Creating the Modern Army

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The Heart of the Policy

Creating the New Citizen Army

The National Defense Act of 1920 was all but revolutionary in that it changed the mission and character of the Regular Army. Instead of serving as the professionally trained ground force in the nation’s defense structure, the military took on as its most basic mission the education and training of the civilian components of the new citizen army, making it, in Pershing’s words, “a great institution of military instruction.” During the entire interwar period, the Regular Army continued to regard this mission as its chief and defining responsibility, even at the expense of its own training and development.

The defense act called for the creation of a citizen army, to be called “The Army of the United States,” that would be made up of the existing Regular Army and four civilian components: the National Guard, the Officers’ Reserve Corps (ORC), the Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC), and the Citizens’ Military Training Camps (CMTC), the last of which had an anomalous relationship to the entire program. Creating this new citizen army involved reorganizing the Regular Army, developing the citizen components, and properly assembling them into the Army of the United States.

Once the National Defense Act had been passed, it fell to General March and the General Staff to reorganize the existing army along the new lines required by the act. While the defense act was passed in opposition to his own plans for reorganization, once it became law, March moved immediately and loyally to implement it. Most of the conceptual planning and actual reorganizational work was carried out during the remaining portion of his tenure as chief of staff, leaving it to his successor, General Pershing, and the new secretary of war, John Weeks, to complete these preliminaries and begin implementation.

In his annual report, submitted just weeks after the defense act was signed, March indicated the General Staff’s full support of building a citizen army,
stating with enthusiasm, “In the furtherance of this end the field open to the Army is one of great possibilities.” He noted his approval that the new law meant that the army’s traditional separation from society would come to an end. Moreover, the officer who would be most responsible for implementing the program, the director of the War Plans Division, Major General William Haan, had long been a genuine and enthusiastic supporter of the legislation. Haan, who in the war had commanded the 32nd Division, composed of National Guard units, was a firm disciplinarian with a rigorous professional outlook. Yet his duty with the 32nd had led him to appreciate the citizen-soldier, and his temperament led Haan in the direction of cooperation and conciliation rather than domination. The result was that, in the same way the character of General March had shaped the centralization of authority in the General Staff in the war’s final months, the character of General Haan largely shaped the work of establishing the foundation of the military policy under the National Defense Act.

Once the defense act was signed, Haan created a committee involving major interest groups, including the General Staff, Pershing’s staff, the general-service schools, and the Infantry School. The panel soon addressed concerns on the basic concepts. From there, two major committees of the War Plans Branch of the War Plans Division carried the work forward. An Organization Committee worked on the tactical structure of the Regular Army and the tactical units that would make up the Army of the United States. Its members found their efforts frustratingly interrupted by the force reductions ordered in the 1920 and 1921 Army Appropriation Acts so that much of their work had to be redone. A Committee on War Department and Defense Projects carried out most of the plans regarding the integration of the National Guard, the Organized Reserve, and the Regular Army into the unified citizen army and allocating units of each to the new corps areas. These corps-area commands replaced the older territorial departments on September 1, and within three weeks they received instructions on the overall development of the U.S. Army. The plan for restructuring the National Guard was published in October 1920, and in February 1921 the basic organization of the Organized Reserve was completed, with unit allocations sent out to corps-area commanders shortly thereafter. The entire plan was then explained to state governors in a letter sent out at the beginning of June.

The plan was quickly accepted. The goal of the General Staff was to develop the framework for a citizen army of 2,000,000 men that could be mobilized quickly in the face of a great emergency such as the past war. This force was to be made up of six field armies of three corps each, with six divisions in each corps. Of the requisite fifty-four divisions, nine would come from the Regular Army, eighteen
from the National Guard, and twenty-seven from the Organized Reserve. The 280,000 men allocated to the Regular Army would allow the creation of nine divisions at full strength. The National Guard was to be expanded to 424,800 men by 1924 and would be organized into the eighteen divisions, all to exist at full strength. The Organized Reserve units, on the other hand, would be skeletal organizations only, consisting of reserve officers and a few enlisted specialists. Reserve units were formed on the assumption that, in an emergency, the manpower to fill them would come from a draft and that they would initially be mobilization and training commands. All units in this “Six-Army Plan” would be localized. The Regular Army divisions would be stationed in World War I cantonments in each corps area. The National Guard and Organized Reserve divisions were broken down into myriad local units that could be mobilized within the corps areas at the outbreak of a war. For less than a major emergency, only Regular Army and National Guard units would be mobilized, while minor emergencies would be handled by an expeditionary force made up of regular units only.4

In the meantime, the General Staff itself was reorganized along lines similar to those used by Pershing in France during the war.5 On September 18 the chiefs of branches offices for the combat arms were created. At the same time, the basic organization of subordinate units, such as branches, arms, and services, was standardized.6 As a result, at the end of fiscal year 1921, as both March and Haan were ready to step aside for their successors, the military was tactically organized into a single Army of the United States comprising three basic components. In some respects, all that was left to do was to organize and fill the citizen components.

Pershing’s first major concern when he became chief of staff was to finish the work of reorganizing the General Staff along the lines of the Allied Expeditionary Force (AEF), which he had commanded in France, with a nucleus general headquarters to support him as commanding general. Within a week he had a board of senior officers, organized under Major General James G. Harbord, to carry out this reorganization.7 The basic structure of the General Staff was altered to conform to that of Pershing’s AEF staff, with the same titles and the same G1 to G5 designations.8 Moreover, this new organization was to be used as a model for the corps-area commanders’ staffs. Otherwise, the basic structure of the General Staff created by March remained largely unaltered. The War Plans Division (G5) was organized so that it could serve as a nucleus of a general headquarters but was otherwise an integral part of the General Staff, sharing in its work. Thus, the resulting arrangement retained much that existed under March. Moreover, it was clear that the General Staff would continue to supervise the bureaus; the goal of the reform was to make it better able to do so.
Pershing’s real influence on the General Staff in the first years as chief of staff, therefore, was not in reorganization, as much as that might have interested him, but in the process of implementation of the National Defense Act by setting up the civilian components of the Army of the United States. As noted earlier, much of the preliminary conceptual and organizational work for this had already been accomplished during March’s tenure. The major contribution of Pershing and his staff was the decentralization of the program by placing the major responsibility for its execution on the shoulders of the new corps-area commanders. Based on the Six-Army Plan, the country was divided into nine corps areas, each with its own commander responsible for much of the military activity therein, including the training of the civilian components. By the time Pershing had become chief of staff, much of the initial work establishing the corps areas was already completed. The corps areas themselves were designated and the Regular Army units assigned to them for training the civilian components as well as the assignment of the Organized Reserve units. What remained was to organize the corps-area training structure, especially the training centers. The governing instructions to corps-area commanders regarding their training responsibilities were issued in September 1921. These instructions were brief, leaving much room for the commanders’ initiative, pointing out only the work to be done and calling for “brief” monthly reports on progress.

With the organization of the corps areas already completed, the General Staff under Pershing turned its attention to the creation of the training centers. Each was to be the corps-area commander’s headquarters and planning center. Regular Army recruits assigned to corps area would be trained there, as would Organized Reserve and National Guard units when appropriate. Regular units responsible for training civilian components would be stationed at each as well. Finally, in a war, the training centers would function as mobilization centers for the corps area. Basic instruction and regulations for the organization of the training centers were issued to corps-area commanders in October. While assignment of regular units was significantly disrupted by the three reductions in the army, most training centers had sufficient units assigned to allow them to begin full-scale summer training in 1922. Once the corps-area training structure was in place, Pershing and the General Staff left it alone and involved themselves with policy issues in regard to the civilian components, including educating the Regular Army that their training was now its central mission.

Pershing also took an interest in aspects of the further development of the civilian components themselves. In November 1922 a general policy was developed regarding the length of tours and the responsibilities of reserve officers
serving on duty with the General Staff as required by the National Defense Act.\textsuperscript{12} Initially, reserve officers were concentrated in the Personnel Division and, especially, the Operations and Training Division, since those sections dealt with most of the policies regarding the National Guard and Organized Reserve. After a year, Pershing changed this policy so that reserve officers were assigned for orientation purposes to all branches of the General Staff.\textsuperscript{13} He also intervened personally in National Guard and Organized Reserve matters regarding officer assignments to ensure that the Regular Army’s best officers served in training components. The chief of staff also pushed the general-service schools to develop career courses for guard and reserve officers so that they could gain access to the General Staff Eligible List and serve on the staff in wartime.

But Pershing’s main concern with the civilian components at this time was to convince officers in the Regular Army to accept what was then called the “one-army” spirit. As he explained to one correspondent even before he had become chief of staff, this meant “that all officers whether of the Regular Army or of the Organized Reserve should be for the Army of the United States as a whole, and not mere partisans of the branch of the service to which they may belong.”\textsuperscript{14} At the same time, he told the chiefs of branches that he expected them to promote the “one army” spirit when visiting their units and supported the creation of the Army Association of the United States as an organization representing the “one-army” idea.\textsuperscript{15} Pershing also relied heavily on Colonel Palmer to propagandize the “one-army” spirit. At Palmer’s request, the general appointed him aide-de-camp with few duties other than to speak and write on behalf of the “one-army” vision of the National Defense Act.\textsuperscript{16} For the next year, Palmer wrote articles for popular and service journals and spoke to citizen and military groups as well as contacting those in Pershing’s broad network of friends and acquaintances.\textsuperscript{17}

Finally, all officers were encouraged to advocate for the “one-army” idea as well. The requirement that they clear any articles with the War Department before publication was dropped. Instead, it was made clear that officers were not only allowed to publish but also encouraged to do so, especially if the work would acquaint a wide audience with the War Department’s “one-army” policy.\textsuperscript{18} By early 1922, articles on the topic began to appear in service journals. By October, the War Department was emphasizing that officers were expected to take an aggressive role in promoting the “one-army” idea to any audience available.\textsuperscript{19}

Although Pershing’s commitment to the citizen army was vigorous, it was, nevertheless, less than complete. It was one thing to urge the General Staff and Regular Army officers to adopt the “one-army” spirit and to demand that army attention be focused on training of civilian components. It was another matter,
however, to sacrifice units, promotion, and morale to this policy. This problem was evident even before Pershing became chief of staff, as it became clear that the Regular Army was to be reduced from 280,000 to 175,000 men. After several exchanges between the Operations and Training Division and the War Plans Division on how to effect such a reduction, they reached a tentative decision in favor of demobilizing five divisions in order to save the training centers. Nevertheless, opposition to this approach developed within the General Staff, while the chief of infantry also opposed it, favoring, instead a skeletonizing of all divisions. Although the Operations and Training Division proposal was accepted, concessions were made to the opposition. Palmer saw that another reduction would lead to pressure to save as many units as possible through the sacrifice of the training centers and their mission. He sought to avoid this by building sanctions against it. The colonel drafted a general order by which the secretary of war indicated that his interpretation of the National Defense Act was that the focus of Regular Army activities was to be on building the citizen components, the number of officers authorized in the act having been made purposely high for the express purpose of carrying out this training.

Palmer then continued to plump for the idea in speeches and publications. Nonetheless, all of this was to no avail in the face of the 1922 reductions. Palmer urged Pershing to reduce and eliminate the number of divisions in the Regular Army in order to save the training forces. But since that likely meant the further elimination of some officers and the demotion of others, most in the General Staff opposed this idea. Hence, Pershing agreed instead to carry out the 1922 reductions by abolishing the newly created training centers, making the remaining partially skeletonized forces responsible for training. Given the disastrous state of officer morale in the summer of 1922, this was probably a wise policy and probably had less disruption on the training of components than Palmer feared. But it showed the degree to which outside pressures could place significant strain on the commitment of the Regular Army to its new training mission. Even so, as William O. Odom has pointed out, the Regular Army continued to support the citizen components even at the sacrifice of its own training and development.

While the work of organizing the Army of the United States and reorganizing the Regular Army was carried out chiefly by the General Staff, the creation of the individual citizen components required the development of a cooperative relationship between the staff and those units themselves. This was achieved, though in some cases not without some initial difficulty. The process of development was also hindered by the turmoil and stress that beset the army in the
first half of the 1920s. As a result, although the process of developing the citizen components was virtually completed by 1925, its success varied between the components themselves.

The National Guard

Despite the acrimony existing between the National Guard and the Regular Army up to 1920, the two organizations were soon able to build a working relationship that became all but cordial by 1925. They also succeeded in building a new guard organization and fitting it into the National Army structure envisioned in the National Defense Act. But, by 1925, critical deficiencies began to appear in the Guard with regards to recruiting and, especially, in training that led to a growing concern as to whether it could actually carry out its assigned wartime mission.

The immediate foundations upon which the collaborative reestablishment of the National Guard as a civilian component of the Army of the United States was to be built were scarcely auspicious. Relations between the Regular Army and the Guard were already strained to the utmost on the eve of World War I. Then the experience of the Guard during the war severely aggravated this strain. Guardsmen were drafted during the war to serve as individuals rather than being allowed to volunteer as entire units, as Pershing and other army leaders decided that divisions formed pursuant to existing American military policy were too light to be effective and needed to be increased in size. As a result, many guard divisions and smaller units were broken up to form new and larger multistate divisions.25 These were then given numerical designations that in almost no way indicated state or guard origins. While the War Department expressed regret at the damage done to unit and state pride, guardsmen were outraged.

During the war, many senior regular officers who fought in close association with guard units emerged with a profound respect for them. Guardsmen, on the other hand, found far less reason to change their minds about the arrogant and narrow-minded professional intolerance they found in many regulars, especially rapidly promoted field-grade officers on staffs, some of whom became legendary in their repeated expressions of contempt for the Guard.26 Finally, the war all but destroyed the guard units and organizational structure remaining in the country. The draft in 1917 took the younger men out of most units, and the extension of the draft age to forty-five years old in August 1918 stripped most units of all but a few older men.27 Moreover, the National Defense Act of 1916 and the Selective Service Act of May 18, 1917, provided that guardsmen who had
been drafted into federal service lost all guard identity and, at the end of the emergency, would be discharged as civilians rather than returned to the Guard. The immediate postwar experience of the National Guard aggravated the strained relations with the Regular Army even further. The Guard, or what was left of it after war and demobilization, was fearful that it might not even have a future. While it was certain that any final military policy adopted by Congress would continue provisions for a regular army, there was no such certainty that the Guard would not be reduced to the role of a state constabulary. The March-Baker bill included no provision for the organization. Colonel Palmer, in drawing up legislation for the Senate Military Affairs Committee, explicitly omitted the Guard. In this atmosphere, the Guard became increasingly restive, using its political influence to exert pressure for the preservation of its clauses from the 1916 defense act. Their efforts found much support in the House of Representative and were responsible for many of the provisions in National Defense Act of 1920 under which the Guard would be reorganized.

Outside of the legislative issue, relations between the Guard and the Militia Bureau, the agency within the General Staff with responsibility for Guard matters, were also strained by the perception that the bureau was doing little in terms of reconstructing the Guard. During the interwar period, it consisted of four guard officers and twenty-six regular officers. Although the regulars often shared the prejudices of many of their colleagues toward the Guard, they were still closer to guard personnel and more in sympathy with them. Hence, even without policy guidance, the Militia Bureau sought to encourage states to reconstruct their guard units while offering whatever support it could. At the same time, it also pushed the War Department toward a military policy that would include provisions for the Guard. Lacking influence within either the General Staff or the War Department, however, the Militia Bureau was initially able to do relatively little to support guard reorganization.

Outside the bureau, however, state pressures began building in the spring of 1919 to push the General Staff toward a commitment to reestablish the position of the National Guard as the main reserve force. By the middle of May, Secretary of War Baker grudgingly accepted the idea that the Guard was to be reconstituted at the federal as well as at the state level with the National Defense Act of 1916 as its basis. By June, the Militia Bureau had worked out a provisional policy for the Guard that took into account the legal provisions of the 1916 defense act, the tactical experience of the war, and the special conditions under which the Guard operated. In so doing, it raised most of the issues that dominated the guard experience in the interwar years. While the 1916 act allowed the Guard a
strength of 424,800 troops, or 800 men for each congressman and senator for each state, the Militia Bureau anticipated that Congress presently would not fund such a large force, nor could such a force be organized immediately. Thus, it suggested that the army initially plan the organization of the Guard on the basis of 200 men per congressman and senator. It also suggested that it be organized on the same tactical basis as the Regular Army to avoid any repetition of the wartime reorganization that had proved so painful in 1917. On the other hand, it was clear that guard units could never be recruited to the strength of regular units. Many communities were too small to support such numbers, and most armories were built to accommodate smaller organizations. Hence, the Militia Bureau recommended that guard companies be given federal recognition and support at a level of 65 men and that a National Guard reserve be maintained sufficient to raise companies to 100 soldiers in the event of war. 30

Meanwhile, elements in the Guard hostile to the Regular Army and, especially, to the General Staff gained control of the nearly moribund National Guard Association. They worked to mobilize guardsmen to fight for their interests in the fall of 1919 as Congress began to consider military-policy legislation. This political mobilization was difficult since it lacked a target. As a result, anger was actually channeled against the Militia Bureau, which was unfairly subjected to a variety of criticisms aimed to show that an agency headed by a Regular Army officer could never understand or meet the needs of the National Guard. 31 So, during the fall of 1919, as Congress considered military policy, the Guard’s two main political objectives were preserving the Guard provisions of the National Defense Act of 1916 and placing one of its officers at the head of the Militia Bureau.

By then, however, the anti–General Staff radicals began to lose control of the National Guard Association to moderates who advocated a more cooperative relationship with the staff. Recruiting for the Guard had not been successful, especially in the summer and fall of 1919. 32 Cooperation in this area then began to pay dividends. In the spring of 1920, the Regular Army began to assist the Guard in recruiting while publicizing plans to give guardsmen some summer training. As a result, enlistment numbers began to rise rapidly. 33 A more cooperative spirit also helped in Congress, where there was still much support for a version of a military-policy bill that would leave the guard provisions of 1916 intact and for placing a guardsman at the head of the Militia Bureau. 34 As a result, even though the Guard and the army remained in opposition on many issues related to the pending national defense legislation in the spring of 1920, their relationship became increasingly cordial and cooperative.
As completed, the National Defense Act of 1920 contributed to this growing cooperation by providing compromises on major issues that were satisfactory to both sides. It required the Militia Bureau to be headed by a guardsman, but it gave the General Staff considerable control over the selection of that officer. It called for the appointment to the General Staff of guard officers to deal with issues specifically related to their organization. The Guard was also allowed a temporary variance of 10 percent in the requirement for a minimum of 65 men a unit to qualify for federal support. Moreover, units were given a year to reach this standard; in fiscal year 1920–21, units needed to contain only 50 men to qualify. Finally, since the Guard was to play a role as a reserve available for immediate use, it was generously allowed the authorized strength of 800 per congressman and senator as provided in the 1916 act.

With the passage of the National Defense Act of 1920, the focus of attention in both the General Staff and the National Guard was on building the new Guard within the framework provided by the new law. Over the next five years, this centered on three major issues: recruiting, organization, and training. But as would be expected, in the first years the focus was on recruiting and organizing. The provisions of the defense act had given the Guard nearly all it had asked for, including a critical mission and an ambitious recruiting goal. This fostered a new spirit of cordiality and cooperation that increasingly seemed to infuse relations between the Guard and the Regular Army, creating an initial euphoric enthusiasm in the Guard as it set out to recruit under the act. This effort then met with at least the appearance of impressive success. During fiscal year 1921, the size of the Guard increased by over 100 percent, from 35,883 to 113,640 men, and the Guard enjoyed another 42-percent growth in fiscal year 1922 to 159,658 troops. This increase was matched by expanded breadth for the organization. In June 1920, only thirty-four states had units. At the end of fiscal year 1922, only Nevada lacked units, and twenty states had organized all the units allocated to them.

Yet the statistical results masked several basic problems. Despite this initial rapid growth, army leaders began to question whether the National Guard would be able to recruit much above its prewar levels. For the pessimists, the initial surge in guard enlistments in 1921 was seen as a response to the end of uncertainty and other matters that had depressed recruiting earlier. Moreover, most of the growth came from the development of new units rather than the expansion of established ones. By July 1921, it was necessary for the chief of the Militia Bureau to request a one-year extension of the special provision that gave tentative recognition to units with as few as fifty men per company. A similar
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request was made in 1922. Finally, as Congress began cutting budgets, it became increasingly less willing to fund the rapid expansion of the Guard.

The recruiting problem reached a crisis stage in 1922 with the army reduction called for by the Congress. Officers in the General Staff and elsewhere had always been skeptical as to whether the National Guard could ever recruit the authorized 424,800 men and felt that a force half that size was adequate. By the end of 1921, General Staff leadership was convinced that a severe reduction was needed and hoped the Guard would take the lead, not wanting the reductions to appear to be an anti-Guard action on their part. Early in 1922, the situation became more critical as it became increasingly clear that Congress would again reduce existing officer strength, which led to efforts to find ways to economize on the use of officers. The General Staff began to consider vastly reducing recruiting by the Guard. Secretary of War Weeks took the lead in this. After Congress passed the 1922 army reduction, Weeks assembled a committee of guardsmen and members of the General Staff to suggest appropriate action. The panel began meeting on November 13 and had a recommendation ready by January 15, 1923. It called for a reduction of the final overall size of the National Guard to 250,000 troops, which would still provide for enough men to staff the eighteen infantry and four cavalry divisions called for in the Six-Army Plan at maintenance rather than full strength.

Most guardsmen considered the new goal reasonable in the light of national and state economic-retrenchment policies, the growing recruiting problems, and the reduced size of the Regular Army. Yet the reduction all but enshrined the 65-man rather than the 100-man company as the standard National Guard unit. In an emergency, these companies would have to be expanded to a war strength of 200. It had been anticipated originally that much of this expansion would be carried out by units of National Guard reserve, men who had been trained and still attended summer camps but belonged to no distinct unit. Yet that program was a total failure, with less than a thousand enlisted. Thus, while it was never admitted, the reduction of the final objective meant that in an emergency, Guard units would be so diluted by a massive input of untrained volunteers or draftees that their immediate fighting power would be negligible. This, in turn, meant that the Guard would never really be capable of meeting its mission as an immediately available combat-ready force.

This decision, however, was vindicated by the results of recruiting efforts in 1923. Major General George C. Rickards, chief of the Militia Bureau, had called for appropriations to provide for a nearly 20-percent expansion of the National Guard, from 159,658 to 191,000 men, but by the end of the year, guard
membership was up by less than 1,000 men to 160,598. Several factors explain this unexpected collapse in recruiting. For one, by 1923, the three-year enlistment of nearly 15,000 guardsmen who had signed up in 1920 expired, and most left. Moreover, curtailing the manpower objective meant that many states received no new allotment of units. Finally, budget retrenchments in many states made legislators less willing to invest in armories. These factors tended to diminish the number of new units created, and new units had always been the major source of increased numbers for the Guard.

Underlying these external factors, however, was an internal problem. The National Guard was losing its overall attractiveness. The fact that the total number of guardsmen remained level between July 1, 1922, and July 1, 1923, at the same time as the number of units increased meant that average unit membership actually fell. There were several reasons for this. Twenty years earlier, the Guard, with drills, uniforms, and parades, was one of the more exciting preoccupations offered in many communities. By the early 1920s, movies, organized sports, and other activities had appeared as rival forms of public entertainment. Labor remained hostile to the Guard, so union members rarely joined. On top of this, life in the Guard was rather demanding and boring. In the early 1920s, training concepts in the Guard were still fairly primitive and focused on parade drill, so training seemed more like useless work than military instruction. On top of the one and a half hours of drill each week, most officers were expected to put in another hour and a half without pay to complete paperwork and plan for future drills, not to mention several additional hours a week on a correspondence course for professional advancement. Thus, many found the time commitment eating up two to three nights a week. As a result, guardsmen began to lose interest and dropped out when the opportunity presented itself. Turnover rates in many units in 1923 approached 50 percent, creating problems in stability and training.

The recruiting crisis of 1923 was overcome to some extent in 1924 as measures were taken to increase public interest. As a result, the National Guard enjoyed a 15-percent expansion in fiscal year 1924. The enthusiasm created by this expansion was, however, dissipated early in the next fiscal year when economic retrenchment in Congress limited available funds, and the Militia Bureau was forced to suspend recognition of new guard units, leaving enlistments nearly static. Even before this freeze, however, many in the General Staff, and in the Militia Bureau, began to regard the prospect of even reaching the reduced goal of 250,000 guardsmen by July 1926 as unlikely.

On the other hand, even though the organization of the National Guard into tactical units that would fit into the overall Six-Army Plan was a massive job, it
was handled smoothly in a manner that continued to maintain the confidence of both regulars and guardsmen. The problem was fraught with political difficulties. While dividing the corps allotted to the Guard in the National Defense Act into specific divisions and allocating units of each to states was relatively easy, getting the states to go along with this was difficult because the process would necessarily involve an amalgamation of some traditional units while extensively changing the functions of others. In addition, while the General Staff had to plan the organization of a 42,480-man Guard, the schedule for reaching that strength stretched over four years, so unit allocations had to be introduced incrementally to preserve the Guard’s overall balance during this expansion.

Despite the massiveness of the undertaking, the initial organization was done rather rapidly. By the middle of July 1920, a committee in the General Staff had worked out the basic policies along which the National Guard would be reconstructed. Following the War Department’s commitment to decentralization, the plan gave corps-area commanders broad authority in local reorganization, leaving the staff and the Militia Bureau responsible only for policy development and administrative oversight. The task of distributing the units among the states was far more complex, but that was worked out chiefly by the Guard itself. Palmer had insisted that this be worked out by a board on which guard and reserve officers would predominate. By December, after initial discussions with state governors, this board, acting through the chief of the Militia Bureau, distributed major allotments to individual states. Then state boards, made up almost entirely of guard officers, distributed allocations of company-size units to localities. The task of supervising the formation of local units and recognizing them belonged to corps-area commanders. Even though this process involved the distribution of over 2,500 units in a ticklish political setting, it went surprisingly smoothly.

After the initial organization of the National Guard, the only major organizational problem remaining to be worked out centered on the relationship of the Militia Bureau with the corps-area commanders. Much of this problem stemmed from fears in the General Staff that, with a guardsman at its head, the bureau would soon become the headquarters for an increasingly autonomous Guard. Such concerns were aggravated by overall anxieties regarding decentralization and by personality clashes. Rickards, who became the first guardsman to serve as chief of the Militia Bureau, came to his post with a long and distinguished career and significant backing within the Guard. He also viewed himself as an advocate for the Guard, which introduced further strain between his office and the General Staff. The result was an ongoing struggle between the bureau, which wanted to keep as much control over the Guard in its hands as
possible, and the staff, which sought to delegate as much authority as possible to corps-area commanders. The issue was finally resolved by a committee of regular and guard officers who worked out a compromise that shifted more authority to the corps-area commanders, making the local guard units so dependent on them that the development of an autonomous Guard became virtually impossible. Rickards protested the decision but lost. 

Despite this source of rancor, the General Staff and Chief of Staff Pershing made major efforts to further the development of cordiality and trust in the relations between the National Guard and the Regular Army. Recruiters were encouraged to cooperate with the Guard and were recognized when they did so. Finally, and most important, Pershing insisted that officers serving with the Guard be among the best in the army and be informed that the army considered such duty to be of the highest importance. He also ordered the compilation of a roster of these officers so that everyone on it with an effectiveness rating of less than average could be relieved. He then went through the list himself, checking off names of officers he wanted released from service with the Guard.

Organizational developments between 1923 and 1925 were far less discouraging than the recruiting efforts. Indeed, the slow growth in recruiting was one of several factors that led to a sense of stability in the National Guard by the end of 1925. At the same time, histories of the Militia Bureau began to appear in professional journals, signaling that the office was becoming accepted as part of the army leadership structure. Guard regulations were revised as were those for mobilizing its units. At local levels, the bureau encouraged guard units to write their own histories and apply for coats of arms as a means of creating a sense of permanence and unit identification. At the same time Congress authorized commissions in the Army of the United States for the Guard, which gave guardsmen a better sense of belonging to a single whole, as did its participation in the defense test in 1924.

While the growing sense of stability in the organization to some extent balanced the more volatile and depressing situation in terms of recruiting, both issues were old problems that officers in the National Guard and the Regular Army could understand if not entirely control. Yet by 1925, a new problem began to appear in the Guard that became a growing source of concern among regulars, since it called into question the basic ability of the Guard to fulfill its primary mission. The trouble was with training. To fulfill its mission to serve as a force immediately ready for emergency combat situations, the better part of the Guard would have had to have undergone a significant degree of both individual and unit training. This was a challenge.
In the initial years of reconstructing the National Guard, little attention was given to training since the problems of recruiting and organization were so immediate and compelling. Moreover, many assumed that the ranks of the Guard would be filled by war veterans who had already undergone considerable training. This, however, failed to happen, with new recruits increasingly being younger men without military experience. By the summer of 1921, 80 percent of guardsmen had no previous military training, which meant that the Guard had to provide them training to make its units immediately available in case of war. Observers saw the issue largely as one of time. A guardsman trained only an hour and a half a week and fifteen days in the summer. Even if he attended every drill, this would provide less than two hundred hours of training a year, scarcely enough to prepare a man or a unit for combat, many believed. For several years, hope was that the problem would be solved by a rapid expansion of CMTC, which at least would provide the Guard with a source of partially trained manpower. This, however, failed to happen.

As these initial expectations dissipated, problems associated with training became clearer in both character and complexity. Time remained a critical issue, but there was also the question of who would carry out the training. Palmer envisioned a citizen army as self-trained, with the more able and ambitious moving ahead in rank by training themselves to a point that they would take charge of instructing others. The assumption that the National Guard would train itself, however, proved flawed in several ways. First, it put too heavy a burden on the leadership. Officers needed to spend time not only in supervising the one and a half hours of drill one evening a week but also in preparing training programs on both an annual and weekly basis. In addition, they had to work on the correspondence courses necessary for their own professional advancement. While some guard officers had a sense of professionalism and commitment sufficient to inspire them to devote this time and energy, many others did not. Moreover, even those willing to put in the time to do the job right often lacked the experience needed to develop a compelling training program. This was aggravated by the fact that, due to the high level of turnover, a typical National Guard unit consisted of both veteran noncommissioned officers (NCOs) and raw recruits. Such variations in experience meant that the unit could not train together but had to follow several different training plans simultaneously. Finally, although the Guard was furnished with regular officers and NCOs to assist with training, the regulars often lacked the understanding, patience, and tact needed in working with part-time volunteers. The result was often not just friction but also frequent efforts by the regular officers to take over the job of training themselves.
Through the summer of 1922, the General Staff limited itself to supervising the conduct of summer camps, where almost all efforts were focused on recruit training. The army also made spaces in its own special-service schools available to the National Guard in an effort to provide training for its officers, while Pershing attempted to get curricula for regular officers in special summer schools revised to include more instruction related specifically to guard training. By 1923, it was clear that, to provide an adequate system of training for the Guard, the General Staff would have to coordinate the supervision of the entire training year so that summer camps supplemented rather than duplicated the work done in armories during the year. The Operations and Training Division, therefore, began to coordinate efforts by publishing an annual training directive focused on the objectives to be met in both the Regular Army and the summer training camps. While dissemination of the plan in 1923 was too slow and the plan itself too rigid to influence instruction in armories that year, the distribution of the following year’s plan was speeded up, and the plan itself made more flexible, providing unit commanders basic training objectives to serve as the focus for their own preparations.

But while the General Staff and the National Guard had developed a comprehensive training system by 1925, there was still growing skepticism within the Regular Army that the Guard was getting the necessary training to fulfill its mission. This pessimism was seen in a sudden rash of articles on training that appeared in the professional journals in 1925. While their tone was always positive and dealt with problems solved, the articles also discussed in detail the problems yet unresolved and with an undercurrent of doubt. Few saw any answers to the time problem, compounded as it was by the high turnover rate. This meant that most guard units were deeply involved with recruit training and could rarely be counted on at any given moment to be ready for immediate combat. In addition, while most guard officers needed to carry on their own professional training through the correspondence-school system, many took little interest in the courses.

Finally, in the minds of many regular officers, the training deficiency and high turnover in individual units greatly aggravated the dilution problem inherent in mobilizing National Guard units by filling them to war strength with untrained conscripts. Considering that, at any given time, a significant number of the men in typical guard units were themselves recent recruits, filling a sixty-five-man unit to its war strength of two hundred by adding raw draftees meant that far more than just two-thirds of the men in a unit would be untrained. And, since even the members of the more experienced cadre had only about 150 hours a year...
of training themselves, it seemed highly questionable whether, in an emergency, they would be able to train the newcomers while still functioning as a readily available combat unit. Hence, while the ethos of the “one army” spirit made it virtually unprofessional for regular officers to openly criticize the Guard, the sudden interest they expressed in the issue of guard training in 1925 would indicate that the Regular Army’s traditional skepticism that the National Guard had the ability to carry out its mission was rapidly returning.

The Citizens’ Military Training Camps (CMTC)

Of the four citizen components for which the army took responsibility under the National Defense Act 1920, the most anomalous was the Citizens’ Military Training Camps. These were authorized under section 47(d) of the defense act, which, while it was quite precise in fiscal matters, was rather vague as to the purposes of the camps. This vagueness was largely due to the fact that the impetus for the CMTC came from two sources. Narrowly interpreted, the obvious intention was to provide for a continuous source of reserve officers and noncommissioned officers, especially after the veterans of the war surpassed the age of useful service. But the concept of summer training camps had its own history that suggested to many a far broader purpose for the CMTC. The idea was tied to General Wood’s Plattsburgh experiment and through it to the preparedness movement and the effort to establish universal military training. For many of its supporters, section 47(d) was to be the wedge that would reopen the way to the establishment of universal military training. Pursuit of both the narrow and the broader objectives made the camps a distinctly ambiguous undertaking. The thirty-day events were expected to turn out officers and noncommissioned officers for the Organized Reserve in the way that wartime officer-training camps had, yet, at the same time they were to provide civilian attendees with an exciting experience that would popularize military service to the point that the country would accept it. In short, camp commanders were not altogether certain whether they were to emphasize the “military training” or the “camp” aspect of the CMTC.

This anomaly became apparent as the army prepared to hold its first set of camps in the summer of 1921. The key structural device masking the ambiguity of the camps’ purpose was in the organizational focus around three different courses—the “red,” the “white,” and the “blue.” While the color scheme suggested that all three were meant to be part of a greater whole, such was not actually the case. The red course was for the civilian initiate, focusing on boys in their late teens and basically organized to be an enjoyable introductory orientation
and indoctrination program. The white course was developed to produce non-commissioned officers, while the blue course aimed to produce reserve officers. Hence, while the CMTC color scheme suggested that it was a three-year program of instruction in which candidates would pass from the red to the white to the blue over time, actual cases of such progression were, in fact, rare.

Moreover, while a few officers such as Palmer had hoped to see the program emphasize the white and blue courses as the means to build up the Organized Reserve, the General Staff opted to emphasize the red course almost to the exclusion of the other two. The overall objective behind this was to popularize the idea of military training by spreading the exposure to a special CMTC version of such training as widely as possible. This was explained clearly to corps-area commanders before the camps opened in 1921 in a General Staff directive that stated, in part, “it should consistently be kept in mind that the purpose of the camps is not so much to give 10,000 men 30 days of practical military instruction as it is to demonstrate to the country the merit of these camps.” When it became clear that Congress would likely appropriate no more than $1 million for the program, these plans were modified to ensure the widest possible distribution of camp experience, with each corps area given a quota and orders to promote a broad geographic representation in the camps.

At the same time, while those in charge of the camps received explicit instructions on subjects to be taught, they also understood clearly that the main measure of success would be “the enthusiastic approval” of those attending. While the schedule developed by the General Staff included five hours of instruction in military matters each day, a lot of time was still left for physical training and athletics. Prospective attendees were promised a wide range of sports activities. Movies, vaudeville performances, or talks about the war were scheduled for most evenings. The military training itself was to be rigorous but not exhausting, and camp commanders were warned to ensure that no campers were injured. Training included a heavy emphasis on the rifle and on marksmanship, perceived by the General Staff as being popular among teenage males. Finally, camp commanders were instructed to pay attention to the quantity and quality of the food and to ensure the presence of adequate medical personnel. Overall, the four-week experience was intended to be quite a bit more like a camp getaway than actual military training.

The General Staff initiated the program with a massive recruiting effort for the 1921 camps at the national, state, and local levels. It aimed to ensure not only that they would be able to recruit a social and geographic cross-section of American male teenagers, but also to put pressure on Congress to increase
appropriations for future summer camps by demonstrating their popularity. Corps-area commanders were encouraged to recruit attendees vigorously: “No mark is too high and it will not be inappropriate if there are at least ten eligible applicants for each accepted position.”

The 1921 camps appeared to have been a tremendous success. The publicity campaigns, together with the efforts of recruiters and civilian groups, produced the much-hoped-for oversubscription of applicants. Over 130,000 males expressed interest, of whom over 40,000 actually applied and 11,202 were finally selected, with 10,681 actually attending the camps. Soothing letters went out to the unsuccessful applicants, promising preferred treatment in the competition for the 1922 camps. Moreover, the actual participants were extremely pleased with the experience. Numerous letters arrived from parents happy with the noticeable growth in physical and personal maturity of their sons, while the army itself proudly noted that the campers had, on average, gained an inch in height, 2.75 pounds in weight, and an inch in chest expansion during their camp experience. State governors were canvassed on their response to the program, and thirty-seven of thirty-eight gave it an enthusiastic endorsement.

Counting on the 30,000 unsuccessful candidates as a backlog and expecting the popularity of the camps to create a word-of-mouth campaign that would bring in a host of new applicants, the army was confident that the CMTC program was headed in a direction of rapid expansion. But while there was enthusiastic discussion in the General Staff of expanding the program participation to 50,000 campers in 1922 and up to 100,000 in 1924, this was dampened by a realization that Congress would not appropriate the necessary funds. As a result, the army finally requested appropriations for only 30,000 campers in 1922. The apparent success of the 1921 camps also had other ramifications. It fixed for the next two decades the dominance of the red course as the quintessential feature of the CMTC program. While the white and blue courses debuted in 1922, they received little attention outside of the cavalry and field artillery participants. In the infantry camps white and blue participants were used as NCOs for the red course.

With confidence in the assumed popularity of the CMTC program, the army entered 1922 focused chiefly on the issue of how to carry out the anticipated rapid expansion of the camps that summer. Congress had generously doubled the appropriations for the camps for 1922, but the army hoped to triple enrollments. This led to a search for economies. The most important issue, however, was to ensure the camps’ popularity. Directives from the General Staff emphasized “the necessity for making instruction popular and maintaining enthusiasm in the daily work.” At the same time, the War Department notified congressmen of the
intention to expand enrollment in the camps to 30,000 and reminded them that the popular program had attracted many more applications than that in 1921. This confidence was abruptly shattered in late spring, as recruiting reports began to indicate surprising indifference to the program. By May 1, 1922, with the army halfway through a sixty-day recruiting campaign, only 4,000 boys had applied. A variety of factors contributed to this sudden and totally unexpected decline, but the most important was that the army fell victim to its own oversubscription campaign. Those rejected from the camps in 1921 were quite alienated by that, and few reapplied. Moreover, the high rejection rate that year discouraged others from applying the following year. It also angered and discouraged many of the civic groups and individuals who had worked hard in 1921 to encourage recruits.

This emerging enrollment crisis was seen as an extremely serious matter by the army, stretching well beyond mere embarrassment. The underlying purpose of the CMTC program was to prove that military training would be both popular with young American males as well as beneficial, thereby building public support for the eventual introduction of universal military training. An enrollment failure in the second year would destroy that perception. Understanding the importance of the crisis, Pershing and the General Staff gave it their full attention. All corps-area commanders were called upon to invigorate recruiting and to cooperate with supporting civilian groups. At the same time, President Warren Harding was urged to call on the governors of all the states to aid in the recruiting push. All these efforts, together with a fifteen-day extension of the application period, led to a final enrollment of 28,000 boys, 6,000 of whom failed to show up at the camps.

The army put the best face possible on the results, emphasizing in its reports that the 22,000 boys who actually attended marked a doubling of the program in just one year. But officials were shaken by the experience. This failure, together with the far more important reduction in the size of the officer corps ordered by Congress, made the summer of 1922 a real nadir in the army’s experience and in its self-confidence. The sense of despair was heightened by a General Staff study, conducted in the spring of 1922, that concluded that the need to replace the aging world-war veterans with new reservists would require that the camps be expanded immediately to 100,000 participants a year.

The General Staff responded to this by increasing the control of civilian organizations over the camp enterprise. While efforts were made to include a number of such organizations in this effort, reliance was placed chiefly on the MTCA, which was given even greater control over the program, especially in recruiting. Leading members of the MTCA were now to be designated as “War
Department Civilian Aids for Military Training” and given special access to corps-area commanders regarding recruitment.86

The introduction of the white and blue courses in 1922 posed other problems for the program. Since graduates of these courses would hold NCO rates and reserve-officer ranks within their respective branch, the branch organizations had considerable influence in the activities of those camps. They also became increasingly critical of the red course for not offering enough training to allow graduates to enter the white course. One result was that the red course was divided into two separate portions, a thirty-day basic course, which remained focused on the objective of popularizing military training, and a thirty-day advanced course, which aimed at preparing campers for the white course the following year.87 The result of this, and the sharp discouragement over enrollment in 1922, was that the CMTC program slowly began to shift its emphasis a bit from popularizing military training to serving also as a four-year program to produce reserve officers.

Despite the setback in 1922, the army adhered to its goal of reaching a training level of 100,000 in the CMTC camps, as this was now seen as necessary to produce the number of reserve officers needed to support current mobilization plans. At the same time, it stepped up recruiting efforts for the camps. New publicity ideas, including a nationwide contest in which teenage females wrote essays on “Why the young man I know should attend a CMT Camp” and an offer from Babe Ruth to give an autographed baseball to the outstanding boy in each camp, were introduced.88 This new campaign was a smashing success. While the General Staff had planned for 30,000 campers, it stretched funds in every possible way to accommodate the 33,000 who actually attended. Within the staff, hopes for reaching the goal of 100,000 reignited.

Despite this success, however, by 1925, the CMTC program began to feel the pain of the army’s deepening budget crisis. The general depletion of war surpluses that plagued the ROTC also affected the CMTC. Therefore, while the General Staff planned only a modest increase in camp attendance to 35,000 in 1926, it was clear that even this figure could be achieved only with drastic economies. Thus, the initial hopes that the CMTC program would reinvigorate the prewar public enthusiasm for universal military training began to dim rapidly.

The Officers’ Reserve Corps (ORC)

Even before the World War, General Staff officers concerned with formulating a military policy based on a citizen army were aware that this new force would require a reserve officer pool made up of men who had at least a significant
modicum of military training. Therefore, in planning the creation of a military policy after the war, both General March and the General Staff agreed on the need to create a large Officers’ Reserve Corps. The existence of such a corps was already sanctioned in National Defense Act of 1916. Yet the structure and future of any such military force remained disturbingly unclear in the year and a half during which the National Defense Act of 1920 was being developed. Thus, recruiting and organizing an ORC in this period was difficult.

Almost immediately after the war, the army began recruiting officers leaving active service to join the ORC, taking advantage of the demobilization process. By early February 1919, March could report that over 10,000 officers had applied for reserve commissions. On the other hand, the army’s goals for the ORC were even more ambitious. March and the General Staff tentatively decided that the country’s future military policy should be based on raising a citizen army in times of emergency of 2,000,000 men. That would require an ORC of 150,000 officers, half of whom, it was hoped, would be signed up by the end of December. Happily, recruiting reserve officers at this time was not difficult. Many had a positive feeling about their wartime experience and were eager to continue a military connection. Moreover, an officer’s commission still conferred status in many areas of American society. Hence, the recruiting goal of 75,000 reserve officers was met by December 1919, with the expectation that, by the completion of demobilization, 82,000 more would join.

The more difficult problems were associated with organizing the ORC in a period of uncertainty and, more importantly, building a tight institutional bond between it and the Regular Army. Organization problems initially included coping with the paperwork involved with an organization that was attracting four hundred applicants a day at a time with the army itself rapidly diminishing in size. The Personnel Section of the General Staff, which had the responsibility for approving applications, was swamped. But the greatest problem by far was binding the ORC to the Regular Army and to the War Department. Since these were without a military policy, while they might be able to form an ORC, they could give it little in terms of a mission or other ways to provide activities that would establish bonds.

As feared, reserve officers did come to feel abandoned and responded by forming chapters of a Reserve Officer Association (ROA) on a local, then a state, and, finally a nationwide basis. The General Staff was unhappy about this, arguing that “Reserve Officers should feel they are a part of the Regular Army, not a separate and distinct class.” But by then the damage had been done, and the
development of a separate corporate identity among reserve officers would remain a persistent aspect of the character of the ORC for the interwar period.

This period of confusion and perceived neglect came to an end in June 1920 with the passage of National Defense Act. It provided not only a role and mission for the reserve officers but also, in fact, made them the heart of the new military system. While the Regular Army and National Guard were designed, in part, to provide forces to be used in minimal exigencies, the central purpose of the new system, as the act’s authors and supporters tirelessly reiterated, was to provide the structure, planning, and machinery to allow the huge citizen army that fought the Great War to be mobilized again in the future if needed, only more quickly and more effectively. The key to this accelerated mobilization was having the tactical structure of a fully organized army already in place in the form of paper units staffed by reserve officers and a few key enlisted men. The role of these officers in an emergency would be to receive, arm, and train recruits raised by selective service. Therefore, they were no longer thought of as auxiliaries to be called up to fill out the Regular Army as it went off to fight the nation’s wars; instead they were to be the leaders of the citizen army that would fight the wars. As a result, the success of the national defense program created by the act rested, in large part, on the ability of the army to recruit and train a force of reserve officers sufficient to create such a citizen army.

Although the formation of the reserve officer units was critical for the success of this new program, little apparent effort was made in terms of actually organizing such units for over a year. As with the case of the reorganization of the army itself, creating a vast new military organization such as the ORC required a great deal of preliminary planning to be carried out before efforts could begin in creating any actual units. For instance, all major decisions about the size and character of the overall Army of the United States, of which the Organized Reserve would be a part, had to be worked out in advance, as did principles upon which reserve units would be based. Thus, much of fiscal year 1920–21 was consumed with drawing up blueprints for the ORC. While this delay is understandable, it led to further discontent among reserve officers, as recruiting levels fell and several thousand finally resigned.

Even the development of the planning process was difficult. According to the National Defense Act, all plans regarding the formation of the ORC were to be worked out by committees composed of both regular and reserve officers. As a first step in the development of the Organized Reserve, the War Department solicited recommendations from governors of reserve officers in their states who
might be suitable for service on such committees. These panels, once formed, began working in September 1920 to write tentative regulations to govern the foundations of the ORC as well as distribution tables that would list its various branch units and assign them to paper divisions spread throughout the United States. A preliminary draft of Special Regulations 46, dealing with the organization and administration of the Organized Reserve, was completed and distributed for comments on December 1, 1920. Afterward, the final regulations were released on February 16, 1921.

These regulations were designed to allow the Organized Reserve to fulfill both explicit military objectives and implicit political objectives. The military objectives involved the creation of sufficient paper units to create twenty-seven divisions, three in each corps area, as well as cavalry, headquarters, and other organizations. While much of this work was mechanical, the War Department was concerned about reserve units being able to build a sense of unit cohesion and esprit de corps. Therefore, they were given divisional and regimental numbers designating them as units that had actually fought in the war to provide a sense of organizational history. Finally, the implicit political objective of the Organized Reserve was to create a tangible link between Americans and the army by providing local reserve organizations with which the local population could identify and in which they could take pride. Therefore, developers took great care, insofar as possible, to form divisions and especially tactical units within state lines while assigning subordinate units to distinct regions within a state, seeking to establish an organized reserve presence in every part of the country.

The work of assigning units to locations began in April 1921. Corps-area commanders received copies of Special Regulations 46 as well as tables indicating divisions and other units assigned to them. They, in turn, created boards made up of reserve officers for each state in their area to work out the distribution of units within states. These panels also included a regular officer, who came to meetings equipped with a distribution proposal, leaving the boards with the duty of largely approving the plan worked out by regulars in corps-area headquarters. The corps-area plans were then sent in June to the War Department, where they were carefully scrutinized and the necessary modifications worked out with each commander by the end of the month.

With organization plans completed, the War Department was ready in July 1921 to begin the actual organization of the ORC units. While corps-area commanders were responsible for organizing the units in their areas, they were assisted by special teams of regular officers sent in for this purpose. Forty-two such support groups were created, consisting generally of a colonel, three other
field-grade officers, and several sergeants to carry out the clerical work. Despite the care taken in the initial planning, these teams usually found the situation facing them chaotic. With no funds authorized for renting office space, they had difficulty establishing an actual headquarters. Nor was adequate information provided. Most teams were given only a list of names and addresses of reserve officers, often inaccurate, from which to select officers for the reserve units. As a result, personal-qualification files had to be built slowly using questionnaires. Attitude problems hampered all efforts, as it was often difficult to get local reservists to take the idea of creating an Organized Reserve seriously. Correspondence with local reserve officers was answered slowly, if at all. Nevertheless, by December 1921, the initial organization of all twenty-seven infantry divisions had been completed, and recruiting programs were underway in most areas.

The organization of units also demonstrated quickly that the military and political objectives of the Organized Reserve program were, to some extent, at odds with each other. As state and local boards continued to create subordinate tactical units throughout the summer and early fall of 1921, the War Department discovered that corps-area commanders and state boards were concentrating units in and around large urban centers for efficiency in terms of administration and training. As a result, many rural areas were left with no Organized Reserve representation at all. While the War Department had sympathy with the considerations that led to such concentration, officials felt that the “opportunities for the creation of and development of local community interest” took precedent, and they called upon corps-area commanders to give the “maximum distribution of subordinate units” high priority. To reinforce this call, the War Department sent back those organization plans that called for such concentration of units.

By the beginning of 1922, the initial development of the ORC had proceeded to a point that most of the major problems had been overcome. The General Staff felt it could now turn its attention to recruitment and to addressing new issues within the reserve component as they emerged. Recruiting for the ORC had slowed precipitously at the beginning of 1921 as demobilization came to an end and persistent inactivity within the component reduced morale. By February 1921, the ORC had a reported strength of only 70,000 officers. While the War Department reduced its initial recruiting goal to 100,000, there was growing concern as to whether even that goal would be reached and, even if achieved, maintained. The recruiting effort during demobilization had already brought into service the most willing officers, those who had highly positive feelings about their service in the war and were eager to continue that service in some way. The army now had to approach those veteran officers who, for one reason
or another, had not chosen to join when demobilized. This phase was slow in results. At the same time, the army reductions that began in 1921 reduced the number of officers available for recruiting duty.

Toward the end of 1922, another major problem began to emerge, as units requested funding for headquarters and for supplies such as rifles, uniforms, and other equipment. As far as the War Department was concerned, the ORC was a purely paper organization. A local company might consist of a handful of officers with headquarters in the living room of the company commander, who would likely maintain files in his personal desk or file drawers. Their duties were to train personally for responsibility during mobilization and to lead units afterward. The bulk of this training would be carried out through correspondence courses. As such, units were not expected to have much need for proper headquarters space, let alone weapons and uniforms. Initial requests, therefore, were viewed skeptically by the General Staff. But officers in the Operations and Training Division defended the requests, arguing that office space and equipment were vital to helping tiny independent units overcome a sense of isolation and to give them a feeling that the ORC really existed, that they were a real unit in a real organization. In short, a headquarters with racks of rifles and flags would provide the morale and sense of esprit necessary for widely dispersed, largely paper organizational units to survive and maintain individual training. As a result of this argument, weapons were allocated and funds found for renting space for headquarters.

The most important single problem in the reserves, however, was the issue of summer training. From the beginning, the heart of the reserve program was to be a fifteen-day summer training camp. The ostensible purpose of this training was to keep officers current on new weapons and doctrinal developments as well as to give them instruction and experience in the mobilization and training duties they would face in an emergency and in the combat leadership they would face afterward. Summer training sessions were organized to do this. Early camps included terrain exercises, focusing on problems in minor tactics, along with drills and demonstrations of new weapons. Later, as training became more sophisticated, three types of camps emerged for reserve officers. These were branch training camps for instruction in combat leadership; unit camps, in which an entire unit would train for the mobilization duties for which it was responsible; and reserve leadership camps to train reservists for wartime duties as regular officers. Theoretically, by attending each of these camps, a reserve officer could have significant training and experience in the three major dimensions of his assignment.
But training was only part of the reason for camps. In some respects, the main purpose was to boost the morale of reserve officers by letting them put on a uniform and be officers in the field for two weeks, demonstrating that the ORC really existed and that their volunteer service in the reserves was appreciated and mattered. Hence, those who ran the camps understood that it was more important that the reserve officers enjoy their experience than that they gain the maximum training possible.\textsuperscript{117} Thus, while authenticity was achieved by the lure of tent encampments, the routine was not demanding, especially physically, with emphasis placed on the social side.\textsuperscript{118} Major General John L. Hines, while he was commanding general of the Eighth Corps Area, understood this when he wrote to Chief of Staff Pershing informally about the reserve officers camps in his area in 1922: “We made them comfortable and had a very good mess for them. We gave them a reception and dance, and I believe the schedule of instruction was very good considering that it was the first one and, therefore, perfection could not be expected. . . . I made it plain to all officers engaged in the work that I thought it absolutely essential that these officers go home feeling that they have been treated with every consideration.”\textsuperscript{119}

Given the personal value of the summer camps both in terms of training and morale, the War Department considered it essential that each reserve officer be able to get to them at least once every three years. Yet Congress never allocated anywhere near enough money to allow a third of the ORC to go to camp during a summer. In 1922, the first year for the camps, the House of Representatives struck their appropriations out of the budget entirely, and the Senate could restore only enough to allow 4,500 reserve officers to go for summer training.\textsuperscript{120} While Congress was more generous in later years, the goal of reservists attending a camp once every three years never came close to realization.

The General Staff was aware of the danger that, without sufficient experience of serving with the Regular Army to create bonds of affinity, reserve officers would fail to identify as part of the single Army of the United States and would, instead, develop a separate corporate identity similar to that of the National Guard. Since Congress did not provide even a minimum opportunity for camp attendance, the army tried other approaches. When possible, representatives of the General Staff would meet with reserve officers in an area for one- or two-day conferences whose subliminal theme was the necessity for those in the ORC to identify with the army as a whole.\textsuperscript{121} On a more symbolic level, the staff amended uniform regulations so as to remove the “R” from the “U.S.R.” that the reserve officers had worn on the collars of their uniforms, thereby making the reserve
uniform insignia indistinguishable from that of the regular officers. Finally, the Army Association of the United States and Reserve Arms was formed, which, it was hoped, would provide a means to include guard and reserve officers with regular officers in a single professional organization.

None of these efforts, however, proved sufficient to stem the development of a sense of individual corporate identity within the ORC. During 1921, chapters of the ROA sprang up at local and state levels. The following year, the state ROA of Nebraska called for the formation of a national organization. Despite its misgivings, the War Department did not attempt to stand in the way. The founding congress of the national ROA was held in Washington on October 2-4, 1922. Once formed, it began calling for the creation of special federal office for reserve affairs, a step opposed by the General Staff as leading to the further development of a separate corporate identity within the ORC.

Starting in 1923, the General Staff began to shift its attention from recruiting and organizing units towards individual officer training and giving the ORC a more professional tone. The central focus of this effort was to encourage voluntary training largely through correspondence courses, expecting that those with the interest and ability to carry out such self-training would emerge as the leadership of the Organized Reserve. In addition, it was felt that the Organized Reserve would never be accepted by regular officers unless reserve officers achieved a respectable level of professional development. Finally, while the ORC at that time consisted almost entirely of veteran officers from the war, the General Staff always saw this as a temporary situation that would come to an end as the veterans aged out. To function as an ongoing citizen army, the ORC had to create a leadership structure out of ROTC and CMTC graduates who could not draw on previous wartime experience but had to rely entirely on the voluntary training program. The first step to produce this new emphasis on professionalism was a revision of the regulations for the ORC. The principal focus was to create a more specific and stricter set of qualifications needed for promotion. Overall, the two basic qualifications required were completion of the requisite correspondence courses and, especially, “demonstrated ability to command.” The latter quality, of course, could basically be manifested only in summer training camps.

Along the same line, there was growing concern in the General Staff that ORC units not become top heavy in rank. In fact, staff officers hoped that, in the event of an emergency expansion, there would be enough positions open in the upper levels of Organized Reserve units to allow for the insertion of a few regulars and the rapid promotion of proven junior officers. This attitude grew stronger as the first mobilization plans began to reach final shape in late 1923 and early 1924. This new emphasis on maintaining room for expansion in the upper
ranks was soon felt within ORC units. In 1921 and 1922, when emphasis had been on recruiting officers for the reserves and creating actual Organized Reserve units, the War Department was somewhat liberal on questions of assignment of officers. The policy then was, if a unit had a vacant position in which an authorized table of organization called for an officer of a certain grade with certain qualifications and it could find no officer of that grade with those qualifications in its area, then it could assign an officer of a different grade with nearly those qualifications. In short, colonels could fill positions reserved for captains. Late in 1923, the General Staff reversed itself and began to follow a new policy whereby the only officers who could be assigned to a position in a unit were those holding both the requisite qualifications and the requisite grade. Others might be allowed to fill vacant positions for which they were otherwise disqualified on the basis of grade, but they would be listed only as being “attached” to the unit, not “assigned” to it. Furthermore, each unit was to be allowed a distinct quota of officers in each grade, and any unassigned officers in excess of that quota were to be listed as “surplus.” To give emphasis to the distinction between “assigned,” “attached,” and “surplus” officers, unit commanders were required to submit reports listing those in their units in each category.

This policy change, which was seen as forcing older and more senior officers out of the reserves, produced enormous anger in the units. “Attached” status was seen as derogatory, and many senior officers who had played major roles in their units now either lost interest or displayed their anger openly. By the fall of 1924, the growth of discontent and demoralization was seen as significant enough that the General Staff began to reconsider its policy but found they it difficult to discover a formula that would satisfy the reserve officers while keeping unit organization within the dictates of the mobilization plans.

As with the other components of the army, 1925 was a year of crisis for the Organized Reserve. In this case, however, budget issues were less important. While fiscal constraints further reduced the number of reservists who could participate in summer training, the emerging crisis was growing doubt as to the viability of the entire Organized Reserve program. This was created by two major issues. The first was growing tension developed between the reservists and the General Staff regarding the demand for specific reserve officer representation in the War Department. The second was increasing evidence that reserve officers were not undertaking the self-training needed to perform their roles in the event of an emergency. By 1925, these had ripened to the point that many in the army saw in the reserve project yet another reason for doubting the validity of the entire citizen-soldier concept upon which the military policy of the National Defense Act was based.
The movement among reserve officers for specific representation in the War Department or on the General Staff had two principal aspects. One was the growing consciousness among reservists that they formed part of a specific component in the Army of the United States with a specific mission that was distinct from that of the Regular Army. Second, this sense of corporate identity was strong enough to cut across branch lines to the degree that most reserve officers thought of themselves as “reservists” far more than as “infantry” or “cavalry.” Hence, they wanted matters related to their training and administration to be handled by officers specifically devoted to the reserves rather than by branch chiefs.

After 1922 this movement began to build momentum. In 1923 the national ROA, acting chiefly as a political lobby for reserve officers, still focused its efforts on getting Congress to authorize more money for summer camps. But by 1924, it renewed the call heard two years earlier for a distinct representation of the Organized Reserve in the War Department on a similar basis as the National Guard. But now the organization specified that it wanted the creation of a new post in the General Staff, the assistant chief of staff for reserve officers, to be headed by a general from the Organized Reserve. By March 1925, the ROA submitted a formal request to the secretary of war for the creation of a specific bureau for the reserves, similar to the Militia Bureau, that would give the Organized Reserve its own distinct national leadership.

While leaders in the General Staff were somewhat aware of the pressure building within the Organized Reserve for a more autonomous existence, they were still surprised and shaken by this demand. From their point of view, this struck at the heart of the military policy established by the National Defense Act. The defense act provided for a single Army of the United States made up of several components, in which the mission and role of the Regular Army was to provide the professional guidance in training and development of all components. The task of the General Staff was to deal with the concerns of all components, not just those of the regulars. It was this conception of the staff that had prompted such bitter opposition among regular officers in the War Department to putting a National Guard officer at the head of the Militia Bureau, which they looked at generally with some hostility. The purpose of the bureau, from the point of view of the regular officers, was to provide professional guidance to the development of the National Guard as a component of a single U.S. Army, not to serve as the political representative of a military organization in competition with other components. Regular officers now saw in the demand to create a reserve bureau a similar threat to give the General Staff an increasingly political character while limiting its ability to guide and control the development of the Organized
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Reserve. Were such developments to continue, the whole idea of the Army of the United States as a cooperative union of three components could be threatened, as each would then be driven into a competitive stance in relation to the other two. And in such a contest, the Regular Army would be not only the smallest component but also the only one without outside political leverage. All these considerations led Brigadier General Hugh A. Drum, then the assistant chief of staff for operations and training to conclude somberly, “while considerable experience has been had with the Reserve project, positive conclusions as to its future development cannot be made at the present time.”

Drum sought a solution for the problem that would still reflect what he and other officers in the General Staff saw as the “one army” spirit of the policy upon which they felt the National Defense Act was based while also satisfying the growing demand within the ROA for some form of visible corporate representation. The key to his plan lay in the few National Guard and Reserve Officers already assigned to the General Staff in compliance with the defense act. In the past, no policy had been developed for the use of such officers on the staff so that, while occasionally called together for consultation on reserve matters, particularly in drawing up regulations, they were otherwise merely assigned to work as needed. Drum suggested that these officers instead be assigned primarily to duties clearly associated with the Organized Reserve in a way to give them greater visibility. This, he hoped, would satisfy the demand for representation while demonstrating the idea that the General Staff was made up of and represented the Army of the United States as a whole.

Drum’s idea did not win immediate acceptance in the General Staff, where most officers doubted that merely giving the reserve contingent greater visibility in roles directly related to their component would satisfy the dissidence reflected in the ROA. The reservists actually on the staff also felt it was inadequate, so the issue lay unresolved throughout the summer of 1925. But by September, the staff had come to support Drum’s plan, with the additional provision that the War Department would seek appropriations to increase the number of reserve officers on the staff, some of whom would be sent to the offices of branch chiefs so that, over time, they would develop greater branch identity as a counter to their corporate identity with the reserves. While this solution seemed to put the issue to rest at least temporarily, it contributed to a further erosion of confidence among regular officers on the General Staff regarding the viability of the Organized Reserve project.

The issue of reserve officer training also seemed to come to a head in 1925 and significantly furthered that erosion, carrying it well beyond the ranks of
the General Staff. At issue was not so much the training that took place at summer camps as the inactive training regarding the correspondence courses reserve officers were expected to carry as the heart of their professional development. The staff, working together with army schools, had created an elaborate system of correspondence courses and sub-courses to allow for this self-paced and self-directed professional development. The courses were geared to allow any officer willing to devote about two hours a week to their study to complete the educational work needed for promotion by the time it was due.139

By 1925, this issue of inactive duty training was becoming critical. For one thing, it was understood that in the next decade, the character of the Organized Reserve would undergo a major change as the World War veterans gradually retired, to be replaced by graduates of ROTC and CMTC who lacked wartime experience. Hence, with the rise of a new generation of reservists who could no longer rely on such experience, a successful inactive-duty training program was vital if the reserve program were to produce officers with even a minimal competency to lead a citizen army in war. Yet it was becoming clear by 1925 that the correspondence-course system was not working. As early as 1923, the commanders of summer training camps complained that many reserve officers who attended were unready for training since they had not completed relevant courses.140 By 1924, Drum was directing commanders of corps areas to put special emphasis on inactive training of reserve officers.141 By the fall of 1925, concern about the low level of participation in the correspondence courses had extended well into the army itself. In its September issue, Infantry Journal, which almost always avoided printing anything critical of any army component, published a scathing critique of the entire reserve program, pointing to the fact that only 12 percent of reserve officers were even enrolled in correspondence courses, with only 6 percent finishing them.142 At the same time, Pershing, in a gentler tone, reiterated that the Organized Reserve was “something more than a social organization, something more than an organization in which a man can occasionally wear his uniform. It is an organization that demands an interest, that demands study.”143

While Drum and others sought ways to improve reserve officers’ participation in the correspondence courses and to reduce their sense of isolation, confidence in the Organized Reserve reached a low by the end of 1925. In an otherwise positive address to the ROA at its annual convention in October 1925, Major General Hines, having succeeded Pershing as chief of staff, admitted to being discouraged by the overall progress of the reserve project.144 Moreover, by the end of the year, it was becoming increasingly clear that the allocation of Organized Reserve
units developed in 1921 under the principle of localization was unrealistic for carrying out an actual mobilization based on a draft of available manpower. While it was likely that a major reallocation of units could solve the problem, this would involve shifting some units from one state to another, a process that would considerably disrupt the development of Organized Reserve. While the problem was not insurmountable, it was still just one more indication that the program and the citizen-soldier concept on which it was based seemed to be at an apparent crisis point at the end of 1925.

The Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC)

Of all the civilian-component training activities undertaken by the army in the period between 1920 and 1925, none was as popular or seemingly as successful as the Reserve Officer Training Corps. There were several reasons for this. Officers could readily see that the viability of a military policy based on a skeletonized reserve force would depend on securing a large, well-trained ORC. Moreover, the students in the ROTC program would train within branches, so that a branch identity and bonding would develop in ways that it did not form within the other civilian components. Finally, the program was popular with the administrations of many universities and colleges. Administrators were both eager to have it on their campuses and highly supportive of it. Thus, for regular officers, the experience of developing the ROTC program provided far greater satisfaction and was far closer to what was expected from the National Defense Act than the experience with the other civilian components.

The tradition from which the ROTC sprang, that of the self-trained volunteer officer who served in emergencies, was far older in America than the more visible tradition of the professionally trained regular officer. And while regular officers in the nineteenth century began being trained at West Point, some citizens interested in leading volunteer military units began to look for their military training from colleges with established military credentials and cultures such as Norwich College, Virginia Military Institute, and The Citadel. By 1862, the first year of the Civil War had demonstrated the value of these college-trained volunteer officers so that Senator Justin Morrill included a requirement for military training in his bill establishing the land-grant colleges.

The impetus for major change in this form of amateur military training in colleges in the early twentieth century came from two sources. One was the educational institutions themselves, many of which were seeking to rationalize and modernize their curricula and wanted to give more coherence and purpose to
the mandated elements of military instruction. The second was the army’s rising interest in establishing a reserve system based on federally trained volunteers. Articles in military journals concerning reserves up to 1907, however, were limited to the issue of expanding the army for the purpose of fitting out expeditions. But after a brief war scare in 1908, authors began viewing the reserve problem from the perspective of meeting a national emergency arising from an invasion by a major power. As a result, the estimates of the size of the reserve force needed began to expand rapidly. Many of these assumed that reserve officers would be drawn from the graduates of land-grant and other colleges offering federally sponsored military-training programs.

Early in 1915, as the War College Division of the General Staff was formulating its plans for a national military policy, it turned its attention to the military-training programs in the land-grant schools. By midsummer, it had worked out a fundamental scheme based on centralizing control of all military education at civilian institutions into a program to be called the Reserve Officer Training Corps. By November, its plans were sufficiently clarified and detailed that the staff could draft a bill to establish the ROTC. This legislation was then included in the final military-policy bill passed as the National Defense Act of 1916. By March 1917, the enthusiastic reception of the program by colleges and universities led the adjutant general to suggest that its expansion be halted until September, since the number of schools that had accepted the program already would place considerable strains on available manpower. But before this issue could be discussed, the United States was at war.

The world war severely disorganized the nascent ROTC program but did not end it. In June 1917, Secretary of War Baker rejected a suggestion that students enrolled in ROTC be given draft deferments until their officer training was completed. By early 1918, however, it was becoming clear that, along with a system of controlled and rationalized industrial mobilization, the nation needed a system of rationalizing personnel mobilization that would assure a steady supply of officers for the anticipated campaign of 1919 while ensuring that the draft would not prove economically devastating to the nation’s colleges.

Out of this concern was born the Student Army Training Corps (SATC). The plan was to allow students in colleges or special technical-training programs to enlist in the army and receive significant drill and training but to remain in school until their education was complete. Chief of Staff March agreed to the idea in late April 1918 and created the Committee on Education and Special Training (COEST) to draw up plans. By September, four hundred of the just under six hundred colleges in the nation had accepted SATC units. The
program, however, lasted only six weeks. On November 12, Baker ordered it discontinued, and students enrolled under it returned to civilian life.

With the end of the war and the SATC program, the War Department rapidly bent its efforts toward reestablishing ROTC, and within ten months the program was again fully functioning. Attention then shifted from the problem of reestablishment to problems of administration. During this ten-month period the most visible characteristic of the reestablishment effort was the vigorous leadership of COEST and, especially of Frank Morrow, its chairman. Morrow sought to take advantage of what was seen as a momentary window of opportunity created by specific postwar conditions to create a program that would be far more expansive than that provided for in the National Defense Act of 1916. The result was that ROTC was reborn in an environment of great enthusiasm that favored its successful reestablishment despite the incubus of growing popular indifference to all things military. At the same time, the enthusiasm generated by its rapid expansion precluded any significant reconsideration of the program and its initial inconsistencies. Consequently, problems that were just barely visible in the program’s brief life in 1916–17 returned in more magnified proportions in the 1920s as funding diminished.

As the war came to an end, schools that had participated in the SATC program saw the value of ROTC, especially in terms of financial support of students, and expressed the hope that the program would be continued.151 War surplus equipment and uniforms meant that the resources for a rapid expansion in 1919 were at hand. Morrow, therefore, felt that, with energetic action, an expanded and popular ROTC program could be established in the nation as a fait accompli before Congress even began a consideration of military policy. He easily sold his idea to both the General Staff and to Baker, who authorized the program’s reestablishment in November 1919.152

Morrow’s plans for a rapid and massive reestablishment of ROTC were extremely successful. By the end of December 1919, all colleges that had had units in the prewar period had applied for the reestablishment of those units, while applications were also received for the establishment of nearly two hundred new units.153 One of the major reasons for this rapid expansion, as Michael Neiberg points out, was the popularity of the program with college and university presidents who saw it as providing much needed discipline, patriotism, and moral guidance for the students involved.154

By this time, however, there was growing opposition within the General Staff to Morrow’s policy of rapid expansion of the ROTC. Some questioned the wisdom of creating units when there was no assurance that Congress would provide
the means to support them. Concerned officers appealed to the chief of staff to halt the expansion until the War Department had a better sense of the future military policy of the country. This appeal was successful, and Morrow’s expansion project was slowed considerably. With this, it was clear that COEST’s days were numbered, and it was disbanded at the end of August 1920. Nevertheless, before COEST disappeared it had expanded ROTC into a program with over 50,000 students enrolled and within easy reach of Morrow’s goal of 100,000 participants. By the beginning of the fall semester, the program had been adopted in 191 colleges and 128 secondary schools, with applications pending for 151 more units. ROTC had also conducted its first summer camp. While all this put a strain on the army in terms of finding officers to support these units, it gave the program a flourishing start when such a popular success was vital to the army. At the same time, this activity left the structure of ROTC unexamined and the army with a program for producing reserve officers that was unnecessarily cumbersome and expensive.

By September 1920, ROTC seemed to be well established, involving at least enough students that initial enrollment goals were met. It also followed the lines provided for in the 1916 National Defense Act. There were two levels of the program, a junior version for high schools and a senior version for colleges and universities. The main, though unspoken, objective of the junior program was to serve as another opening wedge for universal military training. At each institution at the senior level, there were two sequential courses. The first was the basic course, a two-year mandatory program for all male students. Its objectives were to prepare them for the subsequent advanced course and to popularize military training and the army. The second was the advanced course, which was open to selected volunteers from the basic course and, upon completion, led to a commission as a reserve officer.

With ROTC established, attention was turned to the immediate, numerous, and varied problems associated with the initial organization of such an enterprise. The next three years of the program revolved chiefly around the efforts to resolve those issues as they appeared. As a result, ROTC in this period seemed to be dominated by troubles. As one observer wrote in the fall of 1920, “The outstanding feature of the R.O.T.C. situation is that its problems are far from settled.” In perspective, these difficulties, while numerous, were basically of a minor and transient nature that ought to have been expected in the initiation of so vast and novel an enterprise. Indeed, given the fact that, by the fall of 1920, ROTC involved well over 100,000 students in over 300 institutions nationwide, and that it offered the officers of the army their first cooperative venture with
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civilian institutions and vice versa, it is surprising that the problems were so few and, with several exceptions, so minor in character. The most significant fact related to ROTC in this period was that, despite its initial hasty and possibly overextended origin and subsequent growing pains, it continued to thrive during years of federal budgetary retrenchment.

The problems in the program at this time were generally experienced at two levels. The first was with the individual college or university, regarding difficulties related to organizing the program and integrating it into the academic, social, and cultural life of the institution. The second was at the national level, where the problems centered on the management of the entire program and integrating it into the other programs and priorities of the War Department. Of the two, the issues at the lower level were easier and more transient, although it is likely that they did not appear to be so to the harried and frustrated professors of military science and training (PMS&T) who faced them constantly. On the campuses the problems generally fell into two categories. One included those associated with maintaining the program itself, which initially involved matters of supply, the maintenance of uniforms and equipment, and personnel matters. The other included the greater problems associated with creating a new educational program and integrating it into those already established at the institutions in a way that was acceptable to both sides.

In regard to program maintenance and personnel, the most significant issue by far was uniforms. Cadets were expected to wear them to class and drill, which often meant that they were worn two or three days a week. Hence, the individual units, the host institutions, and the cadets all wanted uniforms that were impressive in appearance and fit well. These, of course, were expensive. In planning for the rapid expansion of the ROTC, Morrow and others counted on being able to use existing stocks of war surplus uniforms. Yet this assumption was ill-founded. Wartime uniforms were cut to fit a male population between twenty-one and twenty-five years old. But including the junior units in the high schools, the ROTC population ranged in age from thirteen to twenty-one, and many of the uniforms were just too large to be used and few were suitable for younger cadets. Moreover, wartime uniforms were meant for field service and made cheaply, often fitting poorly and seldom making the impressive public appearance sought by the units and the cadets. Finally, many military schools had their own distinct uniforms and did not want to switch to the use of army surplus regardless of quality.

The army initially responded in 1919 by allowing institutions that so desired to purchase tailored uniforms for ROTC cadets on campus, with the provision
that they would be reimbursed by the government for all or part of the cost. But by 1922, repeated budget cuts made these commutations a luxury so that further extensions of the provision were made very sparingly. At the same time, the War Department slowly shifted to issuing new uniforms of its own order rather than using war surplus, which overcame some, though not all, of the difficulties, though requests for commutations continued to be received well into 1924.

Along with the problem of uniforms, there were other initial supply troubles. These were caused by a variety of factors, including the shift in the responsibility for supplying ROTC from COEST to the Adjutant General’s Office, the declining availability of clerical staff due to rapid demobilization, and confusion in the use of the nation’s railroad system as it was returned from temporary public administration back to private operations. This produced repeated frustrations that were compounded by other changes in administrative responsibility. All of these problems left institutions confused as to whom to contact regarding repeated and lengthy delays in getting equipment.

The most difficult of the supply related issues, however, was the matter of accountability for equipment. Taking the view that ROTC was essentially a college program that the army supported, the War Department required that a school official sign for and accept responsibility for all equipment used in training and be bonded against loss and breakage. School officials, however, tended to see ROTC as a War Department enterprise that was merely hosted by educational institutions. They resented the requirement that they take responsibility for army equipment. The issue provoked continued interchange between the institutions and military officials. Given the basis for the requirement in existing legislation, however, neither side was able to do much about it, leaving it as a source of lingering irritation.

On the academic side, a number of problem areas emerged in this period. One was the overall relations between the War Department and the colleges and universities, especially during a time of great flux for the army. College leaders expected to be personally consulted on matters related to government programs on their campuses. The army tried to meet these expectations as well as it could, at least at the national level, introducing no major legislation and initiating no major policy changes without at least consulting representative groups, such as the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities. At lower levels, however, officers were often more abrupt and peremptory in their dealings with institutions. Moreover, the period 1920–22 saw rapid changes in policies in the army, with officers frequently shifting from one position to another, and a permeating
sense of demoralization resulting from the demotions and reductions in officer strength mandated by Congress. All this led to problems of confidence, as academic officials began to wonder if the army could be trusted to keep its promises. Again, these problems tended to work themselves out over time, especially after 1922, as the army’s situation became more stable.

The ROTC curriculum also provided opportunities for collisions between host institutions and the army. Desiring that ROTC education be standardized as much as possible, the War Department had highly specific and detailed ideas regarding the curriculum of military-science programs. As a result, this curriculum at any given institution was developed through negotiations between the army’s professors of military science and tactics and school faculty members in an effort to revise existing courses in a manner that would fit army specifications, with the promise that they would then be included in the ROTC curriculum.

Another major area of academic difficulty was instruction. Although the officers assigned to duties as professors and their associates rarely had either advanced degrees or any experience with college teaching, they had to teach in situations where they would be compared to academic professionals. Indeed, much of the issue of course credits revolved around the question of the quality of the instruction given in military-science classes. This problem was aggravated in the early years by the frequent transfer of officers. In addition, much of ROTC was structured to be self-taught. Military drill, for instance, was largely conducted by the cadets themselves, with upperclassmen in the advanced course conducting the drilling of lowerclassmen in the basic course. This practice became the source of considerable criticism regarding the level of professionalism in the instruction of military-science students.

Despite all these problems, many on the campuses recognized almost immediately that ROTC was making positive contributions to college life. Students in the advanced course received financial assistance in terms of commuted rations. The physical condition of these students improved, a matter of great concern to educators at that time. Finally, ROTC added new features to the social and recreational life on campuses by sponsoring dances, especially an annual military ball, and athletic teams. As a result, while the harried military professors may have seen the program in terms of a continuous diet of problems and troubles, on the whole, their efforts led to widespread acceptance of ROTC as a permanent and positive part of the educational program on collegiate campuses as well as a further development of that program elsewhere.

On the national level, the main ROTC challenge for the General Staff was creating an administrative structure that would allow centralized control of
the program so it could be directed toward agreed-upon goals. Structurally, the ROTC program was organized around three levels of control. At the top, direction and guidance came from the General Staff, in particular from the ROTC Branch of the Operations and Training Division. At the next level, supervision, support, and oversight of individual units was in the hands of the corps-area commanders, all of whom had staff officers responsible for ROTC. At the bottom were the professors of military science and tactics at individual institutions, who were responsible for the direction and administration of their campus units.

While this structure seemed simple in the abstract, making it work in practice was harder. At the top, branch chiefs also wanted some control over the units in their bailiwicks. In addition, the adjutant general and the assistant chiefs of staff for supplies also had some jurisdiction over ROTC. All of this led to some initial confusion as to who reported what to whom and to an increased tendency for those at the top and bottom of the structure to ignore normal army lines of communication and to correspond with each other directly. This problem was finally ended by 1922, as the linkages in the system were finally worked out and clarified. As for guiding the actions of individual units, the General Staff relied on the traditional means of official regulations and inspectors.

While the ostensible purpose of the inspection system was to ensure that the operations of individual units were in conformity with the applicable regulations, the system soon took on a life of its own in terms of directing ROTC activities. The idea of controlling ROTC units principally by means of periodic inspections arose in COEST, with its division of the country into twelve ROTC inspection districts, each headed by a district inspector who reported directly to Morrow. Initially, the purpose of inspections remained largely organizational and intended to be supportive in character. Inspectors were, therefore, charged to be constructive in their approach, acting more as advisors than critics. Later, however, inspections became increasingly oriented around competition between units to be recognized as either a “Distinguished College” among senior units or as an “Honor School” among junior units.

Along with giving programs direction and control, the General Staff also administered summer camps. The army tended to see the summer-camp experience as the keystone of the ROTC program, providing cadets with both practical training and an adventurous experience that would bind them more closely to the army. As a result, the General Staff was eager to offer this to as many ROTC students of both its junior and senior levels as possible, making it mandatory for those in the advanced course. The first camps were held in the summer of 1918;
even amid a war, the army made sure to find the time and resources to conduct camps for nearly 7,000 ROTC cadets. The camps were then held in 1919 and 1920.

The army's experience with ROTC camps in the early 1920s followed the lines of its experience in other ROTC-related areas. Yet the fact that, by 1919, the army already had considerable experience with summer officer-training camps meant that, by 1920, it had already developed a good sense of what these should be like. Hence, there were far fewer problems with the camps than with other areas of ROTC, and those that existed were minor and specific.

The most significant ongoing issue was the division of control and responsibility for the camps. Direct responsibility for developing and administering the programs for each one fell on the commanding officer of the camp and on the corps-area commander. They were guided and supported in this by the Operations and Training Division of the General Staff, which was responsible for policies regarding the conduct of the camps, for distributing funding to support their activities, and for setting general guidelines for the training offered there. At the same time, the camps themselves were organized by the branches, which meant that there were distinct infantry camps, cavalry camps, and so forth. Branch chiefs took responsibility for developing the specific training programs for each. Despite the army's commitment to decentralization, guidance from above in terms of both policies and programs of instruction was often quite detailed and rigid. Otherwise, this division of responsibilities produced remarkably little friction. The only significant ongoing conflict was between the tendency of the branches to make the experience at their camps unique and the desire of the General Staff to standardize them.

By 1922, the camps were governed by a well-developed administrative rhythm. In December, the General Staff would submit an overall summer training plan to all of the components, including ROTC, that outlined general goals and allocated funds. Chiefs of branches would use this to develop specific programs for the ROTC camps under their jurisdiction. All of this would then be sent to corps-area commanders and, through them, to the commanding officers of the camps. At the end of his camp, the commanding officer reported on the experiences and made recommendations for changes. This information made its way back to the General Staff and was fed into the development of the plan for the subsequent year. By the end of 1922, the training-camp program was basically set and had largely become a matter of routine. This pattern was upset only by the intrusion of outside issues, most of which originated with efforts to economize induced by budget restrictions. Otherwise, the camps worked smoothly.
and successfully. Enrollments grew, as did student satisfaction, so that even in this early period the camps were already a source of pride for the army.\textsuperscript{185}

The most significant outside issue affecting ROTC was the budget. As the army was hit with demands for economy, ROTC funding was reduced from $4,000,000 for 1920 to $2,900,000 for 1922. Finally, in early planning for the program, it was assumed that much of the materiel supplies would come at no cost from war surplus. But it was soon discovered that these could not be used as much as expected. So, by the spring of 1921, the General Staff faced the possibility of a shortfall in the 1922 budget for ROTC by as much as $700,000.\textsuperscript{186} Although it took a number of measures to reduce the shortfall, the army still had to institute a variety of economies in the program. The major victim of these was the junior ROTC level. Its financial support diminished to the point that the program was soon limited to units in private military academies.\textsuperscript{187} With this change, the old prewar idea of using federally sponsored military training in the high schools to popularize universal military training died, a victim not only of the drive for economy but also of the increasing antimilitary climate in society in the 1920s.

But while the three-year period between 1920 and 1922 was filled with problems and challenges for the ROTC program, it was, overall, a period of growth and success. The program, both at the national and unit level, acquired its basic form and largely worked out the problems of jurisdiction and administration. It was popular and grew rapidly. Units were gradually accepted as integral parts of their host academic institutions. Thus, while 1922 was calamitous for the army in many other ways, it could still look to the ROTC program as a success.

Moreover, the next two years were seen as happier and more stable time than the earlier period. Articles in professional journals concerned themselves less with problems and more with celebrating achievements or with describing ROTC as if the institution and its activities had become permanent fixtures. Enrollments in the program continued to grow at better than 10 percent annually; the rate of growth in the number of advanced-course students was even greater. Other statistics, such as camp attendance and number of graduates commissioned into the Organized Reserve, grew as well, though more slowly.\textsuperscript{188} Problems continued to exist, and indeed, some significant issues of a more permanent nature began to appear. Yet this did not seem to cloud the happier overall perception that the difficulties that had plagued ROTC in its early postwar years were now coming to an end, that the program had been stabilized, and that it was entering an era of constructive growth.

Problems, of course, continued to exist but were diminishing. On campuses, the major single remaining problem for units was uniforms. The General Staff
agreed that measures of economy required that ROTC continue to rely on war surplus uniforms until the supply was exhausted in 1925 or 1926. And although there was a brief flurry of interest in developing a distinct ROTC uniform, the costs were considered too high, the use of regular stock uniforms continued.\textsuperscript{189} On the other hand, the old question of accountability for equipment was resolved at the end of 1923, when the responsibility was transferred from the institutions to the military professor.\textsuperscript{190} ROTC instructors had been frustrated by the fact that no textbooks had yet been published to cover the courses they taught. By the end of 1924, however, this problem was partially resolved by reorganizing ROTC courses around existing training regulations.\textsuperscript{191} At the same time, temporary regulations for the program were revised and issued as AR 145-20, indicating that ROTC was now governed by normal army regulations.\textsuperscript{192}

By 1924, two more-ominous and long-term problems began to appear, threatening the vision that the program was, or could continue to be, successful. One was whether ROTC could produce the number of reserve officers called for by the mobilization plans linked to the National Defense Act. As such, the problem had two dimensions: first, whether the total number of reserve officers provided annually would be sufficient to maintain the Organized Reserve at an adequate level, and, second, whether the balance of reserve officers among the branches would be adequate for existing war plans. The Six Army Plan required enough officers in the Organized Reserve to provide for twenty-seven divisions upon mobilization as well as enough to help the Regular Army and National Guard provide their assigned divisions. Original planning presumed that the maintenance of such a manpower pool would require commissioning 10,000 new reserve officers annually, with the bulk coming from ROTC and a far smaller number coming from CMTC. By 1923, this estimate was reduced to 7,000 annually, with 80 percent coming from ROTC. Even though the program’s enrollments were rising at an encouraging rate, it was clear that, with the limited number of regular officers available for support duty, this expansion would soon reach a virtual limit that would still be far short of the capacity needed to produce the 7,000 reserve officers annually.\textsuperscript{193} The second issue was that the production of reserve officers in certain branches, particularly field artillery, was well below the numbers needed to maintain the balance among the branches in the mobilization plans. Since infantry units were far cheaper than others in terms of equipment, ROTC was soon unbalanced in favor of that branch. Now, due to fiscal and personnel limitations as well as direct legislative prohibitions, this imbalance was all but baked in.\textsuperscript{194}

The other longer-term problem was the older issue of budget limitations. Initially, this did not seem overly serious. ROTC remained popular in Congress
so that, after the initial decrease in funding experienced in the period 1920–22, appropriations began to increase substantially in 1923–24. The program’s major fiscal problem in this period was the longer-term concern of the diminishment of war surplus materials it had used for free in the past. When these were finally exhausted, ROTC budgets would have to absorb new costs. As a result, during 1924, increased emphasis was placed on economy wherever possible. Even the possible elimination of summer camp for students in the basic course came under consideration.  

By mid-June 1924, it was becoming clear that ROTC was headed for a major fiscal crisis. The rapid exhaustion of surplus stocks meant that future appropriations would have to be raised dramatically just to allow ROTC to continue its current level of activity. Yet this was still less than adequate to produce the reserve officers needed for the Six-Army Plan. Unless ROTC was expanded by 50 percent, the army would have to accept the conclusion that the Six-Army Plan as unviable, an admission that could, in fact, call into question the ability of the National Defense Act citizen army to provide an adequate defense for the United States.

During 1923–24, Congress and President Harding had been remarkably generous with ROTC, increasing appropriations by 35 percent (from $2,800,000 to $3,800,000) at a time when fiscal retrenchment was otherwise the order of the day. But Harding’s successor, Calvin Coolidge, was far more committed to budget austerity, making it highly doubtful that such a generous rate of expansion of appropriations could be expected in the future. Yet by June 1924, estimates indicated that the need to make up for the exhaustion of surplus supplies and to expand the program to meet the needs of the Six-Army Plan would require an increase in the ROTC appropriation for fiscal year 1926 of $3,250,000, an 85-percent jump, while final exhaustion of stocks a year or two later would call for eventual appropriations of $9,250,000, a 240-percent increase over current levels. Since it was extremely doubtful that budget increases of this magnitude could be wrung out of Coolidge, ROTC went into 1925 headed for a new fiscal crisis that could undermine the army’s faith in the entire citizen-soldier concept.

Superficially, 1925 still seemed to be shaping up as a banner year for the ROTC. Enrollments continued to rise, while the closing down of several weak infantry units provided means for a badly needed expansion of field-artillery units. In fact, however, 1925, a crisis year for the entire army, also saw the precipitation of a major crisis in the ROTC program. As with the military itself, this crisis was largely budgetary. Despite the problems arising from the depletion of surplus stocks and the need to expand officer graduations to meet the needs
of the Six-Army Program, the Coolidge administration made it clear to the War Department that there would be no appropriations increase at all for ROTC for fiscal year 1926. This put the General Staff into a major quandary. On the one hand, the staff recognized that ROTC required an annual increase to produce the number of reserve officers needed for the Six-Army Plan. On the other hand, due to increased costs arising from the depletion of surplus stores, it would be difficult to maintain ROTC even at its existing level with the appropriations allowed. Hence, after much controversy, the Operations and Training Division decided that the least disruptive course would be to limit the level of ROTC enrollments for fiscal year 1926 to that of fiscal year 1925.198

While the division finally accepted this solution in mid-April, it still had considerable difficulty getting other parts of the General Staff and the chief of staff to go along, so this dragged on without resolution until June. There was then further delay as the directive went out to the corps-area commanders that they had to maintain overall enrollments at the same level as in 1925, although they were allowed wide discretion in how they were to do this. These officers appreciated the discretion but not the assignment. Nor were they clear as to what was wanted, leading to a further flurry of correspondence. As a result, the commanders did not begin informing their local ROTC professors of the order to limit enrollment until late July and early August. The professors, in turn, spent a few weeks mulling over how they might implement the limitation on their campuses before going to the president of their respective host institution with the news.199

The chiefs of branches in Washington heard about the limitations at the same time the corps-area commanders did. Major General Frank W. Coe, chief of the Coast Artillery Corps, and Major General William J. Snow, chief of Field Artillery, wrote separate letters denouncing the decision. Snow characterized it as “a catastrophe.” He agreed with Coe’s conclusion that, after the two had urged colleges for so many years to bend every effort to expand the program, to order a halt to that expansion on the eve of a new academic year, with students already enrolled in the program, would “destroy the confidence of college authorities in the War Department’s policies.”200 College presidents reacted to the news with equal outrage. The president of Cornell University wrote angrily of his embarrassment with having to drop 129 students who had been accepted in good faith into the advanced program the previous spring.201 The General Staff was further vexed in dealing with this correspondence by the fact that it was both impolitic and professionally disloyal to place the blame for this predicament on the president’s stringent fiscal policies. Yet by the end of 1925, their sense of professional loyalty toward Coolidge was diminishing rapidly and many officers found
private channels to communicate to college and university presidents the staff’s view of the real cause of this dilemma. As a result, the concluding resolution of the annual meeting of the Association of Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, held in Chicago in mid-November, soundly blamed the president and Congress for the situation of ROTC.²⁰²

In truth, however, the army itself deserved much of the blame for the 1925 ROTC crisis. From the time of its creation, ROTC had always been a rapidly expanding program that had existed well beyond its means. The rapid expansion of the program and its dependence on surplus stores made it vulnerable to crisis at the first major fiscal-retrenchment program. It is, indeed, doubtful that any U.S. president would have found it politically possible in the 1920s to provide ROTC with the resources needed to sustain the size and rate of growth it had achieved by the beginning of 1925. At that point at least, a more modest program might have experienced a more stable and happy development.