

FORUM & FEATURES



The Third Army: Past and Present

CAPTAIN DANNY M. JOHNSON

The Third United States Army, best known perhaps for its distinguished service in World War II under the command of General George S. Patton, Jr., was formally reactivated recently at Fort McPherson, Georgia, after nine years in an inactive status. It has been around, performing one function or another, for more than 60 years.

The Third Army was originally activated on 15 November 1918 at Ligny-en-Barrios, France, as Headquarters, Third Army, American Expeditionary Forces. General John J. Pershing named Major General Joseph T. Dickman as its first commander. It was composed initially of the III Corps, which included the 2d, 32d, and 42d Divisions, and the IV Corps, which included the 1st, 3d, and 4th Divisions. To these were added, on 22 November 1918, the VII Corps, containing the 5th, 89th, and 90th Divisions. In the same month, the Americans and their allies began their march into Germany to assume occupation duties. The Third Army moved to Coblenz, Germany, as the principal headquarters in the

American sector for units assigned to the American Army of Occupation.

The return of our troops to the United States progressed rapidly, and the Third Army was disbanded on 2 July 1919 in Germany. It was reconstituted, though, in October 1921 as part of the Organized Reserves and allotted to the Seventh Corps area, but was withdrawn from the Organized Reserves and allotted to the Regular Army as an inactive unit in August 1932.

REACTIVATED

In October 1933, it was activated again at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, this time as a Regular Army unit, one of the four field armies created by General Douglas MacArthur, then the Army's Chief of Staff, within the continental limits of the United States. It was responsible for the Fourth and Eighth Corps areas and for additional missions dealing with the region along the Gulf of Mexico and the country's southern border.

From the time of its activation as a

Regular Army unit, the Third Army's headquarters alternated between Fort Sam Houston (the headquarters of the Eighth Corps area), and Atlanta, Georgia (the headquarters of the Fourth Corps area), depending upon the senior commander at the time.

Early in World War II, the Third Army engaged in training tactical units for service overseas, and in January 1943, it was called on to provide the original cadre for the activation of the Sixth Army, which was also formed at Fort Sam Houston.

On 12 January 1944, an advance detachment of Third Army headquarters departed for England, with the main body arriving there in March 1944. (Its duties at Fort Sam Houston were taken over by the Fourth Army, which moved from the Presidio of Monterey, California, on 26 January 1944.) Lieutenant General George S. Patton, Jr., assumed command of the Third Army in England, where it remained until July 1944, when the headquarters moved to the Cotentin area of Normandy, France. Many of its assigned units had seen action during June and July 1944 as

part of the First Army. The Third Army became operational on 1 August 1944.

A number of armored columns soon drove quickly to the tip of the Brittany peninsula, while others swung to the east and drove across France. The Third Army was halted on 25 September 1944 by orders from higher headquarters as it came up to the line formed by the Moselle River.

The drive for the fortress city of Metz began on 9 November, and after 12 hectic days of bloody fighting, the city, along with most of its protecting forts, surrendered. The Third Army then moved on to establish bridgeheads over the Saar River at Saarlautern and Dillingen, and stood ready for an all-out attack to pierce the Siegfried Line. It had penetrated that line at several points when it was dramatically diverted to Luxembourg for the Battle of the Bulge. The speed with which it moved from one sector to another and drove into the Bulge from the south was one of the outstanding feats of the war.

STEADY DRIVE

In early 1945, the Third Army drove steadily into the Siegfried Line against stubborn resistance, and captured the Saar-Moselle triangle, which led to the capture of the city of Trier on 2 March 1945. On 5 March, its 4th Armored Division drove through the enemy's lines, and by 9 March both the 4th and the 11th Armored Divisions had driven more than 80 miles to the Rhine River. Turning south, the Third Army on 13 March again crossed the Moselle and drove through the Saar Basin. On the night of 22 March, without artillery or air preparation, the 5th Infantry Division of the Army's XII Corps made the first assault crossing of the Rhine at Oppenheim. The 4th Armored Division followed this crossing by thrusting armored spearheads deep into Germany.

When a link-up with Russian forces became imminent, a restraining line was established beyond which Army

units were not to advance. The Third Army reached this line on 16 April, and the following day it was ordered to pivot to the south and to attack into Austria and the so-called redoubt area. This drive carried the Third Army across the Danube, Isar, and Inn Rivers and into Czechoslovakia and Austria, where it was when the war in Europe ended on 8 May 1945.

At various times throughout the war, six corps (III, V, VIII, XII, XV, and XX) had operated under the Third Army. A total of 40 U.S. Army divisions and one foreign division had been assigned to it for varying periods. It had taken part in the Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace, and Central Europe campaigns.

Following the surrender of Germany, the Third Army was once again assigned occupational duties, this time in Bavaria and western Czechoslovakia. On 15 March 1947, the War Department transferred the Third Army, less its personnel and equipment, from Germany to Atlanta, Georgia, where it replaced the Seventh Army, which was inactivated on the same date. In December 1947, the Third Army moved from a downtown location in Atlanta to Fort McPherson.

It was assigned the geographical areas of Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida, and it was made responsible for the command support of all assigned and attached units, activities, and installations in its area. It was also responsible for organizing, training, and equipping its assigned Active Army and Army Reserve troop units, for insuring the combat readiness of these units, and for directing and supervising the training of the Army National Guard. The Third Army was redesignated on 1 January 1957 as Headquarters, Third United States Army.

In 1972 the United States Army began its most sweeping reorganization in ten years. As a result, the Continental Army Command and the Combat Developments Command were discontinued and the Forces

Command (FORSCOM), with headquarters at Fort McPherson, and the Training and Doctrine Command, at Fort Monroe, Virginia, came into being. The Third Army was assigned to FORSCOM on 1 July 1973, but was eventually inactivated at Fort McPherson on 1 October 1973.

CENTCOM

Now reactivated and back at Fort McPherson, the Third Army will function as the Army component headquarters for the multi-service Central Command (CENTCOM), which has its headquarters at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Florida. In peacetime, the Third Army will be under the operational control of the CENTCOM and under the command of FORSCOM. It will have operational control of the XVIII Airborne Corps, which is at Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

The Third Army headquarters was formed to improve the command and control of all Army forces assigned to the CENTCOM. Units slated for CENTCOM missions are the XVIII Airborne Corps, the 82d and 101st Airborne Divisions, the 24th Infantry Division, the 6th Cavalry Brigade (Air Combat), various Ranger and Special Forces units, and a variety of Army National Guard and Army Reserve combat support and combat service support units. This arrangement will allow the XVIII Airborne Corps to focus on detailed planning for employment while the Third Army focuses on planning for deployment and sustainment.

Most of the people assigned to the Third Army headquarters will be members of the Army Reserve. Accordingly, the Department of the Army has established Headquarters and Headquarters Company (HHC), Third Army (Augmentation), an Army Reserve unit also located at Fort McPherson. (During peacetime, HHC, Third Army (Aug) is assigned to the 81st Army Reserve Command in Atlanta.) It has an authorized strength of 376 Reservists. Upon mobilization, the unit will cease to exist,

and its personnel will be assigned directly to spaces in Third Army headquarters.

During peacetime, 95 members of the Active Army and 41 members of the Army Reserve will staff the headquarters on a full-time basis. Additionally, 150 people currently assigned to FORSCOM headquarters will be predesignated as members of the Third Army for planning, during exercises, or in the event of mobilization. (The activation of the Third Army will not require an increase in

the Army's force structure.)

If the Third Army is mobilized, it will have an assigned strength of 662, organized under the Field Army Table of Organization and Equipment. The Deputy Commanding General of FORSCOM also serves as the Commanding General, Third Army, which gives him both a mobilization and a peacetime role.

Because of the various roles the units of the CENTCOM will have on any future battlefield, the Third Army can be expected to continue to

serve with distinction in the future as it has in the past.



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Able and Willing

DANDRIDGE M. MALONE

A really good soldier is both able and willing. But that's not really news. You probably already know that developing soldiers means building skill and will. And you know that building skill, or training, is the primary task and the principal responsibility for any company-level leader this side of the battlefield. You know, too, that every time you build skill, you automatically build will.

In general, these things apply to developing all soldiers. But because each soldier is different, you may need some *how-to's* for developing the individual soldier, because what works well for building skill and will in one soldier may not work at all for the next. (It would if soldiers were machines, but they're not.)

Your goal, then, is a simple one — to produce a man who is both able and willing. Some soldiers are always able and willing. They have the skill and the will, no matter what task you give them to do. Others, of course, have the will (they try hard) but not

the skill (whatever they touch turns to mud). Still other soldiers have the skill to do a task you give them, but not the will — you have to stand over them and make them do the task.

If you want to develop soldiers as individuals, you have to start by sizing each one up in terms of how able he is and how willing he is. You have to check his headspace with an "able and willing gauge."

So if you want to develop soldiers as individuals, you have to start by sizing each one up in terms of how able he is and how willing he is. In short, make an estimate; check his headspace with an "able and willing gauge." This simple basic estimate

works, and it can save you time, help you do the right things right, and — in addition to all that — it's logical. It makes good sense for a leader to come down hard on a soldier who has the ability to do a task but won't do it. On the other hand, it makes no sense at all to come down hard on a man who is trying his best but has never really been taught the skills he needs to do a given task. Knowing how to judge a soldier in terms of "able and willing" is the first step in developing soldiers as individuals.

Listed below are some traits and characteristics of soldiers in each of the four different categories of "able and willing." As you study these, think about the immediate subordinates you have right now, about each one as an individual. Few individuals will fit clearly and completely in any one category. But if you'll think about a man, you'll see that one of these four categories seems to describe him better than the others.