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 1948-49, to 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 few were consumed while Guard units desperately beat the bushes to find and purchase packing, crating and wheel-blocking materials for rail shipment 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 Mobilization plans were sketchy and out-of-date.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 (USARPAC) MOTE 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 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 MoEx’76.

MoEx ’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 culled 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 300 Reserve Component depots.

The results have been under review for a year and the unclassified findings are starting to trickle out. They cannot be a source of much pride for anyone in the area, for the high, low, or any place in between.

First, let’s go through some of the MoEx ’76 findings, then let’s talk about how those weaknesses develop and can be fixed.

First, it was determined that the Army’s whole mobilization 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 an army effectively. For instance, 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.

Beyond that, coordination between Department of Army, FORSCOM, and U.S. Army Europe was found to be poor.

Most units have 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 the 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, immensely violent kind of war that Defense leaders believe Soviet leaders would undertake in Europe.

Mobilization and movement planning is shockingly inadequate at every level of the 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 deploy.

—Continued on page 14

Does your insurance retire when you do?

OCUNAS training

Second-in-a-series article on overseas training looks at the Air Guard program.

A patch of blue

Air Guard weathermen surrounded by Air Guard infantry troops tell green-suited aviators when they may, and may not, fly.

Photo contest winners

back cover

Departments

You ought to know 16
Washington report 16
View from the Hill 19
NCGAUS travel service 21
People in the news 24
Posting the Guard 28
Pentagon Paragraphs 32

Cover: Madame Pélè blows her stack. Hawaii Guardians 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 of disaster relief performed by the Guard during the last half of 1977. — (Photo by Robert Duncan, press secretary to the Governor of Hawaii)

Staff

EDITOR Luther L. Walker
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Bruce P. Hargreaves
ADVERTISING John E. Bibb
CIRCULATION Don DesJardins