

Another Change of Command

By late summer 1970 the Achievements by General Rogers at Fort Carson in turning around the morale of the troops, reductions in on and off post criminal and racial incidents, and some progress toward getting better soldiers to reenlist, got the attention of Congress as well as high civilian officials. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird visited and assured Rogers of \$5 million to carry out more of his ideas. Several Congressmen visited Carson, as did President Nixon. (For Carson could be the proof an all-Volunteer Army could work and the Draft stopped) But if young American volunteered to serve - as much for its care and 'benefits' as anything - would they also be willing to fight in a war? A big, yet unanswered - question.

Changes would cost money and changes in some laws, so the Army needed a better Pentagon spokesman for those changes. They

decided to reassign Major General Rogers to head up the office of Army Congressional Liason in Washington.

Before he left he asked whether I wanted to come with him - change my orders from being Chief of Staff to the Pentagon again. Having had my family in a stable place for only two years, with young David already, as a Day Student (which we could afford) enrolled in excellent Fountain Valley Prep school heading for college instead of being a boarding student (which we could not afford), I had to think overnight about it.

I knew that Gen Rogers was headed for the Army top. And I knew he would insure that I was made at least a Brigadier General, without me however, ever having commanded a Brigade as a full colonel. Perhaps a Major General. I was right about his going to the top - he soon became Chief of Staff of the Army and even later the NATO Supreme Commander, with Four Stars. He would have taken me along

as part of 'his team.'

But I also knew I would be too old to command a Division in Europe by the time of the next war - 20 years as I calculated. I would then be over 62. I wanted to have a chance to command, at least a Mech Infantry Brigade of 3,000 under the 'New Army' policies and to see if I could get 'volunteers' ready (and willing) to fight. I had ideas of how to do that - as an extension of my better understanding of what could motivate this new generation, to become superior combat soldiers. So I turned down that golden opportunity. Without regrets. He, and General Dewitt Smith, who also soon left to head up the Army's Public Information Staff, made it up to me some 30 years later, when I was nominated for a high West Point award.

So Rogers was replaced by ambitious Major General John C Bennett as commander of Carson and its Division. Who, on the surface of his background - West Point Class of 1945, 82d Airborne, would be able to continue the soldier-

centered efforts Rogers had started.

5th Mech to 4th Mech

Just as General Bennett assumed command, the long expected change happened - the 5th Mech was deactivated, while the Colors of the 4th Infantry Division which had been returned from Vietnam as its last soldiers were sent back to the US, were handed to the Fort Carson the old 5th Mech- became - for the first time - the 4th Infantry Mechanized Division. Few men were moved.

We just took off our Red Diamond patches and put on the Ivy Leaf Patch. Only our unit history and highway signs would have to change.

Now Fort Carson became the home to a Combat Division whose proud heritage - as a straight Infantry boots on the ground - Division going back to WWI and landing on Utah Beach at Normandy, was now a Mechanized Infantry Division in which every soldier rode to battle in small armored vehicles.

Not tanks, not trucks.

I began to notice that Fort Carson had already started to become - which it never had been before - a 'desirable' assignment for up and coming mid grade - Lt Col to General - Army officers. The mediocre 'Camp Carson' (for 30 years) had, as "Fort" Carson started to arrive as a 1st Rate Army base. Before the 1990s three more Army 'Chiefs of Staff' will have had passed through there as Mech battalion or brigade commanders. Even Colin Powell became an assistant Division Commander before going on to his fame as the most senior black officer in the Department of Defense as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

VOLAR Comes to Carson

The Nixon Administration, trying to deal with both the political fallout from the war, great national distaste for the draft - which made up the bulk of the 54,000 soldiers killed in Vietnam - wanted solutions to achieving a

volunteer Army. So it created a formal program - VOLAR - Army lingo for Volunteer Army which would be the template for the entire Army. And spread to the other services.

That motivated the VOLAR Army Staff section in the Pentagon to contact me, as Chief of Staff at Carson where the innovations started, and wring out of me as many proven, and large, 'recommendations' to help attract and retain as many good soldiers as possible.

My own recommendations centered on two unfilled requirements. First, as even the Rifle Squad Infantry was getting higher tech and complicated, continuing Education beyond high-school or GED testing, expecially among NCOs, needed to be backed and seriously funded by Congress.

I had done my part when I learned that a community college had no permanent campus in El Paso County. So I backed the Army selling a slice of land near I-25 to the college where it was close to the catonement area and the

Security-Widefield and Fountain towns where most NCO families lived. And it and was not suitable for training. It is now called Pikes Peak Community College and serves a large number of soldier, NCO, and officers as full college benefits began to be implemented Army wide.

Then also, observing how the newer generation was getting married younger and living with girls and marrying more - that the Army must 'support the family' - legal military Dependents - and not just the soldier - housing, child care, medical and all the 'family' needs even when the soldier was off to war. That too had to become part and parcel of the new Volunteer Army.

So much 'VOLAR' was spread across the Army, world wide - often resisted by commanders, even though it was a Policy - that it became a cliché' Exactly how it was supposed to work was a puzzle to some.

So I was requested to fly to Germany, and at least 'educate' the leaders of the III Corps, in

how VOLAR worked. The Army in Germany suffered from some of the same problems, including drugs, which US units did. So I did this 'education' of officers between the time I left the Chief of Staff's position, and took as Brigade Command.

The 3d Armored Division took to the VOLAR recommendations like a duck to water - because their top commander could see its need, and value, better than most other generals there then. They honored me as seen below.

United States Army Europe
3d Armored Division



To All Who Shall See
These Presents

Greetings

Colonel David R. Hughes
is hereby appointed a

**Lifetime
Spearheader**

For his faithful performance of duty while serving on the frontier of
freedom with the famous 3d Armored Division (Spearhead).

Given under my hand this Friday,

23d Day of July 1971 at Frankfurt, Germany

W. R. Kraft, Jr.
William R. Kraft, Jr.
Major General, USA
Commanding

Civic Action

Now there were many opportunities for Fort

Carson's soldiers and units to 'help out' in the civilian communities of Colorado. One of the Ethics of the new generation was to be helpful, to help solve societal problems.

Beyond perfectly acceptable 'invididual' volunteering, sometime we were approached by communities or organizations to bring real resources to needed tasks. So long as we cleared with any Unions who did similar work, and we could justify the expenditure of men and materials as actual 'training' we responded.

One developed into a formal program called MAST. Fort Carson had Helicopters - Hueys and Chinooks. Rescue of injured mountain climbers in the Colorado Rockies was a natural task - with superb training or pilots, crews, and medical personnel. MAST became popular and actually spawned, with all the Vietnam returning helicopter pilots the growth in Colorado of Hospital based private 'Flight-for-Life' technology.

Another one was from the fact that some units,

such as the 52d Engineer Battalion is a construction unit - and unless it just builds bridges and takes them down again, they cannot get good practical training. So the first 'Domestic Action' project was their building an overpass high over Pikes Peak Avenue at the Deaf and Blind School. It is still there.

And a big one that got a big story in the September 19th, 1971 Washington Post together with an extended interview of Secretary of the Army Froehlke was the 'Civic Actions' taken in dirt poor (Hispanic side), and just very low income (white side) of Center, eColorado, in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. An Hispanic Fort Carson Lieutenant Juan Gomez who not only grew up there, suffered much discrimination in that town, had some medical training and hated the Army, suggested that Fort Carson see whether it could justify completing a little Medical Clinic in town there, that would help his people as well as the rest of the townsfolk.

Before the 'Center Project' was done, not only did Fort Carson soldiers rebuild the old Jail, complete the Clinic, but also built rebuilt the sewer and water pipe system in the poorest, Hispanic, part of town. Carson provided tools and manpower, but no money for materials. The town had to provide that.

Two things were interesting about this project. First of all when the town was asked what it needed, only representatives from the white side of town - which include all the town officials, came to the first meeting. We said the WHOLE town must have a say. So Hispanics were invited and came too. In the end decisions represented the whole town.

Then 23 years later, in 1994 after I retired and was doing advanced technical pioneering wireless for the National Science Foundation - I had occassion to extend a wireless internet link from Alamosa to Center to permit the school to get Internet connectivity it did not have yet, nor could afford to extend 20 miles by wireline. A

'Juan Gomez' wanted to see me at the school. He was that same Lieutenant, now in business, and wanted to thank me profusely for not only what Fort Carson did then, but by my insisting that the Hispanics be also 'at the table' - that started a social revolution in and around Center. Hispanics got elected to the School Board, and the town began to integrate in ways it never had before. The evenhanded Army became the catalyst for social change in a racially divided town.

Congressional Hearing With a Sergeant

By late 1971 Congress got interested enough with the 'Fort Carson Changes, that they started hearings. One of the first ones, before a Senate Subcommittee featured lowly Sgt David Gyongyos, who made both a prepared statement and answered all the questions put to him. He had been a Sp4 on General Rogers Enlisted Man's Council, and had been

at Carson through the changes for 18 months. It stunned some people that such a low rank enlisted man from Fort Carson testified before Congress about Volar, and thei Senators listened.

[Click here for Testimony \(PDF file\)](#)

Testimonials like that gave the Congress the backbone to make the historic changes to the legal basis of the Army - the Draft.

The Enlisted Wives Council

Both as Chief of the large Fort Carson Staff - most of whose military members had wives - and later when I commanded a Brigade - I took a chapter from General Rogers creation of an Enlisted 'Man's' Council - and having heard the soldiers ask questions and make recommendations on behalf of their wives - I created a Staff wide 'Enlisted Wives Council'. I, my wife, the Command Sergeant Major and his wife' met several times with women 'elected' by their peers. And listened to their complaints and

suggestions. And acted on many of their suggestions. That worked as well as its counterpart for men.

I knew that good married soldiers and NCOs could be greatly influenced whether or not to join the Army, and then reenlist based on their own knowledge and experience of 'Army Life'

Issues of the Hospital, Schools, Commissary, Post Exchange, Housing - were discussed and we were able to take action to improve their Army family life and even, when they were employed as Civilians in the Headquarters for a second family income, improve conditions in their office lives.

Taking a Brigade

Soon after my trip to Europe, I was given the command of the 3d Brigade, 4th Infantry "Chiefs" Division, Mechanized. And left the Headquarters of Fort Carson. The previous commander, Col M C Ross had just been promoted to Brigadier General, and had to

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move on to another assignment.

I had two Mech Infantry Battalion, two Armor (Tank) Battalions - 4,000 men.

I dove in.