



U.S. ARMY

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THE U.S. ARMY AS AN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

The development of the U.S. Army into a formidable expeditionary force reflects the challenges and adaptations it encountered during key conflicts from 1846 to 1898. The Mexican-American War, the American Civil War, and the Spanish-American War collectively tested the Army's ability to extend its reach into new territories and manage the intricate demands of modern warfare. Of particular importance was the Spanish-American War, which introduced an overseas dimension to military operations and brought to light numerous logistical and strategic shortcomings. In the period between the Civil War and the Spanish-American War, the Army faced dual responsibilities: securing western territories and rebuilding the South. These efforts strained resources and underscored the need for better preparedness and stockpiling for future conflicts.

The Spanish-American War was precipitated by the explosion of the USS Maine in Havana Harbor in 1898, which served as the catalyst for U.S. involvement. Yet, the Army found itself unprepared for the demands of this new conflict. The dispersed nature of its personnel, insufficient training, and lack of a coherent mobilization mechanism posed significant challenges. With a scattered force of about 25,000 personnel and National Guardsmen lacking in readiness, the Army had to rely on rapid recruitment to fill its ranks, achieving a peak of around 59,000 soldiers. However, training deficiencies persisted, affecting the Army's ability to project power effectively.

Logistical challenges further compounded these issues. The lack of joint operational experience and modern infrastructure created bottlenecks at key ports like Tampa, which was inadequately equipped to handle the volume of supplies and personnel required for the conflict. This exposed a pressing need for a reformed logistics supply chain and better organization. Supplies ranged from personal items to heavy artillery, and the overwhelming demand for horses and their care added to the logistical strain. These bottlenecks, combined with poor infrastructure, disrupted the deployment of troops and supplies to battlefields in Cuba and beyond.

In the Philippines, the Army faced even greater challenges. The vast distances involved hindered communication, coordination, and timely delivery of supplies. Disease and illness, exacerbated by unsuitable equipment, posed severe risks to troops, making medical logistics a critical concern. The Philippine-American War, which followed the Spanish-American War, introduced guerrilla warfare, complicating the Army's operations further. This experience highlighted the need for tactical and technological advancements, such as the adoption of the M1911 pistol and the Springfield M1903 rifle. These weapons addressed deficiencies in the Army's arsenal and enhanced its capability to handle diverse combat scenarios.

The lessons learned during these conflicts led to significant reforms within the Army. Elihu Root, the Secretary of War, advocated for the establishment of a General Staff and the reorganization of supply departments to address the logistical failures of previous wars. This reorganization introduced specialized command structures, enabling more efficient planning and execution of operations. These reforms laid the groundwork for the Army's future engagements, including the Punitive Expedition of 1916, which tested the newly implemented systems.

During the Punitive Expedition, the Army refined its logistical processes, constructing supply hubs and integrating civilian labor to meet the demands of the campaign. Despite challenges such as managing civilian workers and environmental conditions, the operation demonstrated the Army's improved capacity for sustained power projection. While the expedition ultimately failed to capture Pancho Villa, it succeeded in reducing cross-border raids and showcased the Army's growing adaptability.

By the time the U.S. entered World War I, the Army was better equipped and organized to meet the demands of global warfare. The lessons and innovations from its previous conflicts had transformed it into a more capable and modern force, setting the stage for its emergence as a leading power in the 20th century. The evolution of the U.S. Army during this period underscores the interplay of logistical, tactical, and organizational reforms in shaping its role as a global force.

AN ARSENAL THAT'S ALWAYS READY

The Spanish-American War proved to be the first major challenge for Rock Island Arsenal. The challenges were all new beyond the complex logistics issues. However, the foresight of one Rock Island Arsenal commander resulted in the new Army installations readiness to meet the need of the Nation.

LTC Daniel Webster Flagler, the third arsenal commander, set in motion the plans devised by his predecessor to build the new arsenal. During his tenure at Rock Island, LTC Flagler observed and carefully studied the capabilities and potential at the location. Rock Island had many advantages over other installations. It was centrally located, well away from enemy territory, was served by the river, and rail that spanned to both coasts. This, coupled with the arsenal's manufacturing capabilities and craftsmanship culminated in LTC Flagler's recommendation for modernization and expansion prior to war.

His planning paid off during the Spanish-American War, as it was his plans that postured the arsenal to produce materiel to sustain the Warfighter, and maintain equipment with little challenge. Materiel was produced at the arsenal and then shipped directly to ports in Los Angeles and Tampa for transport overseas.



We are a little late for April Fools' day but we wanted to remind you that everyone in the Civil War was serious and never smiled for pictures. The above unidentified U.S. Army officer said (*probably*), "here hold my drink, watch this." He was demonstrating the act of "thumbing one's nose" at the enemy as witnessed during the Civil War.

APRIL TRIVIA

1. **Who was the Rock Island Arsenal commander that went on to become Chief of Ordnance?**
2. **What Indian Wars battle was instrumental in the improvement of small arm accuracy?**
3. **What future president led the 1st Volunteer Cavalry in Cuba?**

LAST MONTH'S ANSWERS

1. **How many Soldiers in the Union Army were recent immigrants?**
1/3 of the Union Army
2. **Who did MG Sherman directly blame for the Union loss at the First Battle of Bull Run?**
The Civilian Press
3. **What were President Lincoln's nicknames for President Jefferson Davis and GEN Robert E. Lee?**
Jeffy D. and Bobby Lee



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