

THE DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF FOR LOGISTICS

13 December 1954

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Washington, D. C.

Lieutenant General Williston B. Palmer, USA, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Department of the Army, was born in Chicago, Illinois, 11 November 1899. He was graduated from the United States Military Academy in June 1919, the Command and General Staff School in 1937, and the Army War College in 1939. During World War II he was commanding general of the VII Corps Artillery in the Normandy Invasion, the capture of Cherbourg, the Saint-Lo breakthrough, and the battles at Mortain, Mons, Liege, Aachen, and Cologne; also in the Battle of the Bulge, the encirclement of the Ruhr, and the drive across Germany to the Elbe River. In 1946 he founded the Army Information School at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. He was director of logistics for the European Command in 1948, and vice chief of staff of the European Command in 1949. In November 1949 he assumed command of the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and in November 1950 he was transferred to command of the 2d Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas. He took the 2d Armored Division to Germany in July 1951, then was transferred to Korea and became commanding general of the X Corps in December 1951. On 21 December 1952 he became the assistant chief of staff, G-4, Department of the Army. On 13 September 1954 he was assigned to his present position, a new office created to strengthen the logistics organization of the Army. General Palmer has been awarded the Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, the Legion of Merit, the Silver Star, and the Bronze Star Medal. He also has been awarded the Order of Military Merit Taiguk with Silver Star (Korean), and the Order Broyaca, Grade of Grand Officer (Colombia). This is his first lecture at the Industrial College.

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ADMIRAL HAGUE: Our speaker this morning, Lieutenant General Williston B. Palmer, Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics, Department of the Army, has not held his present job very long. As a matter of fact, a few short weeks ago, there was no deputy chief of staff for logistics for the Army. The creation of that billet is a very significant organizational change for the Army.

At least twice before in the Army's experience there has been a coordinating authority for logistics. In World War I there was a director of Purchase, Storage, and Traffic; in World War II, there was the Army Service Forces which performed this function. But with the return of quieter days both of these offices were abolished.

Now the creation of a coordinating, overall authority in the logistical field is a very significant event. On the surface it immediately indicates that the Army recognizes that the military services must, in the piping times of peace or relative quiet, be organized so that they can go into hostilities without having to impose a reorganization. There are one or two spots where I think the other services might ponder that lesson.

I think also it probably indicates a recognition on the part of the high command of the two principles that are accentuated in the Industrial College: First, that in this day and age of total war, the support of strategic plans can no longer depend on the supply being automatic; and, second, again in this day and age of total war, it is absolutely impossible to separate military mobilization from economic mobilization.

The background of this move in the Army, this reorganization, and the limits of responsibility and authority of the job will be given you this morning by General Palmer. We are most fortunate in having the first Deputy Chief of Staff of the Army for Logistics to give us this lecture.

General Palmer, it is a great privilege and a pleasure to welcome you to this platform.

GENERAL PALMER: Admiral Hague and gentlemen: The Admiral has stated quite precisely the area in which I am going to hold my discussion this morning.

On 8 September 1954 the Army created a Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics. This officer was assigned two principal functions: to be the Chief of Staff's adviser on all logistical matters and to direct and control the seven technical services. These had been also the functions of the predecessor office, that of Assistant Chief of Staff for Logistics, usually known as G-4, but the new deputy was granted, in specific terms, authority over the missions, organization, procedures, personnel, training, and fiscal and business management of the technical services. It was the absence of these specific grants which, more than anything else, frustrated his predecessor, G-4.

These changes resulted directly from a report by the Secretary of the Army which was approved by Secretary of Defense Wilson on 17 June 1954. The Secretary's report, in turn, followed a period of intense study and debate upon the report (18 December 1953) of the Advisory Committee on Army Organization (Davies committee). Both of these reports called strongly for change, but change by evolution; both warned against the danger of disruptive revolutionary changes. And accordingly, we have taken some decisive evolutionary steps.

The United States Army has a long history. Its organization at any moment of time is something evolved in the pressures of all its yesterdays. So let us begin by taking a quick look at the past of our logistical organization, and then try to bring it into focus at this moment of time.

When President Washington's first Secretary of War, General Henry Knox, first organized the War Department in 1789, he did so by establishing four bureaus--the offices of the Adjutant General, the Quartermaster General, the Paymaster General, and the Judge Advocate. As the years rolled on, new bureaus were created--the Chief of Engineers, the Surgeon General, the Chief of Ordnance, and so on.

For over 100 years, the chiefs of what we now call the administrative and technical services were not really part of the Army and some of them were not even Army officers. What they were, in fact and in law, was heads of bureaus in an executive department which numbered the Army among its numerous responsibilities. They reported to the Secretary of War personally and took orders from nobody

else. This departmental bureaucracy was something quite apart from the Army.

The official head of the Army was the senior line general, and he had the title of "Commanding General of the Army" or sometimes "General-in-Chief." He was the most frustrated man in the Army as well as the highest ranking. He had no authority over the bureau chiefs; and whenever he tried to butt in they politely told him to go to h---, the Army had nothing to say about it. That may sound absurd and impossible, but it is absolutely true.

From the soldier's point of view, this strictly bureaucratic approach to military affairs had a thousand grave defects, but the gravest of them all was this: "The War Department possessed no means whatever to relate its actions to the conduct of war." There was no agency to collect and evaluate intelligence; to prepare strategic plans guided by that information; to prepare a mobilization plan based on that strategic plan; to compute materiel requirements based on the mobilization plan; to plan an industrial mobilization based on the materiel requirements; or to plan a budgetary program by which the appropriations might be related to the probable strategic needs.

It was to fill this void that the general staff was created 50 years ago (1903), and the Chief of Staff was interposed between the Secretary of War and the bureau chiefs.

The bureau chiefs very naturally resented this interposition of the Chief of Staff. Nothing arouses resistance so certainly as being shoved from the source of power. However, it was not the technical services (as we now call them) that made the biggest fuss about it. The Adjutant General of that day defied the Chief of Staff so obstreperously that in 1912 he had to retire to avoid a court-martial; and even after his retirement, he got a rider into the Army Appropriation Bill to remove General Wood as Chief of Staff. President Taft vetoed the bill and the Army went unpaid for seven months.

Then in 1916 the Judge Advocate General swung a haymaker at the Chief of Staff, attacking his power in a long legal opinion. That round ended when Secretary Baker overruled the Judge Advocate General in a masterly legal opinion of his own. So as we entered World War I, the general staff idea was still fighting for life--but not particularly with the technical services.

What interested the technical services was "money." At that time, and for long after, Congress made the appropriations directly to the bureau chiefs--so much money to the Quartermaster General, so much to the Chief of Ordnance, and so on. Then the law would go into details about what the bureau chiefs would do with the money.

The bureau chiefs accepted the need for a general staff to collect and evaluate intelligence and to prepare plans for possible wars; but they held on to their direct appropriations until after World War II (1950). The change even then was gradual. First, Congress gave the Secretary of Defense a broad authority over the money of all three services. Then Congress created the office of Comptroller for each of the services, and stopped making direct appropriations to the technical services; and the Comptroller took over the money.

This was probably the most important change ever made in the administration of the Army with the sole exception of the general staff law itself, but don't let me give you the impression that it was a victory for the general staff. It was a victory for the Defense Comptroller.

But we have gotten ahead of our story. We have seen that the vacuum in high command became intolerable at the turn of the century, and so the general staff was born. And even as the old supply bureaus were arraying their strength to hold off this encroaching upstart, they discovered that they themselves were changing almost beyond recognition.

Clearly something of tremendous significance happened to the Army about 50 years ago. It had been getting along (however awkwardly) for over 100 years, it had come through the terrible strains of the Civil War; and now all this commotion began with the little one-horse Spanish-American War! Why?

What had happened was indeed significant: We had undertaken an overseas war. That was what tore it. The War Department collapsed when we took our first modest step into what has become a whole series of overseas wars; wars which have continually grown like the expanding universe--bigger forces with more complex gear in more theaters on more continents at greater distances with more allies to assist, so that, try as we may to catch them, our problems seem to rush constantly outward beyond our reach. It was the little one-horse Spanish-American War that pulled the trigger. Patterns that had been fairly stable for 100 years have been shifting ever since.

In World War I and on a greatly increased scale in World War II, the stuffy little departmental bureaus grew into huge industrial organizations, with arsenals, factories, depots, proving grounds, purchasing agencies, schools, laboratories, ports, fleets, and a vast array of technical troops with the field armies.

Since all of these enormous enterprises were intended solely for the support of the combat arms, some agency inevitably had to appear with the mission of coordinating their huge efforts with each other and with the missions and plans of the Army. For 50 years, more or less, the Army has been seeking how to conform to the fact of life that these huge logistical enterprises have to be directed and controlled by somebody.

In World War I, after a lot of thrashing around, they finally combined under one strong man the command authority and the general staff planning over logistics. The solution of 1918 was to organize the Purchase, Storage, and Traffic Division, under General Goethals.

In World War II the same thing happened. They found the strong man in General Somervell. He moved from the position of G-4 to that of Commanding General, Army Service Forces. The technical services came under his command, the logistics planning was done by his staff.

Our World War II effort in Europe likewise followed this pattern. General John C. H. Lee was made commander of the Services of Supply in the European theater at any early date. Time after time, a G-4 division was established on the ETOUSA staff. One after another, General Lee swallowed them up and took back the G-4 functions to himself. Finally, he swallowed up the whole theater headquarters in his combination SOS-ETOUSA headquarters of 1944.

So these rare but very expensive experiments in wartime logistics all seem to yield the same answer. The function of executive authority over logistical operations and the functions of principal staff adviser for logistics are always given to one man when the pressure gets heavy enough to squeeze out the theorists.

In 1946, when the wartime organization shrank down, it was decided to abolish Headquarters, Army Service Forces, and to combine both the staff function and the executive authority in G-4 of the general staff. The word "command" is a good one to avoid unless you mean

it in the complete sense. The authority G-4 received was to "direct and control" the technical services. Under this formula, with the assistant chief of the general staff empowered to "direct and control" the technical services, we went through the war emergency which began in June 1950.

This was no trivial test of the logistical organization. At the same time we were supporting the Korean campaign, we were also undertaking the creation of the Seventh Army in Germany, the creation of the Communications Zone in France, the farflung MDAP programs and the further flung base construction programs. The logistical effort was certainly as great as in World War I. The management combination of G-4 and the seven technical services had a pretty fair test. It made mistakes but it was never in the slightest danger of collapse. It was the first modern war in which we did not abandon our logistical organization and create a new one.

As we emerged from the Korean War, there was good justification for these two conclusions:

First, that the two functions of general manager of the seven technical services and principal staff adviser for logistics should be combined in one man.

Second, that G-4 could handle the two jobs in a war emergency.

From the day I returned from Korea to become G-4, it was made crystal clear to me that I was completely responsible, both to the Chief of Staff and to the Assistant Secretary of the Army, for the logistic operations of the Army. That was what they meant by "direct and control."

But the 100 percent responsibility was not matched by corresponding authority. The effect of the so-called "general staff concept" that had prevailed since 1921 was to give four or five other general staff agencies authority to intervene in technical service affairs. Since there was no one boss with full responsibility and authority for integrating and giving pattern to the system of seven technical services, they were left to seek their own salvation, each a separate little world of its own. What they desperately needed was leadership provided by one boss who was not subject to the partial veto of four or five other authorities, each of whom claimed partial jurisdiction.

The recent changes in logistical organization are intended to furnish them precisely that leadership.

The first step was to change G-4 into a deputy chief of staff.

The second and concurrent step was to spell out the grant of command authority, not only in all logistical matters but also in a number of things which G-1, G-3, the Comptroller, etc., have heretofore handled direct with the technical services. What I hope we have accomplished, by adding all those words to my charter, is a real clarification of authority and responsibility.

That was all that was needed. There are no jealousies or feuds between me and the other gentlemen concerned. They are my lifelong friends. They have demonstrated so conclusively their right to my respect and their fitness for their high positions that I am always inclined to place their judgment ahead of my own.

It is a nice thing to be able to say that, in complete sincerity, about your associates--and it is that mutual trust and confidence above all else which makes our Army great. I hope and believe that the same feeling exists between me and the chiefs of the technical services.

And I want to make very clear--and this is important in order to be fair--that I have found the seven technical services entirely willing to play ball with me 100 percent. It was no fault of theirs that there were defects in our teamwork.

When Secretary of Defense Lovett left office two years ago, he said in his final report (18 November 1952): "A reorganization of the technical services would be no more painful than backing into a buzz saw, but I believe that it is long overdue."

I have great respect for Mr. Lovett, but fortunately for me I don't agree with him about the buzz saw. I am sure that we can isolate and define the problems and deal with them reasonably; and I am sure I will have no buzz saw scars afterward.

The seven "technical services" of the Army have reasonably distinct functions: a construction service, a communication service, a medical service, and a transportation service; and then a supplier of consumer goods, a supplier of munitions, and a supplier of toxic agents.

Each of these technical services was actually born in war, born of the stern reality of war. There is nothing which prevents their being changed whenever new conditions make changes desirable. The Secretary of the Army can transfer responsibilities among them by a simple directive; everyone remembers several such changes since 1940.

The difficulty heretofore has been that nobody had full responsibility and authority to weld them into a single integrated system.

We have now taken that decisive, but not revolutionary, step; and now I think we will quickly see a number of fuzzy areas along the fences between the technical services. We will get busy clearing out this underbrush. And then, I suspect, we will uncover quite a considerable number of problems, which have been hampering us seriously all this time, undetected because they have been obscured by the brush.

We are already far advanced in creating uniform supply and accounting procedures which will soon give us a homogeneous supply system instead of seven dissimilar systems.

We are already far advanced in gaining control of our 24-billion-dollar inventory, buying only what we really need and getting rid of what we no longer need and closing expensive depots which we can do without.

We are already far advanced in an attack on the strangling problems of maintenance and repair parts.

There are major tasks to be faced.

We must improve the whole system of developing logistical managers. For 50 years we have had a magnificent process for developing tactical commanders to higher and higher responsibilities. Nobody can pretend that these officers come to the higher commands with a comparable readiness to deal with their logistical responsibilities.

By the same process, highly trained G-3's are now available at a dime a dozen, while highly trained G-4's are the scarcest article in the world. Yet the G-4 job is far more difficult. I speak from considerable experience in both fields.

We have the best supplied, best cared-for Army the world has ever seen; but we can furnish the same service far more effectively. And we have to do so if the United States is to survive into the 21st century.

That is the real meaning of the recent change in the logistical organization of the Army. That is where we have arrived at this moment in time.

COLONEL WIRAK: General Palmer is ready for your questions.

QUESTION: Your change in mission and organization includes a substantial portion pertaining to personnel. Does your concept include drawing up a supply corps similar to that of the Navy and Air Force or which would include a career management office at some level other than the technical services?

GENERAL PALMER: If I understand your question, Do I mean to convert my office into a supply corps similar to the Navy's including career management office, is that what you mean?

QUESTION: Yes, sir.

GENERAL PALMER: Or do you mean, do I mean to establish a defense technical service?

QUESTION: The personnel now managed by the technical services so far as a supply corps is concerned.

GENERAL PALMER: I am assigned responsibility for their career management, and the way, as I see it, that will evolve, each chief of the technical service will administer the personnel of his own branch as he does now. That obviously continues until you see some definite change to be made. However, there are certain career problems peculiar to certain technical service fields which need to be studied and evaluated and, in fact, first need to be identified. The difficulty has been that there has never been a staff agency staffed with qualified people, or for that matter with any people, to examine those problems, isolate the problem itself, ascertain the facts about it, arrive at the conclusions, and come up with a recommendation which then I can take up with G-1, and, if I find G-1 and I are unable to agree, raise it to the highest level for solution.

The one that is raised the most often--I am not sure it is the most valid because we have not yet given it the proper isolation for testing its validity--is that of procurement personnel. A man perhaps is doing a fine job in negotiating contracts in Chicago when some arbitrary overseas rotation process puts him in command of a maintenance battalion

in Korea for which he is completely unqualified, and the commander of the maintenance battalion finds himself engaged in trying to out-trade General Motors. There certainly have been instances which gave rise to criticism there. We have never been able to give that a proper examination. We now propose to do that.

I have charted on the third sheet of the throw-away, a director of personnel with three divisions under him. Those three divisions will not get into detailed personnel administration but will get into all policy questions. We will probably also start listing certain key people in fields in which some services are better supplied than others--that is the procurement type of activity--in order to use our judgement as to where they are most needed. That is looking further ahead than we have gotten at the moment. That is, let us say, essentially the new thing in this organization.

QUESTION: The second part of your new charter covers the supervising of training, subparagraph "b (2)."

GENERAL PALMER: Right.

QUESTION: Now how will that tie in with the new concept of a continental command?

GENERAL PALMER: The charter of the Continental Army Command has not yet been approved by the Secretary of the Army. It is still in discussion so I don't know what authority he is going to get over the technical service schools; but in putting that in my charter, it was the intent to establish the area in which I have particularly to assume control, because somebody has to supervise training of that area which has nothing to do with troops. There are many schools which do not involve the training of troops--for personnel of class 2 establishments or arsenals, things of that sort that are 95 percent civilian establishments--schools which are in a high proportion civilian: The Supply Management School at Fort Lee; the Procurement School at Fort Lee; the Ordnance courses at quite a number of different places, which have to do entirely with industrial activities and have nothing to do with training troops.

Now the training, on the other hand, that you are speaking of as concerning CONARC, is that for replacement training and for general reserve units of the technical services; it has to do with readying troops for the Army in the field, and there certainly is a very strong school

of thought that this should be under the Continental Army Command, that one authority ought to have undivided responsibility to train troops to go to overseas commands. But the part you find in my charter there, which I am particularly interested in, should have nothing to do with troop training.

QUESTION: We have a Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Research; now we have one for Logistics, both with research and development (R&D) responsibilities at the same level on the chart. Do we consider the two a team or will we turn R&D all over to Logistics?

GENERAL PALMER: That question comes up for decision by the Secretary of the Army at 1600 this afternoon. I am not in an empire building mood but I believe the whole R&D staff ought to be put into one place. I am perfectly willing to have it under either head, where, judged by other people, it will work best. There has been some struggle, not entirely resolved, but I am not a party to it. There are differences of opinion from outside. As you all know, that is the great difficulty in getting anything done in Washington--having been given responsibility to discharge, you can't discharge it because outsiders think it should be run on an entirely different basis and keep the argument open.

QUESTION: General, will these additional responsibilities that you have and that G-4 didn't have and the new offices created here call for any appreciable increase in your strength over and above what G-4 had?

GENERAL PALMER: I asked for about 150 more people. There are about 50 involved in the personnel part of it, which isn't too much. Then we go into the banking business a great deal more. We get bulk allotments from the Comptroller which we parcel out to the technical services. We give them more when they run out. That is a simple benefit of passing paper through one less office for allocation. One voucher covers the whole thing instead of getting three nonreconcilable vouchers from all over the Pentagon.

Then I need an inspection office which takes a few people; that really is an analysis of the Inspector General's reports. The process in the Army is that there are always inspectors going out all over the world. We want to see that our orders are being complied with so we give the inspectors certain things and tell them to particularly look for these things to see that they are being done. They go out to look and report. We have a room full of reports which nobody looks at. So I

need this office to analyze the information we get from the Inspector General, and it takes three or four people.

QUESTION: General, this may have a couple of thorns in it. I notice your responsibility does not include the civil functions of the Chief of Engineers. Would you care to comment on an Air Force function performed by the Chief of Engineers and how that fits into the picture?

GENERAL PALMER: They fit in with the civil functions. I don't have anything to do with them. In other words this is just one of the facts of life. The Chief of Engineers over generations has been the chief construction office of the United States Government. He has also been part of the Army; but the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, presides over an enormous construction enterprise and I don't believe that 10 percent of his current business is with the United States Army; 90 percent of it is outside the United States Army. A large part of what he does is for the Air Force. Under various acts relating to civil works, he has a lot of other jobs. In a major war the Army gets to be his important client but in times like these, the Army is not his important client.

I have a director of installations in my office who, you might say, presents the Army's bids to the Chief of Engineers--that is what it amounts to. All this is done in perfectly good temper and the engineers have always been and always will be, I am sure, one of the most valuable, loyal and devoted elements of the Army. There has never been any question about that. But they have a mission given them which takes them at this moment 90 percent out of the Army.

QUESTION: At the time the Seventh Army was set up in Europe, the housekeeping functions were taken away from the Seventh Army and put under the director of the Army Service Forces to allow more flexibility of the combat forces. Do you visualize there should be established a service command within the United States to take over these housekeeping functions similar to the way they were done under ASF?

GENERAL PALMER: I think you will find that has been done in a partial way. Any post, for instance, that is commanded by a division commander and occupied by the division, has a deputy post commander who runs the service command functions. There is a separate post

staff to run the housekeeping establishment, which is distinct from the division staff. So you can pick up your division and leave the post. It was done a great many times in the Korean War. As we shrink down to complete peacetime, they tend to abandon that because it involves extra personnel and duplication of effort. But when you have any need to move your troops, a separate housekeeping establishment is set up.

These six territorial armies in the United States are largely service commands right now. The Army commander wouldn't know his outfit if he took his staff overseas on a mission. He has in his command now the Reserves and the National Guard.

To set up a top command such as they had under General Somervell would really mean setting up another separate command besides General Dahlquist's Continental Training Command. This command should not be put under the same man responsible for wholesale logistical functions--for depots, factories; general hospitals that haven't anything to do with troop housing. I certainly would never want to get into two scrambles at once the way General Somervell was.

QUESTION: Would you care to comment on the consideration that led to the rejection of the Davies committee recommendations: (1) that there be a vice chief of staff for logistics; and (2) a logistics supply command as such?

GENERAL PALMER: Frankly, I don't know. The Davies report got into debate at altitudes far above me. I have never been in it. I did not campaign for this office. I did not campaign for the change in title. And I did not campaign for any part of this change. I told them I could make it work the way it was. I didn't want to get into the empire-building racket here. I am a troop soldier and I expect to go back to troops. I was able to sit back and say, "Boys, let me know when you are going to change things."

I received a letter from Mr. Davies saying--it was a complimentary letter--"Sorry, we are not able to go along with your view in this matter," which was to leave G-4 alone.

From there on, I don't know. I think the vice chief of staff idea was a little too rich to digest for most of the people who sat down at the table; and the supply command, I thought myself was a mistake because the chart was drawn to put it down beside the Continental Army Command, with the chiefs of the technical services below that. That would have

put them on the level of a territorial army, when, as a matter of fact, the chiefs of the technical services must be up with the Army staff because there is no way in the world that you can put these people with their special qualifications where the Army staff is prevented from getting advice from them. In the general staff we don't have that specialized talent. There is no way to lick it that I can see. You have to keep them up there close to the throne and available to people. There is no use to say you can communicate with them through a long chain of command.

QUESTION: I note that some of your responsibilities are conditioned by policies of the Comptroller. Just what is the working arrangement between your office and the Comptroller's office, moneywise?

GENERAL PALMER: Well, I don't think we have time to answer that before lunch. The point is that necessarily the Comptroller has to coordinate overall accounting policies that apply to the whole Army. I work them out within the technical services. This has been proved a very necessary thing. There are a great many different accounting policies and systems within the technical services which my colleagues and I are trying to smooth out. We don't do that by ignoring the Comptroller. We work out something and then consult with him. You can't have the Comptroller making policies for the whole Department of the Army and then have the technical services and me doing something opposite within the Army.

It is my responsibility within my territory to see that these things get done a lot better, which is rough. Particularly in a thing of this sort where it is so ingrained by past practice and with so much accounting and so much bookkeeping that it is near impossible to extricate yourself. It takes a good deal of determination to accomplish anything and I am the guy who is responsible for seeing that things get done in this logistics field. I realize that is a very confusing reply I have been giving you, but honestly it would take more than from 10:30 to noon to get into that question with any degree of precision.

COLONEL WIRAK: General Palmer, you have given us a very stimulating talk. On behalf of the Commandant, I thank you for this enlightening talk.

(17 Feb 1955--350)S/sgh