

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE*Transient Generals*

"Turbulence at the Top: Our Peripatetic Generals" by Lewis Sorley, in *Army* (March 1981), 2425 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, Va. 22201.

The Army's readiness is hampered by policies that turn assignments in its senior echelons into a game of musical chairs, reports Sorley, a retired Army lieutenant colonel and chief of the CIA's audit staff.

The U.S. Army's General Staff, for example, consists of seven top generals, plus a Chief of Staff and a Vice Chief. Between 1960 and 1980, 86 different officers held these nine senior positions (average tenure: 27 months). The Army went through 12 deputy chiefs of staff, 11 vice chiefs, and 10 comptrollers. As a result, the top command worked together, on average, for only four months before someone departed.

But turnover affects all major commands. As of August 1980, the U.S. Army's nine four-star generals had served in their current billets an average of only 20 months. And over two decades, the Second Infantry Division in Korea had 19 different commanding generals. The attitude that evolves, as one general put it: "All errors are due to one's predecessor and each commander leaves before his own errors crop up."

Partly to blame are "statutory predispositions" to early retirement and the lure of civilian careers. But the primary cause, says Sorley, is a promotion policy that encourages plenty of "generalists," not enough specialists. This policy has deprived the Army of experienced field commanders at a time when growing Soviet military strength has made tactical skill the key to victory in a conventional NATO war. (Many of the leading Soviet generals have held their current jobs for more than 10 years.) The Army now has a generation of "amateur commanders," writes Sorley, with no strong commitments to their predecessors' programs, little incentive for long-range planning, and more concern for avoiding failure than for achieving success.

Sorley's recommendations: Reassign general officers only in cases of promotion or retirement. Tie any general's new job to his past experience. Allow commanders a needed respite "not by giving them staff assignments in unfamiliar fields, but by providing sabbaticals during which they . . . study, travel or teach."

Build-Up or Bottleneck?

"Can Industry Meet the Challenge of a Big Boost in Defense Spending?" by Michael R. Gordon, in *National Journal* (Mar. 8, 1981), 1730 M St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Reagan administration hopes to increase military spending by \$184 billion over the next five years. But even if Congress approves this build-up, writes Gordon, a *National Journal* correspondent, the nation's defense industries may not be up to it.

Opinions vary. Some Carter administration alumni, notably William J. Perry, former Undersecretary of Defense, argue that industry has the

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capacity for such a massive "surge," given the current decline in U.S. production of autos and commercial jetliners. However, recent studies by congressional committees, the Pentagon, and private researchers take a gloomier view. The "defense industrial base" employs perhaps one-fifth of U.S. scientists and engineers and one-tenth of industrial workers. But it labors under increasing difficulties.

First, the Vietnam War's \$135 billion drain on the Pentagon budget combined with soaring military payroll costs (due partly to the shift to an all-volunteer force) necessitated drastic "stretch-outs" and deferments of Pentagon spending for new military hardware. Procurement budgets fell from \$42 billion in 1968 to \$18.7 billion in 1976 (in 1978 dollars); the number of subcontractors supplying components to major aerospace corporations dropped from 6,000 to 4,000, reducing the pool of companies with specialized skills and manufacturing capacity.

Second, presidential policies and uncertainty over congressional weapons funding (done on a year-to-year basis) have discouraged manufacturers from making long-term investments in plant and raw materials. Jimmy Carter's sudden decision in 1977 to scrap the B-1 bomber project had a ripple effect. Manufacturers of titanium sponge, used in aircraft forgings, held back on adding new capacity. Lead times for these forgings jumped from 38 weeks in 1978 to 120 weeks in 1980, slowing F-15 fighter production.

Finally, the sheer complexity of "fewer and costlier" new weapons (e.g., the \$2 billion Trident missile submarine) has affected production capacity. Contractors cannot use the new technology to make civilian goods and hence lack a "hedge" against a drop in military orders. So, they limit their defense production facilities.

Foreign arms sales (\$6.7 billion in 1978) ease some industry difficulties. But Pentagon officials and outside analysts suggest reforms: congressional approval of multiyear weapons contracts; increasing industry competition by splitting up major contracts; paying some costs of plant expansion; even making cheaper, less complicated weapons.

ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

Layoffs and Services

"Have Employment Patterns in Recessions Changed?" by Norman Bowers, in *Monthly Labor Review* (Feb. 1981), Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402.

The growing role of services in America since the end of World War II has trimmed back the percentage of the labor force thrown out of work by recessions. So contends Bowers, a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics economist.

Bowers analyzed changes in employment and unemployment from