

# Negro Servicemen's Morale Hurt By Housing Bias

## Rights Unit Reports On Difficulties

### Five Proposals Are Suggested To Lower Off-Base Barriers

WASHINGTON — Off-base housing discrimination places a severe strain on the morale and efficiency of the Negro serviceman whether he is stationed in Alabama, New York, Rhode Island or Arizona, according to a staff report released Sunday by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights.

The Commission reports that the Defense Department recently has moved to halt posting of discriminatory rental listings and to demand non-discrimination clauses in new leases of private housing for servicemen.

**IN THE PAST**, local landlords near tactical missile bases were permitted to bar Negro servicemen from housing units leased by the Army even though this forced Negro personnel to live farther away from the base than national security regulations authorized.

What is still lacking, the commission states, is an "affirmative program" to encourage landlords and builders to make housing available to all servicemen without regard to race.

**FAILURE TO** plan and implement such a program, the commission staff points out ignores the directive contained in President Kennedy's executive housing order of November 1962. The order directed all executive department and agencies to take all appropriate action to promote the abandonment of housing discrimination.

The 50-page report on military housing expands and further documents findings summarized in the chapter of the commission's 1963 biennial report on the Negro in the armed forces. It is based on field studies and interviews by the commission staff, and on information supplied by the Defense Department and other government agencies.

The Armed Forces depend on the private housing market for the bulk of the housing required for married military personnel, the commission staff reports. It notes that the Defense Department reduced its estimated family housing needs for fiscal 1964 by 47 per cent (383,200 units) and on the assumption that local communities would make an equal number of units available to servicemen.

No effort was made, the commission staff states, to determine whether this housing would be made available to Negro servicemen as well as whites.

**WHILE** inadequate and overpriced private housing is a problem for both white and Negro servicemen, the Commission staff found that racial bias makes the problem doubly acute for Negro servicemen.

A further handicap is the fact that Negroes as a group do not have sufficient rank to qualify for the limited supply of on-base housing, which is generally made available according to a priority system operated without regard to race.

**THE COMMISSION** notes that thousands of rental and sales units constructed with federal assistance, and thousands of public housing units, are located near major military installations. It cites an FHA survey which revealed that of 300,000 rental units near military establishments only about 63,000 were "available to Negroes."

One third of all public housing projects throughout the nation are occupied exclusively by whites, according to the Public Housing Administration.

**THE REPORT** points out that the Defense Department has done little to use state anti-bias statutes as a means of expanding housing opportunities for Negro servicemen.

As an example of what can be done, the report cites the securing of housing accommodations for servicemen through the cooperative efforts of the Air Force and the New York State Commission on Human Rights.

The report re-states the recommendations on military housing made by the commission on Sept. 30 in the 1963 biennial report. These include:

• Direct negotiations by

local commanders aimed at desegregating housing developments predominantly occupied by military personnel.

- Cooperation with private fair housing organizations;
- Use of the resources of public agencies enforcing federal, state and local anti-bias laws, and the referring of servicemen to housing covered by such laws.
- Initiation of lawsuits to desegregate housing projects receiving federal assistance, pursuant to the housing Executive order;
- Revision of planning for additional military units to take into account the fact that discriminatory practices reduce the supply of housing actually available to all personnel.