

Top enlisted man visits Helena

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IR Staff Writer

Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army William G. Bainbridge flew into Helena today for a brief visit with the staff and members of the Army National Guard.

He is the senior enlisted man in the Army and spends most of his time traveling to Army facilities across the United States and recording problems or suggestions of enlisted men.

Bainbridge is presently touring Army Readiness Regions 8 and 9 including the western United States and will wind up his tour in California in about two weeks.

He calls himself a sort-of troubleshooter and takes any problems or suggestions back to Washington D.C. where he advises the Army Chief of Staff and his (Chief of Staff's) staff.

"I conduct these field visits to find out what the challenges and problem areas are for the enlisted man," Bainbridge said.

AND HE CONSIDERS it a big job because 87

percent of the Army forces are enlisted, Bainbridge said.

Today, he listened as staff members of the Army National Guard told him that while recruitment into the Guard in Montana is in good shape, the Guard is "really falling down" in retaining reserve recruits in the Army Guard.

"The active army is in good shape because the active soldier fits into a grade structure," he said.

But in the reserve guard, he said there is a job vacancy problem and oftentimes the grade and pay scale may not fit the reservist.

"There are just so many spaces available," he said and added that because of Montana's geography and limited number of positions, it is unrealistic for an enlisted reserve person to change units, for example from Helena to Missoula.

Bainbridge added the key to retaining reserve guard personnel is good training.

There are several pressing issues which face today's army.

HE SAID THE Army has to figure out how to effectively integrate the Army's goal of 30,000 women into service by 1983. The army has already conducted a study on that, he said.

Maintaining and acquiring the latest equipment and weapons systems is another big concern.

And he added maintaining a high quality level of training to make sure army forces are able to deploy successfully is extremely important.

Bainbridge says today's volunteer army is successful and the ranks are receiving highly qualified men.

Bainbridge was appointed sergeant major of the U.S. Army in July of 1975.

He enlisted in the Army in 1943 and served with the 423rd Infantry Regiment, 106th Division in Europe during World War II. He participated in the Battle of the Bulge and was captured by German forces. He was discharged from the Army following the war.

He was recalled to duty in 1951 and was assigned to Europe as operations sergeant with Headquarters, Seventh Corps.

He later served in the Vietnam War.



Army Sgt. Maj. William Bainbridge

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