

1994: Commission on Roles and Missions

Study: The Commission on Roles and Missions (Mark D. Sherry, *The Army Command Post and Defense Reshaping, 1987-1997*. U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2008)

Purpose: A 1993 Department of Defense (DoD) Bottom-Up Review cut operational forces, but left headquarters, doctrine centers, and schools largely intact. This prompted accusations that DoD had preserved the administrative “tail” of the department at the expense of its warfighting “teeth.” Congress added fuel to the proverbial fire by expressing its disapproval of the overlap in functions among the services. In 1994, Congress directed the secretary of defense to appoint an independent panel to examine the current roles, missions, and functions of the service’s headquarters. Secretary of Defense William J. Perry selected John P. White of Harvard University to lead the commission. Other members of the Commission on Roles and Missions (CORM) included former Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, four retired general officers (one from each service) and six colonel-level staff members from across the services and the joint staff. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), established a temporary directorate led by Brig. Gen. John P. Costello to build a campaign plan centered on the Army’s positions on likely issues. When the CORM first met in May 1994, it identified 328 problems divided into six mission areas. The CORM cut this number over time until it identified 26 issues for further review.

Outcome: Most of the operational issues identified affected the Army, particularly regarding expeditionary and contingency force overlap with the U.S. Marine Corps. CORM also identified overlap between the Army and Air Force concerning issues of close air support during combat operations. The CORM’s final recommendations proved controversial. The commission recommended that the Army would shift its operational support aircraft to the Air Force. It also called for outsourcing other infrastructure issues to private industry. Most importantly, though, CORM stressed that the services should develop a joint doctrine and strengthen regional combatant commanders’ authority over theater communications, support, intelligence gathering, and joint training. Secretary of the Army Togo D. West, Jr. was willing to accept most of CORM’s recommendations, but he rejected the suggestion to reduce political appointees in HQDA and merge Secretariat positions with the Army Staff. All of this was for naught, however, as Republican leaders of a new Congress distanced themselves from CORM. As a result, the commission resulted in no major changes, but did highlight some issues that the services would address in later studies.

Dr. Matthew Margis

Approved by: Dr. Peter Knight, GS-15