

1950: The Army Reorganization Act of 1950

Study: The Army Reorganization Act of 1950 (James E. Hewes, Jr., *From Root to McNamara: Army Organization and Administration, 1900-1963*. U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1975)

Purpose: By 1948, the statutory basis for the Army's organization, including the Departmental Headquarters, was a mess. Congress had passed nearly 400 provisions regarding the organization of the Army since the passage of the National Defense Act of 1916, some of which contradicted each other. The First War Powers Act of 1941 had given the president the power to reorganize the federal government as he saw fit for the duration of the war plus six months. Congress had extended this act several times after the end of World War II, but the Army faced reverting all the way back to its organization before World War I if the law was allowed to expire. In 1949, the Management Division reporting to the comptroller of the Army proposed new legislation that would grant the president, secretary of defense, and secretary of the Army greater authority to adapt Army organization as required by changing conditions without consulting Congress. Most of the technical and administrative services would no longer have a statutory basis, however. Only the chief of engineers, judge advocate general, surgeon general, and chief of chaplains would retain their statutory basis due to their unique professional requirements.

Outcome: A slightly revised version of the Army's proposed legislation passed in Congress in 1950. The Army Reorganization Act of 1950 repealed much of the National Defense Act of 1916 and granted Army senior leaders the flexibility in future organization that they desired. Congress added a restriction that no more than 3,000 officers could be assigned to the Washington, DC, area with no more than 1,000 of them assigned to the Army Staff. Additionally, legislators put in language reemphasizing the need to maintain professional qualifications for engineers, lawyers, and medical personnel. The law also explicitly stated that the civil functions under the chief of engineers could not be reassigned to any other agency in the Army. Thereafter, the secretary of the Army could reassign the duties of any of the other technical and administrative services as deemed necessary.

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