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Casualty reporting is one of three primary personnel and administrative functions performed on the battlefield. While the other two, strength accounting and replacement operations, seem to get more immediate visibility with commanders, casualty reporting has an importance and sensitivity and immediacy not found in other administrative functions. It has far-reaching effects on the morale of the military and civilian populace, significantly

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impacts on the Army image, and also impacts on other functions of Army administration such as strength accounting and replacement operations. Because of this, casualty information must be collected and recorded with 100 percent accuracy and in a most timely manner. Commanders at each echelon are charged with specific responsibilities. Additionally, the system also depends upon information provided by military intelligence, graves registration, military policy, chaplain, and medical sources.

STUDENT ESSAY

CASUALTY REPORTING ON THE MODERN BATTLEFIELD: CAN IT BE ACCURATE AND TIMELY?

BY

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5 APRIL 1984

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE, CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA

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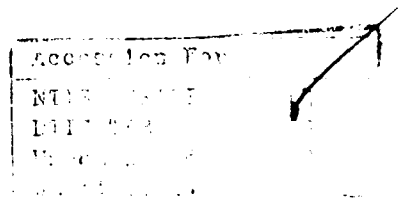
USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM

CASUALTY REPORTING ON THE MODERN BATTLEFIELD: CAN IT BE ACCURATE AND TIMELY?

INDIVIDUAL ESSAY

by

Lieutenant Colonel Alan D. Hobson
Adjutant General Corps



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Casualty reporting is one of three primary personnel and administrative functions performed on the battlefield. While the other two, strength accounting and replacement operations, seem to get more immediate visibility with commanders, casualty reporting has an importance and sensitivity and immediacy not found in other administrative functions. It has far-reaching effects on the morale of the military and civilian populace, significantly impacts on the Army image, and also impacts on other functions of Army administration such as strength accounting and replacement operations. Because of this, casualty information must be collected and recorded with 100 percent accuracy and in a most timely manner. Commanders at each echelon are charged with specific responsibilities. Additionally, the system also depends upon information provided by military intelligence, graves registration, military police, chaplain, and medical sources.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this essay is to examine the Army casualty system to determine its adequacy for both small scale contingency operations such as the recent Grenada operation and for larger operations in a traditional theater.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This author, while assigned as Commander, 18th Personnel and Administrative Battalion, 1st corps Support Command, Fort Bragg, NC and responsible for operating a mini-Personnel Command (PERSCOM) for the contingency corps, became concerned about the adequacy of the casualty reporting system for contingency operations. This concern was based on several factors. A primary factor was the inability to actually test the system under simulated conditions. Even though attempts were made to test the system during exercises, these tests seldom proved realistic. Another factor centered around the lack of experience and training of administrative personnel in this area. Actual peacetime casualty reporting, especially in CONUS, is normally done by installation personnel, many of whom are civilians; therefore, the division AG and personnel service company specialists who would do this function in wartime actually receive little hands-on experience. Personnel at the battalion level and below received even less training in this area. Of possibly greater significance, there appeared to be a lack of attention or interest at all levels concerning this important area. It was perceived that this was an area that yes, we must deal with it, but it'll all work out.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES

In writing this paper, the author used as a starting point the knowledge and experience obtained from almost 22 years as an Adjutant General Corps officer involved in all aspects of casualty administration. In addition to researching regulations and DA pamphlets on the subject, numerous conversations were held with the following agencies and individuals:

- The Adjutant General Center, Casualty and Memorial Affairs Directorate.

- Soldier Support Center, Directorate for Doctrine and Combat Developments.

- Former combat arms battalion commanders who are students at the Army War College, Class of 1984.

- Adjutant General Corps officers at the Army War College.

- SIDPERS-3 Project Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Personnel, HQDA.

The remarks, opinions, and comments collected from the agencies and personnel were under a non-attribution policy.

The investigation has been concentrated in the following areas:

- What is the present system?

- Is the present system working?

- Did the system work for the Grenada operation?

- Does the system need to be changed, if so, how?

HOW THE SYSTEM WORKS

AR 600-10, the Army Casualty System, establishes policies and outlines responsibilities and procedures for the efficient operation of the Army casualty system.

The Adjutant General, through the Casualty and Memorial Affairs Directorate, has primary responsibility for worldwide operation of the Army Casualty and Memorial Affairs Systems. Of the specific functions of the Casualty and Memorial Affairs Directorate, four have the greatest visibility and the most impact upon the soldier, his command, and his family. These functions are casualty reporting, notification to Next Of Kin (NOK), survivor assistance, and disposition of remains.

The Army Casualty System is operated through a worldwide network of Casualty Area Commands (CACs) located at major installations in CONUS and major commands overseas. These CACs belong to the local commander and are usually a part of the Adjutant General's Office or major Personnel Command. They are responsive to the office of the Adjutant General (TAGO), HQDA and provide casualty services on an area basis. This means that the CAC within whose area a casualty occurs assumes reporting responsibility, and the CAC within whose area the NOK reside provides notification and survivor assistance. It should be pointed out that while a casualty may most commonly be thought of as a death, reportable casualties include such cases as wounded, missing, detained, and seriously or very seriously ill.

In reviewing the reporting procedures of the system, it appears that during peacetime the system isn't too difficult to administer. If a soldier, for example dies of an accident, the unit notifies the servicing Military Personnel Office (MILPO) who in turn pulls the personnel file and notifies the installation CAC where the complete casualty report is prepared and transmitted to TAGO. CAC personnel, who may be either military or civilian, do this on a daily basis and are normally well-trained and understand the importance and sensitivity of their job. This starts the notification to NOK process and survivor assistance

programs. Officers are normally detailed by the CAC to accomplish personal notification as designated representatives of the Secretary of the Army. If officers are not available, enlisted personnel in grades E7, E8, and E9 may be used; however, the grade of the notifier should be equal to or higher than that of the casualty.

The Survivors Assistance Officer (SAO) may also have been the notification officer but it is normally another officer detailed by the CAC. He too, must be competent, dependable, and sympathetic. Every effort is made to insure that the SAO speaks the same language as the NOK. Selected senior noncommissioned officers, with the exception of those assigned duties as "on production" recruiters and guidance counselors (this does not include career counselors), may be utilized as SAOs for NOK of enlisted retiree deaths and those active duty enlisted deaths when death gratuity payment is paid by check, either by the finance center or the SAO. When the death gratuity is paid in cash, commissioned officers or warrant officers will be appointed as SAOs and class A agent officers to the appropriate finance and accounting office. Noncommissioned officers cannot be appointed as class A agent officers![1]

WARTIME OPERATIONS

Wartime casualty procedures obviously become more challenging to implement. Battlefield intensity, sheer volume and the challenge to the communication system are but a few of the difficulties likely to be encountered.

The structure for wartime casualty reporting in a mature or traditional theater is fairly well-defined. The company sized unit reports to the battalion who reports to the servicing MILPO (either a Personnel

Service Company (PSC) for nondivisional units or the division AG's Personnel Service Division (PSD) for divisional units). The servicing MILPO pulls the personnel file and prepares and dispatches the casualty report to the Personnel Command (PERSCOM) who dispatches the report to TAGO. The PERSCOM is performing basically the same function as the CAC does for peacetime CONUS casualties. Once TAGO receives the report, the notification and survivor assistance programs work as previously described.

At the unit level the information is submitted to the battalion Personnel and Administration Center (PAC) via the Unit Casualty Feeder Report (DA Form 1156). This form is also utilized along with DA Form 1155 (Witness Statement on Casualty Incident) which is used to provide additional information for the following:[2]

- Reports of missing/Missing In Action (MIA).
- Reports of Killed In Action (KIA)/dead (remains not recovered).
- Reports of captured.
- Other reports where soldiers are no longer under the control of US forces.

Although the company commander is responsible for collecting accurate data, the soldier is often the primary source of knowledge about casualties. In some cases, he may bear full responsibility for a casualty report as the only witness. Information may also be collected from a number of people, to include civilians and members of other services and national forces. In any event, the accuracy and timeliness of casualty reports depend upon direct witness or witnesses or persons having the best knowledge of casualty incidents.

The unit commander normally delegates responsibility for preparation of feeder reports to platoon leaders, platoon sergeants, and/or

squad leaders. The completed forms are passed to the first sergeant or unit commander to be verified and forwarded to the PAC. Reports must be forwarded as the casualty occurs. Batching for purely administrative reasons is not acceptable. When a casualty incident renders a unit incapable of reporting casualties, the next higher headquarters assumes this responsibility.

The battalion PAC may be divided into forward and main elements. If so, the casualty feeder reports are collected from subordinate units by the forward element and sent to the main element as fast as possible. The PAC forward maintains close contact with the battalion aid station and updates feeder reports with status changes or additional medical information. The PAC main receives feeder reports and enters each in an appropriate unit casualty log which is maintained for each subordinate unit. Entries are made as they occur. The log is maintained until each entry is cleared by a subsequent SIDPERS status change transaction or the person returns to duty. The PAC clerk enters name, social security number, grade, MOS, and casualty status. The number of the SIDPERS transmittal letter is entered later, or "RTD" is labeled for casualties returned to duty. This is a control measure to insure that the necessary information is entered into the personnel system. The PAC main verifies all personnel data for accuracy. Then it transmits feeder reports to the PSD or PSC where the field personnel records are maintained.

PSDs/PSCs verify data and feeder reports through review of the personnel file (Military Personnel Records Jacket - MPRJ or 201 file) and coordination with other activities. Casualty status is also verified by other reports that may provide status information. These include:[3]

- Strength accounting reports.
- Military police and straggler reports.
- Prisoner of war reports.
- Medical treatment facility admission and disposition reports.
- Graves registration and mortuary interment reports.
- Intelligence information reports.

The PSD/PSC confirms the status of persons reported as missing/MIA and further determines the actual status. It also conducts missing person boards of inquiry. Finally and most significantly, it initiates the 73 line casualty report on DD Form 173/1 which combines data from the unit casualty feeder report and additional data from the MPRJ. This report will eventually trigger the notification system and, for obvious reasons, must be totally accurate as well as timely.

Within the PSD/PCS the casualty reporting function is normally divided between the Personnel Records Branch (PRB) and the Personnel Actions Branch (PAB). The actions branch normally prepares the casualty report after collecting all the data required from the unit, medical units, grave registration units as well as the records branch. Two important documents from the MPRJ are the DD Form 93, (Record of Emergency Data) and the VA Form 29-8286 (Servicemen's Group Life Insurance Election). The DD Form 93 designates beneficiaries and NOK to be notified. The VA Form 29-8286 designates the Servicemen's Group Life Insurance (SGLI) option selected by the soldier. When a soldier is reported KIA or dead or is subsequently determined to be dead, the carbon copies of both forms are forwarded directly to HQDA.

The PSC/PSD forwards the casualty report to the PERSCOM or theater level in the most expeditious manner. The PERSCOM acts as a central

control activity or "clearinghouse" for all casualty reports. If the PERSCOM is not available, the headquarters Adjutant General performs this function. PERSCOM's responsibilities go well beyond submission of the individual casualty report. They include:[4]

- Establishing and maintaining an active master casualty file of all personnel reported in a casualty status.
- Coordinating all casualty data with the Theater Army Personnel Operations Center (TAPOC) to be used in replacement operations and to verify normal strength accounting procedures.
- Processing line of duty investigations as necessary.
- Coordinating with subordinate units to assist in recovery of remains by providing grid coordinates of units that report KIA and MIA casualties to the central graves registration office.
- Assisting the graves registration office in identifying remains through research of files and records.
- Compiling and forwarding casualty statistics to HQDA, theater army, and supported major commands for use in maintaining loss rate tables for other appropriate purposes.
- Preparing special strength or status reports of multiple/mass casualty incidents to reflect number and types of casualties (KIA/MIA/WIA).

CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

As can be seen from the preceding paragraphs, the system is fairly well-defined for an operational theater. This is not the case for contingency type operations. FM 12-15, Wartime Casualty reporting, which does an excellent job of outlining the system for the operational theater/is somewhat vague in its explanation of contingency operations.

It indicates that the process previously described <u>may</u> be modified by <u>SOPs</u> of the command involved. A contingency corps <u>might</u> deploy with an

abbreviated record. This record might contain the DD FM 93, VA Form 29-8286, DA Form 2 (Personnel Qualification Record - Part I) and the DA Form 2-1 (Personnel Qualification Record - Part II). Under this concept the full MPRJ remains at home installation from which the unit deployed; therefore, the personnel element of the contingency corps may have to submit an abbreviated casualty report with enough information to enable HQDA/TAGO to notify the NOK. A copy of the abbreviated casualty report would also be sent to the home installation which must prepare and submit the complete casualty report to TAGO.[5]

As can be seen, the local commander is given considerable latitude in how to handle the casualty situation. This isn't all bad but requires a serious planning effort by the personnel community. The first question to be resolved is who is actually going to do the reporting to the home installation and to TAGO. This has to be the senior personnel element in the area. For example, if it's a brigade sized element, the brigade S-1 must assume the role of the PERSCOM. It's doubtful that he's trained to this and he's certainly not staffed to do so. For a division operation, the division AG would assume the responsibilities and, assuming that he has deployed his personnel specialists, should be capable of handling abbreviated reporting.

For a true contingency corps operation, the Corps Adjutant General assumes the responsibility. He will normally handle this function through the activation of a Corps Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) which functions as a mini-PERSCOM. An immediate problem that the Corps AG has is staffing. In Europe today the Corps AGs have direct control over a personnel and administration battalion; therefore they can detail personnel from the battalion to work in the CPOC. In CONUS, the P&A

battalion is under the COSCOM commander; thus requiring the AG to negotiate a memorandum of agreement with a major subordinate commander to detail personnel for the CPOC.

Detailing personnel from the P&A battalion presents a problem regardless of who owns the battalion because the mission of a P&A battalion is to support the nondivisional troops of approximately the same number as a division AG supports division soldiers; therefore, pulling people degrades the nondivisional support. Possibly, the Division 86 concept of placing more of the personnel support at Corps level will alleviate this problem but it is doubtful that there will be enough bodies.

Assuming that the Corps AG solves his staffing problems, he must then insure that this somewhat ad hoc group called the CPOC can, in fact, do all the duties previously described for the PERSCOM. This becomes a challenge because it is unlikely that these personnel would have the expertise or experience to immediately step in and do the job. It is this author's firm belief that Corps AGs do not understand or appreciate the magnitude of this task.

Another major consideration for the contingency corps is communications. We know that with the advent of electronic journalism, the press will be rapidly and vividly reporting incidents and maybe even gross numbers of casualties. Our actual reporting system will have to be almost as timely and totally accurate or one can imagine the barrage of congressional or White House inquiries. The personnel and the signal as well as operations communities must be together on this key issue. Casualty reporting, even though it won't directly affect the battlefield, must have a high priority. If electronic communications don't work, a courier system must be substituted which is equally timely.

Now that we have the people and commo systems working well we need to discuss the actual mechanics of the system. TAGO has given the field authority to submit an abbreviated casualty report. This is real progress. Prior to that, the contingency corps had to go back to the home installation who then prepared and transmitted the full report to TAGO. This process would have been much too time-consuming.

This new system requires that the deploying unit conduct a thorough POR (Processing for Overseas movement) at home station. Key to this process is the proper preparation of the DD Form 93 (Record of Emergency Data) and the VA Form 29-8286 (Servicemen's Group Life Insurance Election) and their proper disposition. One copy goes with the soldier and one copy must go to TAGO by courier or mail express. It must reach TAGO quickly because if the soldier becomes an immediate casualty and the field promptly reports it to TAGO and the information on file at TAGO is different than his most recent election of options, we have a problem of significant proportion. The personnel system must also have the capability in theater to prepare and process new forms in case the soldier again desires to change his options.

IS THE SYSTEM WORKING?

In evaluating the system, one needs to consider peacetime conditions, the operational or mature theater and contingency type operations.

The peacetime situation appears to be operating smoothly and efficiently. The Casualty Area Commands (CACs) understand the sensitive nature of their jobs and are able to communicate this to the detailed notification officers and survivors assistance officers. Although these officers are required to be away from their primary jobs, it is this

authors experience that they and their commanders are most cooperative and understanding and are able to stay with the job until it is properly done. It seems that his dedication ties in with the concept that the "Army takes care of its own." Nobody wants this duty, but when received, it's undertaken in a professional manner. There has been some discussion that the notification officer and SAO should be a full-time job. This idea should be quickly discarded for two reasons. The first is why try to fix something that isn't broken and two, if it were to become a full-time job, there is always the possibility it would be viewed as just a job and not undertaken in the caring and sensitive manner as is now the case. No matter how dedicated the officer may be, it would be difficult to preclude a "business as usual" attitude. Additionally, the CACs have a wide geographic area; therefore, the officer might be in one part of a state and urgently needed miles away. With the Army's manpower constraints, lieutenants would probably wind up with the job as opposed to more experienced officers who normally are detailed under the present system.

The second category is to evaluate it under wartime conditions in a mature theater, the most recent being Vietnam. From all accounts the system worked. There are some horror stories about the wrong body being shipped but overall the system worked. This was the first war that personal notifications were required. This was done primarily to reduce the anxieties caused by hoax calls which were a problem during that time frame. The system of personal notification will not, and should not, be discontinued.

This brings us to the contingency operation. There are two areas we can look at. One is actual exercises and the other is the recent Grenada

operation. We can discard exercises because casualty play has not been tested or, if attempted, has been poorly done during exercises.

The Grenada experience is still fresh in our minds and although overall from a casualty standpoint, the mission was accomplished, provides some excellent lessons learned.

In analyzing the Grenada experience it can safely be concluded that there was a lack of planning for casualty reporting and handling. As a result there was no system to provide TAGO with accurate and timely information. It was not until the third day of the operation that initial by-name reports of casualties began to reach TAGO. These reports came from a variety of sources such as individual units in the area of operations, evacuation points, mortuaries, hospitals, and home stations. The first actual report of a fatality came from Roosevelt Rhodes Hospital, Puerto Rico, when it requested disposition instructions on an individual who was dead-on-arrival. It was at least three more days before casualty personnel from Fort Bragg's XVIII Airborne Corps and 82d Airborne Division were able to construct a casualty reporting system that worked reasonably well. They also assumed reporting responsibility for all Army units in the operation.

In the meantime, once the information from the various sources was pieced together by TAGO personnel, procedures established for notification and survivor assistance were followed. Because of the relative smallness of the operation (spouses, children and parents of 11 KIA and 99 WIA were provided with information and assistance) there was not undue embarrassment on the Army's part even though a reporting system was not established initially. The establishment of a toll-free "800" telephone

line in TAGO which answered inquiries from the general public provided a useful service for those who learned their loved ones had not been reported as casualties.

The lesson learned that most clearly stands out is the lack of planning for casualty reporting and handling. Apparently the personnel planners did not have the opportunity to provide input to the OPLAN. The reason cited was operation secrecy and urgency. Conclusions from the operation are:

- There was no meaningful joint planning to deal with the issues of casualty reporting and graves registration/disposition of remains.

- There were no implementing Army plans at any level which addressed casualty reporting and graves registration/disposition of remains.

- The lack of planning led naturally to the absence of a functioning system during the operation.

- Personnel planners at all levels were excluded from Grenada planning.

- Operators of the casualty system at division level were not permitted to operate under their normal SOP for battle casualty reporting.

- Failure to declassify the operation in a timely manner for casualty operations purposes, complicated and delayed processing operations.

- The absence of a standard, operating reporting system delayed processing and notification actions and has the potential for causing a complete system breakdown in future scenarios where the numbers of casualties would be greater.

IDENTIFICATION OF REMAINS

Timely casualty reporting in any scenario is hindered by inadequate means of positively identifying remains. The fingerprinting system is the best method of providing positive identification. Prior to 1974 the Army had little difficulty in this area because the standard ID card contained fingerprints and duplicate sets of fingerprint cards were contained in the field personnel file. The personnel file provided excellent backup in case the ID card was missing from the remains. People who were involved in the casualty business during the Vietnam era indicate that the majority of remains were identified by matching ID card fingerprints.

In 1974, DOD, in an attempt to reduce the administration load in ID card preparation, eliminated the fingerprinting requirement. The casualty system was dealt a further blow in 1977 when a Military Personnel Center, HQDA, study group designed to reduce paperwork in the field personnel file, eliminated the requirement to file the fingerprint cards. This was apparently done without coordination with TAGO. Attempts to reinstate have been to no avail.

Soldiers are presently fingerprinted when they enter the Army. The actual fingerprinting is done at the Military Enlistment Processing Station (MEPS) and the prints are forwarded to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). This poses two difficulties. First, because fingerprint records of military personnel are maintained only at the FBI complex in downtown Washington, DC, the only possible communication line for positive identification is between the facility conducting the identification process and the FBI. This dilemma is faced in all occurrences of oversea deaths, either by natural, accidental or hostile action. Secondly,

because of the importance of fingerprint records and the legal and scientific weight of their value associated with law and medicine, the FBI has imposed stringent standards on the quality of fingerprinting. The Army has had difficulty in meeting these standards and there are no routine procedures to re-fingerprint personnel whose records were not acceptable. The reject rate over the past year has been approximately 30 percent. It is also estimated that 20 percent of the entire Army has no fingerprints on file with the FBI.

A short-term fix to this problem is a recent requirement for Rapid Deployment Force personnel and remote area personnel to be fingerprinted as part of their POR process and take the card with them in their abbreviated record. This is merely a band-aid approach to a major problem which needs to be studied seriously.

FUTURE CASUALTY REPORTING

In this modern world of automation and high technology it is appropriate to examine the personnel system to determine if there is anything on the horizon to replace the present "stubbly pencil," typewriter message preparation system.

As you might suspect there are systems being planned. The Soldier Support Center at Fort Benjamin Harrison has developed a conceptual high technology system which, among other things, provides personnel managers at all division levels of command with the capability to give by-name accounting of each assigned and attached personnel asset. A primary focus of this system is to insure accurate casualty reporting as well as personnel management and other soldier service functions such as a postal directory to expedite mail.[6]

To assist in administration of this system the Soldier Support Center is examining the feasibility of returning the company clerk to the unit. The clerk would be issued a microcomputer containing a personnel roster called a "battle roster" which gives personnel assigned and attached to the company. As casualties occur, the company clerk enters the changes on the microcomputer. The changes would then be sent to the Battalion S1 by FM radio over the Admin-Log net, by micro-cassette or on a printed hard copy produced by the microcomputer. The S1, through the battalion Personnel Operation Center (PAC), enters the changes on a microsource computer which updates the personnel accounting system at brigade/division level.

This microsource computer is a commercially available device simulating the operating capabilities of the tactical army combat service support computer, which will be fielded in personnel units beginning in 1986. This computer contains the complete personnel accounting system data base on a microprocessor about the size of a suitcase and runs on an external power source provided by a 1.5 kw generator. The microsource computer is located at each PAC, the Adjutant General, G1 and Replacement Detachment. Because of this dispersion of similar data bases, a redundancy and continuity of operations capability is automatically built into the system. The various data bases are updated over existing multi-channel communications using an internal module. A built-in printer provides the capability to produce hard copy reports. Additionally, a floppy disk drive enables data base updates to be accomplished by courier in case multi-channel communications are unavailable.[7]

A key element in the high technology personnel system is the Soldier Data Tag (SDT) concept which proposes an individually carried field record that contains personnel, medical, and finance information.

In essence, it contains basically the same information as the present hard copy records and, in fact, eliminates the hard copy records. This small tag, about the size of our present "dog tag," contains a microchip record of essential data and is carried by the soldier and can be read, updated and interfaced with the various automated systems previously described. It would be used during both peacetime and wartime. During wartime, it will be used for manifesting deploying personnel, casualty reporting, replacement operations, strength accounting, combat payments, and for medical treatment. Specifically, in reference to casualty reporting, if the soldier becomes wounded or killed, the tag's information can be read by medics or graves registration teams using a coupler that connects to a portable reader. This information is recorded on the portable reader/recorder and used for processing a casualty report.

Another new system which is being developed by a Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, HQDA, project office is called SIDPERS-3 which is to replace the current Standard Installation/Division Personnel System (SIDPERS-1 and 2).

SIDPERS-3 will replace SIDPERS-1 and 2 by looking beyond the boundaries of conventional data processing as we know it today. It will bring together a full range of state-of-the-art technologies, providing support during peace, mobilization, war, or combinations of these environments. Most importantly, it will bring the same personnel reporting system to the Total Force, active and reserve components.

The system will be tailored into modules for combat, garrison and mobilization. The combat module will be composed of the personnel support organization, procedures, hardware and system software necessary to sustain US Army combat forces during combat operations. The essential

characteristics of the combat module are an austere staffing of personnel support elements within the theater of operations, processing only a set of wartime data elements, transactions, or reports, and an orientation towards providing only command and control statistical information (strength, replacement, casualty) during combat. By-name accounting will be done during lulls in the conflict or outside the theater of operations.

The draft concept for SIDPERS-3 has been finalized and is being staffed Army wide. Software development is expected to require three years. Expected deployment date for the new system is 1989. As the system evolves any new breakthrough in hardware and software will be analyzed to determine if it can be incorporated into the new system.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE

Now that we have looked at the present system both for the mature or operational theater and for contingencies and examined personnel systems of the future, just where does that leave us.

In order to preclude embarrassment for the Army, the following quick fixes need to be strongly considered:

- Review contingency plans to determine adequacy of casualty operations. Insure that these plans are in sufficient detail to outline who is responsible for casualty reporting, who reports to whom, what forms will be utilized, what communication systems will be utilized and what are the procedures required to insure proper identification and disposition of remains. This review must be done at all levels down to and including company sized units. Most importantly, insure that a casualty reporting team is included in the early follow-on units.

- Once we've adequately included casualty operations in our contingency plans, we must incorporate realistic casualty play in our exercises. This is more difficult than one might imagine. Since exercises, by their very nature are designed to condense several months activities into a few days of exercise play, the personnel community must be innovative in its testing of plans. All too often a pre-canned system is used for casualties which doesn't tie into the actual exercise and ends up as a joke and no benefit to anyone. AGs and GIs must get their commanders interested in this program or we'll never know if we can handle a major endeavor. A step in the right direction to get commanders' attention was a recent letter from the DCSPER of the Army addressed personally to each MACOM commander which asked for their personal assistance to insure that the casualty system is prepared and will be responsive to future combat situations. The DCSPER cited the Grenada operation as an example and indicated that had the conflict been more intensive or of longer duration, the system would have collapsed.[8]

- Tied closely with exercise play is the actual training of casualty specialists at all levels. Granted, exercises are an excellent method of training the clerks, but that isn't sufficient. Additionally, all too often the PAC clerks and PSC/PSD clerks don't go on the exercise, or wind up handling real world actions or spend all their time working on the personnel status report for the nightly briefing. As concluded earlier, PCS and PSD clerks don't normally handle real peacetime casualties, especially in CONUS because its done at installation or Casualty Area Command level; therefore, dedicated training is a must. The yearly Skill Qualification test (SQT) does address casualty reporting for Personnel Action Specialists (75E), but this alone, is not enough to insure adequate preparation.

Assuming that our quick-fixes are implemented and do solve the immediate problems, we should also look at some long-term fixes. Included are:

- The identification issue. Some would argue that this should be a short-term requirement. The only reason for listing it under long-term is that there appears to be too many bureaucratic roadblocks to insure an immediate fix. We must come to grips with the magnitude of this problem. Mass casualties are a distinct possibility. Dental records may be destroyed, may not be available and even if they are, they are not fool proof. That leaves us with the fingerprint dilemma. We must do two things, put the fingerprint card in the field personnel file and put the fingerprint on the ID card. Granted, the ID card may not be on the body. In this case, the field personnel file would be the backup. This problem must be solved.

- Conduct a more thorough analysis of the high technology and SIDPERS-3 systems to determine if they actually do improve casualty reporting. On the surface it appears that they do because anytime you improve data accuracy you improve casualty reporting. The ONUS is still an unit personnel to identify and input the casualty information. A lingering question is the availability of communication equipment. Specifically, does the high technology system apply to the contingency corps?

- Review the need for the field to report all the data items required by the present 73 line casualty report. There are approximately 30 items that are contained on the HQDA master file. At the present time, the field is required to report these items basically because of the DA file not current. Hopefully, the high technology system and SIDPERS-3 will solve this problem.

- Review and test the interface between the casualty system and the communication system for both contingency operations and for the mature theater. This is a critical area. Have we properly envisioned the increased load on the commo system? Personnel and signal types must get together. Realistic testing and exercise play becomes difficult for reasons previously mentioned but it must be done.

SUMMARY

The Army casualty system, although experiencing difficulties, is on the right track. The system from the top is well laid-out. AR 600-10, The Army Casualty System, properly defines roles and responsibilities and gives commanders sufficient latitude to develop implementing plans. FM 12-15, Wartime Casualty Reporting is a sufficient "how to" manual to enable all levels to practice and train in this area. The system in the past has been neglected possibly because it is an administrative system which isn't pleasant to think about, is working in peacetime, and is somewhat difficult to practice, especially on a meaningful scale. The recent Grenada experience has been a blessing in disguise. It very accurately pointed out the weaknesses of the present system without causing undue embarrassment to the Army. If we correct the Grenada lessons learned deficiencies together with the problems we already knew about, improve training and exercise participation, and closely coordinate personnel systems of the future specifically with the casualty experts, we can and will have a system that is timely and accurate and one that the next of kin of our fallen comrades deserve.

ENDNOTES

1. US Department of the Army, Army Regulations 600-10 p. 7-4.

2. US Department of the Army, Field Manual 12-15 p. 2-0.

3. Ibid. p. 3-0.

4. Ibid. p. 4-1.

5. Ibid. p. 1-3.

6. Captain John J. McNally III and Captain Randall Thomas, "The Commander's High Technology Personnel System. Soldier Support Journal January/February 1984. p. 21.

7. Ibid. p. 22.

8. Robert M. Elton, Lieutenant General, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Headquarters Department of Army, letter to the US Army's major command, commanders.