

1941-42: McNarney Committee & Marshall Reorganization

Study: McNarney Committee & Marshall Reorganization (James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963*. U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1975)

Purpose: After the United States began mobilizing for war in 1940, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, became increasingly dissatisfied with the War Department's ability to manage the process, in large part because its organization required him to spend too much time resolving conflicts among competing agencies. In December 1941, Marshall directed Brig. Gen. Joseph T. McNarney to head a committee to study the War Department's reorganization. Marshall would use the First War Powers Act of 1941, which gave the President power to reorganize the federal government for the duration of the war, as his authority for discarding the Army's organization mandated by the National Defense Act of 1920. The McNarney Committee made its recommendations in February 1942, which Marshall accepted and which President Franklin D. Roosevelt then approved.

Outcome: The McNarney-Marshall reorganization divided the Army into three major commands: Army Ground Forces, Army Service Forces, and Army Air Forces. The War Department General Staff's strength, except for the War Plans and Intelligence Divisions, was drastically cut and its agencies limited in function to broad planning and policy guidance. The expanded War Plans Division, soon renamed the Operations Division, served as Marshall's command post and quickly became in effect a "super staff" over the General Staff, responsible for planning the Army's global military operations, for determining and allocating the resources required, and for directing and coordinating their execution. The reorganization abolished the offices of the chiefs of the combat arms and Army Ground Forces assumed their functions. The technical and administrative bureaus were placed under Army Service Forces, as was the new Women's Army Corps. The bureaus, however, remained administratively independent agencies. This arrangement resulted in considerable friction when the functionally organized Army Service Forces headquarters attempted to control and coordinate their activities.

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