

# HQDA History

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## Revolutionary Origins

The Headquarters, Department of the Army's (HQDA) historical roots are grounded in the Board of War and Ordnance, which the Second Continental Congress established as a standing committee during the American Revolution on 12 June 1776. The board would have administrative oversight of the Continental Army and make recommendations to Congress. Originally comprising five members of Congress instead of military officers, the board could not keep pace with demand and lacked the expertise to manage military affairs effectively. In late 1777, Congress replaced the standing committee with a permanent Board of War composed of both civilian and military members. And after the ratification of the Articles of Confederation in 1781, the Confederation Congress officially established a Department of War, which initially consisted of a secretary at war, an assistant, an administrative aide, and two clerks. Congress appointed Benjamin Lincoln to the role of secretary at war in October 1781, which Lincoln held until his resignation two years later. After Secretary Lincoln's departure, the chief clerk assumed leadership responsibility until Congress elected General (Ret.) Henry Knox to be secretary at war in March 1785.

Administrative and financial turmoil in the early 1780s concerned Confederation leaders who quickly realized that the central government created under the Articles was too weak for the country to function effectively. After months of debate, delegates of the Constitutional Convention forged the Constitution of the United States. Taking effect on 4 March 1789, the new government reassessed its administrative organization. During its first session, Congress established the Department of War as a civilian agency whose principal officer would be the secretary of war. Ability to appoint the secretary of war shifted from Congress to the president. President George Washington, friend and wartime colleague of General Knox, appointed Knox to be the first secretary of war.

## Growth in the 19th Century

While the new nation grappled with threats both internal and external, the Department of War kept quite busy. In addition to foreign hostility and conflict with Native Americans, the department also managed frequent reorganizations of the U.S. Army and its own struggle to find a permanent headquarters location. For example, in September 1800 the War Department occupied a three-story house on the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue near a block of houses known as the "Six Buildings," until a fire destroyed the building, along with all the department's books and files, just two months later. Meanwhile, the War Department saw a modest increase in personnel to help with the expanding workload during the Quasi War (1798–1801). As soon as the conflict ended, Congress reduced the department's size with the passage of the Military Peace

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Establishment Act of 16 March 1802, just to increase it again in 1808 as the threat of war with Britain loomed. During the War of 1812 (1812–1815), the new War Department building was among those the British burned when they invaded and occupied D.C. in August 1814. Although the department's records and books escaped destruction this time because clerks had removed them, the loss of the building meant yet another move.

After the War of 1812, the War Department's expansion led to the creation of sub-departments, which Secretary of War John C. Calhoun later transformed into a system of bureaus for managing technical and administrative activities such as medical, ordnance, supply, and personnel. During the American Civil War (1861–1865), the War Department witnessed significant expansion of its responsibilities—including the recruitment, training, supply, medical care, transportation, and pay of millions of soldiers. These new duties required an increase in personnel, which strained available space in the building the department occupied between 1820 and 1889. Additionally, the War Department supported the Freedmen's Bureau, overseeing provisioning, clothing, sheltering, and supplying of refugees and freedmen in the South from 1865 until the bureau's charter ended in 1872.

When President Ulysses S. Grant took office in 1869, he realized that the size of the executive departments exceeded existing office spaces. So, he asked Congress to approve funding for a single building that could house the three Executive Branch departments primarily involved in conducting the nation's foreign policy. Construction of the State, War, and Navy Building took seventeen years with the War Department wing being the last to be completed. The department operated out of the State, War, and Navy Building until the late 1930s when the growing departments faced space issues yet again, causing War Department personnel to be dispersed among various buildings in the Washington metropolitan area.

## **Secretary Elihu Root's Reforms**

Throughout the nineteenth century the War Department was divided between the field army under the commanding general and the technical and administrative bureaus supervised by the secretary. The bureaus, however, operated with significant autonomy, leading to confusion, duplication of efforts, and inefficiency, which became embarrassingly apparent during the Spanish-American War (21 April–10 December 1898).

Elihu Root, who became secretary of war in 1899, used the opportunity to reform the department's administrative organization and assert more control over its operations. Root's first major change was to replace the commanding general with a

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General Staff under the leadership of a chief of staff. The General Staff would comprise Army officers who would assist the chief of staff in the planning and supervising of military operations. The chief of staff would then be the principal military adviser to the secretary and president. But Secretary Root left these reform efforts incomplete when he departed the office in 1904. Having only partially reined in the bureau chiefs, Root's successor, William Howard Taft, ultimately abandoned the reforms in favor of the traditional secretary-bureau chief alliance. Although the department underwent several other reorganizations under Secretaries Henry L. Stimson and Lindley M. Garrison, when the United States entered World War I in 1917, then-Secretary of War Newton D. Baker opted to return to the traditional policy of letting the bureaus run themselves and resurrecting the position of Commanding General. These decisions resulted in many mishaps similar to those in the War with Spain, only with far more serious consequences.

## World War II

When Henry L. Stimson became secretary of war for the second time in July 1940, he entered a department whose personnel were scattered among numerous buildings throughout the Washington metropolitan area. He urged Congress to authorize funding for a new building to bring the entire department under one roof. Construction of the Pentagon accelerated after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 and was completed on 15 January 1943. Secretary Stimson also supported the passage of the War Powers Act of 1941, which enabled him and the Army chief of staff, General George C. Marshall, to reorganize the Army. Between 1939 and 1941, the War Department tried to work within the confines of the Harbord Board report, which was founded on the belief that any new war would be similar to World War I—a single theater of operations necessitating similar command and management methods.

But World War II proved to be an entirely different war and General Marshall sought to develop a radical, new organization adapted to the war's circumstances. He substituted the vertical pattern of military command for the horizontal pattern of bureaucratic coordination, which enabled him to decentralize operating responsibilities. General Marshall could then devote his time to what he considered more important issues including planning strategy, allocating resources, and directing global military operations. After the war, Marshall proposed integrating the services into a single department similar to his wartime organization of the Army. In this plan, a civilian secretary would be responsible for the nonmilitary administration of the services and under the secretary would be a single chief of staff for the Armed Forces to manage the military activities of four operating commands: the Army, Navy, Air Forces, and a Common Supply and Hospitalization Service.

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When General Dwight D. Eisenhower replaced General Marshall as the chief of staff, however, Eisenhower believed that teamwork and cooperation of decentralized bureaus functioned better than tight executive control as a management philosophy. Under Eisenhower's plan, the assistant chief of staff, G-1, would become the Director of Personnel and Administration and G-2 Director of Intelligence. G-3 would be the Director of Organization and Training, with responsibility for War Department as well as Army-wide organizational planning. And G-4 would be the Director of Service, Supply, and Procurement responsible for logistical planning.

## HQDA and the Cold War

Meanwhile, government leaders debated how best to organize the nation's defenses in a new global landscape while Congress passed the National Security Act on 26 July 1947. The act established the National Military Establishment (NME) encompassing the Department of the Army (formerly the Department of War), the Department of the Navy, and the newly established Department of the Air Force. The National Security Act amendments of 1949 redesignated the NME as the Department of Defense (DoD). The act also removed the service secretaries from the National Security Council, withdrew their cabinet status, and cut their direct access to the President, but not to Congress.

The Department of the Army (DA) experienced several other reorganizations in the decades after World War II, particularly within HQDA. For example, when President John F. Kennedy appointed Robert S. McNamara as secretary of defense in 1961, McNamara was concerned about how long it took to get decisions out of the DoD. Secretary McNamara lay blame for communication and decision delays on the committee system's endless bargaining and compromises. His remedy was to replace committees where possible and assert greater executive authority, responsibility, and control over the DoD and its operations. The services, especially the DA, lost many important functions with Secretary McNamara's establishment of agencies such as the National Security Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, and Defense Communications Agency. Two decades later, the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 overhauled the headquarters functions of each military department and enabled the services to coordinate more effectively.

Throughout the 1990s, a series of budget and personnel cuts hindered HQDA, which resulted in bureaucratic inefficiencies. Army leaders anticipated being asked to decrease their forces in response. They launched Project QUICKSILVER in 1989, planning a 25 percent reduction of Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) units. VANGUARD Task Force followed in 1990, which was supposed to do the same for TDA elements.

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Congress sought to reinforce these efforts with the National Defense Authorization Act of 1991, which mandated an annual cutback of no less than 4 percent of the DoD's "management headquarters" personnel between 1991 and 1995. In its efforts to refine its headquarters organization, HQDA leaders used the Shannon-Reimer HQDA Transformation Study (1993) to "design a headquarters organization for the Army of the future." And in 1999, Secretary Louis E. Caldera and General Eric K. Shinseki initiated an HQDA Redesign Task Force based on feedback from several studies and working groups.

## **11 September 2001 and HQDA in the 21st Century**

When Thomas E. White succeeded Secretary Caldera as secretary of the Army, he established a Realignment Task Force (RTF) to take over the HQDA reorganization effort. White sought to eliminate duplication of efforts and streamline operations by integrating the Army secretariat and staff as much as was legally possible. The task force had largely completed a plan for realignment by early fall 2001, when HQDA experienced one of its most difficult periods.

On the morning of 11 September 2001, as part of al-Qaeda coordinated suicide attacks, terrorists crashed a hijacked plane into the west side of the Pentagon, causing a partial collapse of the building. The fire that raged in the Pentagon came within feet, if not inches, of the Pentagon's communication hub, which could have created a catastrophic failure to the nation's defense communication system. But HQDA personnel from the Office of the Administrative Assistant's Information and Technology Agency stayed in the burning building throughout to keep the Pentagon's communications functioning. Of the 125 fatalities at the Pentagon, the Army bore 60 percent of them: 47 civilians, 6 civilian contractors, and 22 soldiers. Despite these losses, HQDA persevered.

In the years that followed, HQDA experienced several other reorganizations. In July 2013, for example, Secretary of Defense Chuck T. Hagel directed a 20 percent reduction in headquarters management spending by the DoD. In response, HQDA completed a comprehensive review of its organization and proposed a fiscal year (FY) 2019 Organization Design, which would limit organizational echelons to seven and set an ideal manager-to-employee ratio at one to eight. In January 2017, a DA general order made several organizational changes to HQDA and its principal officials' responsibilities. And in April 2018, Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper established the Army Reform Initiative (ARI) to review HQDA, which he believed had grown too large and assumed too much authority. Of the many ARI recommendations, U.S. Army Installation Management Command, formally a direct reporting unit to HQDA, was

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realigned in March 2019 as a major subordinate command of U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC). And HQDA's assistant chief of staff for installation management was redesignated in September 2019 as the deputy chief of staff, G-9

Today, Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) continues to maintain both directive and supervisory functions and consists of two separate staffs: the Secretariat—composed of primarily civilians—and the Army Staff—comprising mainly military personnel. HQDA supports the Secretary of the Army in many ways, including but not limited to:

1. Developing policies and programs.
2. Establishing and prioritizing requirements.
3. Providing resources to support the organizing, staffing, training, and equipping of forces to meet combatant commanders' current and future operational requirements.
4. Assisting the secretary and the chief of staff of the Army in exercising their duties and responsibilities.
5. Backing the Army's warfighting units; and aiding the Army's soldiers, civilians, and their families.
6. Other requirements as defined by the president, secretary of defense, and secretary of the Army.

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