

'Warless' Military Biding Its Time

By Jack Anderson and Les Whitten

In the nation's 200-year history, there have been nine major conflicts, which lasted a total of 40 years. Ergo, our military establishment has spent 160 years doing little except preparing for the next war.

The men-at-arms have whiled away this time, sometimes usefully, more often wastefully, conducting paper wars, madcap maneuvers and other inane projects.

With the close of the Vietnam war, the troops again are at loose ends. The fighting men have no one to fight, the bombers no place to bomb, the missiles no targets. From our Pentagon notebook, here are a few episodes from this millennial military world:

• The military auditors have discovered some loose cash that must be spent, of course, before congressional critics get the idea that the defense budget is too fat.

On the shores of Waikiki, PX profits are being used on a \$20 million military "resort." It will be called "Hale Koa," which, in the Hawaiian tongue, means "House of Warriors."

Meanwhile, the admirals, eager to do their part, have issued contracts to "study the drinking practices of Navy personnel" and to effect "the roundup and removal of approximately 5,000 feral goats and approximately 800 feral pigs" from San Clemente Island off the California

coast. Happily, the Navy is recovering \$1.50 for each pig and goat that can be corralled.

• A Pentagon house organ called the Pentagram News gave slavish coverage to the appointment of Martin R. Hoffmann as Army Secretary. Hoffmann's name was misspelled throughout the story.

This unpardonable blooper caused the greatest stir since Mylai in the Pentagon's third-floor, outer "E" ring, which the top Army brass inhabit. They cabled urgent instructions to information officers around the world.

"In the interest of professionalism," the Army cable, stated "we pass to you that a review of some post and unit newspapers . . . indicates a need for us all to be aware of the proper spelling of the name of the new Army Secretary . . ."

"Please note that Secretary Hoffmann spells his name with two (2) f's and two (2) n's. His complete name is Martin R. Hoffmann, repeat, Hoffmann."

• Aboard the aircraft carrier Saratoga, two crewmen apparently became bored with the peace that had settled over the warship and sought to enliven the routine. The story can best be told by quoting from the formal charges filed against them.

Airman Apprentice Terrence Patrick McKee and Aviation Boatswain's Mate Mark Edward Keylor "did . . . willfully destroy" federal property "by driving an aircraft towing vehicle with a jet engine starter unit off

the stern of the USS Saratoga."

The machine plunged through "the flight stern safety net" and settled on the bottom of Mayport Basin off the Florida Coast. A team of divers retrieved it.

The sailors also were accused of setting fire to "an air-conditioning vent . . . of a minimal value."

• Despite the prevailing peace, the Pentagon people are keenly aware of the enemy around them. Certain computer technicians, for example, handle classified computer cards—perforated cardboard pieces with tiny rectangular holes.

The office windows where these computer technicians work are always covered with heavy drapes. Presumably, this is to prevent some Soviet with a telescope from peering at the classified holes.

• At MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., Lt. Gen. Winton Marshall keeps a traffic light in his office. He has used it, according to our sources, to forewarn subordinates of the state of his temperament.

"When green is lit, you are talking \ his language," explained one underling. "Yellow means you are on soft ground, and when he turns on the red light, watch out."

The general told us the traffic light was a gag gift, which he occasionally "piddles" with. But he insisted that he doesn't use it to register his moods.

• A military contract, like a snowball rolling downhill, tends to grow and grow. Last

year, for example, a few decorative tiles fell from the domed ceiling of the National War College at Ft. McNair here in Washington.

The Army brass took one look at the deteriorating dome and proclaimed it a "serious safety hazard . . . beyond the in-house capability" of the Army to repair. A \$65,000 contract was awarded to Universal Restoration, Inc., to stop the tiles from falling.

In August it was determined that the tiles also were in need of cleaning, which included "brushing and simultaneous vacuuming." The contract was expanded to \$250,000.

In December, the figure climbed to \$380,000. Twenty days later, it jumped to \$640,000. In March, the contract soared dizzily to \$1,984,800. Universal's additional duties included testing the tiles by "tapping lightly with wooden mallets" and marking "all loose and hollow-sounding tile."

This prodigious flow of money to Universal was not enough, apparently, to prevent its payroll checks from bouncing. The Army had to cough up an emergency payment of \$35,000. An officer of the firm, Paul Harris, began to answer our questions and then said he would not give us "any more information about this company."

The FBI and the General Accounting Office, meanwhile, also have started to ask questions.