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Training-Unit

REPORT ON U.S. ARMY LARGE-SCALE MANEUVERS

(Prepared by John Slonaker, Dec 1976)

The justification for exercises that provide realistic battle experience, including a sense of involvement in a full-scale operation, was provided by an anonymous sergeant during the Battle of the Bulge. A general paused to speak to troops who were fighting off a Nazi attack. Asked how things were going, the young sergeant drawled, "Well, I'll tell you, General, after them Tennessee maneuvers, nothing is bad." (Reference: "Maneuvers - The Final Exam." Army Information Digest, November 1954, p.9)

The final test of an army's effectiveness is whether or not the combined actions of individual soldier's achieve the tactical objective sought by the army commander. The most conclusive means for determining the speed and clarity with which information moves upward and orders move downward is a simultaneous testing of all command echelons. This is the purpose of large-scale maneuvers.

Based upon a study of numerous individual maneuvers, from "the first genuine corps and army maneuvers" in 1940 to Desert Strike of 1964, Mr. Jean Moenk, currently FORSCOM historian, wrote A History of Large-Scale Maneuvers in the United States, 1935-1964 (Ft. Monroe, VA: USACONARC, 1969), which is attached. He points out that, when the U.S. entered World War II, large-scale maneuvers were considered "the logical culmination of a progressive training program beginning the various states of unit training" (p.1)

On pages 327 to 339 he summarizes the pros and cons of large-scale maneuvers. To summarize the summary:

Any ideal training situation for the higher level staffs and support elements required a realistic exercise of time and space factors; the development of tactical and logistical situations requiring decisions and actions; the provision of a frame-work for the practice of joint coordination; and the introduction of the unexpected (p. 327).

According to many unit commanders, these factors implied the physical presence of extensive forces on the ground which were dispersed both laterally and in depth. The theory underlying this school of thought was that the normal frictions of the military machine could only be achieved by the simultaneous operation of its various components in a representative environment. However, other commanders, as well as many staff officers at higher levels of command, considered the maneuvering of tens of thousands of troops over millions of acres of land as a training aid which was far too expensive for the education of a relatively small number of commanders and their staff officers (p. 327).

An argument in favor of maneuvers is that combat experiences of World War II indicated "the individual soldier and small unit seemed to perform better when exposed to combat-like experiences prior to entering the deadly game of actual warfare where errors cost lives and could not be corrected by further training." (p. 328) Although he had earlier noted (pp. 5, 7) that "the individual could be adequately trained without corps or larger field training exercises," Moenk does not fully discuss in his summary the question of whether or not large-scale maneuvers provide to the isolated individual infantryman greater realism than do small unit exercises. If it provides equivalent realism, the large-scale maneuver may be justifiable on a cost basis, since combat soldiers and all levels of headquarters are trained simultaneously.

Moenk points out arguments against large-scale maneuvers: They provide fine training for headquarters but the pace is too slow for individual soldiers in small units. Also, the imposition of artificial restrictions, "many of which stemmed from cost considerations or the desire to prevent maneuver damages," tended to lessen the value of the small unit training. As an analysis of the cost problem, Moenk furnishes comparative per capita cost charts for post-World War II exercises. (p. 331)

Summarized below are six representative maneuvers described in Moenk and elsewhere:

I. Louisiana Maneuvers, September 1941. Following its corps-size maneuvers in Tennessee in June 1941, the Second Army's 130,000 men journeyed to Louisiana and engaged the Third Army, with a strength of 270,000, in a maneuver area of 30,000 square miles. Unlike many exercises, this, the largest war game ever undertaken by the Army, was a "free" maneuver, its result not predetermined. Realism was stressed and the outcome was up to the two commanders, General Ben Lear and Walter Krueger.

The purpose of the maneuver was to give commanders and their staffs the opportunity to wield army-size units. General Lesley McNair, Chief of Staff, General Headquarters, used it to uncover fallacies in Army doctrine pertaining to logistics, organization and tactics. Army Chief of Staff George Marshall hoped the publicity accorded the exercise would stimulate the American people and Congress into granting the Army more money for training and equipment.

The maneuver broke new ground not only in the size of units involved but in the concentration of airpower, armored forces, and parachute troops. Among the problems tackled: concentration of huge forces and their deployment for battle, crossing unfordable rivers, changing direction of advance, retreat and pursuit, and changes in supply lines. Among the lessons learned: 1. the necessity of coordination; 2. the importance of security, march discipline, concealment, and liaison with adjacent units; 3. the vulnerability of armor with the proper use of antitank weapons, terrain and demolitions; 4. and, most importantly, the need for a properly functioning chain of command. General McNair pointed out as particular deficiencies: failure to make effective use of armor, lack of attack and defense aggressiveness, and failures in discipline, infantry-artillery cooperation, and reconnaissance. To General Lear the maneuvers revealed that small unit training and discipline were still not up to par.

The exercise was useful in conclusively separating competent and incompetent officers. "Removing the incompetent was, perhaps, McNair's chief priority following the Louisiana Maneuvers." (Murray, p. 33)

References:

Moenk, cited above. pp. 53-62.

Murray, George E.P. "The Louisiana Maneuvers, September, 1941: Practice for War." M.A. thesis, KS State, 1972. 63 p. U310M87.

Wiley, Bell I., & Govan, William P. History of the Second Army: Army Ground Forces Historical Study No. 16. Wash, DC: Historical Section, AGF, 1946. pp. 23-29. #03-2.1946.

II. The only large-scale maneuver conducted in the immediate postwar years was the West Coast Joint Amphibious Training Exercise Mountain Goat held on the beaches of Aliso Canyon, CA, and inland at Camp Pendleton, 25-29 November 1946. Sixth Army provided enemy opposition for the landing force, i.e., 2d Infantry Division. The division had available only 70% of its authorized strength, with rifle companies particularly weak. To overcome this problem the attack was made on narrow fronts, "depending on the speed of penetration and the skill in tactical maneuvering to outflank or surround enemy resistance." The ship convoy provided adequate space for the 10,000 landing troops, but only 50% of the TOE vehicles could be lifted. The division landed with three battalions abreast. Some confusion and landing delays occurred as a result of errors in coordination, but the landing schedule and diagram were followed surprisingly well. To Major General George P. Hays, Commanding General of Sixth Army, the exercise provided "evidence that the American military establishment has lost a great deal of its skill in the art of war" through the discharge of combat veterans and substitution of green replacements.

Reference: Moenk, pp. 110-114.

III. Exercise Portrex, held between 25 February and 11 March 1950 in Puerto Rico, was a joint Army-Navy-Air Force exercise designed to provide joint operations training, test the validity of joint operations techniques and procedures, and help develop principles for joint amphibious-airborne operations. The U.S. was considered the zone of interior from which an invasion force was launched against the aggressor force (Caribbean Defense Forces) on Vieques Island. After receiving training at the U.S. Navy's Little Creek Amphibious Training Base, Virginia, the invasion force (3d Infantry Division) sailed from Norfolk and hit the beaches of Vieques on 8 March with air cover and an 82d Airborne Division battalion drop.

Specific criticisms of the maneuver:

1. The maneuver area on the island was too small, preventing the sound tactical employment of available forces. Aggressor forces were able to erect formidable obstacles on the small beaches, thus requiring excessive umpire controls.
2. The drop of the 82d Division's battalion had been given wide advance publicity and 700-800 VIP's were present at the site. The aggressor had advantageous positions from which to wreak havoc on the battalion, which, in addition, suffered 61 real casualties because of unfavorable conditions.

In his critique, Major General Ray Porter, Commanding General, U.S. Army Caribbean, pointed out that it was unrealistic to expect to have the luxury of so much advance planning time. Also, the training value of the exercise was diminished because public information considerations were placed ahead of sound tactical and security considerations.

Total cost: \$1,126,500.

Reference: Moenk, pp. 136-143.

IV. Joint Exercise Longhorn, staged at Fort Hood between 25 March and 11 April 1952, was designed to provide training of Army and Air Force units in large-scale offensive and defensive operations, night operations, defense on a wide front, tactical air operations, airborne operations, logistical support including the use of air for resupply and casualty evacuation, tactical defense against atomic and chemical weapons, and featured an armored breakout.

A problem immediately became obvious. Chief, Army Field Forces, was not required to coordinate with DA when selecting the units. Unfortunately, AFF chose units scheduled for deployment overseas during the maneuver. Henceforth, maneuver troop lists were required to be submitted to DA for approval.

Unit ground forces totaled 96,785. U.S. forces were made up of a provisional field army headquarters, XV Corps, 31st and 47th Infantry Divisions, 1st Armored Division, and 301st Logistical Command. The aggressor was 82d Airborne Division and 17th Armored Cavalry Group. These were three phases: 1. delay and withdrawal; 2. development of, and attack from, a defensive position; and 3. attack from bridgeheads and an armored pursuit.

Criticisms:

1. As was the case in many maneuvers, corps and divisions failed to collect and evaluate intelligence information and to provide security for units and personnel.
2. National Guard divisions lacked aggressiveness.
3. The Army and Air Force had never moved by air an entire non- airborne division for immediate commitment to combat. Much of the 31st Division's equipment could not be moved with the unit because of a shortage of the correct type of aircraft.
4. The paradrop of the 508th Regimental Combat Team was improperly executed -- among other errors, 90% of the men and equipment were dropped into one tiny zone, such saturation resulting in the theft of air for chutes. One paratrooper was killed and 39 injured. Then followed a simulated atomic strike which theoretically destroyed two- thirds of the RCT.
5. Because of insufficient funds there was a shortage of corps artillery and service support units. Improvising led to unrealistic tactical shortages.
6. Umpire quality was poor.
7. The field army headquarters was established too late in the planning stage to be of much use.

Equipment losses totaled \$224,000, which was less than the 1951 Southern Pine, but more than 1952 Snowfall. Total cost: \$3,397,245.

Reference: Moenk, pp. 170-183.

V. Joint Exercise Swift Strike III was conducted in a six million acre area of North and South Carolina between 21 July and 16 August 1963. The purpose was to train major combat organizations as a highly mobile, hard-hitting, joint land and air team. U.S. Strike Command, General Paul Adams, Commander in Chief, controlled the two opposing task forces. TF Red was composed of III Corps (2d and 5th Infantry Divisions, and 1st Logistical Command) and Twelfth Air

Force. TF Blue was made up of XVIII Airborne Corps (82d and 101st Airborne Divisions and 5th Logistical Command), Ninth Air Force, and a Joint Unconventional Warfare Task Force for guerrilla operations. About 85,000 Army troops participated. For the first time since World War II an airborne corps operated against a ground corps.

Blue airborne assaulted and Red counterattacked Blue's airhead. Blue then launched a coordinated attack. Red retreated south of the Saluda River and regrouped for a nuclear counterattack, which forced Blue to withdraw north of the river in a defensive line. The 101st, in a retrograde move, was withdrawn to Blue homeland and Red assaulted remaining Blue forces as the exercise ended.

Accomplishment: The exercise was important as an effort to supply forces solely by airlift. (Airstrips were constructed by engineer units.) The ROAD concept of division organization was tested. ROAD allowed division organization to be tailored for the requirements of a specific operation. Huge movements of troops and supplies into and out of the exercise area were accomplished --83,000 troops, 16,211 trucks, 11,335 trailers, 323 tracked vehicles, and 1,050 other major items of equipment.

General Adams' criticisms: The airborne units waited interminably for their heavy equipment drop and they lost time looking for lost equipment. Dropped equipment was destroyed because of improper rigging. Missiles were not camouflaged and radar equipment was erected in conspicuous places. Other commanders commented that the Red logistical command should have been joint, not merely Army, and that airborne equipment loading procedures and airborne command post communications were vulnerable. Movement restrictions were imposed to minimize damages in the six-million acre area. As a result Red was forced to eliminate two-thirds of its cross-country operations. Tactical realism was lost.

Among General Adams' major conclusions:

1. Maximum training benefits were derived.
2. Efficient working relationships between the two services were established.
3. It was learned that the ROAD division was extremely mobile and responsive to tactical changes, with the use of only minimal essential equipment.

The exercise cost \$10,679,061, a \$6.4 million increase over Swift Strike II of the previous fiscal year. Swift Strike III cost \$125 per man, Swift Strike II, \$75.

Major General Charles Beauchamp's DA Liaison Group observed Swift Strike III and was critical of large-scale joint field training exercises when planned and executed by U.S. Strike Command.

Beauchamp announced that the Army was receiving a poor return for its training dollars. Small units, especially those that had not completed combat training, should not be required to participate. The Group also believed two-sided exercises could not be really "free" and generated too many control problems. In his conclusion General Beauchamp seemed convinced that the presence of actual combat units merely provided the "situation" for staff actions and plans. The same objective could be achieved with CPX's.

In contrast, the Red Commander, Lieutenant General Thomas Dunn, declared the exercise approximated the realism of combat and was highly beneficial. CPX's could not duplicate that realism.

Reference: Moenk, pp. 292-311.

VI. Exercise Desert Strike conducted by U.S. Strike Command from 17 to 30 May 1964, was a two-sided, semi-controlled joint Army-Air Force field training exercise designed to familiarize STRICOM forces with the concepts and doctrines associated with large-scale employment of nuclear weapons. Emphasis was also placed on electronic tactics and joint intelligence. It was staged along that portion of the Colorado River separating California and Arizona, a 12-million acre area of desert. Sixth Army provided neutral administrative and logistical support. General Adams was maneuver director. Task Force Phoenix, representing the nation on the east bank on the river, was comprised of III Corps (2d Armored Division, 5th Infantry Division, 258th Infantry Brigade (ARNG), 191st Infantry Brigade (USAR), and 1st Logistical Command) and Twelfth Air Force. Task Force Mojave, representing the nation of the west bank, was made up of XVIII Airborne Corps (1st Armored Division, 101st Airborne Division, 2d Brigade, 40th Armored Division (ARNG), and 5th Logistical Command) and Ninth Air Force. Total Army troop participation - 89,788.

The units engaged in deep armor thrusts, defensive operations along natural barriers, airmobile and airborne assaults and counterattacks, and simulated employment of nuclear weapons. Phoenix attacked Mojave, placing numerous bridges across the river. The 1st Armored Division was bypassed by 2d Armored Division. The 5th Infantry Division was successful until the 101st attacked. Phoenix withdrew and defended the river line. The preponderance of power was shifted by the Maneuver Director to Mojave. Nuclear strikes were exchanged and the 101st and 1st Armored Divisions forced Phoenix withdrawal across the river.

Critique: USCONARC reported that 90% of the mistakes made by participating units resulted from inadequate umpire control and lack of communication. It took an inordinate amount of time to set up nuclear strikes. The Air Force and Army tallies of Hawk aircraft hits differed - 14 versus 700. The exercise was not staged at a time designed to climax the progressive training programs of the two armored divisions. Training of support units was interrupted their service at the maneuver. Equipment readiness suffered as a result of hard use in Desert Strike.

Cost - \$43,172,300. If that figure was reduced to \$35,342,493 because of the savings resulting from cancellation of other FY 1964 exercises, the cost per man was still \$394, the highest amount ever.

Like Swift Strike III, Desert Strike was studied by a DA Liaison Group. Unlike Swift Strike III, it was viewed as a valuable training exercise. Mechanized and armored units, especially, received valuable training in maintenance, tactical formations, command and control, and movements. Relative freedom from restrictions increased the value of the training experienced by small units. Both Swift Strike III and Desert Strike Liaison Groups decided there was excessive use of the joint task force concept. In actual tactical operations, the joint task force could impose undue restrictions on the ground commander. Other observations of the Group were that command posts were becoming too large, immobile and vulnerable; that the desert maneuver area was a good training area since it reduced dependence on road nets, lacked civilian centers of population, and provided room for movement; and that reserve unit participation was successful.

Nevertheless, large-scale field training exercises were shelved after Desert Strike. Unit deployments to the Dominican Republic (82d Airborne), Korea (2d Infantry Division), and Southeast Asia (1st Cavalry Division and then many others) made it impossible to conduct large-scale exercises.

Reference: Moenk, 312-26.