

Readiness — a matter of cost

MAKING advance plans and preparations for a future mobilization have never been a long suit of this nation or its military establishment. Almost invariably, we organize, man, staff, equip and support our armed forces for their peacetime function, then feel surprise and shock when that turns out to be inadequate for a smooth, efficient mobilization for war.

In 1917, for instance, laws governing mobilizations were so vague and fragmentary that it was necessary to draft members of the National Guard into Federal service, in unit elements, through the newly-created Selective Service System.

In 1940-41, to offer but one example of poor planning from thousands, it was necessary for one regimental executive officer to use his own personal credit card for gasoline to take his regiment's vehicles to a mobilization station hundreds of miles away.

In 1950 (Korea), mobilized units were critically short of personnel and the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) pool was grossly inadequate for making up the shortages. Consequently, larger organizations, such as divisions, had to accept, then train, their own allotment of draftees before they could deploy — a process that took six months.

In 1961 (Berlin Crisis), even though it was only a partial mobilization, precious weeks were consumed while Guard units desperately beat the bushes to find and purchase packing, crating and wheel-blocking materials for rail shipments to "mob" stations — and railroads struggled to locate enough flat cars and bring them to shipment points. Mobilization plans were sketchy and out-of-date. At many posts, facilities earmarked for use by mobilized units had long since been demolished or converted to other uses.

In 1968 (Pueblo Crisis and Vietnam), many of the same defects turned up again, but the mobilized force was so small that solutions could be found quickly when problems arose. Even so, there were weeks of delay in getting units into a Vietnam combat configuration. For some inexplicable reason, DA did not require mobilized

units to reorganize under the U.S. Army Pacific (USAR-PAC) MTOE upon mobilization. Instead, it left that time-consuming task until later, thus delaying unit deployment availability needlessly.

So out of the mistakes and blunders of the past, we have learned our lesson. Right? We won't let it happen again. Right?

Wrong! Emphatically wrong! We seem to have learned little.

If it suddenly became necessary to mobilize today for a national emergency arising in Western Europe, we'd be slowed by many of the same deficiencies that plagued us in 1941, 1950, 1961 and 1968. That has been confirmed by MobEx '76.

MobEx '76 was a realistic, 30-day exercise with a "worst case" scenario, designed to test not just the ability of Reserve Component units to mobilize quickly and efficiently, but of the Active Army to manage and support a full mobilization. It was billed as a "no fault" test, to encourage participants to expose, rather than hide, problem areas. It was conducted by the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, Department of Army, with participation by Forces Command (FORSCOM), six CONUS installations and 590 Reserve Component units.

The results have been under review for a year and the unclassified findings are starting to trickle out. They cannot be a source of comfort nor of pride for anyone in the command chain, high or low.

First, let's run through some of the MobEx '76 findings, then let's talk about how such weaknesses develop and take hold.

- First, it was determined that the Army's whole command system is not structured and staffed to support a major mobilization. FORSCOM is supposed to supervise a mobilization, but its span of control is far too broad to supervise such a massive operation effectively. Moreover, the three CONUS Army headquarters are not staffed to assume some of the load. Neither are the Readiness Region headquarters, which were not designed for that purpose anyway. Beyond that, coordination between De-

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partment of Army, FORSCOM, and U.S. Army Europe was found to be poor.

- Most units had serious deficiencies in equipment, either quantity or quality, or both.

- Nearly all units tested had personnel shortages and MOS deficiencies. Under present circumstances, it would not be possible to overcome those shortcomings in time for units to meet early-deployment deadlines. The IRR pool, from which fillers theoretically were to come, already is inadequate and is shrinking rapidly. The only available expedient, inefficient and wasteful though it would be, is to cannibalize one unit of its best men and equipment to make other units ready for deployment. It's futile to look to Selective Service for help. That system has been destroyed, for all practical purposes, and would need seven months to provide the first increment of trained personnel. That's useless in the no-warning, intensely violent kind of war that Defense leaders believe Soviet leaders would undertake in Europe.

- Mobilization and movement planning is shockingly incomplete at every level, from Department of Army and FORSCOM right down to individual companies.

- Guard and Reserve units pegged for short-notice mobilization to help in-process other units at mobilization stations are themselves scheduled to de-

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Cover: Madame Pele blows her stack. Hawaii Guardsmen rushed to evacuate villagers in path of molten lava flowing from the active volcano. Action on the Big Island of Hawaii was but one of many types of disaster relief performed by the Guard during the last half of 1977.

— (Photo by Hobart Duncan, press secretary to the Governor of Hawaii)

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