

Haig Selects Ex-General For Key Job

By Michael Getler

Washington Post Staff Writer

Another military man—retired Army Maj. Gen. John C. Bennett—is headed for a key position on the White House staff, according to government sources.

Bennett, who left the Army last August after 27 years, is expected to be named soon to become deputy to four-star Army Gen. Alexander Haig.

Haig has been serving since early May as White House chief of staff, taking over many of the duties previously carried out by H. R. Haldeman, President Nixon's former top civilian assistant who resigned in the wake of the expanding Watergate affair.

The expected appointment of Bennett comes at a time when there is still sharp criticism by some members of Congress over Haig's appointment to what critics maintain is a civilian job, and over the larger question of whether the traditional separation between military men and politics is being blurred.

The surprise announcement last week by the White House that Haig would retire from the Army effective Aug. 1 to formally become an assistant to the President has not entirely quelled the debate.

On Monday, Rep. John E. Moss (D-Calif.) issued another sharp attack on the Haig appointment. He said he viewed the retirement procedure as mostly an attempt to evade a federal

See BENNETT, A14, Col. 4

BENNETT, From A1

statute which prohibits officers on "active duty" from holding civil office.

Mr. Nixon, by all accounts, has come to rely heavily on the managerial talents of Gen. Haig to help run the White House, and government officials say that when it came time for Haig to look for help in his new job, he naturally turned toward former military associates whose work he held in high regard.

Some Pentagon and Army officials privy to the pending Bennett appointment concede, however, that in light of the criticism brought about by the Haig appointment itself, it would have been better if an experienced civilian deputy could have been found.

Bennett, like Haig, had all the right credentials for a top career in the Army, and some Army officers say they were surprised when Bennett retired last August at a two-star rank and at age 48.

At the time, Bennett was commanding officer of the 4th infantry Division at Ft. Carson, Colo. Bennett is a West Point graduate with master's degrees from Columbia University and George Washington University. He and Haig were military assistants to top Pentagon officials in the mid-1960s.

Bennett, born in Washington, D.C. in December 1923, is also a former deputy commander of a Special Forces unit in Vietnam, chief of staff of the 82d Airborne Division, and commander of the Army's Yukon Command in Alaska.

Since leaving the Army,

he has been a vice president of Alaskan Airlines.

Once Bennett moves over to the White House, he will join a growing list of White House staffers with long and close ties to the military, another condition which has drawn criticism from both Moss and Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.), acting chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. Symington, on June 1, warned against turning the White House into "a military command."

Aside from Haig and Bennett, former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird is now the President's top domestic adviser and two of Laird's top lieutenants at the Pentagon — J. Fred Buzhardt and William J. Baroody — are also now White House staffers.

Haig also took two of his former aides — Army Lt. Col. Frederick Brown and Maj. George Joulwan — with him to the White House. Both of these officers are still on active duty, but there are indications at the Pentagon that they may soon return to duty with the Army.

"The Haig matter," Moss charged, "is only the latest most vivid illustration of this cumulative erosion of the barrier separating political roles and military professionals."

Aside from the increasing military background of the President's staff, Moss added that "increasing reliance by American Presidents on the (White House) National Security Council and its staff, instead of the State Department, means

that an organization with strong military orientation has replaced an overwhelmingly civilian institution as the central advisory organ for American foreign policy."

While much of the criticism over the Haig appointment thus far has focused on a dispute over its legality, the Moss statement contains a sharp—and certain to be controversial—attack on the wisdom of such appointments.

"General Haig," Moss said, "hails from a hierarchical rather than an egalitarian organization. He is oriented to a group rather than to rights of individuals. He stresses obedience and discipline rather than freedom of expression. While I am sure he is a decent, honorable man, the President, by placing him in the most de facto political position in Washington, has elevated those very virtues that are the blatant negation of what this nation and our society stands for."

On the legal question, the Pentagon and White House first maintained that Haig could be brought into the White House even on active duty under the President's authority as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. It was also maintained that the general had not in fact accepted any "civil office."

But the subsequent announcement that Haig would retire and thus give up his "active duty" status in the Army reflected what Moss and others view as the weakness in the White House legal case.

The U.S. Code provides that "no officer on the active duty list . . . may hold a civil office by election or appointment."

But Moss, and to a lesser extent Symington, have also challenged whether certain civilian positions should be held even by retired military officers.