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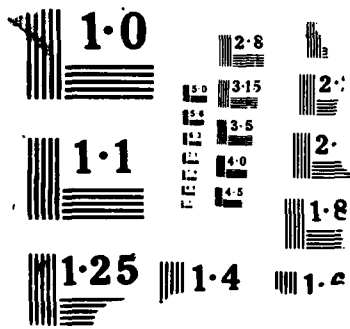
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MOBILIZATION EQUIPMENT REDISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HAWTHORNE L. PROCTOR, QM

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number of these programs and systems have been tested. A most recent test was done for the mobilization equipment redistribution system (MOBERS) which clearly showed the value of a peacetime shakedown of a mobilization subsystem. Equipping forces is crucial in peacetime and it is imperative to provide them the needed equipment during a crisis situation. Even though some problems were discovered during the MOBERS evaluation at Fort Hood, it can, with some modification, be used to adequately equip deploying forces.

USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

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MOBILIZATION EQUIPMENT REDISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

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U.S. Army War College
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
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ABSTRACT

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In today's environment, it is essential for the Army to be able to respond to the myriad of challenges that would require the deployment of forces. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those responsible for mobilizing and deploying those forces to have viable programs, policies and procedures that are responsive during a crisis. For the past several years, a number of these programs and systems have been tested. A most recent test was done for the mobilization equipment redistribution system (MOBERS) which clearly showed the value of a peacetime shakedown of a mobilization subsystem. Equipping forces is crucial in peacetime and it is imperative to provide them the needed equipment during a crisis situation. Even though some problems were discovered during the MOBERS evaluation at Fort Hood, it can, with some modification, be used to adequately equip deploying forces.

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U S forces that are not forward deployed must be prepared for mobilization and deployment if they are to assist in carrying out the national military strategy of deterring, or if necessary, defeating the nation's potential adversaries. Successful rapid movement of forces to a crisis area depends on how well mobilization plans are carried out. In 1978, the defense establishment evaluated its post-Vietnam mobilization plans during an exercise called "Nifty Nugget." This exercise considered those actions necessary to support the preparation, deployment and sustainment of military forces in a large scale conventional war and underscored concerns that there were inaccuracies, inflexibility and a lack of coordination in the mobilization process.¹ Since that time, several mobilization exercises have been conducted to evaluate how well improvements in our mobilization plans and procedures have enhanced our ability to go to war.

Other assessments as a result of "Nifty Nugget" recognized that the successful mobilization and deployment of forces is contingent in large measure upon the effectiveness of manpower and logistics systems.² Since then, much has been done to man combat ready, well-trained and deployable forces. Similarly, peacetime equipping initiatives have improved materiel readiness throughout the force. The focus here is to look at a logistics subsystem to determine how well it can meet the expectations associated with the expeditious distribution/redistribution of equipment to a deploying force in a crisis.

Mobilization under any scenario or crisis is a complex process. Consequently, successive mobilization exercises have focused on many of the subsystems that must be integrated to ensure that the nation meets its global commitments. Last year, the Army took an in-depth look at one of its mobilization subsystems, the mobilization equipment redistribution system (MOBERS) during an annual REFORGER (return of forces to Germany) exercise. Although the results of this evaluation reflected some qualitative improvements in both planning and executing the equipping process, a few challenges still remain.

MOBERS is the subsystem that is used by the Army for managing the equipping process during a crisis that requires forces to mobilize and deploy. MOBERS plans are developed to identify the means and the priority in which major items of equipment will be provided to deploying units as specified by a scenario or an operations plan (OPLAN). By design, MOBERS uses two automated systems to effect equipment distribution or redistribution planning and execution. Through the Logistics Data Network (LOGNET), an operational prototype of the worldwide military command and control system (WWMCCS), MOBERS plans are developed using several logistics data bases which permit the centralized planning for equipping deploying units while they are still at the installation or mobilization station. The centralized planning process takes into account available resources in the continental U S (CONUS) both at the wholesale

and unit levels and projects them for fill of shortages in deploying units. Every effort is made to minimize turbulence, transportation and other needs by initially projecting available resources to fill unit requirements locally.

The MOBERS plan is provided to Forces Command (FORSCOM) and to other major commands (MACOMs) as appropriate for execution. However, FORSCOM has a significant responsibility to equip deploying units since it is the Executive Agent for mobilizing and deploying CONUS forces. Through the use of the Developmental Army Readiness and Mobilization System (DARMS), it is able to carry out the decentralized execution of a MOBERS plan. Since execution is accomplished at installations or mobilization stations, plans have to be flexible to allow for changing needs in a fast-paced environment. Moreover, the Army Materiel Command (AMC) plays a vital role by assisting in the execution process. First, it ensures the rapid movement of equipment from the wholesale system to deploying units. Second, it operates and manages the continuing balance system-expanded (CBS-X) program that contains asset balance data which is most useful for planning during mobilization. Because of the capabilities of CBS-X, data collected from mobilization stations or installations on the execution of a MOBERS plan can be provided to assist logistics planners.

The wartime asset redistribution system used prior to the establishment of MOBERS was called the mobilization asset planning system (MAPS). This system did not provide the degree

of planning necessary to ensure that available resources were provided to deploying forces from all potential CONUS sources. Consequently, MOBERS was developed on LOGNET to ensure that the redistribution of available resources could be accomplished without constraining deployment schedules. Procedures for equipping forces in a crisis have been evaluated during several mobilization exercises resulting in improved concepts for executing MOBERS plans without hands on experience.

Proud Scout was the recent mobilization exercise involving REFORGER units in a test of MOBERS at Fort Hood and Fort Carson 9 - 22 September 1987.³ This exercise was chosen to determine FORSCOM'S ability to execute MOBERS using a scenario whereby the actual redistribution of equipment left behind by deploying units would be transferred to potential wartime claimants. Moreover, the Army's leadership recognized how critical MOBERS is to the mobilization process and directed that the test be done. The exercise provided an opportunity to validate the MOBERS process using POMCUS units' residual equipment (PURE) as well as other assets that were available to fill shortages in deploying units. At Fort Hood, concurrent evaluations were made of mobilization plans and other logistics functions such as transportation, maintenance and manpower needed to support the equipment redistribution mission. The test at Fort Carson was administrative and did not involve the level of effort that was required at Fort Hood. Although both sites accomplished their

objectives, there were some concerns about the adequacy of the MOBERS process and its usefulness in meeting the equipping challenges during mobilization.

Since execution of a MOBERS plan takes place at the installation level, it must be timely and accurate. During the test at Fort Hood, MOBERS data was found to be inconsistent with data already in DARMS.⁴ MOBERS must reflect current data and it is imperative that inaccuracies in disparate data bases used to develop redistribution plans be resolved immediately. At Headquarters Department of the Army, the Office of the Deputy Chief Staff for Logistics (ODCSLOG) is already working on this issue and will use the requisition validation (RECVAL) data base to build MOBERS plans.⁵ RECVAL contains current asset balances, peacetime authorizations and wartime requirements data. Although it is used as the peacetime equipment planning and execution document, RECVAL is ideally suited for MOBERS since all data would be consistent. Further, ODCSLOG will produce the POMCUS equipment requirement list (PERL) report which reflects the assets POMCUS units should deploy with to fill shortages in their prepositioned equipment sets. The PERL report and RECVAL will now be produced by the same agency using a single data base to preclude the inconsistencies that are pervasive in the existing data bases used to build and execute MOBERS plans. There are other improvements requiring additional resources in order to execute MOBERS plans. It may be necessary to acquire

more personnel to manage and process PURE during mobilization because of the potential for surge in work load. Additional automatic data processing (ADP) support at the installation or mobilization station may be required to maintain visibility over repair parts, asset redistribution and maintenance work load. Under an actual mobilization, transportation requirements are expected to be much higher than those experienced during the test. Since redistribution is driven in large measure by priority of need, resource availability and deployment schedules, equipment donors may not be at the mobilization station where equipment is needed. Therefore, careful planning for transportation resources required to move equipment must be an integral part of the MOBERS execution process. In essence, a work loading model for processing MOBERS plans could be developed for mobilization stations to help them execute those plans.

Two of the major deficiencies noted in the mobilization process during "Nifty Nugget" were inaccuracy and inflexibility. As the test at Fort Hood has shown, MOBERS can become a viable tool for equipping deploying forces with some improvements in the data and ADP systems used to prepare and execute those plans. By using a single agency to extract data to be used in the development of MOBERS plans, ODCSLOG and appropriate MACOMS will be able to adequately resource deploying units in a crisis.

ENDNOTES

1. Peter Grier, "The Lessons of 'Nifty Nugget,'" Military Logistics Forum, Vol 3, (June 1987), p. 42.
2. Office of the Secretary of Defense, An Evaluation Report of Mobilization and Deployment Capability Based on Exercise Nifty Nugget-78 and REX-78, (30 June 1980), pp. 16-22.
3. Interview with Mr. Jack Kern, GM-14, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Department of the Army, 18 and 25 March 1988.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.

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