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General Haig: Upward mobility

THE ARMY:

Shooting Stars

"When you see the lights burning late in Kissinger's office," President Nixon once remarked, "it's usually Haig." The dedication and quiet savvy of Maj. Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., Henry Kissinger's top deputy at the National Security Council, are well known among Washington insiders. Last week, at 47, Haig moved front and center with the announcement that he was being promoted to the Army's second highest post—Vice Chief of Staff—over the graying heads of 240 other generals with higher rank and more seniority.

At the same time, the Army disclosed another drastic step to open the upper echelons to younger officers: 25 two-, three- and four-star generals are being forced into retirement "to promote upward mobility," according to one Pentagon source. As for Haig, a battlefield officer in Korea and Vietnam with a knack for administration and a master's degree in international affairs, the promotion continues his own extraordinary pattern of upward mobility. Only a colonel when he first joined the White House staff in 1969, he won his first star before the year was out, a second early this year. He will get two more stars simultaneously with his new Pentagon post. According to Army historians, only one other U.S. officer has ever made such a broad jump along the chain of command: Gen. George C. Marshall, who went from one star to four when he was promoted to Chief of Staff in 1939.