

ad Racial Disorders

General of State National Guard Advocates More Force in Riots

Commander Says That Heavy Weapons Might Be Used in New York Disorders

By J. ANTHONY LUKAS

The commander of the State Army National Guard said yesterday that if his troops were called out to put down a race riot here they might use greater force and firepower than had been used in other riot-struck cities across the country.

The commander, Maj. Gen. Almerin C. O'Hara, said he believed a greater commitment of force might "better and more rapidly" bring riots under control and limit the loss of life and property.

General O'Hara said final decisions on tactics and weapons would have to be made in response to specific situations, but he said he would "not rule out the use of any weapon" in a riot here.

He said it was "entirely possible" that he would order the use of hand grenades, recoilless rifles, bazookas and other "heavy weapons." The chances of using artillery, he said, were "very remote."

General O'Hara, who was at his temporary headquarters at Camp Smith in Peekskill, gave his views in an interview. His remarks followed President Johnson's announcement Thursday that he was ordering that new training standards be issued to National Guard units across the country to help them respond "effectively and quickly" to riot conditions.

The New York National Guard is composed of the 25,000-man Army National Guard, the 5,000-man Air National Guard and the 5,000-man Naval Militia. The three units have their own commanders.

Strict Military Operation

The general, a 56-year old veteran of World War II who has commanded the guard here since 1960, said decisions on tactics and weapons have to be made by military men because "civilians are not cognizant" of these matters.

"We would be acting in support of civilian authority to restore peace and order, but we would not be acting under civilian instructions," he said. "Once we took on the mission we would operate as we saw



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Maj. Gen. Almerin C. O'Hara

it."

General O'Hara said the one exception to this rule was that the guard would have to accept any specific instructions on tactics and weapons from Governor Rockefeller, who as the guard's commander in chief is the only official who can order it into action.

However, the general said that "knowing Governor Rockefeller as I do I'm sure he would not tie our hands with such instructions; I'm sure he would realize that there are military decisions which should be left to military men."

Asked about the general's remarks while visiting Elmira yesterday, Governor Rockefeller said: "No local authority will give the guard orders. They get their orders from me." He would not elaborate on that point.

In commenting on General O'Hara's statements about what weapons he might use, the governor said only that "there is no use specifying what means might have to be used. I hope we don't have to use the guard at all."

Close Watch Maintained

Mayor Lindsay and Police Commissioner Howard R. Leary both declined to comment on the general's remarks.

General O'Hara said it was important that the guard not be unduly restrained by civilian authority because "if the military is brought in and they lose control, then what do you

have left?"

He said he believed National Guard units had to operate "with one hand tied behind their back" during riots in some other cities. The New York National Guard has been keeping a close watch on the handling of riots elsewhere he said. An officer went to New-

ark to study the situation there and one will leave soon for Detroit.

General O'Hara said that all guard units throughout the country were confronted with a difficult situation this summer because guard riot control training was designed chiefly to deal with "the less violent kind of riot we faced in 1964, 1965 and 1966."

He said the standard riot control techniques—chiefly formations with bayonets—were "not really adequate for the kind of guerrilla warfare and snipers we face these days."

General O'Hara said that the New York National Guard had anticipated this development some years ago, however, and was prepared to supplement the old procedures with some techniques adapted from more "regular combat."

He said that to some extent the military methods used in flushing guerrillas out of a village in Vietnam could be adapted to guerrilla warfare in the ghettos.

"Of course, we can't do just what we would do in Vietnam," he said. "Out there if you had a sniper in a room you'd just crank up a tank and fire a shell through the window, destroying the whole room and much of the building."

"I don't think public opinion would accept the use of that kind of force here," he said.

There has been considerable criticism by community leaders of the heavy "suppressive fire" that the New Jersey National Guard used in trying to drive snipers out of buildings during this month's Newark riots.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation recently distributed a manual on riot control to police departments around the country suggesting, among other things, that snipers be controlled not by general police fire but by a few specially trained "counter-snipers."

General O'Hara said all his commanders were under orders to use "only the force necessary to achieve their objective and no more." At the same time, he said, "we have made it clear that we are ready to use any force we feel it is necessary to use."

Members of the guard's 42d Infantry Division—which would probably be the first unit deployed in a riot here—say they have been told they would each be issued two clips (16 bullets), which they would carry in their cartridge belts.

Initially, only sharpshooters designated by the unit commander would be ordered to fire against snipers. However, if the fire from snipers were dense enough all men would be ordered to join in.

Maj. Gen. Martin H. Foery, commander of the 42d Division, said that such orders could be issued by the commanding general or by the "senior officer present" in any given situation.

Asked about the racial attitudes of his commanders, General Foery said: "Christ had 12 apostles and one of them was a rat. I have 11,000 men and if 1,000 of them are bigots, that's par for the course."

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