



Bullet'n Backstory

Joint Munitions Command

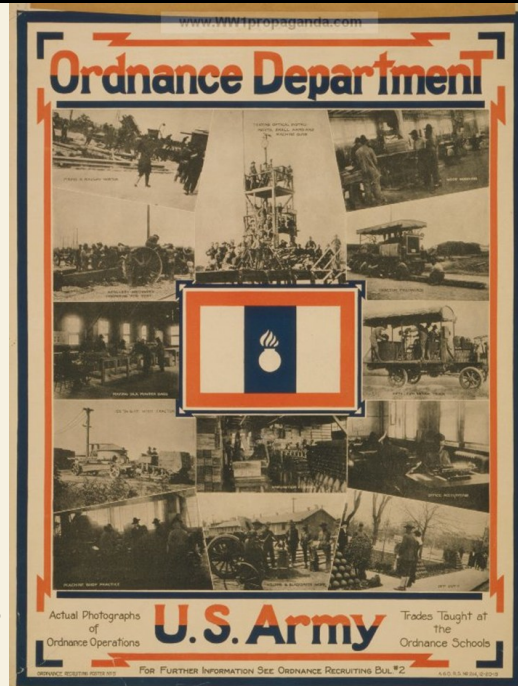
Volume 14, Issue 3

May/June 2026

Commemorating the 250th Birthday of the United States Joint Munitions Command: The Ammunition Legacy

The Joint Munitions Command's lineage can be traced to our nation's fight for independence and the War and Ordnance Departments that built the military infrastructure to bolster that fight. As George Washington mobilized our first Army, the nation's ability to supply ammunition became critical. In 1775, the first Continental Army Depot was established. Soon, 27 other depots and arsenals were created to supply the Continental Army. The Continental Congress relied on committees to manage logistics and supply during the war. With the exception of small arms, everything was purchased, mainly using contracts personally supervised by the Secretary of War. As the Army grew, this task became unmanageable and new management strategies were needed. By June 1776, the Continental Congress formed a five-member Board of War and Ordnance to manage the task of supplying the growing Army.

Following the Revolutionary War, the U.S. War Department was created to organize and maintain the Army under the command of the President. Congress supported the public manufacture of arms and powder by appropriating funds for the establishment of federal armories, arsenals, depots, laboratories and magazines so the United States would become independent of foreign nations for essential military items. The War Department established the Ordnance Department (OD) in 1812 to manage all ordnance items, including ammunition, combat vehicles, equipment and weapons. By the Civil War, the Army had several permanent arsenals and depots in major cities such as Boston, New York and Philadelphia, which would support an Army of a million Soldiers.



Between the Civil War and World War I, the industrial base wasn't defined by significant expansion. Modest improvements were made to the organization of the OD, and scientific research continued, but the nation remained unprepared for a major conflict. However, by the early 20th Century, the OD had played a crucial role in the Industrial Revolution and helped establish the "American System of Manufacturing." During WWI, the War Industries Board (WIB) was created to bring order to the procurement process for war materiel. The WIB quickly built explosives, powder, and loading, assembling and packaging (LAP) plants, with the ordnance mission was operating on a scale never previously reached.



War Industries Board - World War I

JMC Archives Spotlight — The End of the Bullet'n Backstory:

For twelve years, the JMC History Office has enjoyed bringing you interesting stories about ammunition, the U.S. Army, and military events throughout world history. In that time, the Backstory evolved from a two-page monthly newsletter to a three-page bi-monthly publication. It has been a consistent joy to research and write, with the exception of a two-year span when it was on hiatus to focus on other priorities. In advance of JMC's decommission ceremony in June, here is the 131st and final issue of the Backstory. While keeping the timeline column intact, the usual format has been changed to focus on the story of the ammunition mission from 1775 through the end of JMC. You will also find contact information for the ASC history office. As many of you know, I pursue numerous creative endeavors outside of government service (books, music, art, video production), but I always got a special thrill from being able to bring some of that creativity to JMC, whether in the Backstory, our short-lived history podcast, or lunch and learn presentations. I have preserved and chronicled JMC history for most of its lifespan, organizing and databasing the collection as its Archivist and its 2nd Historian, after serving as deputy to Keri Pleasant for almost two decades, first as contractor then as Army civilian. As I leave to serve a new role for the Army, it is bittersweet ending this stage of my career after serving so long with so many dedicated people. Thank you to those whose professionalism made my job easier, who appreciated my efforts to entertain the team, and whose need for information helped me serve a valuable role in the overall mission. Best wishes, Dr. Paul-Thomas Ferguson.

This Month in Military History

May 1, 1328: The English Parliament ratifies the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton, recognizing Robert the Bruce and his heirs as the rulers of an independent Kingdom of Scotland. The treaty only lasts 5 years, when England invades Scotland again.

May 4, 1858: As part of Mexico's Reform War (1857-1861) against the religious conservative establishment, liberal secular forces establish a new capital at Vera Cruz.

May 7, 1429: Commanding a French army, Joan of Arc becomes a national hero when she breaks the English army's siege of Orléans, ending their latest attempt to conquer France in the Hundred Years' War.

May 10, 1775: The Green Mountain Boys, under the command of Ethan Allen and Benedict Arnold, capture Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain in the first offensive victory for colonial forces in the American Revolution.

May 13, 1916: Lafayette Escadrille, a U.S. unit composed of volunteer pilots operating under French command, enters combat for the first time at the Battle of Verdun. They are later transferred to the U.S. Army as 103rd Aero Squadron.

May 16, 1863: Under the command of Ulysses S. Grant, the Union's Army of the Tennessee defeats John C. Pemberton's Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana at Champion Hill, Mississippi. It is the bloodiest conflict in the Vicksburg Campaign.

May 19, 1643: A Dutch force under the command of Hendrik Brouwer captures the Chilean Archipelago of Chiloé, massacre the Spanish garrison and sign a pact with the native Huilliches tribe.

May 22, 334 BCE: Alexander the Great defeats Emperor Darius III at the Battle of Granicus (Turkey), forcing the Persians to fight defensively. It is the first of three major battles leading to the Macedonian conquest of Achaemenid Persia.

May 25, 1738: Cresap's War (or The Conojocular War), a violent border conflict between Pennsylvania and Maryland, ends with a treaty establishing a colonial border at the Mason-Dixon Line.

May 28, 1942: Nazi forces massacre 1,800 Czechs after a British-trained team led by Jan Kubiš and Jozef Gabčík wounds Holocaust architect Reinhard Heydrich during an assassination attempt in Prague. He will die from his infected wound on June 3.

May 31, 1223: Mongols under Jebei Khan and Subedei Khan kill 20,000 Russians in a victory at the Battle of the Kalka River (Ukraine).

By the end of WWI, 16 government ammunition installations and 76 commercial contractors produced powder and high explosives at 92 ammunition plants. An additional 93 LAP plants produced U.S. and foreign allies' ammunition requirements. The WIB industrial base was quickly dismantled after the war. Thus, World War II required the largest government ammunition-focused buildup in U.S. history. In 1941, a network of ammunition plants was constructed across the country. The OD author-

ized construction of 112 plants and built 86 by the end of the war. The Corps of Engineers managed the construction of government-owned plants, which were initially managed by the OD. Over time, smaller organizations like the Field Director of Ammo Plants were created to manage the industrial base.



Harry Truman breaks ground at Lake City AAP

After WWII, 30 plants were shut down immediately while 14 plants remained active, primarily engaged in demilitarization, renovation and production of fertilizer. The OD faced the task of rehabilitating 56 plants to meet the ammunition requirements of the Korean War. Between 1953 and 1964, the Army's ammunition industrial base was reduced to only 26 ammunition plants. The need for many ammunition plants was reduced thanks to large stockpiles and the addition of advanced technology to production processes. During the Vietnam War, 26 government-owned ammunition plants met mission requirements.

In 1962, the Army underwent a major reorganization. The old Technical Commands were replaced by the U.S. Army Materiel Command (AMC). AMC consolidated the research and development (R&D), production, storage and sustainment functions. The creation of AMC led to several organizational changes for ammunition management, eventually leading to the establishment of Joint Munitions Command. The Ordnance Special Weapons Ammunition Command (OSWAC) split into the U.S. Army Weapons Command (WECOM) at Rock Island Arsenal (RIA) and the U.S. Army Munitions Command (MUCOM) at Picatinny Arsenal. MUCOM ab-

sorbed the procurement and R&D mission. The procurement function at Joliet, Illinois, remained a subordinate to MUCOM and became the Ammunition Procurement and Supply Agency (APSA).

Over the course of the next 30 years, organizational changes in the management of ammunition reflected changing philosophies concerning the relationship between R&D, acquisition and sustainment of munitions. At the end of the Cold War, the munitions industry was burdened by excess capacity and lacked funding for maintenance and modernization. Throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s, modernization programs were implemented but often didn't come to fruition. Between Vietnam and the Gulf War came the creation of the Single Manager for Conventional Ammunition (SMCA) in 1977.

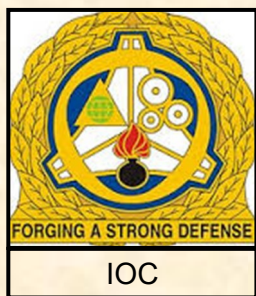


Ammo Cases — Vietnam, 1977



The Army was charged with central management of conventional ammunition for all services and three Navy ammunition installations were transferred to the Army. Under the new organizational system, 13 of 26 ammunition plants actively produced ammunition in response to Gulf War requirements. Ten of the sites actively produced ammunition, while the broader mission involved the logistical challenge of rapidly moving and retrograding existing ammunition.

After the Gulf War, the Army closed several ammunition installations in accordance with Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) laws. During Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. Army operated 15 ammunition plants and 3 ammunition depots. Additional BRAC actions further decreased the OIB during the conflict while organizational shifts continued. Depot Systems Command (DESCOM) managed ammunition requirements beginning in 1976. DESCOM was followed by Industrial Operations Command (IOC) in 1995, Operations Support Command (OSC) in 2000, and Joint Munitions Command in 2003, as a subordinate of Army Field Support Command (AFSC).



IOC



OSC



JMC

In 2006, JMC and AFSC separated into separate commands, with AFSC redesignated Army Support Command (ASC). Just as technological innovation and automation have allowed the OIB to meet and sustain ammunition needs using a smaller footprint, so have bureaucratic changes created opportunities to address mission requirements using less manpower. The industrial base has significantly reduced in size since WWII. Now the civilian workforce is pursuing the same goal, with JMC reintegrating with ASC after 20 years of separation. Moving forward, industry and government will continue partnering to meet mission needs.

JMC Leadership History

MG Wade H. McManus, Jr. (2002-2003)

BG Robert M. Radin (2003-2005)

BG James E. Rogers (2005-2008)

BG Larry D. Wyche (2008-2010)

Mr. Jyuji Hewitt, Acting Executive Director (2010)

BG Gustave F. Perna (2010-2012)

BG Kevin G. O'Connell (2012-2013)

BG Kristin K. French (2013-2015)

BG Stephen E. Farmen (2015-2016)

BG Richard B. Dix (2016-2017)

BG Heidi J. Hoyle (2017-2018)

Ms. Rhonda VanDeCastele, Acting Executive Director (2018)

BG Michelle M.T. Letcher (2018-2020)

BG Gavin J. Gardner (2020-2022)

COL Landis C. Maddox (2022-2023)

BG Ronnie D. Anderson, Jr. (2023-2025)

BG Daniel J. Duncan (2025-2026)

This Month in Military History

June 2, 1763: While playing a game of baaga'adowe (lacrosse) outside British-held Fort Michilimackinac (northern Michigan) to distract the garrison, a group of Ojibwe gain access to the fort and massacre most of its occupants, part of Pontiac's War.

June 5, 1288: As part of a war over succession in the Duchy of Limburg (Cologne, Germany), a combined force under John I of Brabant decimated Siegfried II of Westerburg, inflicting 1,100 casualties to just 40 in one of the most lopsided battle of the Middle Ages.

June 8, 452: Attila the Hun invades Italy for the last time, ravaging the northern plains until Rome sues for peace to avoid an attack on the city. Attila will die in Germany in 453.

June 11, 1184 BCE: The date on which the ancient city of Troy was sacked and burned, according to calculations made by Greek philosopher Eratosthenes (276-194 BCE).

June 14, 1381: Despite efforts by King Richard II to negotiate with leaders of the Peasants' Revolt, rebels storm and enter the Tower of London without facing resistance.

June 17, 1462: During a night attack at Târgoviște (Bulgaria), Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II survives an assassination attempt by Wallachian Prince Vlad III, the most likely historical inspiration for Count Dracula.

June 20, 1863: After splitting from pro-slavery Virginia during the Civil War, anti-slavery West Virginia becomes the 35th state admitted to the Union, despite providing an equal number of volunteers to the Union and Confederate armies.

June 23, 1900: Following a siege of two and a half months, Frederick Hodgson, British Governor of Gold Coast, Africa, flees Fort Coomassie with his supporters. He will later serve as governor of Barbados (1900-04) and British Guiana (1904-11). Britain will hold Gold Coast as a colony until 1957, when it becomes the independent nation of Ghana.

June 26, 1539: More than 200,000 troops clash when Afghan ruler Sher Shah Suri defeats Mughal Emperor Humayun at the rain-soaked Battle of Chausa (Bihar, India), where 8,000 drowned in the flooded Ganga River.

June 29, 1682: Sophia Alekseyevna names herself Regent and Tsarevna of Russia over her brother Ivan V (16yo) and half brother Peter I (9yo). The brothers depose their sister in 1689 and rule jointly until Ivan's death in 1696, after which Peter rules alone and becomes the first Emperor of Russia, Peter the Great.

Transfer of JMC Historical Document Collection

Following the merger, ASC Public and Congressional Affairs Office will maintain the former JMC Archives, which houses historically significant records related to the history of the ammunition enterprise, including: emails, manuscripts, letters, reports, studies, images, videos, films, photographs, oral history interviews, briefings, SOPs, policies, decision papers, memoranda, statistics, newspapers, newsletters, brochures, maps, blueprints, drawings, and artifacts. Such records are pertinent to the Army's knowledge of active and predecessor installations and the ammunition industrial base. If you or others are leaving JMC, it is vital that records be assessed before disposal. If employees are uncertain about the historical value of materials, the best policy is to make the items available for preservation. Contact Kaleb Bemis (kaleb.d.bemis.civ@army.mil) in the ASC History Office (Basement 390).