

INTERNET ARCHIVE  
**Wayback Machine**  
BETA

http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/97summer/schnau.htm

NOV FEB MAR Close  
◀ 6 ▶  
2006 2007 2008 Help

95 captures  
13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09

## Lessons in Command and Control from the Los Angeles Riots

CHRISTOPHER M. SCHNAUBELT

From *Parameters*, Summer 1997, pp. 88-109.

[Go to Summer issue Table of Contents.](#)

[Go to Cumulative Article Index.](#)

"Police officers responded to a domestic dispute, accompanied by marines. They had just gone up to the door when two shotgun birdshot rounds were fired through the door, hitting the officers. One yelled 'cover me!' to the marines, who then laid down a heavy base of fire. . . . The police officer had not meant 'shoot' when he yelled 'cover me' to the marines. [He] meant . . . point your weapons and be prepared to respond if necessary. However, the marines responded instantly in the precise way they had been trained, where 'cover me' means provide me with cover *using firepower*. . . . over two hundred bullets [were] fired into that house." [1]

Operations other than war (OOTW) present numerous challenges to leaders instilled with a doctrine principally designed for fighting Soviet-style armies during large-scale conventional wars.[2] Some of these missions (e.g., peacekeeping, peace enforcement, and nation assistance) pose doctrinal problems due to what has been described as "the American proclivity for satisfying political decisions by using conventional military forces to produce effects that are foreign to their nature." [3]

In other instances, the term OOTW presents a doctrinal challenge because the domestic activities that were once among the Army's prominent missions, such as quelling riots or performing disaster relief, had been receiving short shrift in deference to warfighting. The notion that killing people and breaking things should be the US Army's sole concern is a relatively recent development; one need only note the role of the Army in putting down Shay's rebellion in 1786-87 as well as its many other noncombat operations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Since it is unlikely that US policymakers will soon stop asking the military to perform tasks for which it is not presently designed, an understanding of the differences between war and operations other than war may help leaders primarily trained for high-intensity combat to adapt to the particular demands of other military operations.

This article examines two attributes of operations other than war that are likely to influence command and control and thus affect directly the outcome of the mission: the absence of an obvious continuum or linear relationship between the strategic, operational, and tactical consequences of action, and the requirement for interagency coordination even at relatively low echelons. The article uses the 1992 Los Angeles riots to illustrate some of the unique characteristics of this type of mission: the situation was "amorphous and ambiguous," the use of force was greatly restrained, coordination with nonmilitary entities was often required at battalion and lower echelons, and political considerations governed military actions at even the individual level.[4]

### Doctrine

The Army's operational doctrine is contained in FM 100-5, *Operations*, published in 1993; it is presently under revision as the Army continues to adapt to the conditions and requirements of our time. Chapter 13 of the manual, "Operations Other Than War," identifies the activities included in such operations. One of the activities--support to domestic authorities--is clearly limited in scope; the other, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, addresses the Army's responsibilities to support both domestic and international emergencies.

A companion doctrinal publication, *Domestic Support Operations*, also appeared in 1993. It provides considerable information to commanders and staffs for carrying out tasks associated with the four recognized forms of domestic support: disaster assistance, environmental assistance, community assistance, and support to law enforcement. The material is based on the applicable federal statutes; matters addressed in the publication include the roles and responsibilities of the branches of government and specific federal agencies, interagency coordination, principles for conducting the operations, and legal considerations and constraints.

By the time these two documents appeared, the Army had just completed two operations in support of domestic authorities: support of law enforcement in the Los Angeles riots and disaster assistance to the victims of Hurricane Andrew. The former, the subject of this article, occurred in late April and early May 1992. The latter involved the 10th Mountain Division and other units of the active and reserve components for several months starting in August of the same year. Some of the lessons learned from those missions undoubtedly made their way into the emerging doctrine. Some, however, may not have been considered. It is these lessons that this article develops in detail.[5]

### The Los Angeles Riots in Brief

The Los Angeles (LA) riots were the most destructive civil disturbance in US history, causing the deaths of at least 54 people and more than

Internet Archive

Wayback Machine

13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09

Go

NOV FEB MAR

6

2006 2007 2008

Help

Close

\$800 million in property damage throughout LA County. [6] More than 10,000 troops from the California National Guard (CANG) 2000 active component soldiers and 1500 marines were deployed to the area at the height of operations. The LA riots provide an immediate case study to illustrate the unique characteristics of the 1992 LA riots. The military response to the LA riots is also noteworthy because active component and National Guard troops served together in a single joint command. Furthermore, CANG troops served first in a state status (under the command of the governor), were subsequently federalized (placed under the active component chain of command), and then reverted to state control. See Figure 1 below for a brief chronology of key events in the crisis.

INTERNET ARCHIVE		Chronology of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots		Go	NOV	FEB	MAR	Close
		95 captures			◀	6	▶	
13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09		Acquittal verdicts announced in the trial of police officers accused of beating Rodney King			2006	2007	2008	Help
<b>29 April</b>	1515							
	1850		Rioters beat and nearly kill truck driver Reginald Denny as a television crew captures both the horror of the incident and the absence of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) officers. Hundreds of arson and looting incidents begin.					
	2100		The California governor's office informs the adjutant general that the governor has decided to mobilize (call to state active duty) 2000 California National Guard (CANG) troops at the request of the LA mayor.					
<b>30 April</b>	-		A dusk-to-dawn curfew is imposed in large portions of the city of LA and the surrounding county.					
	0400		Approximately 2000 CANG soldiers have reported to armories.					
	1100		Los Angeles County requests 2000 more CANG personnel; the governor approves the request.					
	1350		Ammunition from Camp Roberts (in central California) arrives in LA area via CH-47 helicopter.					
	1435		The first CANG elements (two military police companies) deploy in support of the LAPD and the LA Sheriff's Department (LASD).					
	2000		About 1000 CANG troops are currently deployed "on the street," with more than 1000 more prepared to deploy and awaiting mission requests from law enforcement agencies.					
	2356		LAPD and LASD request 2000 additional CANG troops, for a total of 6000.					
<b>1 May</b>	0100		Perceiving the CANG deployment to be too slow, the governor requests federal troops.					
	0515		The President agrees to deploy 4000 federal troops to LA.					
	0630		Approximately 1220 CANG soldiers are deployed in support of LAPD; 1600 are deployed in support of LASD; and 2700 are in reserve awaiting missions.					
	1430		Active component Marines from Camp Pendleton, California, begin arriving in the LA area via convoy.					
	1630		Commander, Joint Task Force-Los Angeles (JTF-LA) arrives in LA area.					
	1730		Active component soldiers from Ft. Ord, California, begin arriving in the LA area via C-141 aircraft.					
	1800		The President announces that the CANG will be federalized.					
<b>2 May</b>	0400		Final plane with active component soldiers arrives.					
	1100		Approximately 6150 CANG troops are deployed on the street, with 1000 more in reserve; 1850 soldiers from the 7th Infantry Division are in staging areas; Marines prepare for deployment.					

Figure 1. Chronology of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.

INTERNET ARCHIVE First active cc  Go

WayBackMachine BETA 95 captures

13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09

More than 6900 CANG soldiers are deployed, with 2,000 more in reserve. Approximately 600 Marines are deployed by active component.

NOV FEB MAR Close

6

2006 2007 2008 Help

	2359	Army and Marine Corps personnel remain in staging areas.
9 May	1200	CANG reverts to state status, ending federalization; active component forces begin redeploying home.
13-27 May	-	CANG releases troops from state active duty, returning them to "part-time" status.

Source: Compiled from Harrison (1992), Delk (1995), and various CANG after-action reports.

### The Political Context

The LA riots erupted on 29 April 1992 after a jury acquitted four LA police officers accused in the beating of Rodney King, a black motorist who, while driving under the influence of alcohol, had led California Highway Patrol and Los Angeles Police Department officers on a high-speed chase and subsequently attempted to assault the arresting officers. The jury, as described by journalist Joe Domanick, was selected from "the nearly lily-white" community of Simi Valley and consisted of "ten whites, one Hispanic woman, one Filipino woman, and no blacks. Zero." [7] The acquittals stunned the public, which had been conditioned to believe that a guilty verdict was inevitable as the media relentlessly played an excerpt of a video tape, taken by a bystander, showing several white police officers beating a prone and apparently helpless Rodney King with their batons. [8]

The riots probably began about four miles from Watts, the neighborhood where riots had occurred in 1965. [9] The verdicts were announced at 1515 hours. About 45 minutes later, an unruly crowd had formed at the intersection of Florence and Normandie avenues. Police were called at approximately 1630. When officers arrived, a mob was assaulting pedestrians, pelting vehicles with bricks and rocks, and smashing shop windows. Rather than call for emergency backup and immediately arrest the boldest troublemakers, the police retreated from the trouble spot.

"Where were the police?" asked the *Los Angeles Times* the following day. [10] In truth, the riots might have been averted had police responded with a massive effort to quell the initial unrest. For various reasons however, the LAPD was unprepared to deal with the rising civil disturbance. Most of the department's senior leaders were 40 miles north of the city attending a training seminar when the verdicts were announced. The chief was out of the office attending a political fund-raiser. Several of the department's most senior officers, as well as the chief and the city's mayor, were not on speaking terms with each other as a result of partisan bickering and political maneuvers. [11]

Shortly after the assaults on bystanders began at Florence and Normandie, scenes of the chaos in LA were being broadcast live across the nation. One of the most abhorrent images was captured by a news helicopter: Reginald Denny being dragged from the cab of his truck, knocked to the ground and kicked by several men, then struck in the head with a fire extinguisher, several times with a hammer, and finally a brick. Local authorities were clearly overwhelmed.

### The National Guard Responds

At approximately 2100 hours on 29 April, the governor ordered the mobilization of 2000 troops from the California National Guard. The CANG's 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized) (hereafter identified as "the division") was given the mission and directed to draw on units located closest to the area. About five hours later, units from the CANG's 49th Military Police (MP) Brigade were mobilized and attached to the division. [12] Although the MPs were more appropriately equipped and trained for civil disturbances than soldiers assigned to a mechanized infantry division, they were located in the northern part of the state, more than 400 miles by air from Los Angeles. The unexpected nature of the emergency caused the CANG leadership to deploy the closest units first.

It was obvious that the soldiers had to be assembled as quickly as possible and that they would ultimately be deployed to the streets, yet their mission, including identification of the agencies they were to support, remained uncertain, as the following circumstances suggest:

- CANG leadership did not have a deployment timeline establishing when troops would be available on the streets.
- Law enforcement agencies expecting military support did not know when to expect troops to arrive.
- Law enforcement agencies did not know where they wanted the troops to be deployed nor exactly what the soldiers should do once they appeared. It had been a very long time since law enforcement leaders had seriously considered the possibility that the military might be required to help them in quelling a civil disturbance. When the crisis came, military support arrangements would be mostly ad hoc.

California National Guard staff officers had regularly attended state interagency coordination meetings prior to the riots. This involvement, however, was primarily to plan for military support in case of an earthquake. Although civilian agencies anticipated the potential for violence as a result of the Rodney King incident, they were certain that civilian law enforcement would be capable of dealing with the unrest. Civilian and military leaders alike were convinced that the National Guard would not be required in the event of a civil disturbance. Personnel from the California Office of Emergency Services (OES), the agency responsible for coordinating statewide response to emergencies too large for local governments to handle, went so far as to assure CANG planners informally that "on-the-street" civil disturbance support from the National

Guard would not be required. Instead of following for the use of its own troops, the CANG had to send out several thousand troops to the LA area and area departments. Go

Wayback Machine BETA 95 captures

Yet even if CANG leaders had concluded that the military role in the Los Angeles area was the presumed experts regarding the potential for riots and the ability of civilian agencies to respond. Furthermore, the military role in civil disturbance operations is to support rather than take the lead; military forces are deployed only at the request of the appropriate civil authorities. If civilian leaders did not think that military support would be necessary, the CANG had no leverage to cause them to incorporate military support into their emergency plans. The CANG's leaders were not in a position to second-guess the police or elected officials.

2006 FEB 6 2007 2008

Disinterest from civilian agencies, however, did not prevent the CANG from planning for possible deployment and conducting internal exercises of its own plans. In 1990, the CANG had revised its civil disturbance strategy to rely primarily on the 49th Military Police Brigade, located in the San Francisco area. The five infantry battalions of the division would be tasked to provide additional forces if necessary. Yet once the strategy had been revised, there was no follow-up to ensure that operations plans were adjusted, nor were designated units required to conduct annual civil disturbance training and procure the associated equipment.[14] Moreover, several of the strategy's unstated assumptions did not hold: the LA riots were considerably larger than those posed in the CANG exercises, and the CANG had far less time to mobilize and deploy than planners had foreseen.

The widespread belief that military support for civil disturbance operations was a Vietnam-era anachronism reinforced the desire of CANG leaders to downplay this particular state mission, a belief fostered by the realities of resource allocation.[15] Severe post-Cold War budget and force-structure reductions threatened the National Guard; many of its leaders believed that its fate depended on demonstrating combat readiness. In the belief that resources used for state missions might be perceived as detracting from training for the National Guard's federal warfighting mission, CANG leaders hoped to minimize cuts in size and funding by focusing on the federal mission.[16]

Another significant reason for the assumption that the CANG would not be needed rested on a system of mutual aid among California law enforcement agencies. (Similar agreements also applied to fire departments and other emergency services). The concept of mutual aid was that if a particular sheriff or police department became overwhelmed by local events, the state Office of Emergency Services would coordinate the dispatch of reinforcements from other jurisdictions. According to mutual aid "doctrine," the CANG would not be called upon until all available law enforcement resources had been committed. This assumption apparently acquired over time the force of a decision; it led to the reasonable belief that even if the CANG had to be mobilized, the time it would take to absorb mutual aid assets would be ample for the CANG to assemble, equip, and deploy troops. Absolutely no one, civilian or military, expected a situation wherein the National Guard would be needed on the streets in a matter of hours. As things turned out, however, the governor, possibly under the pressure caused by live TV broadcasts of assaults and damage, mobilized the CANG before mutual aid had been fully implemented.

Unfortunately, during the LA riots the mutual aid system did not operate as planned. The LAPD had traditionally avoided participation in the system for fear that it would always be the source of the support. Additionally, a fierce culture of independence had been deeply ingrained within the department's leadership, to the degree that its leaders routinely refused to plan and coordinate emergency response with other agencies: it was inconceivable that the LAPD would ever require outside assistance. As late as midnight the first night of the riots, Chief Daryl Gates doubted the need to deploy the CANG, telling a television news reporter that he "didn't want to be taking orders from a general." [17] The lack of mutual aid planning within LAPD undoubtedly hampered the incorporation of additional law enforcement officers once they arrived from other jurisdictions and may also have increased the pressure for a rapid CANG deployment.

Two other invalid assumptions affected decisions that day. The first was the likely nature of potential unrest. The idea of civil disturbance apparently held by most military and civilian planners was the well-organized and comparatively non-violent Vietnam War protests of the late 1960s and early 1970s, in which crowd control was the primary requirement. The second related to the scope of the disturbance. The city's previous experience with large-scale violence--the Watts riots in 1965--was confined to a relatively small area of about 60 square blocks. The 1992 LA riots were spread across hundreds of square miles.

The values on which these assumptions were based influenced conclusions about the likely form and scope of potential unrest; the outcome was that police and soldiers alike had prepared "to fight the last war" instead of the one they would actually confront.[18] Even after the anarchic nature of the 1992 riots became apparent--widespread looting and plunder rather than localized protest--both the National Guard and active component troops spent hours training in the "stomp and drag" crowd control techniques prescribed in Field Manual 19-15, *Civil Disturbances*. [19] These crowd control formations and techniques were virtually never used during the LA riots.

#### *2100 on 29 April to 1435 on 30 April*

National Guard units mobilized quickly once the governor issued the order to do so. By 0400 hours on 30 April, approximately seven hours later, some 2000 soldiers of the division had reported to armories in the Los Angeles area.[20] At least several hundred more troops whose units had not yet been mobilized, such as those of the division's 2d Brigade (located 100 miles to the south in the San Diego area), reported to their armories on their own initiative after viewing news reports of the riots. Although the mobilization of the first 2000 soldiers was proceeding rapidly, the division commander anticipated the need for additional troops and placed the entire division on alert.

While the response of individual soldiers was superb, failure to plan for, coordinate, and exercise the mobilization of troops to support civil disturbance operations produced severe difficulties in two key functions: command and control, and logistics. Following mobilization, the California adjutant general told the LAPD chief of police and the LA County sheriff that it would take about seven hours for the 2000 troops to be "mobilized in armories." [21] While the estimate accurately stated the time to assemble soldiers for duty, it significantly understated the time it would take to have troops in position and prepared for deployment onto the streets, which turned out to be approximately 17 hours.

Local law enforcement and CANG officials also held very different expectations about the timing of the CANG deployment. The police and

sheriffs expected troops on the street first thing in the morning of 30 April. Governor's senior CANG leaders apparently expected that all law enforcement assets would be committed in accordance with mutual aid procedures, and that troops would not be deployed until the evening. A detailed report has been conducted at night.

13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09

2006 2007 2008

Go

6

Help

Very few soldiers had received civil disturbance training within the previous year, which in turn concealed the scope of the logistics problems awaiting their commanders. Most units did not have face shields and riot batons on hand, and the lock plates required to prevent an M-16 rifle from firing in the full-automatic mode were not available in quantity at most unit armories.[22] The required training was conducted while units waited in their armories--and later in reserve locations around Los Angeles--for missions to be assigned and for munitions and riot control equipment to arrive.

A detailed look at the most significant single challenge during this period, the movement and distribution of munitions, highlights the need for contingency planning and the ensuing rehearsal and training of all stakeholders--civilian as well as military in this case--in any common mission. A decision made several months before the riots led to the removal of unit security ammunition from the CANG's armories and its consolidation at Camp Roberts, in central California, approximately 250 miles north of Los Angeles. The decision was based on logistical and security challenges associated with maintaining the ammunition in dozens of small armories around the state: storage under very restrictive conditions, constant rotation with training stocks, and strict accountability through frequent physical inventories.

Under these circumstances, and given the assumptions discussed previously, moving the ammunition to Camp Roberts seemed to be an efficient use of resources. Staff planners believed that if the ammunition were ever needed, a helicopter could deliver it to mobilization locations before troops had to deploy. Sending a helicopter to pick up and distribute the ammunition, however, turned out to be neither simple nor quick. A detailed plan for the emergency movement of munitions had not been written, nor had the mission ever been assigned to an aviation unit or rehearsed.

As soldiers began to mobilize, staff at the CANG headquarters estimated that the ammunition could be picked up at 0600 hours and delivered to the division headquarters in Los Alamitos, about 30 miles south of Los Angeles, no later than 0800. Without advance notice, a CH-47 flight crew from a unit located in Stockton, California, about 200 miles northeast of Camp Roberts (and some 450 air miles north of Los Angeles) was alerted at home at approximately 0120 hours; their helicopter arrived at Camp Roberts at 0620. For various reasons, most of which might have been avoided if the procedure had been rehearsed, the helicopter did not depart Camp Roberts until 0945:

- The helicopter flew to the main helipad to refuel instead of directly to the ammunition supply point.
- The ammunition was moved by truck to the helipad and did not arrive until 0715.
- The aircrew was not familiar with palletized cargo and did not bring rollers, so the cargo had to be loaded manually.
- Once the pallets had been loaded, several had to be off-loaded and broken open so that obsolete lots of CS grenades could be removed, then re-banded and reloaded onto the CH-47.

The difficulties in getting the ammunition out of Camp Roberts could largely be blamed on inexperience and incomplete staff work. Unfortunately, the next set of delays might be attributed to officers who seemed to consider the riots to be a training event rather than an emergency.

- In order to save expensive helicopter blade hours, after departing Camp Roberts the aircraft was diverted by a logistics staff officer to fly to Camp San Luis Obispo (located approximately 50 miles to the south) and pick up additional riot equipment, such as face shields, flak vests, and batons.
- Personnel at Camp San Luis Obispo decided to offload some of the munitions to make room for the equipment.
- At Camp San Luis Obispo, the helicopter was directed to wait for M-16 lock plates to arrive from Sharp Army Depot.

The CH-47 finally departed San Luis Obispo at approximately 1230 and arrived at the division headquarters in Los Alamitos at 1350. The deployment problems created by the unexpectedly slow movement of the ammunition were exacerbated by the absence of communication between the relevant headquarters: neither the governor's office, nor the adjutant general, nor the division commander at Los Alamitos had been informed of the delays.[23] By comparison, it is standard procedure in California to send along a second aircraft as a backup when the adjutant general travels by helicopter. Ammunition for the civil disturbance operation already in progress apparently did not rate the same level of consideration.

The ammunition snafu probably added between two and five hours to the CANG's deployment. Even had the munitions arrived on schedule, the absence of pre-riot coordination meant that the pace of CANG deployment inevitably would have been slowed by the need to determine the support requirements of law enforcement organizations, tasks appropriate for military personnel, and assembly locations for the arriving units. As the munitions were en route, unit leaders conducted reconnaissance and units received refresher training in handling civil disturbances. With the munitions on hand, CANG troops became available to accept missions at 1435 hours on 30 April, approximately 17 hours after the governor had mobilized the National Guard.

The unexpected delay in getting ammunition to the troops was not the only procedure that might have been accomplished more efficiently, but by its nature, it was largely responsible for the widespread perception of poor initial performance by the CANG. This is unfortunate, for it called into question the meritorious efforts by many of California's citizen-soldiers and airmen in reporting for duty--some even before called--and performing their jobs in an exemplary manner through the entire operation.

#### *1435 on 30 April to 0515 on 1 May*

Within a few hours of the governor's order to mobilize, the CANG had established an operations cell at the LA County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) to receive law enforcement support requests, obtain mission approval from the deputy adjutant general, and assign mission taskings to the division. Mutual aid doctrine and California OES procedures called for municipal requests for military support from law

enforcement organizations to be submitted through the county's senior law enforcement official, the sheriff. The city of Los Angeles, however, insisted on bypassing the county level and sending requests directly to the CANG.

95 captures

2006 2007 2008

Go

NOV FEB MAR

6

Help

This situation posed a dilemma for CANG. The absence of a unified law enforcement chain of command or other means of coordination meant that by default the National Guard was required to make decisions that were the responsibility of either law enforcement or political leaders. The LAPD liaison officer at the county Emergency Operations Center continued to request literally hundreds of troops without having specific missions for them. The LA sheriff's department, meanwhile, requested far fewer troops and did so only with immediate taskings in mind. Because the sheriff's liaison officer was receiving all the soldiers his department could employ, he told the CANG informally that it was all right to give the lion's share to the LAPD.

Perhaps the LAPD was requesting troops as a wise precaution; some CANG leaders, however, felt they were either trying to shift blame or cover unlikely contingencies. While this situation was evolving, hundreds of California Highway Patrol officers—who according to the mutual aid concept should have been deployed long before the CANG—sat in a staging area in Los Alamitos with nothing to do. They were eventually assigned to protect fire trucks en route to emergencies.

By the time munitions had been distributed, hundreds of troops had deployed to reserve areas waiting for missions. While senior military and police leaders struggled to establish mission tasking procedures, unit commanders within each area of operations were aggressively seeking opportunities to provide support. During the night of 1 May, for example, Colonel Richard Metcalf, the 2d Brigade commander, personally visited the three police stations in his area of operations to look for business for his soldiers. Other brigade and battalion commanders coordinated directly with their law enforcement counterparts to explain military capabilities and identify support requirements.

The CANG operations cell and the division headquarters did not provide specific mission taskings to units. The task actually sent from the division to its subordinate or attached units was to report to a specific law enforcement agency at a particular location and provide the support requested. As MP companies and battalion-sized infantry and armor units became available, they were assigned to support specific law enforcement jurisdictions and authorized to accept specific taskings directly from the senior police official in the jurisdiction.[25] Typically, a CANG battalion commander and an LAPD area commander worked together to determine how many soldiers were available, how many to send to each location, and what tasks the troops would perform once they arrived.[26]

A judgment that the civil disturbance was occurring within a "non-linear" operational area precluded the establishment of unit boundaries by the division staff. Military unit areas of operations were instead designated to coincide with the jurisdiction or area of responsibility of the law enforcement agency or police station receiving support. This sort of direct coordination between mid-level law enforcement leaders and supporting military units greatly improved what was at best an ad hoc process for requesting and approving military support to local police.

Each unit commander and the senior supported law enforcement officer would jointly determine which specific tasks the military unit would perform: e.g., operate traffic control checkpoints, escort fire trucks, perform site security. Once coordinated, the specific tasks and locations chosen were reported through military channels to the CANG operations cell. Although not explicitly stated, the procedure for approving the specific tasks assigned to CANG units through this process was the principle that silence from the higher headquarters constituted consent to the proposed mission.

Once military and law enforcement leaders initiated face-to-face contact, the deployment of troops proceeded smoothly, if slowly, aided by the CANG's experience in providing counterdrug support. Counterdrug operations require the same degree of close coordination with the supported law enforcement organization that was expected in supporting police officials in LA County. Prior to the riots, the officer in charge of the CANG operations cell, Colonel (now Brigadier General) Edmund Zysk, had approved hundreds of law enforcement requests for military counterdrug support. Consequently, the CANG's leadership had already addressed and felt comfortable with many of the legal and procedural issues concerning aid to law enforcement. These were the same issues that would later slow decisionmaking by senior officials in the headquarters of all federalized troops, Joint Task Force-Los Angeles (JTF-LA).[27]

Even as elected officials were appealing publicly for more soldiers, the CANG was pushing soldiers out to support LA area law enforcement agencies more quickly than the police could absorb them. The CANG never managed to convince the governor and the mayor of Los Angeles that troop deployments were on track; apparently expecting a conspicuous military presence immediately after the governor's decision to call troops to state active duty, Mayor Tom Bradley quickly demanded federal troops. His request came not as a result of prodding by local law enforcement officials, but through the influence of former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who was a well-connected private citizen at the time. In an apparent surrender to politics and the images on national TV screens, Governor Wilson agreed to ask for help from the federal government. Yet even as the governor's office was phoning Washington, approximately 1000 CANG troops were standing by, equipped and ready to respond to requests for support from local law enforcement officials.

### JTF-LA and the Consequences of Federalizing the National Guard

The mission of Joint Task Force-Los Angeles, formed as a consequence of the decision to deploy 4000 federal troops to Los Angeles, was "to restore law and order." But as subsequently pointed out by Major General James Delk, the CANG's deputy adjutant general, that mission "had been accomplished before [active component forces] arrived." [28] For various reasons, the riots were essentially over by the time JTF-LA was established and active component troops began arriving during the night of 1 May. Besides the fact that the erstwhile looters were simply becoming tired as well as running out of things readily available to steal or burn, the largest single factor in quelling the riots was probably the imposition of a dusk-to-dawn curfew after the first night of rioting. The curfew, combined with the presence of more than 4000 CANG troops, 5000 LAPD officers, and about 4000 additional police officers from agencies across the state, helped to discourage most rioters after the first 36 hours of rampage.

As active component forces arrived, the JTF-LA headquarters began the process of assuming command of all military forces deployed for the

riots. The CANG operation cell not realizing it had been federalized, continued to receive and approve missions and to... units until the... priority task became...  
 Once JTF-LA assumed full responsibility for all tactical troops in its operations, increasing the CANG...  
 the... command and contro...  
 13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09  
 2006 2007 2008  
 Go NOV FEB MAR Close Help

The JTF established two subordinate commands, one each for Army and Marine forces. The commander of the 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Major General Daniel Hernandez, was designated to command the Army forces.[29] Geographic boundaries between deployed CANG units and arriving federal units were hastily--and arbitrarily--drawn. Areas of operations were assigned to the division's major subordinate commands and to Marine forces; the latter deployed only one battalion in what seemed to be a mostly symbolic commitment. In the context of that brief description of events related to the arrival of active component forces, here are some of the more significant changes that followed federalization of the CANG and the establishment of JTF-LA.

- Freeways were the feature used most often by the JTF as boundaries. Although they provided a readily identifiable line on a map and were easily located on the ground, the freeways had no political or operational relevance. As a result, brigade- and battalion-sized units had to change from the earlier procedure of supporting a single police jurisdiction to providing support to several police areas and operations bureaus. In some cases, the change caused units to operate in more than one city.

The effects were comparable from the police perspective. Leaders of police areas and bureaus, who previously had only one military counterpart, now were typically supported by multiple units and were thus required to coordinate with more than one military headquarters. In retrospect, a more effective means of assigning boundaries would have been to continue to match military units to the jurisdictional boundaries of the law enforcement entities they were supporting, as had been done initially by the National Guard.[30]

- The CANG's procedure for approving law enforcement requests had been rapid and gave maximum discretion to subordinate commanders to coordinate directly with the supported law enforcement entities. Before the establishment of JTF-LA and the federalization of the CANG, virtually 100 percent of law enforcement support requests had been approved. Following federalization, only about 20 percent were approved.[31]

The substantial reduction in military support following federalization is frequently attributed to legal restrictions imposed by the *Posse Comitatus Act of 1878* (United States Code, Title 18, Section 1385), commonly referred to as *Posse Comitatus*. This belief, however, is erroneous. The Presidential Executive Order of 1 May provided JTF-LA the authority to "restore law and order," which included the performance of law enforcement activities; *Posse Comitatus* therefore could not limit the military's options in this circumstance. Nevertheless, the JTF-LA commander's mission analysis concluded that his essential tasks did not include the requirement to *maintain* law and order. According to Major General Marvin Covault, the JTF commander, "It was not the military's mission to solve Los Angeles's crime problem, nor were we trained to do so." [32] The police, the public, and the media, however, expected the military to keep the peace rather than disengage quickly.

In his report concerning the military and law enforcement response to the LA riots (*The Webster Report*), former Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation Judge William Webster wrote:

It [JTF-LA] required each request for assistance to be subjected to a nebulous test to determine whether the requested assignment constituted a law enforcement or a military function. As a result, after the federalization on May 1 . . . not only were the federal troops rendered largely unavailable for most assignments requested by the LAPD, but the National Guard, under federal command, was made subject to the same restrictions, and therefore had to refuse many post-federalization requests for help.[33]

- The JTF established liaison teams at each of the four LAPD operations bureaus and at the City of Los Angeles emergency operations center to coordinate requests for military support. The CANG operations cell already operating at the LA County Emergency Operations Center was converted to a JTF liaison headquarters and tasked with collating LAPD support requests with support requests from the LA sheriff's department and from cities other than LA. Mission support requests were subsequently transmitted from the county Emergency Operations Center to the JTF-LA headquarters in Los Alamitos for review by the commander and staff.

Each new request for support was reviewed by the JTF-LA commander, the operations officer, and the staff judge advocate. The definition of what constituted a support mission, however, remained vague. Some activities reported as single missions troops operating in several locations and conducting a combination of mobile patrols and fixed-point security tasks, such as security for a shopping mall. In other instances, the security of four intersections within a few blocks of each other was reported as four separate missions. The level of detail was such that a mission request to station an infantry squad at an intersection had to indicate the exact corner on which the unit would be located; moving across the street was considered a change in mission and required a new approval process.

Obtaining approval for a new mission or a change in a previous mission was a slow process under the control of JTF-LA. An average request for support required from six to eight hours from the time it was transmitted from one of the LAPD bureaus (to the liaison cell at the county Emergency Operations Center) until approval or disapproval was received by the executing battalion. Added to this processing time was the time devoted to generating the mission request, which typically involved the coordinated effort of a military battalion commander and a senior police officer.

Each previously approved mission also required daily revalidation, which also was a change in procedures. Liaison officers were required to determine which missions the police wanted continued--not surprisingly, the answer was almost always "all of them"--and then report this information to the JTF-LA cell at the county Emergency Operations Center and wait to find out if any previously approved missions had been disapproved since the last inquiry. The revalidation process often took longer than obtaining permission for new missions. In several instances approved missions still requested by police were not performed because the unit performing them did not realize the missions were still approved.



APPROPRIATE		Federal	
		State	
		Restore Law & Order	Preserve Law & Order
1. Man traffic control points	x	x	
2. Provide building security	x	x	x (-)
3. Escort emergency equipment	x	x	
4. Provide area security, area patrols	x	x	
5. Provide security at custody facilities	x	x	
6. Provide security for emergency work crews	x	x	x (-)
7. Protect sensitive sites	x	x	x (-)
8. Transport law enforcement personnel	x	x	
9. Show of force	x	x	
10. Disperse crowds	x	x	
11. Employ riot control agents	x	x	
12. Provide VIP protection, escort	x	x	
13. Provide reserve, quick-reaction force	x	x	
14. Joint patrols, ride-alongs	x	x	
15. Other missions mutually agreed upon	x	x	x
INAPPROPRIATE			
1. Hostage negotiation	x	x	x
2. Barricaded suspect	x	x	x

Figure 2 Civil Disturbance Mission Tasking Guidelines

The screenshot shows the Wayback Machine interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text '3. Evidentiary searches' and a 'Go' button. Below the search bar, there is a 'Wayback Machine' logo and a '95 captures' indicator. The main content area shows a calendar view for the year 2007, with the month of February highlighted. The date '6' is selected. Below the calendar, there is a table with columns for '3. Evidentiary searches' and '4. Criminal investigation'. The table shows 'x' marks in the columns for the months of August, September, and October, indicating captures for those months. The date range for the captures is '13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09'. There are also navigation buttons for 'NOV', 'FEB', 'MAR', '2006', '2007', '2008', and 'Help'.

- Prior to federalization, the CANG readily deployed troops in numbers tailored to mission requirements. Soldiers were frequently deployed in squads, and noncommissioned officers were expected to perform their jobs. Guidance from JTF-LA, however, emphasized control: units were to deploy in formations of at least platoon size with an officer in charge at all times. This requirement often meant that a mission that previously called for two squads would thereafter require two platoons so that an officer could be present with the soldiers during each 12-hour shift. Once JTF-LA realized that retroactively imposing the new requirement would have required a large effort to shift resources to dozens of ongoing squad-size missions, the guidance was modified to apply only to new deployments. However, the JTF headquarters reviewed squad missions daily and encouraged subordinate headquarters to increase the size of the force conducting them as soon as practical.

Since the JTF-LA mission effectively had been accomplished before its arrival, the commander's priority shifted quickly to removing federal forces from the area. Even in the best of circumstances, the process would have been problematic because it meant weaning LA area law enforcement from the military presence to which they had rapidly become accustomed. By the fourth day after troops had deployed, the crime rate had dropped below its usual level by more than half.[36] Gang violence had nearly disappeared, as rumors of a truce between the Crips and Bloods circulated on the streets. Both the police and the public felt safer with the military present; no one was eager to see the troops leave.

The initial JTF-LA approach to disengagement was to have its liaison officers try to talk the supported law enforcement agencies into canceling some of their ongoing missions. This tactic was unsuccessful because it ran counter to the advantages that JTF-LA provided to law enforcement leaders; the latter could of course be expected to ask for all the free help they could get. When LA area law enforcement agencies continued to send new requests for military support instead of reducing the support it was already receiving, JTF-LA used the mission validation process to begin canceling current missions.

Already unhappy with the federal commander's denial of most support requests--in sharp contrast to the CANG's acceptance of almost all missions while in a state status--law enforcement officials were further upset by JTF-LA's drawdown procedure. The police understood that the military had to go home sometime; after all, by 6 May the LAPD itself had ended mandatory overtime and returned to normal pre-riot shifts. Unfortunately, law enforcement priorities were not taken into account when selecting missions to be canceled, which meant that neither the police nor the supporting units had adequate time to adjust to the changes. The perception of exclusion from the decisionmaking process created tremendous frustration among law enforcement leaders.

An alternative process would have established cancellation criteria, similar to approval criteria, that would inform police that the military would no longer perform certain mission types after a specific time and date. Similarly, the JTF could have informed law enforcement leaders that it would reduce its level of operations by a certain percentage each day, asking them to choose the specific mission or mission types to be eliminated. Instead, the JTF headquarters simply declined to revalidate some of the ongoing missions each day without any apparent reason for individual decisions. It appeared to many participants that the JTF headquarters insisted on total control of all decisions regarding military support without soliciting input from subordinate units, liaison officers, or the supported law enforcement agencies.[37]

- The single most contentious issue following federalization, however, was the designation of arming orders. An attachment to the rules of engagement, arming orders prescribed the readiness condition of individual weapons during the crisis. The arming orders specified six individual readiness postures ranging from AO-1--rifle at sling arms, bayonet in its scabbard, magazine in the ammunition pouch, and chamber empty--to the highest level, AO-6. In this posture, each soldier's rifle was to be at port arms, bayonet fixed, magazine in the weapon, and a round in the chamber. In actuality, even at the highest levels of arming order, soldiers kept their bayonets on their belts because the bayonets were both useless during the riots and dangerous to oneself and to other soldiers. The controversy concerned whether soldiers should routinely keep a magazine in their weapons, which constituted an AO-5 arming order.

The JTF-LA commander ordered soldiers to remain at AO-1 unless they were responding to an immediate specific threat that required a higher arming order. However, most soldiers on the street--and the police officers they were supporting--believed that merely being in uniform in LA following the riots required a higher state of readiness than AO-1. In the event, the JTF staff believed that their arming order was consistently violated. Their impression was probably correct, for the vast majority of deployed National Guard soldiers kept a magazine in their weapons. Despite repeated admonitions from the JTF headquarters, National Guard officers and senior NCOs left it to the troops on the ground to determine the appropriate arming order. They had tacitly decided to risk an accidental discharge or unjustified shooting rather than have a soldier killed while trying to load his weapon. In the deployment to Bosnia, similar concern for soldier safety is called force protection.

### Operational Control Versus Tactical Initiative

The tension created by two opposing requirements for operational success--commanders need to influence the battle, yet subordinates need freedom of action to win the fight--appears as well in operations to support civil authorities. American operational doctrine, still designed to fight numerically superior but tactically inflexible Soviet forces, resolves the dilemma of control versus freedom of action largely in favor of freedom of action. Great value is placed on initiative at even the lowest echelons. According to FM 100-5, *Operations*, "initiative requires a willingness and ability to act independently within the framework of the commander's intent." [38] The commander's statement of intent helps subordinate leaders focus their own actions on higher-level objectives without additional guidance should the situation suddenly change. Mission-type orders tell subordinate units what to do, not how to do it.



1. James D. Delk, *Fires & Furies: The L.A. Riots* (Palm Springs, Calif.: ETC Publications, 1995), pp. 221-22. Fortunately, one in the house was injured. When the suspect had surrendered, police discovered that the couple's children were also inside the home.

2. The US Army Training and Doctrine Command, "95 captures of the mob," specific subjects: "Peace Operations," "Humanitarian Assistance," and "Operations in Aid of Civil Authorities." (Message dated 27 October 1995, subject: Commander TRADOC's Philosophy on the Term "Operations Other Than War.") However, the main points of this article--the tendency for commanders to micromanage and the ambiguous link between tactical action and operational or strategic consequences--seem to indicate a common thread between these specific operations; OOTW remains the best term to collectively describe them.

3. See William Mendel, "Low Intensity Conflict Forces for 'Engagement' Policy," *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, 4 (Autumn 1995), 217. (This well-turned phrase draws on Clausewitz and Colonel Harry Summers; see also page 213.) Mendel recommends the creation of a Joint Engagement Command, with specifically trained forces, that would be assigned the responsibility for OOTW.

4. John B. Hunt, "The LA Riots and LIC," *Military Review*, 72 (July 1992), 87-88. Also see *Stability and Support Operations*, Field Manual 100-20, Draft (Washington: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 15 May 1995), pp. 1-1 to 1-16; and *Domestic Support Operations*, Field Manual 100-19/Fleet Marine Force Manual 7-10 (Washington: Headquarters, Department of the Army/The Marine Corps), pp. 7-11 to 7-14.

5. One of the major lessons learned from the LA riots was that federalization of the National Guard significantly reduces the range of military support available to law enforcement. This lesson was applied during the response to Hurricane Andrew in August 1992. The Florida National Guard provided more effective support by remaining in a state status despite the deployment of federal troops to the area. The National Guard concentrated its efforts on supporting law enforcement while active component forces focused on logistical support to the population and non-law enforcement organizations. See "Operations Other Than War Volume II: Disaster Assistance," *Center for Army Lessons Learned Newsletter*, No. 93-6 (October 1993), pp. IX-1 and IX-2; and S. L. Arnold and David T. Stahl, "A Power Projection Army in Operations Other Than War," *Parameters*, 23 (Winter 1993-94), 4-26. For doctrinal issues see FM 100-5, *Operations*, 1993, and FM 100-19, *Domestic Support Operations*, 1993.

6. The "LA" riots actually occurred in several areas of LA County, including the cities of Los Angeles, Inglewood, Compton, Pasadena, West Hollywood, Carson, and Long Beach.

7. Joe Domanick, *To Protect and Serve: The LAPD's Century of War in the City of Dreams* (New York: Pocket Books, 1995), pp. 407, 412.

8. The excerpt typically presented on television showed only the portion of the incident that occurred after King had lunged at police despite being shot with Taser darts. When the almost one-and-a-half-minute video is seen in its entirety and in slow motion, as the Simi Valley jury viewed it, the police appear to have been justified in at least the initial blows directed at King. The jury found the officers not guilty on all counts with one exception: a mistrial was declared on the charge brought against Officer Powell alleging the excessive use of force under the color of authority.

9. Delk, p.26.

10. David Freed and Ted Rohrlich, "LAPD Slow in Coping With Wave of Unrest," *Los Angeles Times*, 1 May 1992, p. A-1.

11. Delk, p. 27. Also see David D. Haddock and Daniel D. Polsby, "Understanding Riots," *Cato Journal*, 14 (Spring-Summer 1994), 147-57.

12. Several California Air National Guard units also were mobilized during the riots (Delk, pp. 338-39).

13. Delk, p. 21.

14. William H. Harrison, *Assessment of the Performance of the California National Guard During the Civil Disturbances in Los Angeles, April & May 1992, Report to the Honorable Pete Wilson, Governor, State of California*, 2 October 1992, p. 6.

15. The National Guard serves a "dual role." The National Guard of each state is the organized portion of the state militia as provided for by the US Constitution. The National Guard of the several states is also part of the reserve components of the Army (Army National Guard) and the Air Force (Air National Guard), and may be called into federal service under the US Constitution (Article I, Section 8; Article II, Section 2; and the Second Amendment). See National Defense Research Institute, *Assessing the Structure and Mix of Future Active and Reserve Forces: Final Report to the Secretary of Defense*. (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1992), pp. 15-17. The majority of state missions performed are for disaster relief in response to major wildfires, floods, or earthquakes.

16. After several years of emphasizing the importance of the National Guard's federal role, it is ironic that National Guard leaders have more recently asserted that state missions dictate the maintenance of a larger force structure than proposed by the Department of Defense. See Roger Allen Brown, William Fedorochko, Jr., and John F. Schank, *Assessing the State and Federal Missions of the National Guard* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995).

17. Delk, p. 45; Domanick, pp. 426-29.

18. Delk, pp. 22, 47. Description by Major General James Delk, the CANG's deputy adjutant general at the time of the 1992 riots.

19. Department of the Army, Field Manual 19-15, *Civil Disturbances* (Washington: GPO, 25 November 1985).

20. Harrison, p.10.

21. Delk, p. 39.

Wayback Machine

22. ...r's concurrence, the ... captures the ... technical details, and ... when practical. For technical details, and ...

Go

NOV FEB MAR Close

6

2006 2007 2008 Help

23. Furthermore, several erroneous and contradictory explanations for the ammunition delay were released to the press by the CANG public affairs officer. Such inept handling of public affairs contributed to the lack of confidence in the CANG's capabilities--especially concerning its leadership.

24. A similar problem affects counterdrug operations within US Joint Task Force Six, tasked with coordinating counterdrug support from federal military units (i.e., those other than the National Guard), which has been unable to identify a single law enforcement agency with the authority to prioritize requests for military counterdrug support. This situation is probably an inevitable result of our federal system of government--federal law enforcement agencies do not command state agencies, which in turn do not command municipal agencies.

25. The military understands this relationship as the authorization of one unit to provide "direct support" to another. This command and control relationship means that the unit providing support answers directly to the supported unit, even as the parent military unit retains formal command over the supporting unit and remains responsible for providing its administrative and logistical support.

26. The four "operations bureaus," West, East, Central, and Valley are LAPD's largest geographic subdivisions. These are further dividing into "areas." The officer in charge of a bureau is typically a deputy chief, while a commander supervises an area.

27. Colonel Zysk had been responsible for supervising Task Force Grizzly, the CANG's 400-member counterdrug support unit, for the previous two years.

28. Delk, p. 320.

29. The structure placed an active component brigade from the 7th Infantry Division (Light) under command of a (federalized) National Guard general. This decision by the JTF commander, Major General Marvin Covault--who was also the 7th Infantry Division commander--was politically astute. It demonstrated his confidence in the CANG's senior officers and helped to assuage animosity between active component and National Guard leaders and troops.

30. It should be recalled that earlier the CANG had decided to allow unit boundaries to conform to police jurisdictions; this meant that support could be coordinated relatively easily between opposite numbers in the military and police or sheriff's departments. All that changed when boundaries were redrawn by JTF-LA.

31. After-action briefing by the California National Guard Plans, Operations, and Military Support Officer; June 8-11, Reno, Nevada.

32. Quoted in Delk, p. 305. Posse Comitatus always governs the role of federal forces in support of civilian law enforcement within the United States, but it applies to National Guard units only after federalization. Consequently, so long as the National Guard was performing its state mission of support to law enforcement, Posse Comitatus did not restrain the number or types of missions its personnel could undertake.

33. Quoted in Delk, p. 305.

34. This is the procedure used to provide National Guard counterdrug support to law enforcement agencies. The Secretary of Defense has pre-approved six mission categories, with a total of 19 subtasks, that the National Guard may perform without further Department of Defense approval.

35. Delk, pp. 250-64. Figure 2 is reproduced from the matrix on page 264.

36. Delk, p. 222.

37. For another perspective on how to close out an operation in support of civil authorities, see Kevin C. M. Benson and Christopher B. Thrash, "Declaring Victory: Planning Exit Strategies for Peace Operations," *Parameters*, 26 (Autumn 1996), 69-80.

38. FM 100-5, *Operations*, p. 2-6.

39. "What West Point Doesn't Teach," *The Washington Post*, National Weekly Edition, 22-28 April 1996, pp. 12, 14. Some analysts have suggested that "media spin" is now a principle of war. The advent of satellite television coverage has greatly influenced the link between combat operations and national policy. The effects of the media on the conduct of the Vietnam War have been widely noted. Real-time coverage--such as that during the Gulf War--has now added the perceived need for immediacy to the political pressures of decisionmaking. See Frank J. Stech, "Winning CNN Wars," *Parameters*, 24 (Autumn 1994), 37-56.

---

Major (P) Christopher M. Schnaubelt is the commander of the 1st Battalion, 185th Armor Regiment, 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized), and is the chief of the Research and Analysis Division at the National Interagency Counterdrug Institute. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College and holds an M.A. in political science from San Diego State University. During the LA riots, he was the S2 (intelligence officer) of the 2d Brigade, 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and was assigned during federalization as liaison officer from JTF-LA to the LA Police Department's Operations West Bureau.

---

Go to Summer issue Table of Contents

WayBack Machine 13 Aug 97 - 12 May 09

95 captures

NOV FEB MAR Close

◀ 6 ▶

2006 2007 2008 Help

Go to Parameters home page

Reviewed 12 May 1997. Please send comments or corrections to [Parameters@carlisle.army.mil](mailto:Parameters@carlisle.army.mil)