



All ashore that's going ashore: The men who run the Pentagon arrive for work in a 48-foot motor launch. Each general has his own comfortable chair.

The Privileges of Rank in the Pentagon

by Jack Anderson

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Each weekday morning on the shores of the Potomac, a curious event takes place. A dozen uniformed Air Force generals line up single file on a dock at Bolling Air Force Base—just four miles downstream from the Pentagon. Clutching briefcases, the generals step gingerly over a wooden plank into a plush, 48-foot motor launch. Each general sits in his own comfortable lawn chair. His feet rest

on an expensive red carpet which is vacuumed daily. As the powerful launch pushes off, coffee is served.

What's happening here? The men who run the Pentagon are going to work. All over town, in fact, brass hats and bigwigs enjoy a leisurely ride to the office. The privileges of rank are apparent everywhere.

On the ground, scores of limousines, equipped with telephones and reading lamps, arrive at the Pentagon's mall

entrance.

In the air, helicopters begin ferrying the big brass who prefer to keep above the traffic tangles. Enough whirlybirds have been spared from the Vietnam war to provide air taxi service for as many as 125 Pentagon big shots each day. The unwritten Pentagon policy: Three stars are required for a chopper to Andrews Air Force Base; four stars are necessary for the Pentagon's short-est junket to the Army-Navy Country

Club across the turnpike.

Aside from the privileged few, most of the Pentagon's employees have to make it to work on their own. Some 10,000 drive cars, thousands more take the bus; about 100 ride bicycles.

Back on the dock at Bolling, as the generals speed off in their staff boat, 40 airmen crowd into a smaller craft that looks like a floating bus. The airmen's schooner, which chugs along at half the speed of the generals' boat, is always crowded. "We try to squeeze in," explained an Air Force major.

Status symbols

The point made in the early morning is repeated throughout the day: the top brass travel first class. Everyone else goes steerage.

An enclosed city of concrete rings and corridors, the Pentagon is ruled by an almost impenetrable bureaucracy. The place is so top-heavy with officers that one-star generals are treated like captains and captains are treated like hatracks. An exaggeration? Early this year the Pentagon's top brass trooped

up to Capitol Hill to explain why they wanted billions more next year for defense. As senators and generals argued, a young captain in the rear of the conference room caught our eye. He was leaning against the wall, staving at the floor, earning his day's salary, holding two armfuls of brass hats.

With so many chiefs, the struggle for status in the Pentagon is fierce. Little things begin to count: a huge desk, a private bathroom, a spy-proof conference room. Sometimes status is measured by the number of buttons on a telephone. Adm. Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has a phone with 64. The button that glows with a red halo is for the President.

Dining in style

We have investigated the special privileges enjoyed by the military elite. When it comes to supplying themselves with the basic necessities of life, the Pentagon potentates spare no expense. Here is a report:

FOOD: In the Pentagon's private dining room, Army generals dine royally in leather-cushioned chairs. The day we visited, their menu included salmon croquettes and bearnaise sauce, braised lean ribs of beef, Portuguese skinless and boneless sardines, chilled clams, Mexican omelettes, asparagus spears, sherry and chocolate snowballs. The portions were generous. The price per meal: \$1. (Nearby, on the same floor, in the public dining room, G.I.'s pay \$1.20 for a hot pastrami sandwich served with cole slaw, potato chips and a pickle slice.)

Hearty appetite

The top cooks, not to be outdone, also dine well on subsidized delicacies. The secretaries of the armed services wage a daily war with their warstines. Consider Secretary of the Navy John Warner, for instance. His mess chief, Melvin Williams, told us with consid- erable pride: "I've seen Mr. Warner eat a serving of lamb chops, liver, fish, poached eggs and bacon for breakfast -- all at one sitting."

TRANSPORTATION: A pampered general never walks, when he can ride, even rides when he can fly. Status again is at stake. In the name of "official business," practically any form of transportation is available 24 hours a day. A ranking general can take a limousine to the Pentagon where he can catch a helicopter to Andrews Air Force Base where he can fly in a VIP plane anywhere in the world.

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At the Pentagon, probably the most chauffeured man is its leader, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, who

has a second Cadillac available -- just in case something goes wrong mechanically with the first one.



Helicopters ferry the big brass who prefer to keep above Washington traffic tangles. Enough helicopters have

been spared from the Vietnam war to provide an air taxi service for as many as 125 big shots every day.

