

February 13, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL McNAIR:

I have your memorandum of the 11th on desert training as well as the one on the training center for combined arms. The latter is a larger subject and one which involves large considerations and considerable disruption of our present training program. The merits of it, however, I maintain stand proven, - proven by the Germans. It is only a question of whether we are in a position to put it into effect. The size of such an undertaking cannot be discounted. But the project for desert training is a much smaller one and one that does not involve substantial problems of organization.

I do not believe that I made myself clear in my notes as it is apparent the comments which were sent to the War Plans Division do not cover at all what I had in mind. What I meant to convey was the necessity for war training of one or more of our armored divisions. Experimentation as to tactics and materiel are only incidental although the results of the experience would, even at this late date, prove very valuable. The training of one experimental combat team would be, in my judgment, far too slow a process for us to indulge in at this stage of the war when the likelihood of the immediate employment of our troops in time to stave off decisive results is apparent.

The only shelter the troops could have, as I envisage it, would be those they would have under combat conditions. From their initial camp, the division would be ordered to move forward, say, 200 or 300 miles into the desert under strictly campaign conditions with water lines, supply lines, maintenance units, and all that would be needed to maintain the division in combat. Thereafter, another armored division, after having undergone the same experience, could be engaged against the former under as nearly warlike conditions as it is possible to simulate. In a desert country, this could be done to a much greater extent than any maneuver ground that has thus far been made available to the troops. The use of mines, anti-tank weapons, aircraft, recovery units, maintenance battalions, and other supplies and installations, would all be given a major test which should serve as a test of preparedness for actual combat.

As I see the picture, we have not the time to get the

WARFARE  
DESERT  
SCHOOLS (TRAINING SCHOOL FOR COMBINED ARMS)

benefits of the relatively leisurely experimentation which seems to be suggested in your memorandum. The development of special equipment and experimentation on a "school troop" basis fits peacetime conditions but is not economical in a war, particularly one in which, for the time being at least, we are getting soundly licked. What I have in mind and what I think we need is as near actual war training of a division or divisions as possible for in a very short time those units themselves will be engaged in battle against well-trained armored units of the enemy.

There is a wealth of material in reports that have come from Libya which I am sure were read by many of the officers at Fort Knox but I doubt very much that the tactics are actually being tried out on such an intensive scale as the method suggested would permit. I am certain they are not being subjected to the severe tests of supply and maintenance, and distant operation, that could be set up on a basis such as is suggested.

I suggest it would be unwise not to check the opinion of the Soil Conservation Service by an actual reconnaissance by an officer who is familiar with the terrain of North Africa.

(SIGNED) JOHN J. MCGLOY

JOHN J. MCGLOY  
Assistant Secretary of War

Lt. Gen. L. J. McNair, Chief of Staff  
General Headquarters, U. S. Army  
Army War College  
Washington, D. C.

JJMCC:JHS

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, U. S. ARMY

ARMY WAR COLLEGE

WASHINGTON, D. C.

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IN REPLY REFER TO:

352.01/75-G  
(2-12-42)

February 12, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF WAR:

Subject: Training School for Combined Arms.

1. General Eisenhower handed General Clark the attached draft memorandum, dated February 9th, concerning the creation of a training school for combined arms, when the latter was in the former's office on February 10th.

2. This headquarters does not concur in the plan to create a great training school for combined arms, as outlined in your draft memorandum.

3. It would require approximately a year to set up such an establishment and provide it with troops trained adequately to make it function effectively.

4. While the staff of the Command and General Staff School might be used as a nucleus for the new school, it would have to be augmented. Moreover, the overhead in trained officers for troop units would be great and this overhead would tax further units already handicapped by the necessity of furnishing officer cadres for the expansion now in progress.

5. Some 50,000 troops and great quantities of equipment would be tied up.

6. In principle, schools are for the training of individuals and do not require the presence of such great bodies of troops. The Command and General Staff School, as presently organized, appears to suffice for the training of commanders and staff in the employment of the combined arms. By study of recent campaigns and by frequently rotating instructors between school and troops, instruction is kept abreast of developments.

7. For unit training, the instructor of a unit is its commander. Each division and army corps, in turn, with proper leadership, can and should constitute its own combined arms training school. Higher commanders, as they are being selected at present, are believed to be so capable that they can themselves, if necessary, train their principal subordinate commanders, and they in turn theirs, until the proper teamplay is developed. If such high commanders cannot conduct combined training effectively, they are hardly capable battle commanders.

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8. The past year, which culminated in large maneuvers, admittedly showed serious deficiencies in combined training. However, final conclusions cannot be drawn, since the components themselves were inadequately trained, their commanders in too many cases were incompetent and inexperienced, and means such as aviation and tanks were not available beforehand for preliminary training. Efforts have been and are being made to correct these conditions. At present troops are engaged in a review of basic and small unit training. Following this, appropriate armored and air commands will be made available to army corps commanders for combined ground-air-mechanized training.

L. J. McNAIR,  
Lt. Gen., G. S. C.,  
Chief of Staff.

1 Inclosure:

Memo to C of S, WD,  
fr O Ass't Sec of War,  
2-9-42.

FEB 12 1942



MESSAGE CENTER  
OFFICE CHIEF OF STAFF

REPRODUCED AT THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

February 9, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR THE CHIEF OF STAFF:

For a long time I have been impressed with the wisdom of setting up a great training school for combined arms. The secret of successful tactics in this war, as in all previous wars, is coordination of effort. At one time it was necessary only to coordinate units which moved with the same speed. With the introduction of cavalry units, different speeds had to be coordinated but, today, the speeds of various units not only vary but they move in different elements and most are greatly increased. Not only do speeds vary but tactics and weapons throughout the Army vary to even a greater degree than ever before. Maneuvers have proven that they do not supply the need for more combined training. They are cumbersome, can only be held during certain periods of the year and, in many other ways, fall short of supplying the sustained experimentation and training with combat arms which modern armies must have and which ours, at the present time, certainly lacks. We are going up against one of the greatest handicaps that untried soldiers can encounter, namely, other soldiers trained by years of combat in many varying types of terrain, with a tradition of success and directed by skilled and

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experienced staffs. There is no substitute for this but constant war training under campaign conditions.

Ft. Benning, Ft. Sill and the other branch schools are excellent but they do not deal with combined arms except on the most elemental and theoretical basis.

We should, in my judgment, set aside a relatively large area as a training and experimentation station for all arms. It should be done on a large scale, all types of ground and air units should be sent there in quantity, a school staff should be set up to plan and prepare the courses and, at least, two combat divisions with many incidental troops should be installed there to work up to the point of perfection the joint employment of air, infantry, artillery, tank, engineer, signal and other units. Officers should be able to train on real and not simulated combat teams. The whole area and all training should be under one head or commandant. Officers from the service schools should be sent there to complete their training and all tactical commanders should be sent there from time to time to view exhibitions, if not to take the courses.

There are many details that suggest themselves but the foregoing is the general plan. It is a plan which was adopted by the Germans most successfully as a necessary step in the coordination of a modern army. The plan would not be a substitute for maneuvers in any sense but would fill the great gap in combined arm coordination which now exists in the day to day training of the army.