

ARMY CUTS FUNDS FOR RIFLE GROUPS

Support for National Unit
Will Be 'Near Zero'

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 29—The Army said today it would sharply reduce its controversial, multi-million dollar support of civilian marksmanship clubs affiliated with the National Rifle Association. It said it would cut to "near zero" sales, loans and gifts to N.R.A.-affiliated groups of .30 and .45 caliber military weapons and ammunition.

Army assistance to a .22 caliber "junior marksmen's" program of the rifle group will continue, a spokesman said, but on a scale not yet determined by Under Secretary David E. McGiffert. Last year, the Army's Office of the Director of Civilian Marksmanship and the national board for the promotion of rifle practice distributed free to rifle shooting clubs \$800,000 worth of .30 caliber "practice" ammunition and \$480,000 worth of .22 caliber ammunition.

The reduction in activities of the Army group and the marksmanship board was accompanied by a 90 per cent cut in their budgets, from \$428,000 during the current fiscal year, ending June 30, to only \$52,000 next year. It will reduce civilian marksmanship personnel here from 22 to five persons, officials said.

The President's budget today gave the apparently misleading impression that the entire civilian marksmanship program is to be abolished. The 1969 budget notations for it are blanks. However, Col. Le Roy Strong, head of the civilian marksmanship office, said the \$52,000—"enough to keep us in business"—would come from funds earmarked generally for Army "operations and maintenance." Ammunition costs of the civilian marksmanship program are charged to regular Army procurement accounts, he said, and are not itemized in the budget.