



R E S T R I C T E D

THE GENERAL BOARD  
UNITED STATES FORCES, EUROPEAN THEATER  
APO 408

STUDY OF ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE ARMY GROUP HEADQUARTERS

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INTRODUCTION

War Department Field Manuals have for some years contemplated the employment of U. S. forces in groups of armies. However, prior to World War II an army group headquarters had never been organized and there were no published tables or other data which would furnish insight into details of intended functions.

The lack of background experience having necessarily limited the coverage of instructional matter, it is not unnatural that the concept of the practical means of application and employment of the army group headquarters is subject to controversial views. Effort has therefore been made to emphasize certain major requirements as demonstrated by experience.

Operational functions pertaining to the command of two or more armies offer no staff complications; however, the administrative functions involved are relatively unappreciated. This study is therefore confined to administrative functions.

Since operations of Headquarters 12th Army Group (First U.S. Army Group) afford an extensive source of study for the scope of administrative functions under different types of employment, the experience of that headquarters forms the basis of this report.

The specific nature of these administrative functions, the events and situations which made them necessary, their development and results are shown in detail in other reports of the General Board and in the Final After Action report of Headquarters 12th Army Group. They are merely mentioned in this report, no attempt being made to explain or explore them.

Usage herein of the term ADMINISTRATION accords with the definition (unqualified) in FM 100-10.

CHAPTER 1

PUBLISHED INFORMATION

1. Group of Armies. "The group of armies consists of two or more armies with suitable reinforcements placed under a designated commander for the accomplishment of a particular task, the execution of which requires coordination and control by one commander. The group (task force) may operate under the War Department or under a theater commander<sup>1</sup>."

2. Responsibility. The Group Commander "prepares plans for the group operations \*\*\* assigns missions and objectives to the armies \*\*\* but decentralizes execution of the task to his subordinates \*\*\* He must be prepared \*\*\* to regroup and move to other areas and execute other missions<sup>2</sup>."

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3. Functions. A group of armies "is primarily a tactical command<sup>3</sup>." "The group commander exercises no territorial jurisdiction and has few supply or administrative functions except when he becomes theater commander \*\*\* the group commander must estimate the means required and make recommendations for the allotment of additional means. He exercises control over supplies and credits for his forces. He makes provision for suitable traffic control measures and in some instances establishes supply installations<sup>4</sup>."

4. Staff. "The General Staff of the commander of the group of armies will be occupied more with operational than administrative matters. The Special Staff must include representatives of the various arms allotted the group of armies as additional or special means<sup>5</sup>."

### 5. Limitations of Instructions.

a. It will be noted that published data do not include instructional guidance as to detailed nature or extent of administrative functions and provide but little information on intended organization.

b. Although provision is made for Special Staff members of the Arms, no mention is made of the Services.

## CHAPTER 2

### ACTIVATION OF ARMY GROUPS

#### 6. First U.S. Army Group.

a. The first exclusively American army group headquarters to be organized in the U.S Army was activated in the European Theater 19 October 1943, designated as First United States Army Group and assigned the initial mission of planning only, plus preparation for assuming responsibility for the direction of field operations at the appropriate time<sup>6</sup>. There was considerable uncertainty during the latter part of 1943 concerning its eventual mission. It appeared that it might be the US Theater Field Headquarters on the continent, but it was also possible that it would eventually command armies only and be one of the major commands under Headquarters European Theater of Operations, United States Army.<sup>7</sup>

b. There being no approved tables or organization for an army group headquarters, First United States Army Group was organized under General Headquarters Tables of Organization 300-1 and for Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Special Troops, Tables of Organization 300-3.<sup>7</sup> Organization and other details are covered in Study No. 2, The General Board.

7. 12th Army Group. The second United States army group headquarters to be designated in the European Theater was the 12th Army Group. It was simply the First United States Army Group with a change in designation. The latter remained an organization on paper for deceptive purposes. The 12th Army Group came into being on 14 July 1944 and took command in the field on 1 August 1944.<sup>9</sup>

#### 8. 6th Army Group.

a. The third and last army group developed from the European campaigns of World War II was the 6th Army Group which was activated 1 August 1944 and took over command in the field on 15 September 1944. It came from the Mediterranean Theater for the conduct of

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operations in southern France and did not officially become a part of the European Theater until September 1944.<sup>10</sup>

b. In accordance with FM 100-15, it was envisaged that the functions of Headquarters 6th Army Group would be almost wholly tactical and that it would perform a minimum of administrative functions consistent with its missions, there being but one US army under its command. For this reason, except for Engineers and Signal, no special staff sections of the combat arms and services such as normally operate in the army headquarters, were organized. However, special representation of the remaining arms and services were included in the G-3 and G-4 Sections.<sup>11</sup>

CHAPTER 3

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

9. Inferred Functions.

a. One inference to be drawn from FM 100-15 is that a group of armies may be formed under a theater headquarters for the accomplishment of a specific task in a specific area and, having no territorial jurisdiction and few administrative functions, is subject to being moved readily to other assignments.

b. Another inference is that the armies may operate as a real task force directly under the War Department, and thus being removed from the next superior headquarters, would undoubtedly be responsible for a wider scope of administrative functions than in the case mentioned above.

10. Resultant Considerations.

a. As a task force, administrative and supply functions might be few but only if there were some other headquarters such as the Theater Headquarters to plan for and coordinate in the field such functions between the combat forces and other commands such as services of supply, Communications Zone and Air Force. To justify an Army Group Headquarters for a task force there should be more forces involved than those of one army, which automatically creates the need for administrative coordination. The administrative and supply functions of an army group headquarters should be the fewest when it commands armies only and there exists in the field a superior headquarters directing and coordinating all forces.

b. Obviously Manuals contemplated, and correctly so, that the conditions of operations of an army group headquarters and the responsibilities, particularly for supply and administrative functions, would vary. If the headquarters is charged with the planning for and the entire control of the operations in the field it will have considerable work of a nature other than that concerned with the direction of combat operations. It will be responsible for the administrative functions in its field of operations and very likely will have territorial responsibility. Some administrative functions of a static nature need not be handled by the headquarters when they have nothing to do directly with the operations in the designated areas. The responsibility for administrative and supply functions should be clearly understood prior to operations and the headquarters of the army group organized accordingly.

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11. Missions of 12th Army Group. The operations of the 12th Army Group (First United States Army Group) in planning and in initial command in the field in operation OVERLORD, were very similar to those which would probably be assigned to a task force headquarters. In later operations including planning during operations, it had less administrative responsibility. In the former case its plans included the operations of all ground forces and its commander acted as the commander of all ground forces on the continent. In the latter case, the commander was concerned with the command of armies only and his responsibility for operational coordination with the air forces and administrative coordination of the armies with the air forces, other army groups, and the Communications Zone were considerably lessened. The administrative functions under each of the two conditions are discussed hereinafter.

### 12. As a Task Force. Plans.

a. The Group Headquarters under directions of C - in - C 21 Army Group (British) was given the mission of planning for the operations of all United States ground forces in the securing of the lodgment area on the continent (Operation QVERLORD). The first Army was charged with the assault plans and the plans for operations until such progress had been made as to enable an army rear boundary to be drawn. The Services of Supply was charged with plans for the operations of the Communications Zone on the continent when it should be so established by the designation of an army rear boundary. Administrative requirements of the air forces on the continent were coordinated by the First Army for its period of control and then by the Army Group.<sup>12</sup>

b. It was contemplated that soon after an army rear boundary had been drawn, a second army headquarters would take command of a sector in the field and the army Group Headquarters would then have the operational direction of two armies in addition to the administrative coordination of those armies with each other and with the Communications Zone. The army commanders and the Communications Zone were to exercise area administration of all forces in their respective areas but the army group commander was responsible for the area as a whole and hence his staff had to prepare administrative instructions applicable to the areas as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

### 13. As a Task Force. Operations.

a. During the period of operation of the group as a task force with complete command in the field, a Theater Headquarters existed near by. Administrative matters not closely connected with the operations of the forces on the continent, were of little concern of the Army Group Headquarters. Channels for the handling of such matters were direct from the commands concerned to Theater Headquarters. Administrative functions in connection with the following activities were of primary concern to the Army Group Commander and his staff; welfare of troops, including recreation; discipline, including control of straggling and looting; replacements; prisoners of war and evacuation of personnel; army supply reserves; supply and transport priorities; salvage and evacuation; captured enemy materiel and supplies; development of Army Service Areas; allocation of service troops; traffic control; development and maintenance of road and rail; local procurement including labor; displaced persons; civil affairs supply and distribution; restoration of civil government and civil industry to the extent required by operational necessity.

b. The above functions were all inclusive as to the assault area and all troops ashore and, representing the nucleus of the entire expeditionary force, laid the ground work for subsequent operations,

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14. As a Command with Armies Only. Beginning 1 September 1944 the Commanding General, 12th Army Group was relieved of responsibility for forces other than armies assigned to the Group. From this time on administrative planning and operations of the Group Headquarters were concerned with immediate and contemplated tactical operations of the armies. With a third and eventually a fourth army assigned to the Group, the actual amount of work connected with administrative coordination of the armies increased, although the functions remained the same. Coordination with the air forces in the army areas continued. The Theater and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces were established on the continent and direct administrative relationship between the Army Group Headquarters and those Headquarters became active. Notwithstanding relief from the responsibility of directing the efforts of the Communications Zone after 1 September, close contact with that command was essential, particularly with the Advance Section thereof. With the increased activity of the armies and with new problems continually arising, the size of the administrative staff in the Army Group Headquarters needed for the earlier operations proved to be none too large under the lessened responsibilities after 1 September.

### 15. Nature of Functions.

a. The major administrative functions having to do with the armies and those with the greatest activity in relation to other headquarters were: Reinforcements; leave and rest area program; transport of leave personnel; regulation of PW evacuation; coordination of Red Cross activities; coordination of recovered allied military personnel matters; awards and decorations; priorities in supply and transport; ammunition allocations; special equipment and changes in tables of equipment; equipping resistance forces; traffic regulation; allocation of service troops; disposition of captured equipment and supplies; evacuation; salvage; logistical planning; administration of foreign nationals serving with the command; displaced persons; relief supplies; and, as a result of Army Group headquarters being given area responsibility in Germany without provision of any other agency for assuming the obligation, matters concerning civil administration and industry including public safety and health, communications, education, transport, utilities, manufacturing, mining, price and property control and finance.

b. In the case of many of the functions continuing from the stage of task force operations, there was an inevitable upsurge in volume, particularly in G-5 activities.

## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

16. Fundamental Concept. Since a commander must have administrative means at his disposal for accomplishing operational objectives, he must have within his command the functions necessary to enable proper use of the administrative means. An appreciable variety of administrative functions in an organization comparable to the army group as used in Europe, must therefore be expected.

### 17. Group Staff Requirements.

a. It is apparent that a sizable administrative staff is needed for both preparation of plans and for operations. The number of personnel needed varies to some extent inversely with the time available

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for an organized staff to prepare plans. Preparation of those plans enables a staff to spend considerable thought on the potential problems that will be met in actual operations and is therefore excellent training for such operations. The number of staff personnel needed for actual work in the field is not as great if the staff is thoroughly organized and has planned the field operations. These statements apply in particular to the administrative part of the staff.

b. An army group commander must include in his constant preparation of operational plans, estimates of the logistical capabilities necessary for execution of his plans. He must have requisite information and a staff capable of analyzing and utilizing the information; a staff capable of acting and advising. With shortages of service troops, equipment and supplies, he must know how to allocate those available to attain the best results. Information concerning probable support from the rear must be assessed in the light of experience. He requires an administrative staff which can work with other staffs on matters of vital importance to him, particularly with forward elements of the supporting service command, with the Theater Commander's staff and with the Air Forces.

18. Theater Staff. It takes sometime on the part of any staff to efficiently work into an operation. If the Theater staff is to operate efficiently from the start in full coordination of all matters between the field forces and the Communications Zone, and even with the Air Forces, it is necessary that the Theater Commander and his staff be established in the field of operations when the army group is so established, and in advance of the time when the army group takes over command of its armies. If however, as was the case in the European Theater, the Theater Commander and his staff do not take over complete control, including coordination of the armies and the communications zone in early operations, the army group staff must be prepared to do a certain amount of such coordination even if it is to last for a short time only. This is not desirable, in that it means a duplication of a certain amount of personnel in the Theater and the army group headquarters.

19. Procedure. The group headquarters must be able to coordinate administratively the armies with each other and to some extent the armies with the Communications Zone, in spite of Theater coordination between the group and its armies, and the Communications Zone. Matters that can be handled between the army group staff and the Communications Zone staff should be so handled without reference to Theater Headquarters.

20. Basic Principle. The principal administrative functions necessary for the conduct of warfare remain relatively constant but the detailed division of responsibility between army group and other agencies is, in a measure, dependent on overall organization for operations. The fundamental principle should be to free the army group headquarters of as much administrative responsibility as possible, consistent with the capability of the support constituted for that purpose. However, due care should be exercised against curtailing administrative functions to the point of diminishing the returns from available means, and the army group headquarters should retain control of the means necessary to accomplish the mission of its commander.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

21. Conclusions.

a. Published instructions relative to the army group headquarters are, through lack of background experience at time of publication, incomplete and lacking particularly in information as to administrative functions.

b. An army group headquarters even though primarily tactical has, in fact, many administrative functions.

c. An army group headquarters should be so formed and constituted as to enable it to discharge the inherent administrative responsibility necessary for discharge of operational responsibility.

d. An army group headquarters should be relieved of unnecessary administrative burdens but not at the expense of restricting facility and efficiency of operations.

e. Existing documents regarding the army group headquarters should be revised and expanded in the light of experiences in the European Theater.

22. Recommendations. That this study be reviewed by the War Department General Staff and that suitable action be taken to insure realization of the probable administrative functions of an Army Group Headquarters.

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