

Gen. Ryan Scored on Flight Pay Order

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WASHINGTON, June 26 — Gen. John D. Ryan, the Air Force chief of staff, signed an order last week entitling himself and 64 other Air Force generals to continue receiving flight pay despite a new law banning such payments to generals and admirals in "non-combat assignments."

General Ryan's action was disclosed today by Representative Les Aspin, Democrat of Wisconsin, who described the order as "a new low in the whole grubby history of arm-chair officers and their fight to collect flight payments they don't deserve."

In a statement, Mr. Aspin, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said General Ryan's action represented "a clear violation of law and utter defiance of civilian authority by the Pentagon brass."

Under a provision of law passed last year, flight pay was terminated for officers of the rank of colonel or Navy captain and above who were serving in "noncombat assignments." The provision, which the military has been lobbying on Capitol Hill to repeal went into effect June 1.

Up to \$3,000 a Year

The rationale of the House Appropriations Committee in sponsoring the provision was that inequities had developed in a system where high-ranking officers who were no longer serving in flight duty and were too old to expect to return to flight status were continuing to receive up to \$3,000 a year in flight pay.

The committee estimated that



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Gen. John D. Ryan

the provision would save \$14.6-million a year by cutting off flight pay to more than 5,000 officers, including 467 generals and admirals.

General Ryan, according to an Air Force spokesman, concluded, however, that 65 generals and 67 colonels were serving in positions requiring active flying and thus were entitled to continuation of their flight pay. At the same time, he decided that 285 generals were no longer entitled under the law to flight pay.

The Air Force, according to Pentagon officials, acted under general criteria laid down by the Defense Department on how the law should be imple-

mented. The critical question, according to defense officials who developed the criteria, was what constituted a combat or noncombat assignment.

Combat Assignments

As interpreted by the Air Force, such jobs as chief of staff of the Air Force, the commandant of the Air Force Academy and the commander of the Military Airlift Command were combat assignments justifying flight pay. General Ryan also ruled that the commanders of various commands, such as the Tactical Air Command and The Strategic Air Command, and the Alaskan Air Command, were entitled to flight pay.

The Navy avoided such political embarrassment by ordering that no captain or admiral should draw flight pay after June 1. But the Navy was betting that before the end of the month, Congress, heeding the military lobbying, would pass legislation providing that the termination of flight pay would not go into effect until Jan. 1.

The Senate passed such legislation last week, and it was approved today by the House Armed Services Committee. Mr. Aspin blocked an attempt by Representative Samuel S. Stratton, Democrat of upstate New York, to push the legislation through the House today under a unanimous consent procedure.

Mr. Stratton will try again tomorrow under a procedure requiring a two-thirds vote of approval.