

1898-1903: Dodge Commission

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

Purpose: During the Spanish-American War, the War Department's failures in planning and management became a public scandal. In September 1898, President McKinley appointed a commission headed by Grenville M. Dodge, a Civil War veteran and railroad executive, to investigate the problem. The commission published its findings in February 1899. It concluded that the department's failures were not the result of negligence or corruption. Rather, they stemmed from an antiquated management system in which there was no mechanism for compelling cooperation and coordination among the technical and administrative bureaus, each of which had its own budget and supporters in Congress. The commission recommended studying whether the Army should combine all its supply operations in one agency and all its transportation operations in another, following the example of the largest American corporations.

Outcome: Later in 1899, President McKinley fired the Secretary of War and replaced him with Elihu Root, a lawyer familiar with modern corporate management techniques. After reviewing the Dodge Commission's report, Root proposed creating a War Department General Staff, which would provide overall supervision and coordination for the service, to include the technical and administrative bureaus. The chief of staff of the Army would replace the position of commanding general of the Army. He also proposed implementing the commission's recommendation for consolidating all supply operations in one agency. The bureaus opposed Root's proposals. In 1903, Congress approved creation of the General Staff, but it rejected consolidating supply operations in one agency. Furthermore, Congress did not make the bureau chiefs subordinate to the Chief of Staff, ensuring constant tension between the bureaus and the General Staff.

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