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MILITARY ASSISTANCE in *Los Angeles*

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PARTS OF Los Angeles can be extremely dangerous. The county has over 100,000 gang members and there were 771 gang-related homicides reported last year.¹ It is not surprising that many police officers admit they "lost the streets" some years ago, with many neighborhoods in the city dominated by rival gangs. Drug deals are often conducted openly, without even a pretense of cover-up. Gunshots and fires routinely occur on a normal night in some of those neighborhoods, which are carefully avoided by most law-abiding citizens.

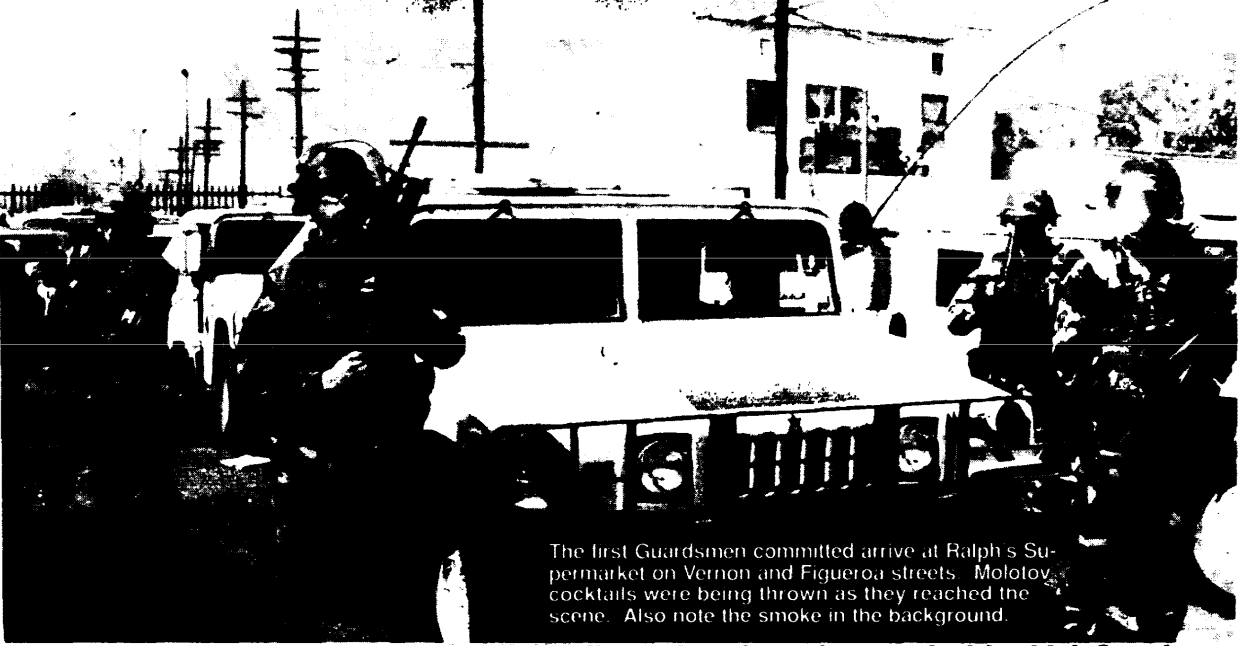
That was the environment when the Rodney King verdict was announced on 29 April 1992. Riots erupted, and shortly after 9:00 p.m., the first 2,000 California Army National Guard (CAARNG) soldiers were requested by the governor. The call was not expected, because the CAARNG had repeatedly been assured they would not be needed for any disturbances resulting from the Rodney King verdict.² As a consequence of those assurances, considerable riot control equipment had been loaned to other agencies.³ In spite of the no-warning start, there were 2,000 Guardsmen marshalled in Southern California armories within 6 hours.

Units were dispatched early in the afternoon of 30 April, based on informal requests by law enforcement leadership before formal tasking arrangements had been established. I later met with the sheriff, chief of police and commissioner of the California Highway Patrol in the sheriff's office. A situation report was provided by the chief of police, whose greatest immediate concern was for protection of firemen responding to

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numerous arson fires in the riot area. Several had already been wounded and many were refusing to leave their stations without escort. It was quickly agreed that the Highway Patrol would escort fire trucks, with ambulances later added to their mission. We agreed that the CAARNG would handle all other missions. After a brief discussion, it was decided that all mission taskings would flow through the Sheriff's Emergency Operations Center where the sheriff, police and military would be collocated, along with a representative of the State Office of Emergency Services. This arrangement, reached by mid-afternoon of 30 April, continued throughout the period that military forces were committed in Los Angeles.

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The first Guardsmen committed arrive at Ralph's Supermarket on Vernon and Figueroa streets. Molotov cocktails were being thrown as they reached the scene. Also note the smoke in the background.

There was considerable discussion about the speed with which Guardsmen had responded to the emergency . . . No one doing the criticizing during the riots asked us what the standard is. . . [It is] helpful to note that the 82d Airborne Division's alert battalion is expected to have the first aircraft wheels up in 18 hours. Guardsmen were committed and on the streets before 18 hours had elapsed that was an extraordinarily fast response, especially when considering that the response was initiated without warning.

and the great distances involved, but were quickly reestablished using commercial and cellular phones.

Guardsmen were quickly committed into chaotic areas where there was considerable shooting, fires and looting. Guardsmen were then scattered throughout the affected area, often down to the fire team level. Thirty shooting incidents were reported in just one night. There were innumerable cases of gang members driving by their cars flashing weapons, which included Uzis and Kalashnikovs. Countless incidents of taunts and provocations by gang members occurred, especially after dark. One particularly disconcerting tactic was for a car with lights out and loaded with gang members to silently roll to a stop in a dark and deserted shopping center guarded by Guardsmen. The four doors would slowly and simultaneously open. After a pause, those inside would suddenly ignite a series of flashbulbs or strobes. One can guess several reasons why they did this, but at the very least, it considerably raised the stress level.

There was considerable risk taking, especially the first few nights. Lock plates are required to be installed in M16 and M16A1 rifles to prevent automatic fire during civil disturbances.⁴ This is a comparatively complex process, requiring a trained armorer or maintenance contact team. We did not have time, so most soldiers were committed before the plates were installed. Another instance of risk taking involved a brigade of Guardsmen that convoyed from Northern California for 16 hours. The brigade commander wanted to give his soldiers a minimum of 6 hours rest when they arrived at the staging area. He was given 1 hour to equip and brief his troops before they were sent out on missions that lasted all night.

Four serious incidents during the initial phase were particularly memorable. One involved two Guardsmen from an infantry battalion who rescued two girls from a convicted rapist. The other three were the only incidents involving gunfire. The first involved the 40th Military Police Company from the 40th Infantry Division (ID)

(Mech), the first unit on the street. Members helped arrest an armed robber who twice turned his weapon on them. The robber surrendered after four rounds were fired, with no one injured.

The second shooting incident turned out to be by far the most important. A gang member had taunted Guardsmen from the division's support command, telling them he was coming back to kill them that night. This was a rather common threat, but this man was not kidding. He returned in his car after curfew and attempted to run them down. They jumped out of the way during his first attempt, but were not fast enough when he made his second run. One Guardsman was hit, but not seriously. The gang member drove off for a while before returning for his third attempt. When he refused to stop, the Guardsmen fired about 10 rounds at his tires in an attempt to stop him. When it was clear he was determined to run Guardsmen down, they finally used deadly force and killed him with one bullet in the shoulder and two in the head. The television bulletin said something like "Gang member tries to run down Guardsmen, dies with three bullets in head." That was the initial impression because one of the two bullets into his head was tumbling. Regardless, the bulletin was repeated many times over several stations. The effect on the street was almost immediate, with gang members obviously more subdued thereafter.

The decedent turned out to be a felon who had tried to run over police officers a couple of weeks earlier and had narcotics in the auto with him.

Another gang member caused the final shooting incident involving Guardsmen when he attempted vehicular homicide. He first hit a car, and then ran down a police officer, breaking his leg. When the gang member refused to stop, two infantrymen each fired one round. The gang member then stopped with a serious wound in the buttocks and groin. He also turned out to be a felon on probation for manslaughter hit and run, and also had drugs in his possession.

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The response from citizens when the CAARNG arrived in a neighborhood was immediate and gratifying. There was much applause and other visible signs of support, to include thumbs up and waving. Guardsmen had trouble spending money in local stores . . . as shopkeepers and eating places refused to take money from them. Literally thousands of pizzas and other meals, soft drinks and cookies were delivered to Guardsmen by restaurants and individual citizens. The CAARNG's weight control program was, de facto, temporarily suspended.

siderable machinegun fire and great expenditure of ammunition, from small arms through .50 caliber. Commanders during these riots, knowing the lock plates were not installed, had to rely on their noncommissioned officers to enforce fire discipline. The fact that only 20 rounds were fired in Los Angeles was an extraordinary demonstration of restraint and testament that trust was not misplaced.

Order was quickly restored. The response from citizens when the CAARNG arrived in a neighborhood was immediate and gratifying. There was much applause and other visible signs of support, to include thumbs up and waving. Guardsmen had trouble spending money in local stores, even those that had been looted, as shopkeepers and eating places refused to take money from them. Literally thousands of pizzas and other meals, soft drinks and cookies were delivered to Guardsmen by restaurants and individual citizens. The CAARNG's weight control program was, de facto, temporarily suspended. Cards and letters of thanks from school children were delivered by teachers to various staging areas.

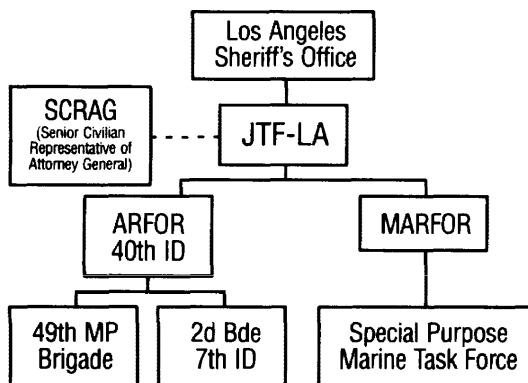
When law and order was reestablished, the streets were much safer than they had been prior to the riots. In Compton, for instance, the police told us the crime rate was down 70 percent. One

Tasking rules also changed. Where the CAARNG permitted great latitude among junior officers and noncommissioned officers in accepting taskings from law enforcement, all taskings following federalization were approved centrally, a comparatively lengthy process. Taskings were also revalidated on a daily basis. This greatly improved control, but was understandably frustrating to harried law enforcement officials.

elderly gentleman told us that his wife could walk to the market for the first time in over 20 years. While this response was gratifying, it also made it extremely difficult to remove the troops. The citizenry simply did not want to let us go, and the last troops did not leave until 29 May, precisely a month later, in a carefully phased withdrawal.

There was considerable discussion about the speed with which Guardsmen had responded to the emergency, an issue which continues to this day. No one doing the criticizing during the riots asked us what the standard is, though we know that the military has a standard for just about everything. In this case, a good source is the Department of Defense Civil Disturbance (Garden Plot) Plan. The 7th ID (Light) at Fort Ord, California, received orders to move at 0415 on 1

Command and Control Relationships



May. The first chalk lifted off slightly over 12 hours later. The task force closed at El Toro Marine Base, El Toro, California, about 25 hours after the start time. That is well within the standards described in Garden Plot.⁵ It is also helpful to note that the 82d Airborne Division's alert battalion is expected to have the first aircraft wheels up in 18 hours.⁶ Guardsmen were committed and on the streets before 18 hours had elapsed. As you can see, that was an extraordinarily fast response, especially when considering that the response was initiated without warning.

After law and order had been restored, Guardsmen heard that they had been federalized and Active Component soldiers and Marines were on the way to restore law and order. Feeling that their efforts were not recognized or appreciated, morale plummeted.

The joint task force commander, Major General Marvin L. Covault of the 7th ID, arrived shortly thereafter. He was briefed by the 40th ID

Civil Disturbance Mission Tasking Guidelines

	State	Federal	
	Restore & Preserve Law/Order	Restore Law/Ord	Preserve Law/Ord
Appropriate			
Man traffic control points	X	X	
Provide building security	X	X	X (-)
Escort emergency equipment	X	X	
Provide area security/area patrols	X	X	
Provide security at custody facilities	X	X	
Provide emergency work crew security	X	X	X (-)
Protect sensitive sites	X	X	X (-)
Transport law enforcement personnel	X	X	
Show of force	X	X	
Disperse crowds	X	X	
Employ riot control agents	X	X	
Provide VIP protection/escort	X	X	
Provide reserve/quick reaction force	X	X	
Other missions mutually agreed upon	X	X	X
Joint patrols/ride alongs	X	X	
Inappropriate			
Hostage negotiation	X	X	X
Barricaded suspect	X	X	X
Evidentiary searches	X	X	X
Criminal investigation	X	X	X



Guardsmen on foot patrol passing looted and burned out stores. Note the gang brand at left.

Comparing fire discipline during these riots with earlier riots may be instructive. For instance, in the 1965 riots in Watts, there was considerable machinegun fire and great expenditure of ammunition, from small arms through .50 caliber. Commanders, during these riots, knowing the lock plates were not installed, had to rely on their noncommissioned officers to enforce fire discipline. The fact that only 20 rounds were fired in Los Angeles was an extraordinary demonstration of restraint.

and moved to the tactical operations center (TOC) established by his assault command post. His first act was to name Major General Daniel J. Hernandez of the 40th ID as the Army Force (ARFOR) commander, and placed his 2d Brigade OPCON to Hernandez. This immediately restored the morale of National Guardsmen. The Marine Force (MARFOR) made up the other portion of the joint task force. The MARFOR consisted of approximately 1,500 Marines from Camp Pendleton, California, commanded by Brigadier General Marvin T. Hopgood, deputy commander of the 1st Marine Division. That task force staged out of Tustin Marine Base, Orange County, California.

It quickly became obvious that key decision makers did not realize the differences that would

occur in support to law enforcement after the troops were federalized. The impact of Posse Comitatus and its proscriptions against federal troop involvement in law enforcement had not been fully considered.⁷ Where National Guardsmen had previously been accepting virtually all mission requests, it now seemed that comparatively few were acceptable. We later met with key officials and produced a matrix (see chart) which made it clear to everyone how the situation had changed.

Tasking rules also changed. Where the CA-ARNG permitted great latitude among junior officers and noncommissioned officers in accepting taskings from law enforcement officials, all taskings following federalization were approved centrally, a comparatively long process. Taskings

were also revalidated on a daily basis. This greatly improved control, but was understandably frustrating to harried law enforcement officials.

No criticism of the Active Component is implied here . . . but things clearly did change. Some explanation may be helpful. For instance, California Guardsmen may be unusual in the relationship that has developed with law enforcement officials over the years. The natural affinity between law enforcement officers and the military is manifest in many ways, including the many police officers who are also in the reserve components. In addition, other dynamics were at work. California is a disaster-prone state, so the CAARNG is used quite often in support of law enforcement. The trust and credibility developed over the years was immediately evident under the great stresses of the riots.

Federalization adversely impacted in many other ways. California pays Guardsmen a minimum of sergeant pay when called up for emergencies. When federalized, junior enlisted soldiers immediately suffered a pay cut. Contracting and logistics systems changed from state to federal systems, and back again when no longer federalized. Rules of engagement and arming orders changed. In every case, Army leadership worked to minimize inconveniences, but some were inescapable.

We must not dwell on the negative, because it is obvious in retrospect that the Los Angeles riots were a tremendous success story for the military. The Total Force under Covault never worked better. Most important of all, no troops were killed or seriously injured and no innocent civilians were injured by the soldiers.

Also in retrospect, the current standards and training methodology used in the CAARNG were overwhelmingly validated. There are many examples. The 40th ID's headquarters quickly went into action using lessons learned during BCTP (battle command training program) and WARFIGHTER exercises. Subordinate headquarters demonstrated their competence learned in Brigade/Battalion Automated Simulation Exercise, Army Training Battle Simulation System and CAPSTONE-sponsored exer-

Also in retrospect, the current standards and training methodology used in the CAARNG were overwhelmingly validated. There are many examples. The 40th ID's headquarters quickly went into action using lessons learned during BCTP and Warfighter Exercises. Subordinate headquarters demonstrated their competence [and] at least one battalion [displaced] its TOC nine times during the riots . . . without loss of continuity of command.

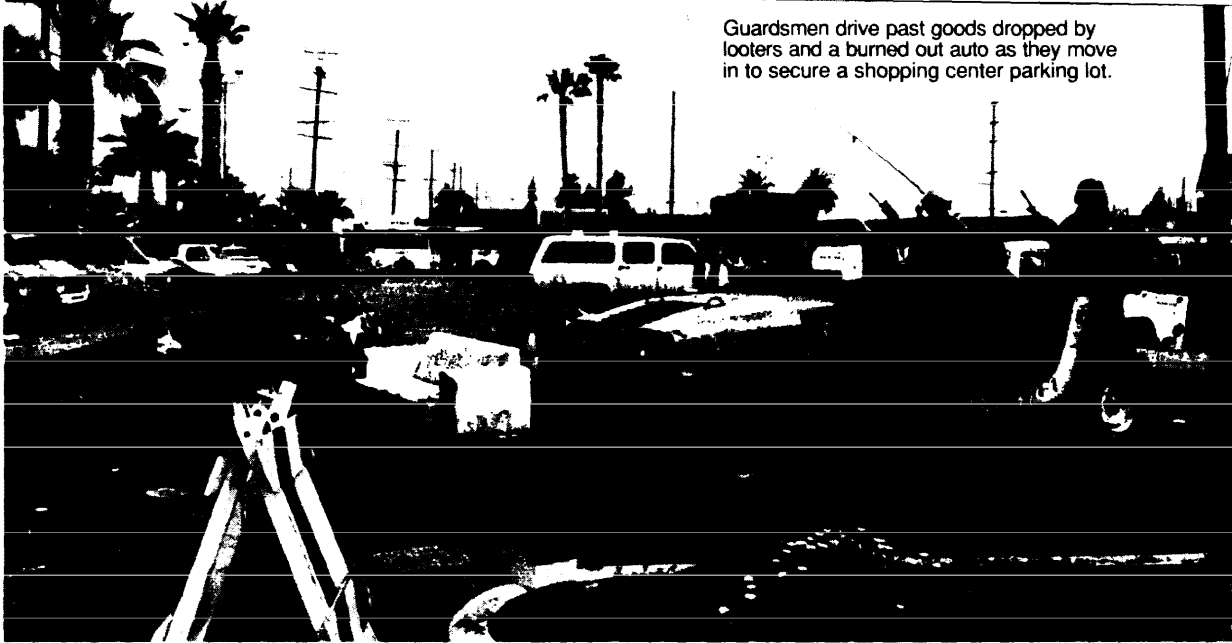
cises. At least one battalion had to displace its TOC nine times during the riots, and did so without loss of continuity of command.

Interestingly, battle-focused training served us much better than the civil disturbance training we used to practice. Much civil disturbance training involves riot control formations, which we rarely, if at all, used in Los Angeles. During these riots, the CAARNG was primarily used to secure areas that were cleared by the police. Prior to our arrival, their greatest frustration was to have mobs return to an area the minute the police moved on to answer another call. As a consequence, our role was more akin to low-intensity conflict (or urban warfare) than riot control.

In addition, while we know the quality of our Guardsmen is much better than just 10 years ago, we just did not know how much better they really are. Junior officers, with self-reliance forced on them in running units in widely separated armories, exhibited extraordinary self confidence and competence while geographically dispersed around Los Angeles.

If there is a secret to our success in Los Angeles, it is probably our young noncommissioned officers. We have been powering down for years in a consistent program involving at least the last four division commanders. This powering down was not designed for civil disturbances, but merely part of what the 40th ID considers battle focus. For instance, all noncommissioned officers in

Guardsmen drive past goods dropped by looters and a burned out auto as they move in to secure a shopping center parking lot.



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TOCs throughout the division are expected to be able to brief. The payoff came during the riots. For example, one young sergeant with five other soldiers was responsible for an entire shopping center in Compton.⁸ Night after night, he and

his soldiers exhibited unprecedented professionalism and restraint in spite of stress, fatigue and great provocation. Such soldiers were the real secret of success in Los Angeles, and we are extremely proud of all of them. **MR**

NOTES

1. Information provided by Lieutenant Paul Mock, Los Angeles Police Department.

2. There were a series of discussions with various law enforcement agencies starting on 6 April 1992. No indication was given by any state or local agency during this period that there was any potential requirement for California Army National Guard "on street" forces.

3. There were several equipment loans to law enforcement agencies. The Los Angeles Police Department was provided 190 flak vests, 275 kevlar helmets and 380 mask filters following a request on 14 April, prior to the King verdict. In addition, 625 vests were provided to the LA City, 1,210 to LA County, and 500 to Orange County Fire Departments.

4. Paragraph 4-5c(2), NGR 500-1 dated 15 September 1988. Installation instructions are found in TM 9-1005-249-23&P dated June 1991.

5. Time standards are described in Appendix 1 to Annex A of the Department of Defense Civil Disturbance Plan (Garden Plot) dated 15 February 1991. While open to interpretation, most construe the intent as troops committed in the area of operations within 36 hours.

6. The 82d Airborne Division's Readiness SOP's Appendix 2 (Battalion TF Alert Sequence Task List) to Annex F (DRF 1 Assumption and N-Hour Procedures) of Chapter 4 puts wheels up in the first aircraft at N+18 hours.

7. Before all military forces were federalized, many National Guard units participated in law enforcement functions. One such unit, Company B, 4th Battalion, 160th Infantry from Orange, California, detained more than 140 curfew violators in just one night. The unit is commanded by Captain Ricardo A. Nicol III, an attorney in Santa Ana. In another example, on 1 May in the Newton District, members of the 40th Military Police arrested three murder suspects in the death of an individual during a drug deal gone "bad." California Army National Guardsmen do have arrest powers, in spite of many inaccurate reports otherwise. However, we frankly prefer not to exercise those powers, and leave the actual arrests and other issues such as custody of the chain of evidence to law enforcement personnel.

8. This soldier was Sergeant David L. McGill from Huntington Beach, California. He and his soldiers were responsible for securing the Compton Fashion Plaza Shopping Center for several nights. McGill also volunteered and served a six-month tour during operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*.

Major General James D. Delk, Army of the United States, Retired, was the commander of California Army National Guard forces in Los Angeles until federalized. He holds a B.A. from Upper Iowa University, an M.S. from Shippensburg State University and is a graduate of the US Army War College. While on active duty he served in a variety of command and staff positions in infantry, tank, supply, maintenance and headquarters units, selected to organize the National Guard Bureau's first Readiness Branch and coordinated the National Guard's transition to the automated Unit Readiness Reporting System. He has served as chief of staff, Selective Service System, Washington, D.C.; military executive, Reserve Forces Policy Board, Office of the Secretary of Defense; commander, 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized); deputy STARC commander, California Army National Guard; and upon retirement, was appointed as a brigadier general, Adjutant General Corps.