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ABSTRACT

DRAWDOWN IN EUROPE: BUILDING DOWN SMARTER

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This paper examines the challenges faced by six Army battalions directly involved in the massive United States Army Europe (USAREUR) drawdown during FY 91\92. The four most critical functional areas (1) notifying, (2) manning, (3) equipping and (4) redeploying are evaluated to determine the impact of the drawdown on soldiers, families and national security. The paper also assesses the impact of external political and military events on USAREUR's original plan for unit withdrawals, equipment redistribution and personnel reductions.

A recurrent theme is the resourcefulness of subordinates in overcoming countless obstacles and successfully accomplishing a drawdown of historic proportions. The paper concludes with recommendations for corrective measures from former USAREUR battalion commanders which are intended for implementation at corps or higher levels of command. The recommendations outline strategies in each functional area to increase efficiency, improve quality of life for soldiers and families and enhance national security during future drawdowns.

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Drawdown in Europe: Building Down Smarter

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INTRODUCTION

GENERAL

There is no peacetime task more challenging to a battalion than having to inactivate or redeploy from an overseas location. This mission requires the drawdown and transfer of all property and equipment while maintaining accountability of the Army's resources; sustaining pride, discipline, morale; and continuing to care for soldiers, their families and civilians. To accomplish the mission the commander must conduct an orderly, disciplined drawdown, turn in facilities in top condition, maintain strict property accountability, and minimize the turbulence for soldiers and families.¹

Obviously this would be a very complex undertaking even under ideal conditions. Too often, drawdowns are complicated by short suspenses, frequent mission changes, competing requirements, and overburdened support assets and resources. Completely dismantling a battalion's infrastructure and redeploying all personnel and equipment is a difficult and unfamiliar task. This task is further complicated by the fact that there is no formal training or prior experience to assist the chain of command in tackling a mission of this magnitude. Development of standardized procedural guidelines could yield a more orderly drawdown by alleviating much of the current trial and error.

OBJECTIVE

This paper will examine the Army drawdown in Europe and indicate those aspects that went well; it will also explore what did not go as expected. Where appropriate, it will recommend corrective measures to strengthen areas needing improvement. While some of the problem areas covered in this paper may already have been brought to the attention of the Army leadership, a careful review of the problems encountered by battalions which have recently completed the transition is worthwhile, as it might identify some recurring problem areas.

The objective of this paper is twofold. First, by studying lessons learned we may be able to improve the efficiency of future operations. This could enhance national security by expediting the reassignment of personnel and the redistribution of critical war fighting materiel. Secondly, any gains in efficiency will ultimately ease the burden on soldiers and families during future drawdowns.

SCOPE

This paper will focus on the challenges faced by six Army battalions directly involved in the massive United States Army, Europe (USAREUR) drawdown during FY 91/92; units were either inactivating or redeploying. The redeploying battalions were referred to as Enhancing CONUS

Contingency Capability (EC3) units. The EC3 battalions returned as a unit to the United States to become part of the CONUS Contingency Corps; personnel from inactivated battalions returned as individuals. Even though the units surveyed included field artillery, aviation, and infantry battalions, there were some common themes voiced by all the battalion commanders concerning their drawdown experience.

In terms of methodology, I interviewed six former USAREUR battalion commanders about both personnel and equipment management issues during the drawdown. The interviews were both on site and telephonic and lasted from 30 minutes to one hour. Our discussions focused on their most significant lessons learned and their recommendations to improve future drawdown procedures. In addition to the interviews I reviewed OPLANs, After Action Reports, Lessons Learned, SOPs, briefings, GAO reports, and newspaper and journal articles covering the plans, costs and issues associated with the drawdown.

I chose to narrow the scope of this paper by concentrating on the four most critical functional areas associated with a battalion's inactivation or redeployment. These four are: (1) notifying, (2) manning, (3) equipping, and (4) redeploying. Each of these areas were assessed to determine the impact on soldiers, families and overall mission accomplishment. While there are literally hundreds of tasks that must be accomplished, many of which are peculiar to units redeploying from USAREUR, the tasks

associated with these four functional areas appear to be the most critical regardless of the type of unit involved.

This review is important for three reasons. First, it is important from a national security perspective. Units involved in a drawdown are in a not mission capable (NMC) status. All collective training ceases, and individual training continues only as long as resources remain available. Only "protect the soldier" training (APFT and weapons qualification) is mandatory. Transfer and turn in of equipment renders a unit incapable of accomplishing its wartime mission. Any refinement that might improve the drawdown process and expedite personnel and equipment flow to fully capable units will improve readiness and enhance national security.

Secondly, since the drawdown is ongoing, there is still time to profit from the experience of previously inactivated units. There is also a good probability that the drawdown will be even greater than the numbers currently projected for the FY 95 "Base Force" plan. Both the Secretary of Defense, Les Aspin, and the Clinton administration favor cutting an additional 217,000 service members from the roles.² Regardless of the exact number selected, future drawdowns are inevitable; every effort should be made now to ensure a rapid and efficient transition for those involved.

Finally, the review is significant from a personal perspective. Whenever operations of this magnitude impact

directly on the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers and family members, everything possible should be done to ensure it is a positive experience for those involved. Operations should be structured to provide maximum advance warning to soldiers and families to allow ample time for the management of personal affairs. Unfortunately, this was not always the case during the USAREUR drawdown.

The paper will include a historical overview of the current drawdown. It will assess the impact of external political and military events on USAREUR's original plan for unit withdrawals, equipment redistribution and personnel reductions. The consequences of the accelerated FY 92 redeployment schedule will also be examined in each functional area. The paper will conclude with observations and recommendations for corrective action.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In 1986 Soviet spokesperson, Georgi Arbatov, in response to Mikhail Gorbachev's promise of daring new steps to relax superpower tensions declared to the United States that " we are going to do a terrible thing to you - we are going to deprive you of an enemy."³ This prophetic statement has foreshadowed a dramatic restructuring of the US military. With the end of the Cold War and a diminished world threat, all services have had to redefine themselves and restructure their forces based on a new world order.

The Army is now in the midst of its most massive drawdown and restructuring since the end of World War II. Comparison of the end-state force structure to FY 90 strength figures demonstrates just how dramatic a transformation this will be:

1990.....	5 Corps.....	28 Divisions
1995.....	4 Corps.....	20 Divisions

Nowhere is this reduction more dramatic than in Europe.

The drawdown currently taking place in Europe actually began in 1988 when it was determined that the long-term survival of the Soviet Union was doubtful. Responding to guidance from its civilian leadership and acting in conjunction with the Joint Staff, the Army began to model a "base force" or minimum force necessary to respond to post Cold War threats and able to execute US national military strategy.⁴ The Army of the future would be characterized by these factors: smaller; more US based; and extremely versatile to allow it to operate in an uncertain and unstable, multipolar world.

Forward Presence forces responsible for deterring aggression and achieving regional stability would remain but would be much smaller. The Army would rely on US based units to support forward deployed forces through rapid power projection, sustainment and reinforcement. This shift from large forward deployed forces in Europe to US based contingency forces had a dramatic impact on Army force

structure. General Gordon Sullivan, Army Chief of Staff, assessed the impact by stating that "America's Army is undergoing the most dramatic changes it has undertaken in 50 years. Rarely have such forces of change come to bear in such compressed time and to such depth."⁵

Former Secretary of the Army, Michael P. W. Stone, quantified this change when he stated that between fiscal 1989 and 1995, Army forces in Europe would be cut by 57 percent.⁶ By November 1990 USAREUR had developed its original plans for the future force structure and implementation of the drawdown. Specifically, the plan called for a decrease from 216,400 to 158,500 troops; 64,000 to 37,000 civilian personnel and 858 to 758 installations. All targets were to be achieved by the end of fiscal 1995.⁷

Moving such a significant number of personnel and redistributing their equipment would place an enormous burden on transportation and support agencies. As early as February 1991 USAREUR officials warned that returning more than 30,000 soldiers a year to the Continental United States (CONUS) could result in problems such as: (1) a backlog of household goods and privately owned vehicles to be shipped to the United States; (2) too few personnel to upgrade and turn in unit equipment before departing the theater; (3) higher transportation costs and inefficient use of resources; and (4) erosion of the quality of life for soldiers and families.⁸ Ironically, these were some of

the very problems experienced by battalions during the FY '92 drawdown.

While USAREUR's FY 91 withdrawal plan targeted approximately 30,000 military personnel, only about 14,600 actually redeployed due to the deployment of VII Corps to the Gulf War. Certainly the deployment of VII Corps was an unforeseen obstacle, but USAREUR was also faced with a host of challenges in the administrative and logistics arena. Short notice personnel and equipment taskings; lack of repair parts; and frozen personnel actions due to the Stop Loss Program were only a few of the problems encountered during the turbulent Operation Desert Shield/Storm period in USAREUR.

USAREUR decided to accelerate the FY 92 withdrawal schedule to make up for lost momentum during Desert Storm and due to requirements of the fiscal 1993 budget. The 1993 budget was important for several reasons. First, it did not support the higher force levels left in theater following the end of Desert Storm. Secondly, it significantly reduced the end-state goal from 158,800 to 92,200 troops and directed completion of the drawdown by the end of FY 93.⁹

During FY 92 approximately 68,000 troops, the equivalent of 125 battalions, withdrew from Europe. Along with them came 90,000 family members, thousands of tons of household goods, privately owned vehicles and pets. Major commands were brought out with them such as: 2d Armored Cavalry Regiment, 2d and 3rd Armored Divisions, 8th

Infantry Division and VII Corps. In addition, 168 installations were shut down throughout USAREUR during this same period.¹⁰

In February 1992, logistics officials estimated that USAREUR unit inactivations would generate about 45,000 major items of equipment such as tanks, artillery and trucks in excess of USAREUR's needs. On the basis of its condition, it would either be sent to units or depots in the United States; given to NATO allies under a harmonization program resulting from U.S. treaty commitments; sold to other countries under the foreign military sales program; or sent to await disposal¹¹.

Concurrent with these massive drawdown activities the decision was made to eliminate all War Reserve Materiel in USAREUR. This decision exacerbated equipment management tasks by generating \$5.8 billion of excess equipment that competed with the already huge amount of equipment that had to be redistributed from departing units. This placed a great strain on storage depots - some of which experienced a 55 percent increase in major item storage.¹²

Against this background of accelerated personnel drawdown activities and massive equipment redistributions let us now review some of the problems encountered and lessons learned from six battalions that participated in the drawdown. A functional area assessment framework will be used to gauge the impact on mission accomplishment.

FUNCTIONAL AREA ASSESSMENT

NOTIFYING

This functional area includes all those tasks required to properly notify key US and Host Nation officials of a unit's impending inactivation/redeployment. The intent was to have notification originate from the Office of the Secretary of Defense and be disseminated through command channels by means of message traffic, television and radio announcements and newspaper articles. Briefings through all levels of the chain of command, to include townhall meetings, would ensure the widest possible dissemination of the news to soldiers and family members. While a formal, timely announcement was the goal, it was not the reality for many units.

One of the major problems experienced in USAREUR was late notification. Late notifications created significant burdens for drawdown battalions. While the USAREUR objective was 180 days, some of the units surveyed were given less than 120 days to drawdown.¹³ The most extreme case was a battalion which was never officially announced and then given just 79 days to redeploy.¹⁴ One consequence of such short notice is that the unit was forced to spend an inordinate amount of time explaining and, at times, convincing agencies involved with the drawdown that it was in fact redeploying.

Use of verbal orders further exacerbated the situation; not all key players had the same dates.

Essential planning was not done at all, or done poorly, when agencies were not given adequate advance notification of a unit drawdown. Also the lack of any drawdown strategy or procedural guides made obtaining support very difficult, particularly for initial drawdown battalions.

Late notifications impacted on soldier quality of life by complicating their management of personal affairs. Obtaining visas, passports and birth registrations are extremely time consuming procedures. Incomplete processing of visas and passports forced some soldiers to PCS to CONUS without their dependents; they returned to Europe and retrieved dependents when the paperwork was completed. Time-sensitive outprocessing procedures such as : shipment of household goods; disposition of US and German-spec POVs; pet inoculations; dependent schooling; and notification to landlords were adversely impacted by short notice redeployments.

Worse than late notification was the problem of multiple notifications. Frequent mission changes were fairly common during this period. While some of the confusion can be attributed to events in the Gulf War, much of it took place well after resolution of Desert Storm. Battalions in various stages of their drawdown were stopped and given missions that ranged from deployment to the Gulf to reconstitution with a new mission in a new organization. The most egregious example was a battalion that was: (1) twice notified to deactivate; (2) told to convert to a new

weapon system; (3) directed to retrieve original equipment and reconstitute as originally organized; and (4) finally directed to redeploy as an EC3 unit. The battalion was reassigned five times during this 16-month odyssey.¹⁵ This apparent lack of coordination at the Corps/DA level also adversely impacted on several brigade deactivations.

The obstacles inherent with a drawdown are only compounded when units and their support agencies do not receive timely notification. Management of the drawdown is complicated at all levels, morale suffers, senior leadership credibility is questioned, and an inefficient competition ensues for scarce support assets and resources.

MANNING

This area encompasses all actions or policies that impact directly or indirectly on personnel assigned or attached to an inactivating /redeploying unit. Items such as orders, awards, finance and medical support and reassignment policies are included under manning. All commanders agreed that dealing with personnel issues was the most sensitive portion of the drawdown and, by far, the most frustrating.

The most successful units were those which were supported by a battalion data base which processed the enormous amount of information required for a smooth drawdown. All commanders augmented their staffs to meet the report requirements and handle the incredible increase in

information flow.

Critical Personnel Inactivation Information was the information which had to be identified immediately, constantly updated, and closely monitored to ensure smooth movement of soldiers, families, and personal property. To 50 separate data points had to be tracked for each soldier. Commanders needed access to real-time information such as: assignment data, family member data, POV data, pet data, transportation data, and NCOER/OER/Award data.¹⁶ This was only a small portion of the information that was submitted in weekly reports to higher headquarters.

The majority of the commanders admitted that their biggest frustration was the inability to make the personnel system function in a timely manner. Slow receipt of assignment instructions(AIs) was a unanimous complaint. Problems were also encountered in getting action on foreign service tour extensions(FSTEs), All Others Tours, DEROS updates, Reenlistment updates, and No Cost Moves. Computer malfunctions at Corps and DA often caused delays in getting assignment instructions, orders, and travel status. While a battalion can overcome many problems through close coordination and ingenuity, very little can be done for departing soldiers until assignment instructions are received.

When it became apparent that the personnel system was hopelessly backlogged with an immense workload, most commanders took the initiative and established direct

contact with DA assignment personnel. Using this approach, commanders were oftentimes able to accomplish in a 10-minute phone conversation what the personnel system was unable to do in months. Direct coordination between the battalion commander and the MOS branch manager at DA proved to be the most effective means to receive long-overdue AIs. This was especially true with low density MOS AIs. Despite their best efforts, most commanders reported having residual personnel remaining after their E-date due to lack of orders.

EC3 battalions had just the opposite problem. For them, maintaining adequate personnel fill was very difficult. Once identified as an EC3 unit, a battalion was a known loss to theater. There appeared to be a reluctance by higher headquarters to provide filler personnel to units which would soon redeploy to CONUS. One EC3 battalion lost over 100 soldiers through normal attrition during a seven month period, yet received no replacements even though adjacent residual battalions were significantly overstrength.¹⁷ One commander felt that he was essentially on his own once identified as an EC3 battalion.

Another frustration faced by commanders was the problem of "duffle bag drag". This occurred when both officers and enlisted were caught in the drawdown cycle and repeatedly reassigned from one inactivating unit to another. In one instance a field grade officer was assigned to three inactivating units during a two year period.¹⁸

Repetitive reassignments, while sometimes unavoidable, cause turbulence in the chain of command, complicate efficiency reports, lower morale and create hardships for families with school age children.

One problem that was avoidable, but happened all too frequently, was the apparent lack of coordination between DA and subordinate personnel commands. One highly visible example was the assignment of soldiers from CONUS to drawdown units in USAREUR. This occurred during all phases of the drawdown, not just the period immediately following notification. Again, this included both enlisted and officer personnel; for example, a battalion commander who reported to a drawdown battalion was reassigned shortly after he signed into the unit.¹⁹ Considering the constant coordination between DA and USAREUR personnel commands, it is hard to understand how disconnects like this could occur.

There were though, some notable successes in this area. One was the exception to policy granted to all soldiers with dependent students in their senior year of high school; this allowed the soldier to remain on station with his family until graduation. This was a smart policy that was well received. It prevented a great deal of turmoil for students and families and demonstrated concern for family issues. The Exceptional Family Member Program was also well administered during the drawdown. Giving battalion commanders the latitude to handle hardship cases,

and the authority to manage personnel flow, was another smart initiative from CINC USAREUR which certainly helped ease the burden of transition.²⁰

EQUIPPING

Equipping is a broad category that includes all tasks necessary to account for property. Of particular interest are those actions necessary to inventory, inspect, repair, redistribute and turn in major items of equipment. USAREUR was faced with a formidable equipment management task resulting from the rapid drawdown and the decision to eliminate the entire stockpile of excess war reserve equipment in Central Europe. The plan was to redistribute equipment internally from departing units in the following order of priority: (1) Army Readiness Package South; (2) other Army units remaining as part of the residual force in Europe; and (3) POMCUS storage sites.²¹ An ever increasing mountain of excess equipment made implementation of the plan extremely difficult.

One of the major challenges faced by drawdown units was lateral transfer of equipment. This task involved matching available excess equipment from deactivating units to valid shortages in the residual force. While property accountability appeared accurate from the theater/corps perspective, their data bases rarely reflected current on-hand quantities at the user level. Incompatible and out-dated data bases degraded modeling capabilities and

continually hindered redistribution efforts. Despite frequent coordination between battalion Property Book Officers (PBOs) and Materiel Managers to update property lists, redistribution plans simply did not keep pace with the constantly changing circumstances and organizational realignments. Disposition instructions were often late and frequently inaccurate. Units identified by Theater Army Materiel Management Center (TAMMC) disposition instructions to receive the excess property often refused to accept it; they insisted that they had their authorized fill. This was a recurring problem that seemed to worsen as the drawdown matured.

Equipment redistribution became so acute in some deactivating battalions that commanders resorted to distributing property inventories to residual battalions in the hope of identifying and filling shortages.²² Some unit PBOs used the USAREUR telephone directory to make random calls in an attempt to locate battalions which would sign for equipment. It seemed at times that the onus was on the losing unit to redistribute equipment. This was certainly the feeling when key personnel from Force Modernization Cells at Corps and higher levels were diverted to other priority missions such as field training exercises. This effectively froze all coordination efforts until their return.

Another irritant was the uncertainty surrounding equipment turn-in standards. Besides not knowing where the

equipment was going or when, the turn-in standards were often unclear. At first most units were directed to meet 10/20 standards; equipment had to be fully mission capable and free of all mechanical and physical deficiencies through the organizational maintenance level. As the drawdown continued and spare parts became increasingly more difficult to obtain, turn-in standards ranged from the original 10/20 standard to "as is" with accompanying reports of discrepancy (RODs). The "as is" standard created mountains of equipment held in storage awaiting repair funds. Ultimately, most of this equipment will most probably be destroyed, sold or given to allies.

The battalions which experienced the least difficulty with equipment redistribution were the "fast movers". These were units which had deployed to the Gulf during the early stages of their drawdown. The battalion would return to USAREUR to complete the deactivation with only 20% of its equipment. The bulk was left behind awaiting shipment to CONUS. Small arms, pacing items (critical warfighting equipment) and installation property were the only major equipment concerns.²³ Consequently, their transition was in many cases less complicated than normal drawdown units.

There were exceptions to equipment redistribution problems. All commanders interviewed were satisfied with the rapid disposition of pacing items (helicopters, howitzers, Bradleys, etc) and small arms. All were managed expeditiously with specific and accurate disposition

instructions received early on in the transition. One battalion was fortunate enough to have a Division Logistics Representative collocated in the battalion headquarters to provide on-site disposition instructions.²⁴ While this was certainly the ideal solution, it was also the exception.

Considering the complexity of such a vast undertaking, it is little wonder that materiel managers in many cases were simply incapable of keeping up with the rapid pace and sheer volume of transactions which were taking place. When necessary, battalions fended for themselves by having PBOs coordinate directly with individual project managers to ensure timely equipment redistribution.

REDEPLOYING

Redeploying involves all tasks required to ship property and clear units and individuals from theater. The accelerated pace of the drawdown not only increased demands on USAREUR resources but also challenged stateside military installations. Already taxed to plan for assimilating an influx of personnel from domestic base closures and realignments, stateside installations now had to accommodate USAREUR soldiers and equipment.²⁵ Moving such large numbers in such a compressed time period presented some unique challenges in both USAREUR and CONUS.

Drawdown assignment rules required all soldiers with less than 18 months left on their current tour to be

reassigned to CONUS. Based on this guidance most battalions were faced with returning 60 - 70% of their soldiers to stateside assignments. The goal was to transport busloads of departing soldiers and family members to designated airports for return flights on aircraft with reserved seating. In reality, soldiers were transported out individually or in small groups. Reservation of airline seats to support port calls was another example of the reactive planning caused by late notification. Without proper notification, the Air Force was unable to allocate the additional seat reservations required for a battalion redeployment. This resulted in long delays in scheduling flights and forced some soldiers to be shuttled throughout Germany to take advantage of any airline seats available.

There were no established redeployment procedures for the initial EC3 units and few personnel within theater had any expertise with this type of movement planning. In one case it took direct coordination between the returning battalion and MAC HQ to coordinate final airlift support.²⁶

The consensus was that reception of EC3 units in CONUS was excellent. Gaining installations went out of their way to accommodate soldiers and families. Naturally there were some obstacles that had to be overcome. One of these was the lack of sufficient space, particularly adequate motor pool space and secure areas such as unit arms rooms. Installations had to make significant internal adjustments, sometimes relocating hundreds of personnel, to accommodate

the EC3 units.

Quality of life issues were a major concern for many returning to CONUS, both in EC3 units and as individuals. Soldiers with families were particularly hard hit by the lack of close-in affordable housing around many overcrowded stateside installations. Many were forced to live well beyond the prescribed 30 mile radius from post; some in search of rentals opted to buy homes since rentals were not available. Junior enlisted families suffered financial hardship when forced to live in temporary lodging well beyond the four day reimbursement period. Other irritants included long delays in receiving household goods; many waited over 100 days while some waited for over five months for their property. The drawdown saturated the capacity of carriers, contractors, ports and custom officials in Europe. USAREUR identified packers and movers from as far away as the United Kingdom to assist in movement of household goods.²⁷

The least troublesome aspect of redeployment was the preparation and turn in of installation facilities and Real Property (real estate). In most cases the military community played a major role in the turn in of equipment and facilities. Standards were clearly articulated in advance, courtesy inspections were conducted and close out assistance was provided as necessary. Commercially leased passenger and cargo vans and trucks provided by the community for the duration of the drawdown were

tremendously helpful. Installation clearance, the final phase of redeployment, was a relatively simple procedure, thanks to community support.

While some problems did surface, as anticipated with such an accelerated drawdown, thousands of soldiers and family members did return to CONUS in a safe and timely manner. Throughout the turbulent period of redeployment, taking care of soldiers and families remained the top priority for all commanders. .

CONCLUSION

The inactivation/redeplymnet of a battalion is an extraordinary mission requiring extraordinary measures. Accomplishing this mission overseas only adds to the complexity of the operation. The burden of the drawdown falls primarily on those at the subordinate levels. Late notifications, lack of a coordinated strategy, short planning windows and overburdened support systems created significant obstacles.

Commanders responded by restructuring their battalions to meet the challenge. Officers and NCOs were designated to perform specific tasks and become instant subject matter experts. Daily in- progress reviews became a routine means of monitoring progress, taking immediate corrective action, and coping with the tenfold increase in information flow. Accurate, current status reports were absolutely critical for the planning and flexibility necessary to keep pace

with an ever changing scenario.

Despite the many shortcomings noted throughout this paper, USAREUR did successfully accomplish its mission. Its success was the sum of the efforts of the many fine professionals, both military and civilian, who worked together to find solutions to the countless problems created by the drawdown. Resourcefulness of subordinates was the most critical component of this entire operation. Ordinary units faced with an extraordinary mission accepted the challenge, overcame the obstacles and successfully accomplished a drawdown of historic proportions.

I will now propose some recommendations that address the problem areas noted throughout this paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations from former USAREUR battalion commanders are the product of lessons learned during the FY 91/92 drawdown. Implementation is recommended at the corps or higher level of command.

NOTIFYING

- Ensure all units ordered to inactivate or redeploy are formally announced and given a minimum of 120 days to accomplish the mission.

- Provide formal written orders to all selected units as soon as the drawdown schedule is formally announced. Use verbal orders sparingly; never use for formal missions.

- Grant release authority early on so commanders can provide maximum early warning to battalion personnel and initiate coordination with community support agencies.

- Ensure all theater support agencies are formally notified as early in the drawdown sequence as possible; this is particularly important for personnel, transportation and logistics support.

- Closely coordinate the unit selection process at theater/DA level. Both should concur before selections are announced. Avoid changing missions or directing unit regeneration after significant personnel transfers or equipment redistribution take place.

MANNING

- Send Officer and Enlisted Management Teams to drawdown battalions to conduct individual interviews, determine eligibility for follow-on assignments and complete personnel action requests. This would determine approximate availability dates and help commanders manage personnel flow. It would also expedite personnel support by reducing the inefficient practice of conducting personnel actions over the telephone or through distribution.

- Augment personnel commands subordinate to PERSCOM; the increased workload generated by the drawdown quickly overwhelms normal staffing. Assign dedicated points of contact to respond to inquires and expedite personnel actions for subordinate drawdown units.

- Aggressively pursue assignment instructions, especially for low density MOSs, early on in the deactivation process. This was a recurring problem which should be closely monitored at PERSCOM.

- Coordinate with the American Consulate to send field teams to drawdown units to process applications for visas and passports. Central locations could be selected to service multiple units. This would save considerable man hours and transportation assets now lost to travel.

- Distribute a theater standard computer data base program which will capture all Critical Personnel Inactivation Information. Much time and effort is now wasted developing software programs at each unit.

EQUIPPING

- Develop a unit drawdown strategy based on the drawdown experience gained over the past two years in USAREUR. Procedures should be simple, standardized and uniformly administered by dedicated personnel whose sole mission is to assist drawdown units. This strategy should be a compilation of good ideas from successful drawdown / redeployment units.

- Establish a single report format that will meet all higher headquarters information requirements. Too many resources are currently being wasted on the preparation of multiple, redundant reports.

- Develop a rapid and dependable means to reconcile

property accounts from user through corps level. A system to accurately track current on-hand quantities and keep pace with constantly changing property accounts and organizational realignments is needed; it would improve modeling and produce more accurate disposition instructions.

REDEPLOYING

- Avoid scheduling inactivations/redeployments over extended holiday periods; holidays are essentially lost time due to the fierce competition for limited airline seats during these peak travel periods. US and Host Nation support agencies provide very limited support during the Christmas/New Year reduced manning period.

- Keep higher headquarters actively involved until units physically depart theater. The best way to ensure a realistic assessment of progress and problems is through on-site visits. Too often reports get so filtered at each intermediate headquarters that they no longer accurately reflect conditions on the ground. Overly optimistic reporting is a disservice to everyone, especially the drawdown unit.

- Maintain the decentralized execution approach. Battalion commanders must retain the authority to handle hardship cases and manage personnel flow; sufficient key personnel must remain on station until equipment and facility turn-in is complete.

- Continue to exercise leadership; ensure caring for people remains the top priority in theater. Meeting an E-date should be a distant second to taking care of soldiers and families.

While a flawless drawdown may not be attainable, improvement of current drawdown procedures is. Implementation of these recommendations will take strong leadership and a unified effort by all key players. The potential improvement in efficiency could enhance our national security and improve the quality of life for soldiers and families. Building down smarter is certainly well worth our effort.

ENDNOTES

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