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Lessons in Unit Cohesion:

from the United States Army's COHORT
(Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training)
Experiment of 1981 to 1995

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US Army Command and General Staff College Press
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The cover photo is courtesy of wikimedia commons. A soldier guards his tank during REFORGER 85 DF-ST-13234.jpg. Private First Class (PFC) Jose Ledoux-Garcia of Company C, 5th Battalion, 77th Armor, guards his M60A3 main battle tank during Central Guardian, a phase of Exercise REFORGER '85. He is armed with an M3A1 .45-caliber submarine gun. Base: Giessen, Country: West Germany (FRG). DF-ST-85-13234, 22 January 1985, Source: {{NARA|6390253}} |Date=January 1985 |Author=TSGT Boyd Belcher |Permission=Released to Public, PD-US-Army}. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:A_soldier_guards_his_tank_during_REFORGER_85_DF-ST-85-13234.jpg

Lessons in Unit Cohesion: from the United States Army's COHORT (Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training) Experiment of 1981 to 1995

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Program Description

The Command and General Staff College (CGSC) Art of War Scholar's program offers a small number of competitively select officers a chance to participate in intensive, graduate level seminars and in-depth personal research that focuses primarily on understanding strategy and operational art through modern military history. The purpose of the program is to produce officers with critical thinking skills and an advanced understanding of the art of warfighting. These abilities sare honed by reading, researching, thinking, debating and writing about complex issues across the full spectrum of modern warfare, from the lessons of the Russo-Japanese war through continuing operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, while looking ahead to the twenty-first century evolution of the art of war.

Abstract

In 1981, the United States Army experimented with its personnel management philosophy to examine the benefits of a unit-based system over an individual system. This study looks at the historical background of personnel management from World War II to the Vietnam War. It tells the story of COHORT until its end in 1995. The US Army believed cohesion would increase combat effectiveness. The COHORT system aimed to build cohesion through stability at the company and battalion levels on a three-year life cycle. COHORT built horizontally-cohesive units, but failed to stabilize and educate NCO and officer leaders which prevented full success. Additionally, the US Army did not fully address cultural issues related to individual vs. unit needs, the promotion system, readiness reporting, and the effects of the post-Cold War drawdown in strength. This study shows personnel stability is a prerequisite to cohesion and unit effectiveness. Turbulence prevents training and leadership from building combat readiness to its full potential. The personnel system should focus on building unit cohesion through personnel stability, and account for individual concerns whenever possible, in both peace and war.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

> Never again, except in the direst emergency, should replacements—unknown, lonely, frightened—ever be fed singly into units, only a few hours later to find themselves facing the enemy. This one act in a very short time can damage seriously, if not undo or completely destroy, all of the previous training and preparation, no matter how well it was accomplished.
>
> —Department of the Army Replacement Board, *World War II Replacement System*

The US Army's personnel management systems have been in use since the American Revolution and have switched between unit-based and individual-based approaches. The 40th Army Chief of Staff, General James C. McConville said, "US Army leaders have a sacred obligation to build cohesive teams that are highly trained, disciplined, and fit that can win on any battlefield."[1] This manuscript will address the organizational decisions that the US Army has made in the past and also offer lessons from the most massive personnel management experiment after World War II, project Cohesion, Operational Readiness, and Training (COHORT). Determining which personnel management system to use is one of the most important strategic decisions made before a war begins, primarily because of its implications for cohesion and combat effectiveness. While the individual personnel management system has worked for the US Army in the past, perhaps it is time to move onto a new system that takes advantage of historical lessons.

For most of the US Army's history, a unit-based replacement system was used, one in which commanders recruited soldiers for a regiment. The regiment equipped them, trained them together, and they fought together as a unit until reduced to so few men that the regiment required amalgamation with another regiment. The unit-focused approach occurred in both long wars of the 18th and 19th centuries: the American Revolution and the Civil War. The other conflicts, such as the War of 1812, were of lesser duration or intensity so that units did not undergo such a process of near-destruction and amalgamation. Some of the advantages of this system include strong cohesion and *esprit de corps.* Because soldiers and most leaders remained together for extended periods, training focused on building proficiency rather than having to start from the beginning as new soldiers arrived. Each light cavalry regiment from the American Revolu-

tion was amalgamated at least once because of casualties. Many regiments in the Civil War became so depleted they mustered only the strength of companies. A famous example was the destruction of the famed Stonewall Brigade during the Battle of Spotsylvania. From May 1864 until the end of the war, the formerly proud brigade of five regiments served only as a single, small regiment. The downside of this approach is the need to continually raise new units. The positive aspect is that these rump units remained cohesive and performed well when amalgamated into new regiments. The US Army continued with this unit-based system throughout the remainder of the 19th Century until World War I.

During World War I, the US Army created divisions as units, but could not transport enough units to the front to allow a rotational system. Individual replacements flowed into units during the fighting, often with little training. Active combat for most units lasted only a few short months, so the system did not generate a great deal of scrutiny. One of the principles behind the decision-making, to shift from a unit-based system to an individual one, was the development of the industrial-age idea about production and the movement of individuals, a persepctive that treats people more as cogs in a vast machine rather than valuable in their own right.[2] The United States Army of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam continued the practice of delivering soldier replacements to combat units in varying degrees. This structure developed the US Army's leaders of the late 1970s and 1980s. Their service as junior officers during those conflicts shaped their ideas of how to organize units for combat.

The 1970s proved a watershed for the development of personnel management in the US Army. The US Army of the 1970s was in turmoil following the end of the Vietnam War. US Army leadership identified issues with the individual replacement system exemplified by the one-year rotations of soldiers into and out of Vietnam. At the same time, units such as the 23rd Infantry Division remained in-country. Additionally, the shock of combat in Israel's Yom Kippur War of 1973 showed the brutal nature of modern, mechanized combat. In some cases, units lost soldiers to battle fatigue in less than 24 hours. The US Army wanted to learn from the lessons of Vietnam and the Yom Kippur War and then complete an overhaul of its doctrine, personnel management system, and organization for combat.

As a result of these lessons, the US Army developed the COHORT system, also known as the unit manning system, in 1981. The unit manning system had two purposes: "The first was to create military units characterized by high levels of trust, self-confidence, competence, and cohesion that would enable them to survive the first battle. The second purpose was to increase training proficiency by reducing personnel turbulence

and, thereby, facilitate cumulative rather than repetitive training cycles."[3] Rather than send replacement soldiers to a unit during the year or training cycle, all the soldiers in a company began their US Army experience in the same basic training class. Additionally, they remained in the same squads throughout their first enlistment or approximately for three years. By 1985, the first division designated as a COHORT unit was the 7th Infantry Division, and the US Army planned on expanding COHORT to every unit by the late 1980s. To evaluate the program's success, Walter Reed Military Hospital conducted a series of studies on the unit. After the end of the Cold War and despite early signs of success, the US Army returned to the individual model of personnel management. Many units today regularly experience personnel turbulence. Some vestiges of COHORT remain, including brigade rotations to Afghanistan and Iraq. Today, the US Army is developing a sustained readiness model that attempts to keep units at a high level of readiness while experiencing personnel turnover throughout the year. As this manuscript will show, turbulence inhibits both cohesion and readiness.

The Problem Statement

Given the difficulty of effectively maintaining unit strength while ensuring cohesion, the history of the COHORT system provides the US Army with useful lessons. The Army's repeated attempts at a unit-based system indicate the limitations inherent in an individual replacement scheme. The constraints imposed by the operating environment have prevented a successful switch to the unit-based personnel system.

The Research Question

How can the US Army use the lessons from the COHORT system to improve cohesion, operational readiness, and training today? The US Army's current individual manning system neither promotes cohesion sufficiently nor simplifies training management, especially in comparison to unit manning. A strictly unit-based system has several downsides, such as the necessity of creating more units to supply a backfill during combat.

This study is both timely and relevant because the US Army is now in a period of transition as it moves from counterinsurgency operations to a focus on large-scale combat. The army recently switched from the US Army force generation model to the sustainable readiness model of readiness management and is looking for ways to improve the overall readiness of the force to meet the goals established by the Chief of Staff of the US Army.

Mauscript

This manuscript will advise senior leaders on which personnel management system the US Army should adopt and further provide a historical basis for the recommendation. In the end, the author hopes the US Army will change how it looks at its personnel management system and place the needs of the unit above individual concerns. Personnel management is too important to be left only to the personnel managers and requires a holistic process involving all leaders to create the best system for the US Army. The US Army should use the lessons of COHORT to shift its emphasis to units over individuals. This manuscript recommends that the US Army make stability the rule, and turbulence the exception.

The COHORT system provides potential solutions for the US Army today in terms of how to establish a manning system that supports unit cohesion and improves the overall readiness and training level of units. Stabilizing soldiers by only moving them and their leaders at designated intervals increases the cohesion, readiness, ability to train, and the effectiveness of units. British Army Lieutenant Colonel Jeremy J. J. Phipps wrote in his pamphlet, "Unit Cohesion: A Prerequisite for Combat Effectiveness;"

> Combat will be psychologically terrifying. Strong group loyalty and discipline will enable a combat unit to stay and fight together effectively. Group loyalty and discipline occur when soldiers have worked together for long periods and have faith in the proven ability of their leaders. The individual replacement system currently used by the US Army to place people in job[s] on an individual basis tends to destroy unit stability and cohesiveness. The intangible benefits to be gained are long-term and difficult to measure.[4]

Personnel stability for a defined period by unit type and projected missions improves the ability of units to focus on personal readiness, equipment fielding, individual training, and collective exercises at set periods rather than balancing them simultaneously. There is an important cultural dimension to personnel management systems. The treatment of individuals as interchangeable parts is antithetical to our foundation as a democratic society based on the self-worth of all individuals. As described by Lieutenant Colonel Joseph W. Trez, "Invariably, our American desire for efficiency, our sense of fairness and equity to the individual as part of our American ethic, and the vast personnel resources available to our country has consistently driven us to use the Individual Replacement System."[5] Next is key definitions.

Key Definitions

Armies organize forces according to two different systems when constructing and replenishing units. An individual system focuses on efficiency, ease of management, and the percentage of personnel present in a unit at a given time. Soldiers move from unit to unit according to policy and preference, and units receive soldiers when there are shortfalls between their authorized number and the actual number of soldiers present. Some positive features of the individual replacement system include ease of administration and efficiency. If turbulence is too high, it reduces combat effectiveness, limits cohesion, exacerbates combat trauma, and emphasizes quantity over quality.

A unit-based system differs in that soldiers are assigned for a more extended period of service and do not typically move, especially during their first enlistment. Some complications include that this system is more difficult to administer, is more inefficient because of varying individual timelines despite stability, and it is not as easy to scale for large scale combat once casualties accumulate. For example, one inefficiency is in order to fill all positions in the US Army, there should be more "spaces" than "faces." It provides soldiers with a more cohesive environment, establishes stability and predictability for home life, keeps them together for numerous training exercises, and helps prevent post-traumatic stress. There are many examples in which outnumbered but better led and more cohesive units have won against the odds. The individual experience in Vietnam led to the willingness of the US Army to create the COHORT experiment.

COHORT was the most common term for the experiment, but it was also called at various times and interchangeably, the new manning system and the unit manning system. All three terms will be used interchangeably throughout this manuscript, with an emphasis on COHORT. Another change implemented by the US Army at the same time as COHORT was the creation of the US Army regimental system. The total number of regiments active in the US Army decreased, and there was an association between battalions stationed in the continental United States and those outside the continental United States. The idea was soldiers would gain more *esprit de corps* by a long-term association with a single regiment. The regimental system would reduce the stress of changing duty stations because soldiers rotate between posts in Germany and Texas, for example. COHORT and the US Army regimental system were the primary building blocks of the new manning system/unit manning system.

Scope

The scope of this manuscript is the history of the personnel system used in the US Army from World War II to the end of the COHORT experiment in 1995. It examines the unit and individual systems and how they affected cohesion and combat effectiveness. Additionally, chapter 2 will show that cohesion applies at the company-level and below; while the levels above company have a profound influence on unit cohesion, too.

Limitations

The most significant limitation of this study is that it ends primarily with the end of COHORT in 1995. Although the US Army has used many aspects of COHORT in the years since its end, this manuscript does not purport to analyze topics such as the rotational system used in Iraq and Afghanistan. Nor does it attempt to quantify the unit status report or conduct a quantitative analysis of individual versus unit-based systems.

Structure of the Study

This manuscript has seven chapters. The second chapter examines morale, cohesion, and *esprit de corps* and their relationship with combat effectiveness. After all, if they do not matter and do not improve combat effectiveness, why would the US Army devote so much time and effort into building them? It examines multiple authors' views on cohesion, a formula for building it, and cohesion's dark side. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of operational readiness and training.

The COHORT experiment began in 1981, but its roots extend much further back. Therefore, the third chapter looks at the development of the United States Army's manning system from World War II to the end of the Korean War. It traces the personnel decisions that came to haunt the US Army in Vietnam which set the conditions for the COHORT experiment.

The fourth chapter focuses on the Vietnam War and how the United States Army and Marine Corps approached personnel management. It shows the degradation of quality from the beginning of the conflict to the end, and how that led to a desire for reform in the late 1970s and 1980s.

The fifth chapter traces the COHORT program from its infancy through its large-scale expansion in the mid-1980s. It discusses the administration of the new manning system, how the program grew over the years, examines a typical training path, and concludes with the drawdown and its impact on COHORT. The end of the Cold War resulted in peace as well as a period of extreme personnel turbulence during the drawdown years.

The sixth chapter examines the research which was conducted by both individuals and by Walter Reed Military Hospital that tried to determine the effectiveness of the COHORT experiment. It looks at both positive and negative aspects of COHORT to deduce the primary lessons the US Army could use today.

The seventh and closing chapter provides conclusions and recommendations for the modern US Army based on the lessons of the COHORT experiment. It recommends actions for division-level leaders and below as well as US Army-wide changes. In general, the US Army should take measures to reduce turbulence and place unit effectiveness above individual concerns.

Notes

1. “40th Chief of Staff of the Army Initial Message to the Army Team,” attachment to email message, received by author 9 August 2019.

2. Peter S. Kindsvatter, *American Soldier: Ground Combat in the World Wars, Korea, and Vietnam* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 100.

3. David H. Marlowe, *Unit Manning System Field Evaluation: Technical Reports No. 1* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, November 1985), II-2. Hereafter cited as Marlowe, WRAIR 1.

4. Jeremy J. J. Phipps, “Unit Cohesion: A Prerequisite for Combat Effectiveness” (National Defense University, Washington, DC, 1982), vii.

5. Joseph W. Trez, “Manning the Army in Peace and War” (USAWC Military Studies Program Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1990), 20.

Chapter 2
Morale, Cohesion, and *Esprit de Corps*

> For centuries armies throughout the world have studied the art of fighting wars…but certain principles consistently come to the front. One of these is that men who go into battle and fight as cohesive teams always produce better results.
>
> — Lieutenant Colonel James G. Pulley"The COHORT System–Is It Meeting the Army's Needs

Before discussing the COHORT experiment and the situation that the US Army faced after Vietnam, it is necessary to distinguish between morale, cohesion, and *esprit de corps.* This chapter will define each, examine their interrelationships, discuss the role of unit commanders, and relay their importance in combat. Cohesion is not a new topic, and many of the most successful armies have created policies to support cohesive teams. What is it, how is it created, and are there any downsides?

Defining Cohesion, Morale, and *Esprit de Corps*

What is cohesion, and why is it important? United States Army Doctrine Publication 6-22, *Army Leadership,* defines cohesion as "the bond of relationships and motivational factors that help a team stay together. A cohesive team puts aside its differences and chooses to work together. Cohesive teams achieve greater success, feeding a sense of greater team competence, commitment, and confidence. These factors increase cohesion and contribute to the willingness to undertake new challenges and overcome hardship."[1] The authors state, "Leaders build cohesive teams by setting and maintaining a collective mindset among team members and enabling successful performance."[2] The first part of the definition discusses relationships. While combat decreases the amount of time necessary to build relationships, time is perhaps the most crucial component of establishing healthy relationships. Combat reduces the time to build bonds for two reasons. First, life and death situations make bonding necessary because trust is essential to survival in battle. Second, trust is based on competence, and in peacetime, competence is proven during training. In wartime units are continually performing their mission. General Maxwell Thurman said, "Unit integrity, particularly at small group level, is absolutely crucial and essential" because long service together improves unit effectiveness.[3] Individuals will understand one another better, trust one another more, and anticipate decisions and behaviors.

Army Doctrine Publication 6-22's definition misses the vital difference between vertical and horizontal cohesion. Horizontal cohesion is the bonds built between peers. "Horizontal cohesion develops from shared experiences and interdependence in achieving commonly valued goals."[4] Soldiers in a squad or platoon demonstrate horizontal cohesion by holding one another to a higher standard, acting out of initiative, and sticking together during tough times. "Vertical cohesion is a product of interactions between subordinates and their leaders." It has a considerable role in the performance of organizations.[5] Vertical cohesion develops when leaders demonstrate tactical competence, build a sense of purpose, display commitment to one another, and value their subordinates. As this study will show, COHORT focused narrowly on horizontal cohesion.

Another definition of cohesion and its importance comes from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and their studies of the COHORT experiment by the Department of Military Psychiatry:

> Cohesion is the product of bonding soldiers have with each other, with their leaders, and to their unit. Walter Reed Army Institute research and studies by the Israeli Defense Force, have demonstrated that members of cohesive units are resistant to combat stress breakdown. Six years of research by the Department of Military Psychiatry at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research has confirmed findings by military historians that soldiers who develop cohesive bonds with one another (horizontal cohesion) feel supported and collectively stronger, and are protected against feelings of isolation on the battlefield. Bonding with leaders and the institution confers identity, security, purpose, feelings of personal significance, and a sense of unit strength and competency (vertical cohesion). Along with experienced leaders and accretive training, cohesion is the foundation of soldier power—the source of light infantry combat potential and a prerequisite for developing a capability for independent small unit operations.[6]

Cohesion is not a simple subject. It includes the interplay of relationships between peers, superiors and subordinates, the dynamics and bonding of groups, and "a set of perceptions of the skills and abilities of oneself and others."[7] Also, building cohesion requires both an element of emotion and of task orientation.

Before continuing to discuss cohesion, it is best to understand morale and *esprit de corps.* Morale is primarily at the individual level, and *esprit de corps* exists mostly at battalion and higher levels. The critical differ-

ence between *esprit de corps* and cohesion is that members of cohesive units can personally know one another. Knowing one's fellow soldiers is one of the primary reasons why men fight for one another. Therefore, cohesion occurs at company-level and below.

Additionally, cohesion occurs within primary groups, and *esprit de corps* occurs within secondary groups. Army Doctrine Publication 6-22 states that *esprit* encompasses cohesive teams.[8] It is simply impossible to have a cohesive division of 20,000 people, but it can have *esprit.* Staffs and unit commanders can be cohesive, but only as a part of the larger organization. One of the primary methods that units can build *esprit* is through unit history.

Unit associations bond soldiers and families together to support one another both during and after combat.[9] The US Army regimental system, a sub-component of the unit manning system, attempted to build *esprit* by limiting the number of regiments within the US Army. Soldiers could, in theory, move from post to post but would remain in the same regiment. Morale is related but undoubtedly different from cohesion. Soldiers will fight with low morale, but it requires cohesion to keep them together long enough to rebuild individual morale: morale ebbs and flows. The US Army decided to focus COHORT on cohesion because it has the most significant impact on combat effectiveness.

Du Picq and S. L. A. Marshall on Cohesion

Earlier authors identified cohesion's importance. Two stand out, Ardant du Picq and S. L. A. Marshall. Du Picq was a French regimental commander during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to 1871. He wrote *Battle Studies* before his death in that conflict. Du Picq's most well-known quote also succinctly summarizes the importance of cohesion. He said, "Four brave men who do not know each other will not dare to attack a lion. Four less brave, but knowing each other well, sure of their reliability and consequently of mutual aid, will attack resolutely."[10] In describing how to ensure men act in concert when in the face of danger, du Picq said:

> A wise organization insures [*sic*] that the personnel of combat groups changes as little as possible, so that comrades in peace time maneuvers shall be comrades in war. From living together, and obeying the same chiefs, from commanding the same men, from sharing fatigue and rest, from cooperation among men who quickly understand each other in the execution of warlike movements, may be bred brotherhood, professional knowledge, sentiment, above all unity. The duty of obedience, the right of

> imposing discipline and the impossibility of escaping from it, would naturally follow.[11]

Modern combat within the past 150 years has required immense discipline because of terror during the fighting and the battlefield's expansion spatially. "But [discipline] depends also on surveillance, the mutual supervision of groups of men who know each other well."[12] Discipline is required to fight effectively in situations that require space between individuals. Du Picq further said, "To-day [*sic*] fighting is done over immense spaces, along thinly drawn out lines broken…by the accidents and obstacles of the terrain."[13] Men fighting in compact bodies actually required less discipline than dispersed units, even though harsh measures were commonplace. This is shown by the choice of only highly disciplined soldiers as skirmishers and light infantry in the late 18th and early 19th centuries because of a lack of direct supervision by their officers. "Combat requires to-day [*sic*], in order to give the best results, a moral cohesion, a unity more binding than at any other time."[14] Units fighting in close order could rely on physical cohesion rather than the moral cohesion mentioned by du Picq. Today, soldiers must fight at even greater distances from their fellows than du Picq experienced over 150 years ago; therefore, cohesion is more important than ever.

Du Picq further explains that discipline is a means of enforcing cooperation and teamwork in combat. He wrote:

> But in any body of troops, in front of the enemy, every one [*sic*] understands that the task is not the work of one alone, that to complete it requires team work. With his comrades in danger brought together under unknown leaders, he feels the lack of union, and asks himself if he can count on them. A thought of mistrust leads to hesitation. Unity and confidence cannot be improvised. They alone can create that mutual trust, that feeling of force which gives courage and daring. Courage, that is the temporary domination of will over instinct, brings about victory.[15]

Discipline is the foundation of teamwork, as described above. Rather than occurring naturally and in a short time, "Discipline cannot be secured or created in a day."[16] In the aftermath of the Civil War, du Picq wrote, "The Americans have shown us what happens in modern battle to large armies without cohesion. With them the lack of discipline and organization has had the inevitable result."[17] The primary lesson taken from du Picq is the importance of stability in building cohesion in combat units.

Marshall was the US Army's chief historian in the Pacific in 1943 and Europe in 1945. During World War II, he pioneered methods for

post-combat interviews conducted at the company-level as soon as possible upon completion of the battle. Marshall's overall conclusions and recommendations in *Men Against Fire* still resonate and provide lessons to combat leaders today despite the fabrication of some findings.[18] He said, "Only when the human, rather than the material, aspects of the operation are put uppermost can tactical bodies be conditioned to make the most of their potential unity" because "it is an anachronism to place the emphasis…on weapons and ground rather than on the nature of man."[19] Marshall's reflections on the nature of man and how to motivate him in combat demonstrate the importance of placing psychological and sociological concerns at the forefront of close combat. He said the physical, mental, and spiritual proximity of comrades provides soldiers with the willingness to keep fighting in modern warfare and prevent them from becoming "a mental case."[20] Marshall wrote the "fighting man…is sustained by his fellows primarily and by his weapons secondarily. Having to make a choice in the face of the enemy, he would rather be unarmed and with comrades around him than altogether alone, though possessing the most perfect of quick-firing weapons."[21] Marshall knew that the most essential element in creating capable combat units was the emphasis on moral rather than physical concerns.

Marshall discusses at length what he calls tactical cohesion, which, according to him, is the communication that occurs between soldiers in combat. He discusses the need to speak and communicate vertically and horizontally to ensure that no soldier feels alone, and no elements face the threat of the enemy without support. One of the essential aspects of learning to cooperate in battle is the willingness to talk to others. He said part of training should include the following speech:

> When you prepare to fight, you must prepare to talk. You must learn that speech will help you save your situation. You are a tactical unit and you must think of yourself that way. Don't try to win a war or capture a hill all by yourself. Your action alone means nothing, or at best, very little. It is when you talk to others and they join with you that your action becomes important.[22]

Although the title of that chapter is "Tactical Cohesion," it really discusses how cohesive units should act in combat.

To build tactical cohesion, Marshall writes, "Battle morale comes from unity more than from all else and it will rise or fall in the measure that unity is felt by the ranks."[23] Much of what he wrote describes the need for commanders and leaders to ensure there is sufficient unity in the ranks

to prevent man's herd instincts from taking over and leading to panic. He said:

> All other things being equal, the tactical unity of men working together in combat will be in the ratio of their knowledge and sympathetic understanding of each other. Lacking these things, though they be well-trained soldiers, they are not likely to adhere unless danger has so surrounded them that they must do so in order to survive, and even then, quick surrender is the more probable result. But…it should be noted…that it is honored by the personnel system of our own US Army more in the breach than in the observance. We have never had any continuity of policy which is based upon the simple idea that *esprit de corps* depends upon comradeship.[24]

Esprit de corps, according to Marshall, is directly linked to the combat performance of tactical units. He also noted many examples of leaders failing when they led soldiers whom they did not know.[25] Still, they are unwilling "to risk danger on behalf of men with whom he has no social identity" because they do not have a reputation to lose. Men who know each other well are most likely to be effective in battle.[26] Marshall condemns the policies of the US Army when it comes to the development of cohesion as treating manpower "as if it were motor lubricants or sacks of potatoes."[27] He also describes the US Army's willingness to change names and traditions as well as move units across the world without regard to the effects the changes have on the humans that occupy those units. Finally, Marshall concludes with a discussion about the American tendency to use machines and firepower to conserve human life. If the US Army is willing to spend so much money on materiel to save lives, why do its personnel policies fail to reflect a similar willingness to conserve lives by promoting cohesion? It follows that men are willing to fight for others they know.

Other Authors on Cohesion

The psychologist Jonathan Shay illustrates other reasons why cohesion is vital in his books *Achilles in Vietnam* and *Odysseus in America.* After treating dozens of Vietnam veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder, Shay concluded a major contributing factor was the individual system of replacements during the Vietnam War. He compares their experiences with Achilles' combat in *The Iliad* and Odysseus' return home in *The Odyssey.* Shay discusses the importance of cohesion, leadership, and training as combat multipliers that also reduce both physical and psychiatric casualties during wars.[28] He says, "Not only do cohesive units fight more

successfully, thus reducing *all* casualties, but also they directly protect their members from psychological injury."[29] Clearly, cohesion is essential.

Soldiers should trust their superiors to use their power wisely and do "what's right." He says, *"The trustworthy structure of 'what's right' in a military organization—horizontally with peers, vertically in the chain of command, and personally in the training and equipment the military service has supplied—is what allows that armed services force and cunning strategy to be put into effect against the enemy."*[30] A significant part of earning that trust comes from deploying soldiers to combat as a unit equipped well with excellent training. Another aspect is the role leadership plays in determining unit success. In the "Impact of Cohesion on Platoon Performance at JRTC," Guy L. Siebold and Dennis R. Kelly found "Bonding among leaders, soldiers, and between leaders and their soldiers was a powerful component of cohesion correlated significantly with performance."[31] Leader bonding had the most considerable correlation to cohesion and performance, and soldiers bond more often with competent leaders.

In addition to bonding, Shay recommends that soldiers deploy to combat as a unit. The bonds created before the battle will unite soldiers and allow them to decompress afterward, which is not possible with an individual system. "Social cohesion—from having trained together and traveled to the war zone together—is what keeps people physically alive and mentally sane when faced with a human enemy who is *really trying to kill them.* Only the support of others makes it possible to face armed killers."[32] Social ties and unit esteem among soldiers protect soldier's psyches. Shay says American studies fail to account for community factors because "their individual-focused culture blinds them to community phenomena."[33] Among his many recommendations, Shay states that stability should be the rule and turbulence the exception, especially among leaders. People should work together for more extended periods, and disruption of formations, both internally and externally, should be minimal. He says, "The only sure way to create trust among a group of unrelated strangers is time doing demanding, difficult, worthwhile, and sometimes dangerous things—together."[34] Another way of thinking about cohesive units is that they are composed of soldiers unwilling to let each other down. They act in a manner that may not be best for their self-interest, but it benefits the entire group. Finally, Shay posits that creating cohesive units is imperative because policymakers "have an ethical duty not to make personnel policies" that fail to support cohesion.[35]

Major Dale B. Flora wrote "Battlefield Stress: Causes, Cures, and Countermeasures" while a student at the Command and General Staff Col-

lege. He found "psychiatric casualties are most likely to occur in units with low cohesion which are in a high threat situation. Unit cohesion is the single most important element in reducing the effects of battlefield stress."[36] Next is other studies.

Other studies, particularly by the RAND Corporation, have distinguished between task cohesion and social cohesion. They determined task cohesion is more important than social cohesion in determining unit effectiveness.[37] As shown previously, social cohesion does not necessarily require "all the members of a unit to like each other and respect other's personal beliefs."[38] The evidence is much more clear that primary group association is a prerequisite to effectiveness, not just task cohesion.[39] Horizontal, vertical, social, and task cohesion are nuances in understanding cohesion. Naturally, life and death situations will create conditions different than a peacetime setting in which dependence and trust go beyond friendship.

Additionally, soldiers do not get to pick their coworkers, thus leading soldiers to a willingness to work with men and women they otherwise would avoid. Cohesion then is the invisible glue that causes some units to stick together in the worst of circumstances and is most notable when it is absent. Cohesion is clearly invaluable to military organizations, but how is it created and sustained in combat?

Building Cohesion

How then do units build cohesion? Lieutenant Colonel Frederick G. Wong supplied a formula for building cohesion: "stability, stress, and success."[40] Personnel stability is a prerequisite to building cohesion because human bonds and trust take time to develop. Stability should be measured both internally and externally. The COHORT experiment's focus was external stability that limited the flow of personnel into and out of a unit at the battalion or company-level. While ostensibly providing stability, if commanders continue to shuffle personnel from one job to another in the same battalion, the effect is mostly the same as bringing in new soldiers. Cohesive units can adjust to these changes better than non-cohesive units, but too many changes will destroy that cohesion. This internal stability is just as critical as external stability. For example, moving a platoon leader in one company to be the executive officer of another creates at least two personnel gaps that require the rebuilding of relationships. A study by Monte D. Smith and Joseph D. Hagman called "Personnel Stabilization and Cohesion: A Summary of Key Literature Findings" supports Wong's conclusions by offering a similar process to build cohesion.[41] Once units have stable rosters, they can take the next step to build cohesion.

Stress is a vital part of building cohesion because it helps solidify the long-standing bonds created by stability. Wong says, "In other words, leaders should devise their training programs to provide their soldiers increasingly tough and challenging experiences that approach as near as possible the conditions they will face under combat together."[42] Men and women who rise to the occasion during training learn to depend on one another and understand how people will react. There are two types of stress: eustress and distress. Eustress is generally positive, and distress is usually harmful. Both are necessary for units to reach their highest levels of potential. For example, a training rotation to the National Training Center will provide a great deal of distress due to its rigor. Leaders should encourage eustress by giving soldiers opportunities to rest when they can and expressing empathy. As a result, after finishing the rotation, the company will be at peak performance. "The US Army Research Branch in World War II recognized that the 'intangibles,' e.g. fairness, being told why a task is necessary, and officer interest in the personal welfare of his men, were more important in establishing unit morale than the 'tangibles,' e.g. food, shelter, pay, and medical care. So, this is nothing new."[43] After stressful situations, the next step is to succeed.

Cohesive units are those that have stable unit rosters, undergo stressful situations together, and succeed. "In other words, leaders should plan their training to provide for situations that result automatically in success and achievement for soldiers of primary work groups such as squads, crews, sections and platoons."[44] High performing individuals and teams have to be recognized in front of their peers and made into a positive example if leaders want to build cohesive cultures in their units. Rewards can take many forms, but the vital thing to remember is that leaders must ensure initiative, trust, and confidence are part of their unit's identity.

Does cohesion improve the combat performance of units? Yes. The results vary and require some explanation. Many factors account for unit performance, including training, quality of the leadership, and casualties. No one factor can explain performance in its entirety. Still, historical and scientific research shows the essential role of cohesion in determining unit success. Leader performance is critical as well, as demonstrated in the study by Jeffrey D. Peterson in his dissertation, "The Effect of Personnel Stability on Organizational Performance."[45] There are numerous examples of units that persisted in combat beyond a reasonable expectation that did not collapse, including the famous Band of Brothers at Bastogne. At Bastogne, units faced numerous enemy attacks and held for weeks despite horrific conditions. At least as fascinating is the collapse of specific units or the significant reduction of effectiveness with the loss of a key leader.

That being said, cohesive units are more capable of withstanding such losses.

The Dark Side of Cohesion

Cohesion does have a negative side to it. As described by Lieutenant Colonel Robert J. Rielly:

> Group cohesion can produce negative effects in three ways:
> - It forms values, attitudes, beliefs and norms that are obviously contrary to the US Army's.
> - The group's values, attitudes, beliefs and norms are close to the US Army's but not exactly what the organization wants.
> - The group's values, attitudes, beliefs and norms could change after prolonged combat or a significant emotional event.46

Nazi SS troops in World War II are an easy example of cohesion gone wild. Although they were extremely effective in battle despite immense casualties, their cohesion also enabled them to commit atrocities regularly and without remorse. Another example is when soldiers are unwilling to report on a buddy who committed a war crime. Despite the possibility of adverse effects, cohesion is still a major positive force for the military. The most crucial lesson leaders should take is that every unit has the potential to commit the next My Lai massacre, and so leader vigilance is critical.

Operational Readiness and Training

In addition to cohesion, the name COHORT includes operational readiness and training. Defining the two other terms is important because operational readiness is the ability of a unit to complete its mission in wartime. Training is important in improving combat performance. Taken as a whole, COHORT was designed to enhance all three characteristics, primarily by improving external stability. The US Army believed stability would allow a higher level of readiness across the US Army. As the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research studies would show, COHORT unit stability should have enabled companies to progress through more and more difficult training iterations rather than simply be "stuck" on more basic training because of the need to bring new soldiers up to speed. COHORT promised not only to increase cohesion but also to increase the readiness and training of the US Army.

In conclusion, cohesion differs from morale and *esprit de corps* primarily through the level—primary group versus secondary group. Cohe-

sion is essential because it builds psychological readiness in combat soldiers. The five dimensions of readiness are "horizontal cohesion, vertical cohesion, individual morale, confidence in group combat capability, and confidence in leaders."[47] Cohesive units are more effective in combat, particularly early on before casualties reduce the overall numbers of troops available, or replacements arrive and disrupt the cohesion built up over time. Units can and should build cohesion through the formula of stability, stress, and success (recognition). Cohesion can have a dark side, but the positives massively outweigh the potential negatives. Highly cohesive units are not a danger to their leaders. On the contrary, they are combat multipliers that fight more effectively and bring home more soldiers, both physically and psychologically.[48] The next chapter will discuss the US Army's experiences with the individual system in brief during World War II and Korea. Those experiences led the US Army to develop the policies used in Vietnam and ultimately resulted in the devastation of its effectiveness.

Notes

1. US Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2019), 6-13.

2. US Army, ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership,* 6-6.

3. Maxwell Thurman, "Interview by Richard H. Mackey, Sr." (Transcript, USAWC/USAMHI Senior Officer Oral History Program, US Army War College, Carlisle, PA, 1 January 1992), 291.

4. David H. Marlowe, *Unit Manning System Field Evaluation: Technical Reports No. 5* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, September 1987), 10. Hereafter cited as Marlowe, WRAIR 5.

5. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 10.

6. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 10.

7. Department of Military Psychiatry, *Evaluating the Unit Manning System: Lessons Learned to Date* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, October 1987), 3.

8. US Army, ADP 6-22, *Army Leadership,* 1-6.

9. Jonathan Shay, *Odysseus in America: Combat Trauma and the Trials of Homecoming* (New York: Scribner, 2002), 221.

10. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies: Ancient and Modern Battle, trans. John N. Greely and Robert C. Cotton* (Harrisburg, PA: The Military Service Publishing Company, 1958), 110.

11. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 96.

12. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 96.

13. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 98.

14. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 102.

15. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 97.

16. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 111.

17. Ardant du Picq, *Battle Studies,* 111-112.

18. The primary conclusion since debunked is his assertion that only 25 percent of combat soldiers fired their weapons in combat. Despite this false assertion, Marshall's *Men Against Fire* still has many conclusions and recommendations about men in combat that justify its use in this manuscript.

19. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 38-9.

20. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 42.

21. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 43.

22. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 137.

23. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 138.

24. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 150.

25. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 152.

26. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 153.

27. Marshall, *Men Against Fire,* 155.

28. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 205.

29. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 219.

30. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 206.

31. Guy L. Siebold and Dennis R. Kelly, *The Impact of Cohesion on Platoon Performance at the Joint Readiness Training Center* (Alexandria, VA: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 1988), viii.

32. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 210.

33. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 210.

34. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 219.

35. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 220.

36. Dale B. Flora, "Battlefield Stress: Causes, Cures and Countermeasures" (Master's Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 1985), 115.

37. Robert J. MacCoun and William M. Hix, "Unit Cohesion and Military Performance," in *Sexual Orientation and US Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, Defense Research Institute, 2010), 138.

38. MacCoun, *Sexual Orientation,* 157.

39. James G. Van Straten, "Lessons from Team SNAFU," *Military Review* 67, no. 5 (May 1987): 54-63. Team SNAFU consisted of very few individual stragglers, and instead was composed of small teams, crews, and squads that maintained cohesion and then fought together when cobbled into a larger force.

40. Frederick G. Wong, "A Formula for Building Cohesion" (USAWC Military Studies Program Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1985), 21.

41. Monte D. Smith and Joseph D. Hagman, *Personnel Stabilization and Cohesion: A Summary of Key Literature Findings* (Alexandria, VA: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, 2005), iii.

42. Wong, "A Formula for Building Cohesion," 29.

43. David H. Marlowe, *Unit Manning System Field Evaluation: Technical Reports No. 4* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, December 1986), 72. Hereafter cited as Marlowe, WRAIR 4.

44. Wong, "A Formula for Building Cohesion," 32.

45. Jeffrey D. Peterson, "The Effect of Personnel Stability on Organizational Performance: Do Battalions with Stable Command Groups Achieve Higher Training Proficiency at the National Training Center?" (Diss., Pardee RAND Graduate School, Santa Monica, CA, 2008). Peterson found there was not "a prevalent or strong relationship between battalion leadership stability and battalion training proficiency," xi. While he concludes stability is not a prerequisite to build cohesion and effectiveness, he does not account for vertical cohesion as a strong factor in unit performance. Effective leadership and useful training are prerequisites to success. Stability helps get there, but it still requires tactically and technically proficient leaders. Finally, he advocates more flexibility for some, but not all, members of a battalion command group such as the executive officer and operations officer rather than the battalion commander. Additionally,

as this manuscript will show, cohesion primarily exists at the company-level and below.

46. Robert J. Rielly, "The Darker Side of the Force: The Negative Influence of Cohesion," *Military Review* 81, no. 2 (March-April 2001): 60.

47. Department of Military Psychiatry, *Evaluating the Unit Manning System,* 3.

48. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 264-265.

Chapter 3
The Individual System in World War II and Korea

> No amount of inexperience can excuse a cruel replacement system under which individual replacements were allowed to travel, without comrades or commanders, from one depot to the next and then to enter battle without even their names being known to the men around them.
>
> —Martin van Creveld, *Fighting Power*

The US Army changed from a unit-based system to an individual one during World War I, but the war did not last long enough for the system to come under much scrutiny.[1] Not so during World War II. Decisions made during this time played almost as significant a role as Vietnam did on the perceptions of the leaders of the US Army during the COHORT experiment. All senior general officers either served in World War II, like General DePuy, or directly served under veterans, like Generals Meyer, Starry, Vuono, and Wickham. All of them served in Korea, which perpetuated many of the concepts used in the earlier, more massive conflict. Beginning in World War I, the US Army focused on unit strength instead of unit cohesion, primarily due to the managerial ideas of the industrial revolution and the ease of accounting.[2] Strength is tangible, while cohesion and other human factors are intangible. This chapter will show that the personnel decisions made in World War II and Korea influenced the personnel system in Vietnam and played a direct role in the decisions made in creating the COHORT experiment.

World War II

The US Army in World War II had a dilemma. The US Army needed to know how many divisions to build to defeat both Germany and Japan. The United States had to deal with the simultaneous expansion of its Navy, Army Air Force, and the Army while rapidly increasing industrial production to meet the demands of both theaters. A series of compromises reduced the initial estimate from over 200 divisions down to just 90, even though 89 were already built. Out of those, 87 saw combat.[3] The two divisions that remained uncommitted by the end of the war were the 13th Airborne Division and the 98th Infantry Division. Ultimately, the Allies won World War II, with only 59 divisions deployed to Europe and 30 divisions deployed to the Pacific.[4] The US Army consisted of eight million men, including the Army Air Forces, and by the end of the war, five million were serving overseas.[5] Dr. Peter Mansoor said, "In nearly every

personnel decision made during the crucial months of mobilization after Pearl Harbor, the War Department cut the [Army Ground Forces] in favor of more service forces and air units."[6] *The Army Ground Forces Study No. 3* in 1946 stated, "Not as many divisions and non-divisional combat units were formed as were originally planned, partly because over-all [*sic*] strength of the army became fixed at a lower figure than had been expected, partly because requirements for service troops and overhead functions proved to be larger than had been foreseen."[7] The number of divisions, sufficient enough to win the war, severely limited options for commanders in both theaters, but especially in the European theater.

The US Army's decision to limit the number of divisions to 89 meant that commanders, particularly in Europe, did not have an infantry reserve, and divisions remained in combat once they arrived in theater.[8] The decision to use an individual system meant that over one million men at a time were not organized in combat units; instead, most were destined to join divisions in theater.[9] The only exception to the rule about staying in combat were the airborne divisions. In fact, during the Battle of the Bulge, the only reserves available to General Eisenhower were the 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions.[10] The limited number of divisions prevented the rotation of units into and out of combat so that they may rest and refit. The only option available was to rotate smaller units or individuals because, after a month of continuous combat, service member exhaustion gave way to apathy, and sickness increased at ever-increasing rates while in contact.[11] While there was a proposal to add a 4th infantry regiment to permit combat rotations within divisions, the US Army ultimately decided that commanders would be unable to keep units out of combat as intended, which prevented its implementation.[12] General Devers, the American commander in North Africa, wrote to General Leslie McNair, Army Ground Forces commander, "That divisions should not be left in the line longer than 30 to 40 days in an active theater [because] everybody gets tired, then they get careless, and there are tremendous sick rates and casualty rates. The result is that you feed replacements into a machine…and it is like throwing good money after bad."[13] The Army Ground Forces proposed unit replacements at the regimental level, and the War Department accepted it, but it was not implemented.[14] In addition to the limited number of divisions, the prewar status and limited size of the US Army narrowed the available options to General Marshall, the Chief of Staff of the Army.

The US Army of 1940 required a massive expansion after the outbreak of war in 1941. At the beginning of 1940, there were only eight divisions in the active army, including the Hawaiian and Philippine Divisions. "In December 1941, the Army of the United States consisted of

29 infantry divisions, 5 armored divisions, and 2 cavalry divisions."[15] The remaining divisions were built over roughly three years, with the last division being activated in August of 1943.[16] The more than ten-fold growth meant that many compromises were required. Although units remained together from inception to deactivation, there were many that experienced cannibalization on a repeated and devastating basis. Although divisions contained only 700,000 men, the US Army contained an additional 1.1 million officers and enlisted men outside of divisional units as individual replacements.[17] General DePuy's division, the 90th, had to provide cadres several times before deploying to England.[18] Many units arrived overseas poorly prepared for combat.[19] One of the last divisions activated, the 106th, showed many problems despite a lengthy training period, primarily because of personnel turbulence. "Between March 1943 and October 1944, [Army Ground Forces] stripped 1,215 officers and 12,442 enlisted soldiers. The 106th Infantry Division never recovered from the raids upon its personnel."[20] Mansoor says, "More combat divisions…overseas… would have resulted in fewer casualties over the course of the war."[21] The continual shuffle of men into and out of divisions as individual replacements prevented effective collective training due to the need to essentially start over. They were forced to supply casualty replacement overseas and paid the price for the inability to train together before combat.

Many divisions were established by pulling cadre from other units. Even the vaunted 82nd Airborne came into existence by pulling men from the 9th Infantry Division. Later, it had to provide a cadre to form the 101st Airborne Division.[22] Those units went on to become effective because they did not suffer the death of a thousand cuts, like the 106th Division, which lost over 1,200 officers and 12,000 men between March 1943 and October 1944.[23] During the time of large-scale conflict, it was simply impossible for the US Army to create new divisions without using existing units as the base. The problem occurred by not keeping withdrawals to a minimum while still maintaining units on a collective training path. Some divisions never conducted collective maneuvers at the division-level before entering combat.[24]

The cannibalization of divisions for individual replacements and cadre inhibited cohesion and *esprit de corps.* One of the few divisions to escape cannibalization was the 88th Infantry Division. The key to its success was early personnel stabilization and its ability to avoid losses for individual replacements.[25] One division commander compared the turbulence to that of a football coach forced to give up his team right before the season and then to have to rebuild it with cobbled together replacements.[26] The entire system failed to build cohesion and prevented excellent train-

ing at the highest possible levels. These decisions and rapid mobilization failed to minimize personnel turbulence, failed to provide cohesive teams for collective training, and prevented rotation in combat.

Not only did the US Army compromise itself by building a limited number of units, but the replacement system also left much to be desired, particularly during periods of high casualties. The overseas movement of individual replacements occurred without regard to either unit or destination. Even those soldiers from the same cannibalized divisions did not stay together in Europe. As a result, soldiers deployed alone, processed through replacement units alone, typically arrived at their companies in the late afternoon and then went on their first attack the next morning.[27] A large proportion of them went back to the rear either in an ambulance or a body bag because they did not know what to do, and the experienced soldiers were unwilling to help until the new replacments had proven themselves.

As the war progressed, various leaders proposed changing the deployment system. This was met with mixed results. Peter S. Kindsvatter found, "When replacements were given additional training and a chance to integrate into their squad and platoon when out of combat, their chances of survival went up."[28] In the end, the US Army deployed soldiers as a small package of four men that traveled to the same company. They could be broken up depending on local circumstances.[29] They also created training camps staffed with combat veterans near the combat zone to provide specific training to new arrivals.[30] Due to these adjustments, the American system was able to maintain reasonably high combat effectiveness at the division-level, despite numerous casualties and the high cost on individual well-being.

The replacement system also had issues with the treatment and return of wounded men after healing. Men could only return to their units if there was a specific requisition from their company. Additionally, casualties were so high at some points that when wounded men got back, they did not recognize the others in the unit.[31] The system also prevented men from going back to their units without a valid requisition, forcing some to wait for an interminable period. Others went absent without leave to rejoin their units.[32] The unwillingness and inability of commanders to rotate units into and out of combat for refitting and reconstitution played a significant role. This led to a high number of psychiatric casualties, also known as battle fatigue.[33]

Battle fatigue is more commonly known today as post-traumatic stress disorder. Here more than any other area did the shortage of combat units affect soldiers the most.Soldiers go through different psychological phases when in sustained combat. At first, they are mostly ineffective and

require a firm hand to be lethal and survive. Over time, units become more lethal and effective, but only up to a point. After about eight months of combat, unit performance starts to plateau, and in some cases, crash.[34] The soldiers in those units follow a similar pattern. Many studies show that frequent breaks out of the line, with hot food and warm showers, went a long way in preventing battle fatigue, and also fixed many minor problems so soldiers could return to their units.[35] These breaks did not often occur during World War II.

As discussed above, the individual system had both positive and negative characteristics. Martin van Creveld believed the German Army created higher fighting power, consisting of "morale, elan, unit cohesion, and resilience," when compared to the American Army.[36] He noted the failure of the American Army to pay attention to the psyche of soldiers.[37] Some newer authors, like Mansoor, have attempted to change the narrative. Still, at the time of COHORT, the perceptions about the individual system focused on its negative characteristics. The alternative posed by the Germans consisted of keeping units in combat until they became combat ineffective, followed by complete reconstitution and rebuilding. By the end of the war, the German system could not keep up, even though cohesion remained high.[38] In the American system, once soldiers entered combat, the only way out was by either victory or a body bag or ambulance.

Some of the significant implications on fighting effectiveness caused by the turbulence of the individual personnel system included: trust between leaders and followers, an inability to train as a unit before entering combat, isolation, the loneliness of individual replacements, and treatment of the wounded. Once men went into combat, there was no escape. The personnel policy implemented in Vietnam in some ways can be seen as a direct challenge to the feeling of no escape by providing an exact date of return.

Despite issues, the American Army still defeated both the German and Japanese armies during World War II. It kept its combat power and efficiency up through the last day, in part because the quality and quantity of its troops were high enough to win on the ground. The decisions made after the war about the US Army structure completely destroyed the effective US Army within a brief time. Disbanding the US Army led to a complete loss of effectiveness in the name of individual fairness. Because many soldiers deployed individually instead of with units, the US Army asked, "Why should men who have only been here a short time be allowed to leave?" instead of "How do we reduce the end strength of the US Army while still maintaining combat effectiveness?" The US Army created a calculation based on time overseas, proximity to combat, awards, and other

factors in determining who should return. This matrix was wrong which only compounded the effects of the earlier decision to deploy individuals instead of units. As a result, divisions lost their most experienced men right at the end of the war, and many others left in short order. The men that remained were new and did not have an opportunity to build cohesion because of unit turbulence and lack of training. The alternative choice whould have kept men and units together as much as possible rather than generating perpetual turbulence. It would not have been entirely fair, but it would have kept a more capable US Army than what resulted. In many ways, the US Army of 1946 was a shadow of itself from only a year prior, and directly influenced the performance of American troops at the beginning of the Korean War. The US Army was a hollow shell waiting for a war to show how weak it was: Korea was that war.[39]

The Korean War

In the aftermath of World War II, the US Army faced an uncertain future with many commitments to fulfill. The US Air Force became a separate branch, the US Army was reduced in size by over 6 million men, and the US Army occupied Germany and Japan. While some problems encountered by the 8th US Army in Japan were due to local conditions, the turbulence and gutting of divisions in the aftermath of World War II led directly to many of the combat performance issues encountered at the beginning of the Korean War. The policies enacted in Korea played a significant role in COHORT's development because all of the senior leaders in the US Army were Korean War veterans, and the US Army used the lessons of World War II and the Korean War to influence their personnel decisions during Vietnam.

The personnel policies implemented at the end of World War II were fundamentally flawed and the proof was obvious in the performance of units during their initial phase of combat in Korea. Poor decisions, turbulence, and a lack of training doomed the performance of the first units in Korea.[40] Low numbers of men in units meant training was nearly worthless. "No matter how skilled soldiers might be as individuals, they could not compensate for unit weakness[es]."[41] Author Roy K. Flint went so far as to say, "Without exaggerating, it could be said that Eighth Army units were bordering on being unready for war."[42] While the deficiencies of the US Army go well beyond personnel, the reasonably acceptable performance of Task Force Smith of the 21st Infantry contrasts with their sister regiment, the 34th Infantry. The example of the 34th Infantry compared to the 21st Infantry substantiates the weaknesses of the system used after World War II. New leaders did not know their subordinates, nor did their subordinates have trust in their leadership. Its performance, "Resulted

from the absence of aggressive leadership and unit cohesiveness" because of its high turbulence.[43] Draftees in the postwar US Army rotated in and out throughout the year, had inadequate equipment, and had little time to maintain it. The US Army in Japan was a constabulary force until Lieutenant General Walton Walker assumed command of the Eighth Army. Even then, he only had a matter of months to try and train the units for combat.[44]

Throughout most of the war, units initially deployed and fought together. Divisions primarily consisted of regimental combat teams–units similar to the modern brigade combat team. Because the main threat to American interests was in Europe, the US Army made the decision to limit the number of divisions deployed to Korea. After the initial influx of units, they remained in combat for the duration of the war, with a few exceptions. During the retreat in the winter of 1950-1951, several divisions rotated out of combat for reconstitution. For the remainder of the war, divisions mostly stayed on the front lines, and only individuals and small units would rotate out. The decision to request Korean augmentation into the United States Army primarily did not work because the Koreans could not fight effectively. They did not fit in well nor did they contribute to unit cohesion.[45]

Some of the other personnel policies reflected a growing understanding of the human psyche. One primary reason that soldiers became psychiatric casualties during World War II was the fact men fought "for the duration." As a result, the US Army implemented a points system like that used at the end of the war. The average tour ranged from 9 to 15 months, with more points awarded for infantry service, wounds, and decorations for valor.[46] Another change, particularly after the war became more static, was the policy of training men before sending them to their units. This allowed men to understand the local conditions and fighting, although they were not yet a part of their squads and platoons. Soldiers also received R&R, or rest and recuperation, which became known in some circles as I&I, "intercourse and intoxication."[47] Another significant change was that unlike in World War II, "Soldiers were returned to their original units after recovering from a wound or an illness."[48] This was not a hard rule, and some men were assigned based on the US Army's needs instead of ensuring that they returned to their family—their unit. These personnel policies were primarily an improvement over those of World War II;

> Although the addition of the replacement companies improved on our previous wartime experience, the procedures that dominated the personnel management aspects of the conflict [*sic*] aimed at providing fairness to the individual and sharing the

> burden equally among individuals. It appears that we had not learned the most important lessons from the previous war—those that dealt with the aspects of cohesion.[49]

The replacement companies kept soldiers together while traveling to the warzone, where they were then integrated into their divisions.

There were both positive and negative outcomes to the personnel policies implemented in the Korean War. Some of the positives include continuity, knowledge of the terrain, and no mass influx of "green" personnel. Because the soldiers rotated and not the units, there was no loss of understanding of the local area when new leaders assumed command. The US Army wanted to avoid the costly rotation of divisions in Korea while concurrently deterring the Soviets in Europe. As a result, leaders like General Matthew Ridgway pushed to keep the individual system. Additionally, units composed of all "green" soldiers tended to perform at a lower level than those with mixed ranks during their initial exposure to combat.[50] Some of the negative outcomes included a lack of set teams due to their casualties and rotation. Later replacement "'packets' of four 'buddies' were allowed to train together and be assigned together as replacements to a unit."[51] Leaders frequently rotated in and out both by policy and because of casualties, which prevented their soldiers from getting to know them, even though combat had accelerated the cohesion-building process. For example, then Captain Hal Moore said it took him about a month to get to know the standing operating procedures, officers, and men in his company.[52] He served as a mortar company commander for little more than two months, and as a rifle company commander for less than one month out of his approximately fourteen-month tour in Korea.[53] Considering that he commanded a total of three months in two companies, Moore only had one month of truly effective command. The limited number of divisions also prevented large scale unit rotations.

The personnel policies used during the Korean War were an improvement over World War II policies. Still, they had many deficiencies that focused too much on individual fairness over unit effectiveness. During the COHORT era, the future leaders of the US Army all experienced the individual system used in World II and Korea and witnessed the disaster of Vietnam. The individual system managed to keep the US Army capable during both conflicts, but it played havoc on unit readiness after World War II and before the Korean War. In both cases, winning the war may have prevented the US Army from looking at the system and determining the best approach during the decade between Korea and Vietnam. As a

result, the individual system was firmly in place as part of the US Army in the years leading up to Vietnam.

Notes

1. See Appendix C for a discussion about the system used by the US Army before World War II.

2. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 44.

3. Maurice Matloff, "The 90-Division Gamble," in *Command Decisions,* ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1984), 380.

4. This number does not include Allied divisions, including America's British or Soviet allies.

5. Matloff, "90-Division Gamble," 380.

6. Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 35.

7. Robert R. Palmer, *Ground Forces in the War Army: A Statistical Table, Army Ground Forces Study No. 3* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), 10.

8. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 11.

9. Palmer, *Ground Forces,* 13.

10. Harold R. Winton, *Corps Commanders of the Bulge: Six American Generals and Victory in the Ardennes* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 102.

11. Leonard L. Lerwill, Joseph Rockis, and John H. Beeler, *The Personnel Replacement System in the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 475.

12. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 254.

13. Jacob L. Devers letter to Leslie J. McNair, quoted in William R. Keast, *Provision of Enlisted Replacements, Army Ground Forces Study No. 7* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), 16-17.

14. Palmer, *Ground Forces,* 17-18.

15. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 72.

16. Robert R. Palmer, *The Mobilization of the Ground Army, Army Ground Forces Study No. 4* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), 25.

17. Palmer, *Ground Forces,* 25.

18. Henry G. Cole, *General William E. DePuy: Preparing the Army for Modern War* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), 17.

19. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 82.

20. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 82.

21. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 11.

22. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 55, 73.

23. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 82.

24. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 83.

25. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 8.

26. Bell I. Wiley, *The Building and Training of Infantry Divisions, Army Ground Forces Study No. 12* (Washington, DC: Historical Section, Army Ground Forces, 1946), 46.

27. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 71.

28. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 72.

29. Lerwill, Rockis, and Beeler, *The Personnel Replacement System,* 446.

30. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 250-1, 258.

31. Mansoor, *GI Offensive,* 195.

32. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 132-133.

33. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 164-168.

34. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 71-88, 161.

35. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 168-172.

36. Martin Van Creveld, *Fighting Power: German and US Army Performance, 1939-1945* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 163.

37. Creveld, *Fighting Power,* 167.

38. Robert S. Rush, "A Different Perspective: Cohesion, Morale, and Operational Effectiveness in the German Army, Fall 1944," *Armed Forces and Society* 25, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 477-508.

39. This paragraph is based on: John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1952), 265-283.

40. Roy K. Flint, "Task Force Smith and the 24th Division," in *America's First Battles,* ed. Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 269-70, 272.

41. Flint, *America's First Battles,* 274.

42. Flint, *America's First Battles,* 274.

43. Flint, *America's First Battles,* 299.

44. Thomas E. Hanson, "The Eighth Army's Combat Readiness Before Korea: A New Appraisal," *Armed Forces and Society* 29, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 167-184.

45. Allan R. Millett, *The War for Korea, 1950-1951: They Came from the North* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 227-8. Commonly known as KATUSAs: Korean Augmentation to the United States Army. The language barrier and lack of training were two of the issues facing the program.

46. T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War–The Classic Korean War History* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 1963), 347.

47. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 99; Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War,* 346-347.

48. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 133.

49. Trez, "Manning the Army in Peace and War," 10.

50. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 71.

51. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 50.

52. Mike Guardia, *Hal Moore: A Soldier Once…And Always* (Philadelphia, PA: Casemate, 2013), 64, 66.

53. Guardia, *Hal Moore: A Soldier Once…And Always,* 70, 79, 85.

Chapter 4
Why COHORT? The Legacy of Vietnam

> When I first joined my company it was operating alone in the high mountains that formed the Vietnamese border with Laos. Our job was to disrupt the Ho Chi Minh trail and find and destroy supply bases and hospitals. The company had set up on a hill temporarily and I was asked to take one of my squads out on a security patrol to screen the company position. It was my first combat patrol and I was determined to look competent. I was also nervous as hell. So, I assume, were my troops.
>
> —Karl Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to War*

Vietnam was the impetus for the development of the COHORT system because the personnel practices enacted during the conflict only exacerbated the worst characteristics of the individual replacement system. As Marlantes illustrated, men went to war alone, joined a unit often in the heart of combat, and rotated out during battles once they hit the magic number of days. Leaders moved irrespective of the combat situation based on a shorter, six-month timeline for officers in combat units. After their tours, men redeployed alone and had no support structure at home. Soldiers boarded a plane in Saigon the day after their last combat patrol, and less than two days later, they could be home. This chapter will show how these decisions led to discipline problems, a lack of unit cohesion, inadequate training, inexperienced noncommissioned officers and officers, and reduced combat effectiveness overall. The US Army likely would not have supported the COHORT experiment without the negative combat experience of the Vietnam War on crucial leaders such as Generals Meyer, Starry, and Wickham.

Widely considered broken by the end of the war, the US Army's small units lost their cohesion and then failed to perform on the battlefield. As recounted by Stanley Karnow:

> The US army [*sic*] in Vietnam was a shambles as the war drew to a close in the early 1970s. With President Nixon then repatriating the Americans, nobody wanted to be the last to perish for a cause that had clearly lost its meaning, and the name of the game for those awaiting withdrawal was survival. Antiwar protests at home had by now spread to the men in the field, many of whom wore peace symbols and refused to go into combat. Race relations, which were good when blacks and whites had earlier

> shared a sense of purpose, became increasingly brittle. The use of drugs was so widespread that, according to an official estimate made in 1971, nearly one third of the troops were addicted to opium or heroin, and marijuana smoking had become routine. Soldiers not only disobeyed their superiors but, in an alarming number of incidents, actually murdered them with fragmentation grenades—a practice dubbed "fragging." An ugly scandal surfaced after officers and noncom[missioned officer]s were arraigned for reaping personal profits from service clubs and post exchanges. Morale also deteriorated following revelations of a massacre in which a US infantry company slaughtered more than three hundred Vietnamese inhabitants of Mylai[*sic*] village in cold blood—an episode that prompted GIs to assume that their commanders were covering up other atrocities.[1]

The cumulative effect of these issues created the conditions necessary for the all-volunteer force. It allowed the US Army to begin the process of experimentation that was required to address the problems that were identified in Vietnam.

The Draftee US Army

The legacy of World War II and the Korean War demonstrated to military leadership that an individual system was preferable to unit manning despite multiple US Army luminaries stating otherwise. After World War II, General Dwight D. Eisenhower testified about the perils of the individual system to no avail. General Lawton Collins received similar treatment post-Korea.[2]

The US Army of Vietnam inherited the personnel management view of an industrial process which was focused on individual replacements. It was used between the wars but never developed beyond it. One notable exception was the GYROSCOPE experiment from 1955 to 1958, which rotated battalions into and out of Europe instead of individual soldiers. The primary problem encountered by the US Army was that draftees joined the US Army for only two years. Yet, the GYROSCOPE deployments were three years, necessitating a near-constant stream of replacements sent forward to Germany.[3] The experiment failed according to retired General Donn Starry because the US Army "tried it at too high a level, and it didn't work."[4] Rather than focus on unit stability, the thought was that one soldier is as good as any other. In the name of fairness, soldiers left the US Army at the end of enlistments even with a pending deployment. Stop-loss did not exist in the 1960s.

In 1965, the active US Army had 970,000 soldiers, including approximately 200,000 draftees.[5] The US Army used the system described in the previous paragraph to enlist and train soldiers. One primary advantage was the ability to control the flow of recruits into and out of the US Army. Brian McAlister Linn wrote about the personnel turbulence in the early 1960s. "Between 1960 and 1965, the average unit replaced between 50 to 60 percent of its people every thirteen months."[6] He quoted the 8th Army Commander in Korea, General Hamilton H. Howze, as saying, "There is no real training in a situation such as this because the basic training vehicle and our most valuable commodity, the soldier, is missing."[7] A unit-based system may have more ups and downs compared to the individual system in which overall manning is more easily managed on an industrial scale by a centralized authority. The staggering number of moves in a year had the potential to overwhelm the system.[8] Efficiency and fairness held primacy over unit effectiveness leading up to the Vietnam War. As this manuscript will show, this American cultural affinity for efficiency and fairness comes at a cost in human lives.

The First Division Deployed–1st Cavalry Division

One of the first units to feel the pernicious effects of the individual manning system was the 1st Cavalry Division in the summer of 1965. Even though senior leaders at all echelons above the battalion level knew that the division would soon deploy to Vietnam and the crucible of combat, the individual replacement system reigned supreme. Leaders changed out with impunity, as demonstrated by the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment led by then Lieutenant Colonel Hal Moore. Only a few short months before their deployment to Vietnam, they:

> Lost eight of fifteen platoon-leader lieutenants. Most were reserve officers who had completed their commitments and were released from active duty; others were transferred or reassigned elsewhere. In early June we were assigned six brand-new second lieutenants. But in early August, shortly before [they] deployed, all six were yanked out of the battalion.[9]

Even before sailing to Vietnam, the 7th Cavalry lost out on valuable training experiences for its leaders. Still, the US Army was not finished reducing the combat effectiveness of the unit.

Despite the impending fight in Vietnam, President Johnson did not declare a state of emergency or extend enlistments. "Instead, the war would be fed by stripping the US Army divisions in Europe and the continental United States of their best personnel and materiel, while a river of new draftees, 20,000 of them each month, flowed in to do the shooting and

the dying."[10] As a result, many soldiers remained at home while the unit deployed to combat. The US Army deemed that soldiers with less than 60 days remaining on active duty had an insufficient amount of time to deploy them to combat. This resulted in the loss of nearly one hundred soldiers in Moore's battalion, a 12 percent reduction in strength only weeks before deployment. As Colonel Moore stated, they "were being shipped off to war sadly understrength, and crippled by the loss of…[t]he very men who would be the most useful in combat. It made no sense then; it makes no sense now."[11] The effects of the individual replacement system did not show up until approximately a year later. Lieutenant Colonel Moore went to war with his depleted but intact unit on the United States Navy's *Maurice Rose.*

Even after enlistees with less than 60 days remaining on active service stayed home, units in Vietnam only delayed the pain of constant personnel turbulence. Moore said, "At the end of September [1965,] my battalion had 679 officers and men against an authorized strength of 767. Four sergeants and seventeen enlisted men rotated home in October. In November, six sergeants and 132 men of the battalion were scheduled to leave."[12] Despite the significant reduction in strength, the companies of 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry, remained highly effective and cohesive in combat, as proven during the Battle of Ia Drang. This is just one example of the effects of personnel policies on a single unit in the early days of the Vietnam War. Decisions made in 1966 were soon to solidify the individual replacement system and eventually break the US Army's effectiveness.

How to Manage Personnel in Vietnam?

In 1966, the US Army had a choice on how to replace troops, given the current flow of units into Vietnam. It could rotate individuals or units, but either way, the US Army would have to change the pre-1965 model because of the massive influx of soldiers into Vietnam in late 1965 and early 1966. At the same time, combat in Vietnam still required large units, and the number of divisions present for combat was not enough to match the demands of General Westmoreland.

The US Army decided to continue to deploy entire units into Vietnam, but individuals would rotate out after a year. Replacements trickled in at a steady pace throughout the year to fill units in-country. Once the US Army had its desired end strength, units would remain in-country; but, at the same time, only individuals rotated into and out of the theater. One of the advantages for the US Army included the opportunity to expose more leaders to combat in what was assumed to be a short-duration mission. Another advantage was the continuity that was gained by allowing high-

er-level units to remain in one area for a long time. Units built continuity at the organizational level, even if the personnel rotated as frequently as those at the company-level. A third advantage was the ability to keep units on combat missions for extended periods. Helicopters supplied enough mobility to arrive at any clearing designated as a landing zone, allowing individual replacements to join their unit in combat without having to return it to a base area.

The most crucial reason the US Army continued the individual personnel management system was because of its newfound understanding of the human psyche after the experiences in Korea and World War II. Soldiers in both earlier wars experienced battle fatigue, with more falling to it during World War II than in Korea. As a result, the US Army implemented a strict 12-month individual rotation system, 13-months for Marines. Kindsvatter found "The rotation system established in the Korean and Vietnam Wars was a significant factor in reducing long-term, or classic, combat fatigue."[13] Still, as mentioned previously, Shay promoted unit cohesion as one cure for post-traumatic stress disorder.[14] Indeed, the change to a set end of tour date was an improvement over the approach of World War II: victory, hospital, or a body-bag.

These advantages misled the US Army into believing that the individual manning system was the best personnel model, even though by the time the US Army fully implemented this system, the first adverse effects could already be seen because of the faulty leader rotation plan. In his study of the West Point class of 1966, Rick Atkinson found that many young officers experienced these effects first-hand. One officer, George Crocker, deployed to Vietnam before his division did so he could learn about the country and combat ahead of his platoon's arrival. Within six hours after his arrival into Vietnam, Crocker was already in combat with a unit he did not know; he would survive to assist with his platoon's first brush with combat weeks later.[15] After merely six months of combat, Crocker moved to a staff position to make way for a new platoon leader.[16]

One of the ways the US Army attempted to mitigate the adverse effects of rotating inexperienced officers into units in combat was to require lieutenants to serve four months as platoon leaders in the United States before their deployments.[17] The US Army focused on preparing its officers for combat as individuals rather than trining with the units they would serve in during the war. For example, officers had the opportunity to attend both Ranger School and the Jungle Warfare Course before sending them into Vietnam. Fortunately, the US Army maintained significant numbers of experienced non-commissioned officers to counter their officers' lack of

experience and turbulence. At this point, the US Army did not have to rely on "shake and bake" non-commissioned officers.[18]

Because the US Army still deployed whole divisions into Vietnam for the early years of the Vietnam War, most units had a similar experience to that of the 1st Cavalry Division described in the previous paragraph. Rick Atkinson wrote, "By training and deploying together, the [9th Infantry] division initially avoided the *peculiar chemistry* of most in-country units, where *green and eager newcomers* were mixed together *with cautious, war-weary short-timers* [emphasis added]."[19] It was only over time that the chemistry changed, and units became a mix of both. One of the advantages perceived by the US Army was that after the initial deployments no unit ever lost its combat-experienced leaders. The US Army believed it was critical to unit performance for some individuals to have "seen the elephant" rather than bring untested units into theater periodically.[20] Presumably, some leaders and older enlisted men would have previous experience to leverage from their earlier deployments. "The most dangerous period for a combat soldier was the first few weeks, when many men died before developing the necessary skills and instincts."[21] Ironically, the experienced men often hesitated to share their knowledge with newer men until they had proven themselves, thus in some way reducing the effectiveness of individual soldier rotation.[22]

In his study of the 1st Cavalry Division, Major Damasio Davila found that the cohesion of its units was superior in 1966 compared to 1968 or 1970.[23] His primary conclusion was "that a unit deployment set[s] the best conditions to develop cohesion and increase combat effectiveness."[24] He found "that there were instances when cohesion and combat effectiveness were better…under a system of individual rotations vice a unit deployment" because of the pace of combat operations and high *esprit* of the unit itself.[25] One of the indicators of a lack of cohesion was an increase in conservative practices in combat to reduce the chance of friendly casualties.[26] To partially mitigate the impacts of turbulence, the division implemented an individual replacement course as well as a school for junior leaders. Units would not have required these measures if they had deployed together and rotated out of combat to process replacements. The initial years of Vietnam established the basis of the individual system used for the duration of the conflict.

The Later Years and Continuing Practices

Later in the Vietnam War, the individual replacement system took on a life of its own. Replacements entered and sometimes left during battle, commanders rotated regardless of the circumstances, and the performance of the United States Army and Marine Corps suffered as a whole. Units

simply could not operate as cohesive, effective teams with the constant parade of leaders and subordinates.

Rather than look at the US Army in isolation, it is instructive to see how the US Marine Corps struggled with its performance and cohesion during this period. Second Lieutenant Karl Marlantes (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), a Marine Platoon Commander assigned to Vietnam in 1969, joined his unit on a hilltop near the Demilitarized Zone one afternoon. That evening, he issued orders to non-commissioned officers and US Marines whom he did not know to conduct an overnight ambush. Fortunately, Marlantes' first combat patrol did not result in any casualties other than a few unfortunate Asian elephants.[27] Later, he went on mid-tour leave in the middle of a fight and spent several days of debauchery in Hong Kong before returning in the middle of a firefight.[28] His platoon was forced to continue to fight while he enjoyed other primal desires. While a welcome relief to him at the time, his actions indicated a lack of discipline which a more cohesive unit would not have tolerated.

A newly promoted Colonel Hal Moore, now commanding 1st Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, said that already by the end of his tour the brigade could feel the effects of the individual replacement system taking root. He stated:

> Those who had survived and learned how to fight in this difficult environment began going home in the summer of 1966; with them went all their experience and expertise. Replacing them was an army of new draftees, which in due course would be replaced by newer draftees. The level of training drifted ever lower as the demand for bodies grew.[29]

Additionally, Colonel Moore's superiors instructed him to change command in the middle of a brigade-level battle. It was only due to his strong disagreement that they allowed the change to wait until the fight's conclusion.[30] Regardless of an individual's status as an officer, non-commissioned officer, soldier, or US Marine, everyone switched according to the individual's timeline, irrespective of conditions on the ground or their unit's need. The expression "short-timer" was coined during the Vietnam War to describe the unwillingness of men to risk their lives while in their final weeks in theater.[31]

Another leader, then Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Puckett, experienced both the best and the worst of the US Army in one tour in Vietnam. His first command was a cohesive band of fighters that maintained discipline throughout their deployment. After getting wounded, his second command was much different. He immediately noticed the decline in soldier dis-

cipline, despite the two battalions being part of the same division.[32] For example, on his first day in command, he was forced to correct a soldier, ostensibly on guard duty, who did not have his weapon with him.[33] In addition to the lack of basic soldier discipline, the Vietnam War exposed the military to more problems, many of which are attributable to the dearth of experienced non-commissioned officers.

The constant turnover from individual replacements created severe cracks in the very fabric of military society. As Jim Webb noted:

> By 1969 the vaunted ranks of career staff non-commissioned officers who had historically been the backbone of the US Marine Corps were showing the effects of four years of heavy combat. In the infantry battalions that impact was both visible and profound. Within a few days my platoon sergeant, the fourth Marine to hold this key position in the past three months, would leave us. My first platoon sergeant had been hit by a booby trap. The second platoon sergeant had served with us for a couple of weeks and then was sent by the company commander to another unit. The third had picked up his third Purple Heart after being hit by a rocket propelled grenade. The fifth, on his second Vietnam tour, became sick of the constant combat and suddenly decided to leave…when his enlistment expired toward the end of this very operation.[34]

The effects of the Vietnam War permeated not only the United States Marines but the US Army as well. James McDonough noted that out of his platoon, only his platoon sergeant was a career soldier. Many of his non-commissioned officers were younger and less experienced than the soldiers they were leading. They simply could not replicate the expertise of non-commissioned officers who had years to develop their skills instead of months and weeks.[35]

The US Army's Historical Summary for Fiscal Year 1969 noted:

> The 56 percent increase in US Army strength since 1965 has been attained through increased accessions of untrained draftees and enlistees who stay in the US Army for only two or three years. Currently, about half of the US Army's commissioned officers and two-thirds of its enlisted men have less than two years of service. In spite of the expansion, there are 100,000 fewer enlisted careerists today than there were before the build-up. Career soldiers—individuals with more than three years of service—numbered nearly 400,000 in 1964; by 1969, with over half-a-million more men in the US Army, the career force has

> been reduced by 25 percent to less than 300,000. The result is a chronic shortage of officers and enlisted men in the middle grades.[36]

In addition to non-commissioned officer problems, units also had difficulty with the personnel policies in place during the war.

In 1969 the US Army recognized the problem with the current individual system. The historical summary for that year stated:

> Sustaining US Army deployments in Vietnam, Thailand, and Korea has been one of the major concerns over the period of the US Army expansion and the Vietnam buildup. There are numerous facets to such a process. It has been necessary, for example, to meet the short tour (12 months) replacement turnover in Vietnam with the required numbers of individuals in the proper grades and skills,. This will be done while maintaining the short tour policy in other areas, the long tour objectives (25 months) for the continental United States and certain overseas areas, which is an equitable assignment pattern for the career soldier who is subject to repetitive tours, an efficient training base, and a readiness posture against other contingencies. Of the approximate one-and-a-half-million men and women in the US Army, some 700,000 are serving overseas at any one time. Of the more than 800,000 serving in the United States, over 197,000 are trainees not ready for assignment. This suggests the difficulty of meeting the rapid turnover and providing qualified replacements.[37]

Half of the US Army served overseas, and nearly 15 percent were in training, leaving only approximately 35 percent of the soldiers in a relatively stable duty assignment for a more extended period. McDonough took a photo of his platoon on his last day in command that he kept for the rest of his tour. He said, "As I studied the picture during the following months, their numbers would diminish-some as casualties, some by normal rotation home. Had I returned a few days later to the same outfit, I would scarcely have recognized it as the one I left."[38] That much turbulence was simply not sustainable in creating cohesive units around the world, much less in Vietnam. Kindsvatter wrote, "Rotation may have caused problems for unit cohesion and effectiveness, but as a coping mechanism for the individual soldier, it was a winner."[39]

Webb and many other authors describe the effect of casualties and replacements on companies as a result of the policies in effect. Units received replacements at irregular intervals, lost soldiers whenever their time ex-

pired, and remained in combat unless higher headquarters dictated otherwise. Continuing a practice from World War II and Korea, units remained on the front lines and fought continuously rather than rotating into and out of combat.[40] Soldiers quickly realized that the new soldiers were the most dangerous people to be around. That led to the attitude of men treating the new guy as a pariah until after his first combat experience.[41] It took time for men to trust one another. McDonough did not fully earn the trust of his subordinates until he returned to the platoon after being wounded.[42] He said, "I would have no grace period in which to learn my way around. This was a life and death environment. If I began with a blunder, my credibility as a leader would be shot, and so might some of the men."[43] Rather than allow leaders and soldiers to build cohesion before entering battle, the US Army forced leaders and soldiers to fight without the advantage of trust through adequate training together. Combat served as the initiation into the brotherhood that remained solid only if no new replacements arrived at the unit. General Starry later said, "The soldiers did well. The officers did well, under the circumstances and given the conditions—our lack of ability to train them as units, to give them the unit cohesion they needed to do well in battle consistently, the one-year rotation policy."[44] The section on building cohesion established that while units build cohesion in combat at a faster rate than in training, they also experience casualties. Individual replacements during fighting inhibit the bonding that will keep them in good stead during heavy fighting. One of these problems in isolation would have presented leaders with a serious challenge; as it was, the US Army could not stand the pressure, and something had to give.

The pressures of Vietnam led to widespread ill-discipline and a general lowering of standards. Unit cohesion and discipline were influenced by both policy and the declining attitudes of the American people. It was really only later in the war that widespread drug use and ill-discipline pervaded the force as support from home waned. As one example, a group of West Pointers misappropriated a government vehicle, changed its license plate, and used it principally for US Army business but also for private concerns in Long Binh. They thought that it was "hardly more than a fraternity prank" because of the widespread crime in the US Army at the time, including fragging, drug abuse, murders, and open criticism of the US Army.[45] In another case, one officer was wounded inadvertently in an attempted murder:

> And what had blown my new friend apart the night before he was home free? It was not an enemy mortar attack. The lieutenant had gone to the bunkered hootch of the battalion sergeant major. As the officer stood there in the darkness urinating against the

> sandbags, a soldier chose that moment to let the sergeant major know how much he felt about him by tossing a hand grenade at his hootch.[46]

Crime and discipline failures do not occur to the same degree in well-led cohesive units. When they do, the unit polices itself.[47]

Colonel (at the time) Donn Starry served as General Abrams' chief redeployment planner for American forces in Vietnam in 1969. He and General Abrams decided to redeploy an entire division, the 9th Infantry, and send them home together. General Starry said that when:

> [the] personnel managers got in [and they said] 'we can't do that.' Here are two guys who have only been here three months. We can't let them go. They haven't been here long enough. Now, what we are going to do is go over here in this other division and get two other people who have been here 10 or 11 months and transfer them over there so they can go home. So what we had in the remaining units was instant unreadiness. In the end, the first 25,000 probably didn't have much effect, but I'll tell you the second 150,000 did. We had instant unreadiness in the remaining units. We did it to ourselves. We shot ourselves in the bloody foot.[48]

By the end of the 1960s, the US Army was widely acknowledged as broken, with ineffective units, poor leadership, and low morale in Vietnam, Europe, and at home.

Author Richard S. Faulkner is worth quoting at length from his book, *School of Hard Knocks:*

> Unfortunately, lessons learned are sometimes forgotten in the heat of a new crisis. The army in Vietnam faced problems with junior leadership that often resembled those of the Great War. Vietnam also showed that the army's problems with properly selecting and training junior leaders were not just limited to wars requiting mass mobilization. Lyndon Johnson's refusal to expand mobilization for the war and the army's own flawed individual rotation policy created a constant drain of junior leaders from American combat units. As an institution, the army was ill-prepared to fight a protracted attritional war without a call-out of the US National Guard and US Army Reserve. As such, it had to scramble to adapt its system for identifying, training, and developing junior combat leaders.[49]
>
> But in a larger sense it was the army's failure to screen, train, and develop its junior leaders properly that was one of the root

> causes of its morale and discipline problems from 1969 to the end of the war. As one colonel noted at the time, "We have at least two or three thousand Calleys in the army just waiting for the next calamity." While the American armies of the Great War and Vietnam had difficulty fielding competent junior leaders for different reasons, the end result was the same. In both cases, ill-trained and unprepared leaders caused unnecessary casualties and eroded unit morale and cohesion.[50]

Faulkner very clearly finds junior leaders as key in building cohesion. Additionally, problems such as the My Lai incident can arise without strong junior officer leadership.

By the end, Vietnam broke the back of the non-commissioned officer corps and created what became known as "the hollow US Army." The US Army did not have a large stock of non-commissioned officer leadership as units in Germany and in the continental United States felt the effects of money and manpower pouring into Vietnam. Ill-discipline raged across the force. What is more, the political environment demanded change to the divisive Draft, even if the US Army was less than eager to do so. Some of the many problems faced by units included race problems and drug abuse, which were all combined with a shortage of solid, experienced non-commisssioned officers to enforce the standard.

A Changing Culture

The US Army capitalized on the mediocre performance from Vietnam to transform itself in widespread ways. General DePuy was one of the leading innovators of restructuring the US Army after Vietnam in the late 1970s. He introduced new doctrine, first "Active Defense," followed later by the successful AirLand Battle doctrine. While serving as the training and doctrine command commander, he encouraged new organizational designs. Without his influence, it is unlikely that General Starry would have succeeded him. General DePuy started the US Army down the path that would ultimately lead to the COHORT experiment in the 1980s. Perhaps the most significant change was the transition from the draftee army to the all-volunteer force, to be discussed in the next chapter.

While in Vietnam, General Starry, realized the individual replacement system caused more problems than it solved. Lewis Sorley wrote in his introduction to *Press On!* about the adverse effects of the redeployment plan in the latter stages of the Vietnam War:

> Pulling all the longest-serving troops out of units all across Vietnam so as to aggregate them under the flag of some outfit being redeployed, then replacing them in all those other units with

> different people who had been in Vietnam for shorter times, guaranteed constant turbulence, destroyed unit cohesion, and contributed greatly to later widespread problems of indiscipline and destruction of morale. After this dramatic episode Starry developed a permanent and intense interest in developing a unit rather than individual replacement system, something he fought for during the entire remainder of his active service.[51]

Because of his crucible experience, General Starry attempted to influence the US Army while serving as the training and doctrine command commander following General DePuy. One of the factors in determining the need for a shift to a different system was the AirLand Battle doctrine developed by himself and General DePuy. He knew that the execution of a fight against the immense numbers of the Red Army streaming across the Fulda Gap required a more cohesive and effective group of soldiers. In 1980, General Starry commissioned multiple studies of military effectiveness. One goal was to determine what organizational effectiveness really means and how to build it.[52] One of the struggles identified by General Starry was the difficulty in changing something ingrained into the US Army culture. By the early 1980s, the individual manning system already approached 70 years of use and was "good enough" to win multiple wars.[53] General Starry said:

> What we deprived ourselves of in Vietnam, and in Korea as well, because of the rotation policy, was any hope of ever having units in which the soldiers had trained together long enough to become really honest-to-god cohesive units. What you had then…was a situation in which officers were standing up in front of their squads every day, and almost none of the men out in front of them had they ever seen before, and none of them had ever seen the leader, and they're going to go off and fight a battle. And they're expected to do it successfully. Well, the history of battle just tells you that that doesn't happen.[54]

General Starry remained an advocate of the unit manning system for the remainder of his career because of his experiences, and he attempted to introduce other changes to the US Army as well.

General Starry promoted a study of the regimental systems used by other countries, especially the United Kingdom, to find a better way to manage rotations. His team of non-Americans proposed a regimental system. They envisioned a regimental headquarters with a home base that would deploy individual battalions overseas after losing soldiers through attrition, redeploy, refill, and retrain with officers and non-commissioned

officerss that remained in the unit. In the event of a war, each regiment would form new units after mobilizing all the battalions in a regiment. The primary goal of the regimental system was to mitigate turbulence. General Starry said, "Turbulence is sergeants coming and going from overseas assignments at a rate that borders on the ridiculous. We started the regimental system to try to overcome some of the effects of that turbulence."[55] He said, "Well, that was a little bit too rich for the US Army's blood, so the COHORT system was introduced at a level that really was inappropriate to rotate units—at platoon/company-level."[56] This thought experiment led directly to the next logical step: experimentation with project COHORT followed by the expansion to the 7th Infantry Division before moving to the rest of the US Army.[57]

Notes

1. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History, The First Complete Account of Vietnam at War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 23-24.

2. Donn A. Starry, *Press On! Selected Works of General Donn A. Starry, ed. Lewis Sorley* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), 1005.

3. Donald A. Carter, *The US Army Before Vietnam, 1953-1965* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2015), 23.

4. Starry, *Press On,* 1004.

5. Carter, *The US Army Before Vietnam,* 11, 44. By the early 1960s, the Army had approximately 20 percent of its soldiers enter through the draft.

6. Brian McAllister Linn, *Elvis's Army: Cold War GIs and the Atomic Battlefield* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 321.

7. Hamilton H. Howze, quoted in Linn, *Elvis's Army,* 321.

8. "In fiscal year 1962, for example, with a total strength of just over 1,000,000 soldiers, the army anticipated 1,248,000 would make a permanent change of station (PCS). Among those 'PCS-ing' were 318,000 going overseas, 96,000 moving within the continental United States, and 297,000 leaving the service. All this movement not only undermined unit cohesion and effectiveness; it created a transitory army, moving back and forth from the Pacific to stateside to Europe." Linn, *Elvis's Army,* 321-2.

9. Harold G. Moore and Joseph L. Galloway, *We Were Soldiers Once…And Young* (New York: Random House, 1992), 24.

10. Harold G. Moore and Joseph Galloway, "The Roots of Conflict—Vietnam War's True Dawn," The History Reader, accessed 25 April 2020, https://www.thehistoryreader.com/contemporary-history/roots-conflict-vietnam-wars-true-dawn/.

11. Moore and Galloway, *We Were Soldiers,* 25.

12. Moore and Galloway, *We Were Soldiers,* 27.

13. Kindsvatter, American Soldiers, 162.

14. Shay, *Odysseus in America,* 210.

15. Rick Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line: The American Journey of West Point's Class of 1966* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1989), 202, 204.

16. Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line,* 223.

17. Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line,* 137.

18. "Shake and Bake" refers to a quick food item of the 1960s and reflected the short training time allotted for new non-commissioned officrs. This is like the "90-day Wonders" of World War II, where officers often received only 90 days of training before earning their commission.

19. Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line,* 202-3.

20. "Seeing the Elephant" was a euphemism for experiencing combat for the first time.

21. Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line,* 262.

22. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 71-72.

23. Davila Damasio, "A Comparative Analysis of Unit Cohesion in Vietnam" (Master's Thesis, US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 2014), 52.

24. Damasio, "A Comparative Analysis in Vietnam," 55.

25. Damasio, "A Comparative Analysis in Vietnam," 53.

26. Damasio, "A Comparative Analysis in Vietnam," 38.

27. Karl Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to War* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2011), 75.

28. Marlantes, *What it is Like to Go to War,* 75.

29. Moore and Galloway, *We Were Soldiers,* 343.

30. Moore and Galloway, *We Were Soldiers,* 344.

31. Karnow, Vietnam, 23; Richard A. Gabriel and Paul L. Savage, *Crisis in Command: Mismanagement in the Army* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 45-6.

32. Ralph Puckett with D. K. R. Crosswell, *Ranger: A Soldier's Life* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2017), 169-70.

33. Puckett and Crosswell, *Ranger,* 169.

34. James Webb, *I Heard My Country Calling* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 263-265.

35. James R. McDonough, *Platoon Leader: A Memoir of Command in Combat* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 42, 83.

36. William Gardner Bell, *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1969* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1973), 36.

37. Bell, *Historical Summary 1969,* 35.

38. McDonough, *Platoon Leader,* 241-243.

39. Kindsvatter, *American Soldier,* 120.

40. Karnow, *Vietnam,* 468-473; McDonough, *Platoon Leader,* 161.

41. Karnow, *Vietnam,* 466.

42. McDonough, *Platoon Leader,* 38, 83.

43. McDonough, *Platoon Leader,*38.

44. Starry, *Press On,* 1095.

45. Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line,* 295.

46. McDonough, *Platoon Leader,* 68.

47. Savage and Gabriel, *Crisis in Command,* 13, 23, and "Tables and Figures" show desertion rates, fragging, and drug usage. See also Marlowe, WRAIR 1, VII-8, VII-15.

48. Starry, *Press On,* 1251.

49. Richard S. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks: Combat Leadership in the American Expeditionary Forces* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012), 326.

50. Faulkner, *The School of Hard Knocks,* 326-7.

51. Lewis Sorley, "Introduction," in *Press On! Selected Works of General Donn A. Starry,* ed. Lewis Sorley (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2009), xiv-v.

52. *Starry, Press On,* 560.
53. *Starry, Press On,* 1004.
54. *Starry, Press On,* 1004-5.
55. *Starry, Press On,* 1221.
56. *Starry, Press On,* 1005-6.
57. Unfortunately, the personal papers of the Chiefs of Staff of the US Army during the 1980s were unavailable at the time of writing due to digitization at the United States Army Heritage and Education Center. Without reading their words and thoughts, one can only speculate that implementing COHORT at the company-level was an attempt to gain buy-in from the key players in the US Army and in Congress before expanding the a more appropriate level as described by General Starry.

Chapter 5
The History of COHORT from 1981 to 1995

> Several studies have noted a correlation between strong unit cohesion and soldier loyalty and effectiveness, both on and off the battlefield. In an attempt to reduce the high personnel turnover rate associated with the current individual replacement system, the US Army in fiscal year 1981 began to test twenty Cohesion Operational Readiness and Training (COHORT) companies. The basic goal of the reform is to have soldiers spend more time in a single unit than the current individual replacement system allows.
>
> —Karl E. Cocke et al., *Department of the Army Historical Summary: Fiscal Year 1981*

The stated goals of the COHORT, or new manning system, was "to reduce turbulence and enhance cohesion by keeping soldiers and their leaders together in units longer, and to foster a greater sense of belonging and *esprit* by providing career-long affiliation with a specific Regiment or institution."[1] The US Army believed a move to a unit-based system would not only achieve the previous goals but also improve readiness.[2] COHORT began with a phased implementation by first converting some test companies and then was expanded to battalions, brigades, divisions, and ultimately the active US Army overall. This chapter will trace the development of COHORT from its start through its planned full-scale implementation with the issuance of Army Regulation 600-83, *The Manning System* in 1986.

The Post-Vietnam Army

1973 was the first year of the all-volunteer force. The US Army began planning its transition from a draftee US Army in the middle of the Vietnam War. Planning began in 1968, even though the last draftees joined the US Army in 1972. The US Army had difficulty in meeting its recruiting gates, which led to lower standards in order to attract more recruits. The anti-war mentality resulted in the loss of many reserve officer training corp programs, including Stanford and Harvard Universities.[3] Both republicans and democrats wanted to put Vietnam behind them, and the budget decreased during the 1970s.[4]

In addition to budgetary concerns, there were still very few career non-commissioned officers. Before the war, units had a healthy population of non-commissioned officers that could train and mentor junior enlisted soldiers, and, if needed, discipline them. Following Vietnam, many units

had a shortage of experienced, disciplined non-commissioned officers who were willing and able to discipline their soldiers.[5] The problem was so severe that, "Reenlistments by young sergeants with between four and six years of service fell from 47 to 11 percent between 1965 and 1968."[6] Although that was during the Vietnam War, those sergeants became the future senior non-commissioned officers of the 1970s and early 1980s.

Additionally, the US Army's policies still focused on moving leaders frequently to give them experience in multiple units and formation types. Drugs were rampant, along with other crimes.[7] Some leaders could not go into soldier barracks unarmed.[8] After several years, the problems created by Vietnam spilled over into America and Germany, making bases dangerous for women and children without men at home to help protect them.[9] As the system changed from the draft to the volunteer force, the US Army looked at how to improve soldier quality instead of increasing numbers.

As described above, the US Army faced many problems during the 1970s. In a continuation of the draftee period, personnel moved often. A significant source of the turbulence was the need to fill individual slots in both Korea and Europe.[10] One derogatory term of the time was "homesteader," an epithet applied to soldiers without overseas duty assignments. Brian McAllister Linn wrote, "The Cold War army's great size, frequent rotations, and rigid career track prevented any individual identification with a unit or post."[11] Tours in Korea were on a one-year basis, and tours in Europe varied but were primarily two-years. The need to fill these assignments caused a trickle effect of moves across the US Army. Movements became so frequent that in November 1980, the US Army introduced a reenlistment bonus program to stabilize "careerists of rank E-6 and below…for at least twelve months" at one duty location.[12] Writing several years later, Lieutenant General Robert M. Elton said, "In the Republic of Korea, for instance, 2nd Infantry Division non-COHORT units experience about 93 percent turnover every year. In Europe and the continental United States (CONUS), the 18-month average in non-COHORT units approaches 80 percent."[13] Next is the individual system.

The US Army used an individual system geared towards efficiency and maintaining a certain level of manpower that could quickly respond to changing priorities.[14] One side effect of this system was turbulence that "made it extremely difficult to foster cohesion and group solidarity, especially in the small combat arms units which were the cutting edge of the US Army. Personnel turbulence inhibited improved combat effectiveness and impeded commanders in their efforts to develop and maintain cohesive, well-trained units."[15] Other problems included an inability to meet recruitment/retention goals without lowering standards and relatively low

pay and benefits. These problems and the experiences of the US Army's leading generals of the previous decades led to the development of a unit-based personnel system, called "project COHORT."

Project COHORT

General Edward "Shy" Meyer wanted to look at non-monetary means to recruit and retain high-quality soldiers and directed the US Army to test a unit-based system. "In 1979, when the idea of deliberately creating cohesive units was first proposed, Morris Janowitz, the dean of American military sociology, said: 'The question is not how to create cohesion. Armies have known how for centuries. The question is why the American Army doesn't want cohesive units.'"[16] General Meyer wanted the US Army's personnel policies to "foster unit bonding, cohesion, competence, self confidence [*sic*], and trust in combat units that would 'ensure effective combat performance and organizational coherence while avoiding high levels of psychological breakdown in battle.'"[17] Project COHORT is next.

Project COHORT was initiated by US Army Forces Command led by the office of the deputy chief of staff for operations and plans in 1981.[18] The first COHORT company created by the US Army was established at Fort Knox, Kentucky, in March 1981 and its complement of soldiers trained at Fort Carson, Colorado.[19] The US Army started the COHORT experiment with a total of 20 companies. Enlistees completed training as a group before meeting their leaders. "One station unit training and the COHORT system are designed to support the development of horizontal cohesion."[20] After training, units remained in the United States for fifteen months before deploying overseas for eighteen months.[21] The core of the program was stability within junior enlisted ranks. Initially, leaders were supposed to remain in the unit for the life cycle.

In addition to keeping companies together, the US Army, led by the manning task force, also planned to convert to a regimental system inspired by the United Kingdom and Canada.[22] The goal was to reduce the number of regiments within the active US Army to the point where each regiment would have four to six battalions. US soldiers could then move duty assignments across the world without having to change regiments. Not only would soldiers remain in the unit, but recruiting and headquarters would have a regional flavor.[23] For example, if a regiment was based in Texas, most members of that unit would also come from Texas, and the subordinate battalions would rotate to the same overseas duty location in Germany or Korea. The goal of both COHORT and the regimental system was to increase cohesion within units. The US Army intended them as independent but multiplicative efforts.

The goals of the new manning system "were to reduce personnel turbulence, to improve cohesion, and to enable soldiers to cultivate a meaningful and lasting sense of belonging to one of the US Army's valorous and distinguished regiments."[24] The US Army looked back at World War II and the pride some soldiers had for the regiments in which they served and wanted to duplicate that feeling. As shown previously, the typical experience for soldiers in World War II was not necessarily that of unit continuity, including forcing some wounded to go absent without leave to return to their units and friends. The US Army missed the point because unit pride depends on both unit accomplishments and the people that performed those actions. Reflagging units across the US Army to match a distinguished history that does not resonate with the soldiers is not different from the numerous organizational changes made by the US Army over its 245-year history.

The US Army did not condemn the individual system for its damaging effects. The official history said, "there were some good reasons for sustaining the force" using an individual system despite the reduction in "the potential for developing the enduring commitment and relationships so characteristic of the World War II experience."[25] Rather than fully acknowledge the weaknesses that require change, the US Army started to promote COHORT without first explaining that the success won in World War II came at a very high human cost. The new unit manning system was an attempt to correct the mistakes of the past before the next big war.

The regimental system was another experiment designed to improve cohesion based on Canadian and British examples. The US Army technically had a regimental system, combat arms regimental system, since 1957; there were no regimental headquarters or "home base."[26] The four concepts developed by the training and doctrine command included "superimposing regiments on existing brigades," giving a colonel of the regiment administrative powers, establishing "regimental headquarters separate from tactical units," and "converting from a division-based US Army to one founded on combat, combat support, and combat service support regiments."[27] Concept alpha, the superimposition of regiments, was the measure decided upon in 1983. The US Army conducted a feasibility study to determine if battalion-level rotations were possible. Additionally, it examined "the implications of regimental affiliation, recruitment, training, unit rotation, personnel, and logistical management."[28] The cohesion and stability study is next.

The US Army cohesion and stability study, conducted concurrently, "identified current personnel policies that undermined unit stability and cohesion," and concluded that the current individual system impeded both

stability and cohesion.[29] The study recommended the implementation of a unit-based system. It recommended a complete shift to a regimental structure, "including aligned battalions, home-based careerists, regional recruiting, and stateside-overseas rotation."[30] This would have completely changed the structure and culture of the US Army from one of individual equity and efficiency into one focused more on the human factors of regional affinity and cohesion. The US Army concluded that "the individual replacement system [was] the predominant cause of turbulence, and personnel management by unit as the most positive corrective action that could be taken."[31] The US Army also determined, "That the problem of personnel turbulence was inherent to the system, requiring basic philosophic changes rather than modifications to present procedures."[32] The US Army's goal in 1982 did not merely tweak the system, it was a complete shift to a new paradigm. Unit readiness and human factors were measured in terms of stability and unit loyalty with emphasis on the management of units rather than individuals.[33]

COHORT's Three-Year Lifecycle

Before discussing the year-by-year history of COHORT, this section will describe the three-year look at COHORT and how units conducted training after establishment. COHORT units serve as a model of how to establish new units during times of rapid expansion, in addition to providing insights into the COHORT experiment itself.

The new manning system required a different way of organizing units for the long-term. Battalions moved some non-commissioned officers and officers out of their formations and stabilized and in-processed others to serve as cadre. In-processing was centralized, and the company was formed with all its personnel simultaneously. The intent was for non-commissioned officers and officers to join the company early and receive extensive training on how to interact with the soldiers under this new system. For the next three years, the unit was supposed to remain intact with the only losses due to discharges or compassionate reassignments.[34] Eighteen months of the cycle was spent in the continental United States with the remaining eighteen months outside of the continental United States. The other format was "units going to short-tour assignments would serve twenty-four months in the continental United States, then deploy…and serve out the remaining portion of its three-year life cycle."[35] Units conducted training and deployed as a cohesive team. At the end of three years, the company was disbanded, and a new group of cadre and first-term soldiers recreated the company. The US Army wanted COHORT companies to "embody the principles of stabilization (in a unit) and unit

movement. Both these factors foster *esprit de corps*—that intangible 'why men fight.'"[36] The US Army intended that the first three years be a test period to identify problems and create solutions and modify the "hundreds of personnel policies…geared to the individual, not the unit."[37]

AR 600-83, *The New Manning System—COHORT Unit Replacement System* was published in October 1986. It incorporated many solutions to problems that had been identified earlier and provided "Policy guidance on the peacetime procedures involved in the transition from an individual replacement system to a unit replacement system."[38] Both companies and battalions fell under the unit life cycle. Battalion life cycles were up to six years. As described earlier, "first-term enlistees are recruited together for a specific COHORT unit and undergo initial entry training as a group. They then proceed to a US Army forces command unit where they are joined with a cadre to form a stabilized unit that will train together and deploy overseas on a fixed schedule."[39] Soldiers were locked into the unit for the duration, although internal moves were still allowed. The US Army recognized that the transition to the unit manning system "may generate unavoidable startup turbulence."[40] At the time of publication, the only units under this system were combat arms troops. Combat support and combat service support units awaited a later date. The illustrations section includes visual depictions of all four models of COHORT: outside the continental United States long tour for 18 months, outside the continental United States short tour of 12 months, the battalion rotation model of 36-month overseas tours, and the battalion non-deployment model.

The first step was to determine which company or battalion would be a COHORT unit. Next, all recruits joined the US Army using a 3-year plus training contract under the COHORT enlistment option. This enabled disbanding the unit later at the end of its three-year life cycle. Support soldiers, such as supply clerks, were recruited under similar terms and conducted training and follow-on assignments as "packages" of more than ten soldiers. All combat arms soldiers trained together in the same company at a single station for unit training. The US Army anticipated losses during basic training due to various causes; therefore, no replacements were necessary. The only exception was if the unit's strength fell below acceptable levels in the beginning because of no-shows. In that case, the reception station would add recruits to the company before starting basic training.[41]

The cadre for the unit picked up the company from basic training and then returned to its permanent duty station. Cadre selection occurred in the months before picking up the company from within an installation. This caused turbulence within other units on the post because of the high visibility of the COHORT initiative. The goal was for cadre to arrive earlier

than 60 days before the arrival of first-term enlistees. non-commissioned officers could serve in a position one grade higher, both to help with the promotion of junior soldiers and to address a lack of non-commissioned officers. “As a general rule, substitution by-grade of at least 50 percent of the E5 and E6 positions and 75 percent of the E7 positions is desired.”[42] For example, a sergeant could serve as a squad leader, a position coded for a staff sergeant.

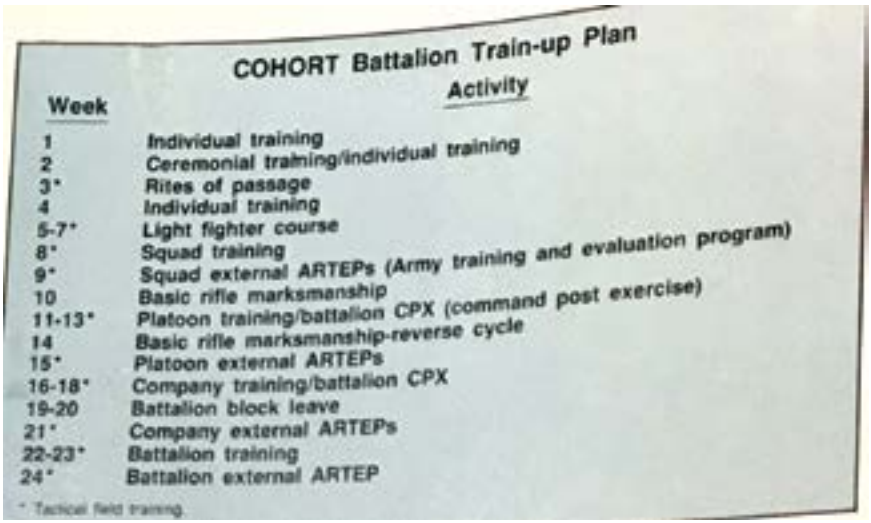
No officers with greater than 12 months at a duty station were eligible for assignment to COHORT units. “The intent of the COHORT program is to keep the initial term soldiers and their leaders together in the COHORT unit for the 3-year life cycle. The goal will be to stabilize officers in the same manner as initial termers and non-commisssioned officer cadre for the 3-year life cycle.”[43] As discussed in multiple studies in chapter 6, this policy was not adequately enforced. Regardless, officer reassignments and changes of command were not to occur within 90 days of deployment. One of the critical questions for the success of the COHORT experiment was the amount of time it took to train units to be ready for combat.

Once the cadre formed, they went through a train-up without soldiers, including lessons on the “unique leadership and training challenges that confront the leader in a COHORT unit.”[44] Lieutenant Colonel George R. Dunn, commander of the first COHORT battalion in the US Army (3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry, 7th Infantry Division (Light)), wrote about the process in an article published in *Army Magazine* called, “COHORT, Born and Bred.” This supplies an excellent example of how training occurred and is likely representative of other units. See Figure 5.1. for the train-up plan. The train-the-trainer program that his battalion cadre went through lasted six-weeks before they attended the light leader’s course for four-weeks at Fort Benning, Georgia. After their graduation, they traveled across Fort Benning, Georgia, to subsequently attend their soldiers’ graduation from one station unit training. He wrote, “From these two events, the true cohesiveness of this unit was born.”[45]

As can be seen in Figure 5.1., 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry was complete with all training and certified to perform its combat mission after twenty-four weeks of training, including two weeks of block leave and nineteen and a half weeks in the field. The plan expanded to 40 weeks when accounting for maintenance and other requirements such as “in-processing, ceremosnies, command post exercises, one station unit training add-on testing, expert infantry badge training/testing and reserve component annual training support.”[46] After initial training, the battalion focused on squad-level training, including an external squad evaluation. The battalion successfully had 25 of 27 squads pass their US Army training and

evaluation program the first time; the other two squads passing during retraining. All platoons passed their US Army training and evaluation program during platoon training. Afterward, the battalion conducted expert infantry badge training, with 35 out of 158 qualified soldiers receiving the award.[47] Block leave came next, followed by company level US Army training and evaluation programs and then a training rotation at Camp Rilea, Astoria, Oregon, for battalion level training.

The capstone exercise was the battalion's 10-day external US Army training and evaluation program and battalion live fire. Dunn said, "The exercise was highly successful as each soldier felt a personal responsibil-



COHORT Battalion Train-up Plan

Week	Activity
1	Individual training
2	Ceremonial training/individual training
3*	Rites of passage
4	Individual training
5-7*	Light fighter course
8*	Squad training
9*	Squad external ARTEPs (Army training and evaluation program)
10	Basic rifle marksmanship
11-13*	Platoon training/battalion CPX (command post exercise)
14	Basic rifle marksmanship-reverse cycle
15*	Platoon external ARTEPs
16-18*	Company training/battalion CPX
19-20	Battalion block leave
21*	Company external ARTEPs
22-23*	Battalion training
24*	Battalion external ARTEP

* Tactical field training

Figure 5.1. Training Plan.

Source: George R. Dunn, "COHORT, Born and Bred," *Army Magazine* (March 1987): 44.

ity for the success of the unit. This was a high-stress exercise that provided a superb learning experience for leaders and soldiers alike."[48] At that point, the battalion was fully certified and ready for worldwide deployment. Dunn said:

> The battalion could have deployed to perform its combat mission five months after its activation. With the completion of its external US Army training and evaluation program four months later, it was deemed fully combat-ready. It now has over two years to

> achieve even higher levels of training and readiness than ever before thought reasonable for a similar unit. Second-generation light infantry COHORT battalions will take much less time to be fully combat-ready because the chain of command will already be indoctrinated in light infantry tactics and techniques and a multi-echelon approach to training can be adopted sooner.[49]

Dunn concludes by estimating that future battalions will be ready after 120 days.

One primary reason behind COHORT was to improve operational readiness. A standard COHORT unit was unready for up to six months, but then it enjoyed 30 months of ever-increasing readiness. It did this by the following means:

> Enhancement of combat readiness is accomplished by providing a stabilized personnel environment which allows the commander to train his COHORT unit to increased levels of proficiency, without the problems of a random flow of inexperienced soldiers into the unit with the simultaneous outflow (also on a random basis) of the experienced, trained soldiers. By contract, the individual replacement system allows a commander to sustain unit proficiency at a level inversely proportional to the personnel turnover rate. Under the COHORT unit system, there is a trade-off for the potential of increased combat readiness. The unit may experience periods of reduced readiness or reduced proficiency at specific points during the unit life cycle. Because these periods are predictable, and there is overall stability, the commander can plan for his unit's "downtime," much as is done for periodic scheduled maintenance of weapon systems in the US Army's inventory. In addition, he can more readily influence and predict the level of unit readiness during the periods between critical nodes.[50]

This enhancement required a change of culture from being ready "all the time" to a more cyclic readiness. The regulation discussed three periods of reduced readiness for COHORT units: replacement of first-term soldiers, replacement of leaders, and deployments or rotations. The US Army authorized COHORT units to report the lowest readiness category during these three periods. Deploying COHORT units would be filled to at least 90 percent strength six-months before movement with "top-off" packages.[51]

Some of the other matters discussed in Army Regulation 600-83 included logistics, housing, family support, and schooling. Because CO-

HORT units rotated overseas together, they moved with family members in an abbreviated time. COHORT companies had the potential to overwhelm installations unprepared for their arrival. Only personnel were rotated outside the continental United States without unit equipment, necessitating property inventories on either side of the rotation.[52] Housing rules were relaxed for COHORT soldiers, including those "not normally authorized housing, that is, private first class and below with less than 2 years service."[53] The US Army emphasized the importance of families in transferring to the COHORT system, with the hope that family bonding would increase "predictability in their assignments, and through career-long affiliation, narrow the circle of personal and professional association of the soldier and family."[54]

Additionally, soldiers could not apply to career-enhancing schools during the first two years of the unit lifecycle. Exceptions included applying to become a warrant or commissioned officer, regardless of the source. Most professional schooling, such as the officer advance course, required the return of the soldier to the unit.

At disestablishment, soldiers had one of three choices: leave the service, re-enlist to join another unit, or remain in the new COHORT company. Not all junior enlisted soldiers had a three-year plus training contract. Officers and non-commissioned officers were not supposed to be assigned to back-to-back COHORT units without permission from the commander of the US Army military personnel center. Those soldiers outside the continental United States at the end of their overseas tour would be reassigned to continental United States units. If they had time remaining outside of the continental United States, their assignments were determined by their command. This created a problem because COHORT disestablishment resulted in many junior enlisted soldiers remaining because of the shorter tour length for COHORT companies. The company then closed and awaited the arrival of the new cadre.[55]

United States Army Regulation 600-83 and the account by Lieutenant Colonel George Dunn provide a good understanding of the "nuts and bolts" of the COHORT system. The primary, "Goal of the new manning system is the maintenance of the cohesive fighting team; therefore, personnel actions will be processed with a view toward organizational needs."[56] United States Army Regulation 600-83 issued guidance that promoted unit readiness over individual concerns. The main issue was that the regulation did not affect every unit in the US Army, only a select few. So, while officers and non-commissioned officers were assigned to COHORT units based on their availability to remain for the duration, there was still a perception that their individual timeline mattered a great deal, and CO-

HORT would damage their careers. The next step in understanding what happened with COHORT is the year-by-year history of the experiment from 1982 until the mid-1990s.

A Year-by-Year History of COHORT to the End of the Cold War

At the end of 1982, the twenty units designated as COHORT were scattered around the US Army. The first two units to deploy outside the continental United States joined the 2d Armored Division in Garlstedt, Germany, in late September 1982; both came from Fort Carson, Colorado. One was B Company, 6th Battalion, 32nd Armor, and the other was C Battery, 1st Battalion, 19th Field Artillery. When C Battery arrived in Germany, they joined the 14th Field Artillery.[57] The other twenty-seven COHORT companies in existence in 1982 were located in eight posts across the country: Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Fort Ord, California; Fort Carson, Colorado; Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Fort Hood, Texas; Fort Lewis, Washington; Fort Riley, Kansas; and Fort Polk, Louisiana.[58] Planned overseas locations included Boeblingen, Garlstedt, Goeppingen, and Neu Ulm in Germany; Vicenza, Italy; and Fort Wainwright, Alaska.[59] General Meyer "approved project COHORT in April 1981 and the expansion to 80 COHORT companies in July 1982 and to 110 COHORT companies in June 1983."[60] By fiscal year 1985, the US Army wanted to have a total of eighty rotating companies.[61]

Even with the deployment of the first two companies, the US Army acknowledged the unique circumstances of the COHORT units. It established provisions for them to be authorized housing while assigned outside the continental United States despite a short rotation time.[62] The Unit Replacement System Analysis I, completed in January 1982, essentially gave US Army leaders the green light to expand COHORT up to the battalion-level. The study found unit rotation would significantly improve overall personnel stability and had no show-stopping problems with unit rotation.[63] It does identify several costs, including "the need for more recruits, and higher dollar costs. Individual replacement remains a significant aspect of the concept and must be managed along with unit rotation."[64] Armed with this information, the US Army continued implementing COHORT.

At the same time, the US Army wanted to convert from the old combat arms regimental system, as mentioned earlier. Whereas some initial COHORT companies switched regiments during their overseas posting, the eventual goal was for soldiers to spend their career entirely within one regiment minus the time required for other duties such as serving as a drill sergeant or recruiter. Even then, soldiers should return to the same regiment even if in a new location. Initially, the US Army only planned on us-

ing this system with combat arms troops, specifically the infantry, cannon field artillery, armor, and air defense branches.[65] The goal was to have four total battalions in each regiment, with two serving inside the continental United States and two outside of the continental United States. The US Army wanted to end its longstanding history of unit affiliation turbulence through reactivation, expansion, and contraction so soldiers could "develop a sense of belonging to a distinguished and legendary regiment."[66] Otherwise, soldiers shuffling from one regiment to another shift loyalties with each move. Recurring assignments were designed to increase a soldier's regimental affiliation to "change a soldier's focus from 'mine' to 'ours' without affecting the current…organization."[67] The two programs, COHORT and the American regimental system, were considered separate but complementary.

In 1983 the US Army planned to convert ten percent of units to the new manning system. Other significant modernization changes that coincided were the Division 86 conversion and "the continuous infusion of new materiel."[68] An article in *Army Magazine* stated, "Another reason for keeping new manning system activity to a relatively low level during this period is the US Army's current preoccupation with absorbing new types and greater quantities of equipment and transforming major combat formations to new types of organization."[69] Korea and the 2d Infantry Division received a COHORT artillery battalion and two COHORT infantry companies for the first time.[70] Out of the 52 total companies, 10 were deployed outside of the continental United States, with eight in Europe. The US Army created 25 new companies in 1982. At this point, the US Army's "field evaluation…indicated that a company-level replacement system became unsustainable in the long-tour areas, [and so] the US Army initiated plans to begin a battalion level COHORT system."[71] The company-level replacement involved too many variables to manage, including the difficulty in providing housing to COHORT soldiers in Europe for their shorter tours.

Additionally, the US Army approved sixty-four regiments and created the first seven as the initial step in implementing the US Army regimental system. Finally, the US Army decided to increase the COHORT units from just the combat arms to also include combat support and combat service support units.[72] At this point, despite a few hiccups, indicators showed that the principles behind COHORT were successful, and senior leaders from the chief of staff down fully supported the move to the new manning system.

In 1984 all measures continued to show the promise of the COHORT system in improving unit morale and limiting personnel moves with CO-

HORT units.[73] The Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Lieutenant General Robert M. Elton, published an extensive article in *Army Magazine* describing the plans for the unit manning system. As a result, the US Army planned additional expansion of the new manning system.[74] At the end of the year, the US Army added 42 companies or batteries with 4,396 personnel.[75]

> As of 30 September, 1984, there were 57 COHORT units assigned to Forces Command,19 overseas, two enroute to training centers, ten in initial entry training, and 14 had completed life cycles. Twenty-five were at Fort Ord, California; while Fort Carson, Colorado, had eight; Fort Riley, Kansas, twelve; Fort Lewis, Washington, six; Fort Bragg, North Carolina, two; Fort Campbell, Kentucky, two; and Fort Hood, Texas, two.
>
> Overseas units included one in the Southern European Task Force; 172nd Brigade, one; 2nd Armored Division (Forward), three; 8th Infantry Division, three; 2nd Infantry Division, seven; and 1st Infantry Division (Forward), four.[76]

The 2d Battalion, 5th Field Artillery at Fort Riley, Kansas, was the first battalion-sized COHORT unit. The US Army planned on adding seven battalions during the fiscal year 1985 before beginning the new manning system battalion rotation program, a plan to rotate battalions to duty stations that were outside of the continental United States.[77] The US Army continued to see promise in the COHORT concept and planned to expand it further in the years to come.

The US Army regimental system in 1984 expanded to a total of 27,000 soldiers in fifteen regiments out of the 64 that were planned.[78] In a decision on 29 June 1984, after less than two years as a policy, the US Army regimental system received a blow from a nod to the individual rotation system by no longer allowing first-term soldiers to affiliate with a specific regiment. The intention was to enable "soldiers to experience service in several regiments before their first [re-]enlistment and commitment to a particular regiment."[79] This was a significant change in the program. The original intent behind the regimental system was to limit the number of associations soldiers had to make to increase pride in one unit rather than share loyalties across many regiments. Although the units selected for the US Army regimental system were the most prestigious, the US Army chose to shutter others with nearly as long a history, but with more connections to current soldiers. Unit history must matter to the personnel within the unit for it to influence pride and *esprit de corps*.[80]

To test the new manning system on a large-scale, the US Army designated the Fort Ord, California based 7th Infantry Division as the first division to implement COHORT in every brigade instead of individual companies within non-COHORT battalions. The 1984 Light Infantry White Paper directed the change in structure from a standard infantry division into a new form, the light division. It was to be manned and equipped differently, including switching from an individual manning system to the new manning system.[81] The Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, created multiple schools to support the light division, including a fifteen-week single station unit training for COHORT soldiers to begin in fiscal year 1985.[82]

As early as 1981, several companies of the 7th Infantry Division were designated COHORT and directed to rearrange personnel to implement the experiment. After the 1984 announcement, the entire division changed into a COHORT unit in the fiscal year 1985. Another change was the addition of another brigade to the division's structure. In a short time, the 7th Infantry Division had three challenging missions: convert from a standard to a light infantry division, implement the new manning system across all combat arms companies, and add a brigade to the footprint at Fort Ord, California. Any single action would have been a challenge for the division, and so facing all three obstacles simultaneously proved challenging, to say the least.

In 1985 the results from the new manning system "indicated…a greater sense of cohesion belonging [*sic*] and unit pride among soldiers and leaders alike; and that COHORT units showed higher personnel stability, lower attrition rates, and higher skill qualification test scores than the norm."[83] The year's plan called for an increase of 46 companies across the US Army, and the addition of thirteen COHORT battalions.[84] Eight battalions were scheduled to deploy in the most extensive rotation of battalions to Europe since the Gyroscope experiment of the 1950s.[85] Four battalions were formed in Europe and four in the United States before switching places during the summer of 1986.[86] Also, 1985 was the first year that the US Army was determined to include more types of formations than just the infantry, armor, and field artillery.[87] One crucial change occurred during this year as General Wickham decided to split the COHORT component and the regimental system.[88] The supporters of COHORT viewed the year as a success. They looked to the next year to consolidate gains and continue expansion across the US Army.

By 1986, General Wickham, the US Army's Chief of Staff, believed the COHORT and regimental system would aid soldier retention because of high *esprit de corps* it creates once it is fully implemented across the US

Army.[89] Additionally, the US Army realized that longer time horizons for COHORT units allowed for the commanders to think in longer terms with the results of achieving higher performance than in the individual legacy system. By the end of the calendar year 1985, the US Army activated 122 companies and 13 battalions through COHORT. This included four non-rotating battalions formed at Fort Ord, California, as part of the 7th Infantry Division (Light).[90] Over the remaining portion of the fiscal year 1986, the US Army activated 23 companies to replace units at the end of their life cycle.[91] The US Army activated 15 combat arms regiments by the end of fiscal year 1985. This system also expanded to training units and combat support and combat service support units.[92] One of the issues identified in 1986 concerned the distribution of soldiers in certain military occupational specialties.[93] Although the coercive moves were contradictory to the intent of the COHORT system, the discrepancy was severe enough to require action despite the new manning system.[94] One of the primary goals of the COHORT system was to improve combat effectiveness, and the US Army acknowledged the supremacy of training with the enhancement from stability and cohesion.[95] Rather than state that effectiveness comes from cohesion, cohesion is, in part, an effect of effectiveness. After several years of trial and error, the US Army published a guiding regulation, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System—COHORT Unit Replacement System,* on 27 October 1986. In AR 600-83, the Army designated eight battalions to rotate to Europe. It used the regimental affiliation system so that only five regiments were involved, the 41st Infantry, 5th Field Artillery, 5th Cavalry, 33rd Armor, and 325th Infantry.[96] Aided by the new publication, the US Army moved into 1987, looking to continue to expand the newly renamed unit manning system.

The year 1987 was significant for COHORT because the Chief of Staff of the Army, General Wickham, announced the expansion of the newly rebranded unit manning system to the entire US Army. The Historical Summary for 1987 is unclear because it states only 77 companies were designated as COHORT, and it mentions the same 13 battalions from the previous year.[97] All four active-duty light infantry divisions contained significant numbers of COHORT units. The year 1987 marked the conversion of the 25th Infantry Division to COHORT when the 5th Battalion, 14th Infantry, arrived in Hawaii.[98] According to the summary, no additional regiments converted to the regimental system that year.

The year 1988 marked the beginning of the end of COHORT. To address the problem of the one-year tour in Korea, 76 "traditional" companies formed in the United States for 24 months before deploying to Korea.[99] In the fiscal year 1988, General Vuono directed COHORT to expand

to 33 percent of division and corps companies by October 1991.[100] Sustained COHORT would grow to 288 companies across Europe, the United States, and the Pacific outside of Korea. By October of 1988, 281 COHORT companies had been created.[101] At the end of 1988 the regimental system was wholly decoupled from the COHORT experiment. After 1988 regiment is not important in understanding COHORT. Once the two were no longer united, the purpose of keeping soldiers in the same regiment was lost along with the intent of building *esprit de corps* over a their career.

In the apogee of COHORT, General Vuono, the Chief of Staff of the Army, approved the unit manning system on 24 February 1988. He changed the COHORT concept by separating it into three processes: traditional COHORT companies, as described earlier, sustained, or package replacement system battalions, and the COHORT system used in Korea. Whereas all of the junior enlisted soldiers remained together for three years in the traditional method, the package replacement delivered "packages composed of officer, non-commissioned officer, and initial term soldiers… every four months."[102] The US Army tested a 12-month package replacement system with the 7th and 10th Infantry Divisions (Light) instead of the three-year model. The 1989 Posture Statement contradicts the record by saying the 6th Infantry Division was the test unit rather than the 10th Infantry Division.[103] Units above battalion-level and table of distribution and allowances units remained filled by the individual system.[104]

One of the primary goals of COHORT was the improvement of personnel stability. Between fiscal years 1985 and 1989, stability for enlisted soldiers remaining in a unit for over a year increased from 39.4 percent to 45.6 percent, respectively.[105] General Starry discussed a training study conducted by Lieutenant General Frederic J. Brown. He said, "Where the turbulence rate exceeded 20 percent a quarter—a new face in the job every quarter—that not much meaningful training got done."[106] In 1989, the rate per quarter was around 13.6 percent, higher, but not over the threshold mentioned by General Starry.

Nevertheless, every two years, each unit within the US Army had a nearly brand-new composition of soldiers. Given the standard enlistment is three years, the rate was extremely high since the goal was to have cohesive units that trained together. The year 1989 is the final year the historical statements mention COHORT; 1989 also served as the COHORT's first test in combat.

Operation Just Cause in Panama featured the 7th Infantry Division (Light). By all measures, they performed as well as the 82nd Airborne Division. Despite problems in Panama, Colonel Keith Kellogg assumed command of Task Force Atlantic in the fall just a couple of months before

the fighting began according to the predetermined rotation.[107] Some units remained in Panama for months, while others deployed on short notice. One brigade was involved in the initial invasion, and the other two stayed in Panama for stability operations. In less than eight months, the US Army faced its next challenge, Operation Desert Storm.

Brinkerhoff discusses the end of COHORT during the time of Desert Storm and it is worth quoting at length. He said:

> The transfer of responsibility for COHORT from the deputy chief of staff for personnel to the deputy chief of staff for operations doomed COHORT. So, in 1989, the chief of staff of the US Army transferred staff responsibility to Lieutenant General Gordon R. Sullivan, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, on the basis that the unit manning system, of which COHORT was the main element, was a unit program and that the deputy chief of staff for operations was responsible for units. This was a completely new venture for the deputy chief of staff for operations, and the action was assigned to the director of force development.[108]

In a memorandum setting forth his "inclinations" with respect to the COHORT program, Sullivan said that COHORT offered the possibility for enhanced readiness through improved stability and cohesion and that there had been enough study—the US Army should "proceed with the PRS-12 sustained COHORT system for the light forces and the PRS-4 sustained COHORT system for all others [and] execute the Korea Traditional COHORT once for each 2d Infantry Division battalion for force modernization purposes only and then put them on the PRS-4 system."

The practical effect of Sullivan's memorandum was to kill COHORT. Since evaluation was to be limited to specific programs, all the deputy chief of staff for personnel-sponsored research work at the US Army Research Institute and the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research stopped, thus closing the door on opportunities to determine the program's effectiveness. Sullivan's instructions meant that the US Army was giving up on unit stabilization and settling for a mere management system of periodic packaged replacements that offered nothing in terms of unit stability or cohesion.

Some leaders involved in the action say that while the deputy chief of staff for personnel staff officers were having difficulty managing the real COHORT program, they supported the concept of unit stabilization, and that the deputy chief of staff for operations staff officers did not support the program and simply allowed it to run down.[109]

The end of COHORT may have begun with General Sullivan, but the package replacement system combined with the post-Cold War drawdown sealed COHORT's fate.

Package Replacement System

Package replacement was a notable change and concession from that of establishing entire COHORT companies, instead, this filled units, particularly in Europe, at four-month intervals. The "COHORT package replacement" executive summary states that turbulence prevents the development of cohesive units.[110] One of the primary reasons that the US Army changed this approach was because of the stress on European installations, and the commander of US Army Europe had recommended switching to a "package system."[111] Initially, companies would form as standard COHORT units and deploy after 12 months before sustainment personnel packages arrived. Units received soldiers in groups of four or more. "The key to successful implementation of the package replacement system is a shift in the mindset of commanders and staffs. We must understand that replacement by team, squad, platoon, or company size packages establishes a common goal for personnel replacement operations in peacetime and wartime."[112] During wartime, replacements would arrive organized into teams, crews, and squads before integration into larger units.[113] There is little difference between an individual system and one where new personnel arrive at a unit every four months. In both systems the teams, crews, and squads remained turbulent. Another finding of the report was that the standard length of enlistment caused problems in replacing soldiers. Because training lasted several months, and the US Army planned training on an annual basis, units would often lose soldiers after 32 or 33 months, thereby causing more turbulence.[114] The US Army created this compromise to alleviate concerns about unit readiness reporting and to ease the burden on overseas units that had difficulty in finding available space for soldiers within the disbanded COHORT companies.

Desert Storm, Stop-Loss, and Beyond

At the end of the Cold War, the US Army faced many challenges. The US Army's actions in Desert Storm, the use of stop-loss, and the force drawdown all played a role in both the legacy and end of the COHORT experiment. In the early 2000s, unit focused stability attempted to use the lessons of COHORT to switch to a unit-based system.

The years 1990 and 1991 presented the dual challenges of Desert Storm and the end of the Cold War to the United States Army. During the Gulf War, no individual soldiers rotated, only the units. The US Army de-

cided individuals would stay for the duration. Timothy R. Reese described the most critical aspect of Desert Storm for cohesion:

> The most obvious example of how good US Army tactical units can be, if given the time to train with one set of leaders and soldiers in the unit, is the Persian Gulf War of 1991. Whatever one's opinion of the operational and strategic aspects of the campaign, at the tactical level US Army units performed brilliantly. It is important to note that the US Army had several months to ready its units for combat. We did not deploy and fight within FM 25-100's mystical "band of excellence." We deployed, trained extensively, then fought at a time and place of our choosing against an incompetent foe. We were able to overcome the limitations of our personnel system and peak for the war.
>
> To get there [to Desert Shield and Desert Storm], many aspects of the current personnel system were put into abeyance—stop-loss, primary change of station moves, non-commissioned officer and officer professional schooling, retirement, and command tours. Why? Was it because we knew they would hobble our ability to field units that could fight and win? Was it because the prospect of a "real war" enabled us for a moment to see through the fog of our own mistakes? The months of unit training in the United States, Germany, or at the National Training Center were the most intense training and team-building experience most had ever experienced. What would have been the result if Saddam Hussein and his incompetent generals had continued their attack in August 1990, or if our units had to fight only hours or days after unloading at the ports in Saudi Arabia? What would have happened if non-commissioned officers and officers continued to go to schools and left their units days or weeks before we attacked?[115]

The US Army retained over 150,000 reservists and 20,000 soldiers through stop-loss to meet the needs of Desert Shield and Desert Storm to deploy units and keep them together for the duration of the conflict.[116] Each month stop-loss retained 3 to 4,000 soldiers despite overall goals to reduce the force.[117] Desert Storm clearly showed the value of keeping soldiers together to train and fight with the same people. The lessons in unit cohesion fell to the wayside in the aftermath.

The US Army from 1992 to 1995 endured a forty percent reduction in force structure. The plan going into 1992 was a reduction from 5 corps and 28 divisions to 4 corps and 20 divisions by the mid-1990s.[118] The US

Army faced further cuts after the secretary of the US Army announced in December 1994 that the active component would only have 10 instead of 12 divisions. The US Army recognized the challenge inherent in reducing numbers drastically by reducing end structure by 42,000 soldiers per year, thereby increasing turbulence within remaining units.[119] The year 1992 actually had a much steeper loss than projected, reducing active-duty strength from 710,000 to 610,000.[120] From overseas, 66,000 soldiers with over 43,000 family members left Europe during fiscal year 1992. The 1994 Posture Statement stated, *"The Army cannot sustain a drawdown pace even close to that of last year without massive involuntary separations and a high risk of severely reducing the combat effectiveness of our units."*[121] The US Army faced a nearly insurmountable problem of personnel turbulence during the 1990s. In addition to personnel reductions, the US Army also faced the challenge of completing multiple rounds of base realignment and closing, in the process closing or realigning 154 bases, with a further 433 overseas.[122] This rapid reduction in forces prevented the US Army from maintaining COHORT units. After all, it is challenging to justify releasing excellent soldiers while keeping the lackluster performers only in the name of cohesion.

The US Army's Posture Statement in 1994 declared, "While our turnover of people has always been significant due to job rotations and separations, *the current pace is severely taxing the ability of many units and installations to keep routine operations on track."*[123] It further stated:

> Many US installations have experienced the turmoil associated with massive personnel movements. The resulting problems have been dealt with and minimized through the exemplary efforts of US Army leaders and all the support people who make personnel moves happen. *Our US Army is continuing to temper this turbulence by a steadfast commitment to our missions, while being sensitive to its impact on those leaving the US Army as well as on those who remain.* This is a leadership challenge as great as any we have faced.[124]

As the above quotes show, the drawdown was a significant cause of the end of COHORT. How could the US Army manage the COHORT with all the other changes? By 1996 the US Army was significantly reduced in size and capability by 64% from over 770,000 soldiers on active duty in 1989 to 495,000 soldiers. "Between fiscal years 1989 and 1994, the US Army eliminated one corps, six active component divisions, and two National Guard divisions."[125] The US Army also realigned units as a result of the reduction in the number of divisions, thus negating the new regimental

system's purpose to keep the units with the best history alive with enough battalions to enable rotation.

By 2001, 60 percent of personnel moves resulted from soldiers entering or leaving the service.[126] In 2002, continental United States units had a 15 percent personnel turnover rate every quarter, not including internal changes.[127] When combined with those internal moves, the turbulence rate likely exceeded General Brown's 20 percent rule. Reese, writing in 2002, noted the problems with the personnel system. He said:

> The biggest obstacle blocking our path to fielding effective combat units is the US Army's personnel system. Our personnel management system trains individuals in a wide variety of tasks over their professional lifetimes. We train individuals who belong temporarily to a unit. They move in and out of those units based on their personal professional development timeline. What the unit is doing is of little or no consequence. We count on having time for these individuals to coalesce into effective combat units when needed. Those individuals learn, perhaps counter-intuitively, to correct the system's own faults when lives are on the line. This requires large amounts of time, extensive retraining, last-minute changes in our personnel system, and luck. We got all four of these in 1990-91 in the Gulf. Our foes in the Balkans have not really put us to the test. Will any foe be that stupid again?[128]

In 2003, the US Army tried another COHORT-like initiative, called unit focused stability. The first unit chosen was the 172nd Brigade in Fort Wainwright, Alaska. It improved on the COHORT concept by allowing unit leaders discretion for developmental school attendance and by permitting changes in training units and unit leaders to account for stronger bonds among stabilized soldiers. One finding from Towell's "Forging the Sword" was that "it may be that well-trained and well-led units can tolerate some level of managed turbulence (albeit a much lower level than currently prevails) without sacrificing very much by way of combat capability."[129] Unit focused stability is no longer a part of the US Army.

Before unit focused stability and after the worst of the personnel cuts ended, Army Regulation 220-1, *Unit Status Reporting* from September 1997 eliminated COHORT from the US Army.[130] In the end, COHORT ended not with a bang but with a whimper. After the end of General Edward C. Meyer's term as chief of staff, "Competing priorities gradually stifled the COHORT initiative he had sponsored."[131] Although eliminated from the US Army officially, COHORT lived on both through later

policies such as stop-loss and unit deployments, and it was also widely analyzed. The next chapter addresses several studies of COHORT and the perceptions of it both during and after the experiment.

Notes

1. US Army, Army Regulation 600-83, *The New Manning System–COHORT Unit Replacement System* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), 3-4.

2. Karl E. Cocke, William G. Bell, James E. Hewes Jr., Young G. Chang, Edgar F. Raines, and Dwight D. Oland, *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1982,* ed. Christine O. Hardyman (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 230.

3. Lisa M. Krieger, "Stanford Ponders the Return of ROTC After Nearly Four Decades," Mercury News, 19 January 2011, accessed 18 February 2020, https://www.mercurynews.com/2011/01/19/stanford-ponders-the-return-of-rotc-after-nearly-four-decades/.

4. The defense portion of the discretionary budget decreased as a percentage of GDP. See Congressional Budget Office, "Budget and Economic Data," accessed 19 February 2020, https://www.cbo.gov/about/products/budget-economic-data#2.

5. Robert D. Heinl Jr., "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," *Armed Forces Journal,* 7 June 1971, accessed 27 April 2020, https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~furrg/Vietnam/heinl.html.

6. Robert K. Griffith Jr., *The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1997), 31, 166.

7. William Gardner Bell, *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1971* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1973), 62.

8. Heinl, "The Collapse of the Armed Forces."

9. Atkinson, *The Long Gray Line,* 311.

10. In 1980, the US Army had one division in Korea, and four divisions and three independent brigades in Europe compared to ten divisions CONUS. Karl E. Cocke, Ronald H. Cole, Romana M. Danysh, Detmar H. Finke, Terrence J. Gough, James E. Hewes Jr., Vincent C. Jones, Billy C. Mossman, Edgar F. Raines Jr., and Ronald H. Spector, *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1980,* ed. Lenwood Y. Brown (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1983), 7.

11. Linn, *Elvis's Army,* 316.

12. Karl E. Cocke, Detmar H. Finke, James E. Hewes Jr., Billy C. Mossman, James S. Nanney, Edgar F. Raines, and Paul J. Scheips, *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1981,* ed. Christine O. Hardyman (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1988), 85.

13. Robert M. Elton, "Cohesion and Unit Pride Aims of New Manning System," *Army Magazine* (October 1984): 222.

14. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 75.

15. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 75.

16. Marlowe, WRAIR 1, II-2. Morris Janowitz was one of the founders of military sociology and did much to write about the relationship between the

military and civilians. “Dean of military sociology” was an honorary title given to him by the authors of WRAIR 1. Some of his works include, *The Professional Soldier (1960) and The New Military; Changing Patterns of Organization (1964)*.

17. Edward C. Meyer, quoted in Kenneth C. Scull, “Cohesion: What We Learned from COHORT” (USAWC Military Studies Program Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1990), 1.

18. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 75.

19. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1981,* 86.

20. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 10.

21. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1981,* 86.

22. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1981,* 86.

23. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1981,* 87.

24. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 74.

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27. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 76.

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37. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 78-9.

38. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* i.

39. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 4.

40. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 5.

41. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 6-7.

42. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 8.

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45. George R. Dunn, “COHORT, Born and Bred,” *Army Magazine* (March 1987): 44.

46. Dunn, “COHORT, Born and Bred,” 45-46.

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48. Dunn, “COHORT, Born and Bred,” 45.

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50. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 21. The author has experienced the effects of this random turbulence many times. It is one of the major reasons for this manuscript.

51. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 7.

52. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 24.

53. US Army, AR 600-83, *The New Manning System,* 24.

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61. Robin L. Elder, "COHORT: Is Readiness a Cost?" (USAWC Military Studies Program Paper, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1988), 4.

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63. David R. Holdsworth and Stephen C. Rinehart, *Unit Replacement System Analysis I (URSA I)* (Bethesda, MD: US Army Concepts Analysis Agency, 1982), v-xii.

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66. Cocke et al., *Historical Summary 1982,* 80.

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68. Mary Ellen Condon-Rall, Department of the *Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1983,* ed. Cheryl Morai-Young (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1990), 4-5. Division 86 was a change in heavy division structure. Some of the new materiel included the Abrams tank and Bradley Fighting Vehicle.

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77. Oland, *Historical Summary 1984,* 152-3.

78. Oland, *Historical Summary 1984,*153.

79. Oland, *Historical Summary 1984,* 153.

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81. Chief of Staff, US Army, *White Paper 1984: Light Infantry Divisions* (Washington, DC: US Army, April 1984.).

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83. Karl E. Cocke, *Department of the Army Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1985,* ed. Marilee S. Morgan (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1995), 18.

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Chapter 6
Analyzing COHORT

> History, practical experience, common sense, and even our doctrine tells us that soldiers and leaders must train together as a unit, over long periods of time, to perform well in training or in combat. But we don't follow through. In fact, we can't follow through because our manning system won't let us. Intuitively we know it.
>
> —Timothy R. Reese, "The Blind Men and the Elephant"

As soon as COHORT and the new manning system were introduced, the US Army attempted to understand its implications. The US Army ordered Walter Reed Army Institute of Research to study COHORT units by conducting a series of five studies of the 7th Infantry Division. Numerous other authors analyzed COHORT both during and after the program ended. As Lieutenant General Elton said, "We appeared to be destroying cohesion in order to create it."[1] In the end, the analyses were conclusive that COHORT was effective at building horizontal cohesion at a small-unit scale, but many of the policies that had been implemented caused problems throughout the US Army.

This chapter is organized into five sections. The first section deals with the Walter Reed Studies and how the 7th Infantry Division changed over time. The second section looks at several additional reports written by the same authors of the Walter Reed Studies but are not part of the same series as the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research field evaluations. The third section identifies negative aspects of COHORT. Next, the paper examines the positive views of the new manning system. The fifth and closing section provides an overall analysis of the legacy of COHORT.

Walter Reed Studies

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research conducted a series of five studies of the 7th Infantry Division that examined the cohesion and performance of the units over time. "The evaluation of the human dimensions of the new manning system speaks to two broad questions: (a) What are the effects of COHORT on soldiers and their units? and (b) What are the effects of COHORT on soldier's families and communities?"[2]

Additionally, the study examines the battalion rotation system from and to overseas duty stations, reconstitution, unit climate, how spouses adjusted to the new system, and the effect on the new light infantry divi-

sions. Walter Reed sent out teams over a two year period and published their findings from November 1985 to October 1987.

Initially planned as 12 quarterly reports, only five reports were ever published. The survey looked at "soldier will" in seven categories: "company combat confidence, senior command confidence, small-unit command confidence, concerned leadership, sense of pride, unit social climate, and unit teamwork."[3] Walter Reed determined that "soldier will" was necessary because those with higher amounts of will "in their units also reported better life adjustment. These soldiers had greater life and US Army satisfaction, experienced greater personal well-being, less personal distress, less worry, and nervousness that interfered with work…and expressed more willingness to stay in their unit, to stay in the US Army, and to re-enlist."[4] As time passed, the tone of the reports changed from overwhelmingly positive to more apprehensive.

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research conducted the study using multiple research areas. They conducted extensive soldier surveys in both Europe and the United States of COHORT and non-COHORT soldiers. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research completed five iterations over three years to examine cohesion as measured through "soldier will" and to provide a comparison of COHORT and non-COHORT units. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research also surveyed spouses in three iterations over 18-months to examine soldier unit issues and how families responded to them. Additionally, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research studied battalion rotation to determine the impact of rotation on soldiers, families, and the communities where soldiers rotated to and from. Unit interviews conducted in person provided qualitative feedback in both individual and group interviews, particularly with commanders and their staff, but also with some junior enlisted soldiers. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research studied battalion reconstitution, morale, and cohesion. This provided information about the modification of the unit manning system to include 'packages' of new soldiers through the sustained COHORT model. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research wanted to identify the effects that were created on morale and cohesion with the introduction of new soldiers to a long-serving group of men. Finally, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research studied the 7th Infantry Division (Light) because the transformation of the division coincided with the introduction of COHORT battalions. During the five reports, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research focused on multiple areas as data and analyses became available.[5]

The first report, released in November 1985, indicated that COHORT increased the "soldier will" and horizontal cohesion when compared to conventional units. Consequently, "this is a bit like forecasting the out-

come of a presidential election on the basis of a few early returns."[6] The teams studied 20 percent of all battalions that were under the new manning system organized by 1985. Every COHORT unit had higher cohesion as measured in "soldier will" than non-COHORT units at the time of writing. The effect on families was also positive and clearly identified. An interesting finding was that many leaders failed to develop strong bonds between both families and units. "Unit leaders view their units in terms of discrete training/inspection events rather than in unit life-cycle terms which enable building ever stronger relationships throughout the life-cycle."[7] Even in the first report, the researchers identified issues in supporting COHORT units and soldiers at the installation and community levels, especially in Europe. Already many soldiers and families had a perception of the "haves" and "have-nots" in terms of soldier treatment, which caused negative feelings towards COHORT because of the perceived special treatment.

The data of the first report indicated how the variability in "soldier will" was due to "only one explanation: leadership at the company/battery level."[8] COHORT aimed to build cohesion; the researchers identified the inability of COHORT to replace good leadership and its subsequent role in building cohesion at the unit level. Leader deficiencies occur because of two possibilities. One conclusion was: "Cohesion is a battery/company phenomenon enacted on a stage set by battalion. The respective contributions of battalion and battery/company commanders to soldier will must be a principal focus of future research."[9] Later studies by Walter Reed Army Institute of Research delved deeper into this issue. The US Army assumed stability would create cohesion despite mediocre leadership. This second conclusion is worth quoting:

> A second possibility is that senior leaders fear COHORT units. The strong horizontal bonding among lower ranking soldiers challenges the established ways of leadership. Leaders, therefore, have to be…consistent, say what they mean, and mean what they say. The accretive training potential of COHORT units places increased demands on leaders [who are] used to the old ways of repetitive, low level training, demands that many find threatening to their own sense of competence. Soldiers who know each other well seem to expect their leaders to know them well, too. Leaders who fear knowing and being known find COHORT units an especially difficult challenge.[10]

This conclusion is fascinating because it demonstrates the deficiencies of training in an individual system. Only when soldiers remain together for extended periods can they reach the more complex levels of training. Ad-

ditionally, leader development plays an essential role in building cohesion. The final conclusion was that leaders lack the skills required to lead COHORT units, especially while dealing with families. The report's primary conclusion is the importance of leadership in building vertical cohesion, and to achieve the maximum potential from COHORT.

The second report, released in March 1986, addresses several of the same issues as the first report but was expanded to discuss the collective performance of COHORT units. It identifies the issues with the US Army's performance measures which create difficulties when comparing COHORT to non-COHORT companies and battalions. Additionally, although COHORT began in 1982, the battalion rotation plan failed to use the lessons learned from the company rotation. One issue was a general lack of information sharing, and another issue was the failure of units to think of spouses as participants, instead they were thought of as recipients in the unit and community. The US Army also failed to adequately educate non-commissioned officers and officers about the goals of COHORT and rotational programs. Additionally, the US Army failed to address misinformation circulating around the units, which fostered the fear of losing promotion and career opportunities as a result of serving in COHORT units. As discussed in the first report, leadership was the crucial factor in determining the success of cohesion-building efforts.[11]

The third report, released in June 1986, continued the positive analysis of COHORT. The data collected between May and December 1985 showes "COHORT soldiers and units faring better on "soldier will" measures than nonCOHORT [*sic*]. For example, COHORT soldiers showed higher vertical and horizontal cohesion than did nonCOHORT [*sic*] soldiers."[12] Another finding revealed that formal family support groups could not replace informal bonds among families. The family support groups focus on unit-level issues, and informal relationships help with individual problems.[13] A panel led by Lieutenant General (retired) Walter F. Ulmer reviewed the initial research and concluded:

> That the value of military cohesion for effective combat operations rests on historical experience, and need not be correlated with measures of garrison or training performance in order to command the continued attention of US Army leaders. The panel accepted as fact that military cohesion is an important inhibitor of psychological breakdown in battle. They emphasized the importance of this relationship above and beyond the scientific community's ability to demonstrate statistical relationships between cohesion and unit training performance.[14]

The panel also highlighted the difficulty in creating a new personnel system. Some panel members expressed concern that the success of COHORT and the light infantry divisions would come at the expense of other units, creating a sense of favoritism and resentment from non-COHORT soldiers.[15] Additionally, the report found that many families had adjustment difficulties at the 7th Infantry Division because of the extensive field training and unpredictable hours while in garrison.[16] Problems at home do not increase combat effectiveness. Overall the third report continued its positive assessment of the new manning system.

The fourth report, from December 1986, unequivocally states, "The COHORT concept works…[because the reports] show small but consistent differences in horizontal cohesion in favor of COHORT units. This finding is not remarkable; it simply confirms what all experienced commanders already know: the longer soldiers train together the better they know one another, and the better they perform."[17] The report further discusses the numerous issues and "organizational chaos" faced by COHORT units, including rotations to and from Europe, leader turbulence, equipment fielding and training, and "conflicting information, rumors, resentments (usually by their non-commissioned officers), and local disregard of the Department of the Army personnel policies."[18] The report offers three conclusions: first, horizontal cohesion requires stability. It can be built either with one station unit training trained soldiers, like in COHORT, or by offering stability. Cohesion also requires a challenging mission to units. Second, battalion rotation works, and the US Army can improve soldier performance by companies and staffs with cadre stabilization. Third, the report discusses the danger of losing the "whole unit manning system experiment…if battalion and company commanders cannot capitalize on the cohesion potential of replacement packets of soldiers who already know one another when they arrive."[19]

Walter Reed Army Institute of Research 4 indicates that COHORT focuses narrowly on junior enlisted stability and external stability, while significant leadership turbulence still took place. The US Army increased horizontal cohesion among battalions in Europe by stabilizing the personnel for some time after their return to the United States. The Walter Reed Army Institute of Research study did not understand how or why this occurred, because "If the task of creating cohesive units were as simple as pronouncing them stabilized, the US Army would have solved the cohesion problem long ago."[20] It then offers a conclusion that units with "definite tasks that were important, meaningful, motivating and which required well organized leadership" maintained cohesion despite information and leader turbulence.[21] This finding was significant because it questioned the

need to train all junior enlisted soldiers through one station unit training according to the COHORT model.

Two other lessons came out of the battalion rotation model studied in this report. "The first is the inability of the US Army to learn from such experiences. Each unit and community faced the rotation problem alone. Consequently, some of the same mistakes made in the earlier company rotations were repeated."[22] This is a significant observation. It shows that although battalion rotations can occur with a limited impact on soldiers, families, and communities, the US Army can and must use lessons from the past to minimize friction. "The second lesson learned is that a rotation is a peacetime, unit, permanent change-of-station move. It is not a deployment. It is the distinction between 'taking a trip' and 'moving.'"[23] The problem with treating a rotation as a deployment is the heartache imposed on families expected to settle in so quickly after arriving without their soldiers because of the required training. It is vital to give soldiers sufficient time to get acclimated because previous experience with rotations proved "that those units which took adequate time to resettle families…generally outperformed those units that rushed into training activities."[24] Units composed of married soldiers need to consider the soldier's loyalty to his family as that above his loyalty to the unit. Leaders who respect this quality build loyalty within the families which subsequently allows the soldiers to focus on their jobs during training rather than focus on worrying if their family is all right.

The final conclusion of the fourth report discussed the "most worrisome policy implication…in the unit replacement data" because company and battalion leaders had little understanding of how to leverage "buddy knowledge" to build unit cohesion.[25] Units receiving replacement packets would "fill spaces in total disregard of faces. Unless this mindset is changed, the whole unit manning system experience will melt back into the individual replacement system it was designed to eliminate."[26] The implication of this finding is the importance of training leaders to do business differently from what they knew. Units received intact packets of replacements, and despite "policy and pronouncements," men were assigned away from their buddies, destroying the cohesion built during basic training. Any policy change, like the introduction of the unit manning system, requires extensive training, education, and monitoring when it is vastly different than the previous experience of the leaders.

The fourth report also included two remarkably interesting discussions. The first was the executive summary of a report by Major Peter W. Kozumplik, entitled "Comparative Wartime Replacement Systems." By including this report, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research attempt-

ed to address concerns that COHORT was unsustainable during combat operations. Kozumplik describes the personnel systems used by the US Army up to World War II and compares a unit-based approach with an individual system, in addition to criticizing the US Army for not learning from previous experiences. He says, "post-war studies were critical and found serious shortcomings in replacement procedures. Victory each time obscured the urgency of the lessons. For this and other reasons, substantive improvement has never been made."[27] He discusses cohesion in terms of primary and secondary groups, in which primary groups are platoon level and below, and secondary groups range from the nation-state to the company. "Whereas Americans noted the US Army itself or the nation-at-large as being the secondary group, British and Canadian analysts focused on the secondary group roles of company, battalions, and regiments. This emphasis provides direct, institutional linkage between the nation/army and the primary group and it greatly eases the role of leadership."[28]

Kozumplik recommends three significant changes to the American system. First, the philosophy of personnel management should emphasize cohesion over strength through the emphasis on the secondary group, and place the needs of unit communities over individuals. He says, "The soldier should find fulfillment not as an individual but as a member of the community."[29] Second, he recommends restructuring the system for personnel management to focus on combat power. Additionally, align procedures for peace, mobilization, and wartime sustainment, decentralize the system, simplify it. Finally, he recommends integrating training units with the fighting units, so that replacements inculcate into the secondary culture from their first day. The US Army should facilitate replacement packages of assorted sizes, allowing individuals to rotate into and out of combat without losing cohesion, and enable reconstitution with a smaller number of core soldiers. "US Army doctrine currently requires a unit core of 60 to 70 percent of initial strength for reconstitution. Yet units supported by regimental replacement systems only required a unit core of 25 to 30 percent of initial strength."[30] These recommendations go far beyond the COHORT system in replacing the individual personnel management system.

The second report was entitled "Unit Reconstitution In A Wartime Scenario." This is a fascinating look at how COHORT could be used in combat. It addresses many of the perceived weaknesses and shortfalls of the concept, including how to integrate new recruits, relieve new soldier anxiety, and make units sustainable in combat. This study aimed to address "a critical but ignored consideration…is that assignment to a unit does not ensure integration into a team."[31] One finding of this report indicates "highly cohesive groups might be more receptive to accepting newcom-

ers, and do a relatively better job of orienting and integrating them."[32] As identified in earlier chapters, the US Army in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam followed primarily a "spaces over faces" approach to unit reconstitution. Men were assigned to combat units without deliberately building cohesion. Walter Reed Army Institute of Research studied the integration of replacement soldiers into COHORT companies and, through a series of interviews, determined the implications and effects during their reconstitution. The study found COHORT squads integrated soldiers much faster and with less anxiety than anticipated. New soldiers had to be assigned in buddy teams of two to three people to a squad. The company and platoon leadership had issues with this aspect of the experiment. Almost universally, all wanted to assign new soldiers to squads based on a "spaces over faces" basis. For example, if three squads in a platoon had seven men, and three new soldiers arrived, the leaders preferred to cross-level the recruits in the name of fairness and equity rather than keep them together.[33] The cohesion of developed teams enables soldiers to move internally with fewer issues than assigning new replacements without buddies.

The study's conclusions included assigning new soldiers to units in buddy teams of two to three soldiers to ease integration and reduce anxiety. When units experienced heavy casualties, the higher unit should conduct reconstitution internally because, within a platoon or squad, soldiers are well-acquainted, and "the advantages of maintaining an intact replacement group outweigh the potential problems. The high levels of cohesion we observed at the platoon level in COHORT units argues that soldiers could be shifted within the platoon to accommodate keeping small teams of replacements together."[34] Additionally, the reconstitution policy for the US Army should enforce cross-leveling with the above recommendation of buddy teams. The focus of unit leaders should be on building cohesion rather than maintaining an absolute strength in squads and platoons. The report also recommended that the US Army should train and educate officers and non-commisssioned officers on the importance of reconstitution and integration.[35] This report is fascinating because, when combined with the report by Kozumplik mentioned earlier, it addresses many of the potential pitfalls and concerns raised about the COHORT experiment, particularly as it relates to its viability during heavy casualties in war.

The final report opens with a foreword by then Lieutenant General William H. Harrison, commander of the 7th Infantry Division (Light) from January 1985 to July 1987. He reminds readers to remember three points: that the failures in the report were US Army failures and not those of individual units, that "[e]veryone involved tried their very best, and the 7th Infantry Division (Light) accomplished its myriad of missions despite

many challenges."[36] The report itself identifies "deficiencies in small unit cohesion, leadership, and US Army practice which have long been known and often addressed, but never solved."[37] Additionally, although the 7th Infantry Division accomplished all of its assigned missions, it still failed to succeed in the human dimensions because of "the way the US Army trains and constrains its leaders."[38] The report goes on to say the light infantry experiment failed in meeting its objective "to create 'high performance' units with ordinary soldiers."[39] The reason it failed to sustain success lay "within the constraints of its missions and conventional assumptions about leadership and leader/follower relationships."[40] As discussed in chapter 5, the 7th Infantry Division was overwhelmed by its simultaneous missions. It converted to a new light infantry configuration, served as the first COHORT division, maintained a high state of combat readiness, provided a blueprint for future conversions, and operated a rapid deployment force capability. The division had to accomplish all of this on a severely deficient post at Fort Ord, California. The report's primary lesson was that the mission which fell through the cracks was the emphasis on the human element, "even when [leaders] knew their behavior undermined the trust and initiative they required for success in combat."[41] One reason COHORT failed in its potential is because of the culture of the US Army, in which "cohesion is presumed to be a by-product, not a core goal leaders need to be trained to create and maintain."[42] As a result, cohesion declined over time in the 7th Infantry Division. One of the very disappointing aspects experienced by the 7th Infantry Division is that COHORT failed despite soldiers' possession of "levels of knowledge and competence among soldiers with less than a year of service that senior non-commissioned officers and officers had never seen before. One observer reported that: 'Privates in the artillery battalion know more after only six months in the US Army than the section chiefs in my battalion in Vietnam knew.'"[43] The reason COHORT failed to reach its potential was not because it failed to increase soldier proficiency and unit performance.

As discussed previously, COHORT only addressed horizontal cohesion, failed to limit internal turbulence, and US Army leaders failed to adapt to the new challenges of leading cohesive units. The report provides numerous depressing accounts of the failure of leaders from squad to battalion to build vertical cohesion. In some cases, leaders could not have done more to destroy it. A few examples serve as representative: "The problem with this US Army that we can't do enough to punish those dumb shitheads."[44] The belief that an officer or non-commissioned officer cared more about his career than the welfare of his subordinates was devastating.

Additionally, many captains appeared to have adversarial relationships with their subordinates, and "treatment of their lieutenants ranged primarily from benign neglect to persecution" instead of being mentors, which is hardly a ringing endorsement of the leadership culture of the time.[45] Deficiencies were not unique to the officer corps. Problems at battalion-level primarily consisted of leader failures to properly prioritize unit activities. Competitions and barracks inspections received the same priority as field training for combat. Leaders called "anything on the training schedule mission essential, and no one can miss it."[46] Additionally, although the training schedule was inviolate, no one knew when they would get released for the day, resulting in many men standing around for hours, causing problems at home, and failing to value soldiers' time. In a particularly egregious example, one battalion commander created "a sense of mistrust among the company commanders, then intimidate[d] them by relieving the captain reputed to have the most cohesive, highest performing, and most independent company in the brigade."[47] The US Army did not set up the 7th Infantry Division (Light) for success because it did not rethink how to train and educate leaders.

7th Infantry Division (Light) not only managed the COHORT system, but it also converted from a standard infantry division into a light unit, maintained the highest level of readiness, and added a rapid deployment force requirement during the COHORT experiment. While the units met or exceeded expectations of performance, the sheer volume of assigned missions overwhelmed the soldiers and leaders. It led to a loss of trust that decreased unit cohesion over time. Other issues included lack of housing and facilities on Fort Ord, California, canceled orders for officers and non-commissioned officers to stabilize them for the duration of their company's life cycle, and a belief of a "ticket-punching" leader culture.

In conclusion, the Walter Reed Studies showed that COHORT improved horizontal cohesion, but many factors played into the deficiencies that have been identified. The unit's aggressive training schedule, additional missions, unwillingness to reduce the unit's readiness during transformation to a light division, and the inadequate facilities on Fort Ord, California, all contributed negatively. Additionally, the leaders involved did not have the same stabilization, and many were assigned to COHORT units under last-minute orders, which canceled their desired move to other locations. The study concluded with three lessons;

> First, they have shown that the vast potential inherent in the COHORT system can be realized—that units manned with average personnel can become high performance organizations. Second, they have illustrated more clearly than ever before the

> powerful demands COHORT units make on leaders. Third, they have revealed the characteristics of command climate that can make it possible for leaders to function effectively as leaders of COHORT units.[48]

Leader behavior is critical to reaching the potential of COHORT. Leaders must build both vertical and horizontal cohesion through competent leadership, mission focus, and respect. Soldier motivation comes from guidance instead of direction, challenges that are mission-focused, and trust. Families must be a focus area, as well. The report concludes by stating, "The COHORT system provides the personnel potential for exceptionally effective units. A few junior leaders throughout the US Army have shown the magnitude of that potential. It can be more fully realized throughout the US Army by appropriately trained non-commissioned officers and officers confident of the support of their senior commanders."[49] As traced from World War II through the end of COHORT, these lessons are not new.

Follow-on Studies by Walter Reed

Many of the same authors of the five Walter Reed Army Institute of Research studies discussed earlier wrote: "Evaluating the Unit Manning System." Appendix B contains "Section 4: Lessons Learned" in its entirety. It is well worth spending some time examining the lessons from COHORT which are summarized in these two pages. The report summarizes the COHORT experiment thus far. It concludes that psychological readiness for combat comes from horizontal and vertical cohesion, personal morale, and confidence in leaders' and the units' capabilities. Additionally, "Psychological readiness for combat is a force multiplier."[50] Therefore, COHORT "facilitates development of psychological readiness for combat" despite issues in implementation, including the damaging effect of leader turbulence on vertical cohesion.[51]

The report also emphasizes the leadership characteristics needed to succeed, not just in COHORT, but in general. For example, providing a predictable duty day and valuing soldiers' time builds cohesion. COHORT was misunderstood by both leaders and troops because of misperceptions about the experiment. The final conclusion is that COHORT units can create high-performance units but require positive leadership that was lacking in many cases. The unit manning system only provides half of the equation. Faris Kirkland, one of the primary authors of the Walter Reed Studies, authored a paper called "Leading in COHORT Companies" in part to address the leadership failures previously identified . It is unknown how widely the paper was distributed or its impact on units. Its main message was for leaders to connect with their soldiers.

Mark Vaitkus, one of Walter Reed's researchers, wrote: "Unit Manning System: Human Dimensions Field Evaluation" in 1994, which re-examins the data collected during the five studies. He confirmed that COHORT companies had higher horizontal cohesion than individually manned companies under all circumstances. The companies did not have a "consistent difference between COHORT and individual replacement system companies on any psychosocial measure except horizontal cohesion," and cohesion decreased over the unit life cycle.[52] Additionally, he showed that cohesion is interrelated and correlated with "confidence in leadership, weapons, and training…and thus the effect of COHORT on horizontal cohesion may be diminished or enhanced depending on these other aspects of unit climate."[53] Vaitkus also showed that COHORT companies had lower cohesion than US Army Ranger companies. Finally, he concludes that stabilization in COHORT only truly applies to junior enlisted soldiers. Stabilization "was realized only partially with non-commissioned officers and not at all with officers."[54] This finding helps to partially explain why COHORT did not increase vertical cohesion.

The US Army Research Institute published a study entitled "Attitudes Toward the New Manning System and New Manning System Characteristics" in July 1986. It focused on the seven characteristics of the new manning system: "unit developmental cycle, opportunity/responsibility structure, informal group influence, restricted career opportunities, restricted but predictable assignments, reordered career values, and common career development of first-term soldiers."[55] The study found that soldiers in COHORT units had favorable views. Still, the most unfavorable aspects of the new manning system were the "career-long stabilization and career restrictions."[56] This study suggests that American soldiers appreciate the ability to relocate to new posts and units. The lesson is that stabilization should be less about restricting soldier movement and more about increasing unit potential by keeping soldiers stable within a unit.

Negative Aspects of COHORT

Lieutenant Colonel John I. Wood, III wrote a study in 1988 while at the US Army War College called, "Can the Unit Manning System Sustain in War." He discusses the most significant problem commanders had—the three-year life cycle, requiring a complete rebuilding of the unit. The turbulence for the higher command was the problem, and United States Army, Europe, "found this to be disfunctional [*sic*] for peacetime training and readiness. As a result, Headquarters, Department of the Army developed a package system to sustain COHORT units."[57] The packages of sol-

diers arrived every four months, too short of a timespan to build cohesion or train to a high level.

During wartime, Wood questioned the value of COHORT because "the qualitative benefits of unit manning would be so low quantitatively."[58] He also surveyed his fellow combat arms officers at the US Army War College. Over 80 percent said they would assign replacements to their units as individuals, even if they arrived as cohesive squads and platoons.[59] Although he acknowledges the above WRAIR report, Wood concludes the unit manning system would not work because of senior leader mentality. Wood recommends, "The US Army should continue to plan for a wartime system based on individual replacements and small sustainment packages" because "the US Army is not capable of nor ready for converting to a true unit replacement system."[60] He also questions how to build cohesive units without an adequate supply of non-commissioned officers.

In a similar vein, "Cohesion: What we Learned from COHORT" by Lieutenant Colonel Scull studied COHORT while a student at the US Army War College. He provided a general overview of cohesion, followed by the different systems used by the US Army before discussing the COHORT system. Scull discusses vertical cohesion implications at length of the many issues faced by the 7th Infantry Division, including inadequate training time for cadre, non-commissioned officers diverted from other assignments, the assignment of out-of-shape non-commissioned officers, and junior officer actions.[61] Scull questions stability as the most critical factor in building cohesive units. He posits that cohesion is "primarily the by-product of good leadership combined with important, fulfilling work."[62] He says, "True cohesion…depends…equally upon the group (each other), the leader (represents the unit), and the mission. Stabilization is a good first step; but, its promise is eroded because ineffective leaders or unreasonable mission requirements detract from the environment required for building cohesion."[63] Scull also describes the issues with the reconstitution process inherent in the COHORT system as too much for the US Army to withstand.

"The COHORT System–Is it Meeting the Army's Needs?" by Lieutenant Colonel James G. Pulley is overwhelmingly positive in its assessment of COHORT. He praises the cohesion, stabilization, training proficiency, combat readiness, soldier loyalty, and care for families. His analysis of the downsides of COHORT is most instructive in why the US Army stopped using it in the mid-1990s. One negative characteristic of the COHORT system was the "evolving methodology" over time. Another negative aspect was the effect on non-COHORT battalions because CO-

HORT soldiers avoided non-essential tasks because of the focus on the program. As a result, non-COHORT units received fewer replacements, provided cadre to form new COHORT units, and had to fill non-training details such as post clean-up. Pulley said, "This inequity gave rise to resistance to COHORT units, a resistance that was felt throughout the rest of the US Army."[64] Moving cadre into a unit to form COHORT companies created a situation in which the US Army created turbulence to stabilize it. Although Pulley references the study in Walter Reed Army Institute of Research 4 by Lieutenant Colonel Schneider who discusses it in detail , he did not arrive at the same conclusion on replacements in combat. He suggests instead that a "unit replacement package should report to its new parent COHORT unit with its formal 'unit designation' already affixed, e.g., 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon of Company C."[65] The remaining units should be amalgamated because their longstanding relationships ease organizational changes.

Additionally, Pulley discusses the widespread prejudice against COHORT because of well-meaning actions that had the effect of generating disdain and mistrust of the new system. Those actions created a culture of "haves" and "have-nots." Pulley says his own battalion received a hostile welcome during its rotation to Germany, and it was the object of resentment based on rumors and speculation rather than facts.[66] Another issue was the misperception that assignment to a COHORT unit was career debilitating. Leaders thought they would also follow the three-year stabilization rule, with the result of fewer career opportunities. Pulley's arguments, while ultimately favorable to the unit manning system, identify some of the reasons why COHORT failed.

Positive Aspects of COHORT

A markedly positive account of the new manning system was called, "COHORT: Is Readiness A Cost?" Lieutenant Colonel Robin L. Elder wrote the paper while studying at the US Army War College after he commanded a COHORT battalion. One reason he cites as justification for COHORT and cohesion comes from the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War. Israeli soldiers credited their ties and feeling of obligation to their "buddies" as their primary motivation and the reason soldiers could return after their evacuation and psychiatric evaluation.[67] Elder examines the "cost" of COHORT in terms of readiness and manages to question the utility of the US Army's unit status report without delving into details.[68] He establishes that company units need between six and eight weeks to stabilize and train, and battalions require three to six months. He says, "it is entirely feasible, under less than perfect conditions, to form and train a unit to perform its

combat mission in a six month period of time."[69] He identifies this six-month timespan as one of the costs of unit manning. Still, he contrasts that with the 30 months of stability, and that COHORT units "will typically exceed the conventional unit in all reportable areas."[70]

Elder writes favorably about soldier psychological readiness but identifies training readiness as difficult and subjective to assess because "training at the collective level is not quantifiable."[71] The conclusion states:

> In those areas that support objective comparison the results strongly favor COHORT or a unit manning system as the means of manning the force. The benefits in terms of combat readiness and psychological readiness for combat certainly would be worth the start-up cost. The start-up cost of a COHORT battalion is also avoidable by reverting to company-level COHORT units. The "real" cost of COHORT may be the cost of the effort required by the US Army Personnel system to make it work. "General Carl E. Vuono, is stepping back from the COHORT experiment because managing it proved difficult, especially in Europe."[72]

He continues to implore the US Army to move past the inertia of the system. His analysis of the package replacement system focuses on its appeal to the unit status report and that it "may not provide a marked advantage over individual replacement" because a four-month time span is too short for stabilization.[73]

Elder recommends that the US Army switch to a COHORT system in which battalions have two experienced companies and one new company to mitigate the issues discussed previously. The disadvantage of this rotation is outweighed by cohesiveness and a more predictable cycle. He offers a counterargument to the opposition of this idea by saying, "We were not hesitant to fight with those units [composed of green, non-career soldiers during Vietnam] with their lack of experience and lack of leaders. Why are we reluctant to adopt a system that has the potential to fix those problems that the individual replacement system contributed to during the past three wars?"[74] Elder recommends the use of a staggered approach in each battalion to address the readiness concerns. There is no evidence that the US Army tested his model.

Dandridge Malone wrote two glowing reviews of COHORT, *With the Mountain Men: Co-operation and Competition Within the Context of Cohort,* and "Dear Army: You've Got Yourself a Real Winner." He states, "COHORT is bringing the US Army added combat effectiveness. The heroes are the small unit leaders. Trust confidence, and respect are the

things he most deserves."[75] Malone says, "The chemistry of COHORT has brought the COHORT company the ability to communicate internally, formally and informally, often with no more than a look, with greater speed and accuracy than any other kind of company, and far greater speed and accuracy than the battalion as a whole."[76] One of Malone's primary recommendations is to treat COHORT units differently by accounting for the three-year lifecycle instead of a one-year repetitive cycle. During the long sustainment phase, COHORT units should have "a time that will challenge not merely depth, adaptability, and versatility, but everything the battalion, and all its units, and all its people, have ever learned along the three-year upward path to being all they could be. There needs to be a final exam."[77] Additionally, George R. Dunn, the battalion commander of 3rd Battalion, 9th Infantry, wrote, "The COHORT concept combined with the regimental system is truly a winning formula—the collective bonding of the soldiers in the unit is dramatic. The soldiers and leaders of COHORT battalions are mentally and physically fit, highly trained, ready to deploy worldwide, and, if so ordered by appropriate authority, ready to fight and win."[78] Analysis summary is next.

Analysis Summary

Faris R. Kirkland, Walter Reed researcher and author, wrote, "The Walter Reed research found that the COHORT system offers the possibility of a major improvement in the fighting power of US Army units. Realizing that potential requires leaders who develop their own tactical and technical competence, and…communicate...their trust in their troops, their own trustworthiness and their respect for their subordinates."[79] One of COHORT's failures was that expectations expanded beyond what was promised.

Another issue with COHORT was that it presented US Army commanders with a "readiness cliff" in which COHORT companies and battalions were unready for up to six months. While it was balanced with up to 30 months of stability, many US Army leaders grew up in a culture of being ready all of the time. The US Army's culture did not change to accept the cyclic nature of COHORT. Non-commissioned officers and officers, although intended to be stabilized, were not locked into the unit as desired. Many thought that service in a COHORT unit would be career damaging rather than enhancing. Lieutenant Colonel Larry H. Ingraham, a member of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, unequivocally wrote about COHORT, *"The chief influence on unit cohesion is leader behavior."*[80] Because COHORT is optimized for horizontal cohesion, the leadership aspect never truly reaches its potential.

General Maxwell Thurman, former commander of Southern Command, offered another explanation for COHORT's demise:

> If I look and say what did I fail to get accomplished, the answer is that I failed to get accomplished the institutionalization of COHORT. I had too many people against me on that. The commanders in Europe didn't like it. United States Armor didn't like it. If you go out and ask people in the 7th Infantry Division if they liked it, the answer is yes. The 25th, yes. United States Armor guys didn't like it. The heavy force guys didn't like it. In this case, the heavy force guys did everything they could do to make sure it didn't work. Again, it wraps around a focus on the unit status report. They were unwilling to bend. I wouldn't say they sabotaged it, but they fought it tooth and nail every step of the way and it succumbed on those grounds. Too bad. Think for a minute. Who went off to fight in Saudi Arabia? The answer is units that had been together for a while. When those units came back to Germany, what happened to them? They got broken up. You take a perfectly good combat-tested outfit and break it up. Send five guys here, three guys there, all based on expiration of their term of service. I thought you said this was a fighting outfit? It is a fighting outfit, but after it has been to a fight, we don't want to preserve it so that we can assimilate other people who have never fought into our fighting outfit. The answer is, no. We tear down all this *esprit de corps* we've built with people who have been in an arduous engagement together for the purpose of meeting expiration term of service requirements. It doesn't stack. In fact, it is all screwing over people. If you had to go to war again, it would be better to take the people who had already been to war because we would have fewer casualties. The more times you go round at it, the better you get at it. We should have learned that in Vietnam. If we didn't learn that in Vietnam, it is a crying shame. If you go back and look, one of the things we did if a guy came back from Vietnam after 6 months of basic training, a year in Vietnam, 15 days leave sandwiched in there, and essentially 19-20 months of service, was to discharge him. Do you recall that? Do you know we discharged those buggers at the port? What sort of esteem factor did we have about that? No wonder they didn't have any parades for anybody. There weren't any units to have in parades. Look at the difference in bringing the 24th Division back to Fort Stewart, Georgia, and parading it down the street as opposed to discharging everybody

> as they came through Charleston, South Carolina, upon return from the Persian Gulf. It is plain. It is what you guys at the United States War College should be spending your time at. Bring this to the attention of people and contrast what got messed up in Vietnam versus what didn't get screwed up in this particular endeavor. The idea is to promote, in the absence of anything else, cohesion, pride, and unit *esprit.*[81]
>
> Unit integrity, particularly at a small group level, is absolutely crucial and essential. You want to do everything you can to make the system work that way. If you let expiration term of service dates drive you, particularly when you let everybody come in on a drift in/drift out expiration term of service, then you are not going to be able to husband your resources and call it a combat unit. That was a big disappointment to me. The US armor/heavy guys were the guys who did it in.[82]

General Thurman is the first to discuss US Armor officers' dislike for COHORT, which is certainly not true in General Starry's case. US Army, Europe, pushed for the use of a four-month stabilization system, which was not that different from a return to the individual system. Regardless of what caused the end of COHORT, by 1997, the US Army eliminated it, even though the US Army attempted to revive elements in 2003 with unit focused stability.

Notes

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5. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 4-6.
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7. Marlowe, WRAIR 1, 2.
8. Marlowe, WRAIR 1, 2.
9. Marlowe, WRAIR 1, 3.
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11. David H. Marlowe, *Unit Manning System Field Evaluation: Technical Reports No. 2* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, March 1986), executive summary. Hereafter cited as Marlowe, WRAIR 2.
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15. Marlowe, WRAIR 3, 9.
16. Marlowe, WRAIR 3, 7.
17. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 1.
18. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 1.
19. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 3.
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22. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 2.
23. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 2.
24. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 3.
25. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 3.
26. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 3.
27. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 40.
28. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 41.
29. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 46.
30. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 46.
31. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 49.
32. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 50.
33. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 53-56.
34. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 57.
35. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 57-58.
36. Lieutenant General William H. Harrison, in Marlowe, WRAIR 5, Foreword.
37. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 1.

38. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 1.
39. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 1.
40. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 1.
41. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 2.
42. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 2.
43. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 12.
44. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 19.
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46. Marlowe, WRAIR 5, 20.
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62. Scull, "What We Learned," 24.
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65. Pulley, "COHORT System Meet Army Needs?" 19.
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67. Elder, "COHORT: Is Readiness a Cost?," 3.
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71. Elder, "COHORT: Is Readiness a Cost?," 10-11.
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75. Dandridge M. Malone, *With the Mountain Men: Co-operation and Competition Within the Context of Cohort* (Alexandria, VA: US ARI, 1988), 58.

76. Malone, *With the Mountain Men,* 59.

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80. Larry H. Ingraham, "Caring is Not Enough: An Uninvited Talk to Army Leaders," *Military Review* 67, no. 12 (December 1987): 45.

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Chapter 7
Conclusions and Recommendations

> The US Army has never entered a war prepared to operate a personnel system built upon the accumulated knowledge of past experience.
>
> —Leonard L. Lerwill, Joseph Rockis, and John H. Beeler, *The Personnel Replacement System*

No matter the changes to warfare, people will always be at the center of ground warfare. "You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have at a later time."[1] Although pilloried for his response, Donald H. Rumsfeld was right. If the United States enters into a large-scale conflict, the country will have the US Army it had in the months leading up to it, and it will take months if not years to change the force into something different. The turbulence experienced by small units in combat because of casualties is not an excuse for turbulence to occur during peacetime. Since the Vietnam War, the United States has not experienced war with an enormous number of casualties. The COHORT experiment attempted to improve the personnel management system for both peace and war. COHORT offers many lessons to the US Army today, including how to change the culture of an army, the importance of cohesion, effective leadership, and the critical personnel organization decisions that must occur before a conflict begins. Cohesion is essential, but only in the context of tough, realistic training, and excellent leadership. Only with all three can units become more than the sum of their parts.

The lessons from COHORT are not new. Cohesion improves the performance of troops in combat. Additionally, stability during peacetime allows units to train together, which is both one of the significant sources of cohesion as well as the primary guarantor of survival in combat. Constant turbulence prevents progressive collective training and therefore inhibits readiness. One lesson for leaders today is that synchronizing arrivals and departures into windows of time will allow the unit to focus on one set of problems at a time. Rather than spending time simultaneously on in- and out-processing, individual training and marksmanship, new equipment fielding, change of command inventories, and administrative duties; units can simplify the process by synchronizing personnel changes. The biggest lesson from COHORT is that turbulence should be the exception, and personnel stability the rule. Stability does not equal cohesion and increased readiness and training; it is merely the prerequisite.

The US Army people strategy proves the continuing relevance of COHORT today. Retired Lieutenant General James Dubik said, "People are not interchangeable parts, the US Army likes to think that we are, but that is just not true."[2] The US Army people strategy of 2019 shows that the US Army recognizes that people are not just cogs in a great machine. Many soldiers have spouses who work outside the home, and their civilian careers benefit from home stability for a more extended period in one location. Stability provides predictability, which reduces stress, and makes families more amenable to supporting their soldier during challenging times. Lieutenant Colonel Reese wrote these words nearly 20 years ago that still echo today:

How many commanders have at the final after action report [at a combat training center rotation, Fort Irwin, California,] said to themselves, and perhaps to their units, "Boy, if we could only come back here in two months and do this again, we could really kick some OPFOR a*!" Instead, BLUFOR units redeploy home and the permanent change of station diaspora begins. Within weeks, permanent change of station moves and intra-unit moves render it a wilted, pale shadow of what it so recently became. Most of our tactical units remain mired at a rather low level of combined arms proficiency, unable to get better due to personnel turnover and lack of experience.[3]

The US Army is transitioning from nineteen years of counterinsurgency to large-scale combat, and there is enough dissatisfaction to push for change. The time is now to use the lessons of the past to prepare for the future.

Specific Conclusions from this Study

But the US Army has not always fully nurtured its units' bonds nor their distinguished histories and traditions. There is always the temptation to treat our soldiers and their units as interchangeable parts of a fighting machine, especially in difficult times when men and money are scarce.[4]

This paper shows that even in a unit-based system, there is still an individual component. And an individual system still creates units during times of expansion. The difference is in the focus area. A unit-based system emphasizes the human factors and the intangibles over more concrete notions such as strength, even though it has some downsides. An individual system is often more efficient and fairer on an individual basis. Still, it can lead to the wastefulness of human lives both during and after combat. The COHORT system incorporated some individual replacements, particularly for non-commissioned offficers and officers. In many respects, the conclusions here are the same findings made by the Walter Reed Army In-

stitute of Research, and are listed in Appendix B. A unit-focused approach treats combat units as the teams they truly are which then sets favorable conditions for the maximum people to return home during wartime.

One important lesson from COHORT, as evidenced in the fifth report from Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, is that changes in policy and culture require extensive training and correction to implement. Junior leaders especially struggled to treat COHORT soldiers with trust and respect. As a result, vertical cohesion did not increase. Additionally, when the US Army experimented with buddy team replacements, most leaders preferred to break up the buddies and assign them on a "spaces over faces" basis. Particularly in combat, individual replacements that arrive at a unit together and serve in the same squad have a better integration experience.

The US Army's system is not set up to build secondary structures to support primary groups. Cohesion does not exist above levels where soldiers can know one another. Even at the company-level, it is unlikely that one soldier is unknown to others in the unit. Therefore, companies and above should exist to ensure platoons and below increase their cohesion and effectiveness.

As discussed previously by General Thurman, COHORT was polarizing. Even twelve years of sympathetic chiefs of staff of the US Army from General Meyer to General Vuono were insufficient to change the culture of the US Army to one that accepts a new personnel management system. COHORT did not exist long enough for non-commissioned officer and officer leaders to evolve over time within the system. An underlying difficulty of the US Army's culture is that the individual system is entrenched because leaders who succeed in a certain environment, subconsciously become skeptical of change and then become rooted in the current system. Part of that culture includes perceptions about COHORT. In general, those that experienced it directly had a much more positive outlook than those that did not. One significant reason is that the COHORT system's limited application created a system of "Haves and Have-nots." The non-COHORT units invariably incurred lower manning, but received increased responsibilities, and that created a great deal of resentment. One of the most important lessons is that the US Army should not create its own turbulence to build stability. Not only does it wreck cohesiveness within the affected unit, but it also contributes to feelings of resentment among soldiers.

Another lesson is that the initiatives to improve cohesion should not focus on only junior-enlisted personnel. While the original intent was to keep the same leadership together, that did not happen. Both horizontal and vertical cohesion are essential in increasing the combat power of units.

Good leadership is required to build vertical cohesion, and trust is a significant component of cohesion. Because leaders moved in and out of units on a different schedule, junior enlisted soldiers viewed many of them as overly career-focused, while many leaders became disenchanted and left their units prematurely to move for career-related purposes.[5] It was not a win-win situation at all.

Stability is critical but must be measured internally and externally. Internal moves within a battalion are as disruptive as external moves. When receiving new soldiers, they should be kept in buddy teams, while vested soldiers within the platoon or company should make the adjustments instead of splitting the new group of soldiers. Units can absorb some turbulence, and internal shuffling is better than spreading out new people evenly. Some amount of personnel stability is vital in keeping the unit culture alive. A worthy future study would determine the number of casualties that a company-sized unit can endure and yet maintain the same organizational culture.

A further conclusion connected to US Army culture is that reporting and readiness matters. The drop in readiness is likely the cause of the animosity described by General Thurman at the end of chapter 6. Although the US Army authorized lower readiness reporting during transition periods, it still required reporting as a strength basis instead of effectiveness. As demonstrated by the example of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry at Ia Drang, its companies remained highly effective despite being "understrength" according to all measures of the time. Strength is a tangible measure, and effectiveness is much more difficult to measure. Still, units can remain effective in combat even after sustaining heavy casualties if they are cohesive, well-trained, and well-led.

Although this study focused on COHORT and not the regimental system, unit history is important in building *esprit de corps.* One reason the new regimental system did not work is because of pushback from proud veterans and influential politicians. Initially, the 10th Mountain Division was going to furl its colors, but because of the influence of Senator Bob Dole, it remained instead of other more prestigious units.[6] Additionally, the US Army continued its reflagging process irrespective of the loyalty of the men and women currently serving in the unit. Additionally, in the US Army, the training base is not aligned with active units. This prevents both drill sergeants and recruits from displaying pride in real organizations while they are at basic training or advanced individual training. History and unit pride are only meaningful if the soldiers think it is important.

Cohesion matters to the whole unit and its higher headquarters. COHORT erred by focusing on junior enlisted horizontal cohesion to the ex-

clusion of other factors. Research suggests the best way to rapidly increase the size of the US Army is to split units and then add new soldiers in case of war. The problem in World War II was not that divisions were formed from others, but that the US Army kept culling the units until there was nothing left. Once formed, units that focus on collective training perform better than those that focus on individual training. High personnel turnover prevents collective training, which reduces combat effectiveness.

Cohesion, by itself, does not create effective units. Commanders at all levels must ensure there is progressive training, a real mission, and good leadership. There is a circular and reinforcing relationship between these factors. Excellent leaders will provide tough training opportunities, and focus the unit on the mission, which will increase cohesion. Additionally, cohesive units will push for the these factors. Many soldiers in COHORT companies were well-trained, well-led, and cohesive. Their inability to attend schools such as airborne and Ranger was extremely detrimental to highly motivated soldiers. While well-intentioned, it created animosity among those soldiers.

The post-Cold War drawdown was the biggest reason COHORT failed, but afterward, the US Army still used unit rotation. The US Army implemented stop-loss and prevented routine personnel moves leading up to Desert Storm. For the next two decades, the US Army attempted to stabilize personnel during deployments. Additionally, the reduction of the US Army after a war is just as crucial as mobilization—policies in the name of fairness are not sufficient. Individual fairness should not trump unit effectiveness. It happened after World War II, and it occurred again after the Cold War.

As long as the US Army remains relatively small in size, the US Army should take every effort to stabilize personnel so that during the first battle, units who are first sent into combat will have the best chance of survival and winning. The US Army should not break cohesion as a practice for the absorption of casualties during wartime. The US Army first needs to be honest about what they want the organization and its units to accomplish. If the US Army needs a massive, individually focused machine geared around an easy to manage model, then the current system is more than adequate. It is easy to administer and provides enough reasonably well-trained troops. Additionally, it looks good in terms of the unit status report by, in part, equating total personnel in a unit with readiness. The US Army should admit that administering the bureaucracy is a more significant concern than the performance of units in combat. The combat circumstances of dispersion and loneliness described by du Picq and Marshall indicate that the US Army needs to emphasize cohesion more, not

less. If the US Army's goal is to have a capable fighting force that brings home the most soldiers physically, mentally, and spiritually, then a unit-based system is needed.

Three Recommendations

> The US Army must be willing to bear the full cost of unit stabilization, and unit stabilization is expensive in terms of personnel needed to sustain the system. For the same force structure, more people are needed for stabilized units than are needed to support the present individual replacement system. Unit stabilization requires that the US Army have more people (faces) than authorizations (spaces), which is contrary to current US Army practice. The US Army emphasizes filling vacancies, which causes vacancies elsewhere. The greater the personnel shortfall, the faster people have to move to fill new vacancies.[7]

This manuscript offers three recommendations: one for leaders at the division level and below, another at the US Army level, and finally, to provide suggestions for future research. Cohesion is a small-unit phenomenon, but it takes a systems-based approach to build the secondary groups that support it. COHORT offers lessons that the US Army can use to improve and prepare for future conflict.

At the division level and below, commanders and senior non-commissioned officers should aim to promote internal stability to the best of their ability. Specifically, units should assign recruits together in buddy teams from basic training and ensure they remain together in the same squad or crew. As much as possible, crews and small units should consist of personnel who are stabilized for the longest possible timeframe—stable personnel help to sustain readiness. Although the US Army's sustainable readiness model attempts to keep readiness high all the time, local synchronization of arrivals and departures offers several benefits. For example, it reduces the administrative burden on unit leaders by consolidating arrival and departure tasks.

Additionally, a predictable schedule will improve soldier and family morale, deconflict resources on post, and allow for equipment fielding and other mandatory details. The "red, amber, green" cycle approach has been used for decades, and there is no reason it cannot continue to work. Finally, commanders should measure internal stability and evaluate leaders on their unit performance as part of the group of teams. Internal stability is the stepping stone for increased training proficiency and readiness. Evaluation of unit performance acknowledges that combat is a team sport, and a

leader should want the entire organization to succeed, not just his own success. The best way to ensure compliance and then commitment is through motivation by promotion.

During combat, division leaders and below should follow similar principles and ensure that soldiers arrive at units in buddy teams. Additionally, no soldiers should ever arrive at their unit while the group is still fighting. Division leaders and below must create enough space to provide time for reconstitution, reorganization, and training. Units can absorb a relatively high number of replacements in an abbreviated period as long as they have the time and space for training. It takes about one week of fighting to turn a new recruit into a veteran.[8] Staying indefinitely "on the line" in combat is not the answer and will subsequently lead to more casualties. As shown during the chapters on World War II and Vietnam, units that reorganized and reconstituted effectively will perform well, even after experiencing heavy casualties.[9]

Although unit-level leaders can make a difference by promoting stability and cohesion, the US Army is required to make lasting change. Both General McConville, the 40th Chief of Staff of the Army, and the US Army's people strategy make it clear that doing business according to outdated industrial-age ideas is not acceptable. Although managing individual talent is important, the US Army should ensure that all soldiers have more career stability and belong to cohesive units. The US Army has enough data from previous experience to move from its current personnel management system to a more stable personnel management system without further experimentation. This change, once applied across the US Army, will help prevent the problems with "haves and have-nots" that occurred during COHORT. In short, change the culture to make stability the rule and turbulence the exception.

One possible model in building cohesion and stability is from the package replacement system, but only the year-long model. It synchronizes arrivals and departures, keeps people together for more extended periods, and provides training predictability during peacetime. Individuals can still move to other duty stations, but those moves should fall within specific windows of time rather than on a random basis. Additionally, soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers should remain in the same unit for as long as possible. The US Army's current system incentivizes movement by offering permanent change of station moves for reenlistment. If the US Army offered more cash to stay in one location, it might break through the cycle of moving soldiers from one post to another to perform the exact same function. Soldiers could depart on a short-term basis for schools and return to their units. Junior enlisted soldiers generally should not change

their permanent station, non-commissioned officers should remain at the same post whenever possible, and officers should be able to return to the same division multiple times in a career.

Additionally, the training base for combat arms troops should be aligned with their active units, with cadre coming from the gaining unit. Non-combat arms troops should use a buddy system to carry some cohesion into their new units in lieu of large-scale realignment. For example, non-commissioned officers from the 82nd Airborne Division could all be in the same basic training company, which would only consist of soldiers assigned to the 82nd. That way, recruits are immersed in their unit's history and *esprit de corps* from their first day in the US Army. As much as possible, soldiers should be grouped together in basic training so that when they arrive at their first duty station, each company will receive a "packet" of replacements who went through basic training together. This model is simplistic and would require significant troubleshooting to serve as a model for the US Army. The switch to a focus on unit effectiveness attempts to harness COHORT's lessons and avoid its mistakes.

The US Army should have a personnel system with enough flexibility to keep men together before wars and then avoid the mistakes of the individual system used from World War II to Vietnam. This is not easy, but it would pay the most dividends in terms of giving new soldiers the best shot at survival with green units while minimizing the psychological cost of the individual approach. If combat experience is limited, units that have spent the greatest amount of time together will perform better than turbulent ones. Units should only remain in combat or on patrol for 2 to 4 weeks before moving to the rear or to a base for about a week. The move to the rear accomplishes several things: it improves hygiene, allows for hot meals, sleep, and will, in general, alleviate many of the immediate problems that lead to combat fatigue or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Like the recommendation listed previuosly, units should prioritize "faces over spaces" when assigning new soldiers by reorganizing their veteran soldiers rather than splitting up the new recruits. Additionally, the week out of combat will allow replacements to move to their new companies and receive training on battlefield conditions with the same soldiers whom they will serve with. Only during lengthy breaks in combat should replacements in buddy teams join a unit, so there is enough time to conduct training and build cohesion. Our current doctrine and force structure does not reflect the need for unit rotations, yet it has been identified throughout this manuscript as necessary requirement. Adding new soldiers during combat operations should be avoided at all costs. Units arriving in combat will have the highest chance of survival and effectiveness if they

are cohesive rather than cobbled together. Dandridge Malone wrote, "You have to get 'cohesiveness' and related concepts just flat out *embedded* in how the US Army thinks and how it does its business—a 'natural' variable in the decision making that runs the US Army at all levels."[10] This requires a considerable shift in mentality for the US Army. Still, it would both maximize the combat effectiveness of units while taking the human element into account.

Both mobilization and demobilization are equally crucial to the security of the nation and its ability to win wars. If the US Army expands rapidly, it should identify early-on which units will provide cadre and assemble them as quickly as possible. Additionally, the end of the war and what it means for the troops and units is easy to overlook. A spirit of individual fairness should not trump effectiveness like it did in all three conflicts discussed in this manuscript. Unit integrity and combat readiness are essential at the end of a war, even after the guns fall silent. The US Army should learn this lesson for the last time. Americans are willing to listen and modify the national culture if the problem and solution are explained.

There are several areas still deserving of further research. What is the role and interrelationship between unit history and *esprit de corps?* This study briefly discussed the US Army regimental system but did not identify any trends or provide analysis. Additionally, unit focused stability, and comparing US Army force generation to the sustainable readiness model are both worthy topics deserving further research and evaluation. Finally, how much stability is required to achieve ever-higher training goals and progression?

Final Thoughts

In the 245 years the US Army has served the United States, there have been less than 10 years in which the country mobilized the entire populace for war. Only during the Civil War and both World Wars has the United States relied upon draftees numbering in the millions. During the time COHORT has been active, the three significant engagements the US Army fought all occurred with little to no notice.[11] The US Army should create a system of personnel management that promotes cohesion and encourages soldiers to train together before they must fight together. If and when the US Army does fight on such a large scale again, the forces that are initially sent into battle should have every advantage given to them. The system the US Army creates should have enough flexibility so that it can grow during mobilization while fielding the most combat effective forces possible at the beginning of the war. Constant personnel turbulence

disrupts training and prevents men and women from forming the bonds of brotherhood that carry them both into and out of danger.

The US Army deserves a system that reflects American values in which every human life is valuable, and every human being is of merit. Our personnel system, while it ostensibly promotes individual contributions, ultimately still treats human beings as interchangeable cogs in the great wheel of the US Army. A unit-based system places the wellbeing of the US Army ahead of individual concerns, but at the same time gives those individuals the best chance to fight, win, and return in sound mind and body. The COHORT experiment failed because it did not go far enough and was unable to change the entire institution of the US Army. Conflicts have become more violent, chaotic, and deadly. This trend has negatively affected our soldiers' ability to cope with the stresses of the field of battle. The US Army owes it to the nation it serves to have the best units available to fight and win conflicts. A unit-based system is superior to an individual based system, even if individual movements still occur.

This manuscript ends with the words that began it. "Never again... should replacements—unknown, lonely, frightened—ever be fed singly into units, only a few hours later to find themselves facing the enemy."[12] Why do soldiers fight? They fight for one another. Only in cohesive units do they combine a willingness to die for one another and to take the fight to the enemy.

Notes

1. Donald H. Rumsfeld, quoted in Eric Schmitt, "Iraq-Bound Troops Confront Rumsfeld Over Lack of Armor," *New York Times,* 8 December 2004, accessed 1 April 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/08/international/middleeast/iraqbound-troops-confront-rumsfeld-over-lack-of.html.

2. LTG James Dubik, "COIN and Insurgency" (Lecture, Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, KS, 11 March 2020).

3. Reese, "The Blind Men and the Elephant," 9.

4. Elton, "Cohesion and Unit Pride Aims of New Manning System," 218-219.

5. Towell, "Forging the Sword," 59.

6. The Center of Military History rank ordered all the divisions active in the US Army at the end of the Cold War based on unit age, campaign credit, and decorations. The 10th Mountain ranked last out of 21 divisions but remained active over 10 more prestigious divisions.

7. Brinkerhoff, "A History of Unit Stabilization," 36.

8. Kindsvatter, *American Soldiers,* 78.

9. It is beyond the scope of this manuscript to analyze the current brigade and division structures. The author's firsthand experiences lead him to believe they do not have the appropriate structure. This is a worthy area of future study.

10. Dandridge M. Malone, "Dear Army: You've Got Yourself a Real Winner," *Army Magazine* (September 1984): 22.

11. Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, Operation Just Cause in Panama, and Operations Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia.

12. Department of the Army Replacement Board, *Worldwide World War II Replacement System* (Washington, DC: United States Army), 10-12, 22-24, quoted in Trez, "Manning the Army in Peace and War," 10.

Appendix A
Illustrations

The following set of four pictures outlines the COHORT replacement models and the COHORT rotation model.

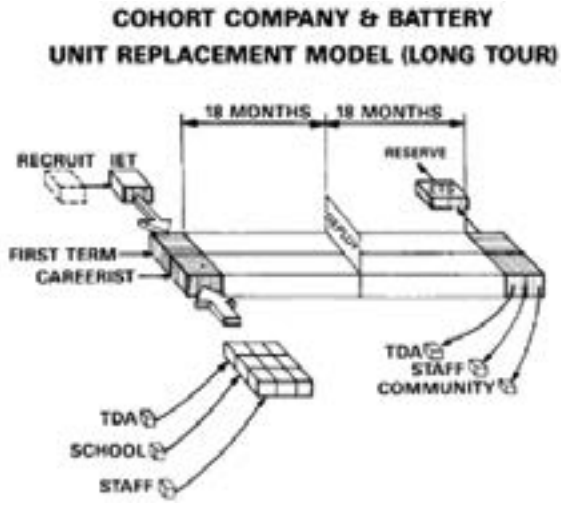

Figure A.1. COHORT Company and Battery Unit Replacement Model (Long Tour).
Source: US Army, Army Regulation (AR) 600-83, *The New Manning System–COHORT Unit Replacement System* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), 26-27.

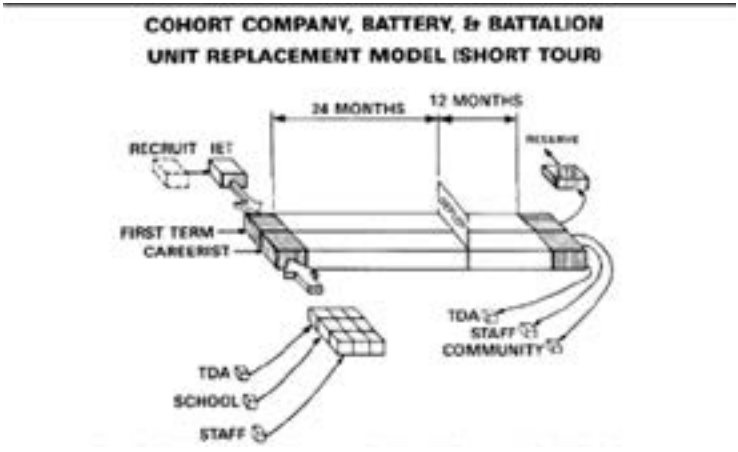

Figure A.2. COHORT Company, Battery, and Battalion Unit Replacement Model (Short Tour).

Source: US Army, Army Regulation (AR) 600-83, *The New Manning System–COHORT Unit Replacement System* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), 26-27.

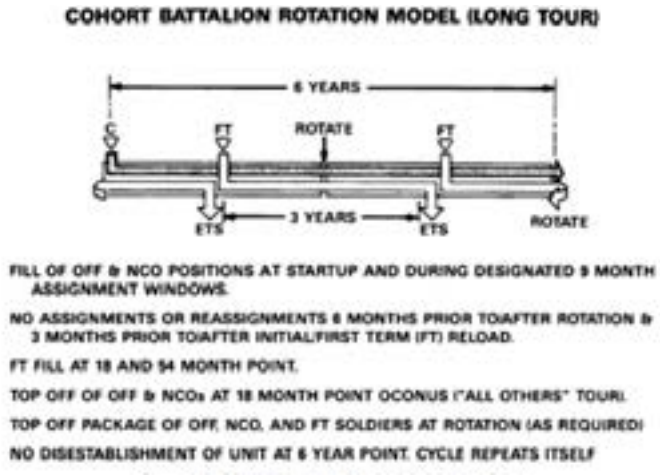

Figure A.3. COHORT Battalion Rotation Model (Long Tour).

Source: US Army, Army Regulation (AR) 600-83, *The New Manning System–COHORT Unit Replacement System* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), 26-27.

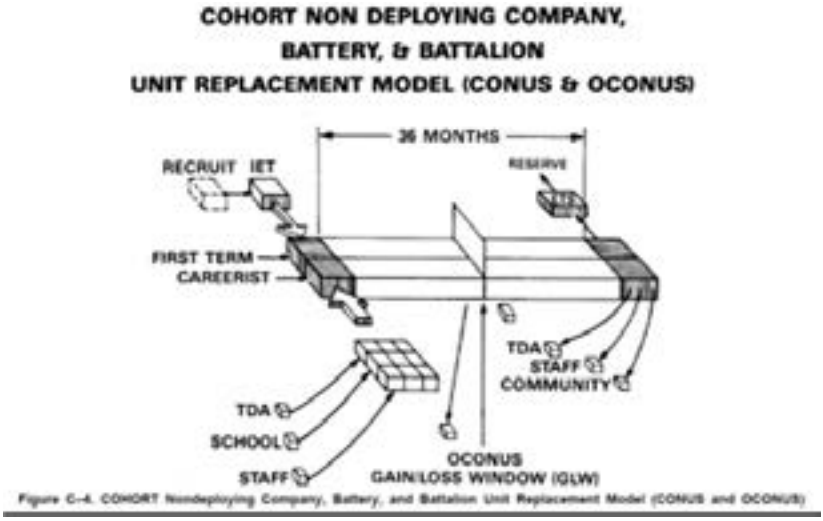

Figure A.4. COHORT Non-deploying Company, Battery, and Battalion Unit Replacement Model (CONUS and OCONUS).

Source: US Army, Army Regulation (AR) 600-83, *The New Manning System–COHORT Unit Replacement System* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1986), 26-27.

Appendix B
Lessons Learned from "Evaluating the Unit Manning System"

"The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross
and which to burn."
—David Russell

The Walter Reed US Army Institute of Research evaluation of the human dimensions of the unit manning system/COHORT supports the following 7 conclusions:

1. The primary human dimensions that affect psychological readiness for combat are:
   - Horizontal cohesion (soldier-to-soldier trust and confidence).
   - Vertical cohesion (caring and concerned leadership).
   - Personal morale.
   - Confidence in unit (company/battery) combat capabilities.
   - Confidence in leaders' abilities.
2. Psychological readiness for combat is a force multiplier. Higher psychological readiness means greater:
   - Confidence in leaders.
   - Confidence in unit combat capabilities.
   - Willingness to go into combat with the unit.
   - Identification with the company/battery.
   - Perceived teamwork in the unit.
3. Unit manning system/COHORT facilitates the development of psychological readiness for combat:
   - COHORT units score consistently higher than nonCOHORT units on most dimensions of psychological readiness for combat.
   - COHORT units are able to resist the potentially corrosive effects of rotation, leader turbulence, changes in equipment, changes in fighting doctrine, and organizational reconfiguration.
   - COHORT units enhance the potential for family-unit bonding.
   - United States Army, Europe and continental United States unit leaders agree that COHORT units consistent-

ly perform collective tasks and sustain themselves under stress better than conventional units.
- Leaders view COHORT units as consistently better at movement, maneuver, occupation, and communication at small unit levels (platoon, company) than conventional counterparts.

4. The COHORT experiment points out certain problem issues:
   - Lack of leader training prevents use of accretive training opportunities.
   - Rapid leader turnover deters unit vertical cohesion and disrupts the development of long-term unit norms and standards.
5. The COHORT experience highlights critical leadership issues:
   - Leadership practices can contribute to enhanced psychological readiness.
   - Predictable duty day and training schedules contribute to vertical cohesion.
   - Personal morale is affected by perceived leader concern for families.
   - Misinterpretation of fraternization policies can deter effective relations among ranks.
   - Leaders must convey clear standards and expectations of what is important.
   - Integrating soldier replacement packets while maintaining unit cohesion requires learned skills.
   - A supportive command climate is essential if subordinate leaders are to exhibit caring and concerned leadership.
   - COHORT soldiers judge leaders carefully and expect the highest levels of competence and concern.
   - With stabilized personnel, poorly trained or unconcerned leaders create long term problems.
6. COHORT continues to be misunderstood:
   - Some leaders fault COHORT for not producing results that were never promised: higher individual performance measures, fewer absent without leave and uniform code of military justice actions, higher reenlistment rates. non-commissioned officerss and troops often blame what they do not like about their current assignment on "COHORT"; yet, they strongly endorse the heart of CO-

HORT: the opportunity for soldiers who came in together to train together and to stay together.

7. COHORT units plus positive leadership can create high-performance units:
   - At every United States Army, Europe and continental United States site visited, the combination of COHORT companies and competent, concerned, and caring leaders produced units judged by their battalion and brigade commanders to be among the top units in their command.
   - Frequently, senior officers and non-commissioned officers expressed greater combat confidence in COHORT companies (with positive leaders) than in "elite" units with which they had served in combat.

Source: Department of Military Psychiatry, *Evaluating the Unit Manning System: Lessons Learned to Date* (Washington, DC: Walter Reed US Army Institute of Research, October 1987), 13-14.

Appendix C
History of the Army's Personnel Management System up to World War II

In the nineteenth century, American "Tactical units developed combat power by emphasizing primary group bonding based on secondary group cohesion. The unit size was not deemed critical to combat power—what mattered was unit cohesion. The philosophical emphasis was on man as a member of a community rather than on man as an individual."[1] The twentieth century and the rise of managerial science emphasized efficiency and unit strength over cohesion. Other nations such as the United Kingdom and Germany used similar systems combining both unit and individual characteristics. Units recruited and trained replacements in the rear using combat veterans from the unit. Replacements went forward together, led by officers and non-commissioned officers from the larger secondary group. Once they arrived at the front, they were distributed among needy units, but the focus remained on building cohesion. The entire system was decentralized, with extraordinarily little communication or direction from above.[2]

The American system, by contrast, focused on unit strength because it was more easily measured and "could be affected by sound management, while, as an intangible, unit cohesion was forgotten. Without structural support, leadership was expected to bond the primary groups and translate strength into combat power."[3] Another significant difference is that the American system attempted to provide individual replacements by each grade and each specialty. In contrast, the other systems only provided entry-level positions and promoted from within. Kozumplik said:

> The emphasis on the individual was carried to the point that whole regiments were dissolved to provide individuals to fill shortages in committed units. Judged in terms of unit cohesion, the American system was a failure. Ironically, it was equally a failure when judged by its own objectives because its very complexity made it impossible to maintain units at strength. American infantry companies routinely operated with strengths no greater than their foreign counterparts. A huge price was paid for a goal that was irrelevant to combat power and couldn't be achieved anyway.[4]

One of the key findings is that "Combat power seems only tangentially-related to unit strength but directly related to primary and secondary group cohesion."[5] Another is the a false dichotomy between the use of

an individual and a unit replacement system. As shown, the other nations used a hybrid for units already in combat, while the US Army almost exclusively used an individual system. The decentralized system used by foreign armies enabled early socialization into the secondary group of the regiment before entering combat, which "facilitated leadership efforts to bond primary groups and lowered the size of the unit core required to continue in combat."[6] Additionally, the men conducting training had a direct interest in ensuring the quality of soldiers. Unit leaders supervised the replacement shipment of "drafts of any size from crew to company," and the individual replacement of leaders constructively used each rest period while simultaneously training the new reinforcements.[7]

Notes

1. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 41.
2. Marlowe, WRAIR 43-44.
3. Marlowe, WRAIR 44.
4. Marlowe, WRAIR 45.
5. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 41.
6. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 46.
7. Marlowe, WRAIR 4, 46.

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