



## In Defense of Liberty

The Evolution of the Colonial Militia into the National Guard



### Militias

In the ancient Greek city-states a man had to own a shield, spear, and sword and be willing to defend the State in order to share the rights of citizenship. This "citizen-soldier" concept continued through the colonial period in America. "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state" was not a new concept when it was penned in 1789. The framers of the Constitution were not willing to totally surrender their state controlled and regulated militia to a national government. The Act of 1793 left the militia in firm control of the states while specifying for their federalization in case of national emergency.

Today, Army National Guard units carry on the tradition of state and national service inherited from the militia. For over two hundred years, in both war and peace, these forces have stood ready "...in defense of liberty."



### A Call to Arms

#### COLONIAL MILITIA

Colonial Americans needed a military force to defend their families and property. Massachusetts established the first colonial militia in 1636 and soon each colony had one of its own. In North Carolina, militia units were organized by county with the Royal Governor serving as commander-in-chief. Various county commanders held the rank of colonel and were appointed, along with other high-ranking officers, by the elected Assembly. Officers were often Assembly members. Each county militia was divided into companies. These companies were specialized into infantry, artillery, and cavalry.

#### NATIONAL GUARD

With the coming of the Industrial Revolution, and the need for a better-trained and equipped defense force, the militia was reorganized in 1903 into the National Guard. Under this system the state governor remained commander-in-chief with the state agreeing to provide armories and storage facilities. The federal government agreed to provide equipment and training. National Guard personnel take dual oaths: one to their state and one to the federal government. The Governor may call upon the Guard to help in case of natural disaster, or to control civil unrest, and the President may call upon the Guard to aid in national or international disturbances.

## Enlistment and Training

### COLONIAL MILITIA

All free males, regardless of race, between the ages of 16 and 60 were required to serve in the militia. Muster, or drill, was held every month. These sessions attracted the whole community and would take on a "county fair"-like atmosphere. Militiamen received pay only when they were in the field under the authority of the colonial assembly. Additionally, the militiaman was expected to provide his own weapons and equipment.

Knowledge of warfare came from experience and reading. Few officers were professionally trained. Some militia units, such as the Minutemen, had more intense training and were expected to be ready to fight on a minute's notice.

### NATIONAL GUARD

All United States citizens between the ages of 17 and 35 may volunteer for enlistment in the National Guard. New recruits attend regular army basic training and an advanced training course. Members are paid monthly and must drill one weekend a month and spend two weeks each year in a more intense training camp.

The Adjutant General is appointed by the Governor to serve as the state commander. Officers train with regular army units and attend various schools, such as the Army War College. Guardsmen can be federalized and sent anywhere in the country, or the world, to enforce national policy.

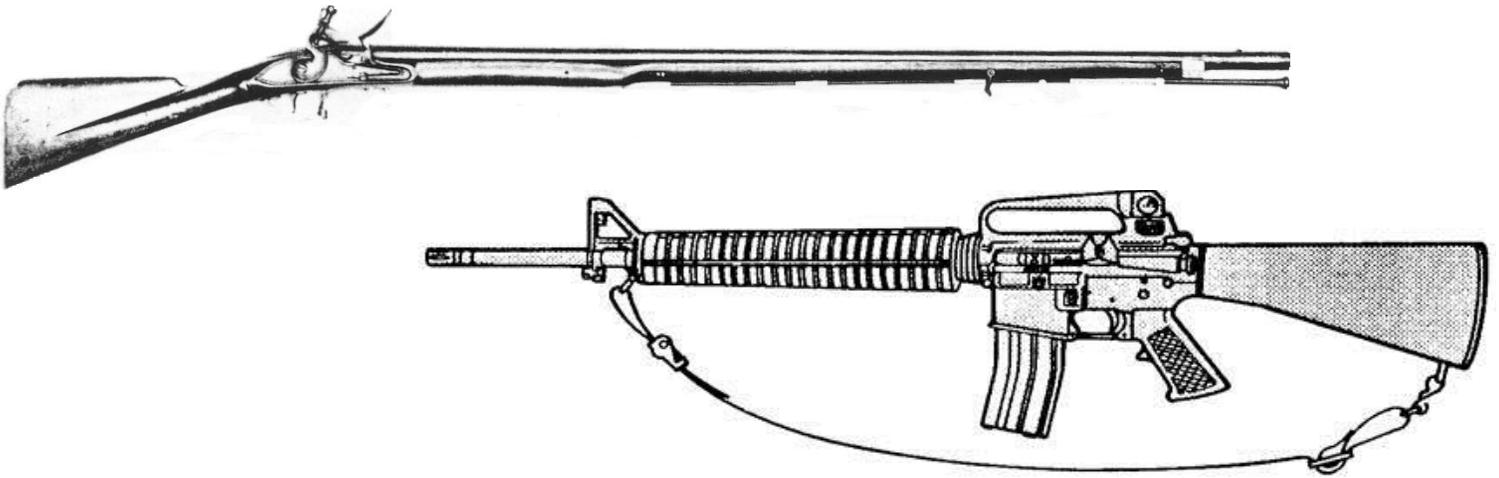
## Weapons and Equipment

### COLONIAL MILITIA

The most valuable infantry weapons of the Revolution were muskets like the British "Brown Bess" and its American copy the "Committee of Safety" musket. These weapons were smooth-bore, muzzle-loading, flintlock weapons that fired a pre-made paper cartridge. They were commonly .75 caliber, that is, the bore was three-fourths of an inch in diameter. These features allowed the musket to be fired eight times in two minutes. Militiamen, massed in tight formations and firing in unison, could have tremendous effect on an enemy. These muskets had no sights. What appears to be a sight on the muzzle is a bayonet stud. After firing several volleys, troops often engaged in hand-to-hand combat.

### NATIONAL GUARD

Technology has drastically changed the face of battle. The Act of 1903 provides for the militia to have standard US Army equipment. The National Guardsman is armed with the M-16 A-2 rifle. In service for over thirty years, it is light and fires comparatively small .223 bullets. It has an effective range ten times greater than the "Brown Bess". The rifle has a thirty-round magazine and can be fired in the semi-automatic or full-automatic mode. Additional weapons may include M-60 machine guns, hand grenades, 9 MM pistols, and grenade launchers. This technology has changed the battlefield in size and scope and given a single Guardsman the firepower of a company of colonial militiamen.



## Colors

### COLONIAL MILITIA

The Colonial Bladen and Brunswick County Militia used the familiar pine tree and rattlesnake as symbols on their flags.



### NATIONAL GUARD

No longer organized as county units, today's Army National Guard flies the North Carolina flag signifying it as the State Militia.

