

MARYLAND'S STATE DEFENSE FORCE

by
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Historical Summary - W W I

The story of the Maryland State Guard (MDSG) is part of the larger history of State Defense Forces (SDF) in general. Militia were regarded as purely state troops until just before World War I. In passing the National Defense Act of 1916, Congress recognized the National Guard as a hybrid federal-state force. This satisfied a long-standing goal of National Guard officials by formally designating the Guard as the principal federal military reserve. At the same time, it made the state militias vulnerable to federal service at the President's order. An immediate question arose: What would the states do if the National Guard was ordered into federal service? It was apparent that the states would find themselves without any internal security forces other than civil police agencies, which might prove inadequate in major crises.

As America's eventual entry into the war became more evident, the question became more than academic. As a result, Congress passed the Militia Act of 1917, authorizing the Secretary of War to equip "home guard" or other SDFs which states created in the absence of their National Guard contingents. By November 1918, 27 states had raised some form of SDF, with an aggregate strength of about 78,000 troops. However, many states did not want to bear the expense, and others believed that article I, section 8 of the Constitution, and section 61 of the National Defense Act of 1916, clearly prohibited maintenance of state forces. Section 61 specifically forbade states from maintaining troops other than their National Guards in peacetime. To fill the resulting security gaps, the federal government created the "United States Guards, United States Army." This organization reached 28,000 men by war's end, and was responsible for guarding over 300 sites in 29 states.¹

When America entered the war, the Maryland National Guard was in state service, guarding bridges and water utilities, until ordered into Federal service between March and July 1917. The Maryland General Assembly passed a measure to create an SDF on 24 June, and Governor Emerson C. Harrington signed it into law three days later.

On 4 August, Harrington issued an executive order to activate a 1,000-man force designated "2nd Regiment, Infantry, Maryland State Guard." A headquarters company, supply company and twelve lettered companies were authorized. MG Clinton L. Riggs, who had been Adjutant General of Maryland from 1904 to 1908, was named colonel commanding on 17 October. Over half the State Guard's strength was concentrated in Baltimore City. Records are not clear, but lettered companies were definitely formed in Hagerstown, Frederick, Salisbury and Annapolis, and others may have existed in Hyattsville, Cumberland, Elkton, Bel Air and Pikesville. Total strength appears to have reached about 800 men, in nine lettered companies and

one machine gun company. Soldiers were armed with .45-calibre Springfield black powder rifles left over from the Spanish-American War. The State Guard was never intended to perform routine guard duty, instead drilling for emergency service. It was called to active service twice. In February 1919, three infantry and one machine gun companies provided security during the execution and subsequent burial of a convicted murderer in Annapolis. Two months later, the infantry company at Salisbury was ordered to Easton to help protect a prisoner being tried there; this prisoner had barely escaped a lynch mob on the first day of his trial. The 2nd Regiment also held two summer camps (Timonium, 1918 and Saunders Range near Glen Burnie, 1919) and sent teams to the national rifle matches during those years.

On 20 January 1920, Governor Albert C. Ritchie directed the Adjutant General to disband the 2nd Regiment. The effective date was 1 March 1920. Maryland's militia code was revised in 1922 and contained no provision for an SDF.²

World War II

With the approach of World War II, the states found themselves facing the same situation as had loomed in 1917, with a greater actual threat of foreign invasion, sabotage and subversive activity. Congress authorized induction of the National Guard in September 1940. The next month, President Roosevelt approved an amendment to section 61 of the National Defense Act, specifically authorizing creation of SDFs *during peacetime* when the National Guard was in federal service. The amendment also renewed the Secretary of War's authority to supply surplus arms and equipment to SDFs. By the end of June 1941, 37 states had created SDFs, which two years later reached a peak strength of 170,400 men. Eventually every state except Arizona, Montana, Nevada and Oklahoma activated a state force. American possessions and territories also had local defense units. As in World War I, the federal government had to provide additional internal security, this time by stationing 50 military police battalions in the most vulnerable states.³

In Maryland, a bill to recreate the State Guard was introduced 2 January 1941 and immediately ran into rough sledding. The Republican Party feared that Democrat Governor Herbert R. O'Connor would use the MDSG as a partisan political machine. National Guard officers were concerned they would be displaced when they returned from the war. And labor leaders charges that the State Guard would be used primarily for strikebreaking. These objections were overcome by various amendments, the measure passed 11 February, and Governor O'Connor signed it 14 February. Maryland's National Guard units had been inducted only eleven days earlier.⁴



FIG 1

Courtesy Marian Brennan

MDSG encampment at Camp Ritchie, 1946. Seated in center, l to r: Maj. Gen. Mohr (MDSG commander), Gov. O'Connor, Gov. Lane, Brig. Gen. Petrott (acting Adjutant General) and Col. Gaylord L. Clark (MDSG Executive Officer).



FIG 2

Courtesy Marian Brennan

MDSG encampment at Fort Meade, 1945 Troops of 5th Battalion (Infantry). At left is Lt. Col. William Jones, Battalion commander. At center front is 1st Sgt. Charles Barton. 5th Battalion was an Eastern Shore unit.

AG Milton A. Reckord suggested that the State Police superintendent be appointed to command the State Guard, thus providing close coordination. Governor O'Connor thought the assignment might be too much for one man to handle. He named COL Dwight H. Mohr commander on 1 May 1941. Mohr had commanded the National Guard's 104th Medical Regiment. He led the reactivated State Guard until it was disbanded in 1947, having risen to the rank of major general.⁵

The MDSG started as a nine-battalion regiment, but was reorganized as a brigade in 1942. It grew to a strength of twelve battalions -- nine infantry, and one each medical, engineer (later converted to infantry) and "Special Military Police." One of the units was a black infantry battalion (the 11th) raised in Baltimore City. Only eight other states supported black units during the war. There were also several separate companies (for example, motorcycle, signal, chemical warfare, cavalry, service and engineer) but these did not survive 1942. The MDSG was authorized 3,535 men, but never actually exceeded 2,730 (31 December 1944).⁶

The State Guard actually saw active duty *before* America became a belligerent, responding to an explosion at Cumberland in October 1941. The entire MDSG was mobilized for state defense by 12 December 1941, guarding bridges and critical public utilities. A problem soon arose. After the initial burst of patriotic enthusiasm, many guardsmen started grumbling. The prevailing complaint was that they signed up for action, not to "walk around reservoirs." A further disincentive was that privates were paid only \$1.25 a day for this boring and unglamorous work. Most states experienced identical problems with their SDF personnel on extended active guard duty.

O'Connor responded by creating the Special Military Police. The remainder of the MDSG went into a "ready reserve" status, and answered seven other calls to state service during the war:

- A three-train collision near Dickerson (Sept 1942)
- Cumberland flood (October 1942)
- Elkton munitions plant explosion (May 1943)
- Point Breeze electric plant strike (June 1943)
- Cambridge hurricane (March 1944)
- Two Baltimore fires (March 1945)
- Baltimore V-J Night crowd control (August 1945)⁷

The special Military Police (SMP) came into being by Governor O'Connor's order on 9 January 1942. It was initially known as the "Military Section of the State Police," and was tasked with providing full-time, statewide security for critical highway and railroad bridges and water utilities. About 300 men were authorized. The rate of pay was set as \$5 per day for privates, giving rise to the term "\$5-a-day men." They were paid from the State Road Commission (SRC) gasoline tax fund. Many state legislators opposed O'Connor's actions because there was great confusion as to the exact status of the SMPs -- were they State Guardsmen, State Police or SRC employees? Others felt O'Connor was by-passing the Assembly by using SRC funds, and that Military Department appropriations should be used. Still others felt that \$5 per day was just too much pay for the work being done (the estimated annual cost being \$600,000). O'Connor also

antagonized Baltimore City officials by pulling MDSG guards from all utilities except the Loch Raven and Montebello reservoirs. This forced the city to create an expensive special police force to secure lesser facilities.⁸

The legislature forced O'Connor's hand in February 1943 by passing a bill to require financing SMP operations from a specific appropriation. The governor then officially activated a "Military Police Battalion" within the MDSG on 7 April 1943. This unit had a maximum strength of 430 officers and men. But O'Connor ordered major reductions during April-December 1943. In a phased contraction, sentries were removed from all bridges and retained at only five water utilities, with the overall force reduced to less than 100 men. And, SMPs at two of these facilities were paid for by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission! This alignment remained in effect until the SMP Battalion was disbanded at the end of March 1945.⁹

With the victory in Europe, Maryland National Guard units began returning home, and the MDSG started disbanding. First to go was the 10th Medical Battalion in May 1945; the last field unit deactivated was 1st Infantry Battalion, on 18 February 1947. Ten days later the brigade headquarters was disbanded.¹⁰ Provision for an SDF remained in the militia code, but none reappeared for almost 40 years.

The State Guard Reborn

There was recurring interest in reactivating the MDSG, but the question of funds always blocked action. Maryland officials felt that at least part of the cost should be borne by the federal government, an expense Washington was not eager to accept. Nevertheless, Adjutant General Reckord proposed a State Guard cadre plan in July 1965, which led to a staff study published in August 1966. After further consideration in the Military Department, a task force met at the Pikesville armory in June 1968 to develop detailed plans and draft regulations. The task force envisioned a structure of three brigades, ten battalions and 25 companies, with a total of over 4,000 men.¹¹

Convincing impetus for the nationwide revitalization of SDFs came from the National Guard's growing involvement in the "Total Force" concept of national defense. This doctrine assigns many National Guard units to virtual front-line combat status in the opening stages of future wars. Obviously, states can no longer depend on the constant availability of a large part of the National Guard. Of equal concern, the lead time available to create SDFs has been greatly reduced by modern mobilization methods. These facts underscored the need for "in-place" state defense organizations, maintained at least in cadre strength.¹²

In Maryland, this realization led to passage of amending legislation, signed by Governor Harry Hughes on 1 May 1983, to be effective 1 July. The amendment's major impact was deletion of the requirement that the National Guard be in federal service as a precondition for organizing and maintaining the MDSG. In other words, the National Guard and State Guard *can now co-exist*. Another major modification was opening membership to women. BG Lewis B. Hill, Jr., was appointed commander



FG 3

Mock Amphibious Invasion of Hart Island, Sept. 1944 Troops of 6th Battalion (Infantry) are shown wading ashore from boats of the 5th and 7th Flotillas, Div. 1, US Coast Guard Auxillary. 6th Battalion was located in Hartford and upper Baltimore counties. (Copied from *Ahoy*, USCGA magazine, Dec. 1944 issue)

on 15 July 1983. Hill lead until 18 August 1987, when he retired and was succeeded by BG Harold L. Ramsburg, Sr., with BG William H. Neal as deputy commander.¹³ Headquarters is at the Pikesville Armory. The new MDSG organized into two brigades, each with three security battalions commanding five lettered companies. Maximum authorized strength is 3,666 officers and enlisted. The 1st (Mason-Dixon) Brigade is also headquartered at Pikesville, and is commanded by COL Joseph A.M. Lettre. Responsible for Western and Northern Maryland, the brigade has battalions at Cumberland (1st), Ellicott City (2d) and Bel Air (3d). The 2d (Chesapeake) Brigade, responsible for the balance of the state, is headquartered at Annapolis under BG Virgil A. Stemple, with battalions located in Parkville (4th), LaPlata (5th) and Salisbury (6th).

All MDSG personnel are volunteers, and serve without pay unless ordered to active State service. Missions include protection of life and property, armory security and operation, preservation of order, and assistance to civil authorities as directed by the governor. Accordingly, Military Police branch training is emphasized. A related role is assistance to families of Marylanders on active Federal service.

MDSG Uniforms - W W I

The War Department imposed a requirement (Bulletin No. 47, 14 August 1918) that distinctive marks and insignia be worn when a "State uniform in any given case is similar to one or more of the United States uniforms." This directive was implemented in Maryland by Adjutant General General Order (GO) No. 16 (5 December 1918), which directed wear of a "red star" as prescribed "upon the sleeve of the uniform coat and uniform overcoat, *excepting the O.D. uniform coat of the Maryland State Guard, which is now distinctive . . .*" (emphasis added).¹⁴ The GO does not elaborate, but insight is provided by the 3 November 1917 Baltimore *Evening Sun*, which reported that State Guardsmen "will not wear Uncle Sam's khaki, but the uniform of the State of Maryland - khaki with forest green trimmings." On 26 November, the same newspaper

reported that issue of uniforms was being held up by a shortage of state force buttons, indicating compliance with the order to replace or cover federal uniform buttons.

World War I I

The MDSG's original World War II uniform was described by General Mohr in a 19 August 1941 letter to the War Department as consisting of O.D. trousers and overseas caps in 18 oz. serge, and khaki shirts in 8.2 oz. cotton. A black tie, and web belt with brass buckle, completed the ensemble. Caps were "without piping, with metal insignia in color as shoulder insignia sample." Shirts were "to have shoulder insignia on left shoulder . . . M.D. [Maryland] to be on right side of collar crossed rifles on left. Sleeve braid to be blue."¹⁵ This uniform was worn during "the first public appearance of the State Guard," a presentation of regimental colors on 20 October 1941 at the Fifth Regiment Armory. The 21 October Baltimore *Sun* also reported that officer uniforms had "gold braid around the overseas cap." The *Sun* article featured an excellent photograph of the color guard. As the photographs of the Fort Meade and Camp Ritchie activities in 1945-1946 reveal, caps and trousers were later standardized in khaki.

HQ MDSG GO No. 6 (7 July 1943) stipulated that MDSG officers attire themselves in such manner as to clearly distinguish them from U.S. Army officers. The only collar ornaments authorized were the letters 'MD'... instead of the 'US' with the 'MD' superimposed." Federal buttons had to be replaced with buttons bearing the Maryland seal, and the MDSG shoulder sleeve insignia was to be worn on the left sleeve, centered "1/4 inch below the shoulder seam." Officers were warned that "U.S. Army and State Military Police have been authorized to arrest and detain" officers who did not comply with state uniform regulations.¹⁶

Maryland was in the forefront in recognizing citizen service in the State Guard. In December 1943, General Mohr requested that a standard national service ribbon be designed and issued by the War Department. The Quartermaster General's office refused, but did offer to



FIG 4

A Private First Class of the 6th Battalion (Infantry), Maryland State Guard, during the mock amphibious assault on Hart Island in September 1944.
A. Archambault drawing.

advise and assist individual states, primarily to avoid duplication of federal awards.¹⁷

Maryland is known to have issued three MDSG ribbons. The Pre-War Defense Ribbon was awarded to soldiers who served before Pearl Harbor, and were therefore making sacrifices without the pressure of actual war. This ribbon was described in a memorandum to Acting AG Petrott from MAJ R.L. FitzSimons as "a solid gold bar with a red and black stripe equal distances from the ends of the ribbon approximately 1/4 of an inch." FitzSimons also described a Service Ribbon, issued to "all members. . . who have served for one year, maintained a drill attendance of 90%. . . , and reenlisted at the expiration of their year's

enlistment." The ribbon was "black and gold in the center, 1/2 inch each, with red and white stripes at either end. The Silver Star [recognizing subsequent awards] is to be appended to the center of the Service Ribbon."

The final award was a Campaign Ribbon recognizing "members . . . who have served on active duty during periods of national peril or local emergency," the service listed earlier. GO No. 1 specified that "a Bronze Star will be worn on the ribbon for each additional tour of duty" in lieu of an additional ribbon. Members of the SMP Battalion received the ribbon for "a twelve-month period of service in that unit." Brigade headquarters staff were entitled to the award after a similar twelve-month tour of permanent duty. (The twelve months were not necessarily consecutive in the latter two cases.) GO No. 1 also stipulated the order of precedence for wear of MDSG awards on the uniform: Campaign Ribbon, Pre-War Defense Ribbon, the Service Ribbon. Unfortunately, no description of the Campaign Ribbon has been located.¹⁸

Current Uniform and Insignia

The prescribed wear for today's MDSG troops is the U.S. Army "Class B" uniform; "Class A" is optional. Solid dark green utilities (fatigues) are also authorized. A red plastic nameplate with the soldier's last name and "MARYLAND STATE GUARD" in white letters is required. Authorized insignia, buttons and badges are

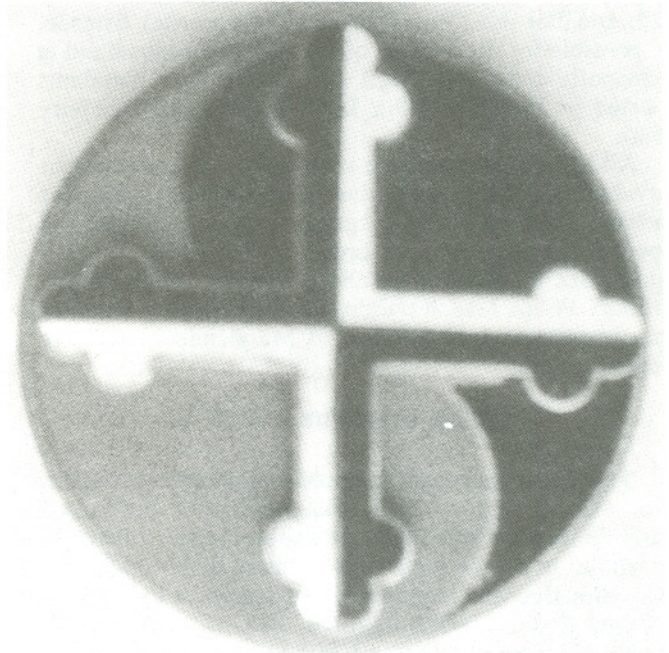


FIG 5

MDSG Distinctive Insignia, World War II. The World War II and current shoulder sleeve insignia are of the same design as this DI. The black and gold *taeguk* was copied from the shoulder sleeve insignia of the 29th Infantry Division (blue/grey). The boton cross, quartered red and white, is from the Maryland flag. Original of this DI is in collection of Marian Brennan.

shown in the accompanying photographs. When "Class A" uniform is worn, Military Police branch insignia are paired with "MD" in cutout for officers and on a brass disc for enlisted personnel.¹⁹

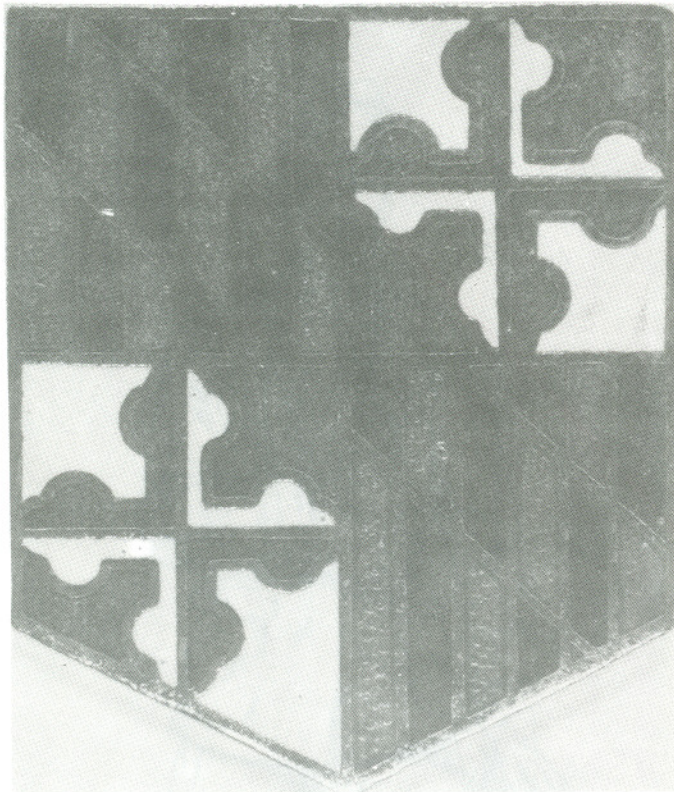


FIG 6

MDSG Distinctive Insignia, Current. This DI is a rather common design, the so-called "Maryland" shield. It faithfully reproduces the heraldry of Maryland's unique flag. Author's collection.

NOTES

1. John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York, 1983); Col. Elbridge Colby and Lt. Col. James F. Glass, "The Legal Status of the National Guard," 29 *Virginia Law Review* (May 1943), pp. 839-56; U.S., War Dept., *Report of the Acting Chief of the Militia Bureau, 1918*, pp. 52-73 (hereafter *RACMB, 1918*); U.S., War Dept., *Annual Report of the Chief of the Militia Bureau, 1919*, pp. 20-1.
2. MD, General Assembly, *Journal of Proceedings of the House of Delegates of Maryland, Special Session, June 1917*, pp. 4-5, 16-7, 157-9 (hereafter *J. House* by year); MD General Assembly, *Journal of Proceedings of the Senate of Maryland, Special Session, June 1917*, pp. 16, 33, 54-66, 76-7 (hereafter *J. Senate* by year); MD, Military Dept., *Report of the Adjutant General, State of Maryland, for 1916-1917*, pp. 5-15, 200, 204-5, 247-50, *1918-1919*, pp. 8, 47, 50, 57, 67-8, and *1920-1924*, pp. 33-57 (hereafter *RAG* by year); MD Military Dept., *General Orders, General Courts Martial Orders, (and) Bulletins Issued During Years of 1920-21, 22, 23, 24*, uncataloged documents, Maryland Dept., Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore, esp. General Orders (GO) 3 (20 Jan 1920), 5 (27 Jan 1920) and 11 (28 Feb 1920); *Baltimore Evening Sun* (hereafter *Eve. Sun*), 4 and 6 Aug 1917, 18 Oct 1917, 2, 3, 7 and 26 Nov 1917, 31 Dec 1917, 2, 5, 7, 15, 16, 19, and 21 Jan 1918, 6 Dec 1918, 1 and 2 Mar, 24 and 25 Apr 1919; *Annapolis Evening Capital*, 28 Feb 1919; *Annapolis Evening Advertiser*, 27 and 28 Feb 1919. Since all newspapers cited hereafter are from Baltimore, the city name will not be cited.
3. U.S. War Dept., *Annual Report of the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, 1941*, pp. 32-3, 40, *1942*, pp. 65, 67-8, 72, 94-6, and *1946*, pp. 38-9, 54, 161 (hereafter *ARCNGB* by year); CA, AG Department, *History of the California State Guard* (N.P., 1946), pp. 19-22.
4. *J. Senate, 1941*, pp. 19-20, 164, 189, 224, *J. House, 1941*, pp. 326, 354-5; MD, *Laws of the State of Maryland, Made and Passed at the Session of the General Assembly... (January 1, 1941-March 31, 1941)*, pp. 47-51 (hereafter *Laws of Maryland*, by year); U.S., War Dept., NG Bureau, *Induction of the National Guard of the United States, 1940-1945, and Present Allotments to States* (Washington, 30 Sep 1945), pp. 6, 8, 17-8; *Eve. Sun*, 30 and 31 Jan 1941, 3 Feb 1941.
5. Reckord to O'Connor, 14 and 27 Feb 1941 in Maryland National Guard (MDNG) Archives file, "Maryland State Guard, 1940-1942" (hereafter *MDSG 1940-1942*); *Sun*, 15 Feb 1941; *Eve. Sun*, 16 Feb 1941; MD Military Dept., GOs on file in Maryland Dept. Enoch Pratt Free Library, GOs 9 (23 Jan 1941), 26 (6 Apr 1941), 27 (1 May 1941) and 29 (9 Oct 1942) (cited hereafter by number and date).
6. "Military Forces of the State of Maryland - Operations Plan [July 6,] 1942," copy No. 4 in *MDSG 1940-1942* (hereafter "Military Forces-1942"); War Records Div., Maryland Historical Society, *Military Participation*, Vol. 1 of *Maryland in World War II* (Baltimore, 1950), pp. 274-5; GO 22 (3 Feb 1947).
7. GO 59 (9 Dec 1941), 60 (10 Dec 1941), 61 (12 Dec 1941) and 1 (2 Jan 1945); "Military Forces-1942"; *ARCNGB, 1946*, 264, 280; *Eve. Sun*, 24 Feb 1942 and 25 Feb 1943; *Sun*, 3 Oct 1941, 25 Sep 1942, 16 Oct 1942, 3 May 1943, 15, 16 and 20 Dec 1943, 25 and 26 June 1944, 15 and 16 Aug 1945.
8. *Eve. Sun*, 23 and 24 Feb 1942, 2, 3, 4, 13, 14 and 19 Mar 1942, 11 Apr 1942, 28 Dec 1942, 22, 24 and 25 Feb 1943, 18 Mar 1943; *Sun*, 6 Mar 1942; *News-Post*, 13 Mar 1942; "Military Forces-1941."
9. GO 10 (7 Apr 1943) and 9 (30 Mar 1945); *Laws of Maryland, 1943*, 153-6; *Eve. Sun*, 25 Feb and 2 Mar 1943; *Sun*, 1 Apr 1945; File, "Special Military Police, Sep-Dec 1943," in MDNG Archives.
10. GO 23 (23 May 1945), 20 (31 Jan 1947) and 26 (7 Feb 1947).
11. Paper, "Conference with Governor Tawes and Mr. O'Donnell," 16 Jul 1965, COL Donald E. Freeman to BG William U. Ogletree, 15 Mar 1968, and "Maryland State Guard Planning Directive, Legal Opinion, Proposed Executive Order and Recommended Statutory Provisions," 15 June 1968 in MDNG Archives file "New State Guard, 1961-date."
12. George J. Stein, "State Defense Forces: The Missing Link in National Security," *Military Review* 64 (Sep 1984), pp. 10-1; "State Defense Forces: A Mobilization Requirement," *National Guard* 37 (Jul 1983), p. 13. The current SDF authority is 32 USC 109.
13. *J. House, 1983*, Vol. 1, p. 220, Vol. 2, pp. 209, 1307-8, Vol. 3, p. 2119 and Vol. 4, Roll Call #411; *J. Senate, 1983*, Vol. 2, pp. 1079-80, Vol. 3, 1941, 2024; *Annotated Code of Maryland, 1983 Replacement Volume*, Vol. 6 (Charlottesville, VA, 1983), pp. 500-4; *RAG, 1983*, p. 20.
14. *RACMB, 1918*, pp. 45-6; *RAG, 1918-1919*, p. 54.
15. Mohr to COL Robert M. Littlejohn, 19 Aug 1941, in file "Maryland Flag and Seal," U.S. Army Institute of Heraldry (hereafter USAIH file).
16. GO 6 (7 Jul 1943) in USAIH file.
17. *ARCNGB, 1946*, pp. 52-3.
18. GO 1 (2 Jan 1945) and FitzSimon to Petrott, 17 Feb 1944, in USAIH file.
19. Letter, MDSG-HHD-CDR, 13 Aug 1984, subject, Wearing of the Uniform by MDSG Personnel.