

1971-1972: Impetus for Change

Study: Impetus for Change (Center of Military History files)

Purpose: In 1971, the Assistant Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Lt. Gen. William E. DePuy, began what he eventually called the “Impetus for Change” study after the Chief of Staff of the Army, General William C. Westmoreland, disapproved almost all of the Parker Panel’s recommendations. DePuy believed that the major reason for Westmoreland’s decision was that the panel had been too ambitious, seeking changes in the service’s organization and its management practices both in Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA) and in the major commands. DePuy instead focused his study on what he saw as the most pressing issues, that Continental Army Command (CONARC) had too many responsibilities to function effectively and that Combat Developments Command (CDC) had too few resources to function effectively. The study addressed several other issues, all related to the Army’s withdrawal from Vietnam and subsequent sharp reductions in force structure and budget.

Outcome: The Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of Defense approved the study’s recommendations in early 1972. Continental Army Command, Combat Developments Command, Third U.S. Army, and the Office of Personnel Operations were eliminated. A new Forces Command assumed CONARC’s functions of overseeing all Regular Army and Army Reserve units in the continental United States, and the readiness of the Army National Guard. A new Training and Doctrine Command combined CDC’s functions with the service schools previously supervised by CONARC. The command would coordinate its combat developments efforts through three new organizations: a Combined Arms Center, a Logistics Center, and an Administration and Personnel Center. A new Health Services Command would supervise all medical care operations in the United States. A new Concepts Analysis Agency would assist HQDA in evaluating force designs and doctrine. A new Operational Test and Evaluation Agency would provide HQDA with an independent means of evaluating new weapons systems and equipment. A new Military Personnel Center assumed the functions of the Office of Personnel Operations and all operational functions of the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel.

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