SECTION I
Mobilization

Before World War II, war planners in the United States believed that mobilization would begin when war started. They realized though that modern war required industrial mobilization at least two years before manpower mobilization. The Army's Industrial War Plan of the early 1930s established the basic principles for harnessing the nation's economic strength before a war, while the Protective Mobilization Plan of 1937 was based on a start of war, M-day, to begin building the initial manpower force. Both plans assumed a sudden start to any future war. In reality, mobilization occurred in a piecemeal fashion as the United States gradually approached World War II.

In the fall of 1938, shortly after the Munich crisis, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, at a meeting of his military advisers, called for an increase in military aircraft production. Army planners wanted to increase the ground forces as well, but the President was looking to the airplane for American defense.

Reexamining its plans, the Army saw no support for anything but a strategy of hemispheric defense. The neutrality acts of the late 1930s determined that the United States would remain isolationist, not enter foreign wars, and protect its national interests with a western hemisphere security force.

The September 1939 beginning of World War II in Europe had little impact on the Army. The President did proclaim a limited national emergency and authorize slight increases in the size of the Army and National Guard, but he felt the public would not support a large mobilization. He believed the Allies would eventually stop Hitler with force, if not diplomacy.

The dramatic German victories in western Europe in the summer of 1940, especially the defeat of France, had a

significant impact on the Army, including the Corps of Engineers. In June, a munitions program for the Army called for procurement by October 1941 of equipment for a force of 1.2 million. To fill the ranks of this enlarged Army, in August Congress approved the induction of the National Guard into federal service and the call up of the Army Reserves. The next month Congress passed the Selective Service Act, the first peacetime draft in the nation's history.

As the Corps increased in size and mission, there was a need for reorganization, as described in the first essay. A significant new mission, the fall 1940 air base construction program, is covered in the next three essays. The Corps' increased training mission is described in the final two essays.

Initially the Army had problems with the major increase in manpower. The regular force was too small to train and absorb the new arrivals, and equipment was in short supply. But Pearl Harbor ended the prewar phase, and suddenly the United States faced a global war. The Army was still training new arrivals and there were still significant equipment shortages, but wartime mobilization had begun.

The following essays provide some details of how the Corps of Engineers carried out its missions as the Army passed from the prewar phase to wartime mobilization.