

Fuel-Tight Military Yields Position

By Jack Anderson

With an explosion of grim directives, the Pentagon has cut military readiness to conserve precious fuel.

Navy steaming time has been reduced 20 per cent, military flying time 18 per cent. Training flights have been restricted in Thailand. U.S. military in Europe have been curtailed. Even in the tense Mediterranean, ships are spending more time in port, and planes are flying fewer exercises.

As evidence that the brass hats are sacrificing, too, the Pentagon has announced that room temperatures have been reduced, Christmas lighting cancelled and limousines abandoned.

All this has been accomplished with great fanfare, presumably as justification for seizing 19.7 million barrels of oil from civilian stocks in November and December. Even more will be siphoned from civilian supplies in the months to come.

The order was issued by the Interior Department, which has authority over fuel allocation. But Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton entrusted this crucial power to a retired armchair admiral, Eli Reich, whose first major move was to direct 22 oil companies to give top priority to the armed forces.

At the same time that the brass hats have reduced combat readiness and cooled off the Pentagon, however, they haven't let the stringent fuel economies

interfere seriously with their own lifestyles.

Both Defense Secretary James Schlesinger and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Thomas Moorer, for example, have gravely warned that the fuel shortage could cripple the armed forces. Yet neither official considers the crisis severe enough to give up his gas-guzzling, chauffeur-driven limousine until public pressure forced them to do so last weekend.

Just before he exchanged his limousine for a smaller car, Schlesinger declared petulantly that "if there are souls in torment," he would be "quite happy to abandon" his big limousine. "In the total picture," he contended, the limousines use a "relatively insignificant amount of fuel."

Of course, every individual motorist on the road could use the same excuse for not heeding President Nixon's appeal to save fuel.

Other Pentagon pashas, according to the official word, have turned in their limousines for mere Chryslers. Lesser lights have been consigned to "economy sedans." The Pentagon's press chief, Jerry Friedheim, for example, is now lugged around in a chauffeur-driven Matador.

Yet we stopped by the Pentagon the other day and counted seven limousines parked at a main entrance. More than a dozen light sedans were also standing by. Several of the mili-

tary drivers were running their motors to keep the vehicles warm for their privileged passengers.

We have also been inundated with citizen complaints about military cars hauling wives to the supermarket and children to school. My associate, Joe Spear, made a half-dozen spot checks and found that military drivers are still chauffeuring the wives and kids around.

Last week end, the military brass swarmed to the East Coast in official cars and planes for the annual Army-Navy football game in Philadelphia. The Navy chartered '75 buses to haul midshipmen to the game. West Point cadets dug into their own pockets to charter 47 buses for the football excursion.

The armed forces have also refused to cut down on the 143 bands, which not only cost the taxpayers \$48.3 million a year but consume enormous quantities of fuel traveling around the world to toot the Pentagon's horn.

The Air Force band, for example, flies to concerts in two airplanes—a C-118 and a C-131. Three months ago, the band and its affiliated Singing Sergeants interrupted a Texas tour and flew back to Washington to perform two numbers for the Air Force Association's annual bash. The two musical pieces cost the taxpayers over \$14,000, not to mention all the fuel that was burned.

On the ground, the band travels in two buses. But the conduc-

tor, Col. Arnold Gabriel, refuses to ride in a bus with enlisted players. He rents a separate car for himself.

The military has now promised, as a fuel conservation measure, to curtail "open house exhibits" and "aerial demonstrations." But the fuel scarcity was known earlier this year when the Navy and Marines sent helicopters, biplanes, parachutists and even the new Harrier vertical take-off plane to the farm of Virginia businessman E. Carl Hengen for his annual corporate picnic.

The free entertainment was officially regarded as a "public display." However, it was scarcely advertised and guards at Hengen's gate routinely stopped drivers to make inquiries.

The energy crisis also hasn't seemed to interfere with the Air National Guard's junkets. Three weeks ago, about 100 students and instructors at the guard's noncommissioned officers academy in Knoxville, Tenn., flew in two KC-97 refueling planes to the Houston space center for a three-day "education" tour. This week, the guard is planning to fly three planeloads of civilian and military dignitaries from Iowa to the Knoxville academy so they can shake hands at a graduation ceremony.

Meanwhile the Pentagon is requisitioning civilian fuel, at least in part, so the brass hats won't have to give up their chauffeured cars and pleasure junkets.