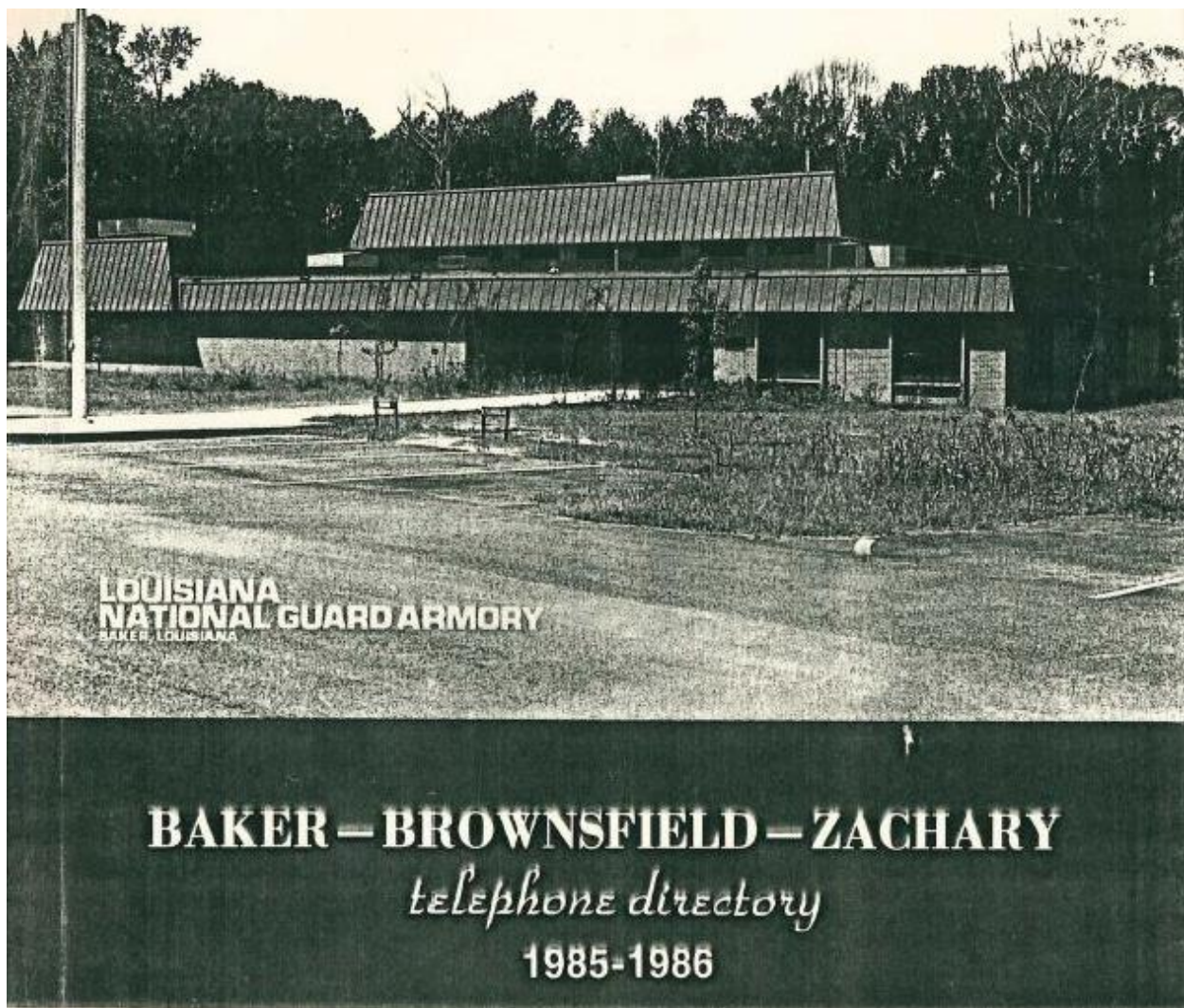
<sup>4</sup> Colonel Orren Lamar Pugh, Jr. was born in Shreveport in 1919 and graduated from LSU in 1940. In 1941 Pugh enlisted in the U.S. Army and stationed at Camp Crowder, Louisiana as a Chemical Warfare Instructor. In 1942 he entered Officer Candidate School (OCS) and was commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Ordnance Branch. Throughout the rest of WWII, he served in several technical command positions in both the American and European Theatres until he was discharged from active duty in 1946. Pugh and his wife took up residence in Baker where he was employed by Exxon Refinery in Baton Rouge. Pugh continued to serve in the U.S. Army Reserve until his retirement in 1975. Colonel Pugh remained active in the civic and religious community of Baker. It was at the request of the Mayor and City Council of Baker to AG Stroud to name the new armory in Pugh's honor.

<sup>5</sup> Culpepper, "The Guard Belongs' in Baker."

<sup>6</sup> "Descant Wins Armory Bid," *The Record*, July 21, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> Gary Chambers, "The Advocate Got It Wrong, Ted Hicks, Baton Rouge's Blue-Collar Millionaire Isn't Dead." *The Rouge Collection*, January 23, 2016, accessed December 31, 2017, <http://therougecollection.net/therouge/the-advocate-got-it-wrong-ted-hicks-baton-rouges-blue-collar-millionaire-isnt-dead/>.; Born into poverty in 1944, Ted Hicks joined the U.S. Navy at 17. When Hicks was honorably discharged from the Navy he returned to Louisiana where he worked at a chemical refinery. While working at the refinery full-time, Hicks put himself through school at LSU and worked for a real-estate company on the weekends. In 1969, Hicks opened his own real-estate and insurance firm before he started in the construction business. Hicks was a founding member of the Baton Rouge chapter of Associated Building Contractors and was influential in passing right to work laws in Louisiana. Eventually Hicks moved into land development and is now a successful multi-millionaire.





EMERGENCY NUMBERS			
FIRE		POLICE	
BAKER .....	775-3711	BAKER .....	775-6000
BATON ROUGE .....	383-4425	B.R. CITY POLICE ...	389-3800
BROWNSFIELD .....	383-4425	B.R. SHERIFF .....	387-5071



After completion, the Baker armory could easily be found in the local phone directory (courtesy of the LANG Archives).

In Louisiana, funding for armory maintenance and repairs were self-generating. Income derived from renting space at armories and other ARNG facilities were dedicated specifically toward maintenance and repairs. Civilians rented LANG armories for civic events, music concerts, dances, sports activities, garden shows, fund raisers, and even wedding receptions. A

nominal fee of \$25 per day was collected and covered the cost of utilities. The rental fees were in return used to fund routine maintenance and repair of ARNG facilities, which kept the money within the community. For maintenance and repair work, nearby contractors were hired, and construction supplies were purchased locally. A \$25 per day rental fee might not appear to have much monetary weight toward funding construction for LANG facilities, but the overall use of armories by the public was considerable. From 1973-1991, over \$7.7 million dollars in “fees and self-generated funds” were collected by the LANG by renting its facilities to the public. Additionally, from 1976-1991, Louisiana spent \$500,000 of appropriated monies on other major repairs for ARNG facilities, excluding the self-generated armory funds. Not just armories but the Guardsmen that drilled inside of them introduced federal funds into small communities in Louisiana.<sup>8</sup>

In 1986, the average ARNG armory in Louisiana brought in an annual payroll of an \$175,000. (About \$400,000 in 2018) The ARNG provided primarily part-time employment, but Guardsmen after 1973 had opportunity to further increase their income through additional training days and emergency activations. The traditional military service obligation in 1980 was one weekend a month and two weeks during the summer.<sup>9</sup> Or roughly 104 man-days annually for a “good year”.<sup>10</sup> But the LANG’s integration into the Total Force Policy enabled Guardsmen to

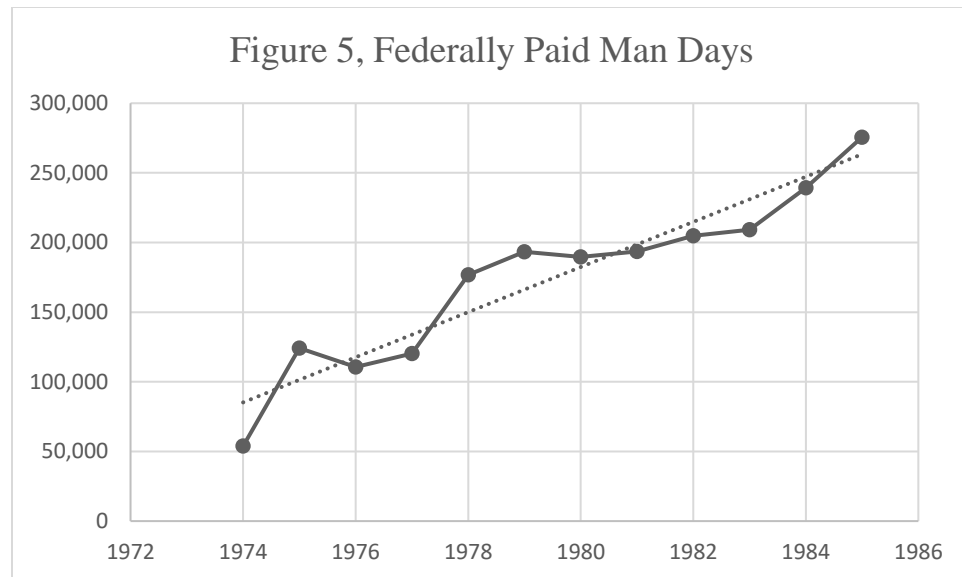
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<sup>8</sup> *Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary*, Executive Budget (FY 1972-1994), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans; “State Budget Cuts Would Force Guard to Close Area Armories,” *The Daily Iberian*, February 16, 1986; “Glaubrecht, Charpentier Wed,” *The Daily Iberian*, March 09, 1986; “Dedication of Armory Coming,” *The Record*, September 21, 1986. Louisiana Army NG Regulation, No. 230-21, “Non-appropriated Funds and Related Activities: Rental of Armories and/or Related Activities,” LANG Directorate of Facilities Engineering: Policies and Procedures Guide 1990, Late Cold War Filing Cabinets, LANG Archives.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Arnett, “National Guard Not Ready if War Breaks Out,” *The Associated Press*, October 19, 1980.

<sup>10</sup> Usually a full day of training is worth two days of pay and a half day of training or drill is worth one day of pay. A weekend a month for twelve months equals forty-eight days and annual training (two weeks in the summer) is fifty-six. Drill periods/man-days are also referred to as Unit Training Assembly (UTA) and Multiple Unit Training Assembly (MUTA).

increase their earning capacity through increased man-days.<sup>11</sup> The total number of man-days allocated to the LANG steadily increased from slightly over 50,000 in 1974 to nearly 275,000 in 1985 (see Figure 5). Man-days equaled hundreds of thousands of federally paid work periods to local Guardsmen. TAG Stroud estimated that in 1984 alone that the federal government infused nearly \$30 million in pay into communities in Louisiana.<sup>12</sup>



Source: *Executive Budget: Louisiana Military Department Budget Summary* (FY 1975-1986), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

As the economy in Louisiana worsened and inflation rose, Guardsmen increasingly relied on their federal pay to supplement their civilian incomes. During the 1970s, wages for the ARNG increased because of the AVF's competition in the labor market. But civilian wages remained flat. Members of the LANG benefited directly from federal employee pay raises which increased their monthly pay. In 1982, an enlisted private (E-1) in the ARNG earned roughly \$110 during a weekend at drill (about \$278 in 2018). If that same private worked forty hours for

<sup>11</sup> Man-days are federally paid periods for either training or work completed by Guardsmen.

<sup>12</sup> Pamphlet, *Economic Contributions of the Louisiana Army and Air National Guard Fiscal Year 1984*, Folder 7, Box 17, Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. Collection, LANG Archives; Folder 1985, Press Releases, Late Cold War Filing Cabinets, LANG Archives.



an entire week as a janitorial custodian and was paid the average hourly rate of \$3.45, he earned just \$138 (\$348 in 2018). The E-1 is the lowest pay grade in the Army, but a private-recruit could earn nearly eighty percent of his weekly civilian income during two days at drill and nearly thirty percent of his annual civilian income from drilling one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer. Guard pay continually rose after 1973, but it was not automatically adjusted for inflation until 1990. Still, pay in the LANG generously outpaced the growth of wages in the local civilian market.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, members of the Guard that served twenty satisfactory federal years of military service (defined by participation points), and after the age of sixty were entitled to military retirement benefits and pay. Routine increases in federal retirement pay and Social Security in 1962 and 1973 respectively accounted for the increase in the cost of living. This had a positive impact on purchasing power of the 28,504 military retirees, including Guardsmen, which resided in the DeRidder-Leesville area surrounding the regular Army installation Fort Polk in rural western Louisiana.<sup>14</sup> Retirement from the LANG meant an enlisted Louisiana Guardsman with twenty-three years of “good” service that retired in 1974 at the rank of First Sergeant or Master Sergeant (E-8), and was sixty years of age or older received \$181 per month (\$1,000 in 2018).<sup>15</sup> This income was, of course, separate from any additional income military

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<sup>13</sup> Taylor, *Military Service and American Democracy*, 115-121; “Fed Workers Get Pay Raise,” *Beauregard Times*, July 07, 1982; Military.com, “Historical Military Pay Rates,” Military.com, <https://www.military.com/benefits/military-pay/charts/historical-military-pay-rates.html> (accessed November 21, 2017); *Area Wage Survey: New Orleans, Louisiana, Metropolitan Area* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics: U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1982), 9, accessed January 02, 2018, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924050117062;view=1up;seq=242;size=200>; Patrick Purcell, “Federal Employees: Pay and Pension Increases Since 1969,” Cornell University ILR (Industrial and Labor Relations) School, January 20, 2010, accessed December 20, 2017, [http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/key\\_workplace/697](http://digitalcommons.ilr.cornell.edu/key_workplace/697).

<sup>14</sup> Sharff and Tennill Jr., *1975 Uniformed Services Almanac: Special National Guard Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Uniformed Services Almanac, Inc., 1975), 17-8; Purcell, “Federal Employees: Pay and Pension Increases Since 1969”; “General Leuer Praises Area Environment,” *Beauregard News*, January 10, 1986.

<sup>15</sup> Sharff and Tennill, *1975 Uniformed Services Almanac: Special National Guard Edition*, 20. Monthly retirement pay is based on the number of “points” earned from active duty service and inactive duty training as well as total number of years served. Three calculations determine monthly retirement pay rate: First, divide total number

retirees such as Social Security or civilian pensions. Federal funds and legislation ensured that Louisiana Guardsmen, active and retired, were able to defend themselves from the irregular economic forces of the 1980s.

ARNG armories in Louisiana created economic stimuli through construction and provided citizens with affordable civic space that recycled locally generated funds back into the community. Simultaneously the Guard's integration under the Total Force Policy amplified the LANG's military obligations and training requirements, which provided Guardsmen with greater opportunities to increase their pay. The increased training was accompanied by dynamic pay raises that added greater value to the supplemental income of Guardsmen. The economic impact of armories and military pay in rural communities was considerable but less evident than the clear advantage of educational benefits through service in the LANG.

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of points by 360 to determine total "years of service"; Second, multiply "years of service" by .025; Third, multiply the four-digit figure by the monthly base pay rate for the rank and years of service figure in effect once the Guardsman reaches age 60.

### Chapter Three: Enlistment for Education

At 09:30 a.m. on February 19, 1986, Miss Vicky Kirby received a telephone call from the LANG Chief-of-Staff, Colonel James K. Carley. Miss Kirby was TAG Ansel Stroud's secretary at Jackson Barracks, the LANG headquarters in New Orleans. Colonel Carley called to notify Miss Kirby that he had received a phone call from a concerned mother in Shreveport whose son was a member of the 527<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion and a student at Louisiana Tech University.<sup>1</sup> The Guardsman's mother had come across an article in the *Shreveport Times* that discussed the possibility of eliminating the tuition exemption for students in the Louisiana Guard. The mother "was upset because she feels this was a condition of her son's enlistment" and it should not be cut. Colonel Carley informed Miss Kirby that TAG's office and others at headquarters "may get more inquiries." The mother from Shreveport was not alone in her belief that tuition exemption was a condition of her son's enlistment. Twin brothers, Jessie and Eddie Hooker of Winnsboro, were vocal about their decision to join the LANG to "take advantage of the on-the-job training skills as well as the free college tuition." Likewise, sisters Donna and Debra Phillips of St. Joseph joined the Guard for technical training "as well as the free college tuition."<sup>2</sup>

Around 1980, recruiters proudly advertised, "FREE COLLEGE TUITION – State law provides exemption for tuition payments in all state supported Colleges in Louisiana for all active members of the Louisiana National Guard." As early as 1974, members of the Guard had been eligible for free tuition after the passage of Louisiana Revised Statute 29:36:1. From 1974-78, approximately 4,256 members of the Louisiana Guard had used the tuition exemption

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<sup>1</sup> In 1972, then Adjutant General O.J. Daigle, Jr. successfully acquired two additional engineer battalions for the LANG, including the 527<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, explicitly to enhance the economic growth of the state; *Military Department 1978 Annual Report*, Louisiana Adjutant General Reports, LANG Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Telephone Logs 1984-1988, February 1986, Box 1, Ansel M. Stroud Jr. Collection, LANG Archives; "Louisiana National Guard – A Family Affair," *Franklin Sun*, February 17, 1982.

program. The legislation was not well publicized and a rewording of the revised legislation in 1979 resulted in some Guardsmen being charged for tuition. By 1980 the legislatures had caught the mistake and began to issue refunds to those that had been charged. Head recruiter for the 156<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and full-time principal at Eunice Vocational-Technical School, Sergeant First Class Larry Manuel believed that the tuition exemption was responsible for the Guard's increase in recruitment. In 1982 alone, over 1,000 members or ten percent of the LANG used the tuition exemption program for higher education.<sup>3</sup> But free in-state tuition was only one of the many benefits open to members of the LANG.

In October 1982, the ARNG reopened its Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP, pronounced SLURP) to current members and recruits. SLRP repaid between \$500-\$1,500, plus interest, of student loan debt for each year of satisfactory service rendered. The LANG offered recruits either a \$2,000 enlistment bonus or \$4,000 in educational assistance. Also, the Louisiana Guard offered various Guard scholarships to high school and college students. Tuition exemption, an enlistment bonus or educational assistance, and SLRP could all be combined to provide a Guardsman with \$15,000-\$20,000 worth of funding at a college in Louisiana. The total amount in educational assistance the Louisiana Guard offered reached a new high with the help of the federal government.<sup>4</sup>

The passage of the Montgomery GI Bill – Active Duty (MGIB – AD) marked the first time the G.I Bill explicitly applied to the National Guard.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> “Jena Guard Recruiting,” *Times Signal*, October 08, 1980; *Military Department 1978 Annual Report*, Louisiana Adjutant General Reports, LANG Archives; “National Guardsmen Could Obtain Refunds,” *American Press*, October 26, 1980; Ben Reed, “Education Benefits Key to Guard Drive,” *News*, February 28, 1982; “Guard Growth, Training Cited,” *The Times*, April 26, 1982; “Twenty New Recruits: College Program Boosts Guard Units,” *The Bunkie Record*, December 14, 1986.

<sup>4</sup> “Army National Guard Reopens Loan Program,” *The Digest* – Southern University, October 29, 1982; “Louisiana National Guard Names Local Scholarship Winners,” *Daily Sentry News*, May 17, 1984.

<sup>5</sup> Student-soldiers were eligible to receive the benefits of the MGIB-AD immediately upon completion of their initial basic training on active duty. For greater detail of the G.I. Bill following the Vietnam War, see Mark

“Effective July 1, 1985, members of the National Guard are entitled to receive \$140.00 a month for 36 months of full time study. These benefits may be paid in addition to bonuses, National Guard Tuition Loan Repayment, and State Tuition Benefits.”<sup>6</sup>

Members of the Louisiana Guard were eligible for up to \$20,000-\$25,000 in educational assistance. In 1985, the average cost of tuition and fees with room and board at a public institution was \$3,408 per year or roughly \$14,000 to obtain a four-year degree. Educational benefits in the LANG enabled students to fully fund their college educations at zero cost to themselves and with cash to spare.<sup>7</sup> The myriad of educational benefits available to members of the Louisiana Guard seemed almost too good to be true and was only a matter of time before the Guard came under financial assault for its generosity during austerity.

As the economic situation in Louisiana worsened by the mid-1980s, the education package available to the Guard came under scrutiny, and the most significant piece of it, tuition exemption, was threatened with elimination. By 1986, the Louisiana state legislature expected public universities to make budget cuts and raise tuition, at the behest of state legislators such as E. Edwards Barham of Oak Grove, Jimmy Long of Natchitoches and Kathleen Blanco of Lafayette, the Louisiana Board of Regents proposed the elimination of free tuition for the elderly, children of public servants killed in the line of service, and members of the Louisiana Guard for a \$1.5 million budget savings. After the mother from Shreveport called, General Stroud’s secretary must have received plenty of similar calls after the tuition exemption program was threatened. The Guard lobbied legislators, and on the day of the vote uniformed men “from

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Boulton’s *Failing Our Veterans: The G.I. Bill and The Vietnam Generation* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> “National Guard G.I. Bill,” *The Enterprise*, July 24, 1985.

<sup>7</sup> “Tuition Costs of Colleges and Universities,” National Center for Education Statistics, accessed January 01, 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=76>. The \$140 from the Montgomery G.I. Bill was given directly to the student-soldier and could be spent on anything. Student-soldiers in Louisiana were able to not only obtain a free college education from the Guard but also pocket up to \$5,040 in profit from the federal government with the G.I. Bill.

the Louisiana National Guard invaded a House committee room...for a battle to keep tuition exemption.”<sup>8</sup>

As one of the members of the LANG present, TAG Stroud testified that over 1,600 Guardsmen were currently using the exemption program. Stroud also explained, that as the Shreveport mother insisted, the tuition exemption was legally guaranteed in some of the soldier’s enlistment contracts. Therefore, any renegeing on the exemption would be a violation of their enlistment contracts. The other Guardsmen present testified to the House committee that the tuition waiver was crucial for retention and attracting quality recruits to volunteer for service in the LANG. After listening to testimony and under the watchful eyes of members of the Louisiana Guard, the House Education Committee voted 9-5 against the proposal to repeal tuition exemption for Guardsmen. The LANG was successful in retaining tuition exemption for its members, but they could not prevent the legislative committee from eliminating tuition exemptions for the elderly and the children of public servants killed in the line of duty.<sup>9</sup> After a massive show of force, emphatic pleas, and the implicit threat of litigation, the LANG had successfully saved the state tuition exemption program.

Since 1974, the LANG offered generous educational benefits that surpassed those of other state National Guards.<sup>10</sup> But the federal government also did much to enhance educational support for members of the Guard. In 1982 the ARNG reinitiated its SLRP and in 1985 the U.S. Congress approved the MGIB-AD. A combination of federal and state benefits entitled members of the LANG to between \$15,000-25,000 in financial assistance. The education assistance aided


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<sup>8</sup> Karen Didier, “Cuts May Turn LA Colleges’ Sacred Cows into Sacrificial Lambs,” *State Times*, February 19, 1986; “Regents Approve Cutbacks of \$118 Million to Colleges,” *American Press*, Mar. 28, 1986; Joan I. Duffy, “Caught With Their Pants Down,” *Daily Leader*, May 04, 1986

<sup>9</sup> Karen Didier, “Guardsmen Defend Tuition Exemption,” *Morning Advocate*, May 02, 1986; “Guard Credit Remains,” *Post Signal*, May 30, 1986; “Board Cuts Tuition Benefits,” *Daily Star*, May 02, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Sharff and Tennill, *1975 Uniformed Services Almanac: Special National Guard Edition*, 29.

the LANG to attract a specific demographic: ambitious young people. Ironically, during the Vietnam War, young men evaded the draft by fleeing to Canada, attending college, or joining the National Guard. After the Vietnam War, young people chose to join the Louisiana Guard for free college, which was central to the LANG's sustained growth under the AVF. The LANG's education benefits came to represent a golden calf that the Guard and its champions aggressively defended from state budget cuts. Yet after the LANG expended its political capital to retain tuition exemption, the Louisiana Guard found itself in a fiscal fight it could not win.




**After you talk  
mortars,  
talk mortar boards.**

Somebody in your unit could get ahead a lot faster if he had a degree.


Somebody could sharpen his skills with the help of a correspondence course.

And you can bet a month's pay those same somebodies would really appreciate a quick reminder of the Guard's educational programs. And remember the interest you took when it's time to re-up.



While you're at it, you might also put in a few good words about the retirement benefits your troops are earning. And the PX privileges and low cost insurance they already enjoy.

Because leadership is more than barking a few commands. It's keeping the good soldiers in to follow them.



**Keep them in.      Remind them why they joined.**

An advertisement in *The Peligram* with the retention of Louisiana Guardsmen in mind.<sup>11</sup> The ad also sought to raise awareness of the potential to increase civilian earnings through advanced training or education (courtesy of LANG Archives).

<sup>11</sup> *The Peligram* is a bi-monthly, unofficial publication of the 241<sup>st</sup> Public Affairs Detachment in accordance with Army Regulation 360-81.



## Chapter Four: Armory Armageddon

On January 17, 1986, General Stroud sent a solemn message to thirty-one Louisiana legislators. Stroud notified the lawmakers that in accordance with the 1986-87 budget, a reduction of twenty-two percent (\$728,000) from the LANG's operating budget would be imposed by the State General Fund. Stroud wrote the legislators personally to inform them that because of the cuts, one or more armories within their districts were being closed, except the day before and after weekend training.

“The decision to close armories was not easily made. I have been a member of the Guard for almost thirty-nine years and consider the armory and its activities the foundation which a good Guard unit is built. I had no other alternative. I will meet with you, if you desire, at your convenience to discuss this matter.”<sup>1</sup>

Stroud described in his letter that all telephone and utilities would be disconnected and as a result readiness, community support, and recruitment would suffer substantially from the closures.

A few months earlier, TAG wrote to the same officials thanking them for their support and attached a pamphlet that described the positive effect of the Guard on Louisiana's economy.<sup>2</sup> FY 1984, the LANG drew \$75 million in federal funds for salaries, repairs, clothing, construction, and other projects. Since state contributions for FY 1984 were only \$5 million, a Federal-State dollar ratio of fifteen to one made the LANG a magnet for federal dollars. Even when Baton Rouge's contributions toward the LANG's budget decreased, money from Washington sustained Guard operations. The booklet also outlined some of the LANG's honors bestowed by the NGB, such as highest net membership gain, highest production per recruiter, and a number one rating in recruiting for twelve consecutive months. During 1984, the LANG employed 1,333 federal and ninety-two state employees with a total payroll of \$34.9 million, as

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<sup>1</sup> Armory Closing 1986, Folder 24, Box 7, Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>2</sup> “Budget Cuts Affect Louisiana National Guard,” *St. Mary Journal*, June 29, 1986; 1985 Letter to Public Officials on Economic Impact of Guard, Folder 7, Box 17, Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. Collection, LANG Archives.

well as another \$43.5 million in federal funds for drill pay and training. The pamphlet strongly concluded,

“...The National Guard is the provider of relief during disasters and emergencies but here in Louisiana the National Guard is also an excellent financial bargain for the people. Today’s National Guard is a proud member of the total force. The National Guard...a good deal for Louisiana.”<sup>3</sup>

Stroud’s letter and the attached brochure did not have the immediate effect on the politicians that he might have expected, so TAG took his appeal directly to the people of Louisiana.

In June 1986, General Stroud held a press conference in New Orleans and explained what effects the budget cuts would have on the LANG. The budget cuts required the closure of forty-four of the fifty-five armories, as well as the physical re-consolidation of the 251 federally funded Guardsmen that worked at the armories. The closures would also create a security risk to the millions of dollars in weapons and equipment at the closed Guard facilities. All unit equipment would also have to be relocated to each battalion headquarters. The average response time for the Guard in a state emergency was two to six hours, but after the closures it could increase to twelve to eighteen hours. General Stroud advised that,

“to the civilian, the Guardsman is most visible during hurricane season; however, these cuts could affect our response time. The armory oftentimes serves as a focal point in a small community. If the armory is no longer open, the chain of continuity-whereby the full-time personnel working there can initiate alert procedures no longer exists. Response will be slower in these smaller communities.”<sup>4</sup>

Stroud informed the public,

“We [LANG] generate \$96 million in federal funds...For every dollar committed by the state, the federal government matches...In fact, the ratio was 24-1 in 1986...it is easy to see that for every dollar cut out of our state Guard budget, we lost many fold from the federal side...We’ve experienced a three to four percent growth annually through recruiting and retention despite the fact that in 1982 our state budget was \$6 million and now in 1986 it is half that.

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<sup>3</sup> Pamphlet, Economic Contributions of the Louisiana Army and Air National Guard Fiscal Year 1984, Folder 7, Box 17, LANG Archives; Folder 1985, Press Releases, Late Cold War Filing Cabinets, Ansel M. Stroud, Jr. Collection, LANG Archives.

<sup>4</sup> “Guard Cites Effects Proposed Budget Slashes Would Have on its Operations,” *St. Tammany News-Banner*, June 29, 1986.

Approximately \$624,000 earned in state sales tax off of federally funded salaries alone will be reduced if the budget cuts go into effect.”<sup>5</sup>

Assistant Adjutant General James Hourin added at the press conference:

“you don’t have to be pro-military or anti-military to decide if these cuts will affect the state’s economy. Simple mathematics will tell you that the National Guard generates more revenue for the state than it costs. Federal funds pay local contractors and local businessmen for the services they provide for the Louisiana Guard. This is money poured directly into the state’s economy.”<sup>6</sup>

General Stroud concluded with a final remark that “we cannot turn readiness on and off like a faucet. We cannot turn recruiting on and off like a faucet. We have momentum. We must keep it going.”

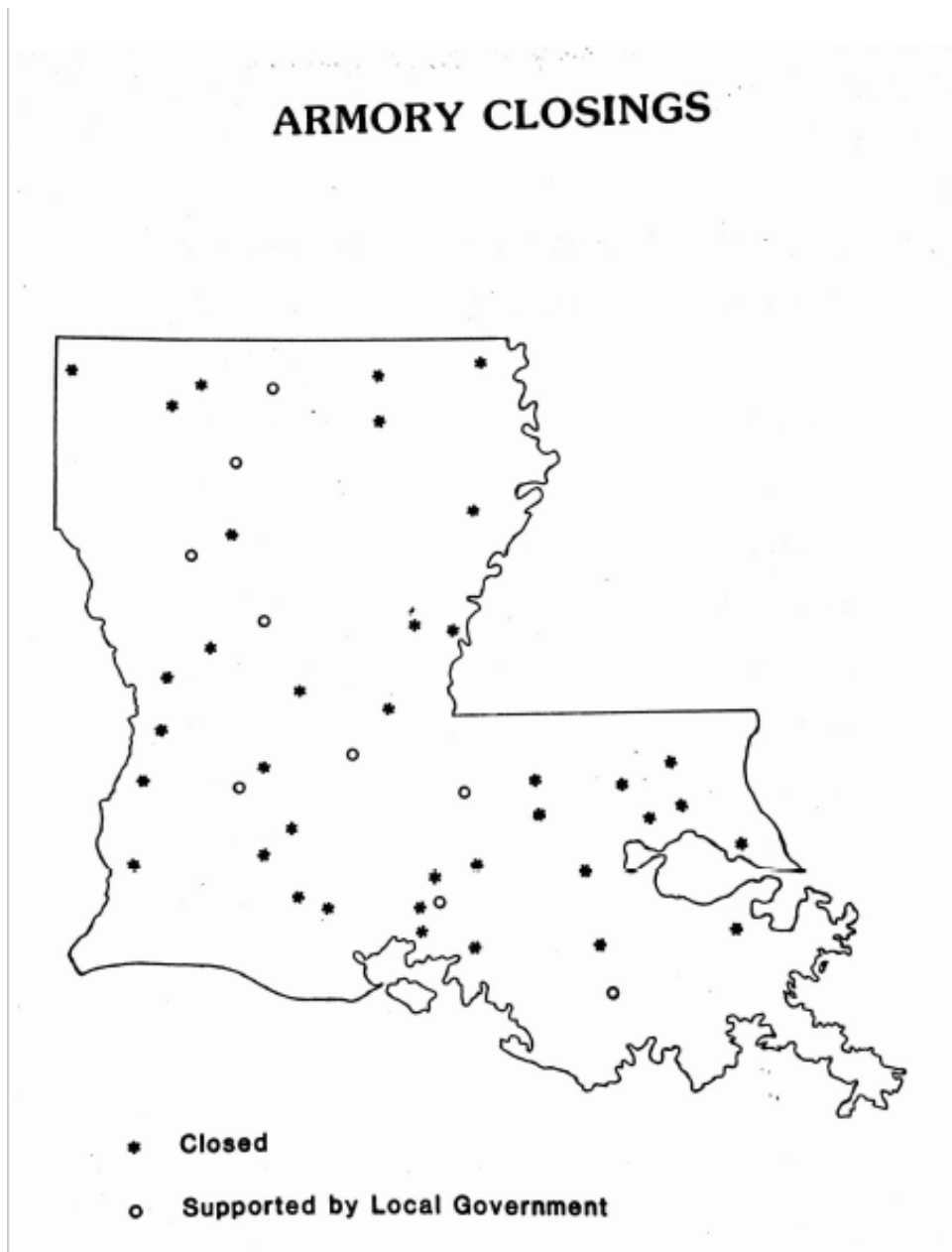
Following the press conference, Stroud continued to conduct an information campaign for two weeks aimed at convincing the Joint Legislative Committee to stave off the budget cuts. The Louisiana Guard even proposed that local governments and private citizens could keep their armories open by assuming the utility bills for the facilities, but few towns could afford to. Through grassroots campaigns, nine communities pooled their resources to keep their armories open, but of the forty-six armories targeted for closure thirty-five closed.<sup>7</sup> General Stroud’s public awareness campaign was not enough to keep the doors of the local armory open, but it was clear that his message did not fall on deaf ears.

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<sup>5</sup> “Budget Cuts Affect Louisiana National Guard.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> “Budget Cuts Affect Louisiana National Guard”; “Louisiana National Guard Affected by Budget Cuts,” *The Daily Enterprise*, June 26, 1986; “Guard Hopes to Keep Guard Armory Open,” *The Daily Iberian*, September 10, 1986; “Save Our Armory,” *The Daily Iberian*, September 21, 1986; “New Iberia Jaycees Sponsor Dance to ‘Save Our Armory,’” *The Daily Iberian*, January 29, 1987.



This map displays the forty-six armories in Louisiana that were positioned to be closed. Out of the forty-six designated to close, nine received support from local governments to remain open. But altogether thirty-five armories (in predominantly small communities) closed (courtesy of LANG Archives).

On June 26, 1986, the Louisiana legislature passed resolution HCR72, declaring the first Sunday of December as “National Guard Day.” According to the bills’ authors, Representatives James Donelon of Metairie and Weldon Russell of Amite, the “National Guard Day” was meant to be “appropriately observed with programs, ceremonies, proclamations and celebrations

throughout Louisiana”. In 1986, the first Sunday of December was also the forty-fifth anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. But this first Sunday of December was designed “to honor the National Guard, not remember Pearl Harbor. National Guard Day is to let the local people know that we’re here,” said Captain Dennis Heard of Company A, 527<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion.<sup>8</sup> By December, most if not all the local armories designated to be shut down had already closed, yet the LANG used the National Guard Day to draw attention to its situation.

Company D of the 528<sup>th</sup> Engineer Battalion, located in the Northern Louisiana town of Bastrop, held an open house with various displays of military weapons and hardware on National Guard Day at its armory. A newspaper article in Bastrop’s *The Daily Enterprise* read: “the public is invited to attend. Due to state budget cuts, most of the armories, including the Bastrop Armory, are without heat and guests are asked to dress accordingly.” The company commander, First Lieutenant Robert C. Kyger, announced that Company D invites “everyone in the community to visit our local armory and visit with our men.” First activated in 1947 as Company L of the 199<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, the Bastrop unit first drilled at the local courthouse until 1950 when a Guard facility was first constructed.<sup>9</sup> The Bastrop unit had a full-time supply sergeant whose job carried with it a civil service status with a salary of \$22 a month and free quarters provided at the courthouse. Like most armories in Louisiana, the construction of the Bastrop armory was a community effort.

On December 7, 1947, *The Daily Enterprise* ran a story that announced that the Bastrop Association of Commerce and Industry had appointed local businessman A.B. Rogers to raise

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<sup>8</sup> “‘National Guard Day’ Designated,” *Morning Advocate*, June 27, 1986; Kathy Calongne, “A Day to Honor the National Guard,” *Town Talk*, December 08, 1986.

<sup>9</sup> A pattern of the post-WWII armory boom, typically once a Guard unit was activated in a town, rented space or a building was used for training until a Guard facility could be established. Typically, the town would donate or offer a 99-year lease on the land and the first Guard building to be constructed for a unit was usually a MSVB. MSVBs served as a functional armory until an actual armory with an in-door drill hall or assembly area was built.

\$1,700 to purchase a property site for the construction of a \$30,000 National Guard facility. As was the case in many communities in Louisiana, the citizens of Bastrop provided adequate donations to purchase the property for the new armory if the land could not be donated outright to the LANG. The city council then leased the land at an annual rate of one dollar to the Guard for ninety-nine years.

After thirty-four years of service at the Bastrop armory, Sergeant First Class Joseph McLean saw the unit evolve from:

“an Infantry Company to a Transportation Company to the Engineer Company... ‘And would you believe that at one time we were a Snow Mobile Company for about a year? Can you image a Snow Mobile unit in Louisiana?’ When asked what they did during their meetings he replied, ‘We looked at a lot of picture books of snow and snow mobiles.’ They never received a snow mobile to practice on he said.”<sup>10</sup>

But in the years after the Vietnam War, the Bastrop unit did more than look at picture books and collect a check on drill weekend. By 1986, Company D soldiers had provided support and assistance in or around their community for numerous floods, storms, tornados, the devastating Pine Beetle epidemic, and even used their heavy engineering equipment (the Armored Vehicle Launched bridge vehicle) as a substitute when flood waters washed out a local bridge. The humanitarian work of the engineer unit at Bastrop even reached as far as Panama for a road building project. “The National Guard works year-round as a guard unit where and when they are needed in times of disaster,” as Sergeant James Jones, the unit’s full-time training non-commissioned officer (NCO), said to visitors on National Guard Day. “We are proud of our men and the part they play in our community as full-time citizens and part-time soldiers.”<sup>11</sup>

Since the closure of the Bastrop armory in 1986, Sergeant Jones and Sergeant Calvin Sistrunk, the unit’s two full-time NCOs, commuted over twenty-five miles away to work out of

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<sup>10</sup> P. J. Jones, “Armory Open House Sunday: National Guard Day Set,” *The Daily Enterprise*, December 08, 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

the 528<sup>th</sup>'s Battalion headquarters in Monroe. Though the Bastrop armory was not completely shut down, it was open only during the weekend drill. All its equipment and records were in Monroe. Not only were the armories' heat cut, but in some cases all utilities were severed to cut costs, which significantly hindered a unit's readiness in the event of an emergency. Future missions to aid or support small communities were seriously delayed as a result. Most drill weekends after the closure consisted of classroom training since all of the military equipment had been moved to Monroe.<sup>12</sup> The impact of the armory closures was larger than just the relocation of the unit's full-time Guardsmen and equipment, but also the federal dollars attached to them.

In 1986, many of Company D's 120 Guardsmen were also residents of Bastrop, and the unit brought in an annual payroll of \$225,000. Except for the unit's two displaced full-time NCOs, most of the members of Company D remained in Bastrop after the closure. The combined payroll for Sergeant Jones and Sergeant Sistrunk was \$25,000 per soldier and for both \$50,000 annually. In 1980, in Morehouse Parish where the Bastrop armory was located, the median family income was \$12,949 and thirty-one percent of the Parish population subsisted at or below the poverty level.<sup>13</sup> The combination of a low median income and a high rate of poverty in Bastrop meant Sergeant Jones and Sergeant Sistrunk's \$25,000 salary (more than twice the median income) had considerable purchasing power. With a daily commute of over fifty miles round trip, Sergeants Jones and Sistrunk may have considered relocation to Monroe and

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<sup>12</sup> Editorial, *The Donaldsonville Chief*, December 11, 1986; Eileen Schlegl, "Guard Shows Off, Moves Out," *The Donaldsonville Chief*, December 11, 1986.

<sup>13</sup> Jones, "Armory Open House Sunday: National Guard Day Set"; *Socio-Economic Facts: Morehouse Parish*, Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, 1980, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana State Documents and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

commute to Bastrop on drill weekends. Had the NCOs relocated after the armory closed, considerable federal dollars would have also left the Bastrop economy.

“It’s poor business to throw away that much money when a little effort on our part will make the company a going concern,” said Bastrop Armory Association President Emmett Stephenson. In addition to the income of the unit’s full-timers, the Guard units no longer bought fuel, food, and other supplies locally. The closure of armories also halted the collection of rental fees by the LANG and the self-funded maintenance work it provided. The armory closures were another potential economic setback to rural, poverty-stricken communities because of the federal dollars that would no longer go into the local economy if the armories closed for good. At least \$275,000 in annual payroll to Guardsmen might have been withdrawn from the Bastrop community, not including money for armory construction or repairs. Not to mention the social costs the community lost from the lack of access to the armories. The communities that most needed to keep open their armory doors were those that could least afford to.<sup>14</sup>

The nine armories that remained open did so only with financial support from their local governments. Since 1976, it was standard practice for police juries and city councils in Louisiana to make annual donations to the local Guard unit or armory.<sup>15</sup> Despite the poor state of the Louisiana economy during the 1980s, some communities continued to provide donations to their local armories. Most towns were not able to or willing to take on the entire utility costs of an armory. It may sound strange that the Louisiana Guard might close armories because it could not afford to keep the lights on, but the issue was real. The cost of utilities increased significantly. From 1986-1987, the amount of sales tax collected by the state of Louisiana for utilities such as

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Jones, “Armory Open House Sunday: National Guard Day Set.”; Schlegl, “Guard Shows Off, Moves Out.”; “Officials Warned – Auditor Cracks Down on Local Contributions,” *Enterprise*, November 04, 1982.



light, power, and gas spiked from \$720,000 to \$18,970,000 or nearly 260 percent.<sup>16</sup> As the economy and unemployment worsened in Louisiana, large numbers of home mortgages were foreclosed, and homeowners themselves needed relief. By 1987, over \$400 million dollars' worth of homes in Louisiana were in foreclosure.<sup>17</sup> The people and local governments of Louisiana were in dire need of additional sources of income, not more bills from their ARNG units. Yet some local communities could afford to give and continued to support their armories. But the armory closures also created confusion as state and federal authorities continued to pursue and fund the construction of more reserve facilities.

In 1986, when armories were being closed, \$2.28 million in federal and \$1.12 million in state funds were approved to construct three new armories in Farmerville, Delhi, and Ville Platte. "The state is building new armories when it can't pay for heating fuel, electricity and telephones at those it already has. And quite frankly, that doesn't make much sense," lectured *The Daily Leader*. The construction of new armories was a part of a larger federal construction program (Long Range Construction Program) funded by the U.S. Congress with appropriated funds for the Department of Defense about seven years prior. When the federal projects came up for funding, the state had to come up with its matching share or the federal funds were lost, and the project was scrapped. As the LANG readily pointed out, by putting up twenty-five percent of the cost, the state received a seventy-five percent return on its investment.<sup>18</sup>

The Commander-in-Chief of the LANG added to the armory confusion when Governor Edwin Edwards doled out \$495,000 in state funds to the city of Bossier to open a single U.S.

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<sup>16</sup> *The Louisiana Economy: FY 1988 Edition*, Louisiana State Planning Office, 49F, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

<sup>17</sup> *The Louisiana Economy*, Table A-IV.

<sup>18</sup> "Financial Woes but Armories Go," *The Daily Leader*, February 18, 1987; Rick Busher, "Three Months for The Armory," *The Daily Leader*, January 28, 1987.

Army Reserve armory when the LANG needed \$728,000 to keep all the LANG armories in the state open. Regardless of public concern or monetary means of financing, armories in rural towns such as Colfax, Delhi, Farmersville, and Ville Platte were built and then closed upon completion. However taxpayers may have found such a tradeoff, the construction of surplus armories provided economic activity to rural communities in Louisiana. Leaders of the LANG promoted the worth of their armories and conducted a campaign of direct appeal to the people and politicians of Louisiana. Despite the Guard's efforts to keep the armories open, the closures continued. It was clear that the LANG's campaign to save the armories had failed, but the drive raised public awareness of the local economic impact of the Guard.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Tell the Times: Governor Has Guard Up," *The Shreveport Times*, January 20, 1987; T.J. Simoneaux, "Armories May be Built, Then Closed," *The State Times*, August 07, 1986.

## Chapter Five: Resurrection

On July 1, 1987, Sergeant Paul Doughty marched up to the flagpole at the Jonesville armory along the Mississippi Delta, raised the flag and rendered a prompt, crisp salute to the colors. As a full-time federal employee with the 1083<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company HET (Heavy Equipment Transportation) or a unit of flatbed trucks to move tanks, Sergeant Doughty raised the flag to indicate that the National Guard was back in operation in Jonesville. As Sergeant Doughty commented, “it’s really just business as usual...with four fulltime employees the local unit also has sixty-six members, most of whom are from this area.” During the closure, Sergeant Doughty commuted to and from the nearest town, Jena, sixty miles away. If the Jonesville armory was closed for the entire FY 1986-87, Doughty would have spent \$816 in additional commuting cost for that year (\$1,845 in 2018). In total, thirty-five of the LANG’s fifty-five armories were closed for as long as nine months. All thirty-five armories were eventually re-opened after funding was allocated for the new FY from the state general fund. As State Representative Al Ater explained: “there were no extra revenues added for it because of the increase in oil prices, tax revenues were anticipated at a level where we could fund it.”<sup>1</sup> From 1986-87, the average cost of a gallon of gas increased ten cents from 0.86¢ to 0.96¢ per gallon. State funding for armories resumed in Louisiana, but what of the LANG’s claim of lost recruiting momentum?

Despite the Jonesville armory’s closure, recruitment appeared not to have suffered. Sergeant Doughty observed, “We feel like recruitment may pick back up with our office in

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<sup>1</sup> “National Guard Local Unit Office Re-Opens for Business,” *Catahoula News-Booster*, July 30, 1987; Jim Edwards, “New Fiscal Years Brings Forth Reopening of Guard Armories,” *New Star World*, August 06, 1987. FY 1986-87 had 253 business days and the average miles per gallon (mpg) for a pick-up truck in 1985 was sixteen mpg. With a sixty mile commute a pick-up would consume roughly 3.75 gallons daily and 948.75 gallons a year. The average cost of a gallon of gas in the U.S. during 1986 was .86¢.

Jonesville now open fulltime again.” It was feared that recruitment and strength for the Guard would suffer without the physical connection to the community and prospective recruits. But Sergeant First Class John Woods of Winnsboro insisted that recruitment had hardly been affected and attributed that to the generous benefits the LANG offered. Woods reasoned that “the Guard has so much to offer...A person can earn free college tuition, as well as student loan repayments, and there are many other benefits also.” In fact, during the armory closures, the LANG grew in strength by 700 men and women.

Major Stafford Landry, the LANG’s Branch Manager for Recruiting and Retention, viewed the poor economy in Louisiana as both a blessing and a curse. “It’s true the economy has helped our recruiting efforts, but at the same time the economy is driving the pool of potential recruits looking for full-time employment into other states.” From 1984-1990 Louisiana had the highest unemployment rate in the nation. Between 1983 and 1989, Louisiana suffered a net loss of 170,000 jobs. In 1985, Louisiana’s labor force totaled 1,758,000, but by 1988 had decreased to 1,712,000. Even though Louisianans left the state in droves, the strength of the LANG exhibited an uneven but upward trend of growth.<sup>2</sup>

Nearly 46,000 people left Louisiana as banks failed, real estate values plunged, and recipients of unemployment and public assistance rose.<sup>3</sup> Workers in Louisiana lucky to still have a job saw a decline in their wages.<sup>4</sup> The combination of the recession and increased local taxes contributed to the flight of Louisianans out of the Pelican State in search of better economic

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<sup>2</sup>*Statistical Abstract of Louisiana 1990*, Table VII-19, Louisiana State Planning Office, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library; see Figure 4.

<sup>3</sup> Sam Lanfer, “Local Armory Re-Opens,” *Franklin Sun*, August 05, 1987; *Statistical Abstract of Louisiana 1990*, Table VII-19; Wall and Rodrigue, *Louisiana*, 407.

<sup>4</sup> According to *Statistical Abstract of Louisiana 1990*, Table VII-8, in 1986 alone, total personal income in Louisiana fell by a staggering \$1.1 billion. From 1985 to 1987, income inequality increased as total income from wages, salaries and labor in Louisiana decreased by \$1.3 billion. While income from proprietors’, dividends, interests and rent increased by \$740 million.

opportunity. As bleak as the situation was, many Louisianans remained and took advantage of the economic incentives offered by the Louisiana Guard. The LANG displayed they were able to do more with less during the armory closures and when it received more money the Louisiana Guard endeavored to be a good steward of its state funds.

After the armories reopened in 1987, the LANG reduced operating costs by carrying out an energy conservation plan. As the Adjutant General of the LANG, General Stroud issued seasonal directives and limited the use of air conditioning at Guard facilities during the hottest months of the year. From May through October, air conditioners could be used but only from 0800 until 1530. November through April (when the weather in Louisiana tends to be more temperate) all air conditioners at Guard facilities were turned off. TAG's memorandum tasked the designated facility engineers and unit commanders with compliance of his energy directives. Stroud explained in a memorandum, his energy policies sought to reduce costs because "utility expenses constitute a major portion of the State's operating budget and significant impact on the state funds available to support maintenance and repair requirements at [Guard] facilities."<sup>5</sup>

During the armory closures energy conservation was difficult to execute because the consolidation of personnel and material at Battalion HQs increased utility and energy consumption. After the armories were reopened, energy conservation was observed but it appears to have been short-lived. During 1988-89, LANG operating budget (which included utilities and energy costs) increased by \$185,000. From 1989-90, the LANG was assigned the task of managing the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) to prepare Louisiana for natural or manmade disasters. With the OEM's budget derived from Washington, the available federal

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<sup>5</sup> "Air Conditioner Policy," LANG Directorate of Facilities Engineering: Policies and Procedures Guide 1990, Late Cold War Filing Cabinets, LANG Archives; "Energy Conservation Policy," LANG Directorate of Facilities Engineering: Policies and Procedures Guide 1990, Late Cold War Filing Cabinets, LANG Archives.

contributions to the LANG's operating budget increased by \$14.6 million.<sup>6</sup> From 1990 to 1991, President George H. Bush ordered Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, which gave readiness rather than fiscal conservation priority for the LANG.

In 1986, when thirty-five out of fifty-five armories were closed, it was feared that recruitment and strength in the LANG would falter and the economic situation in Louisiana would worsen. The leadership of the Louisiana Guard warned that if the armories closed then recruitment and strength would suffer. Thousands of Louisianans moved outside of the state in search of jobs, but the LANG grew by 700 Guardsmen. Despite the closures, the overall strength of the ARNG increased, most likely from the enlistment of younger underemployed workers. The Louisiana Guard proved they were able to do more with less. The resurrection of the armories was attributed to increased oil revenues. But it is likely that the pressure of public and political lobbying from the LANG was partly responsible for the armories reopening. Under TAG Stroud, the LANG implemented a fiscally responsible policy of energy conservation at its Guard facilities. But the Guard's financial worries evaporated after being given authority over the OEM and shortly afterward, mobilized for service in the First Gulf War; which significantly increased the amount of federal funds in its coffers.

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<sup>6</sup> *Executive Budget: Louisiana Military Department Budget Summaries* (FY 1988-1990), State of Louisiana Executive Department, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans.

## Conclusion

Along the banks of the Mississippi Delta, in East Carroll Parish, the town of Lake Providence was in dire economic straits. In 1980, unemployment in Lake Providence jumped from nearly fourteen percent to over twenty-four percent. More than sixty percent of the population had neither a high school diploma or a GED and over forty percent of Lake Providence residents lived below the poverty threshold. Priscilla Coleman, a twenty-year-old single mother, was unemployed since she dropped out of high school, but she managed to get by on \$174 monthly welfare check and \$158 in food stamps. Priscilla's \$332 went toward her \$60 rent, \$12 gas bill, \$125 average electrical bill and feeding her two infants. Times were equally hard in Lake Providence for Judge Quinn, thirty-four, who was laid off from his job with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Quinn had a pregnant wife and a one-year-old infant. After he paid his utility bills and \$47.50 rent, Quinn had little money left for anything else.

“I got \$90 unemployment this month. And I get a check from the National Guard – this month it was \$79, last month \$113. It doesn't leave much for no food. I leave it for my wife and baby. I eat good twice a month – when I go to drill on a Saturday and Sunday – I eat good then. Then I'm OK.”<sup>1</sup>

Even if he owned a car, getting to drill was probably an ordeal for Quinn since the nearest LANG armory was in Oak Grove, twenty miles west in West Carroll Parish. But many Lake Providence residents, like Quinn, simply could not afford to leave or even look for work outside of the city limits. In 1982, women like Priscilla Coleman could not enlist in the ARNG without a high school diploma, but men such as Quinn could volunteer with just a GED.<sup>2</sup> Educational requirements excluded a significant number of the population in Lake Providence from enlistment in the Guard. But for the men and women eligible, the LANG was an opportunity for

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<sup>1</sup> Dianne Sims, “Town Staggers Under Burden of No Work,” *News Star World*, March 07, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> *Socio-Economic Facts: East Carroll Parish* (1980) Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, Louisiana and Special Collections, Earl K. Long Library, University of New Orleans; Joan Davis, “GED Keeps Woman Out of Military,” *The Daily Star*, January 24, 1986.

them to get ahead in life. Education, military benefits, supplemental income, and even preferential military hiring for civil service jobs were available to Louisiana Guardsmen.

During the 1980s, the economic hardships experienced in Louisiana gave cause for some citizens to flee the state in search of opportunity. But most Louisianans remained and some increased their income through part-time service in the ARNG. The LANG provided a positive economic influence on small towns through initial construction, repair and maintenance of armories. Though Louisiana armories were perceived as vital, the pay of soldiers was more significant for the economy. The increased responsibility placed on the Louisiana Guard by the Total Force Policy provided greater training opportunities and man-days for Guardsmen, which also increased their income from the military. Members of the LANG benefited from the AVF's entrance into the civilian labor market through federal legislation that doubled the pay of Guardsmen and ensured it kept pace with inflation.

Generous education benefits were introduced by both Louisiana and the federal government, which significantly contributed toward the growth of the LANG. When educational benefits and armories for the Guard came under fiscal attack, the LANG fervently defended them from being cut. In 1986, the leadership of the LANG failed to keep the armories from closing, but the dire effects they predicted did not come to pass. In fact, the overall strength of the LANG grew. The LANG's publicity campaign eventually obtained the political and economic support necessary to revive the armories. Even without the Guard's physical presence in local communities after the armory closures, ambitious young men and women from around Louisiana traveled considerable distances to volunteer in the LANG.

This research also suggests that armories in Louisiana were distributed politically in locations with low or dwindling populations, rather than placed in college towns and urban



centers. Armories were built to be closed to attract federal dollars to communities in Louisiana. Instead for national defense or security, armories were constructed for political leverage and to garner state and federal funds in impoverished or low-income areas. The ARNG's armories and activities may not be the deciding factor for boom or bust in Louisiana, but the economic stimulus and opportunities provided were the foundation on which a good Guard unit was built in the early era of the AVF.

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## **Vita**

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