

Staff Department
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

STUDENT MONOGRAPH
Advanced Infantry Officers Course
Class #1
1952 -53

TITLE
FLOOD! : THE CITIZEN EXPECTS - - -

Major James W. Linn
Roster No. 113

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Preface	2
Introduction	4
Discussion	
Part I.....	6
Part II.....	10
Conclusions	21
Bibliography	23
Appendix	25

PREFACE

The subject of this study is my observations of what the citizens of one town expected of the military during one flood, and what the military did. To permit the logical development of these observations through discussion to reasonable conclusions and allow the reader to see why those are the conclusions, it is necessary to describe both the flood and the people.

For that reason, the Discussion has been divided into two parts. Part I is devoted almost entirely to the climatological history of the flood with only slight mention of the actions of the people. Having that picture in mind, the reader can then follow logically in Part II, it is hoped, what both civilian and military personnel did at the time, and their reason for doing it.

Much of the material for this monograph was obtained from the files of the Commanding General's and the Adjutant General's offices at Fort Riley, Kansas. The facts concerning the river and the climatological data were obtained primarily from material and information furnished by Mr. W. E. Steps, Engineer, Division of Water Resources, Kansas State Board of Agriculture, and Mr. Louis G. Feil, Chief, Engineering Division, Office of the District Engineer, Kansas City District, Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army. Additional assistance and information has been furnished by Brigadier General Marcus B. Bell, (Ret), Columbus, Georgia; Colonel E. F. Kumpe, CE, PMS&T, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas; Major Arthur L. Travis, ACoFS G4, Fort Riley, Kansas; Captain William H. Sachs, Jr., Actg Asst Adjutant General, Fort Riley

Kansas; Mr. W. B. Avery, City Manager, Manhattan, Kansas; Dr. Ralph G. Ball, Manhattan, Kansas; Mr. Bob Hilgendorf, Extension Department, KSC, Manhattan, Kansas; and Mr. Jack Woodman, Manhattan, Kansas.

INTRODUCTION

During the months of June and July of 1951, the Kansas (Kaw) River Basin sustained a series of floods which culminated on Friday the 13th of July with the highest river crest since the flood of 1844 (when most of the region was yet unsettled). The 1951 floods in the Missouri River Basin, of which the Kansas River is a tributary, caused damage totaling \$935,000,000; more than twice as much, comparatively, as any previous flood in the history of the United States. The major part of this damage was caused by the Kansas River.

The site of the 100 year old Army Post of Fort Riley, Kansas, and the beginning of the Kansas River are both at the confluence of the Smoky Hill and Republican Rivers, 25 miles upstream and to the west from Manhattan, Kansas (15 miles by U. S. Highway 40). During this period of floods the Commanding General of Fort Riley was repeatedly asked for varied types of equipment and assistance. Some could be given as requested, but much could not.

One type of assistance willingly and freely rendered was that of persons in the military service who gave help as individuals either during off-duty time, or when marooned in a town. This assistance was of inestimable value frequently because of particular abilities or traits which the individual had learned or stimulated while in the service. Many of the civilians who were in contact with these soldiers were (and still are) of the opinion that the Army, as exemplified by

Fort Riley,(1) was supporting them directly.

In the town of Manhattan, Kansas, about which this story is told, the Army was never in direct support of any of the rescue activities, nor was it in any way controlling the populace. However, at various times, individual soldiers and officers were engaged in both of these activities, in most cases without any direct or implied permission of their superiors.

For an individual of the Armed Forces to engage in rescue and assistance activities in a time of disaster is entirely proper and well within his duties as a citizen. But to engage in controlling the populace, especially if he is armed, unless under the direct command of his superior, endangers not only himself and the people in the area, but the standing of the Armed Forces and the security of the Nation.

- (1) The terms "Army" and "Military", as used in this monograph, are construed to mean official actions from Fort Riley; it does not include actions taken by the Corps of Engineers through the Office of the District Engineer, Kansas City, nor the actions of other branches of the service to include supply drops by the Air Force and helicopter service provided by the Army and Coast Guard.

DISCUSSION

PART I

Manhattan, Kansas, a town of approximately 20,000 population is located in the flat valley of the Kansas (Kaw) River, just upstream from the confluence of that river with the Big Blue. The valley at that point narrows between bluffs located about 1.35 miles apart which form a pass for the river through the chain of hills.(2) This river drains an area of approximately 60,000 square miles which includes, generally, the north half of Kansas, and parts of Colorado and Nebraska. It meanders, from its head, only 169 miles to the east where it flows into the Missouri River at Kansas City, Kansas.(3)

Kansas is well known as one of the midwestern states of the dust bowl during the years of drought in the 1930's. A lesser known fact is that the state is as well, if not better, acquainted with floods. The Kansas River has overflowed its banks at Manhattan 30 times in the 48 years between 1902 and 1950. The flood next in magnitude to that of 1844 occurred in 1903. Other major floods which occurred prior to 1951 were in 1908, 1935, 1941, 1943, and 1950.

Precipitation for the months of May, June and July of 1951 was abnormally high, but heavier rainfalls had been recorded during earlier May's and July's. The precipitation in May was 170% of normal, followed by a record-breaking June in which more rain fell in one month than ever before in 65

(2) See Map A, Appendix p. 26.

(3) See Map B, Appendix p. 27.

years of recorded Kansas weather history, with total rainfall equalling 233% of normal. These rains caused two floods in June. The first occurred 7-11 June and is the eighth major flood as measured by the height of its crest at Manhattan. The second flood occurred 23 June - 1 July and is the fifth major flood. Water from this flood covered about 8 miles of the town's streets and entered homes in more than 25 blocks.

The first eight days in July saw some moderation in rainfall, although the ground remained quite saturated. However, on 9 July there began a storm which is listed as one of the major storms in the past 55 years in the Midwest, considering the amount of rain which fell in a 72 hour period and the area over which it fell. Even though this area has experienced other storms comparable in magnitude to this storm, few, if any of these storms were preceded by two months of intense rain, with rivers already overflowing their banks and with the ground close to saturation. The net results of these intense rains were

- (1) a flood exceeding the magnitude of any experienced before by the persons in the area, and of even more importance
- (2) a flood which unpredictably rose to its crest along the entire distance from the lower Smoky Hill and Republican Rivers to the mouth of the Kansas River within a period of 24 hours on Friday 13 July; in sharp contrast with the normal flood crest which takes a considerably longer period of time to reach

the mouth of the river.(4)

This unusual set of circumstances created a situation which confounded even the experts with regard to prediction and preventive action as these two examples illustrate:

- (1) Mr. Verne Alexander of the U.S. Weather Bureau at Kansas City states, ". . . a good flood forecast must be 'timely and relatively accurate'. In some cases the forecasts for the July, 1951 flood were not sufficiently timely or accurate".
- (2) In their Fifty-seventh Annual Report, the Directors of the Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company state, "Despite the fact that on the afternoon of Thursday, July 12, authoritative advices were that the flood waters would crest the following day at a level below the dikes, the swollen waters of the Kaw River poured over the dikes in the Kansas City, Kansas, area in the early morning hours of Friday, July 13, without warning. . . Careful investigation confirmed not only the unprecedented nature of the flood and the fact it occurred without warning, but that practically all other industries in the flooded area were also surprised and inundated."(6)

With this situation existing in Kansas City, it can be

- (4) Lincoln, L.J., Colonel, CE Kansas City District Engineer of the Corps of Engineers, "Observations concerning the 1951 Flood", speech given at Kansas Reclamation Association, Salina, Kansas, 20 Sep 1951, private copy.
- (5) Alexander, Verne, North Central Area Engineer, U.S. Weather Bureau, Kansas City, Missouri, "Flood Forecasting", speech presented at Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Committee Meeting, Topeka, Kansas, 14 Dec 1951 private copy.
- (6) The Atcheson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company, "Fifty-Seventh Annual Report for the year ended December 31, 1951", p. 11 & 12, 21 Feb 1952, private copy.

readily understood that 144 miles up the river Manhattan received a more staggering blow because of the relatively shorter length of time in which to get prepared. Additionally, these people were accustomed to floods. While the old saying, "Familiarity breeds contempt" is not completely applicable, since no one held in contempt the damage a flood can do, those people who lived close to the flood waters felt very strongly that the water would not come higher. In many cases, people had evacuated their homes or businesses, or both, only to move back in with nothing gained since the water had not entered home or store. These people, tired of continual moving, decided to chance the third flood and sat tight. In other cases, people who were present during the 1903 flood decided since they were safe in that, or subsequent floods, this one would not surpass the worst of those.(7)

In retrospect, it is easy to analyze the weather factors which are given in the preceding paragraphs and see that an unheard of flood was in the making, but at the time many of the factors were not clearly presented to the people, and even had they been presented it would have been difficult to evaluate the facts impartially.

- (7) Personal experiences; residence was in flooded area with close proximity to business district and personal previous experience with floods in area since 1935; also observation of and discussion with neighbors.

PART II

On Monday 9 July the river had gone below flood stage for the second time since 6 June. But about 1400 hours the rains started and by midnight 3.47 inches had fallen. These rains continued almost without cessation until 1100 hours Thursday 12 July, with a total of 10.32 inches. By Tuesday evening, 10 July, the waters were almost as high as the crest of the first flood of 9 June; by 1630 Wednesday afternoon 11 July the river had exceeded by almost 3 feet the crest of the second flood of 29 June.

Since the City Hall was in the east part of town, it was in the inundated area for the second flood in June.(7) To still accomplish the mission of providing fire and police protection during that flood, emergency communications were established and the fire engines remained at a mobile stand in the middle of the main street of town just above the water. The city officials were out of their offices for such a short period of time that no substitute offices were necessary.

When the July flood started, much the same action was initiated, but it soon became obvious that additional measures would have to be taken. Therefore by Wednesday, 11 July, a Flood Headquarters was established in the Student Union building on the Kansas State College Campus. In this relatively small, cantonment-type building with only one main room were established the offices of the City Manager, Mayor, City Police, City Engineer, County Sheriff and the CP of the National Guard Company, an Ordnance MAM unit.

(7) See Map A, Appendix, p.26.

It is pertinent to the discussion to note the following points about the town of Manhattan:

1. Primarily a college town, it has no manufacturing or other industry; a quiet and law abiding community. Though adjacent to Fort Riley, the majority of the soldiers go to Junction City on the other side of the post. The police force was experienced in traffic control and taking care of college pranksters and drunks.
2. The town had just voted in a new city manager system of government, with three city commissioners, one of whom was elected mayor, in reality an honorary title.
3. The city manager, a stranger to the town, had occupied his position for just over a month. He was no stranger to municipal government, however, having just come from the office of the City Manager of Kansas City, Missouri.
4. The mayor was the Manhattan flood observer for the U. S. Weather Bureau, and is considered outstanding in his knowledge in that field. He was, of course, intensely interested in the scientific side of this natural phenomenon.
5. Under a previous city administration, a committee of citizens, headed by a doctor (a reserve colonel) had prepared a complete disaster plan which had been designed for just such a situation.

By Wednesday afternoon, 11 July, the evacuation of the area was well under way. It was an individual affair, with practically no organization or system. The evacuated people

went to the homes of friends, or of other citizens out of the flooded area, and by Wednesday evening, the College opened to them its gymnasium, field house, and some dormitories.

The water rose steadily from Monday evening 9 July through the middle of Thursday afternoon, 12 July. At that time the rise became slower, and covered very little more of the city, although the river did not crest at Manhattan until 0300 Friday morning 13 July at a height of 33.4 feet. This steady rise Wednesday night and Thursday morning caused most inhabitants of the inundated sections to evacuate; by Thursday afternoon most homes in the area were empty. Those residents who decided then to sit tight remained until the waters receded.

By Thursday morning, the evacuation began to have a semblance of organization. The means for evacuation were varied: boats, rafts, tractor drawn wagons and hayracks, trucks, and, of course, foot. Personnel of the National Guard Company, military personnel, and individual citizens were performing this difficult and tiring task.

The direction for this evacuation was coming from a heterogenous headquarters really sparked by two captains from Fort Riley who will be identified as Capt AG and Capt Pennsylvania NG.(9)

- (9) Capt AG was a member of the personnel section, 10th Div (Trng) at Fort Riley; Capt Pennsylvania NG (National Guard) was on active duty for the purpose of attending the Intelligence School at Fort Riley and had participated in two disaster in his home state where National Guard troops had been called on active duty by the governor of the state to control and assist the civilian populace during floods. Both officers were marooned in Manhattan.

On Wednesday, 11 July, they met with the captain of the Manhattan National Guard Company and decided to organize a military headquarters with the express purpose of providing organization and direction to the evacuation of the flooded areas.

Frequent calls for military personnel to report to flood headquarters to assist in evacuation work were broadcast over the local radio station. A large number of volunteers, both military and civilian, responded to this call. Included were a number of officers from whom a staff was selected and organized for an eight hour shift, 24 hour a day basis. These volunteers and the National Guard Company worked the evacuation plan together from plans and organization developed by this headquarters.

By late Thursday afternoon, 12 July, the water had become so deep and the current so swift, that, coupled with the possibility of erosion holes in the streets, the city authorities became worried for the safety of any persons who might try to enter the more dangerous area during the night. To prevent this happening, and also to prevent looting, it was announced over the radio that the City Manager had declared a state of "martial law"(10) and further a curfew line with guard posts

- (10) Personal knowledge from hearing announcement on the radio and subsequent experience. However, in a letter from the City Manager to the author, dated 13 Nov 52 he states, ". . . we did not intend to surrender any of our civilian jurisdiction, so therefore did not formally [underlining supplied] declare a state of martial law." In the newspaper "The Manhattan Tribune-News" of 17 July 51, the article "Guard Ends Duty; City under Civil Law at All Times", states, "The police power of the city rests with the Manhattan police department and always has [the] City Manager. . . said today. . . Though [the] city manager declared a state of emergency and called upon many military groups for help, the city was not under military law at any time, [the city manager] explained."

(Underlining supplied, in view of the loose use of terms.)

was established beyond which no one could be outside of their house after the hours (as best I can recall) of 2030. These posts were established and maintained by personnel of the National Guard Company, supplemented by military personnel from Fort Riley. Some of these personnel were armed. The supervision of the guard posts on the ground was done by the military staff and officers of the National Guard Company. These posts outlined all of the area of the town which had water in the streets, and therefore included the homes of many persons who did not consider themselves yet to be in a danger area (and whose homes were never actually endangered by high water).

A direct contrast to this method of organization is provided in the town of Lawrence, Kansas, some 90 miles to the east of Manhattan. There, the town met a similar set of circumstances "through a local agency designated by the Chamber of Commerce as the 'Disaster Committee' . . . the chairman named from his knowledge . . . the staff chiefs he needed . . . the Disaster Committee operated as a small dictatorship, and the entire civic machinery of the city took orders from the Disaster Chairman; this included the city engineer, police, water supply, public health, local radio station, and the mayor. A state of emergency was declared, and each staff member designated by the Disaster Chairman did the best he could. It was highly efficient . . . the Governor was requested by telephone to call out the National Guard unit, and they were mobilized with considerable promptness . . . No state of martial law was or should have been declared as the criterion for martial law is well established as a collapse of the civil agencies dealing with these matters. The predominant

and found the following:

1. The military headquarters was well organized and staffed.
2. "Martial law" was declared only on the authority of the city manager; the decision to do so was made after receiving the advice of these two captains, particularly in view of the experience of Captain Pennsylvania NG.
3. Military personnel from Fort Riley were participating in the imposition of "martial law", assisting in the evacuation activities and in traffic direction.
4. Some military personnel from Fort Riley were armed.
5. Capt AG was the issuing authority for passes into the flooded area.
6. Participation in these activities was done in full cooperation with the Manhattan National Guard Company and police department, and with (at least) the tacit approval of the city manager.

Major Commander immediately directed that all military personnel be disarmed, including those standing guard on the helicopter fuel supply point. He then directed that all military personnel assigned at guard posts along the "curfew line" be removed and that the National Guard Company Commander be so informed. The authority to issue passes was returned to the City Manager, who delegated it to the Chief of Police. No changes were made in the organization and operation of the headquarters, nor in the operation of directing traffic and evacuating people from the flooded area.

The Chief of Police and the Commanding Officer of the Manhattan National Guard Company were next contacted by Major Commander. They were advised as to the complete meaning of martial law, and then at about 1300 on Friday 13 July, these three discussed the subject with the City Manager and Mayor. At this time the City Manager was informed that all military personnel from Fort Riley had been removed from any "enforcement-type" duties and were, and would in the future, perform only "assistance-type" duties. The City Manager continued to feel that he had authority to declare martial law, and only with reluctance decided to contact the State Attorney General and the State Adjutant General to determine if it could be continued. He was informed by both that "martial law" was improper and without authority, but was told that a state of emergency could be declared and that the use of National Guard troops for that purpose was approved by the Governor.

Although the words "martial law" were not again mentioned over the local radio, the majority of the citizens were of the opinion that it was still in effect. At that time, the civil authorities and the National Guard Company Commander expressed the thought that even though the period of "martial law" had been without authority, the use of the term as a deterrent had been effective.(13)

- (13) It is obvious that there was never any actual martial law as defined in the Manual for Courts Martial, United States, 1951, and that the term was used very loosely. However, Thursday night, 12 July, the National Guardsmen and those military personnel maintaining the guard posts had been instructed to use force, if necessary, to carry out their orders.

Several times during Friday afternoon and evening, Major Commander was requested by the Chief of Police and the Captain of the National Guard Company to provide military personnel to assist in maintaining law and order; such requests were refused. Traffic direction was still operating and manned as organized by the military headquarters, but care had been taken to coordinate with the police and to place civilians at those corners beyond which vehicles were not to pass.

It was true that there was a hardship imposed upon the small civil police force to maintain the control, law and order needed in this situation. Additionally, the National Guard Company had been working from Wednesday morning through Friday, and had not had sufficient rest. However, the Chief of Police who was to have supplied overall supervision for the personnel of the police force and National Guard Company after late Friday was not able to delegate authority in a manner to leave himself free for planning, organizing and supervising. Of the entire police force, auxiliary personnel and equipment, it can be said that only the radio was utilized to the maximum.

By Saturday morning, 14 July, the current of the river had abated so that boats could get into the area; by afternoon it was possible to get into much of the area by walking. At this time another fact became obvious: during the evacuation, people would willingly subject themselves to direction by anyone demonstrating authority if it would assist in getting out of danger; after the danger was passed and they wanted to return to the area, direction from any source would be resented. Thus, the little control initially exercised over entry into the flooded area Saturday afternoon was soon

stopped because it was not established so it could really be enforced.

Throughout this period of time and until Monday 16 July, the military of Fort Riley performed or furnished additional help, not mentioned above, which included:

1. Two 2½ ton trucks with drivers were sent to Manhattan. One additional truck, with medical supplies, was also sent. These three trucks were used extensively in feeding and supplying evacuated personnel and those personnel assisting in control and evacuation.
2. To the greatest extent possible, the personal problems of military personnel and their dependents were solved by the military staff to lighten the load on the civilian agencies.
3. One of the three short wave radio stations located at Manhattan was operated continuously throughout the flood by military personnel. The local reserve personnel of the various Armed Forces could not or did not organize to the extent that all three stations could be manned.
4. During the times when the leaders of the community met to discuss future plans and actions, the military staff was invited and participated to the fullest extent.
5. On Sunday, 15 July, Major Commander broadcast a talk to the military personnel and civilian employees of Fort Riley who resided in Manhattan. This talk had the dual purpose of informing them of the plans

to assist them in resettling their families if flooded out, and of getting the maximum number back to duty at Fort Riley at the earliest possible day. The talk had the incidental effect of boosting the morale of the local citizens because it showed that someone had planned to start the rehabilitation work, and it pointed out to them the problems of another community, i.e., Fort Riley, so that they realized they were not alone.

On Monday, 16 July, the military personnel held a muster and approximately 500 personnel reported. Of these, about half were able to return to duty that day, while the remaining half was granted leave to relocate their families. In effect, this muster completed the activities of the military headquarters in Manhattan.

CONCLUSIONS

The civil government in Manhattan was not prepared to meet the problems posed by a large scale disaster and did not provide the needed guidance and organization. Into this vacuum stepped volunteer military personnel who, because of their training and experience, were able to bring organization out of confusion and provide the spark of leadership at a critical time.

In so doing, those military personnel initially in key positions were unaware of the limit of their authority; aided by a confused military government, unauthorized martial law was declared. Fortunately, this did no harm to either the military or civil authorities but only because no incidents developed. Following this, and again guided by the military, civil government regained the control which they should have exercised continually.

There were recurrent requests by citizens to have the military in control of the situation; initially the civil government was in on this hue and cry, but after the military pointed out the boundary which, in good faith had been crossed, the civil government was ever watchful to see that the military did not again overstep. However, the citizen continued to feel that he would be more secure in this area of confusion if the military would continue in control.

The military must be prepared to guide the citizens into the right efforts, and can best do it by insuring that plans are available and are rehearsed before the disaster,

and are used during the disaster.

This, of course, has been better said - -

God and soldier we adore
In time of trouble, not before.
Trouble gone and all things righted
God is forgotten and the soldier slighted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PAMPHLETS - PERIODICALS

- Atcheson, Topeka and Sante Fe Railway Company, "Fifty-seventh Annual Report for year ending December 31, 1951", 21 Feb 52, private copy.
- Flora, S. D. and associates (prepared by), "Climate of Kansas", Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, State Printer, Topeka, Kansas, 1948, private copy.
- Manhattan Tribune-News, The, Manhattan, Kansas, Vol. 38, No 96, Tuesday 17 Jul 51, private copy.
- U. S. Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau, "Climatological Data, Kansas", Vol. LXV, Nos. 5, 6 and 7 for May, June and July 1951, U. S. Govt Printing Office, 1951, private copy.
- U. S. Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau, "Kansas-Missouri Floods of June and July 1951". Technical Paper No 17, U. S. Govt Printing Office, 1951, private copy.

SPEECHES

- Alexander, Verne, North Central Area Engineer, U. S. Weather Bureau, Kansas City, Mo., "Flood Forecasting", speech presented at Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Committee Meeting, Topeka, Kansas, 14 Dec 51, private copy.
- Alexander, Verne, "Flood Producing Rainfall of June-July 1951", speech presented at Missouri Basin Inter-Agency Committee Meeting, Topeka, Kansas, 14 Dec 51, private copy.
- Lincoln, L. J., Colonel, CE, Kansas City District Engineer of the Corps of Engineers, "Observations concerning the 1951 Flood", speech presented at Kansas Reclamation Association, Salina, Kansas, 20 Sep 51, private copy.

LETTERS

- Avery, W. B., City Manager, Manhattan, Kansas, letter to author dated 13 Nov 52, private copy.
- Bell, Marcus B., Brigadier General, (Ret), then Commanding General, Fort Riley, Kansas, letter to Mr. Gunby Jordan, Columbus, Georgia, dated 19 Jul 51, private copy.

Hilgendorf, R. D., Director, Radio Station KSAC, Kansas,
State College, Manhattan, Kansas, letter to author,
dated 10 Nov 52, private copy.

Kumpe, E. F., Colonel, CE, PMS&T, University of Kansas,
Lawrence, Kansas, letter to author dated 23 Oct 52,
private copy.

Steps, W. E., Engineer, Division of Water Resources,
Kansas State Board of Agriculture, Topeka, Kansas, letter
to author, dated 13 Oct 52, private copy.

Travis, A. L., Major, GS w/Trps, AC of S G4, Hq
Fort Riley, Kansas, letter to author dated 15 Oct
52, private copy.

APPENDIX

Map "A" - Traced from U.S. Department of Interior Geological Survey Map Manhattan Quadrangle, Kansas. N 3907.5-W9630/7.5 Scale 1:24,000

Map "B" - Traced from U.S. Department of Interior Geological Survey, State of Kansas - Scale 1:500,000