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MISSISSIPPI:

Allen's Army

The second summer of the Negro revolt was still months off. But ever since the first, Allen Thompson, the graying, satin-smooth mayor of unreconstructed Jackson, Miss., has been acting as though Armageddon were just around the corner.

Girding for a new wave of civil-rights demonstrations this summer, Thompson is massing an impressive—and expensive—deterrent force of men and military hardware. To defend the capital city of 144,422, he is building up his young, tough, riot-trained police force from 390 to 450, plus two horses and six dogs. The force is "twice as big as any city our size," Thompson boasted last week—and it will be backed by a reserve pool of deputies, state troopers, civilian city employees, and even neighborhood citizen patrols.

With a hefty \$2.2 million budget to spend, the department recently bought 200 new shotguns, stockpiled tear gas, and issued gas masks to every man. Its motor fleet includes three canvas-canopied troop lorries, two half-ton searchlight trucks, and three giant trailer trucks to haul demonstration POW's off to two big detention compounds. "I think we can take care of 25,000," the mayor said.

Weepers: But the pride of Allen's Army is Thompson's Tank—the already popular nickname for a 13,000-pound armored battlewagon built to the mayor's specifications at roughly \$1 a pound. The twelve-man tank, abristle with shotguns, tear-gas guns, and a sub-machine gun, flopped on its first mission—putting down a demonstration at all-Negro Jackson State College two weeks ago. As it rolled up, a tear-gas shell went off inside, and all twelve men stumbled out crying. Nevertheless, Thompson says reverently: "It's a wonderful thing."

Would a collision come? Thompson thought so—and so did the young war-hawks of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, already mapping a massive summer campaign in Mississippi. SNCC was dispatching questionnaires last week to prospective recruits for its own nonviolent army of 500 to 1,000—mostly college students—to staff



Thompson, troops—and armor

"freedom schools," community centers, and voter-registration drives. "The summer of 1964," SNCC chairman John Lewis said, "could really be the year for Mississippi. Before the Negro people get the right to vote, there will have to be a massive confrontation, and it probably will come this summer . . . We are going to Mississippi full force."

And when they come, Thompson feels he has the means to contain them. "There will be no unlawful marching

and peaceful picketing," he vowed. "We are not going to let them come into the downtown area."

The mayor insists his army is only a second-strike force designed to preserve law and order. "We have to wait," he told NEWSWEEK's Karl Fleming, "until they start trouble." But Thompson is certain trouble will come. "This is it," he said. "They are not bluffing and we are not bluffing. We're going to be ready for them . . . They won't have a chance."