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LOUISIANA MANEUVERS REVISITED

Louisiana Maneuvers — 1941

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower described his experience on maneuvers in Louisiana in September 1941 as taking part in “a vast laboratory experiment to prove the worth of ideas, men, weapons and equipment.” Over 400,000 men, in two continental U.S. armies, were involved. The value of the exercise, he said, was “incalculable.”

It accustomed the troops to mass teamwork ... speeded up the process of eliminating the unfit ... brought to the specific attention of superiors certain younger men who were prepared to carry out the most difficult assignments in command and staff ... and developed among responsible leaders skill in the handling of large forces in the fields.

Presumably, one of the brightest of the young men to be illuminated during the maneuver was an obscure officer identified by the press as “Lt. Col. D. D. Ersenbeing.” However disconcerting the butchering of his name in public may have been, it did no lasting damage to Eisenhower’s career. (He expressed satisfaction that they at least got his initials right, and at the close of the exercise found himself on promotion orders directly to the rank of temporary brigadier general.)

The general pointed out that no comparable attempt had ever been made in peacetime to deal with road movements of vast quantities of food, fuel and ammunition. He also noted that no officer on the active Army list in 1941 had experience in commanding any technical formation larger than a regiment. The problems were enormous, but the Louisiana maneuvers were the great illuminator of problems *and* potential solutions. They also provided a wellhead of experience which would pay dividends in the long months and years of combat to come. Eisenhower commented, “The maneuvers provided me with lessons and experience that I appreciated more and more as subsequent months rolled by.”

Louisiana Maneuvers — 1990s

A half century later General Gordon Sullivan, the Army chief of staff, would read Christopher Gabel’s account of the maneuvers (*The U.S. Army GHQ of 1941*, published by the Center of Military History in 1991). He was struck by parallels between the challenges to the Army of Eisenhower’s time and those facing the Army in the 1990s, especially on the intellectual plane. Much was changing in

the 1940s and there were many uncertainties; so it is in the 1990s. General Sullivan must answer for the Army as to how it will deal with massive redeployments of troops from overseas back to CONUS, the impact of new technology, questions of mobilization and deployment in the event of new contingencies overseas, and new operational concepts, all under the ever-tightening squeeze of reduced resources, both human and financial.

General Sullivan has directed the establishment of a series of computer-assisted exercises as a latter day counterpart to the maneuvers of 1941. Through these exercises he hopes to gain insights into both operational and organizational problems. The former relate to new concepts under study in conjunction with the evolution of Field Manual 100-5, the Army's warfighting operations manual; the latter to the general's responsibilities under Title 10 of the US Code. These, General Sullivan typifies with such questions as: "Can I mobilize the force efficiently? Can I sustain it efficiently in the field? Can I generate what I need to sustain it, in terms of all classes of supply?" The series of computer exercises will be designed to facilitate intellectual fermentation in the Army for hypothesizing, experimenting and exchanging ideas. It will provide leaders with a method of assessing both policy and doctrine. Organization, training, materiel, leader development and individual soldier issues will all come under examination in the process. Every level of warfighting will be open for examination as issues are identified.

Unlike the Army of the 1940s, today's Army does not fight single-service campaigns. Accordingly, the new Louisiana maneuvers (short title: LAM), wherever possible, will be integrated into existing unified command exercises to ensure that the Army exercises as it will fight in a joint or combined campaign. LAM will be an evaluation vehicle to assess new concepts and ideas in real time and shortcut Cold War policy decision methodologies.

The senior service schools (National Defense University, Army War College, etc.), which routinely hold seminars and symposia, will be tapped to provide input to the effort. Army schools are deeply involved in a parallel and complementary program aimed at focusing the forces on change. Battle laboratories have been established at Forts Sill, Knox, Benning, Leavenworth, Monroe and Lee. Fort Sill, assisted by teams at Forts Bliss and Huachuca, will focus on questions of operational depth and simultaneity of attack. Forts Knox and Benning will look at mounted and dismounted battlespace. Fort Leavenworth will be primarily concerned with command, control and operational tempo, while Forts Monroe and Lee will deal with questions related to early theater entry and combat service support, respectively. The battle labs will provide focus and horizontal integration to the Army's investigation of their respective areas. These labs have been singled out as key elements of battlefield dynamics that recent experience indicates may have changed significantly. The labs will work to integrate the evolution of warfighting ideas and technology.

It is not the intent of the chief of staff that LAM become a permanent fixture of the Army, any more than the original exercises. LAM is primarily a modern approach to dealing with very large sets of diverse questions in an organized way. Like the pre-World War II concept, LAM of today is a campaign to focus energies on what is important. It is a process to help evolve the Army for the next century.

The Program — 1992 to 1997

In 1992, research began on the appropriate training, simulation and data collection technologies. Work was also begun on the appropriate policy issues to address in LAM. The first full-scale LAM efforts will be undertaken in 1993 with examination of a major regional contingency in the full operational range from crisis and mobilization through conflict termination and redeployment. An examination of revised doctrine for a new FM 100-5 will be conducted, with special consideration to mobilization, deployment, logistics and operations at the “low” end of the conflict continuum. Major policy and warfighting issues raised by the Army’s senior leaders in 1992 will also be examined. These initial results are expected to provide grist for discussion at high level seminars and conferences and an experience base for LAM ’94.

In 1994, multiple exercises will be tracked at different points to isolate, assess and decide policy issues and feed those decisions into the force integration process. Also, the structure should be able to examine the full range of departmental and warfighting functions with emphasis on organizational design, active and reserve component roles and functions, and requirements determination. By the end of FY94, LAM should indicate which of our policies are functional for our Army of the 21st century and which are not. Many policies that shaped the Army since 1945 are enduring; others are no longer appropriate. LAM will help determine the difference.

LAM ’95 will draw upon the initial cycles and feed a revision of FM 100-5. The 1997 edition of that operations guide is expected to be a landmark document dealing with yet to be clarified notions of “battlefield dynamics.” Doctrine developers note that the nature of warfare has undergone a number of fundamental changes in terms of lethality and mobility. By 1997 they will be looking for the LAM process to have helped solidify Army thinking on how it should be responding in terms of structure, training and equipment to maximize its performance capabilities in the evolving battlefield environment.

Technology and Issues

LAM will employ much state-of-the-art computer technology to tie the laboratories and other players together in the exercises. This will include distributed computer supported simulations of roles and missions examining different levels of conflict, from counterdrug operations through general theater warfare. The chief of staff has described how he might simulate the assembly of a brigade, with a tank task force at Fort Knox, an infantry-heavy task force at Fort Benning, and an aviation contingent at Fort Rucker. By manipulating the parameters of the various force components and their equipment, the exercise can examine the impact of many different combinations of variables in a short period of time.

Another example of a study focus is the question of changes in the quantities of overseas war stocks of equipment and supplies. Money invested in such stocks is money not available for training or for quality-of-life programs. Further, changes in overseas war stocks affect planning and requirements for sea- and airlift. If the lift cannot be assured, there might be an adverse effect on the degree of risk connected with the Army’s capability for dealing with certain scenarios. Likewise, if

the stocks are not provided for somewhere, they may impact the industrial support base, imposing substantially greater burdens in some circumstances. Whatever the case, the Army will be relying upon LAM to illuminate the dimensions of the problem, even if it does not necessarily provide a feasible solution. Further investigations and debate may be required in order to surface ways of working around problems. And then these, too, may be subjected to further LAM testing.

LAM will be spearheaded by a task force located at Fort Monroe, headed by Brigadier General Tommy R. Franks, USA. The chief of staff has designated himself the exercise director, and has appointed General Frederick M. Franks, commander of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, his deputy. A general officer working group will select and prioritize candidate issues for investigation in the exercises. The chief of staff, together with other senior Army officials, will be approval authority for the proposals.

The Louisiana maneuvers of the 1990s are as exciting a concept for the Army, now facing major changes and reductions, as the original exercises were for the Army of the 1940s, undergoing the great stresses of those days. The two efforts, a half century apart, represent unbiased, professional approaches to problem identification and solution using the technology of the times. The new program deserves the enthusiastic support of all components of the service, active Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard.

(This *Background Brief* was prepared by MG Edward B. Atkeson, USA Ret. who is an AUSA Senior Fellow.)

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