

Taps Bids a Sad Farewell to an Army Terminal

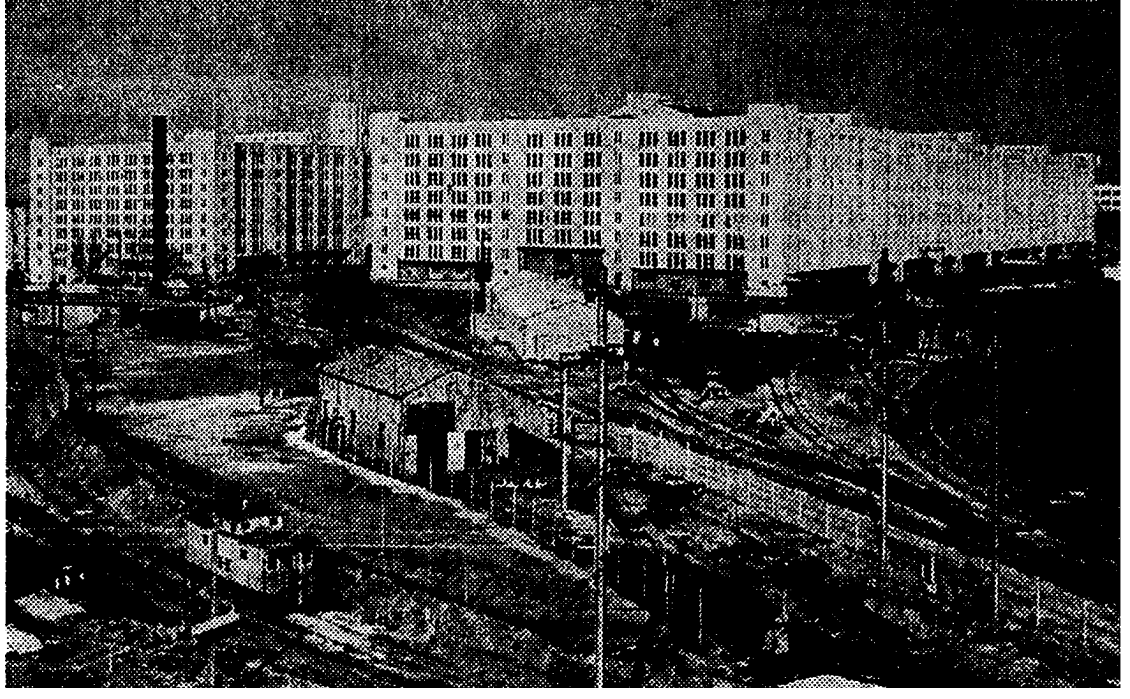
By JOHN P. CALLAHAN

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The New York Times

Activity ceases at Brooklyn Army Terminal as the 47-year-old military site shuts down

By JOHN P. CALLAHAN

Minerva Davidson wiped away a tear, and one of the high-ranking military officials who could not, because he was standing at attention, blinked hard. They were among several hundred persons on the parade ground of the Brooklyn Army Terminal yesterday when Taps was played for the closing of the 47-year-old terminal.

Mrs. Davidson, who was the first stenographer hired at the 105-acre military site when it was opened in 1919, said she wasn't interested in "all the talk about the number of troops and all the cargo that has moved through here."

Like so many of the 3,200 military and civilian personnel who helped move a quarter-million tons of military supplies and thousands of soldiers and their dependents each month to and from United States installations abroad, the 70-year-old former secretary was more than sad. She was "a bit disappointed."

One of her associates among the remaining skeleton civilian force remarked: "Maybe McNamara knows what he's doing, closing us down. But he certainly can't imagine the hardship created by what he is saving."

The reference was to the

decision of Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara in 1964 to close 95 bases in 33 states and abroad, including the Brooklyn base. The Army Terminal, in the Bay Ridge section of the borough, also employed almost 1,000 members of Local 1814, the largest unit in the International Longshoremen's Association.

Asked yesterday what would happen to the men, Anthony M. Scotto, president of the local, said they would be assigned to other areas in the Port of New York. Mr. Scotto declined to attend the closing ceremonies, adding: "I'd rather not go to my own funeral."

A 75-mm cannon blast, and the First Army's 297th Army Band's rendition of the Colonel Bogey March, helped snap the audience out of a pall of sad quiet after the folded flag was passed to the new command.

The new command is the Bayonne (N.J.) Military Ocean Terminal, to which all of the terminal operations have been transferred.

Outside the high wired fence, residents of the area, including shopkeepers, watched the ceremonies. They were among the people studied in a statistical analysis in 1964 and 1965 in vain efforts to dissuade Secretary McNamara from closing

the terminal. The study showed that in addition to the dislocation for 1,000 longshoremen, the loss of employment for more than 2,000 other workers meant a loss of \$40-million a year that the Army base personnel spent in the neighborhood.

In addition, the shutdown meant a loss of close to \$1-million a month spent for maintenance and repairs on the Navy's Military Sea Transportation Service ships in yards and repair shops near the terminal.

Albert Cantor, deputy director of terminal operations, who had been at the base for 40 years, said it was "the busiest military supply terminal in the world."

The General Services Administration will soon offer the terminal to other Federal agencies. If they do not want it, civilian bids will be invited. No one knew yesterday what would happen if the facility was unwanted.

"Meanwhile, we will be here until shortly after Dec. 31, winding things up," a member of the traffic management and terminal services said. "We" means about 26 persons, he added.