



(USAREUR Photo)

Personnel Service Support

By Colonel Edward Strong, Lieutenant Colonel Hoherz and Captain Terry E. Trout

The soldier support challenge for the personnel community of the VII US Corps (The Jayhawk Corps) is to train their soldiers and units for combat, maintain combat gear in top condition for war, and provide professional personnel services support in a peacetime configuration — a tough test for any personnel manager.

VII Corps units are best supported in their

peacetime locations on an area basis. This gives commanders and soldiers quick access to local personnel expertise and means that personnel officers must crossover traditional command lines. Some unity of effort is lost at the major command level. Peacetime actions must be constantly reviewed to be sure responsibilities are clear and the right channels are being used. War plans must consider what the Corps will look like after it

converts to its wartime posture.

The major personnel players in VII Corps are the 38th Personnel and Administration Battalion Commander, and the Adjutants General of the 1st Airborne Division, the 3d Intelligence Division, the 1st Intelligence Division (F), and the Corps. Teamwork and mutual support among this top team of professionals is at the heart of good service in the Corps' peacetime configuration. A common goal of the top team is to provide first rate direct military personnel office support to soldiers and commanders from 17 widely scattered personnel offices.

Management of four different SIDPERS data bases is difficult because each is located in a different city. All 17 of the Corps' Military Personnel Offices deal with and support more than one data base. Some of the routine SIDPERS procedures which work well at a stateside installation have to be modified in the deployed Corps to give special service to commanders stationed far away from their SIDPERS Interface Divisions. There is a personnel cost associated with this extra service, but the payoff is multiplied for personnel managers in the Corps' ability to manage soldiers.

Even though VII Corps combat divisions are managed by the 1st Personnel Command as separate "account holders," the Corps Commander is intensely involved in their personnel posture as well as the other commands in the Corps. Each month, the G1 and Adjutant General review the personnel readiness of the Corps with the commander personally. This provides a regular springboard for problem solving actions on behalf of commanders. Regular readiness sessions place senior officer visibility on critical problems, give direction to the Corps personnel managers, and keep personnel management decisions in sync with readiness requirements.

To move to a wartime footing, the VII Corps personnel community converts to a straight command line support system for Corps units. It also assists the 1st Personnel Command in forming the theater Army's replacement system (TARS) by putting replacement units together and reassigning them to TARS.

Personnel Delivery System

The next and perhaps most important major wartime requirement is to quickly establish and operate a "personnel delivery system" for the Corps on the battlefield.

What needs to be delivered in the personnel community? The simple answer is replacements, mail, and personnel reports (e.g., unit strength

reports and casualty reports).

A delivery system is important because the personnel system will not have enough priority to gain access to any of the Corps' scarce command and control communications systems to exchange personnel information. Key personnel documents will have to be transported from point to point on the battlefield if the personnel system is to survive. The division and the Corps adjutants general will have to physically connect the organizations in the Corps with an official mail system (i.e., a courier system) so documents can be moved in an organized manner.

A personnel delivery system makes a great deal of sense. After all, the Corps Adjutant General already has the mission of delivering personal mail throughout the battlefield. A GS/DS postal unit will be assigned to the Corps from 1st PERCOM at the outbreak of hostilities to receive and push mail forward to direct support postal units in the Corps rear and to the divisions. Organic vehicles are authorized and available in postal units to do the job. VII Corps has built a wartime personnel delivery system around this capability. It's simply a matter of organizing the existing resources in the personnel system and letting commanders know where and how to enter the system.

VII Corps plans to employ personnel teams on the battlefield. Each team will consist of a personnel services company (or division), a replacement detachment, and a postal unit. Each team's mission will be to provide direct support to commanders (i.e., replacement, postal, and military personnel office) from a single location. Mail and replacements are motivators that will bring units to the team where they can turn in their personnel reports!

Personnel teams are the key delivery points in the VII Corps' system. The teams will be deployed in-depth on the battlefield. Teams in the divisions' area will work for the adjutants general of the divisions and the teams in the Corps area will work for the personnel and administration battalion commander (as provided for in current doctrine). The teams will be linked together physically by regular vehicular runs back and forth. The resulting network will be able to move mail forward and pick up outgoing mail, both personal and official. The official mail system will give the Corps its capability to move critical personnel documents throughout the battlefield.

The key link in the delivery system is between the division and the Corps. To bridge this gap, the Corps personnel teams will deploy small Forward Area Support teams (i.e., about six soldiers) in the rear area of the divisions. They will collocate with the division's personnel team. Their mission will be

to distribute mail and replacements, collect outgoing mail, and provide liaison between the division adjutant general and the Corps adjutant general. (Note: Most division replacements will be delivered direct from TARS, but some will undoubtedly transit the Corps system.)

Corps Headquarters

VII Corps employs a Corps rear complex in its wartime configuration. This organization puts the G1, the G4, and the Adjutant General in the same place. The G1 and the Adjutant General combine forces to operate a single personnel operations center to perform the personnel accounting mission and man and sustain the Corps. Here the Corps has the capability to read the battle, work with 1st Personnel Command to control the replacement flow, coordinate critical personnel decisions with the logistics family, and give technical direction to the division adjutants general and the personnel and administration battalion commander.

Another key mission of the personnel operations center is to track the force — that is keep up with where Corps units are located. Mobilization means reinforcements and a rapidly expanding Corps — more units to account for and support. This is a tough job when you consider that most Corps units are widely dispersed on the battlefield and are deployed well forward, often in the divisions' operational area. A major focus of the personnel operations center, therefore, is to know where all Corps units are located and to deliver personnel services support to them.

With the passing of each major exercise in VII Corps the personnel system is scrubbed and improved. The next major exercise will be REFORGER 82 at which time VII Corps will deploy and operate the entire personnel system. This will be the first time in recorded history that a US Corps will be "full up" on a major field training exercise in the personnel business — from the forward line of troops to the Corps' rear boundary.

The Division Perspective

The irony of Division Personnel Service Support in Europe is that, like the European countryside, it is a crazy quilt design. In the 8th Infantry Division (Mechanized), the Army's largest Division, the Personnel Service Support focus is both within the Division and, like Personnel and Administration Battalions also on area support. The 8th Infantry Division operates five Military Personnel Offices (one of which serves no Division troops) while Military Personnel Office support is given to Divisional units by six Military Personnel Offices. One full Brigade is supported by a 21st Support Command Personnel Service Company and support to one forward stationed Armor Battalion is provided by a Military Personnel Office from a sister Division in another Corps! Challenges? You bet!

The exciting part of life in a European Division is that all focus is on the General Defense Plan... the war plan. The enemy is real, the terrain that we will defend is "walked" at least quarterly, and all Divisional systems including Personnel Service

Support are geared to fighting and winning on the General Defense Plan. The Personnel Service Support system is no stranger to the General Defense Plan focus. Divisional Military Personnel Offices are staffed, in part, with soldiers augmented Division Adjutant General Company. In wartime, these soldiers return to full Divisional control and some deploy to the General Defense Plan with the Combat Brigades to form minireplacement cells in the Brigade trains area to assist Brigade S-1s in the operation of replacement system and in personnel accounting and casualty reporting.

Personnel Service Support begins in the battalions and separate companies—don't forget it! Over one-half of Personnel Service Support soldiers are in the Pathfinder Division's 29 Battalion Personnel Administration Centers and in the orderly rooms of our 20 separate companies. Like most units in the Army, the tendency is to change S-1s with the same frequency as you change your socks. Efforts are underway to slow the revolving

door in this crucial position but the key to success is in staffing the Personnel Administration Center with dedicated, trained personnel and administration non-commissioned officers and junior soldiers. I am convinced that the future non-commissioned officer leadership in the personnel and administration community should, and will, come from soldiers now serving in Personnel Administration Centers. This first line of Personnel Service Support is crucial to soldier satisfaction. If the Personnel Administration Center soldiers do not "make it happen" in SIDPERS arrival and departure transactions, then management of personnel readiness is bankrupt. If soldiers in a battalion are not cared for in promotion opportunity, award service, and legal service then that battalion's contribution to the General Defense Plan Combat power suffers.

The challenges are many... the rapid turnover of soldiers generated by the 18 month tour for most first-term soldiers demands a nimble, alert personnel service support system. Problems "solved" as little as six months ago quickly creep back because of knowledge drain inherent in the short tours of the soldiers who operate the personnel service support system. Keeping our life blood system, SIDPERS, operating at the needed high level of accuracy and timeliness is a critical challenge. NO Division in USAREUR is authorized the 20-plus soldiers required to

operate the Divisional SIDPERS Data Bases... incredible but true. Thousands of miles are driven each month by couriers throughout the Division just to keep the input to and output from this vital system functioning. Additionally, no military personnel office is staffed to perform the family support missions such as passport and ID card issuance. We must continue to press for the proper personnel authorizations and the tools such as the Division Level Data Entry Device and DAS³ hardware to make any major improvements on personnel support system.

The challenges are as large as the rewards. In our "hands on" European Army, personnel service support soldiers share the pride in helping soldiers and commanders work through unique problems created by the necessity to be able to roll to the General Defense Plan at any minute of any day; soldiers in personnel administration centers and soldiers in the Military Personnel Offices and Divisional personnel service division have a daily opportunity to develop future personnel service support doctrine. The opportunity to serve in the personnel service support profession, successively, at the Personnel Administration Center, Military Personnel Office, Division, and Theater level can be realized in an extended three year tour, often with only one family move in four years. . you cannot get that training and experience anywhere in the Continental United States!

Regional and Company Personnel Centers

Specialist Five Laura Bain looked out the polorized window of the comfortable German Touring Bus and grinned. The Mercedes and Porches were flying by on the Autobahn. She finally believed what her sponsor had written her about there being no speed limits. The bus had just left the 21st Replacement Battalion and it was full of soldiers new to Germany and enroute to their duty stations. They were nervous and there was little conversation so Specialist Five Bain pulled out and read one more time the letter that Staff Sergeant Marcia Kahn, her sponsor, had written her two months before. So far, things had gone just as Staff Sergeant Pread said they would.

"... and I'll meet you at the transient hotel on post where the bus lets you off. Now, about your

unit. Military Personnel Offices, or MILPO as they are better known, in Europe are either Regional Personnel Centers or Personnel Service Companies. They perform the same daily, peacetime missions but they have different roles in wartime. Personnel Service Companies like ours perform wartime personnel service support as a unit, maintaining our same peacetime organization. Regional Personnel Centers sort of dissolve during wartime and are reformed into Replacement Regulating Detachments, Personnel Replacement Battalions or group up into the Division Adjutant General Companies. A rose by any other name though, is still a Military Personnel Office. One of the key differences between MILPO duty here and in the States is that we seldom deal directly with the US

Army Military Personnel Center in Alexandria, Virginia. We have the 1st Personnel Command, located in Schwetzingen, Germany. It is organized just like the US Army Military Personnel Center and does about the same things for us but is much, much closer. The folks at 1st Personnel Command have provided additional help through a program called "Assault on the MILPO Workload" where some daily irritants have been completely eliminated and others reduced through the "How To" pamphlets they publish, which compile all of the various regulations and circulars, etc. into a single book that clerks and managers can use." Specialist Five Bain looked up as the bus stopped at the front gate of an obviously American post. It felt good to see the United States flag flying. She felt more at ease. A military policeman got on the bus and checked everyone's Identification Card. Staff Sergeant Kahn had told her security was tight but she had not thought much of it until now. As the bus rolled through post Specialist Five Bain wondered what her tour would be like now that she had left the 21st Replacement Battalion.

"Hi, I'm Staff Sergeant Kahn. Welcome to Germany, Relly Kaserne and the 419th Personnel Service Company. Let's grab your bags and get over to the Company so you can sign in and get some rest."

"Thank you. I am tired after the long flight. By the way, just how did I get assigned to this particular company, anyway?"

Staff Sergeant Kahn answered as they walked. "Unlike in the States, the US Army Military Personnel Center did not assign you to this post or to this unit. They just identified you for assignment to US Army, Europe. 1st Personnel Command took over from there and assigned you to the Major Subordinate Command that needed you the most. Major Subordinate Commands are things like Corps, Divisions and Support Commands. Our Corps then looked at all their non-divisional units to see who had the biggest need. This process eventually got down to our Battalion Commander, who decided to send you to this company. That is why it took a few months for you to hear from me after you had been alerted for assignment. Assignments are made this way by specific Military Occupational Specialty and grade and guarantees that every command shares people shortages and excesses, as the case may be. Assignments for soldiers in grades E1 through E4 happen the same way but not until after they arrive at the 21st Replacement Battalion. Believe it or not, it's really not done with magic or a dart board.

The next morning Staff Sergeant Kahn introduced Specialist Five Bain to First Sergeant Torrow. After welcoming her to the Company, First

Sergeant Torrow explained, "Here in the 419th Personnel Service Company, everyone wears two hats. By that I mean that you have a job in the military personnel office providing first class personnel support to our customers. That is one hat. You have another hat, or rather helmet as a squad member in a Table of Organization and Equipment (TO&E) Company with a wartime mission. We have to train and maintain ourselves to be combat ready just like any combat arms unit. Our challenge is to simultaneously accomplish both missions."

"Thanks, First Sergeant. It sounds as though I'll be really busy. When do I start?"

"You will get your chance soon enough but we have to process you in, first. Things like getting you scheduled for driver's testing for your European license, Operation HEADSTART for your exposure to German language and customs, Race Relations and Equal Opportunity Seminar and an Education Center interview to see what they can offer you. We are serious about people programs and want you to take advantage of everything possible. Before we start all that though, we need to get you in to see the Commander."

The Company Commander was waiting, "Welcome, Specialist Bain, to the 419th Personnel Service Company. I'm Captain Harold Williams. In addition to being a company commander, I also wear a hat as the Personnel Officer for this area but I'm sure the First Sergeant told you all about hats. Basically, our military personnel office is organized like most of those in the States. You came from Fort Benjamin Harrison, right?"

"Yes, Sir. I spent two years there."

"Well, we have a Records Division where we keep all the Military Personnel Records Jackets. We also have the usual Personnel Actions Division, SIDPERS Interface Branch, Personnel Management Division, Administrative Services Division, and In and Out Processing. Instead of the Overseas Levy Section in Personnel Management that moves soldiers overseas, we have a Redeployment Section that moves them back to the States. The major operation that you'll find missing here is a Requisition Section that requests personnel replacements for our units. 1st Personnel Command does the requisitioning for everyone in US Army, Europe. We also don't have an Assignment Section in the military personnel office. In Europe, assignments run down command channels from 1st Personnel Command through Corps, Division and Battalion Commanders but I'm sure Staff Sergeant Kahn has filled you in on how you came to be assigned here. Other than that, we're organized just like what you're used to so there's nothing to worry about. Of course, our customers are not just down the street or across post.



An Equal Opportunity segment of the Head Start/Gateway program is taught in the US Army Europe classes. (Photo by Toni Christiano)

Personnel service support over here is on an area basis which means we service all units in our area regardless of the patch they wear. This company takes care of units located on eight posts in five communities with some as far as 50 miles away. Some Personnel Service Companies in Europe break up into Composite Teams to service each major community in their area. Each team consists of a mini-military personnel office that lives and works in the community. Here in the 419th, we use Contact Teams. An Office and Personnel Specialists take necessary records, equipment and blank forms and visit the outlying communities once or twice a week to provide service. We feel it provides essentially the same service to our customers that Composite Teams do without the added expense of maintaining separate billets and work areas for company members.

"Well, enough about work. Germany is a dynamic place for soldiers and I urge you to make the most of every available minute. We can offer you the good, the bad and the ugly. The good is Europe itself, the sights and tastes of countries from England to Italy and from Spain to Austria. The friends are good, too, both European hosts and soldiers with which you'll work hard and play hard every day. The bad is our poor telephone system and our antiquated barracks and equipment, all of which is improving constantly. The ugly? Well, there is an Iron Curtain not too far east of here. It gives us our purpose. Welcome aboard."


Colonel Edward Strong is currently assigned as the VII Corps Adjutant General. He received his commission in 1959 through Officer Candidate School, is a graduate of Command and General Staff College and received a Masters Degree in 1978 from Jacksonville State University.

Colonel Strong has served in various personnel and administrative assignments to include 16 years experience in the European personnel system.

Lieutenant Colonel Hoherz has commanded five times at unit level in Germany, Vietnam and within the Continental United States. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and has an MA in Public Administration. His staff experience includes duty in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and 1st PERSCOM.

Lieutenant Colonel Hoherz is currently the Adjutant General of the 8th Infantry Division (Mech).

Captain Terry E. Trout received a direct commission in the Adjutant General's Corps in 1977. He has served in various personnel and administrative assignments in the 1st Infantry Division, Fort Riley, Kansas, US Army Support Command, Hawaii, Military Personnel Center, Alexandria, Virginia, Military Review Boards Agency, the Pentagon, and the 1st Personnel Command, Schwetzingen, Germany.

Captain Trout has a Master's Degree in Personnel Management and presently commands the 261st Personnel Service Company in Heilbronn, Germany.