

1916: National Defense Act of 1916

Study: National Defense Act of 1916 (James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963*. U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1975)

Purpose: In 1916, there were two conflicting positions on military readiness, one prioritizing a large Regular Army and the other the National Guard. The War Department General Staff advocated the former while the latter had strong support in Congress. Additionally, the chiefs of the technical and administrative bureaus, never reconciled to establishment of the War Department General Staff in 1903, sought to harness the debate over Army organization to their continuing efforts at weakening the General Staff.

Outcome: The chiefs of the technical and administrative bureaus successfully lobbied their supporters in Congress for provisions in the act that weakened the General Staff, limiting the number of its officers to less than twenty and restricting its activities essentially to war planning functions. Furthermore, the act expressly prohibited the General Staff from interfering with the bureaus' activities, and established the bureaus as statutory agencies with their chiefs as commanding officers

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