

The initial visibility of 1,700 items and the capability to control reparables provided the Army Materiel Command will be expanded commensurate with effective and economic combat operational and readiness support. Army efforts will be directed at bringing home appropriate functions when Army Materiel Command can and should absorb them.

The interpretation of "commander's prerogative" being assumed today, often erroneously, requires some clarification as to what it does and does not mean in the Army.

The Army operates under the management philosophy of centralized supervision and policy and procedural direction with appropriate decentralization of operational control to commanders on the ground. The Headquarters, Department of Army, provides central direction and guidance to commanders through policies, regulations, field manuals and other directives.

The authority to act in a field situation is assigned the commander, under the guidance provided. Under the stress of combat, the commander is authorized greater latitude in his decisions because he has direct and personal knowledge of the geographic and combat environment. Nevertheless, the commander remains responsible to his superiors for his decisions. Materiel is only one of the resources provided to the field commands.

The Army recognizes that in peacetime the state of the art provides for the real time manipulation of data by computers and that reduction of order and shipment time is possible. However, movement of supplies by premium transportation cannot be provided to all Army forces worldwide and the Army furnishes sister services common supply support on many bulky items such as ammunition, rations, and petroleum products. The Army policy is based on the field commander's responsibility to perform his mission.

The Army is not opposed to changes in the supply system which are economical and will still support the commander's mission. The Army is continually trying to improve the logistics system and improvements have been accomplished and are in process.

A major goal of these improvements is the more economical management of supplies and the greater flexibility for utilization of supplies within major commands. In this regard, the Army is already planning to centralize control of supplies at command levels where detail logistics management can be provided that is responsive to subordinate commanders' resource requirements. There are many logistic functions that have been centralized to assist the field commander.

Examples are the use of repair modules in lieu of piece parts replacement, direct exchange of assemblies such as carburetors and generators, more accurate computation of unit repair parts usage so that it is unencumbered by unneeded material, and responsive support for weapons systems in terms of hours or days instead of weeks and months.

And I might add the operational readiness figures of our equipment in Vietnam are the highest that they have been in the history of the U.S. Army, and we can supply for the record what I mean by this, sir. But we are maintaining equipment in the Army today in operational readiness that exceeds any standards that we expected in combat before, Mr. Chairman.