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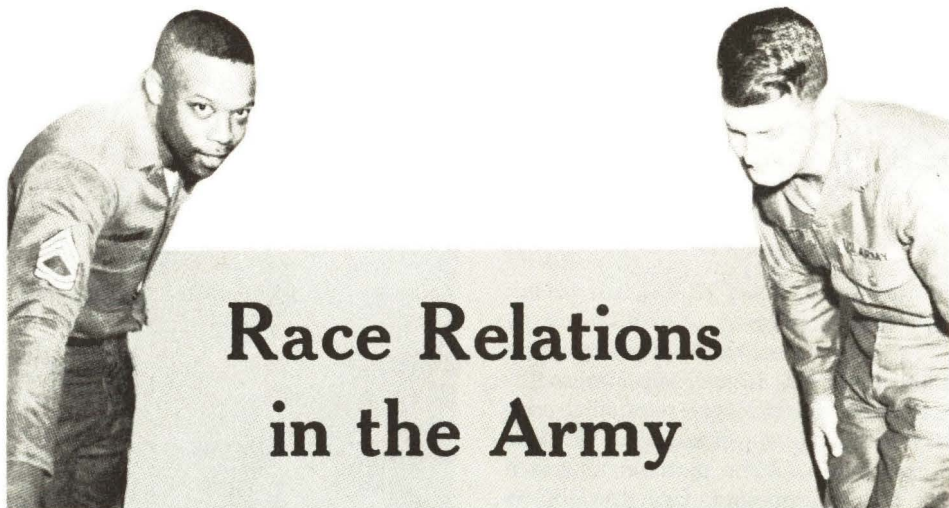
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Race Relations in the Army

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THE Armed Forces have led all sections of American society in providing equality of opportunity and treatment for all personnel without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin. The Presidential Executive order in 1948, which directed that discriminatory practices in the military services be abolished, has met with great, if hard-earned, success. Throughout the period of functional integration of the Military Establishment, the Army has maintained the role of the pace setter. This progress was made possible by the many dedicated officers and enlisted men of all races who contributed to the dramatic story of the fading of the long color line.

In spite of its aggressive and determined actions to insure that all soldiers received equal and just treatment, the Army could not deal with the larger question of racial equality beyond the limits of its installations. Nor was it fully aware of the adverse effects which the root causes of racial friction in civilian society have on interpersonal relations within the Army.

Before 1966, this approach did not present many serious problems. This was due, in large measure, to the intense desire of the black soldier to assimilate into the integrated Army and prove that he could successfully compete with his white counterpart. This drive for self-satisfaction and

belonging accounted for the large influx of black soldiers into elite units such as the airborne.

Honest and open discussions of racial matters were taboo among soldiers for fear of embarrassment or of hurting one's career by being branded oversensitive (if you were black) or racist (if you were white). Many Negro officers and noncommissioned officers voiced their grievances in conversations with those of their race, but were reluctant to place these complaints in official channels.

Passive Approach

In some cases, these problems were the result of offpost discriminatory practices which Negro personnel realized could not be eliminated by their commanders. This passive approach by Negro personnel had the unfortunate effect of shielding the Caucasian commander from the realities of the black experience in the United States. It also has added to the current difficulties arising from a lack

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of general awareness among career personnel of the basic factors of good race relations. Therefore, the Army's greatest sin, during the 1960's, was probably one of complacency rather



US Army

A Negro sergeant rests after combat in Vietnam. Racial unrest in the Army is primarily a reflection of the greater problem in society.

than the actual fostering of discriminatory practices.

Racial harmony is an essential part of total unit combat readiness and a contributing factor to the unity of purpose and spirit so essential to the creation of effective military organizations. The Army is engaged in a business in which total respect and cooperation among individual soldiers is necessary for survival and mission accomplishment. In this environment, racial tension, if allowed to fester, could turn success into failure.

Recognizing this threat, the Army Chief of Staff, in 1969, ordered a de-

tailed analysis of potential problems which could negate much of the Army's past accomplishments in racial harmony and impair its ability to accomplish assigned missions. He also directed that appropriate programs be developed to cope with those problems identified in this assessment. This task was given to the Equal Rights, Personal Affairs, and Army Community Service Branch, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel.

Racial Tension Assessment

The assessment of racial tension in the Army included a review of the information gathered during Department of Defense and Department of the Army factfinding trips to installations worldwide between December 1966 and October 1968, as well as additional staff visits in August 1969 to obtain more recent information. It also incorporated an analysis of complaints of alleged racial discrimination handled by the Army staff from August 1968 to August 1969, and a study of reports of racial incidents which had occurred at Army installations worldwide during this period.

The main conclusions developed in this assessment were that there had been an increase in racial tensions in the Army; that they often result from ineffective communications; that racial unrest was not prevalent in areas where troops were in contact with an armed enemy; that there was no organized effort to promote racial disharmony in the Army; and that efforts must be made at all levels of command to foster mutual understanding and trust among all personnel.

The assessment further disclosed that, although it has made and continues to make progress in achieving its goal of total equality, the Army

is part of a society which is undergoing a rapid change. Racial unrest constitutes one of the most serious problems facing American society. Before entering the Army, all soldiers have been affected, to some degree, by this traumatic racial situation. Many of them carry over into the Army behavior patterns and prejudices built up in their civilian life. The Army cannot change these attitudes overnight. However, an understanding of the root causes of racial unrest will greatly assist a commander in his efforts to promote racial harmony in his unit.

A significant part of this assessment was an analysis of the black soldier and his relationship with white soldiers. This was not an implication that Army policies and efforts for improvement are not applicable to the problems of others, such as Indians, Puerto Ricans, or Mexican-Americans, who may likewise be the objects of discriminatory treatment. It was, instead, an acknowledgment that Negroes are the largest single group suffering discrimination in American society.

The Black Soldier

In examining the black soldier, it was recognized that he is many people. He is the career officer or noncommissioned officer who is accepted as an equal by his white Army counterparts while still being subjected to discriminatory practices in many aspects of civilian society—and often labeled an accommodator or “Uncle Tom” by some members of his own race. He is the young officer who is fresh out of the “black revolution” on the college campus and is now desperately trying to determine where best to serve his country and his race.

He is also the young enlisted man

who, although willing to continue serving his country with honor, still questions the racial injustices which exist in civilian society. Finally, he is the young black militant who brings into the Army an inbred distrust and dislike for the so-called "white establishment," and who believes that racial equality can only be obtained by violently punishing those who commit discriminatory acts against any of his "soul brothers."

Fortunately, at the present time, this militant soldier is in the minority. The danger lies in the fact that he is rapidly becoming a vocal minority and his cries are not being heard, or his presence detected, by many leaders. These are normally leaders who assume that the lack of complaints indicates the absence of problems.

White and Black Racists

The new problem facing the Army is that there are now both white and black racists to identify, educate, and reprimand. The young black soldier's dilemma is that he has a legacy in US military history, but has not been told it. He is confused by the vastness of the Military Establishment, baited by some of his white racist bunkmates, hounded by black militants who preach violence and black separatism, and all the while longing for military leadership throughout his chain of command to understand and communicate with him.

Further, the black soldier resents having his newly found racial pride confused and taken as evidence that he is a black militant or a black racist. He shouts "black is beautiful" not out of racial hate, but out of racial love. He is not asking for preferential treatment, but is asking for the same things white soldiers want.

The black soldier wants the best training, leadership, and discipline that his commander has to offer. He wants to be respected as a man and accepted on his individual worth. The black soldier is also asking for fairness in promotions, assignments, educational opportunities, awards, and decorations, and that he receive punishment to fit the crime and not the color of his skin.

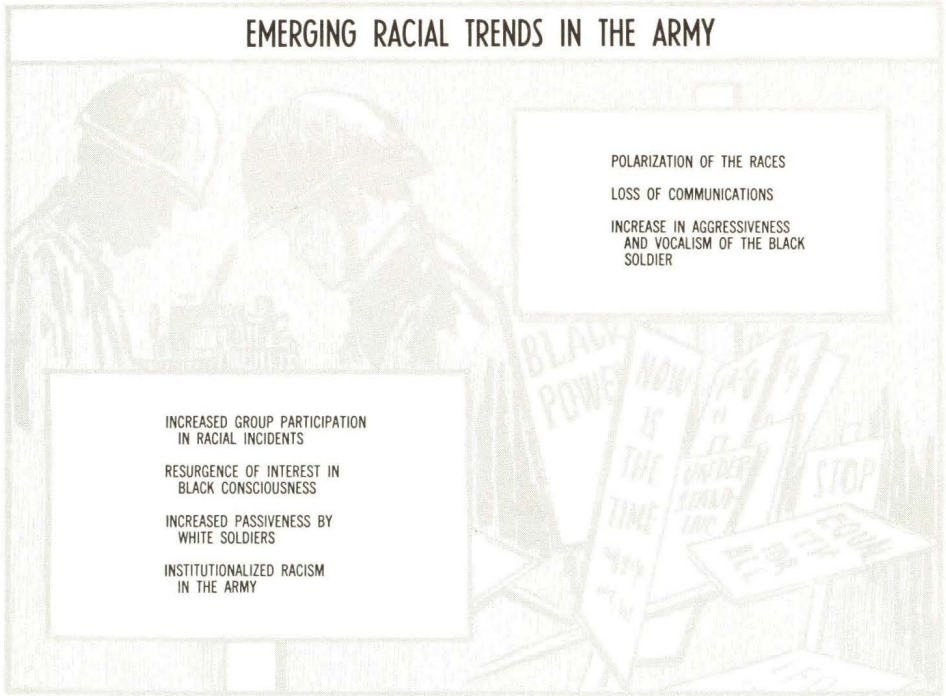
The Silent Commander

Many commanders and noncommissioned officers never openly acknowledge the existence of racial differences or even state what their policies in this matter are, thus permitting tensions to mount in their units. Meanwhile, black soldiers see racial slurs on latrine walls, observe overt acts of racial discrimination in their daily lives, and naturally assume the silent commander condones it all. Often, they have the same complaints that white soldiers have, but the black soldier blames discrimination while the Caucasian faults the Army as a whole.

The leader who states that all his soldiers are "O. D." in his eyesight may not insure that all his subordinate leaders act accordingly. Black soldiers become suspect of the leader who tells his unit: "I want all of you to have 'white sidewall haircuts' for the inspection tomorrow." The black soldier knows he can never meet this requirement, and feels that his leader should realize this also.

He uses the same logic in questioning the sale of suntan lotion in the post exchanges while excluding black cosmetics, and the lack of visibility of the black soldier in training films and other military publications. He also complains of the unfairness in the discretionary decisions of whether simply to warn a man or punish him

EMERGING RACIAL TRENDS IN THE ARMY



under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

Most complaints of black soldiers concern those areas where discretion without command review is at a maximum. If the standards of treatment are not clearly defined, it is easy for a man who has come out second best to conclude that he has been mistreated. If the soldier is black, it is natural for him to find racial discrimination.

To understand fully and communicate with the young black soldier, many Army personnel may have to change previously held ideas and notions. The great majority of white soldiers are trying. Many racial slurs and irritants are completely unintentional and occur because the white soldier does not understand what is offensive to black soldiers.

On the other hand, the young white

soldier cannot be expected to respond favorably to unreasonable demands or provocations which transgress upon his rights. Like the young black soldier, he is much more articulate, aggressive, and intelligent than his counterpart of 10 years ago. He enters the Army from a background of unprecedented affluence and rising opportunity. His choices for livelihood and income have never been brighter, and, unlike his nonwhite counterpart, he has moved from the central city to the new suburbia. Racially, not only is he geographically separated from his black counterpart, but even the old kinships which grew out of common poverty and need have been overcome by the insensitivities of success.

Thus, upon induction, many white youths enter their first equal racial environment totally unaware of the

black experience in the United States and, like their black fellows, only faintly aware of the strides the Army has made toward eliminating discrimination from its ranks.

It, therefore, must be recognized that soldiers will encounter racial militants or extremists of both races. Generally speaking, the young white soldier gets along well with his black counterpart during duty hours. It is normally during off-duty hours that this relationship becomes strained. The white soldier may feel put off by the tendency of black soldiers to band together as a closely knit minority. Although some white soldiers sympathize with the black soldier's drive for equality, others may see this new black awareness as a threat to their security and, therefore, seek the companionship of other white soldiers for protection and strength.

Individual Intimidation

As is the case with the black soldier, the young white soldier may be awed by the complexity and size of the Army and may become vulnerable to individual intimidation by those of his race who are not in full agreement with the Army's commitment to the removal of all vestiges of racial discrimination affecting soldiers. However, because the vast majority of the young soldiers, of all races, are good members of the Army team, a commander has a strong nucleus with which to work.

A favorable atmosphere for a frank and intelligent exchange of views at the platoon and squad levels, coupled with noncommissioned officer and junior officer participation, plus command interest, awareness, and supervision, is the basic foundation upon which an effective communications program must be built.

The findings of this analysis were presented to the Army Chief of Staff in September 1969. The Chief of Staff then directed that seven major actions be accomplished to cope with the problems identified in the assessment:

- *Reaffirm the Army's Continued Commitment to Equal Opportunity and Treatment of All Personnel.* In October, the Chief of Staff dispatched a message to all members of the Army expressing his personal views on this subject. In it, he stressed the Army's continued commitment to equal opportunity and treatment of all personnel, and the need for open communication between commanders and soldiers at all levels. The Chief of Staff also emphasized that the same mutual trust and respect so manifest on the battlefield must pervade all Army installations and activities.

- *Conduct Equal Opportunity and Racial Tension Seminars in the US Continental Army Command (USCONARC).* During the period December 1969 to February 1970, USCONARC conducted a series of equal opportunity and racial tension seminars. The objectives of these seminars were to improve communications between racial groups, to ascertain ways and means of developing positive measures to eliminate racial tension, and to improve understanding of Department of the Army policies and regulations on the subject.

Personnel of all grades, races, and cultural backgrounds participated in these seminars. The project was conducted in three separate phases. Phase I consisted of the installation and unit level seminars which were held at each major USCONARC installation during December. Phase II consisted of Army level seminars at each continental Army

headquarters and Headquarters, Military District of Washington, in January. The final phase was the US-CONARC seminar held at Fort Monroe, Virginia, in February. Commanders were allowed to determine the size, composition, level, and frequency of their seminars. Consequently, the

This was not entirely due to the manner in which the seminar was conducted since other factors, such as geographical location of the installation and the size and nature of the troop population, influenced the results attained.

As a general rule, permanent mem-



Army News Features

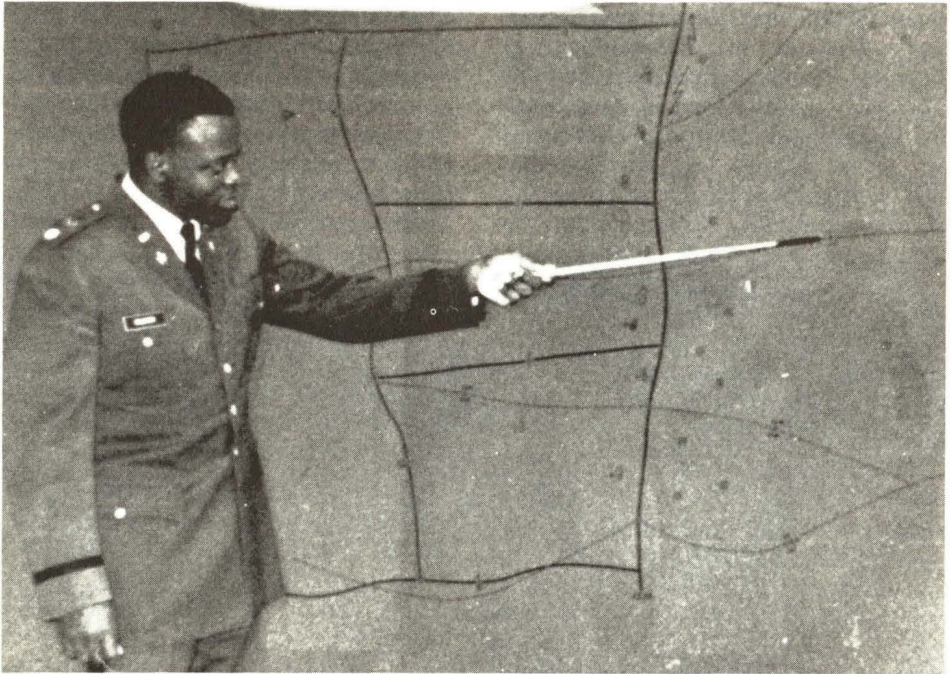
Race relations have presented few problems in combat units in Vietnam

form of the seminars varied from installation to installation.

At some installations, four separate seminars were held—one for officers, one for noncommissioned officers, and two for enlisted men. Several lengthy meetings were held at some installations with the same personnel in attendance; at others, all meetings were attended by different soldiers except for seminar monitors. The locations of the seminars varied from conference rooms to service clubs.

Some installations explored the problem in greater depth than others and consequently developed more detailed findings and recommendations.

Members of the seminar group consisted of representatives of the installation G1, G2, chaplain, staff judge advocate, inspector general, surgeon, and major tenant units. The informal-type discussion in a relaxed atmosphere was found to be most effective, and it was established that the monitors should be listeners rather than active participants in the discussions. Additionally, it was found that the ideal size for equal opportunity and racial tension seminars is 10 to 20 racially mixed participants, and that a length of three hours is most conducive to intelligent and productive discourse.



Army News Features

Major Alonzo Williams of the US Army Combat Developments Command presents a briefing. The number of Negro field grade officers has increased steadily since 1964, but Negro junior officer strength has declined.

The major conclusions arising from the seminars were:

Racial tension in the Army is at a low level when compared with tensions existing in civilian communities.

Racial problems in the Army can be expected to increase in magnitude as new soldiers enter the Army and bring with them the prejudices and biases engendered by the social unrest in their civilian communities.

The potential for racial violence is present and must be met with positive command action.

The seminars also found that difficulties caused by the lack of effective communication are a major obstacle to the prevention of racial tensions in the Army. Communication among junior officers, noncommissioned officers, and

their subordinates is sometimes hindered by the lack of experience and maturity. In many cases, poor personnel management and poor administration have done much to create racial problems or irritants where they otherwise would not have occurred.

Another significant conclusion was that there is a need to educate and develop in officers and noncommissioned officers, at the unit level, a better understanding and awareness of the underlying facets influencing current racial problems. As a part of this educational program, reception station orientations, basic combat training, and advanced individual training courses should include emphasis on intergroup harmony and understanding.

The seminar program illustrated that personnel of different grades and races are able to engage in meaningful discourse on the subject of race relations and attempt to develop ways and means to alleviate problems which adversely affect racial harmony. The findings should materially assist in developing future Army actions for improved race relations. The lessons learned from these seminars are being furnished to Army commanders worldwide for their use in the development of local equal opportunity and treatment of military personnel programs.

Action is already underway in five of the seven areas:

- *Increase Emphasis on the Development and Projection of Information on Minority Group Accomplishments in the Army.* The Army's Office of Chief of Information is developing and disseminating more information on the accomplishments of minority groups in the Army. Continued emphasis is also being placed on publicizing the progress made by the Army in fulfilling its goal of equality of opportunity and treatment.

Appropriate coverage of minority group personnel is being included in the "Big Picture" television series, and efforts are being made to insure appropriate portrayal of minority group members in Command Information pamphlets, posters, and illustrations, and in photographs published in Army publications. The recognition of minority groups in the historical publications prepared by the Department of the Army is also being expanded.

- *Present Racial Tension Briefings to Key Personnel.* An officer from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel has traveled to many parts of the Army presenting a brief-

ing on the assessment of racial tension in the Army. This officer traveled throughout US Army, Europe, last fall, and a similar tour was made throughout US Army, Pacific, in January. During both of these tours, briefings on current racial problems facing the Army were presented to senior commanders, officers, and non-commissioned officers. In addition, similar briefings have been given to selected officers on the Army staff and members of Congress.

- *Incorporate Instruction in Race Relations into the Army School System.* USCONARC has been directed to develop a course of instruction in race relations for presentation at training centers and service schools beginning in July. This training is designed to develop among officers, non-commissioned officers, and enlisted men an understanding of the causes which lead to racial tension and steps which must be taken to foster racial harmony among all personnel.

Among other matters, the scope will include the role of minority groups in US military history, the need for mutual understanding among racial groups, the importance of effective communication between peers, subordinates, and superiors, and the role of leadership in recognizing, resolving, and preventing serious racial problems.

- *Conduct a Study on the Redistribution of Negro Field Grade Officers.* The Department of the Army is determining the actions necessary to achieve a more even distribution of Negro field grade officers. The objective is to provide visible evidence of qualified Negro officers Army-wide, and to assign these officers to positions and levels of command commensurate with their qualifications

ARMY RACE RELATIONS

and individual career needs. There is no intent to establish quotas of the number of Negro officers to be assigned to a given unit, command, or geographical area, nor to grant preferential treatment of these officers.

● *Continue Emphasis on the Procurement of Negro Junior Officers.* Statistics on the racial composition of the Army reveal many areas where the Army can be justly proud. As an example, the number of Negro non-commissioned officers in grades E-6 through E-9 and the number of Negro field grade officers have all shown a steady increase since 1964. There has, however, been a gradual decrease in Negro junior officer strength during this same period. At the end of 1969, there were more Negro lieutenant colonels and majors in the Army than there were Negro first and second lieutenants. If this trend continues, Negro field grade officer strength will certainly decrease in future years.

Steps have been taken to increase the Negro junior officer strength. As an example, 45 Negro cadets entered the US Military Academy in 1969 as

compared to nine in 1968. Efforts are also being made to increase the productivity of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps program at predominately Negro colleges.

The Army's race problems are simply a manifestation of the racial situation in American society. Aggressive command action is necessary to insure that the divisive influence of racial turbulence in civilian communities does not impair the readiness of the Army to carry out its assigned missions. The minority group serviceman has earned and deserves full equality as a member of the Army team. Acts of discrimination or discourtesy to any groups cannot be condoned.

In the same vein, it is the duty of every minority group soldier to conduct himself in accordance with standards traditional to the Army. The Army's record in providing equal opportunities for all personnel has been impressive, and the current efforts to cope with internal racial friction will maintain its position as the Nation's leader in this important area.
