

G.I.'S WERE READY FOR CAPITAL RIOT

25,000 Alerted in Case Rally
Oct. 21 Got Out of Hand

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 21—The Johnson Administration developed detailed contingency plans to rush 25,000 or more Army troops to Washington's slums last month if an anti-war demonstration spilled over into the city, sources disclosed today.

Advance intelligence reports of an attempt to exploit supposed racial tensions during the two-day protest across the Potomac River at the Pentagon so worried senior officials that sizable Army units as far away as Fort Carson, Colo., were alerted for possible movement and airlift plans were made to transport them.

Plainclothes agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Secret Service, the Washington police and Army intelligence mingled with demonstrators to keep watch on potential trouble makers.

One of the best combat units in the country, a 2,900-man brigade of the 82d Airborne Division, was airlifted from Fort Bragg, N. C., to Andrews Air Force Base here. Enough helicopters were assembled at the base from posts up and down the Atlantic seaboard to move a battalion at a time into Washington if rioting flared and got out of hand.

'Another Detroit' Feared

These and similar moves were part of the most comprehensive advance preparations for urban trouble ever made, officials admit. "We just couldn't sit back and allow another Detroit to happen in Washington" a Defense Department official said.

He was referring to the riots that swept Detroit in late July and early August. Before it was over, two Army brigades were flown to the city to back up the National Guards and police in restoring order.

He and other planners said there were reports that representatives of black power groups would split off from the bulk of demonstrators after a rally at the Lincoln Memorial on Saturday, Oct. 21, and, instead of marching to the Pentagon, would go to various Negro neighborhoods in Washington and seek to stir up the inhabitants.

"There were so many diverse groups involved and so much threatening talk in advance," the official said, "the decision was made to take all precautions we could think of."

As it turned out, although there were some bombastic street speeches and minor flurries of excitement, officials report that there were fewer arrests than on an ordinary Saturday night.

Local Police Strengthened

One factor might have been the bolstering of the local police by 1,700 uniformed National Guardsmen who were deputized to make arrests and put on the streets.

One source acknowledged that the principal reason a two-day permit was issued for demonstrations around the Pentagon was to insure that most of the protesters would be across the Potomac rather than in Washington itself.

Throughout Friday night, more than 500 busses and trucks rumbled into an underground Pentagon entrance to place more than 2,500 troops inside the building in advance of the demonstration. They slept that night and Saturday night in the corridors and corridors of the military headquarters, some on bedrolls, others on bare floors.

Through the same night C-130 transports landed every five minutes at Andrews to bring in the standby brigade of paratroopers who were bedded down in tents along the runway.

Lieut. Gen. John L. Throckmorton, who had been in command of Federal troops in Detroit, was rushed up from Fort McPherson, Ga., where he is now in charge of the Third United States Army area. The general would presumably have been put in charge of Federal forces in Washington if they had been committed in the city in any substantial numbers.

Troops were moved to the Pentagon from, Fort Meyer and Fort Belvoir, Va., Fort Meade, Md., the Marine training center at Quantico, Va., and the Anacostia Naval Station in Washington. Other troops at those posts were alerted for weekend duty.

A number of large bulldozers were lined up at nearby Fort Meyer and kept ready for possible movement into the city. One source said the bulldozers would have been used in clearing crowds off streets. "They would have done as good a job as tanks without the onus of tanks," he said.

To spread the availability of troops for riot control, special "provisional" units were set up and alerted for possible deployment.

At Fort Bragg, for example, the corps artillery assigned to the 18th Airborne Corps and the division artillery assigned to the 82d Airborne Division were directed to form provisional units, minus artillery and other heavy equipment, and to refresh the troops in what would be expected of them in riot control work.