Harry H. Woodring

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When Harry Woodring became Secretary of War in the fall of 1936, he found himself in charge of a small, ill-equipped, and poorly trained Army. Well aware of the existing deficiencies, the new Secretary immediately set out to rectify them. His goal was to prepare a military force that could successfully meet any challenge from the outside world.

The basis of the United States military program at that time was the National Defense Act of 1920. That act provided for a voluntary citizen Army to be composed of three echelons: the Regular Army, with an authorized strength of 280,000 enlisted men and 18,000 officers; the National Guard, of approximately 430,000 men; and the Organized Reserve, of about 540,000. In the years following the passage of the act, the apathetic Congress never did appropriate funds necessary to implement it and the strength that was provided for never came close to the authorized figure. In 1936 the Regular Army numbered 147,000 enlisted men and 12,000 officers—about half of the minimum number set forth in the 1920 Defense Act. The year before (1935), Congress had appropriated funds to provide for 165,000 enlisted men, but President Roosevelt had released enough money for only 147,000. At the same time the National Guard numbered 189,000, rather than the 430,000 called for; and the Organized Reserve was even worse off, for instead of a force of half a million men, it contained less than 120,000, all of whom were officers. For a nation of 130 million people, the United States military establishment was quite small; its 159,000-man Regular Army placed it in seven-
teenth place among the world’s standing armies—in a virtual tie with Portugal. 4

Although the Army was small, its size did not bother Secretary Woodring. Just before he became Secretary, Congress had appropriated funds to provide for 165,000 enlisted men and 14,000 officers by mid 1937, and Woodring felt that under the world conditions prevailing at that time, such a figure would be quite adequate. 5 Although he was not concerned with the size of the Army, he was quite concerned with its efficiency. He desired a well trained and fully equipped force that would be ready to move into action immediately.

Military men generally acknowledge that an army’s readiness can be judged by examining the speed and quality of its mobilization, the quality and condition of its equipment and armaments, and the state of training of all its ranks. 6 Unfortunately, in 1936 the United States Army was woefully inadequate in all three areas.

That the Army would be unable to mobilize quickly and efficiently was a fact that the General Staff was well aware of. 7 When Woodring became Secretary, the basis for mobilization was the 1933 Mobilization Plan. This plan envisioned the raising and training of an army of more than one million men within three months of mobilization day (M-Day), a two-million-man force six months after M-Day (M+6), and an army of four and one-half million men twelve months after M-Day (M+12). 8 The plan, which included personnel and supply requirements, had come under fire almost as soon as it had gone into effect. As a new and inexperienced Assistant Secretary of War, Woodring had given his approval to the proposal a few weeks after taking office in 1933, but as he became knowledgeable in the problems of military supply, he soon came to the conclusion that the plan was impractical and could not be carried out. 9 However, Woodring could not convince Secretary Dern of the need for a new mobilization plan, and General MacArthur felt there were more pressing problems facing the Army. Thus, with a lack of impetus from the top, no change was forthcoming. In 1936 the new Chief of Staff, Gen. Malin Craig, whose “greatest concern was the lack of realism in military war plans,” 10 ordered a study on the feasibility of the 1933 Mobilization Plan. After securing reports and evaluations of the plan from commanders at all echelons, the Assistant Chiefs of Staff for Personnel (G-1) and Supply (G-4) concluded that the manpower-procurement rate of the plan was “questionable of attainment and that for this rate the supply demands are doubtful of fulfillment.” 11 In October of that same year the Planning Branch, Office of the Assistant Secretary of War, completed a detailed survey of procurement possibilities under the present plan. Their conclusion was that the supply requirements could not possibly be met. 12
As far as the speed and efficiency of mobilization were concerned, the Army was not a ready force, but that was just one of several difficulties.

In the quantity and quality of equipment and arms the Army was also lacking. Animal-drawn vehicles and field artillery were still being used extensively, and the War Department continued to maintain that “mounted troops are of great value in certain situations and some horse-drawn light artillery can probably be advantageously used.” Furthermore, outdated weapons were the rule rather than the exception. The 1903 bolt-action Springfield rifle was still the basic weapon of the infantry. A new semi-automatic rifle, the Garand 30-cal. M-1, had just been approved as a replacement for the Springfield, but none of them had been issued to the troops. The Browning automatic rifle was being used as a light machine gun, and the World War–vintage heavy Browning machine gun had to function as an antitank gun. Tanks and other self-propelled mechanized weapons were in pitifully short supply, as was ammunition for all classes of small arms and artillery. George Fielding Eliot, perhaps the most widely read American military analyst of the 1930s, concluded that “the condition of the Army as to armament and equipment is far from satisfactory; this is by all odds its worst deficiency.”

Unfortunately, many individuals, including numerous Congressmen, did not feel that the Army was lacking in necessary equipment. They pointed to the large surplus of arms, ammunition, and other supplies from World War I that were stored in Army depots throughout the country, and said that those stocks would be sufficient to equip the Regular Army as well as the one-million-man force to be mobilized in the first three months after M-Day. Furthermore, they contended that if war came and the surpluses were not sufficient for a large reserve force, and shortages did develop, the solution would be simple: the items could be secured from commercial sources. Such thinking was deficient in several respects. First of all, it failed to take into consideration the rapid changes being made in military technology, organization, and tactics—all of which served to make many items in the surplus stockpiles virtually worthless in another war. Second, items such as ammunition for small arms and artillery, which had been in storage for over sixteen years, were beginning to deteriorate rapidly, thereby making their reliability questionable. Third, commercial production could not convert to military production overnight. If advance planning were not undertaken, it would take considerable time for commercial sources to begin production of items desired by the military.

Another deficiency of the Army at this time was the poor state of training at all levels. That this problem existed and should be corrected was acknowledged by General Craig in his Annual Report for 1936, when he
stated that “greater emphasis is necessary on the training of basic units in maneuver and combat exercises.” 16 The shortcomings of the Army training program stemmed primarily from the great dispersion of troops, the shortages of funds and equipment, and the lack of time due to the necessity of performing nonmilitary functions. When Secretary Woodring became head of the War Department, the Army was spread from the Philippines to Puerto Rico, from China to the Canal Zone, and across the United States in more than one hundred and fifty posts and stations. Because of such dispersion, it simply was not feasible, tactically or financially, to bring together a sizable number of units for large-scale maneuvers. 17 Moreover, the training of individuals as well as small units was seriously curtailed during the Depression years, because tight budgetary restrictions permitted the use of only a minimum amount of ammunition and other expendable items that were essential for effective training. 18 A shortage of equipment often served to limit the value of training, because only a relatively few individuals could use or work on the actual piece of equipment that they would be utilizing in case of war. A perfect example of this is the fact that as late as 1938 the eighteen National Guard tank companies throughout the country had but one tank each for training purposes. 19

Another deterrent to training was that many personnel were required to expend all their time and energy on nonmilitary jobs, thus leaving little or no time for military activities. Such functions as care, maintenance, and operation of the Panama Canal; care and improvement of harbors and waterways; responsibilities in the Civilian Conservation Corps; care of national cemeteries; and operation of the Military Academy, along with research and development work and a multitude of other civilian-type tasks, were full-time jobs performed by Regular Army personnel. 20 It was not possible to pull such personnel from their jobs to participate in consolidated field exercises. Even when the time and equipment were available, the training was often impractical and unrealistic. As one soldier put it, “There is too much tendency in the ‘field’ to take everything along from the barracks . . . including the pool table” and then “too much effort, time and expense is devoted to ‘polishing’ this and that that should be used to much more advantage in tactical training.” 21 There was no question that the training of the United States Army in the mid thirties was deficient in both quantity and quality.

No one was more aware of the Army’s lack of readiness than Secretary Woodring, but knowing what needed to be done and getting it done were two different things. The basic reason for the Army’s lack of readiness was the failure of Congress to provide sufficient funds; however, Congress reflected the mood of the nation. Because of the isolationist sentiment that prevailed throughout the country during the two decades after World War
I, the War Department had not submitted budget requests that it considered sufficient to provide an adequate military force. Instead it merely asked Congress for what it thought it could get. Even then the Army's modest requests were usually slashed to the bone by the President's representatives, the Bureau of the Budget. During these years the bureau rarely called on the War Department to justify the requests it made, but cut those carefully prepared requests on its own judgment. Congress, seeing no threat of war, was generally content to accept the bureau's recommendations. Any individual—civilian or military—who advocated or endorsed increased expenditures for defense was immediately labeled a "jingo" or a "warmonger"; thus, Congressmen found it politically advantageous to avoid defense questions. With the President looking for areas in which to cut expenditures, and with Congress and its constituents bent on isolationism, Woodring considered that the chances of receiving increased appropriations were almost nil. Therefore, he set out to increase the Army's readiness with means available to him at that time.

The first problem that the new Secretary turned to was mobilization. A major step toward realistic planning for mobilization had come late in 1935, when Gen. Malin Craig replaced General MacArthur as Army Chief of Staff. Craig was an extremely capable person who possessed a fine but unheralded military record. Craig, who had graduated from West Point in 1898, had gained valuable combat and administrative experience in the Spanish-American War, the Chinese Relief Expedition, the Philippine Insurrection, and on the Mexican border before serving in the American Expeditionary Force as Chief of Staff of both the Fourth Division and the First Army Corps. In 1925 he became Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, and after he had completed several assignments as an Army Corps Commander, President Roosevelt appointed him Chief of Staff. The soft-spoken Craig was a man of action rather than words. Since he did not possess a dynamic, forceful personality, his numerous accomplishments were generally not associated with his name. According to the authors of one of the best studies ever made of military mobilizations, "The profound influence which General Craig during his tour as Chief of Staff had on preparing the Army of the United States for World War II has never been widely known or appreciated except by the professional soldiers who were closely associated with him during those years.

Since mobilization requires the recruiting, training, and supplying of the Army, the War Department's 1933 Mobilization Plan had two basic schemes: one for recruitment and training, and another for supply. However, by late 1936 it was apparent to officials in the War Department that the 1933 plan was not satisfactory, for it called for too much too soon after
M-Day. Under the initiative and guidance of Secretary Woodring and Chief of Staff Craig there emerged more realistic mobilization plans in the form of the 1936 revision of the Industrial Mobilization Plan and the radically new Protective Mobilization Plan. It was the former that Woodring was to deal with first.

An army cannot merely be recruited and trained; it must also be fed, clothed, equipped, and armed. Realizing the importance of supplying a large military force in time of war, the National Defense Act of 1920 gave to the Assistant Secretary of War not only the responsibility of current Army procurement but also the task of preparing plans for the mobilization of American industry in the event of war. During the 1920s the War Department virtually ignored the formulation of plans for industrial mobilization, but in the 1930s it attempted to work out such a scheme. The solution arrived at was embodied in the 1930 Industrial Mobilization Plan and in revisions of it in 1933, 1936, and 1939. The 1930 plan provided for the creation of four superagencies to handle industrial mobilization: Director of War Industry, Administrator of Labor, Director of Public Relations, and Director of Selective Service. Although the key agency was that of War Industry, which would handle requirements, priorities, and facilities, it was equal to, but not superior to, the others. Coordination of the four agencies was placed in the hands of the President. In 1933 the original plan was revised, and another agency and two independent commissions were added; but the scheme remained essentially the same. Although Assistant Secretary Woodring approved the revision, he soon came to feel that it was too ambitious and thus unrealistic. Consequently, he ordered his staff to begin major revisions of it.

As Assistant Secretary of War and later as Secretary, Harry Woodring was quite interested in the Industrial Mobilization Plan, and he devoted a great deal of time and energy to improving it. Woodring continually emphasized the need for "supply preparedness," as he called it. To him this concept meant providing adequate reserve stocks for immediate military needs as well as plans for the rapid mobilization of industries for wartime production. Secretary Woodring indicated his firm belief in the importance of industrial mobilization to military efficiency when he said: "The best general in the world cannot defend his country without troops—the best troops in the world cannot defend their countries without supplies; and supplies cannot be provided without thoroughly efficient preparation and suitable control machinery."

In 1936 the War Department issued a revised Industrial Mobilization Plan. It was ironical that it received its final approval in September from Acting Secretary of War Woodring, who, as Assistant Secretary, had done so much to bring about the new plan. This plan differed from earlier ones
in several respects. First, since it dealt solely with matters of industrial mobilization, the selective-service and public-relations provisions of the earlier plans were deleted. Second, the War Resources Administration, which was the new name for the old War Industries Board, was to be established at the outset of war by an executive order, rather than by congressional legislation. Third, when war appeared imminent, the Army-Navy Munitions Board was to assume the functions of the War Resources Administration until that agency was able to undertake its duties. Fourth, the plan showed a greater degree of coordination and harmony between the War and Navy departments than had any previous attempts at cooperative planning. In light of the serious conflicts that had previously characterized joint Army-Navy mobilization planning, this was quite an accomplishment, and one that Secretary Woodring was quite proud of.

For a multitude of reasons the 1936 Industrial Mobilization Plan immediately came under attack: Gen. Hugh Johnson, of NRA fame, claimed that the plan was too detailed and thus inflexible; Bernard Baruch insisted that its provisions should be implemented by civilian experts rather than the military; Secretary of State Cordell Hull felt that controls over exports encroached upon his authority; and numerous political analysts and journalists claimed that the plan provided for excessive regimentation. By 1938 even the War Department was forced to conclude that it contained certain deficiencies, which it hoped to remedy in the next revision of it. In spite of some shortcomings, the plan at least showed an awareness of the complexities of industrial mobilization, and it presented the most sophisticated approach ever designed to meet those complexities. Even a critic like General Johnson concluded that the plan was “a necessary and a very valuable piece of work.”

When Harry Woodring assumed the position of Secretary of War in September 1936, he did not immediately leave behind the problems of planning for procurement and mobilization, for he continued to serve as Assistant Secretary. Not until July 1937, when Louis A. Johnson became the new Assistant Secretary, did Woodring give up his dual role. This meant that during his first ten months as Secretary of War, Woodring was still in charge of planning for industrial mobilization. In fact, it was during the period when he was filling both posts that he laid the groundwork for cooperation between the War Department and private industry that later proved to be of such value in the production of certain military items. He did this by pressuring Congress to pass a bill that would enable the War Department to sell, loan, or give to private contractors and firms the drawings, plans, and samples of equipment to be manufactured for the Army in time of war. The bill was designed to familiarize manufacturers with items not directly related to peacetime production, especially items for ordnance and for
chemical warfare. Congress, seeing the value of such a program, passed the measure with no opposition. Although this legislation did not go so far as to provide small-scale "educational orders," whereby limited production of certain items would be undertaken, it did give to many industries a better appreciation of what might be involved if they had to convert from civilian to military production. While tremendous progress was to be made in the realm of planning for industrial mobilization after July 1937, it was to come under the leadership of Assistant Secretary Louis Johnson. Unfortunately, Woodring, because of the years he spent as Assistant Secretary, found it extremely difficult to divorce himself from his old post, and, as will be seen, his tendency to advise and guide his new Assistant Secretary was to cause considerable friction between the two and to seriously affect the operations of the War Department.

As important as Woodring's contributions were to industrial mobilization, they were small in comparison with his contributions to military mobilization. On 8 December 1936 Secretary Woodring initiated a major revision of the Army's plans for military mobilization. On that day he sent the Chief of Staff a memorandum calling attention to the fact that in the first several months of a war the supply requirements for the initial one-million-man force called for in the 1933 Mobilization Plan could not possibly be met. In that case, Woodring contended, it would be useless and wasteful to try to achieve the unrealistic objectives of the plan; what were needed were goals that could be attained. The present mobilization plan provided for the formation of a very large force in a short period of time, and Woodring, General Craig, and the entire General Staff knew that it was just a paper plan, which in reality could not be carried out. The Secretary then suggested that the General Staff consider the "advisability and need for two separate and distinct plans. One, a paper plan based on the Staff's present manpower mobilization tables . . . and a second, based on what I term a 'defensive policy' plan calling for a speedy mobilization of a much smaller force for which material can be supplied." What Woodring wanted was a plan that could actually be fulfilled; thus, he favored a scheme that called for mobilization of a much smaller force. He believed that to create such a force and make it effective would require that it be fully trained and completely supplied in peacetime, so that it would be immediately available at the outbreak of war.

The Secretary's directive was all the prodding that General Craig needed to begin work on a new, realistic plan for mobilization. On 16 December he directed the General Staff to begin development of the Protective Mobilization Plan, or PMP. The guidelines presented were quite brief: "The Protective Mobilization Plan will provide for the mobilization of a moderate
but balanced force for the protection of the Continental United States including Hawaii and Panama. The size and character of the force should be such as to permit its being speedily and properly armed and equipped." General Craig closed by emphasizing the importance of the plan, and he asked that it be completed as quickly as possible.36

It took the War Department two years to complete the PMP. It was written in sections, and as each section was completed in enough detail to be useful, it was published. Thus, the PMP appeared in a handful of installments between February 1937 and December 1938. As a result of the piece-meal release and publication of the plan and its further revisions, it soon became commonplace to read or hear about the 1937 PMP, the 1938 PMP, or the 1939 PMP, when in reality they were all a part of, or a revision of, the same plan.37

The PMP introduced a new concept in basic planning for mobilization. According to mobilization experts Marvin Kreidberg and Merton Henry, "The Protective Mobilization Plans were not only the first mobilization plans to be based completely on realism but were also the first plans which successfully achieved real succinctness and simplicity without the sacrifice of coherence.38 Whereas the earlier plans of 1928 and 1933 had provided for the mobilization of a million-man force three months after mobilization began, the PMP placed reliance on a much smaller but better-equipped and highly trained Army to furnish immediate protection. In the event that additional forces were necessary, the plan called for well-defined steps of expansion which were designed to enable proper equipping and training of new recruits. Under the old plans the order for mobilization brought one million men into the Army at once, whether they were needed or not; but the PMP could mobilize the number necessary to meet the need. The first echelon of defense under the PMP was to be a 400,000-man Initial Protective Force (IPF). This force, which was to include units of the Regular Army and the National Guard, was to be completely ready for combat within one month after M-Day. If it was apparent that the IPF would not be sufficient, a Protective Mobilization Force of more than 700,000 men would then be mobilized. The plan called for this second contingent of troops to be ready eight months after M-Day. In the event that still more troops were needed, the PMP provided for a minimum increase of 150,000 men monthly until a four-million-man force was achieved. The primary weakness of the PMP was that it failed to provide a balanced military force. The Army was to be made up almost solely of infantry; the air force and armored force were virtually ignored. Lack of balance is evident from the fact that the plan provided for only one armored division in a four-million-man force.39

Compared to the earlier plans, which called for mobilizing a million
men in three months, the PMP seemed to be a step backward; but the goals of the earlier plans could not possibly have been attained, whereas those of the PMP could be. When it is realized that it took the United States fourteen months to put one million men in fighting trim during World War I, the PMP appears more impressive. The plan had its logistical and tactical shortcomings, but in comparison to previous mobilization plans it marked a real step forward. Secretary Woodring was the first to admit that the plan was not perfect, but he did maintain that there was every reason to believe that it was “feasible and will meet our national defense requirements.”

While the PMP was being prepared in 1937 and 1938 there was little that Secretary Woodring could do to implement even its first phases, because Congress did not intend to provide funds for a plan that was not yet fully developed. In the meantime Woodring tried in other ways to improve the Army's readiness. In December of 1936 he issued his first annual report as Secretary of War. It indicated a general satisfaction with conditions in the War Department and in the Army. The recommendations made were extremely modest, the most significant being (1) an increase in National Guard strength from 189,000 to 210,000; (2) two weeks of annual training for 30,000 Reserve Officers, instead of the present 20,000; and (3) the establishment of an enlisted reserve of 150,000 men. Woodring felt that such modest demands could certainly be met. The Washington Herald stated that the recommendations embraced “a program of minimum requirements,” which, even if adopted, would still leave the nation “perilously weak.” An editorial in the Washington Evening Star maintained that “Congress is not likely to find any of these proposals unreasonable” and recommended that they be given favorable consideration. When the Bureau of the Budget reviewed the increases for the new proposals, they were denied, and, as usual, the Secretary of War was not asked to appear before the bureau or the Congressional Appropriations Committee to justify his budget requests. In the end, Congress performed as it had in the past decade and a half and provided only enough funds to increase the National Guard by 3,000, instead of 20,000; and to give two weeks of training to an additional 2,000 reserve officers, instead of the requested 10,000; and it included no provision for an enlisted reserve.

In spite of his good intentions, Woodring's contributions to improve the Army's readiness were virtually nil in his first full year as Secretary of War. His ineffectiveness stemmed from several factors. First, his dual responsibility as both Secretary and Assistant Secretary, which lasted until July 1937, forced him to divide his time and energy between the two positions. Second, the uncertainty as to whether or not he would be made permanent Secretary caused him to “go easy” so as to not antagonize the President. Third, with
the PMP still in preparation and its needs uncertain, he could not yet take steps to implement it. Although he did not bring about any major advancements in the Army during that first year, the Secretary used the period to win the confidence of the President, Congress, and the Army. As a 6 November 1937 editorial in the *Army and Navy Journal* indicated:

Only a Secretary of War could discharge competently these numerous important and responsible duties who has the fullest confidence of the President, and Mr. Woodring has that. Only a Secretary of War could build as Mr. Woodring has built who has the confidence of Congress, and the Secretary has that. We are moved to recite these facts . . . because a year has passed since the responsibility for administering the affairs of the War Department devolved on him. That year has shown his ability and capacity and understanding in connection with national and particularly military needs. These qualities necessarily have earned for him the sincere respect and devotion of the forces which, under the President, he directs.46

By the end of 1937 Secretary Woodring was examining the Army more closely than before. This scrutiny resulted from his growing concern over the breakdown of peace throughout the world. Japanese aggression against China, Civil War in Spain, and the growing strength of Hitler and Mussolini caused him to be more critical in his examination of the United States military machine than he had been the year before. In his *Annual Report*, which was released in December 1937, Woodring warned the President that although the Army was more efficient than it had ever been in peacetime, it was “relatively weaker, compared with armies of other great countries, than it was a year ago.” The loss in relative strength resulted from the other countries’ strengthening of their military forces at a more rapid rate than the United States. Even though Woodring concluded that “at present our Regular Army . . . is too small to accomplish efficiently the task for which it is responsible,” he did not ask for a sizable increase; he requested only an additional 7,000 enlisted men and 2,300 officers. He again urged that an enlisted reserve program be established, but this time in much stronger terms than the year before. After warning the President that the nation would be “at a distinct disadvantage during the mobilization period of a major war if we lack trained men to fill key positions in the ranks,” he asked that a start be made toward the creation of a 150,000-man enlisted reserve.47

With one exception Woodring’s recommendations in his *Annual Report* for 1937 were similar to those of the previous year. That exception pertained to his request concerning the quantity and quality of military equipment. Woodring stated, as he was to do repeatedly, that while he did not consider the size of the Army extremely important, he believed that the
equipment it had was of the utmost importance. He emphasized the need to reequip the Army "with the latest and best in transportation, means of communication, and weapons." He also emphasized both that the best equipment should be procured and that sufficient quantities should be provided. Although he stressed the importance of and deficiencies in equipment, he urged that a rather conservative approach be used in correcting the shortcoming. He said that he did not want the country to get involved in the arms race, but he did want it to "accelerate" the program for reequipping the Army. Woodring's extremely conservative requests in terms of manpower and equipment reveal one of his major shortcomings as Secretary of War: he continually failed to ask and actively push for what he really believed was necessary in order to create a first-class army. That he was well aware of the deficiencies of the military can be seen in his Annual Reports, but when it came to making recommendations, he fell into the old War Department rut of asking for what he thought he could get rather than what was really needed. For this he can be justifiably criticized.

By the time that Secretary Woodring issued his 1937 Report, events in Europe had caused President Roosevelt to conclude that it was time to examine the defense needs of the nation very closely. In December and early January the President indicated that he would ask Congress to appropriate a large amount for defense needs. With FDR's growing interest in defense matters, the Secretary of War and the War Department became increasingly optimistic about getting the funds to strengthen the land forces significantly; thus, it was a rather confident Harry Woodring who traveled to the White House on 20 January 1938 to discuss the Army's needs. At that conference, FDR informed Woodring that the Navy, not the Army, was to be the primary beneficiary of his new defense program. A highly distraught Woodring pleaded with the President to give the Army more consideration, and he warned that to ignore the ground forces, as was being done, was a grave mistake. His pleas fell on deaf ears as Roosevelt stuck to his earlier decision. A few days later, Woodring wrote Roosevelt, again asking that the defense program place more emphasis on Army needs, which were "truly justified under the present world situation." He then recommended that an additional $30 million be made available to improve the Army's state of readiness. Woodring felt that if Congress was going to appropriate a vast sum for defense, then the Army should have its fair share. The President, feeling that the needs of the Navy should have first priority, chose to take lightly the advice of his Secretary of War; and in his budget message on 28 January he asked Congress for only $17 million to strengthen the Army. In looking back at this request a few years later, Roosevelt said, "With respect to the Army, I included only those items which had been
recommended by the War Department as immediately necessary. It was obviously impossible to do everything at once, and these were the first steps.\footnote{61}

While Woodring was generally displeased with the President's 1938 defense program, he was especially resentful of Roosevelt's failure to strengthen the Army Air Corps. Feeling that the Navy was being built up at the expense of the Air Corps, he went to Roosevelt in February 1938 and asked that one hundred planes earmarked for the Navy be given to the Army instead. The pro-Navy Roosevelt listened attentively, but was not persuaded, and the defense program favoring the Navy remained unchanged.\footnote{52}

Although Secretary Woodring did not succeed in securing a large share of the defense appropriations for fiscal year 1939, he was successful in bringing about one of his most sought-after goals—an enlisted reserve, or, as it came to be called, the Regular Army Reserve. When the first National Defense Act was passed in 1916, it had included provisions for a reserve of enlisted men; however, after World War I the provision was rescinded because of the large number of veterans that could be called in case of emergency.\footnote{58} During the 1920s and 1930s the Citizens Military Training Corps and the ROTC provided a supply of officers that could be tapped in time of war, but there was no program to provide experienced enlisted personnel in such an emergency. From the time that he came into office, Secretary Woodring continually stressed the need for a 150,000-man enlisted reserve; finally, in January 1938, he succeeded in winning the President's support for such a program, but for only a 75,000-man force.\footnote{64}

Next, Woodring set out to sell the idea to Congress. He indicated to the House and Senate Military Affairs committees that if the Regular Army was called to active duty, it would be forced to take the field with units that were small, depleted, and understrength. Such a dangerous situation could be corrected either by a sizable increase in Regular Army strength or by the establishment of an enlisted reserve. For reasons of economy, Woodring recommended that the latter course be taken.\footnote{55} Congress agreed, and in April 1938 it passed the necessary legislation.

The Army Reserve Act provided for the enlistment in the Regular Army Reserve of former Regular Army enlisted men who had returned to civilian life. Since they had previously been trained, no further training was considered necessary. As an inducement to sign up, each reservist was paid $24 a year, and in return he simply had to keep the Army informed of his present address; no weekly or annual training of any kind was required. The Reservists could be called to active duty "only in case of emergency declared by the President." If called, they would receive a bonus of $3 for each month in the Reserves, the total not to exceed $150. An age limit of thirty-five was also established.\footnote{58} Plans called for the 75,000-man force to be
raised over a period of four years, with the cost running $450,000 the first year and increasing by a like amount annually until it leveled off at $1.8 million after the fourth year. The Regular Army Reserve did not in any way replace or affect any of the reserve forces, such as the National Guard, that were already in existence. Its sole purpose, according to the Senate Military Affairs Committee, was "to bolster the Regular Army so that it can better perform its vital tasks of defense in the first stages of an emergency."^57

From the time that he became Secretary of War in the fall of 1936 until March 1938, Woodring, while showing a definite interest in increased Army readiness, did not appear alarmed or overconcerned about the shortcomings that he knew existed. As late as February 1938 he indicated that he considered the nation's new defense program modest but adequate. One month later, when Hitler annexed Austria, Secretary Woodring publicly announced that the United States Army was better prepared than at any time in its history for "whatever happens."^68 Apparently, however, he was not as confident as his public utterances indicated, for after the Anschluss he ordered a detailed study to determine the requirements for properly arming and equipping the IPF. While that study was under way he worked hard to convince Congress of the immediate need for an additional two thousand officers for the Regular Army. Congress responded in early April by approving the Secretary's request, and two weeks later the Army Reserve Act, for which Woodring had worked so hard, was passed. Such activities of the Secretary of War were evidently making a favorable impression on the public mind, because in June 1938 Woodring fared very well when the Gallup Poll asked the question: "Do you think the following cabinet members have done a good or poor job in office?" While less than half of those interviewed expressed an opinion on Secretary Woodring, of those that did, five of every six said that he was doing a good job; thus, the conclusion of the pollsters was that "although there is little that peacetime Secretaries of Navy and War can do to win public attention, today's survey shows that [Secretary of Navy] Swanson and Woodring have substantial approval for their work."^61

In July 1938 the War Department revealed that a careful study showed that there was an immediate and urgent shortage of critical items of equipment for the IPF. To supply those items would cost $142 million.^62 In the weeks that followed, Secretary Woodring and other officials of the War Department tried to educate Congress and the public on the importance and needs of the IPF. Time and again they pointed out that although the quality of the equipment that the units had was good, the quantity was insufficient. Warnings of the consequences of the shortages went unheeded by Congress and the nation, who were convinced that they could avoid another war.
Then in September 1938 came the Munich Crisis, followed by Hitler's success at the Munich Conference; and at last the United States was suddenly interested in its Army. The events of September caused Congress and the American people to realize that they had ignored their military establishment long enough and that further delay in upgrading it would be extremely dangerous. At the time that this new crisis atmosphere developed, the IPF was so short of modern arms that had it become involved in combat, it could not possibly have been an effective fighting force. Whereas the PMP called for a minimum of 227,000 semiautomatic rifles, only 12,500 were on hand; of the called-for 1,500 M2-75mm guns, only 141 were available. The story was the same for other new weapons: 60mm mortars—3,750 required, 1 on hand; 105mm howitzers—55 required, 0 on hand; light tanks—244 required, 36 on hand; medium tanks—1,100 required, 319 on hand. General Craig was quite concerned about these shortages, but he was even more alarmed by the fact that "most of these items require in excess of one year to produce." This meant that if the shortages were to be overcome by 1940, it would be necessary to act at once.

In November 1938, six weeks after Munich, Secretary Woodring released his third Annual Report. Pessimistically he pointed out that in spite of recent advances, the Army still contained certain "deficiencies in organization, equipment, and personnel which must be corrected before we can be assured of maintenance of a military force fully adequate for our defensive needs." He set as his number one priority the perfection of the 400,000-man IPF. To accomplish that goal he stressed the need for additional equipment and training. Woodring emphasized that the IPF was all important because "if they fail in their protective mission the fate of the reinforcing citizens' armies is sealed." The report also emphasized the importance of properly equipping the forces that would follow the IPF into the field. His conclusion was that there was little need for additional personnel but a great need for additional equipment and training.

Hitler's victory at Munich so impressed Roosevelt that he quickly reached the conclusion that the time had come for the United States to begin rearming extensively. Woodring, therefore, spent November and December working on the President's new rearmament program, which placed heavy emphasis on a greatly expanded Army Air Corps. While considerable attention was given to the air program, other matters of Army readiness were not ignored. On 5 January 1939 Secretary Woodring presented to the President the War Department's recommendations for carrying out the rearmament program and increasing the readiness of existing forces. Because of the recent events abroad, Roosevelt was anxious to strengthen the Army, and therefore he was very receptive to the War Department's proposals.
On 12 January the President sent his budget message to Congress, asking that it appropriate $450 million for the "new needs of the Army." While the bulk of the funds requested was to go for increasing air strength, $110 million were to be used for "‘critical items’ of equipment which would be needed immediately in time of emergency, and which cannot be obtained from any source within the time and quantity desired." There was no mention of an increase in the Army's manpower. Pleased as Woodring was with the proposed budget, he indicated to the President that there was still reason to be pessimistic, because "while the measures suggested will materially forward the readiness of the Army, nevertheless a serious deficiency of great import to both Army and Navy will still exist after these measures are accomplished." Furthermore, he was pessimistic because there was no certainty that Congress would grant everything that the President requested.

Beginning in mid January 1939, Secretary Woodring made several appearances before the House and Senate Military Affairs committees as well as the Senate and House Subcommittees on Appropriations. Before each committee he emphasized the same thing: "Our main problem, however, is to assure the complete equipment in critical items of our existing Regular Army and National Guard units and the organization of the initial protective force into a force fully capable of shouldering its heavy burden." In the committee hearings, Woodring was usually drawn into a discussion of future as well as present needs of the Army. These discussions saw him and other War Department officials follow the long-standing practice of asking for what they thought they could get rather than what was needed. Woodring told the committeemen that it would be desirable if supplies for the 720,000-man PMF would be made available, but funds for that purpose were not being requested at that time. Recommendations for additional personnel also indicated the War Department's tendency to ask for half a loaf. Woodring informed the Senate Military Affairs Committee that the "War Department has carefully excluded urgent personnel requirements.... We prefer at this time to invest such money as is appropriated in matériel." At the same time that such statements were being made by the Secretary of War, the Chief of Staff was expressing alarm because "we urgently need to have always available 5 complete divisions" but at present "we do not have a single division." In spite of the Army's awareness of this shortcoming, no additional troops were requested, and, furthermore, it was made clear that no such request would be made. All military representatives who might conceivably be called to testify before one of the congressional committees were informed by the Chief of Staff that in accordance with "presidential views," no additional increases in ground forces had been requested and that such a position should be maintained by anyone testifying.

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on behalf of the War Department. The memorandum containing this information also contained advice on how to reply to the investigators’ questions about the number of ground forces to be provided if and when such an increase should be permitted. The answer to be given was 1,800 officers and 23,000 enlisted men. This information was brought out in most of the hearings.

While members of Congress were debating on how far they should go in implementing the President’s 1939 defense program, their minds were made up for them by Adolf Hitler, who on 13 March sent his troops into Slovakia, thus completing the takeover of Czechoslovakia. This act marked the failure of the Munich Agreement and showed the world that Hitler was indeed a dangerous man who could not be trusted. Congress, at last convinced of the need for stronger defenses, was now willing to listen to the suggestions and recommendations of the President, the Secretary of War, and members of the General Staff. During the next three months, Woodring made numerous trips to the Hill to testify before various committees concerning the need for aircraft, training, and “critical items.” In one appearance before a House Subcommittee on Appropriations he indicated that he considered the President’s proposals “exceedingly conservative and modest” and believed that failure to implement any one of them would endanger the nation’s security. He concluded his testimony by saying, “As Secretary of War, I would be sadly remiss in my duty to the American people were I to advise or countenance the reduction of one iota of any item in the President’s program.”

The jittery Congress did not require much convincing, and in April, May, and June 1939 it passed Army Appropriations Bills for $549 million, including $180 million for new aircraft and $110 million for critical items. It also approved an increase of 2,050 Regular Army officers and authorized an increase in enlisted strength from 165,000 to 210,000 by June of 1940. Woodring was pleased with these legislative victories which marked the biggest military outlays since World War I. It was at about this time that the President expressed himself as “thoroughly satisfied with the administration he [Woodring] has given to the War Department, and particularly the manner in which he assisted . . . in fashioning the Army Expansion Bill and facilitating its passage through Congress.”

Because of the new appropriations, Secretary Woodring was now able to carry out some of the programs that he had long been advocating. One of the first problem areas he was to deal with was that of large-scale Army maneuvers. Although the military had long recognized the importance of these exercises in giving valuable experience to all personnel from field grade officers down to privates, the economy drive of the 1930s had virtually elim-
inated such training. Woodring was especially concerned over the matter of training, because the continual loss from active duty of war-experienced personnel meant that more and more individuals without combat experience were coming into command positions. This factor, he claimed, made largescale training very important, especially in the United States, "where limited forces, limited facilities and limited funds do not permit those massive peacetime manoeuvres and field exercises which characterize the instructional activities of great armies in other parts of the world." In early 1939, with Congress in a mood to spend money for national defense, Woodring asked for $20 million to expand the Army's training program. Included in this request were funds to conduct the "biggest army maneuvers since 1918." When Congress granted the full amount requested for training, the maneuvers were assured.

Subsequently, in August 1939, Regular Army and National Guard units of the First United States Army gathered at Plattsburg, New York, under their Commander, Gen. Hugh A. Drum, for two weeks of war games. With more than 52,000 men participating, this was the largest peacetime military exercise in the nation's history. When the games opened, General Drum expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of the First Army, claiming that the forces assembled were not an army "but a collection of individual units, partially equipped and woefully short in most of the elements which go to make an army." The two-weeks' exercise did nothing to change his mind, and in a very pointed critique, Drum stressed the "inexperience" of the troops assembled and called the state of affairs that he found "deplorable and inexcusable." The New York Times took the statements of General Drum and other Army observers and used them for a front-page story that told of the "'Deplorable' Lack of Training Especially Evident in [the] National Guard" and came to the conclusion that "Neither It Nor [the] Regulars [Are] Fit for War." At first, Woodring was quite upset over General Drum's revelations, because he felt that they reflected on him as Secretary of War. Soon, however, he came to feel that what Drum had done was a good thing, because the exposure of the Army's lack of training and equipment would help make the public mind more receptive to the adoption of recommendations that he had been making for the past several years.

The summer of 1939 also brought a new era in Army-Navy strategic planning. Prior to that time the War Plans Division of the General Staff had drawn up plans that envisioned a future war with a single nation. These plans were called "color plans," because each possible enemy was designated as a color: thus, War Plan Brown was for war with Germany; War Plan Orange, for Japan; and so forth. The need for more realistic war plans and closer coordination between the two major armed services had
long been recognized, but it was not until 30 June 1939 that the Joint Army-Navy Board approved, in general, a new series of basic war plans. The plans, which were known as Rainbow Plans, envisioned waging a war against several foes in more than one area at the same time. The June decision was limited to an outline of the plans; it actually took several years to develop the details. Woodring appears to have taken no part in the preparation of the Rainbow Plans. In part, this was probably because he considered them to be of a strictly military nature and therefore not a matter on which he could advise or guide the Joint Army-Navy Board. Another limiting factor was an order of 5 July 1939 from President Roosevelt to the effect that in the future the Joint Board would report directly to him as Commander in Chief. From that time on, the Secretary of War was usually bypassed when it came to the strategic planning of the Joint Army-Navy Board.

Along with the Army's gains of the summer of 1939 there came a loss. That loss was the retirement of Gen. Malin Craig as Chief of Staff. Although his retirement from active duty was scheduled for 1 September, the stress and strain of the past several years caused him to take terminal leave on 30 June. Considering the strong isolationist and anti-military sentiment that prevailed throughout the country in the mid thirties, General Craig had done an outstanding job in increasing the strength and efficiency of the United States Army, and, most important of all, he had given the Army a realistic mobilization plan. Perhaps the best evaluation of Craig and his contributions to the Army was that given by the noted American military historian Russell F. Weigley, who said, "It is questionable whether any soldier did more than he to make possible American military accomplishments in World War II." When his accomplishments are compared with those of his successor, Gen. George C. Marshall, they seem to be quite small, but when compared with what had been accomplished in the previous fifteen years, they appear to be very substantial. No one hated to see Craig leave more than did Woodring. From the time that Woodring came to the War Department in 1933, these two men had become the best of friends; and later, as Secretary of War and Chief of Staff, they had cooperated to a degree rarely found in military or civilian circles. Woodring, who looked with deep affection upon the General as his "right arm," stated that the relationship he enjoyed with Craig was that of "a brother, and frequently that of a father and son."

In addition to marking Craig's departure from the War Department, August 1939 was to mark the beginning of a new era as far as the United States Army's importance, influence, and significance on the national scene were concerned. With war in Europe appearing imminent, the War Depart-
ment introduced plans for enlarging and equipping a military force that would be more powerful than any that had ever been contemplated in peacetime.\textsuperscript{88} When war finally broke out in early September, interest in the country’s defenses became greater than ever. It was at that time that Congress began to scrutinize, as never before, the state of the Army’s readiness, and Secretary Woodring and the War Department were, consequently, to emerge as centers of attention and activity. Since August marked the beginning of a new era for the Army, it offers a convenient breaking point for examining Woodring’s efforts, up to that point, to improve the Army’s readiness.

There seems to be no doubt that the American military machine was much stronger in August 1939 than it had been when Woodring took control of it in September 1936. While it is true that events abroad were in large part responsible for Congress’s willingness to strengthen the Army, that situation should not obscure the fact that Woodring, who had the confidence of the President, Congress, and the military, played an important role in securing passage of legislation upgrading the armed forces. In size, planning, training, and equipment the United States Army was better prepared and stronger in August 1939 than it had been at any time since 1919. Whereas in September 1936 there were 147,000 enlisted men and 12,000 officers in the Regular Army, there were 175,000 and 13,200 respectively in August of 1939. More important than these actual strengths was the fact that Congress had just appropriated funds to raise the “authorized strength” of the Army to 210,000 enlisted men and 16,700 officers by June of 1940.\textsuperscript{89} Since the Secretary had not actively pushed for such increases in manpower, he can be given little credit for them, but the increases were nevertheless on the way.

In the realm of planning for mobilization, Woodring had played a major role in developing a sensible, workable scheme to provide an adequate protective force and necessary reserves. The Protective Mobilization Plan, with its provisions for an Initial Protective Force and a Protective Mobilization Force, was quite sound; the only problem was that Congress had not seen fit to appropriate the funds that were necessary to implement it. A start, however, had been made in the spring of 1939, when Congress appropriated $110 million for “critical items” and $20 million for training the Initial Protective Force. In addition, Woodring had assisted in the formation of the Regular Army Reserve; had helped to make plans for the largest peacetime military maneuvers; had supervised a major revision of the Industrial Mobilization Plan; had championed the testing and adoption of new weapons, including the Garand semiautomatic rifle; and had contributed significantly to strengthening the defenses of Hawaii and the Panama Canal.

In spite of the progress that had been made, however, the Army was
still woefully unprepared to meet any military emergency. Numerically it was far weaker than the army of any other major power, and because of rapid military expansion abroad, it was relatively weaker than it had been several years before. General Craig, in his final report as Chief of Staff, reported that as of 30 June 1939, the Army "was short much of its critical armament and equipment. . . . There were deficiencies in personnel. . . . And there was a serious shortage in immediate war reserves." The result of these deficiencies was: "We have not now a single complete division of the Regular Army [available for instant dispatch to troubled areas]. We have four partial divisions and five brigades in various stages of completion; and only a few special units available." This meant that in the summer of 1939 the United States Army did not have one complete division ready for immediate action.\textsuperscript{90} Although Secretary Woodring had accomplished much, there remained a great deal to do, and the road to success was full of military, political, and personal obstacles. It was a combination of the latter two that was to create his greatest problems.