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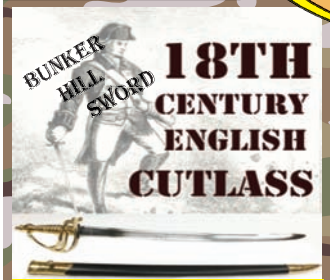

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Cover: An American Stuart light tank lumbers through the war-torn streets of St. Lo, France during the Allied breakout of Normandy, July 1940. See story page 22. Photo: National Archives.

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EDITORIAL

Attacks by Patriot irregulars doomed John Burgoyne's invading British army

THE MAXIM "AN ARMY MARCHES ON ITS STOMACH," ATTRIBUTED to both Napoleon and Frederick the Great rings true when considering the fate of Maj. Gen. John Burgoyne's army that surrendered following two pitched battles near Saratoga, New York, in 1777. Multiple factors contributed to Burgoyne's surrender on October 17 of that year.

For background, Burgoyne had arrived in Canada in 1776 with a large Anglo-German army to reinforce Governor Guy Carleton's much smaller defense force. In February 1777, Burgoyne had submitted to the British crown a grandiose strategic plan—the best set forth by a British commander in the American Revolutionary War—in which he proposed that three forces converge on Albany.

Burgoyne would lead one army south via Lake Champlain, Colonel Barry St. Léger would lead a much smaller force through the Mohawk Valley, and Maj. Gen. William Howe would lead one north from New York City. In so doing, the British would split the Thirteen Colonies, isolating the militant New England region from the rest of the colonies.

Although Burgoyne made a number of mistakes, some factors lay outside of his control and are worth considering. Howe, the commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, for all intents and purposes sabotaged Burgoyne's plan by moving two-thirds of his troops in New York south by water in August to capture Philadelphia rather than deploying the bulk of his forces to Burgoyne. Howe disingenuously claimed he could shift troops north in a timely way once he had secured Philadelphia.

Lord George Germaine, the secretary of state for the American Colonies, also contributed to Burgoyne's failure by not issuing clear instructions coordinating the movements of the three British forces converging on Albany.

Yet Burgoyne undermined himself in several important respects. First, he underestimated the geographical challenges he would confront on his march south to Albany. Although his expedition began well with a swift advance south by water across Lake Champlain, it bogged down afterwards in a forested wilderness with few roads.

His use of Native Americans as allies stands as a clear blunder. Notoriously unreliable, they ignored his orders not to attack civilians. Many of the residents of upstate New York were loyal to the British crown, but the atrocities committed by the Native Americans compelled them to assist the Patriot cause.

The most compelling reason, however, for Burgoyne's defeat might very well be the sustained attacks on his supply line to Canada by civilian irregulars. "It was the ruination of Burgoyne's logistics by the combination of irregular raiders and inhospitable terrain more than battlefield defeats—though toward the end he suffered those, too—that destroyed his expedition," wrote historian Russell F. Weigley.

Burgoyne, unable to obtain reinforcements, ultimately faced an American army nearly three times his size. After his bold attack on October 7 against the Americans entrenched on Bemis Heights failed, he called a council of war to consider his options.

Burgoyne and his generals decided to retreat north without their artillery and baggage, but soon found out that there were too many American detachments in their rear for this too succeed. Per the terms of surrender, the British on October 17 marched out with honors, grounded their arms, and began a 200-mile trek to Boston where they would be held as prisoners of war.

—William E. Welsh

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WARFAREHISTORYNETWORK

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The Soviet Union's devastating ZSU-23-4 self-propelled, anti-aircraft platform, which was designed during the Cold War, remains in use worldwide.

By Christopher Miskimon

Soviet forces occupying Afghanistan in March 1986 during the Soviet-Afghan War sought to annihilate a large force of Afghan Mujahedeen fighters that had sheltered in Xadigar Canyon in Kandahar Province. Lt. Col. S. Pyatakov, who had received intelligence reports indicating that the Mujahedeen had large weapons and ammunition caches in the remote area, planned to spearhead an assault with his Spetsnaz Special Forces to eradicate the threat.

Pyatakov first ordered a squadron of SU-25 ground-attack aircraft to sweep the canyon. He then unleashed a thundering barrage from an entire battalion of 122mm D-30 howitzers. Next, a group of Spetsnaz soldiers arrived in helicopters just as the artillery fell silent. They deployed swiftly in order to go into action before the Afghan fighters could reoccupy their defenses. Two motorized rifle battalions and an artillery battalion also participated in the lightning assault.

The Spetsnaz had incredible firepower at their disposal in the form of the ZSU-2-4 self-propelled, anti-aircraft guns, which laid down curtains of 23mm cannon fire to suppress those enemy fighters who remained able to resist. Each gun could destroy a prospective strongpoint, allowing the Spetsnaz to approach it in relative safety. When it was all over, Pyatakov reported to his superiors that his troops had killed 20 mujahedeen and destroyed large amounts of enemy weapons and equipment.

Originally designed as a close-in air defense weapon during the Cold War, the ZSU-23-4 never got its chance to shoot down NATO warplanes on the plains of Europe during a third world war between the Soviet bloc and NATO. Instead, it served around the world in local wars and proxy conflicts of the superpowers; occasionally in its intended role, but more often as a fire support weapon for ground troops.

The crew of a ZSU-23-4 of President Bashar al-Assad's Syrian Armed Forces stands beside their ZSU-23-4. Introduced as a mobile air defense system during the Cold War in the 1960s, the ZSU-23-4 remains in use in 30 countries.

The gun excels in this role, and therefore is still in service in many countries today. Although deemed obsolete for modern high-intensity battlefields, the ZSU-23-4 nevertheless strikes a balance of firepower, accuracy, and utility that makes it extremely useful in many conflicts. The vehicle easily remains the most popular and widely distributed self-propelled, anti-aircraft gun in the world long after it has gone out of production.

Like many of today's most widely used weapons, the ZSU-23-4 originated in the Cold War arms race that began in earnest in the 1950s. During that period, the Soviets fielded the ZSU-57-2, which carried a pair of 57mm guns. But the

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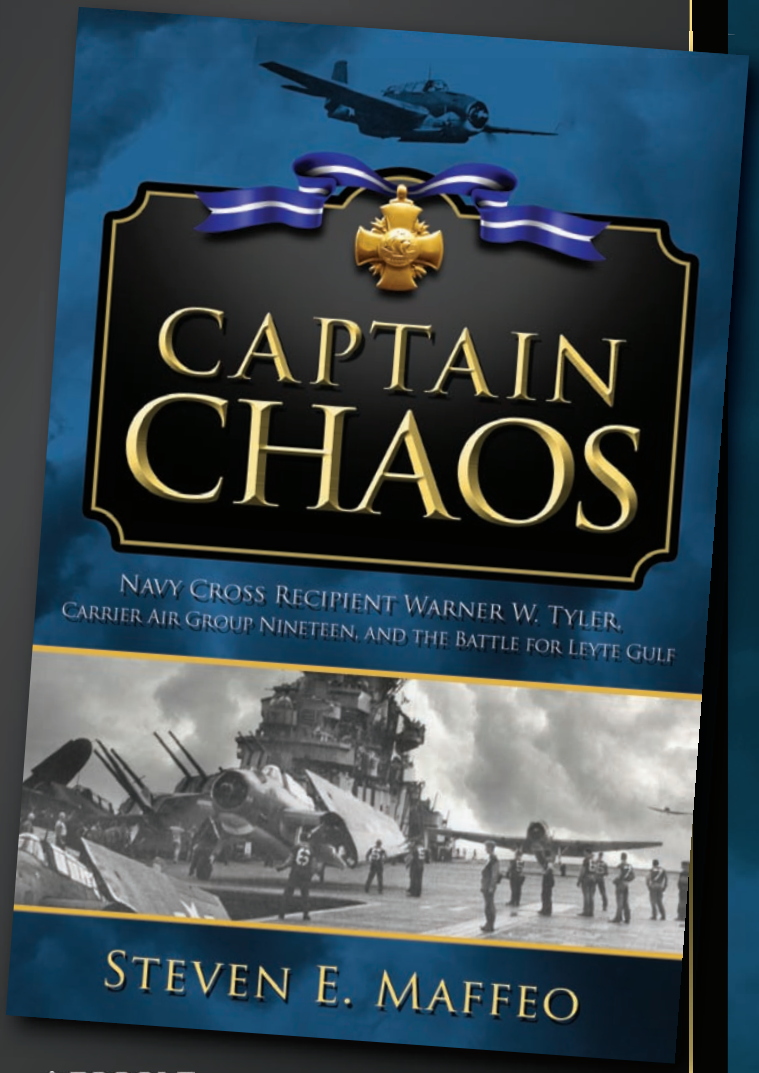

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U.S. Marines operate a former Soviet bloc ZSU-23-4 during a training exercise in the 1990s. In recent years Russian contractors have upgraded the vehicle's weapons and radar for international clients.

National Archives

design quickly became obsolete, even though it continued to see use through the 1970s. To replace it, Soviet designers developed a pair of ZSUs, one carrying a pair of 37mm guns and another with four 23mm cannon. In order to down jet aircraft and helicopters, these vehicles needed radar for fire control and had to be capable of all-weather operations.

The Soviets tested the two ZSUs side by side and found the 23mm version had twice the kill ratio despite its shorter range. Subsequently, Soviet forces adopted it in 1962 as the ZSU-23-4. They named the vehicle Shilka after a left tributary of the Amur River that forms the border between the Russian Far East and Northeastern China. After further refinement the vehicle entered Soviet service in 1965. At the time, it was the most advanced mobile anti-aircraft system in the world.

The Soviets designed the ZSU-23-4 as a lightly armored tracked vehicle capable of protecting its crew from small-arms fire and artillery fragments. The heart of the vehicle was its cannon and radar system. The quad-mount 23mm guns had a rate of fire of 850-1,000 rounds per minute for each gun for a total maximum rate of 4,000 rpm. Its ammunition was used in belts of 40 high-explosive rounds and 10 armor-piercing rounds. While serving in an anti-aircraft mode, it had a maximum effective range of up to 1.5 miles. When firing at ground targets, the rounds could travel 4.3 miles.

The ZSU's RPK-2 Tobol radar system could detect targets as far as 12.4 miles away and could lock onto and track moving targets at half that range. For low-altitude targets the radar works in conjunction with an optical system which provides up to six times magnification. The crew could also use the optics when the enemy was employing counter-radar systems for targeting or when the crew wanted to conceal the vehicle's position by not emitting radar waves.

A Shilka crew can fire its cannons in three different modes. In the optics-only mode, the crew tracks targets and fires manually. When using radar-only mode, the computer calculates the target's range, elevation, and azimuth and aims the cannon. The radar-only mode is the best method for engaging low-flying, fast-moving enemy aircraft.

In the combined radar and optical mode, the radar provides the range to target while the gunner uses his optics to determine elevation and azimuth. Even with the gunner's input, the computer still aims the cannon. This has proven to be the best mode against slow-moving targets.

When the radar is in use, the memory will continue to track aircraft that flew behind an obstruction for eight to 10 seconds, projecting its flight path so it can reacquire the target when it reappears. In the 1990s, the Russian Federation upgraded the ZSU-23-4 giving it improved electronics and digital systems to improve its capabilities. This improved accuracy and lowered the amount of ammunition needed to engage targets by as much as 90 percent.

Although this combination of gun and radar put the weapon system far ahead of any comparable NATO systems at the time, it has its share of drawbacks. The radar is sensitive and often picks up false signals against fast, low-flying aircraft. Moreover, the weapons system has considerable difficulty tracking supersonic planes for more than short periods, and it lacks a laser rangefinder to aid in aiming at stationary or ground targets.

Operators also have found that the guns are susceptible to overheating or continuing to fire after the gunner had released the firing mechanism. To correct this problem, the Russians introduced a water-cooling system. Despite all of this, a well-drilled crew can carry out the ZSU's acquisition and firing battle drill, and place rounds on target, in just 25 seconds.

To counter this threat, NATO has trained its attack helicopter pilots to expose their aircraft for no more than 30 seconds, which allows their long-range munitions, such as the TOW and Hellfire missiles, to strike from outside the Shilka's effective range. NATO pilots also try to fly no more than 30 feet above their cover or concealment. Western military doctrine also calls for distracting the ZSU crew by various means so that artillery or aircraft can destroy it.

The Soviet Army initially organized its ZSUs into separate air defense battalions that it distributed to infantry and armor units as needed. But they eventually integrated the vehicles into the air defense batteries that were organic components of each tank or motor rifle regiment. On the battlefield, the Shilkas typically follow the head of the armored column by 500 yards, which gives their crews protection from enemy tanks and anti-tank missiles while remaining close enough to the battlefront to engage enemy aircraft.

The Soviet Union built 6,500 ZSU-23-4s before production ceased in the early 1980s. As with most Soviet-era armored vehicles the Shilka soon found its way into the armies of the Warsaw Pact and client states around the globe. Poland received 150 while East Germany took possession of 100. Other Eastern European countries operated them as well. Egypt and Syria bought Shilkas to serve alongside their older ZSU-57-2s, while India bought 100 of the vehicles in the 1970s. They are also used by

Vietnam War Medal of Honor recipient Melvin Morris follows in the footsteps of the 54th Massachusetts at Morris Island, S.C.
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Both sides in the protracted Russo-Ukrainian War field the ZSU-23-4. The crew of a Ukrainian ZSU-23-4 (top) participates in a military exercise along the Black Sea Coast in 2018, and Russian servicemen make repairs to a ZSU-23-4 inside Ukraine in May 2022.

RIA Novosti / Sputnik via AP

some countries in Africa, Asia, and South America.

The first major combat for the Shilka came during the Yom Kippur War in October 1973. After its defeat in the Six-Day War in 1967, Egypt rebuilt its forces with the most modern vehicles they could obtain, including the ZSU-23-4. Arrayed Soviet-style just behind the leading elements, they helped down 10 Israeli aircraft the first day.

The Syrians also acquired the Shilka and integrated it into their own air defenses, assisting in the downing 30 Israeli planes. Determined efforts to reduce these air defenses paid off and soon the Israelis achieved air superiority. Still, the Israeli Air Force estimated that a quarter of its losses during the conflict were from ZSU-23-4 fire.

Soviet forces relied heavily on the Shilka when they invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Although Russian troops in Afghanistan experienced no air threat to counter with their Shilkas, they used its cannon in a direct fire role. The Shilkas proved particularly effective not only against Mujahedeen personnel, but also enemy light utility vehicles. The Russians even developed an Afghanskii variant of the vehicle in which they removed the radar and installed night-vision equipment and doubled its ammunition capacity to 4,000 rounds.

The Russians relied heavily on the Afghanskii to escort convoys. Afghan mujahedeen fighters often ambushed Russian forces from high cliffs overlooking the roads. While most armored vehicles could not elevate their guns high enough to engage the enemy, the Shilka could easily do so. In such situations, the Shilka gunners pelted Afghan fighters with high-explosive rounds.

The Afghan resistance eventually learned to deploy rocket-propelled grenade teams against the lightly armored Shilkas. They devised a tactic whereby one RPG team would draw fire from the

Shilkas while a second RPG team fired on the vehicle from a different direction.

The Russians applied the lessons they learned from using Shilkas in Afghanistan to the Chechen wars in the 1990s. Early in the conflict they lost many armored vehicles to RPG fire from Chechen irregulars during the Battle of Grozny in the First Chechen War.

Chechen fire teams armed with RPG-7s and RPG-18s typically took up positions in the upper stories of large buildings in order to fire down on Russian tanks and armored personnel carriers. After their initial assault on Grozny failed, the Russians reorganized before resuming the assault on the city. They integrated ZSU-23-4s into their armored columns to take advantage of their high-angle firing capability.

Iraqi forces used Shilkas during the Gulf War in 1991. The Iraqis used the vehicles in their defense of Kuwait only to see them destroyed by the U.S.-led Coalition's air and ground forces. The Iraqis kept them in service, though, and many were present 12 years later during the Iraq War. In one memorable incident, a UAV fired a Hellfire missile that knocked out a Shilka near Al Ammarah. This was the first confirmed target killed by a UAV in Iraq.

Despite its growing obsolescence, the ZSU-23-4 is so widely used that Russian contractors are often hired to update their weapons and radar. Most significantly, the Russians have developed an improved version of the Shilka that boasts a pair of 9K38 surface-to-air missiles in addition to its cannon. The Polish Army has launched a similar upgrade program for its own vehicles using the Grom missile, while the Indian Army has improved the engine and installed new electronics and radar.

One of the most interesting variants is the Ukrainian Donets. This design mates the turret of the ZSU-23-4 with the hull of the T-80 tank. To further improve the vehicle, the Ukrainians have installed 9K35 missiles on it. The Ukrainians built the Donets variant at a former Soviet factory they possess in Kharkov. Many nations, though, still operate the Shilka in its original form.

Unlike some other Soviet-era armored vehicles, the ZSU-23-4 has proven an overall success despite its drawbacks. It is still used in approximately 30 countries and is seen on battlefields in Syria, Yemen, and the Ukraine. In these conflicts, Shilkas are almost always used in ground attacks against enemy troops, indicating their continued utility in that role.

The Russians still operate the Shilka, although claiming to have replaced it with the 2K22 Tunguska self-propelled, surface-to-air gun and missile system. One thing is for certain, though. The ZSU-23-4 will continue to appear on battlefields around the globe for decades to come. ■

UNIFORM Royal Marine of the 2nd Battalion (1813-1815)

By William E. Welsh
Artwork by Don Troiani

HEADGEAR: The black, lacquered felt, round hat was seven inches tall. It featured at the top, on the left side, a small white feather and a black cockade at the base.

FIREARM: The Marines carried the sea-service version of the .75 caliber, smoothbore India Pattern "Brown Bess" flintlock musket with an iron socket bayonet. Introduced in 1780, it had a shorter, 39-inch barrel and simpler brass furniture and could be fired four times per minute.

UNIFORM: Royal Marines wore a tightly fitting scarlet coatee with black cuffs and white wool or linen breeches. Across the front of the coatee, either evenly or in pairs, were sewn worsted white tape. Pewter buttons featured regimental numbers and designs.

CARTRIDGE BOX (Not Shown): The British introduced in 1808 a 60-round pouch that carried the cartridges in a tin tray that was slung on a buff leather strap over the left shoulder with the pouch falling behind the right hip.

CANTEEN: Worn with a leather strap, the standard issue canteen was a flat, wooden barrel four inches deep and seven inches across.

HAVERSACK: The bag, which was made of light canvas or unbleached linen, was designed to carry three days of rations and worn with a two-inch strap.

After nearly 150 years of service to the British crown, the Royal Marines had upwards of 31,000 marines worldwide at the time of the War of 1812, which constituted about 13 percent of the 240,000 British troops under arms around the globe at that time. Their duties included shipboard security, naval gunnery, and amphibious assault.

They participated in small numbers in the Chesapeake Campaign of 1814 and the Gulf Campaign of 1814-1815. Additionally, they raided along the Eastern Seaboard throughout the conflict, and also trained and assisted Great Britain's Native American allies. ■

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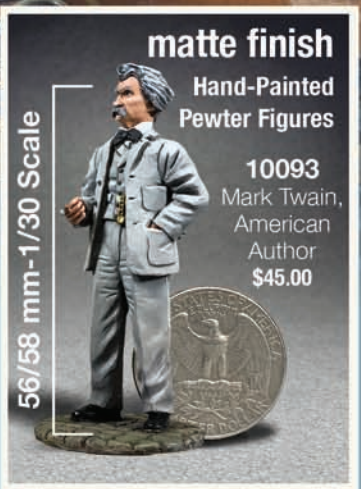

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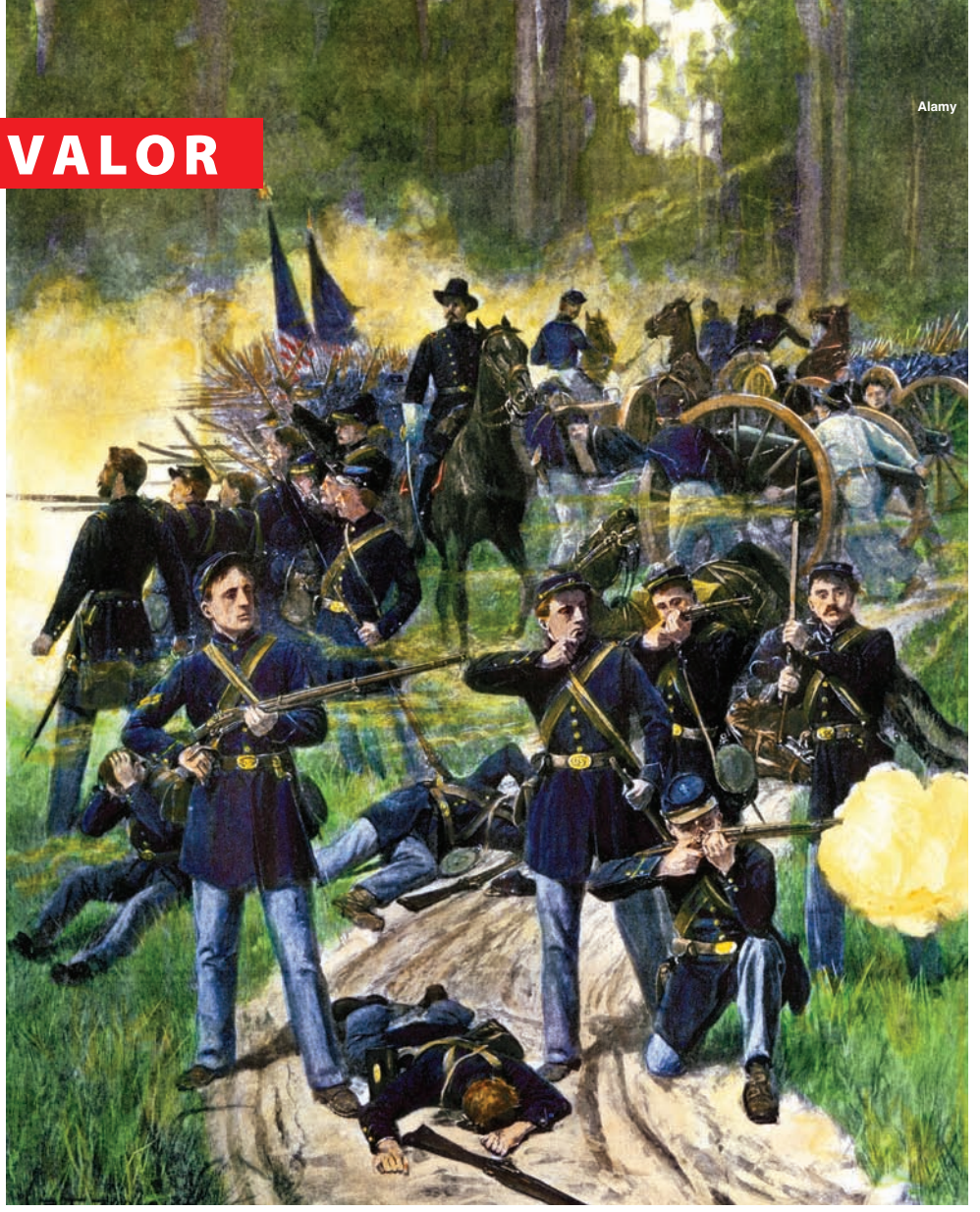

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LEFT: Union soldiers hold the line in the woods behind Boatswain's Creek at Gaines' Mill. When the Confederates punched through the Union line, Butterfield seized the colors of the 83rd Pennsylvania and waved them aloft to rally his troops. RIGHT: Daniel Butterfield rose to the rank of major general in 1863 and served that year as chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac.

Although best known for composing 'Taps,' Daniel Butterfield received the Medal of Honor for rallying troops in the savage fighting at Gaines' Mill in 1862.

By William F. Floyd Jr.

The series of battles that constituted the Confederate offensive against the Union army on the eastern outskirts of Richmond, Virginia, in summer 1862 would thrust a number of Union officers into the limelight. When Confederate General Robert E. Lee penned his General Orders No. 75 on June 24, outlining his strategy for the Seven Days Battle, the initiative switched from Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac, to Lee's newly created Army of Northern Virginia.

One of the Union generals who would shine in those trying battles was New York native Brig. Gen. Daniel Butterfield. A graduate of Union College in upstate New York, Butterfield worked before the war for the freight forwarding company American Express. Butterfield, who lacked formal military training, volunteered to serve in the Union army following the Confederate attack on Fort Sumter in April 1861.

On May 2, Butterfield was mustered into Federal service as colonel of the 12th New York Militia, a unit that joined Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson's Army of the Shenandoah in Martinsburg, Virginia. Exhibiting considerable competence, Butterfield received a promotion to brigadier general in September. Upon transfer to the Army of the Potomac, Butterfield's brigade shipped out from Alexandria, Virginia, for the Virginia Peninsula in March 1862 to participate in McClellan's strategic flanking maneuver designed to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond.

Butterfield would contribute a great deal to the Union war effort. His talent as a leader became apparent early on when he authored "Camp and Outpost Duty for Infantry," a field manual that set forth detailed rules for setting up camp, conducting marches, and performance of duties. The War Department adopted the manual for use by

Library of Congress

Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan scouts the road to Richmond north of Chickahominy Creek. Once McClellan surrendered the initiative in the Peninsula Campaign to Confederate General Robert E. Lee, it fell to Union generals such as Butterfield to save the Army of Potomac from destruction.

the Union army.

By the third week in May, McClellan had established a strong bridgehead on the south side of the Chickahominy River. For the final push on Richmond he reorganized his army, creating two new corps. Butterfield's brigade, which consisted of regiments from New York, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, became the Third Brigade of Brig. Gen. George Morell's First Division of Brig. Gen. Fitz John Porter's newly created V Corps.

When Lee learned that the Union right flank on the north side of the river was vulnerable to attack, he issued general orders No 75 instructing his division commanders to "sweep down the Chickahominy and endeavor to drive the enemy from his position above New Bridge."

By that time most of McClellan's troops were on the south side of the Chickahominy, but McClellan left Porter's corps on the north side to guard his base at White House Landing on the Pamunkey River. Lee began his offensive on June 26 with an attack on Porter's troops at Mechanicsville.

After the clash at Mechanicsville, McClellan ordered Porter to fall back to Gaines' Mill where he would receive reinforcements. Porter's troops established a formidable defensive position at Gaines' Mill behind Boatswain's Creek. Porter's line consisted of rows of infantry behind breastworks with artillery on the high ground behind them. Porter had 26,000 Yankees with which to oppose Lee's 57,000 troops.

The Confederates spent the morning of June 7 getting into position for their attack at Gaines' Mill. Butterfield's brigade defended the extreme left of the Union line. He positioned the 44th New York and 83rd Pennsylvania regiments in the first row nearest the creek. Behind them he placed the 16th Michigan and 12th New York regiments.

The Confederates seemed determined to sweep the Federals from the field by the use of superior numbers. Throughout the late afternoon Confederate Maj. Gen. Ambrose P. Hill's division had attacked Morell's division, but Butterfield's brigade had not come under attack. At 5 p.m., though, Maj. Gen. James Longstreet deployed three of his six brigades directly opposite Butterfield's brigade.

The Confederates made a final lunge at the Union lines as darkness began to set in. At 6:30 p.m., the Confederates assailed the entire length of the Federal line with the same ferocity they had exhibited in the attack earlier in the day. Alabamians and Virginians of Longstreet's division swept forward across open ground, entered the woods, and forded the creek under heavy fire from Butterfield's Yankees.

Butterfield did everything he could to inspire his troops in the face of the enemy's superiority in numbers. As the Confederates massed before them, he rode along his lines with the brigade's colors in hand in an effort to motivate every soldier under his command. "Your ammunition is never expended while you have your bayonets, my boys, and use them to the socket!" he shouted.

Longstreet's soldiers succeeded in bursting through Brig. Gen. John Martindale's left regiments, which were deployed to the right of Butterfield's troops. As the Union left began to unravel, Butterfield rushed forward and seized the colors of the 83rd Pennsylvania near the creek. Waving them aloft, he sought to rally the Keystone State soldiers. Wounded during the savage fighting, he would receive the Medal of Honor 30 years later for the valor he exhibited rallying the Pennsylvanians.

Yet his act of valor could not forestall the inevitable. Brig. Gen. Cadmus Wilcox's Alabamians overran Butterfield's left regiments at the same time that the Confederates broke through the Union center. After the battle, Brig. Gen. John Bell Hood's Texas brigade received most of the credit for breaking through the Union center, but Wilcox had also broken through the Union line.

Butterfield's star continued to rise throughout the remainder of the war. He succeeded Morell as division commander on October 30, 1862. When Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker took command of the Army of the Potomac in January 1863, he chose Butterfield as his chief of staff.

Butterfield received a promotion to major general two months later. He continued in this capacity under Maj. Gen. George G. Meade at Gettysburg where Butterfield was severely wounded on the third day of the battle. Afterwards, he took command of the Union XX Corps in Hooker's Army of the Cumberland, which was transferred to western theater.

Butterfield is perhaps best remembered as the composer of the bugle call "Taps," which he composed at Harrison's Landing at the close of McClellan's Peninsula Campaign. The decorated war hero, author, and composer died in 1901 at the age of 70 and is buried at West Point. ■

French Vice Admiral Charles D'Estaing's victories over the British in the Caribbean in 1779 offset his setbacks aiding the Americans on the mainland.

By William E. Welsh

ABOVE: Vice Admiral Count D'Estaing arrived in the northeastern Caribbean in December 1778 too late to prevent the British capture of the French colony of St. Lucia. RIGHT: D'Estaing commanded the newly created French naval department of Asia and the Americas.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

In one of those ironic twists of history, French Vice Admiral Count Charles Henri Hector d'Estaing, who led the first French fleet to North America in 1778 to assist the Americans during their revolt against the British crown, never met George Washington. Despite the trials and tribulations of d'Estaing's 15-month expedition to North America, the men maintained a high regard for each other.

When Major General John Hancock presented d'Estaing with a full-length portrait of Washington while the French fleet was undergoing repairs in Boston in autumn 1778, the French admiral hung it in the cabin of his 80-gun flagship *Languedoc*. "I never saw a man so glad of possessing his sweetheart's picture, as the admiral was to receive yours," the Marquis de Lafayette teased Washington afterwards.

D'Estaing was born in 1729 into an aristocratic family from the Auvergne region of south-central France. His ancestors had served in the French military going back to the 13th century. His father, a lieutenant general in the French army, made sure that his son followed in his footsteps.

As a young officer in the French army, d'Estaing rose rapidly from lieutenant to brigadier general with service in both the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years War where he served in India. Captured in the siege of Madras in 1759, the British paroled him. Seeking to circumvent his parole, he joined the French East Indies Company and plundered British ships and outposts.

On his return to France, though, he accidentally fell into the hands of the British who incarcerated him on a prison hulk in Portsmouth Harbor under deplorable conditions. During his imprisonment, he developed a life-long hatred of the British. Although the French army promoted him to lieutenant general

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D'Estaing sought to engage British Vice Admiral Richard Howe's fleet in the waters off Newport, Rhode Island, but a violent storm dispersed the fleets. Afterwards, D'Estaing sailed to Boston to repair his damaged ships, abandoning the Americans besieging Newport.

upon his release, he found service on the high seas more exciting, and therefore transferred to the French Royal Navy. He first served as governor of the French colonies in the Lesser Antilles from 1764 to 1772 and after that governor and inspector of naval forces in Brest.

Following the Continental army's victory over the British at Saratoga in October 1777, France entered into a defensive alliance with the Americans in February 1778. At the outset of the alliance, American commissioners to France Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee pressed Charles Gravier, Count de Vergennes, who was King Louis XVI's foreign minister, not just to continue supplying arms and equipment, but also for naval assistance to threaten Vice Admiral Richard Howe's fleet supporting British expeditionary forces in the newly established United States.

In response to this urgent request, Louis XVI told naval secretary Antoine de Sartine to create a a third admiralty for France and appoint d'Estaing to the position. Thus, d'Estaing became the vice admiral of naval operations in Asia and America. In an effort to keep the British from tracking the progress of French preparations to send a fleet to assist General George Washington's Continental army, it was decided to outfit the fleet at Toulon rather than Brest to maintain as much secrecy as possible. For his expedition, d'Estaing would have 12 ships of the line, five frigates, and 4,000 soldiers. His flagship was the 80-gun *Languedoc*. Before he departed, Louis XVI instructed him to keep his fleet intact while both threatening Howe's fleet and protecting French possessions in the West Indies.

The French did not act with any sense of urgency, at least as far as the American ministers could tell. It took them three months to outfit the fleet, and when d'Estaing at last set sail April 13, 1778, it was nearly another three months before he arrived at the mouth of the Delaware River. His reason for the long passage, which was more than twice the length of a slow passage of that period, was that he wanted to avoid an engagement with the British en route that might have forced him to turn back.

Fearing an invasion of England by France and Spain, the British delayed their plan to send naval reinforcements to give Howe superiority over d'Estaing. But Rear Adm. John Byron finally set sail on June 9 for North America with 13 ships of the line to reinforce him.

The French fleet arrived in Delaware Bay in early July, and then moved into position off Sandy Hook, New Jersey, to threaten Howe's fleet in New York Harbor. Howe had built his fleet around his 64-gun ships of the line that at high tide could pass over a treacherous sandbar at the entrance to the harbor. D'Estaing's heavier ships of the line, however, could not clear the sandbar.

After 10 days of trying to find a way to engage the British, d'Estaing weighed anchor on July 22 and sailed to Newport, Rhode Island, in order to conduct a joint operation with American Maj. Gen. John Sullivan against a strong British garrison led by Maj. Gen. Robert Pigot.

Washington and d'Estaing had conferred frequently through correspondence and agreed on the pressing need to liberate Newport to regain control of what many naval officers of the time regarded as one of the best harbors in North America. The French admiral needed to move quickly to retain the initative, but it took him six days to get his fleet into position.

Pigot had 6,500 troops to defend Aquidneck Island in Narragansett Bay where the port of Newport was situated. Sullivan was also slow in his preparations, allowing Howe's British fleet to catch up to d'Estaing on August 9. Outnumbered in ships of the line, d'Estaing weighed anchor to engage Howe at sea, informing Sullivan that he would return afterward to resume the attack on Pigot's occupying force.

The two fleets moved out to sea, each seeking to gain the advantage of the weather gauge over their opponent. As they maneuvered against each other

D'Estaing's French troops in 1779 successfully stormed the British position on Hospital Hill overlooking St. George's Harbor, Grenada. French King Louis XVI praised him for adding two laurels to his crown by capturing St. Vincent and Grenada.

on August 10, a hurricane struck just as they were about to engage. D'Estaing ordered his ships to sail south in an effort to avoid being smashed against the coastline. Reassembling after the storm, several small skirmishes occurred in which the French ships suffered additional damage, including the *Languedoc*, dismasted by the 50-gun HMS *Renown* on August 13.

D'Estaing returned briefly to Newport to inform Sullivan that he could not support him and then sailed to Boston for repairs that lasted two months. The British counterattacked Sullivan's army on August 29, and nearly destroyed it.

D'Estaing decided while in Boston that it was in France's best interests for him to sail to the Caribbean in an effort to fulfill his obligation to protect the vital French colonies of St. Lucia and Martinique. The French and British were headed for a major showdown in the economically important Caribbean.

The two rival European powers had been steadily building up their forces in the region where they both had lucrative sugar plantations. The entry of France into the conflict meant that Britain had to scramble to protect its colonies in the Caribbean because the West Indies colonies produced far more revenue for the empire than the American Colonies.

D'Estaing set sail for the West Indies on November 4, 1778. That same day Maj. Gen. Henry Clinton dispatched Commodore William Hotham with a naval squadron to transport 5,000 troops to the Caribbean theater. While d'Estaing was slowly making his way south, Hotham on December 10 reinforced the British fleet in the Leeward Islands commanded by Rear Adm. Samuel Barrington. The British then invaded the French colony of St. Lucia with 3,400 troops on December 13 and besieged its main port on December 14.

D'Estaing arrived the following day and put 7,000 troops ashore. Holding the high ground, the British repulsed repeated attacks by the French. Barrington formed his ships into a line protecting the troop transports in Grand Cul de Sac Bay. D'Estaing attacked Barrington's fleet on December 15, but could not defeat it. The French admiral reboarded his infantry and withdrew to the French base at Martinique.

Barrington returned to England in January 1779. Byron, who succeeded Howe on October 1, 1777, as the commander-in-chief of the North American Station, soon arrived in St. Lucia to protect the British possessions in the Leeward Islands. The two fleets were separated by just 40 miles, and for the better part of six months the two commanders avoided a clash.

When Byron departed St. Lucia in May to escort a merchant convoy out of the Caribbean, d'Estaing took the opportunity to capture the British colony of St. Vincent on June 18. As if by divine intervention, D'Estaing's situation improved dramatically when a French squadron led by Toussaint-Guillaume Picquet de la Motte arrived in Martinique on June 27 with five additional ships of the line. With the addition of La Motte-Piquet ships, d'Estaing had 26 ships of the line giving him clear superiority over Byron.

Next, D'Estaing captured the British colony of Grenada on July 4 in a bloody two-day battle in which French soldiers stormed the British fortifications on Hospital Hill overlooking St. George's Harbor. Sartine had instructed d'Estaing to destroy British outposts in the Caribbean, but not to occupy them. D'Estaing, however, ignored those orders and garrisoned St. Vincent and Grenada.

Byron arrived off Grenada and engaged d'Estaing not knowing that he had been heavily reinforced. The battle that unfolded on July 6 consisted of a series of powerful broadsides delivered by the larger French fleet that compelled Byron to break off the action after four of his largest war-

Continued on page 94

German panzergrenadiers surrounded Hill 314 just east of Mortain in Normandy on August 7, 1944, trapping several companies of the 2nd Battalion of the U.S. 120th Infantry Regiment. Over the course of the next five days, as the Germans rained mortar shells and pounded their positions with direct fire from their deadly 88mm guns, the tenacious Americans held on.

Each time elements of the German 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division attempted to storm the rocky heights, the encircled Americans called in artillery fire to hold them off. At one point, the opposing sides were so close that an American officer called down artillery fire on his command post.

Axis Collapse in Normandy

Throughout the ordeal the American soldiers trapped on the hill searched the bodies of their dead for food and ammunition before placing them in a makeshift morgue among the rocks. Various attempts were made to resupply them. U.S. artillery units even tried to fire shells filled with supplies to the hilltop, but the effort was an abysmal failure because the contents were either crushed or scattered over the hilltop. Supplies were also dropped from C-47s, but the parachutes often drifted into no-man's land. After five days of bitter fighting, the Germans called it quits on August 12. Of the 670 officers and enlisted men defending the hill, the Americans lost 300.

Seven weeks after the D-Day landing, the Allies still had not pierced the German defensive line in Lower Normandy. The situation deeply frustrated the Allied senior leadership. At a heavy cost in lives, Lt. Gen. Miles Dempsey's British Second Army had taken Caen on July 9 and Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley's U.S. First Army captured Saint-Lo on July 18. The Wehrmacht leadership in Berlin, however, made a costly strategic error in holding the German 15th Army at Pas de Calais in anticipation of a second Allied landing in that sector. As a result, powerful reserves that might have strengthened SS Generaloberst Paul Hausser's hard-pressed German 7th Army in Normandy remained unavailable.

To break out of their position, the Allies planned a two-stage assault on the German lines. The British and Canadians, under General Bernard Montgomery, would launch an armored assault west of Caen, in a attack code-named Operation Goodwood. Once the Germans were unbalanced by the British attack, the Americans would begin Operation Cobra to punch through the German line west of St. Lo and race 30 miles south to the road hub of Avranches at the southern end of the Cotentin Peninsula. Then, they would advance west from Avranches to secure the deep-water ports of Brittany. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in Europe, tasked Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley, the commander of the First Army, with directing Operation Cobra.

Unfortunately for the Allies, Operation Goodwood failed on July 18-19. Thus, it fell to Bradley and his corps commanders to pierce the German line. Cobra called for concentrated bombing by hundreds of heavy B-17 and B-24 bombers, along with medium bombers and tactical bombers, of a narrow corridor west of St. Lo followed by a six-division attack by Maj. Gen. Joseph Lawton Collins' VII Corps.

Some elements of VII Corps had participated in the D-Day landings, while others had come ashore as reinforcements in the days following the invasion. The VII corps actually belonged to Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army, which had not yet been activated, but Bradley attached them to the First Army for the battles in the hedgerows

National Archives

Following the Allied breakout from Normandy in July 1944, Lieutenant General George S. Patton's armored spearheads sped toward their objectives giving the Germans no time to regroup.

By Robert L. Durham

The crew of an M4 Sherman tank pursues retreating German forces in northwestern France. By the time of the Allied breakout from Normandy, most of the German panzer units were badly crippled.

of Normandy. Supporting Collins in Operation Cobra would be Troy Middleton's VIII Corps, positioned west of Collins' command.

Poor coordination between air and ground forces during the saturation bombing missions on Monday July 24, combined by heavy cloud cover, led to friendly fire casualties. Bradley had issued orders that the assault battalions poised to exploit the bombardment should only pull back 1,200 yards, while the margin of safety usually required was 3,000 yards from the bomb line. Some of the bombs fell at 2,000 yards, resulting in 25 killed and 131 wounded.

In contrast, the Germans suffered modest losses of 350 casualties and 10 destroyed armored vehicles that day. After the bombardment, Generalleutnant Fritz Bayerlein, the German Panzer Lehr Division commander, advanced his forward

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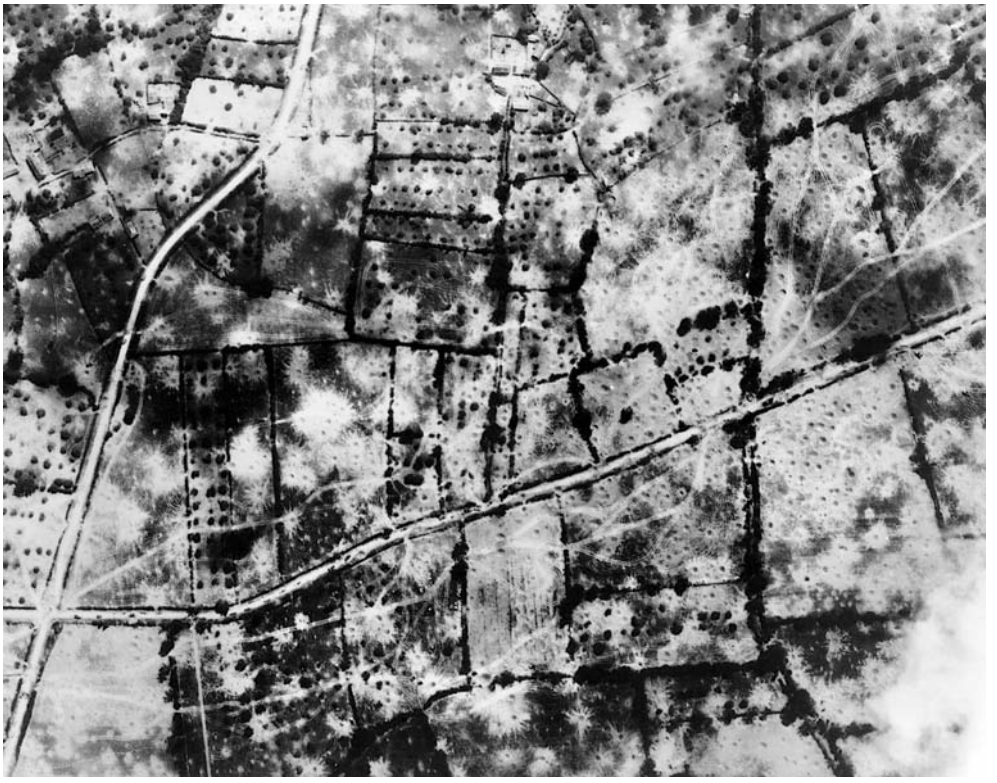


ABOVE: U.S. bomber crews inadvertently inflicted casualties on front-line U.S. troops when some of their bombs fell short during Operation Cobra; nevertheless, they shattered the German defenses. OPPOSITE: When the U.S. Third Army seized Avranches on August 1, it broke out in both directions against the battered Germans. Patton sent only the minimum necessary into Brittany, and directed the rest eastward.

outposts in the mistaken belief that the Americans had concluded their saturation bombing.

Dissatisfied with the aerial bombardment, Bradley agreed to let Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory unleash his strategic and tactical bombers on the Germans again the following day. The aerial bombardment on Tuesday, July 25, devastated Bayerlein's Panzer Lehr Division. The division lost 2,000 men, which amounted to more than half of its fighting strength. What is more, the bomb strikes destroyed the division's communications network. Kampfgruppe Heintz, which was stationed outside the bombing zone, was the only operational element that remained of Bayerlein's elite panzer division.

Unfortunately, the Americans again suffered friendly fire casualties when some of their bombs fell short of their targets. They lost 111 killed and 490 wounded as a result of their own munitions. Among the dead was Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, the head of Army Ground Forces, who ordinarily sat behind a desk in Washington, D.C., but that day was visiting the front lines.

The VII Corps' assault began shortly before Noon on July 25. Collins had assembled 120,000 troops on a five-mile front along the Saint-Lo-Periers Road. The attacking infantry were supported by 600 artillery pieces.

On the right side of Collin's line of battle, the attack by the U.S. 9th Infantry Division bogged down in hard fighting against veteran fallschirmjagers of Parachute Regiment 13 of the German 5th Parachute Division. The Americans clawed their way through the first layer of the German defense, but got no further that day. Meanwhile, on the left side of Collin's line Maj. Gen. Leland Hobbs' 30th Infantry Division captured the shell-torn village of Hebecrevon.

A regiment of the U.S. 4th Infantry Division attacking in the center ran headlong into a German defensive position made up of some of the few tanks of the Panzer Lehr Division that had escaped destruction in the aerial bombardment that morning. The Americans defeated them with bazookas and M4 Sherman tanks. But at the end of the first day, the offensive had not met its objectives. Tasked with driving the Germans back three miles, the Americans had pushed them only a mile beyond the Saint-Lo-Periers Road.

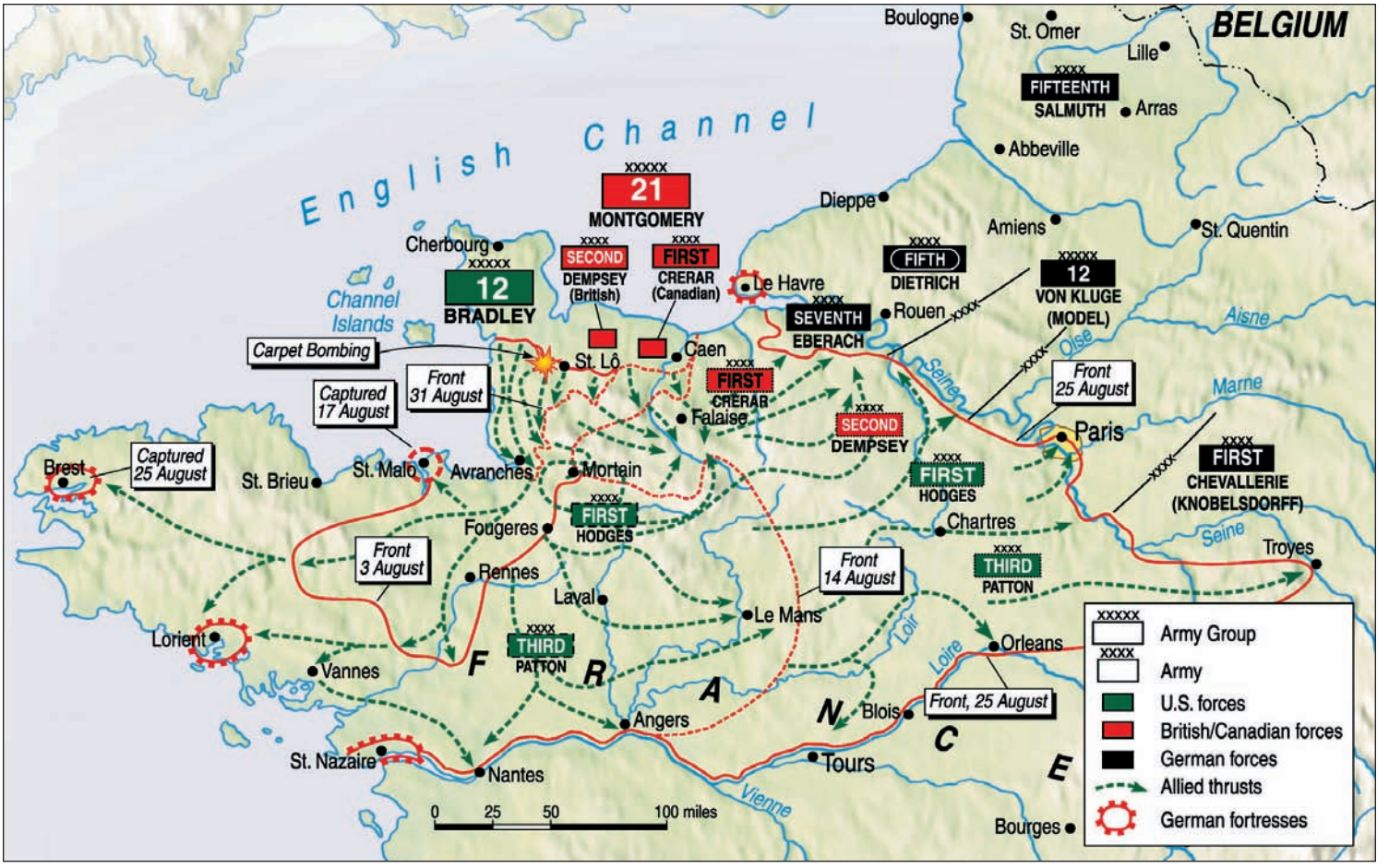
U.S. forces moved faster on the second day as infantrymen riding on tanks jumped off to spray every thicket or wood they passed. The 1st Division averaged less than three minutes to clear each hedgerow, something that took hours a few weeks earlier.

On Wednesday, July 26, the Americans attacked in the direction of Marigny. Combat Command B of the 3rd Armored Division led the way but bogged down as heavy traffic and cratered roads slowed its advance. Yet the U.S. tank crews could move cross-country through the tall hedgerows of the Normandy's bocage terrain more easily than the Germans. This was because they had outfitted their Sherman tanks, nicknamed "Rhinos," with prongs welded from German beach obstacles to enable them to slice their way through the hedgerows. Lacking such equipment, the German panzers had to stick to the roads.

At that point the reserve of the 2nd Armored Division reinforced CCB. A German kampfgruppe of 30 panzers and armored fighting vehicles, which included a powerful Hummel self-propelled gun mounting a 150mm cannon, tried to capture a strategic crossroads near Notre-Dame-de-Cenilly. A company of American armored infantry, backed by several Sherman tanks, held the crossroads throughout the night repulsing the determined German counterattack.

Meanwhile, a column of 15 PzKpfw IV tanks from the 2nd SS "Das Reich" Panzer Division and 200 paratroopers from the 6th Parachute Regiment attempted to overrun an American outpost held by a company of the 4th Infantry Division. Two batteries of American M7 Priest self-propelled guns and four M10 tank destroyers held back the enemy assault until they were reinforced by an armored infantry company. Once reinforced, the Americans forced the Germans to withdraw.

Thunderbolts went into action again on the afternoon of Thursday, July 27, swooping down on 500 German vehicles packed tightly together as they sought to escape south. By nightfall, the P-47s had destroyed 122 tanks, 259 other vehicles, and 11 artillery pieces in the Roncey Pocket 20 miles southwest of Saint-Lo. Another air strike



by British Typhoons armed with 20mm cannon destroyed nine tanks and 28 vehicles.

Other sharp clashes erupted throughout the night as German troops tried to escape encirclement by slipping through gaps in the American lines. As many as 1,000 German infantrymen, supported by various armored vehicles, attempted a breakout near St. Denis-le-Gast, but the Americans shattered them. Lt. Col. Wilson Coleman, the commander of the 41st Armored Infantry of the 2nd Armored Division, won a posthumous Distinguished Service Cross for his role in the fighting.

On Friday, July 28, Major General Robert Grow's 6th Armored Division of Middleton's VIII Corps, advanced down the main road to Coutances. Three miles to the east, the Maj. Gen, John Wood's 4th Armored Division traveled on another road toward Coutances. The debris of German columns that had been annhilated by Allied fighters blocked their way.

Up to this point in Operation Cobra, the Germans had offered very little resistance. By nightfall the Americans had passed through Coutances and were well on their way south to their objective of Avranches. The Germans retreated hurriedly south through the lower Cotentin Peninsula in trucks and horse-drawn wagons. The P-47s maintained steady pressure on the retreating enemy throughout this time. On Saturday, July 29, lead elements of the 4th Armored Division entered Avranches, only to find it undefended. The liberated French inhabitants greeted them with cheers and by waving the French tricolors.

Two days later the VIII Corps took 7,000 German prisoners. The demoralized enemy did not even have to be escorted into captivity. The U.S. GIs simply disarmed them and pointed to the rear. "We face a defeated enemy, an enemy terribly low in morale, terribly confused," Patton told the officers of the 4th Infantry Division.

Bradley then turned the VIII Corps over to Patton. He summoned "Old Blood and Guts" to his headquarters to inform him that he would activate his Third Army on August 1. Patton's objective would be to clear the Germans from Brittany. Bradley also elevated Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges to command of the First Army. Bradley, however, retained overall command of both the First and Third armies in his capacity as commander of the Twelfth U.S. Army Group.

Patton set off at once for Coutances to direct the movements of Middleton's VIII Corps. It did not take long for Patton to make his presence known. When Patton observed some soldiers in his command digging foxholes, he rebuked them. "It is stupid to be afraid of a beaten enemy," he shouted.

The spearhead of the 6th Armored Division forced a crossing of the Soulle River west of Coutances on July 29. Once on the south side, 6th Armored's CCA met only modest resistance. Over the next two days, Middleton's troops brushed aside enemy resistance as they advanced south along the Atlantic coastline. The German front had all but collapsed, though some pockets continued to fight hard. The VIII Corps began mopping up the resistance as it pressed towards Avranches.

The Germans realized that the Allies were poised to invade Brittany, and they moved to secure a strategic bridge over the Selune River south of Avranches before the Americans could get there. But the Sherman tanks of the 4th Armored Division crossed the bridge first and checked the German advance. After a brief exchange of gunfire, the Germans retreated to St-Malo. The American 4th and 6th Armored Divisions captured 4,000 German prisoners, and the infantry following them took an additional 3,000 prisoners into captivity.

Patton met with the staff of the Third Army on July 31. First, he told them that the army would begin its advanced toward Brittany the

Bundesarchiv Bild 101I-299-1805-21; Photo: Scheck

next day. Second, Patton told them that during their advance not to concern themselves with protecting their flanks. "Flanks are something for the enemy to worry about," he said "We're going to kick the hell out of him all the time, and we're going to go through him like crap through a goose," said Patton.

Middleton's VIII Corps advanced into Brittany on August 1, while Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV Corps of the Third Army swung east for Le Mans, which was where the headquarters of the German Seventh Army was located. Patton drove the VIII Corps forward relentlessly in order to capture Brest, Lorient, St. Malo, and Quiberon.

After capturing these cities, Patton wanted to swing his army to the east where he intended to encircle German forces facing the British and Canadians at Caen, but his ambitious plan had not yet been embraced by Eisenhower, so it remained only an idea. Patton had to be doubly sure to follow the chain of command and obey his superior officers in the wake of his disgraceful conduct in Sicily in August 1943 where he had slapped soldiers of the Seventh Army under his command.

Patton's lead elements advanced into Avranches on August 1. Once inside the city, he needed to funnel two armored divisions and two infantry divisions, which amounted to 100,000 men and 20,000 vehicles, across a single bridge. This called for a traffic cop, not a general. But when Patton arrived in the city, he began directing the columns of troops himself. For several hours, he stood in the middle of the traffic jam, directing convoys to the cheers of passing soldiers.

Patton initially had issued orders directly to his division commanders without apprising his staff, but he soon realized it was to his benefit to turn everything over to his staff and have them work out schedules and routes. Elements of Patton's armored spearheads got lost on the first night and had great difficulty determining the correct route in the dark. Enemy artillery and bombers made their advance even harder. Despite the congestion they encountered at intersections, CCA and CCB both arrived at their objectives, St-George, and St-Hilaire-du-Harcourt, respectively, south of the Selune River at dawn.

Middleton found serving under Patton much different than serving under Bradley. Patton advanced boldly, while Bradley had advanced cautiously. When Middleton submitted detailed and cautious plans of action to his new commander, Patton flatly rejected them.

Patton knew from intelligence reports that the German forces in Brittany had scant armor and artillery. Therefore, his soldiers had no reason to fear counterattacks. If his troops encountered pockets of resistance, they were to bypass them and allow follow-on forces to mop up behind the advancing armor. "Old Blood and Guts" only concerned himself with reports the Germans would attempt to destroy key bridges and dams before his troops could reach them. He therefore tasked Brig. Gen. Otto Weyland, the commander of the XIX Tactical Air Command, with deploying fighter aircraft to guard the critical infrastructure in Brittany until it was secured by his ground troops.

Patton claimed he had a "sixth sense" that enabled him to know with moral certainty what the enemy was going to do. He estimated that there were not more than10,000 Germans in the Breton peninsula, but he would soon learn that he was way off the mark. The Germans actually had 60,000 troops garrisoning the peninsula.

Patton ordered Grow to take Brest and push on without worrying about any other objectives. On the same day, he received orders from his superiors to take Brittany with the smallest number of troops possible. Consequently, Patton shifted the XV and XX corps under his command to the east. This left just Middleton's VIII Corps to capture all of Brittany.

Patton ordered Grow to bypass enemy resistance and advance as quickly as possible to Brest. In so doing, Patton overrode Middleton's orders to his division commanders to first take Saint-Malo on the English Channel and then pivot south to Dinan before marching 125 miles west

to Brest on the western tip of Brittany.

The American P-47s did not get into the sky until late in the afternoon of August 1. They knocked out German anti-tank guns hidden in hay wagons, as well as three 88mm flak guns. Using Allied intelligence gleaned from Ultra intercepts, the 6th Armored Division's two combat commands advanced 45 miles in two days. American fighters patrolled far ahead of the armored columns, guarding them as they sped toward their objectives in Brittany. In order that they would not be mistaken for German panzers, the American tank crews placed large brightly colored panels on the tops of the vehicles to make identification easier.

The advance guard of 6th Armored entered Mauron on August 3 where one of its platoons encountered small arms and cannon fire. The platoon engaged the enemy while the rest of the company encircled the town from the north. They knocked out several machinegun nests, compelling the enemy to quit the town.

CCA of the 6th Armored encountered a destroyed bridge at Pontivy the following day. Sergeant Malcolm Helton of the 68th Tank Battalion's reconnaissance platoon searched the surrounding area and discovered an alternate route over the river and canal for which he received a Bronze Star. This enabled the combat command to keep to its schedule. The column advanced more than 60 miles beyond Mauron. This concluded "one of the most daring, brilliantly led, under-pressure armored stabs made thus far in the march," wrote Lieutenant Robert J. Burns Jr., author of the battalion's official history.

The combat commands continued westward toward Brest. When they reached Huelgoat, which was 75 miles east of Brest, they met heavy resistance. German troops armed with Panzerfausts set one of their tanks ablaze, but the crew remained inside continuing to fire their machinegun. When the heat became unbearable, they exited the tanks to find themselves amid Wehrmacht troops who ordered them to surrender. The tank crewmen refused and immediately opened fire on the Germans. Machinegun fire killed two of them immediately. Technician 4th Grade Charles E. Pidcock continued to fire his sub-machinegun at close range until his tank exploded throwing him into a hedgerow. He miraculously survived the ordeal. The Army awarded all three tank crewmen the Silver Star.

The 6th Armored Division reached the outskirts of Brest on August 6. CCB assaulted the Brest defenses at dawn, but the Germans drove them back. After a day of being shelled by German artillery, Grow became convinced a major assault would be required; however, he knew it would take at least two days to mass enough force

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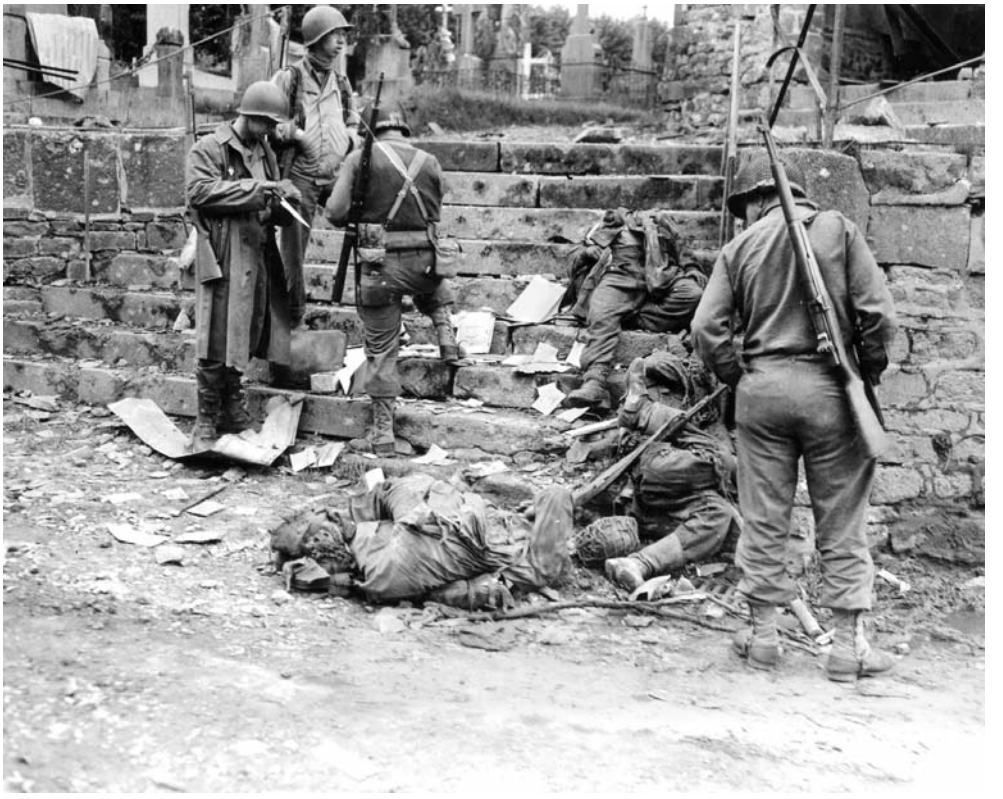

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TOP: U.S. infantrymen examine the possessions of German casualties in the town of Notre Dame de Cenilly at the beginning of Operation Cobra. BOTTOM: Elite German Fallschirmjagers of the 5th Parachute Division, such as this one armed with rifle and stick grenade in a foxhole, fought stubbornly against the advancing Americans. OPPOSITE: The crew of a German Tiger I of the 1st SS Panzer Leibstandarte Division awaits the advance of Allied forces in a well-camouflaged position. Even when they advanced in the open, the German panzer crews carefully covered their panzers with foliage and tree branches to reduce their exposure to air attack.

An American infantryman rushes for cover as German troops open fire outside Brest. The German garrison surrendered on September 18, 1944, after a 43-day siege.

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to capture the Atlantic port. He sent a messenger under a white flag to demand the Germans surrender, but the German commander refused to capitulate.

On the road to Brest, the 68th Tank Battalion encountered repeated roadblock set up by the Germans. The fire teams manning the roadblocks typically had a mix of mortars, panzerfausts, machine guns, and small arms. In one such encounter, Lieutenant John Lundh led a section of tanks in an assault that forced the Germans to retreat to the far end of a town. While CCA of the 6th Armored Division bypassed the enemy, Lundh's section knocked out two enemy machinegun nests, inflicting heavy casualties. Both of his tanks were destroyed in the assault, though. The Germans destroyed Lundh's tank with direct fire from a 75mm, and they destroyed the other tank with panzerfausts.

On August 7 CCA, under constant fire from German artillery, advanced 32 miles passing through the towns of Bodilis and Plabennec. The following day the advance guard of the 6th Armored Division found itself under heavy attack from German artillery and mortars. The armored vehicles ground to a halt when they ran out of fuel. They had travelled so far and so fast their supply lines were overextended. At that point, American observation aircraft arrived, but the spotters could not locate the German positions because they were superbly camouflaged. For the next four hours, the Americans had to endure shelling from hidden German artillery pieces.

Despite the shelling, the Americans were on the final approaches to Brest. The men were exhausted, having travelled nearly 250 miles in recent days. But they were to have no rest. Grow ordered them to prepare to take the city. The exhausted soldiers considered assaulting such a strong position tantamount to a suicide mission.

While Grow organized his division for the attack, German troops in pockets of resistance that had been bypassed, attacked his supply lines. The Americans captured a German staff car coming from Brittany's northern coast. The Germans in the staff car had been reconnoitering the American positions outside Brest in preparation for a counterattack. Inside the staff car was the commander of the German 266th Infantry Division. Grow ordered an immediate attack on the 266th Division, who would not have the benefit of their captured commander. The attack was a resounding success, and the Americans destroyed the German division.

On the morning of August 9, American artillery softened up the German positions on the outskirts of fortress Brest. Grow scheduled the assault for 7 a.m. German 20mm flak guns held up the advance for a while, but American howitzers soon silenced the German guns.

As the attack progressed, the various armored task forces worked their way as close as possible to the German defensive positions. Task Force Davall, led by CCA's Lt. Col. Harold Davall, had started to outflank the Germans when he received orders to break off the attack and regroup.

Task Force Davall redeployed to Plouvien, which was 10 miles north of Brest. The reconnaissance platoon of the task force cleared the enemy from the town. The task force then entered the town. While preparing to bivouac for the night, the Americans heard firing erupt in the streets of the town. It turned out that 1,500 men of the German 265th Infantry Division had arrived in Plouvien unaware that the Americans had arrived in the town at the same time. Captain Raymond Polk, the commander of Able Company, took a section of Sherman tanks and engaged the Germans, but his assault was stopped cold by the well-armed Germans.

Based on intelligence reports, Grow decided to press on with the original attack. Captain Polk would lead a task force whose objective was to outflank the Germans. Sherman tanks advanced against the enemy's right flank. When the enemy realized they were being assaulted from two sides, they withdrew from the town while being strafed by P-47s. For his tactical victory, Polk received the Silver Star.

Patton ordered Grow not to waste time besieging Brest, but to leave a screening force to pin the Germans inside the garrison and then move the bulk of the 6th Armored Division south to capture Lorient and points beyond it. Although he had failed to capture Brest, Patton had rendered the German forces in the interior of Brittany incapable of launching a counterattack against the rear of the Allied forces moving east towards Paris.

Meanwhile, Patton tasked Middleton with bot-

tling up the German garrison at Saint-Malo. For the task at hand, Middleton had only one task force of cavalry scouts and tank destroyers. To assist Middleton, Patton sent Maj. Gen. Robert C. Macon's 83rd Division.

The Germans defending Saint-Malo were led by Oberst Andreas von Aulock, a veteran of the Battle of Stalingrad and the commander of the German 79th Infantry Division. He had 12,000 Germans with which to defend the fortress, and had vowed to fight to the last stone. They faced 20,000 Americans.

Desperate fighting in the streets occurred over the course of two weeks beginning August 4. While the ground forces battled inside the city, American fighters sank two German warships and blasted concrete bunkers in the harbor. The Germans systematically demolished the port's infrastructure and set fire to the city before withdrawing to a fortified position on the outskirts of the city.

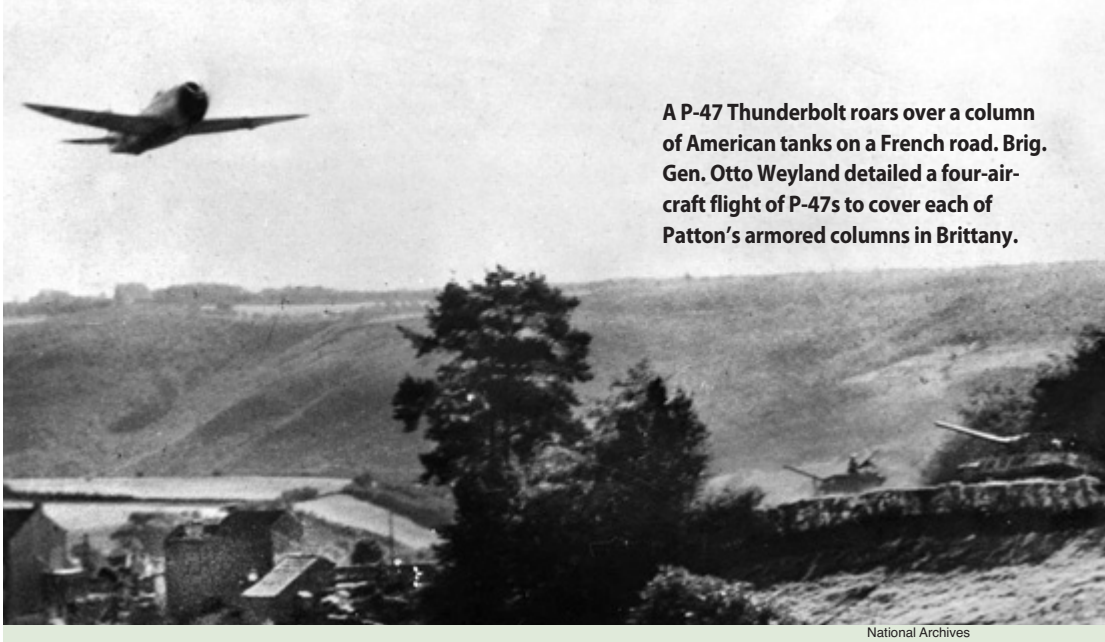
The Nazis, who had strong positions in camouflaged underground pillboxes, continued to resist. In the end, American artillery scored direct hits on most of the German artillery and machinegun emplacements, giving the enemy no choice but surrender, which they did on August 17. "A platoon of captured Germans started singing farewell to their commander," recalled Private Frank Reichmann of the 331st Infantry Regiment. "Most of them were in tears."

Meanwhile, it took three American divisions totaling 75,000 men to capture Brest on August 25. As they had at Saint-Malo, German demolition squads destroyed the vital port facilities and most of the city. Thus, the Germans succeeded in rendering the deep-water ports in Brittany useless to the Allies. But in the final analysis, the campaign in Brittany would prove to be of little strategic consequence because its ports were too far away from the battlefront. No Allied cargo ships or troop ships ever used Brest and American engineers never built a port at Quiberon as Eisenhower had initially planned.

At the same time Grow raced toward Brest, Wood's 4th Armored Division fought its way toward Rennes. Patton received intelligence that the Germans had been ordered to destroy the supply dumps at Rennes, so he pressed Wood to reach the city as quickly as possible.

Mistaking one of Wood's columns for the enemy, Patton ordered Weyland to destroy the column with his strike aircraft. Fortunately, though, the lead pilots recognized Wood's Sherman tanks and waved off the air assault. The air command flew ahead of the column and knocked out several German 88mm batteries.

On August 2, Wood's division arrived at Rennes and found it heavily defended by the Germans. Patton ordered Rennes bypassed, and



A P-47 Thunderbolt roars over a column of American tanks on a French road. Brig. Gen. Otto Weyland detailed a four-aircraft flight of P-47s to cover each of Patton's armored columns in Brittany.

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P-47 Thunderbolts flew close air support for Patton's tank columns

The U.S. Army Air Forces relied heavily in the months following the Normandy landings on the formidable Republic P-47 Thunderbolt to support ground forces in France. Under the direction of Brig. Gen. O.P. Weyland's XIX Tactical Air Command, which was assigned to support Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's Third Army activated on August 1, 1944, P-47s furnished invaluable service to Patton's armored columns as they advanced against German forces in France.

The first P-47 kill occurred on April 15, 1943, when Major Don Blakeslee of the 4th Fighter Group based at RAF Debden in North Essex, England, downed a Focke-Wulf Fw 190 over Belgium. Shortly afterwards, Thunderbolt pilots of the Eighth Air Force began escorting B-17s on strategic bombing missions against targets in the Low Countries, France, and Germany.

Powered by the powerful Pratt and Whitney R-2800 engine, which generated more than 2,000 horsepower, the single-seat, long-range P-47 fighter came equipped with eight 12.7mm machine guns in its wings. In addition, it could carry two 1,000-lbs. bombs or 10 five-inch rockets.

The first variants had poor climb and maneuverability, but pilots liked them because they were fast and could withstand considerable battle damage. As evidence of its durability in combat, the P-47 had a lower combat loss rate than the North American P-51 Mustang. To improve on the early models, Republic lengthened the fuselage to carry a drop tank, installed water injection power boost, and added a bubble hood for the P-47D variant, which became the primary version.

"For the low level job we had to do where you couldn't keep out of the light flak and small arms fire, there wasn't a better plane than the P-47," said a pilot in the 362nd Fighter Group. "It would keep going with damage with which other types would have fallen out of the sky."

Pilots of P-47s flying in support of the Third Army specialized in low-level strikes against German troop concentrations, fortifications, and concrete gun emplacements. They also bombed bridges and railroads in France to deny their use to the Germans.

Maj. Gen. Pete Quesada, the commander of the IX Tactical Air Command, introduced the concept of inserting air support liaisons equipped with VHF radios in U.S. Army tank columns for the purpose of communicating directly with P-47 pilots flying close air support overhead. This enabled aircraft to respond with great speed and precision to the needs of American armored columns.

As a result of Quesada's initiative, Thunderbolts began flying cover for armored columns of the First Army and Third Army in France. P-47s stayed on station throughout the daylight hours to support armored troops on the move. In accordance with USAAF established procedures, Weyland maintained a four aircraft flight of P-47s to cover each of Patton's advancing armored columns as they pushed into Brittany and north-central France.

These pilots flew ahead of the armored columns scanning the terrain below for enemy targets. The threat posed by the Thunderbolts forced the Germans to move primarily by night and camouflage their vehicles, gun emplacements, and fighting positions in the daytime to avoid destruction from above.

—William E. Welsh

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TOP: Exhausted GIs of the 120th Infantry Regiment pose for a war photographer after their tenacious defense of Hill 314 during the Battle of Mortain. ABOVE: Panzer troops of the German 2nd Panzer Division service their anti-tank gun during the German counterattack at Mortain. OPPOSITE: American infantrymen cautiously approach a burning German Tiger I that they have just knocked out of action in the fighting around Mortain. After the battle, the surviving German forces retreated towards Falaise where many would meet destruction.

ordered an advance on Lorient. The Germans set fire to the supply dumps in Rennes the next day and withdrew. Fifteen German tanks counterattacked on August 4, but that did not stop Wood's lightning advance. The American fighters dealt with the German armor. Wood's division captured Vannes on the Bay of Biscay on August 5, thereby cutting off the last escape route for the remaining German forces in Brittany.

Later that day Wood pushed on to Lorient, but the large German garrison in the U-boat base stopped his advance. The same thing occurred at the U-boat base at Saint-Nazaire further south. Wood asked Middleton for permission to take Nantes on the River Loire, and received the go-ahead. Colonel Bruce Clarke's CCA raced 80 miles to the city, to find the Germans were in the process of destroying their supply dumps and bases. After French Resistance fighters showed Clarke a safe path through the enemy lines, Wood gave Clarke permission to storm the city. In a matter of hours, the 4th Armored Division had taken control of the major city at the mouth of the Loire River.

Middleton's VIII Corps had by that point achieved the majority of its objectives, although the Germans still held Lorient and Saint-Nazaire. Wood's armored division screened the two cities for a week until relieved by Grow's division. In late August other forces relieved the 6th Armored Division, which released the VIII Corps' armored forces for the advance to Germany.

While the VIII Corps advanced into Brittany, the rest of Patton's Third Army had turned toward Le Mans, which lay 110 miles east of Avranches. Maj. Gen. Clarence R. Huebner's 1st Infantry Division of Collins' VII Corps captured Mortain, which was situated 20 miles east of Avranches. It continued on through the town and Hobbs' 30th Infantry Division then took possession of the town. The American presence reassured the civilians, who wildly cheered the Americans and threw flowers.

A rugged hill east of Mortain, Montjoie, offered a fine lookout point. The GIs called it Hill 314 after its height in meters. Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 120th Infantry Regiment, were sent to the top, along with Lieutenant Robert L. Weiss, an artillery forward observer for the 230th Field Artillery Battalion.

German leader Adolf Hitler had ordered four panzer divisions to counterattack in a desperate bid to retake Avranches. The plan called for the panzer formations to strike east through Mortain to Avranches. Hitler intended for the counterstrike to drive a wedge between Patton's Third Army and Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges' First Army.

At 1 a.m. on August 7, 26,000 German infantry and 300 panzers advanced toward Mor-

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tain and the 30th Infantry Division's positions around the village. By starting their attack at night, the Germans avoided taking an immediate beating from the American P-47s. For the Germans, nothing seemed to go right. Of the six attacking German columns, only three moved forward on schedule, and one consisting of the 116th Panzer Division on the German right did not advance at all.

The German assault fell heaviest against the U.S. forces around Saint-Barthelemy, a crossroads town two miles north of Mortain. Opposing armor blazed away at each other at close range. Meanwhile, American infantry lay in waiting for panzer grenadiers following the German armor.

The American GIs held their ground for six hours, destroying 40 panzers. At Abbaye Blanche, a 66-man platoon armed with bazookas and artillery forced an entire SS regiment to retreat. Other American GIs took out 60 panzers. When the fog burned off in the morning, though, P-47s went into action, as did Allied howitzers. The Germans found the punishment from aircraft and artillery unbearable.

But the veteran German armored divisions had experienced similar challenges on the Eastern Front, and they remained undaunted. Some German armored forces made impressive progress even though the odds were heavily stacked against them. For example, the 2nd Panzer Division advanced four miles in the north, and the 2nd SS Panzer Division fought its way into Mortain.

On Hill 314, the situation was desperate. Lieutenant Weiss called in fire missions, starting at dawn and firing only by sound and map coordinates. Germans fought their way up the east and south slopes of the hill simultaneously. Weiss called in artillery strikes against these close-range targets. The enemy responded with mortar and direct fire from 88mm anti-aircraft guns.

The German advance ground to a halt when American artillery, directed from the observes on Hill 314, paralyzed it. The artillery fire prevented the units on the 30th Division's southern flank from collapsing under the weight of the German assault. White phosphorus shells forced German panzer grenadiers into the open where they were then blasted by high-explosive shells. By nightfall on the first day the German attack had stalled. Although the Germans heavily outnumbered the Americans, they could not force their way through the 6,000 soldiers of the 30th Infantry Division.

On August 8, the Allied aircraft and artillery pounded German positions mercilessly throughout the day. "We must risk everything," Field Marshal Gunther von Kluge told his staff, even though he knew the battle was lost. Hitler, though, demanded that von Kluge renew the attack, although the Germans remained 20 miles from Avranches.

Von Kluge established a new kampfgruppe, the redoubtable Generalleutnant Heinrich Eberbach, the commander of the German 5th Panzer Army. The Germans sent an SS officer up Hill 314 under a flag of truce to demand the surrender of the American forces on the hill. When Lieutenant Ralph Kerley sent the SS officer on his way with a stream of profanity, the Germans hurled everything they had at the Americans entrenched on the hill.

The situation on Hill 314 was grim. Slain GIs were laid in a make-shift morgue among the rocks so they would not be visible to the other defenders, but nothing could hide the smell. Although multiple attempts by various means were made to replenish the ammunition of the troops on Hill 314, all attempts failed.

With the situation stalemated, the Germans ultimately quit offensive operations at Mortain on August 12 and began withdrawing east. A relief regiment from the 35th Division climbed to the top of Hill 314 and carried down 300 casualties; however 370 walking wounded were able to make it down on their own. The 30th Division had suffered 1,800 casualties and other units together experienced almost as many. Bradley subsequently ordered Patton to shift his forces to Le Mans, which Patton captured on the same day.

In the breakout from Normandy, Patton had demonstrated the value of his armored tactics. Eisenhower, Montgomery, and Bradley all saw the possibilities offered by releasing Patton's Third Army for a race to the Seine River. This would allow the Allies to roll up the flank of the enemy force in Normandy. The Germans would maintain a healthy respect for Patton and his Third Army through the duration of the war in Europe. ■

A Spectacle of Singular MAGNIFICENCE

By Eric Niderost

IT was the afternoon of September 20, 1863, and the right wing of the Union Army of the Cumberland was in full flight at the battle of Chickamauga in northern Georgia. This was not an orderly retreat, but a full-fledged rout, with soldiers who had fought bravely all day suddenly turned into panic-stricken fugitives. A reporter for the Cincinnati *Daily Gazette* caught the horrors of the flight when he wrote that "men, animals, vehicles, became a mass of struggling, cursing, shouting, frightened life."

The fleeing blue-clad troops were goaded by the sounds of the advancing Confederates, who seemed to be on all sides, an inexorable gray wave about to engulf them at any moment. Their fearsome Rebel Yell heard distinctly above the din of battle and the sounds of headlong retreat, was an audible whip that spurred even greater panic.

When the escape road narrowed, the situation turned chaotic. Men, horses, mules, ambulance wagons, artillery carriages and cannons and caissons became jumbled together bringing the retreat to a grinding halt. Yet on other parts of the battlefield the fighting continued unabated with the characteristic storm of canister and musketry.

Union Major General William S. Rosecrans, the commander of the Army of the Cumberland, was being swept along with the rest. Rosecrans had lost his ability to direct events. Rosecrans clung to one hope, which was that Maj. Gen. George Thomas' XIV Corps was still in the fight. "Old Rosy" wanted to join Thomas, but it was hard to swim against the tide of fugitives, and the way seemed blocked at every turn.

Rosecrans allowed himself to be persuaded to continue on to the main Union base at Chattanooga and organize the defenses in that location. The city was a key strategic location in southeastern Tennesee, and therefore was

Minnesota State Capitol

ULYSSES S. GRANT ARRIVED IN BESIEGED CHATTANOOGA IN LATE OCTOBER 1863 TO TURN THE TABLES ON THE CONFEDERATES. HIS INITIATIVES SET THE STAGE FOR AN EVENT THAT TOOK EVERYONE BY SURPRISE.

Lieutenant Colonel Judson Bishop leads the Second Minnesota Infantry in a daring charge up the slope of Missionary Ridge on November 25, 1863.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

The Confederate victory at Chickamauga, Georgia, forced Maj. Gen. William Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland to withdraw to Chattanooga, Tenneseee, on September 21. Maj. Gen. George Thomas succeeded Rosecrans as army commander in October.

bound to be the next Confederate target. But Thomas, who was still fighting his own hard battle on the Union left, was unaware of the Union disaster and had to be informed. Rosecrans's aide, Brig. Gen. James A Garfield, who would one day be president of the United States, was dispatched to inform Thomas of the bad news.

Dejected as well as defeated, Rosecrans reached his Chattanooga headquarters at 4 p.m. He was unable to dismount or even walk without assistance. Helped by his aides, Rosecrans somehow managed to reach a chair, where he slumped down head cradled in his hands. Dazed and overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of his defeat, he never seemed to have fully recovered. Rosecrans had acted "confused and stunned like a duck hit in the head," U.S. President Abraham Lincoln said afterwards.

Rosecrans's opponent was General Braxton Bragg, commander of the Confederate Army of Tennessee. Although a West Pointer like Rosecrans, Bragg was a mediocre general at best, and a man who was thoroughly despised by both his subordinates and the Southern people. His close friendship with Confederate President Jefferson Davis was the only reason that he remained in a position of authority.

Both Rosecrans and Bragg knew that Chattanooga was going to be the strategic locus of the whole campaign. Chattanooga was a town of just 3,500 souls, nestled by the sinuous Tennessee River in the heart of the Cumberland Mountains, which were part of the southern end of the Appalachians. Although small in population, it loomed large in a strategic sense, because vital railroads that linked the eastern and western parts of the Confederacy converged in its vicinity.

The Confederacy had funneled arms, munitions, textiles, and foodstuffs from Georgia's robust war industries through Chattanooga to the rest of the South.

Bragg found the Union army fully entrenched at Chattanooga. Since there was almost no likelihood of being able to lure them out, he faced a formidable dilemma. One option would be to try and outflank Rosecrans by crossing the Tennessee River either above or below the city, but that was not really viable given that Bragg's army lacked materials to build a pontoon bridge across the river. Moreover, the Army of Tennesee lacked wagons needed for supply. Another option was a direct assault, but Bragg knew that Chattanooga's fortifications were just too strong to even consider it.

Yet another option was to try to starve the Union army out of the city, and Bragg embraced this option. He had received intelligence that the Yankees had only six days of rations. This was a win-win situation from Bragg's point of view, because a siege would give him time to accumulate enough materials to cross the Tennessee River.

Chattanooga may have had formidable defenses, but it was also situated in a valley that was surrounded by high ridges and mountains. The city was at the bottom of a geologic bowl where the city and its environs could be clearly seen from above.

Ironically, the Federals originally had stationed troops on Lookout Mountain, but they were withdrawn when Rosecrans decided the position was untenable. Bragg put three Confederate brigades on Lookout Mountain, a rocky spine that rose 1,100 feet into the sky, but in places topped 2,100 feet.

Missionary Ridge, just to the east across Chattanooga Creek, was 400 feet high. Bragg ordered the ridge to be fortified against any Union attempt to take it. There were trenches at its base and crest, as well as an unfinished line of rifle pits halfway up the slope.

It was clear from the very start that the Army of the Cumberland was going to have a supply problem. The Confederates had all, or nearly all, of the approaches to the city well covered. Missionary Ridge guarded the eastern approaches, and formidable artillery on Lookout Mountain commanded all the approaches from the south and west. The only way left was from the north, via a wretched mountain road almost impassable in wet weather and vulnerable to Confederate cavalry raids.

While the bottled up Army of the Cumberland grappled with a growing supply crisis, other changes were in the works. Lincoln created a new

Division of the Mississippi, which included the territory from the Mississippi River to the Appalachians, and placed Major General Ulysses S. Grant, the conqueror of Vicksburg, in overall command. One of the first things Grant did was to replace Rosecrans with Thomas, whose performance at Chickamauga had gained him the sobriquet "The Rock of Chickamauga."

The War Department ordered reinforcements to Chattanooga. Maj. Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman was headed east with four divisions totaling 17,000 men. But their march would be a slow one given that Sherman had orders to repair the Memphis and Charleston Railroad as he moved east along its path. Other Union forces were on their way as well.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton persuaded Lincoln to detach two corps from the Army of the Potomac and send them to Chattanooga. One was Maj. Gen. Oliver O. Howard's XI Corps, and the other was Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum's XII Corps. That would bolster the city's garrison by another 20,000 men. Lincoln recalled Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker to command the two-corps expeditionary force.

Stanton, although often brisk and authoritarian, was at his best here. He summoned several railroad presidents to his office and told them what they had to do. Orders were issued, trains assembled, and 40 hours after the decision, the first troops were on their way to Chattanooga. It was an epic 1,233-mile trip, and 11 days later 20,000 men, horses and equipment arrived at their destination. It was a feat of logistics even greater than the earlier Confederate effort, and set a record for the swiftest and longest movement of a large body of troops before the twentieth century.

Grant's arrival was like a tonic to the hard-pressed men of the Army of the Cumberland. His was a curious charisma, for outwardly he was quiet, unprepossessing and sometimes even a bit shabby in appearance, and yet somehow he exuded confidence, and that confidence spread through any army he commanded.

Nicknamed "Unconditional Surrender" for his victory at Fort Donelson the year before, Grant had to travel to Chattanooga via the same miserable and dangerous road that supplied the Army of the Cumberland with its scanty provisions, so he could see firsthand the problems that confronted him. The route was steep, narrow and slippery and often a muddy quagmire as a result of constant rains. The road "was strewn with the debris of broken wagons and the carcasses of thousands of starved horses and mules," wrote Grant.

Grant arrived in Chattanooga on October 23, 1863. He had severely injured his leg a few weeks earlier, but to his surprise and relief his limb felt good in spite of the arduous journey. Grant was pleased to find a plan already developed to ease the food and supply situation. All he needed to do was to approve it.

Grant quickly authorized an attack on Confederate-held Brown's Ferry on October 27 to establish a supply corridor into the beleaguered city. Once the ferry was in Union hands, supply steamers began delivering food and fodder to the troops defending the city by way of the secure supply corridor designed by Maj. Gen. William "Baldy" Smith known as the "Cracker Line."

On the Confederate side, Bragg's growing unpopularity finally came to a head. Longstreet and several other subordinate officers sent a peti-

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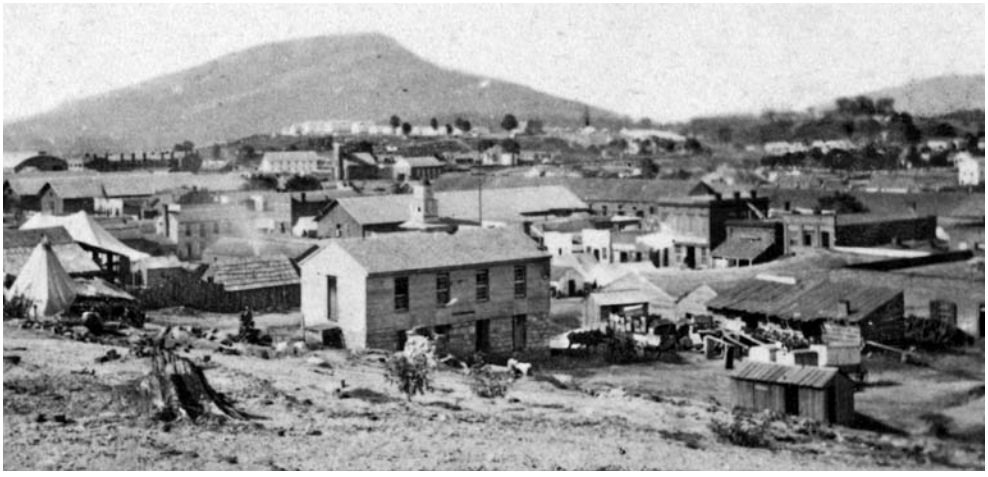

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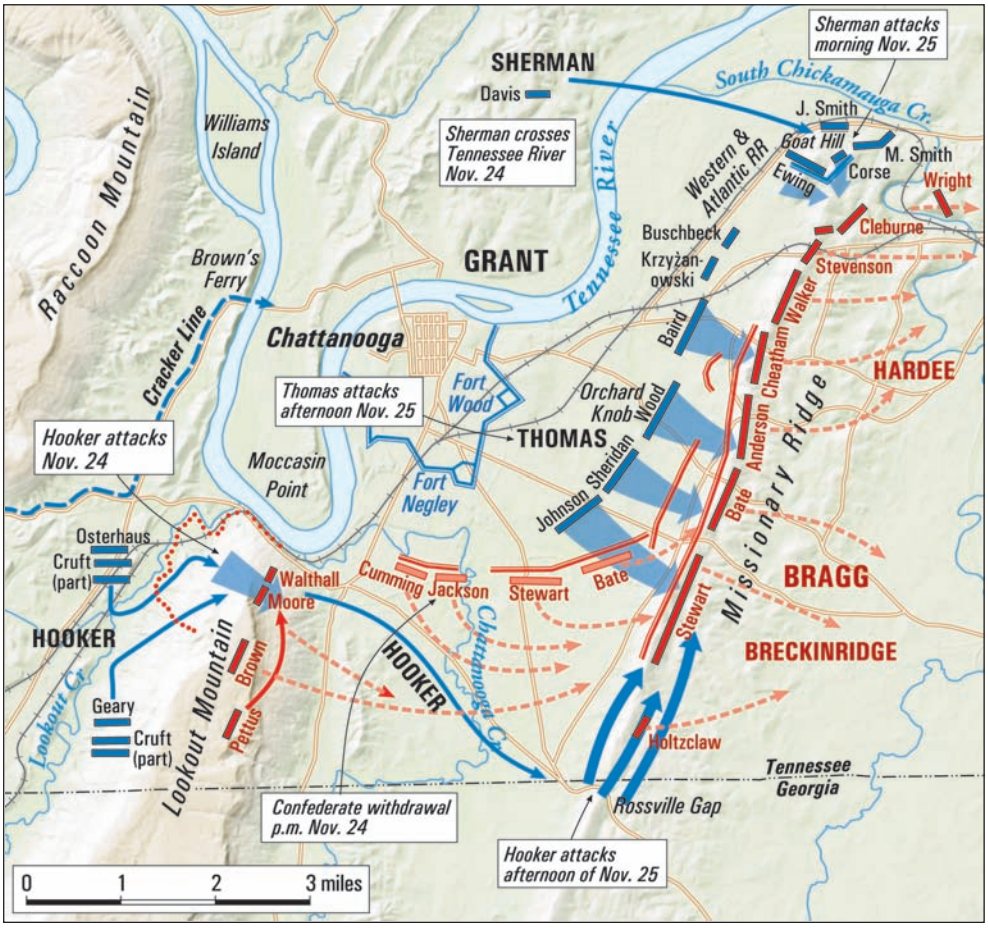

TOP: The Union high command viewed the vital railroad hub of Chattanooga as a gateway to the Deep South. BOTTOM: Major General Ulysses S. Grant arrived in Chattanooga on October 23 to direct operations against the Confederates on Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. He began offensive operations the following month by assailing both Confederate flanks.

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tion to Davis that declared that Bragg's health "unfits him for any command in the field." Bragg's health was a factor for he was often sick, but this was largely an attempt to give Davis a face-saving reason to dismiss the general.

Davis refused to take the bait, but did take the time and trouble to make the long journey from Richmond, Virginia, to Bragg's headquarters to resolve the dispute. Grievances were aired, but Davis refused to budge. He allowed Bragg to remain in command. But Davis, who considered himself a military man and chafed at his civilian role, gave Bragg some bad advice. The Confederate president instructed Bragg to send a sizeable force to drive the Federals out of Nashville.

Bragg complied with the order on November 4. He dispatched Longstreet with 15,000 men to capture Nashville. He later reinforced him with an additional 5,000 troops. Longstreet felt this was a fool's errand, because it reduced Bragg's command to 45,000. He also believed the 20,000 he had under his command was insufficient to capture Nashville.

In the meantime, Grant's army was still bottled up in Chattanooga. There were periods, of relative calm, and sometimes there was some fraternization between outlying pickets. Coffee, tobacco, and other items were occasionally exchanged, and the friendly enemies might even chat and swap a few lies.

It was said that Grant once appeared at a creek that supplied water for both sides. "Turn out the guard, commanding general!" some Union soldiers shouted. Grant, not wanting to attract attention, dismissed the men. The same cry was heard again, only this time it came from the Confederate side of the creek. Grant looked in amazement as a line of Confederate soldiers was presenting arms. Amused at the sight, the Union commander returned the salute.

But such light-hearted moments had to give way to the business of war. The 17,000 soldiers of Sherman's Army of the Tennessee arrived at Chattanooga on November 15. It appeared the initiative would be in Grant's hands. For the first time parts of three main Federal armies—the Army of the Cumberland, the Army of the Tennessee, and the expeditionary force from the Army of the Potomac—were united, a combined force of 60,000 men. But the Confederates still held the high ground surrounding the city, and Grant was not about to order suicidal frontal attacks if he could help it.

Grant decided that flank attacks against Missionary Ridge would produce the desired results. Sherman and his battle-hardened veterans of the Army of the Tennessee would play a major role in the drama. Their chief target would be the Confederate right, anchored on the northern edge of Missionary Ridge, and a place where Bragg's supply line joined his line of communication with Longstreet in the north.

Sherman would march northward, maneuvering in such a way as to keep Bragg guessing at his real destination. Once in position, and safe from Confederate prying eyes, the Army of Tennessee would launch an attack that would surprise the gray troops and roll up their northern, or right, flank. At the same time, or at least close to the same time, General Hooker would take Lookout Mountain on the Confederate left flank.

But once again, the weather wrought havoc on Grant's well-laid plans. Sherman's men were old hands at foot slogging marches, but the rains turned roads into quagmires. It would take Sherman three days to get into position, and in that time Grant was faced with a new concern.

There were reports, which proved false, that Bragg was withdrawing. Grant had to find out for sure, so while Sherman and his long-suffering Army of the Tennessee marched over wet ground to their flank attack position, Thomas was ordered to scout things out with a reconnaissance in force. In the Chattanooga Valley, between the town and Missionary Ridge to the east, there was a tree-studded hillock named Orchard Knob. That was Thomas's main objective.

Both: Library of Congress

ABOVE: Major General Joseph Hooker enjoyed an easy victory against Maj. Gen. Carter Stevenson's division defending Lookout Mountain. LEFT: Captain John Wilson of Co. C, 8th Kentucky Infantry, participated in the November 24 assault that pried the Confederates from Lookout Mountain. OPPOSITE: Major General George Thomas' troops broke out of the confines of Chattanooga and seized Orchard Knob on November 23.

Because of the valley's geography, Thomas's march on November 23 was a spectacle for both sides. The surrounding hills formed a natural coliseum where blue and gray spectators not directly involved could witness the unfolding drama. Bayonets gleamed and sparked in the sun, and national and regimental flags stirred in the breeze.

Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana, on scene and standing next to Grant, could hardly believe his eyes. "The spectacle was one of singular magnificence," he wrote. A cannon boomed, and at that signal Thomas' whole command, 14,000 strong, moved forward. Bragg had just 600 Confederates at Orchard Hill, and after a token resistance they understandably decided to quickly withdraw.

The action at Orchard Hill was only a curtain raiser, but nevertheless a welcome one. It meant that the Union lines were that much closer to the Confederate center. The Orchard Hill battle, more like a heavy skirmish, also influenced the Confederate side. Bragg took notice when he saw that Grant was on the move, and tried to take steps to checkmate the Union commander.

Bragg stopped Maj. Gen. Patrick R. Cleburne and his men from boarding a train that would have taken them to Knoxville. Cleburne was an Irish immigrant who had served a stint in the British army. Cleburne's ability to hold ground where others failed earned him the nickname "Stonewall of the West."

On the morning of November 24 Hooker's troops started out on their assignment to take Lookout Mountain, the anchor point of the Confederate left flank. It was hoped that these movements would act in concert with Sherman's push on the north, or right flank, of the Confederate line. Caught between two fires, Bragg's army would be squeezed and ultimately crushed. Hooker had suffered a humiliating defeat at Chancellorsville in May 1863, and so this would give him a chance to redeem himself.

The Confederate defenders at Lookout Mountain were at first amused by the site of Yankee infantry struggling up the hill; that is, when they could catch a glimpse of the blue skeins of men through intermittent patches of dense fog. The Confederates had 7,000 men posted on the hill under the command of Brig. Gen. Carter Stevenson, but he had arrived the night before and was unfamiliar with the ground. That was bad enough, but his troops were too widely scattered to furnish an effective defense.

By contrast Hooker's troopers were concentrated, and so 10,000 bluecoats were advancing against 1,489 Confederates in their immediate area. Worse still, from the Confederate point of view, was the fact that their artillerymen could not depress their guns low enough to shoot at the attacking enemy. That was not a problem for Union artillery, which quickly found the range and subjected the gray troops to a punishing and bloody barrage.

Nevertheless, the Confederates gave ground reluctantly, and the fighting grew ever more intense with each passing hour. It was clear that the gray clad troops had no monopoly on courage. Confederate Brig.

Gen. Edward Walthall was impressed by the Union soldiers. "I have never seen them fight with such daring and desperation," wrote the former lawyer from Mississippi. Nightfall brought an end to the fighting on Lookout Mountain, but the issue was still undecided. The whole mountain twinkled with campfires from both sides, reminding some of flowing lava, and occasional muzzle flashes from firing muskets further added pinpricks of light to the inky void. The night was cold and clear, and both sides were awed by an almost total lunar eclipse. It seemed a bad omen, but it was unclear for which side it spelled disaster.

The next morning the Union forces on the slopes discovered that the Confederates had withdrawn during the night. Bragg had ordered it, in part because he feared a heavy attack by Sherman could be seen clearly from the valley below, and joyous cheers erupted from thousands of throats at the spectacular view. Lookout Mountain had been a thorn in the Union army's side for weeks. There was visible proof that the siege and its attendant sufferings for those Union forces involved were officially at an end.

Lookout Mountain immediately became a place of romance, of epic battle victory, when in reality it was a hard-fought skirmish. Grant insisted it was "one of the romances of the war," but the legend persisted. Because of the earlier fogs, the fight for Lookout Mountain was quickly dubbed the "Battle Above the Clouds."

But on the Union left Sherman was having his difficulties. He had 26,000 men against 10,000 Confederates under Cleburne and Stevenson, but

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ABOVE: Having seized the Confederate rifle pits at the base of Missionary Ridge, Union troops had no desire to remain exposed to the hellish fire of Confederate artillery atop Missionary Ridge, so they fought their way to the top to the astonishment of both Grant and Thomas. OPPOSITE: Captain Louis von Trebra of the 32nd Indiana captures Confederate guns atop Missionary Ridge. The relief of the besieged Union army in Chattanooga proved to be one of the pivotal events of the war.

on the Missionary Ridge right flank, and felt the Lookout Mountain troops would be better used at that location. At first light, Captain John Wilson and five men of the 8th Kentucky climbed to the Lookout Mountain summit. Kentucky was a slave state, but with divided loyalties, and the 8th Kentucky was a Unionist regiment.

The Kentuckians unfurled their flag just as the sun's rays hit the peak and bathed its slopes with a bright morning glow. The Stars and Stripes the geography favored the gray troops. When Sherman's troops advanced early on November 24 they found that their initial objective was not part of Missionary Ridge as they were led to believe; instead, it was a spur separated from the main slope by a boulder-strewn ravine.

When attacking, Sherman's bluecoats would have to descend from the hill they occupied, cross the ravine, then clamber up steep slopes against an enemy who were dug in behind log-and-earth breastworks. It was a formidable task, because through most of their advance they would be under heavy Confederate fire. Nevertheless Sherman's veterans surged forward with real elan, though casualties were heavy.

But the defense showed courage, too, and the Federals were unable to dislodge them from their breastworks. After heavy fighting, the Union Army of the Tennessee's offensive was stopped dead in its tracks and Sherman sent a message to Grant that his men could do no more. Grant told him to attack again.

Sherman followed orders, but when this new attack failed, he decided he was not going to waste any more lives. Taking out a cigar, he lit it, inhaled deeply twice, then turned to an aide and ordered the troops to entrench. The word went out that they were to hold their ground, but make no further attacks for the time being. Grant grew worried that Sherman might be forced back, and Sherman was the linchpin to his whole plan. There was a chance that Bragg would send more troops to the right, thereby making Sherman's position untenable.

But if Grant ordered a diversionary attack on the Confederate center at Missionary Ridge, Bragg might focus on the new threat and forget Sherman, at least for a time. Grant lacked confidence in Thomas' Army of the Cumberland, and suspected that its defeat at Chickamauga had destroyed its morale; nevertheless, he had little choice but to employ it and what he had in mind was a limited offensive that was not going to take any risks.

Thomas and his men were to take the Confederate rifle pits at the base of Missionary Ridge and then await further orders. Grant was thinking of a diversion, not a major offensive, but for once he misjudged the temper of his men. The soldiers of the Army of the Cumberland knew of Grant's opinion of them and resented it. Feeling a bit ostracized, they wanted to show their mettle and also wipe out the memory of their embarrassing defeat in September. They could hardly wait to be unleashed on the enemy; one of the soldiers, an Indiana man, later admitted "we were crazy to charge."

This advance was no hodgepodge run, but a carefully executed military maneuver. The serried blue ranks were spaced with parade ground precision, and as they moved off drums beat and regimental bands played martial tunes. The Confederates atop Missionary Ridge could only watch with barely concealed awe. This included Bragg whose headquarters was situated on the crest of the ridge.

Such an assault on a well dug in enemy, an enemy that also has the high ground, is usually considered suicidal. But Bragg was unfamiliar

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with defensive warfare and had unwittingly committed several grievous errors. He sent half of each regiment to rifle pits 200 yards from the base of the ridge, while posting the rest on its crest. The lower pit troops were to fire one volley, then climb back up the hill to join their comrades at the crest.

Even worse, the Confederate engineer was incompetent, foolishly placing the artillery on Missionary Ridge's true crest, not the so-called military crest, which was the elevation that commanded the maximum field of fire down the slope. The military crest, which was a few yards further down, would have given gray gunners a clear field of fire, free of the natural dips, swells, and assorted rocks that would give Yankee soldiers cover.

Nonetheless, it seemed it was going to be the Federals, much like Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg, performing a heroic advance that was doomed to bloody failure. But then a miracle occurred. Thomas' Union troops easily took the lowest line of trenches with little loss. In keeping with the original scenario, they were supposed to stay there. But they began to receive fire from the second line of Confederate trenches halfway up the ridge, and they found this completely unacceptable. Rather than passively take Confederate fire like sitting ducks, the Federals spontaneously renewed the attack.

With the adrenaline pumping in their veins, cheer after cheer spontaneously bursting from their lips, the bluecoats pressed up the slopes, taking the second lines of trenches as they went. The Confederates were shocked by the blue tidal wave that engulfed them, and began to panic. Some started to go back voluntarily, remembering Bragg's fire and retire order; but others, not having received that order, only saw retreat and followed suit.

The story of Lieutenant Arthur MacArthur of the 24th Wisconsin captures some of the spirit of that moment. Regimental standard bearer was a very risky occupation, since carrying the flag made you a natural target, and there was always the chance you would be killed by an enemy trying to seize the flag as a trophy.

As the 24th Wisconsin surged up the slope, two of its standard bearers were killed in succession. Who would take the precious banner? MacArthur stepped forward without hesitation, and bore the flag all the way up to the summit. His heroism earned him a Medal of Honor, and later inspired his son, General Douglas MacArthur.

The panicked Confederate retreat soon became a rout. Bragg tried to rally the men. "Here's your commander," he shouted. But the fleeing soldiers showed their contempt by answering "Here's your mule!" As they fled, the Confederates cast off knapsacks, muskets, and blankets to lighten their load and hasten their escape. Only Cleburne's troops, the ones who had successfully stalled Sherman's advance on the right, withdrew in good order.

By contrast, the triumphant bluecoats, by that time in complete possession of Missionary Ridge, celebrated their success with great enthusiasm. Some shouted, some wept, and others danced with delight. Still others, mindful of this sudden reversal of fortunes, shouted in revenge, "Chickamauga! Chickamauga!" at the fleeing Confederates.

"Our men pursued the fugitives with an eagerness only equaled by their own to escape; the horses of the artillery were shot as they ran; squads of Rebels were headed off and brought back as prisoners, and in 10 minutes all that remained of the defiant rebel army that had so long besieged Chattanooga was captured guns, disarmed prisoners, moaning wounded, ghastly dead, and scattered, demoralized fugitives," wrote a Union soldier from Kansas, adding, "Missionary Ridge was ours."

Indeed, the Chattanooga fight had been costly for both sides. The Union suffered 753 dead and 4,722 wounded of 56,000 troops, while the Confederates had 361 dead and 2,160 wounded of 44,000 troops.

Although much hard fighting was to come, the Chattanooga campaign can be considered, along with Gettysburg and Vicksburg, another major turning point in the Union's favor. The victory confirmed Grant as the Union's greatest general. President Lincoln promoted him to Lieutenant General of the Army on February 29, 1864, giving him command of all Union forces. With Chattanooga, the gateway to the Deep South in Union hands, the Confederacy was in grave peril. The capture of Chattanooga set the stage, in 1864, for both the fall of Atlanta and Sherman's March to the Sea. ■

Four months earlier Major General John Burgoyne had left Canada with a large army. He intended to deliver a fatal blow to the colonial revolt that had begun on April 19, 1775. The bright summer days were just a memory now, as were Burgoyne's hopes of ending the rebellion of the American colonies against King George III.

Burgoyne's men marched from their camp on October 17, 1777, not to battle as they had so many times over the past four months, but to quietly lay down their weapons in the desolate ruins of an abandoned fort near Saratoga, New York. The failure of Burgoyne's ambitious plan not only cost King George III of Great Britain an entire army he could ill afford to lose. The victory of Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates' Continental army over Burgoyne's Army of Canada at Saratoga convinced King Louis XVI of France to take the risk of supporting the United States, established the previous year, against the British. As such, the American victory at Saratoga precipitated a historic shift that ultimately would tip the balance of power in the American Revolutionary War in favor of the rebellious colonies.

After repelling an American invasion of British-held Canada, British strategy focused on New York. The British capture of New York City in August 1776 gave the Crown a base from which to control the Lower Hudson River. London hatched a new plan to end the rebellion formed during win-

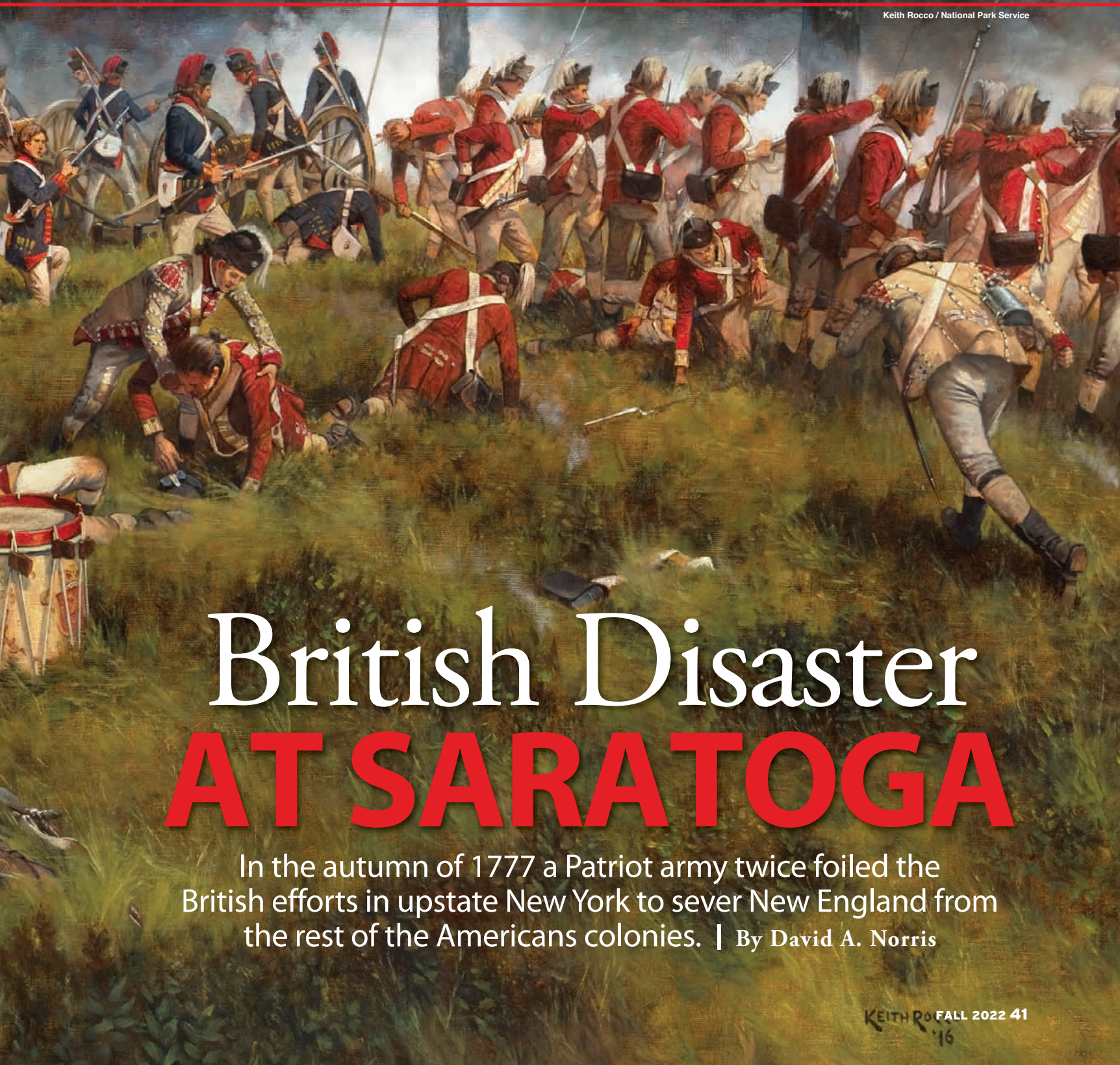
Brigadier General James Hamilton's center column, including the 62nd Regiment, and Royal Artillery, suffered heavy losses in the bloody engagement at Freeman's Farm on September 19, 1777. As the campaign wore on, Burgoyne's army had little chance of reaching Albany, New York.

ter 1776-1777. The plan called for Lt. Gen. Sir William Howe to push northward along the Hudson River from New York City, while John Burgoyne advanced south from Montreal. Additionally, Brig. Gen. Barry St. Leger would lead another force eastward through the Mohawk River Valley. All three armies would unite on the Hudson at Albany, the largest town in upstate New York. New England, which was the center of the most fervent opposition to British rule, would be cut off from the rest of the American colonies.

Although a fine plan on paper, the new Hudson River campaign was flawed from the start by an administrative mistake in London. Orders were drafted for Howe to march up the Hudson to unite with Burgoyne at Albany. Such orders required the signature of Lord George Germain, Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs. When the orders were being written out, Germain, eager to leave the city for his country home, refused to wait until the papers were finished. Rather than sending the orders onward for Germain's signature, a clerk simply filed them.

Quebec's Governor Sir Guy Carleton knew of the plans, as did Burgoyne. Howe also knew of the invasion from Canada. But without direct orders for full cooperation, Howe focused on his own plan to crush the rebellion by taking the American capital of Philadelphia, and gave little consideration to cooperating with Burgoyne.

Keith Rocco / National Park Service



British Disaster AT SARATOGA

In the autumn of 1777 a Patriot army twice foiled the British efforts in upstate New York to sever New England from the rest of the Americans colonies. | By David A. Norris

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Metropolitan Museum of Art

Major General John Burgoyne (left), commanded the Army of Canada at Saratoga, and Maj. Gen. Horatio Gates, served as commander of the Continental Army's Northern Department.

On June 14, 1777, Burgoyne's expedition headed south from Montreal. Maj. Gen. William Phillips, although an artillery officer, served as second in command. After detaching a few hundred troops to remain in Canada, Burgoyne had 9,500 troops. The core of his army was its 7,600 European foot soldiers, of which 4,000 were British and 3,600 were so-called Hessians, that is, mercenary troops hired from small German principalities, as well as 500 artillerymen. Auxiliary troops included 600 Loyalist and French-Canadian militia, 500 Indian allies, and 300 support personnel.

Burgoyne's Army of Canada was divided into three divisions. Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser commanded the Advance Division, Phillips led the Right Division with its two brigades of British troops, and Maj. Gen. Friedrich Adolph Riedesel commanded the Left Division composed of Germans from Brunswick and Hesse-Hanau. The militia and Indians formed up outside of the three divisions.

Burgoyne's army boasted 138 guns, ranging from mortars and small field pieces to large 24-pounders. The large complement of artillery would furnish sufficient firepower for any battles or siege operations that might be mounted during the campaign.

Among the Germans were a number of dragoons serving on foot because of a shortage of available horses in Canada, although some of the British and Hessian infantry officers had horses. The lack of horses would hinder British supply lines throughout the expedition.

The British moved part of the way by water. They journeyed south on Lake Champlain on June 20. The lake, which ran north to south, stretched for more than 100 miles from southern Quebec well into the American colonies, dividing western Vermont from eastern New York. The Royal Navy's Lake Champlain flotilla, led by the 26-gun, three-masted frigate *Royal George*, escorted the expedition's 200 sturdy and shallow-draft bateaux.

Although he was aware of the menacing British army marching south from Canada, General George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, was more concerned about Howe in New York City. From his limited resources, Washington spared 4,000 men for Maj. Gen. Philip Schuyler to hold Fort Ticonderoga and the northern reaches of the Hudson Valley.

On July 1, the British landed three miles north of Fort Ticonderoga. At that point, they were about 100 miles from Albany and the Hudson River. American Maj. Gen. Arthur St. Clair commanded a garrison of 2,200 men at Fort Ticonderoga. Far away to the south, the civilian and military leaders of the rebellion regarded the legendary and massive stone fortress as the "Gibraltar of the North," and believed it would block any invasion attempting the Lake Champlain route.

Originally built by the French, and rebuilt after its capture by the British in 1758, the fort had deteriorated from its wartime readiness. During the previous winter, shivering Patriot troops chopped up the abatis for firewood. Rather than sacrifice the garrison, St. Clair abandoned the fort on July 5, before the British could block his retreat.

The British pursued St. Clair and Fraser fell on the Continental Army's rearguard at Hubbardton, Vermont. He encountered surprisingly steadfast resistance from the Americans, but won the sharp clash with the arrival of von Riedesel's Germans. Although they drove away the defeated patriots, the British force was too battered to pursue them.

Carleton could send no reinforcements to Burgoyne, who also had to detach 1,000 men to hold Ticonderoga and protect his lengthening supply lines. Feeding the army by wagon and bateaux proved challenging and tedious, but the rugged and sparsely populated regions along their march simply could not provide enough food for the army.

Lieutenant William Digby of the 53rd Foot was one of the officers with a horse. He heeded Burgoyne's advice to travel light. "[I left] my bedding behind and making use of a buffalo skin, with a cloak to cover me at nights," Digby wrote in his diary. The lieutenant soon noted a new peril of the American wilderness. "The country around Skenesborough swarms with rattlesnakes, the bite of which is, I believe, mortal," he said. "They alarm the person nearby with their rattles, which providence has wisely ordered for that purpose, and from whence, they take their names."

Burgoyne divided his force in two. One contingent traveled down Lake George, which offered 30 miles of a water route for his bateaux, supplies, and heavy artillery, but at the cost of long portages through rugged country before and after passing along the lake. Without enough watercraft to carry all of his troops, the rest of his force had to move overland, well east of Lake George. The army would reunite near Fort Edward. This old French and Indian War post was on the Hudson, three miles below a sharp bend where the river turned southward. For the time being, old Fort Edward was home to Schuyler's troops.

Schuyler knew that the British had to advance along a single rough road surrounded by forests and swamps. Directed by Thaddeus Kosciuszko, a renowned Polish military engineer, hundreds of soldiers burned bridges, blocked roads with fallen trees, and flooded the roadway where possible. Besides obstructing the intended route of the British advance, the Patriots also destroyed crops and took livestock, rendering the countryside largely barren to the invaders.

Schuyler hoped for reinforcements. St. Clair joined him from the north on July 14. From Washington's army arrived major generals Benjamin Lincoln and Benedict Arnold. Schuyler sent Lincoln to Vermont to bolster forces menacing the British left and rear.

Burgoyne, as the Americans hoped, endured a slow and exhausting trip. For two weeks, the redcoats halted at Skenesborough to wait for the wagons to catch up before pressing on to Fort Edward. Digby recorded the ways in which the Americans had obstructed the British route. Along Wood Creek, they had "felled large trees over the river, which there turned so narrow, as

Americans Shattered a Hessian Raiding Party at Bennington

As Major General John Burgoyne's British Army of Canada invaded New York in early summer 1777 they encountered increasing difficulty sustaining the army so far from their base. In August, Burgoyne dispatched a raiding party to plunder the American depot at Bennington, Vermont.

Lieutenant Colonel Friedrich Baum took 800 Hessian and militia troops to gather supplies and horses from the farms and villages in his path, as well as the supply depot at Bennington.

Baum's column came upon a 200-man scouting party dispatched by American commander Brig. Gen John Stark at Sancoick's Mill within a day's march of Bennington on August 14. The following day Baum ran into Stark's main force numbering 1,700 men. Realizing the American force was more than twice the size of his own, Baum ordered his dragoons to entrench on a hill on the north side of the Walloomsac River.

Baum sent an urgent plea for reinforcements to Burgoyne the following day. The British commander responded by sending Lt. Col. Friedrich Breymann and 650 Hessians to assist Baum.

Baum deployed his main force consisting of the dragoons with one of the column's two 3-pounder guns behind a log redoubt atop the commanding 300-foot hill. He positioned 50 Hessian grenadiers with the other 3-pounder to cover Wilcox Bridge over the Walloomsac River and 50 jagers to guard the southeast approach to the hill. French-Canadian and Loyalist militia and allied Indians constructed their own redoubt on the south bank of the river.

Dividing his force into four columns, Stark directed two to make a frontal assault towards the bridge while the other two columns crossed the river and converged on the rear of the Hessian position from different directions.

The Americans attacked on the afternoon of August 16. The Vermont and New Hampshire militia tasked with striking Baum's rear fanned out around the enemy redoubt and began steadily picking off the dragoons.

Meanwhile, the French-Canadians, Loyalists, and Indians in the bridgehead on the south bank of the river fled in panic as soon as the other two American columns attacked them.

When the dragoons ran out of ammunition, they tried to cut their way out with their swords, but their morale collapsed when Baum fell mortally wounded. Those still alive surrendered.

Word soon reached Stark that Breymann's relief column was approaching from the west. Reinforced by Colonel Seth Warner's Green Mountain Boys, Stark once again brilliantly maneuvered his troops. They attacked Breymann's column on both flanks.

In savage fighting, the Americans routed the Hessians, capturing their two 6-pounders. Wounded trying to save the guns, Breymann had no choice but to retreat with his shattered command. When it was all over, the British had lost 200 killed and 700 captured, many of whom were wounded, while the Americans had suffered 30 killed and 40 wounded. Burgoyne could ill afford the losses incurred from the failed raid.

—William E. Welsh

Americans storm Hessian breastworks at the bloody clash at Bennington.

allow more than one [bateaux] abreast, from whence were obliged to cut a road through the wood, which was attended with great fatigue and labor, for our wagons and artillery," he said.

The British later slogged along a road "broke up by the enemy and large trees felled across it," Digby said. On the night of July 28, there was another delay because of "a report that the enemy had poisoned a spring," he said, adding that the surgeon of his regiment tested the water, and found it good.

A few miles to the west on July 28, the British bateaux reached Fort George at the southern end of Lake George. Burgoyne attached 150 Royal Navy personnel from the Lake Champlain vessels to his army mostly because he knew the sailors would be able to skillfully pilot the bateaux on the inland waterways. He placed Lieutenant John Schank in command of the naval contingent. Schank was assisted by 20-year-old Midshipman Edward Pellew, a veteran of the previous year's battles on Lake Champlain. Pellew would go on to a legendary career as a frigate captain and admiral during the Napoleonic Wars.

One day after the landing at Fort George, Burgoyne's column was at Fort Edward. Along the way most of their guns had been left behind, but they still had more than three dozen pieces. Bad news arrived in a dispatch received on August 3. Howe was not moving to support the invasion from Canada, and had sailed to attack Philadelphia. He left Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Clinton with enough troops to hold New York City, but not enough for a large expedition into the interior.

St. Leger, the third prong of the British expedition also never reached Burgoyne. He stopped to besiege a 750-man American garrison holding Fort Stanwix, some 100 miles west of Fort Edward.

Schuyler could afford to spare Arnold and 700 men to relieve Fort Stanwix. Arnold's approach, along with carefully planted and greatly exaggerated rumors about the size of his relief column, dismayed St. Leger's contingent of Indians. If they carried out their threats to leave, that would take away half of the British force, so St. Leger raised his siege and withdrew.

Hoping to replenish the reunited army's shrinking store of provisions, Burgoyne sent Lt. Col. Friedrich Baum out on August 11 with a large detachment on a raid to seize food and horses for the Army of Canada. Although it supposedly was a secret expedition, and the detachment's route was not publicly known, it was common knowledge in camp that Baum had orders to plunder the American supply depot at Bennington, Vermont.

At the Vermont border Baum ran headlong into a substantially larger American force under Colonel John Stark, which smashed Baum's detachment on August 16 and mortally wounded

U.S. Army Art Collection

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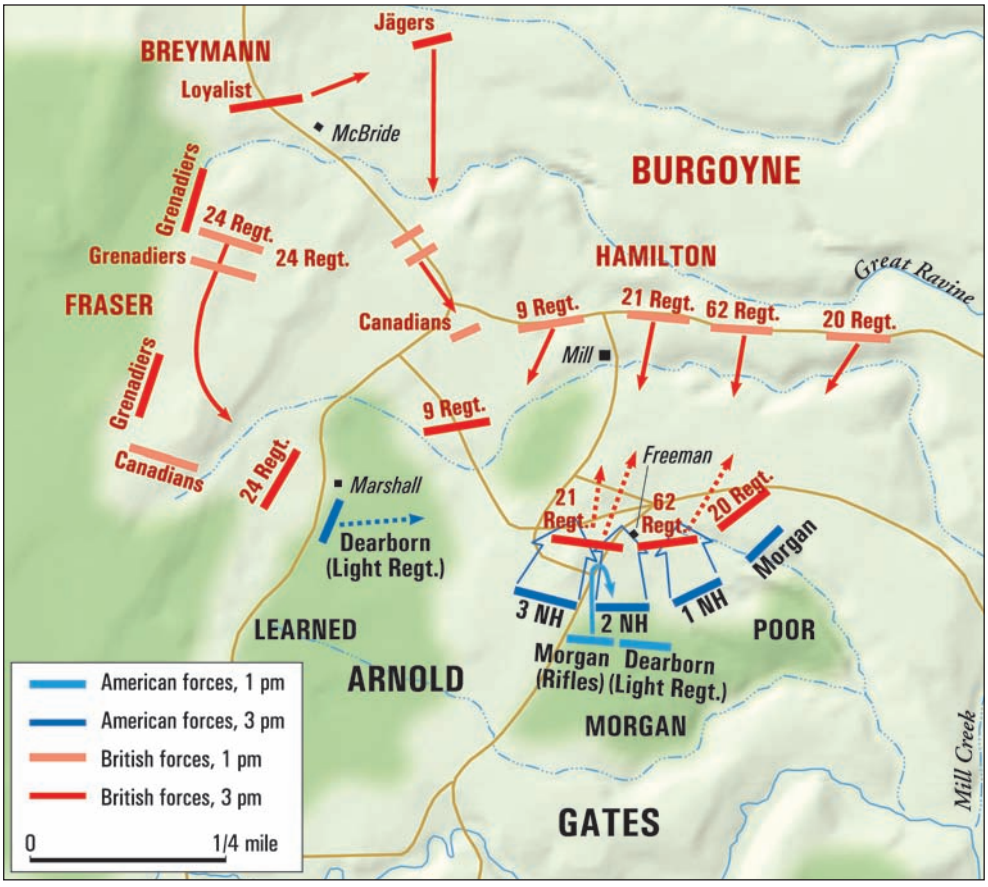


TOP: Colonel Daniel Morgan and his riflemen played a key role in the actions at Freeman's Farm in September and Bemis Heights in October. In the former, they blunted the British attack, while in the latter they fired on the British from dense woods mortally wounding Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser. ABOVE: American light infantry units and Morgan's riflemen advance to attack the British advance guard at Freeman's Farm. OPPOSITE: Major William Hull's Detachment of Massachusetts Continentals passes British casualties as it goes into action on Freeman's Farm. The American Continentals held their ground in several hours of heavy fighting that lasted until dusk.

Baum. They also defeated a relief force under Lt. Col. Friedrich Breymann.

Schuyler held his Continental army together over the course of the summer while slowing the British advance. He deliberately withdrew the American garrison from Fort Ticonderoga in order to save St. Clair's men. His decisions, however, angered impatient politicians viewing the events from a distance who were desperate for a quick victory. Schuyler and St. Clair faced a court martial inquiry for alleged incompetence. Washington sent Gates to take Schuyler's place as commander in the north.

Gates, a former British army officer, was a veteran of the French and Indian War. After leaving the peacetime army, he settled in Virginia and came around to supporting American independence. His pride led him into disputes over his seniority and status. Congress gave him command of the American army that made the ill-advised invasion of Canada in 1775. Before he could take charge, the army retreated into New York, and came under Schuyler's authority. Removed from command, Gates and his associates pressed Congress to restore him. Congress consented, only to again remove him and give the army back to Schuyler. After the frustrating summer while Burgoyne advanced southward, Gates' friends were able to get Congress to fire Schuyler once again.

Within a couple of weeks after Gates arrived to take command on August 19, reinforcements brought his army up to 10,000 men, including 6,900 Continentals. The Americans continued marching south.

Kosciuszko found an excellent defensive position on a hill called Bemis Heights, eight miles south of the community of Saratoga, and on the west side of the Hudson. High ground looked down on the Hudson and the road to Albany. The heavy forests would force the British to squeeze into the narrow road between the river and the American-held hill. Supplementing the works at Bemis Heights, Gates' men dug a mile of earthworks arranged in a large L-shape to protect the hill, and bolstered it with 22 guns.

Burgoyne moved slowly for a few weeks, allowing supply wagons and bateaux to make their way toward him. When he was ready to press on to Albany, he had the choice of staying on the eastern side of the Hudson, or crossing to travel along the other bank. Albany was on the west bank of the river, as was Gates' growing rebel army. Burgoyne opted for the western road. His army was ready to cross on September 11, but two days of heavy rain kept the army in place until September 13.

To get the army across the river Lieutenant Schank directed the construction of a makeshift pontoon bridge. The pioneers tasked with building the bridge lined up the army's bateaux in a

row and anchored them parallel to the river banks. They then placed planks atop the bateaux.

By this time, Burgoyne's numbers had dipped to 3,800 British and 2,800 German regulars. His auxiliary forces at that point numbered 700 American Loyalists, 110 French-Canadian militia, 150 Indians, 150 sailors, and 300 camp followers.

Getting to Albany was impossible without pushing past the much larger American army, comfortably perched on a formidable defensive position. The British moved gradually toward the enemy. Pickets fought small, noisy clashes as enemy patrols pressing near their lines. A great alarm was raised on the night of September 15 when flames engulfed the tent of Major John Dyke Acland of the 20th Foot. The major's Newfoundland dog had knocked over a table where the major kept a candle burning, and the candle rolled across the ground and set the canvas wall on fire. Acland was badly scorched trying to rescue his wife, Lady Harriet Acland, who unknown to him had managed to escape by slipping under the back wall of the tent.

Burgoyne's three divisions prepared for a major assault on September 19. Riedesel commanded the Hessians on the left along River Road, Burgoyne commanded the center, and Fraser led those on the right. Fraser had the key role in the British plans. To the right of the Continental works was an unfortified hill. If Fraser's troops could secure that hill, which was higher than Bemis Heights, British cannons could drive the Americans off the heights, opening the way to Albany.

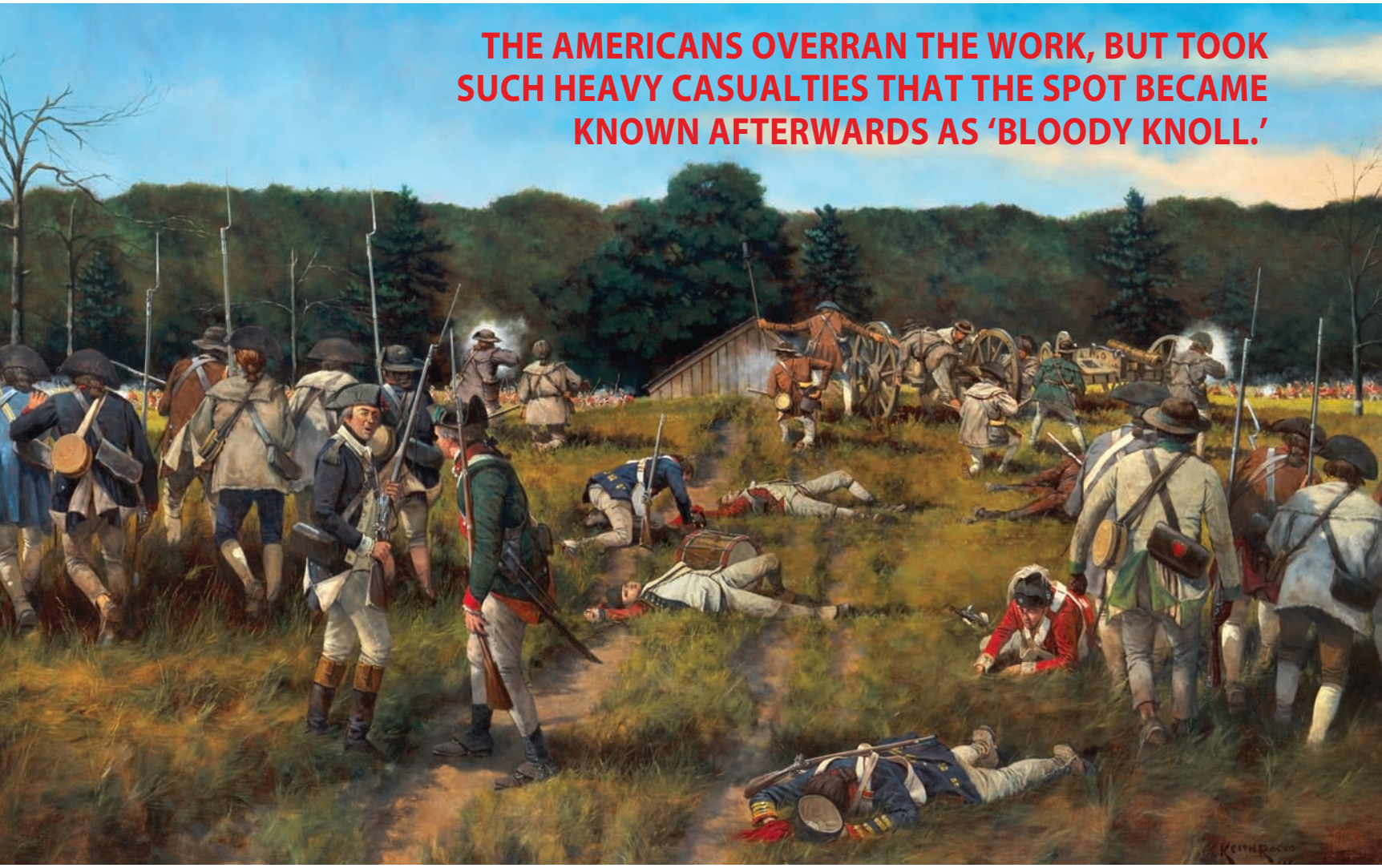
Gates was cautious in his moves and careful of the lives of his troops. He wanted to wait for the British to come within range of his lines. From their prepared defenses, and outnumbering the redcoats, the Continentals could expect to cost the British dearly as they repulsed the attack. But Arnold yearned to meet the British on the field. While Gates refused to order the whole army out into the open, he allowed Arnold to advance and confront the British with his division. [*Ed. Note: There has been debate among historians, as well as some participants in the battle, regarding whether Arnold was actually on the field during this engagement. This debate began shortly after the battle and continues to this day.*]

Colonel Daniel Morgan's riflemen were the first to reach the enemy when they attacked Fraser's right. The riflemen drove back a small force of French Canadians and Indians. Rifles had much longer range and far deadlier accuracy than smoothbore muskets, but could not mount a bayonet. It also took much more time to ram the tight-fitting rifle ammunition down the muzzle than to load a musket. A battalion of musket-bearing troops under Major Henry Dearborn was to accompany Morgan, protecting the riflemen with their quicker-firing, and bayonet-equipped, weapons.

Overconfident from their success, Morgan's men ran into more of Fraser's troops. Following their initial contact with the enemy, the riflemen were scattered and well ahead of Dearborn's protection. Overwhelmed by greater numbers of British muskets, Morgan was driven back.

Burgoyne and Brig. Gen. James Hamilton pressed ahead in the center, reaching John Free-

THE AMERICANS OVERRAN THE WORK, BUT TOOK SUCH HEAVY CASUALTIES THAT THE SPOT BECAME KNOWN AFTERWARDS AS 'BLOODY KNOLL.'



Keith Rocco / National Park Service

Brigadier General Benedict Arnold, shown on horseback, leads a brigade of Continentals in a furious charge against Breymann's redoubt in the Battle of Bemis' Heights on October 7. The Germans stubbornly defended their redoubt, but ultimately were overwhelmed.

man's Farm. One mile north of Bemis Heights, the Freeman's residence was leased from Schuyler. The Schuyler family had owned land in the battlefield area for many years, and Schuyler himself lived on his estate just seven miles to the north of the battlefield. Freeman, as well as local tavern owner Jotham Bemis, whose name would be given to the hill held by Gates, were Loyalists.

Arnold rallied his troops. Fraser was separated from the rest of the British by several hundred yards. Pouring into the gap in the British line, Arnold's troops fell upon Burgoyne's force in the center. The 21st Foot, part of Hamilton's 2nd Brigade, fell back exposing the neighboring 62nd Foot to the American attack. Phillips led the 20th Foot in a bayonet countercharge.

Burgoyne's force teetered on the edge of disaster when Arnold pleaded with Gates to send forward more men into the heavy fighting, but Gates refused to risk any more of his troops.

Riedesel saved the center by throwing most of the left wing into the fray. The Germans and four cannons pounced on Arnold's flank, saving Burgoyne. It was now late in the day and Lieutenant Digby's men, barely able to see in the smoky gloom, nearly fired into an approaching German regiment. They had mistaken the dark jackets of the German troops for those of the Americans. The arrival of night put an end to the fighting.

Although the British held off the Patriots, their battered force suffered another 600 casualties. In contrast, Patriot losses totaled just 350. Nonetheless, the redcoats thought there were good enough prospects to renew the attack. On the day after the Freeman's Farm clash, according to Phillips, Fraser felt the men were too worn out from the previous day's fighting, and a day of rest would pay off with a much more effective attack. Oddly enough, a resourceful British courier was about to change the course of the campaign.

No word from either Howe or Clinton had reached Burgoyne since early August. This long gap in British communications ended when a courier sent by Clinton evaded the American patrols and reached the British camp late on September 20. Clinton's message notified Burgoyne that he intended to attack Fort Montgomery, which was situated 100 miles south of Saratoga, on September 20, 10 days after he dispatched the message.

Elated by the prospect of Clinton's aid, Burgoyne sent the courier back with a message imploring Clinton to create a diversion compelling Gates to detach part of his army. Meanwhile, Burgoyne refrained from renewing the attack on Gates. He planned to hold his position until October 12 in hope that Clinton's maneuvers would favorably alter his situation.

Commanders often sent duplicate messages by different couriers to make sure at least one would get through. Couriers needed impressive patience and nerve to trek through long stretches of enemy-held territory. Something of their ordeals is seen in the story of one Sergeant Daniel Taylor. He was entrusted with a note from Clinton to Burgoyne, which was hidden inside a hollow silver bullet. Taken prisoner by the Americans, Taylor was brought before American Maj. Gen. James Clinton. His captors saw Taylor quickly swallow the bullet. A surgeon administered an emetic. Taylor vomited up the bullet, but managed to snatch it up and swallow it again. The courier refused to take another dose of the emetic until General James Clinton threatened "to hang him and find it with the surgeon's knife." Two days later, Taylor was hanged as a spy.

Burgoyne's main camp held a reasonably strong position facing the Continentals, but his right was vulnerable. The British quickly constructed two new redoubts on the recent battleground, which they possessed after the September 19 clash.

The Balcarres Redoubt, which was the larger

of the two works, was constructed of timber and earth and pierced for eight guns. Its walls included John Freeman's house and barn. On the extreme right of the British defenses, the smaller Breymann's Redoubt stood on a hill. The main works here were earth-filled walls of rails. The builders had piled the rails horizontally to a height of seven feet and buttressed them with vertical posts.

Four hundred yards separated the Balcarres Redoubt and the Breymann Redoubt. In between the two redoubts, 100 French-Canadian militiamen held two cabins that they had fortified.

Although the fighting was not renewed for some time, the Americans were busy. One day after the battle, a force operating far to the rear captured the British flotilla on Lake George. Although a prospective siege of Fort Ticonderoga was quickly abandoned, the actions menaced Burgoyne's potential escape route and made their isolated position all the more perilous.

Morale sank in the gloomy British camp. Far from likely help, they were fast consuming their food and had little prospect of replenishing their supplies. Wounded men lingered under the care of the medical staff, all too often until death. Living officers attended auctions of the possessions of their dead comrades.

A night of heavy rain washed away soil and sand from many hastily dug and shallow soldier's graves, confronting the British with the macabre sight of lifeless bodies exposed to the morning sun. Night after night the eerie howling of wolves, lured to the battlefield by the corpses in their shallow graves, kept even the most exhausted men grimly awake.

Gates' troops had much higher spirits. A rumor swept through the camps that Burgoyne had been killed. Apparently this mistake arose because one of Burgoyne's aides, Captain Charles Green, was shot from his horse when he was near Burgoyne. Green liked appearing in a particularly splendid uniform, and he made a tempting target for the enemy riflemen aiming at redcoat officers.

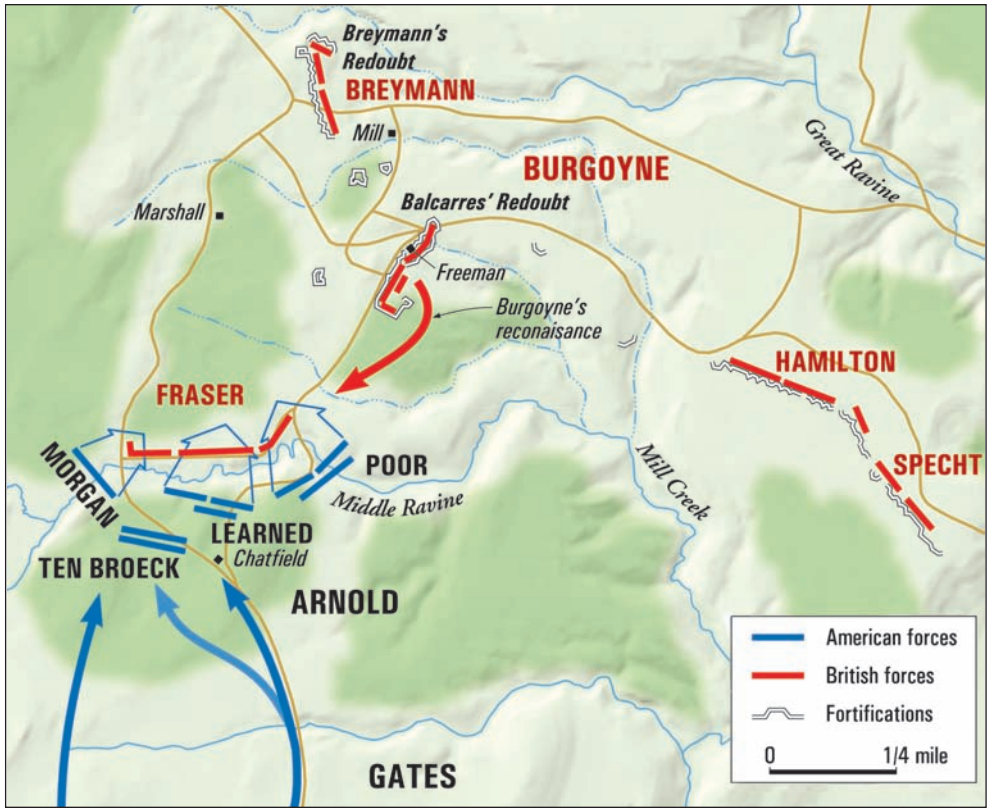
Arnold and Gates were embittered rivals from their jostling for command. After the September 19 battle, their quarrel escalated. Gates relieved Arnold of his command, leaving him at loose ends.

At the beginning of October, Burgoyne's troops waited for their commander's next move. Retreat meant a difficult and risky journey for his battered army. A general retreat might allow Gates to release several thousand men to strengthen Washington's main army. On October 3, to stretch out their diminishing stores, the British reduced their soldiers' rations.

Burgoyne held a council of war on October 4. He proposed a plan to leave 800 men to guard their supplies and send the rest of the army to turn the American left. Phillips, Riedesel, and Fraser all found the plan too risky. So Burgoyne proposed a second, more flexible plan, which called for committing only 1,500 men to the attack. If repulsed by solid resistance, the foray could be passed off as a reconnaissance. Should fortune smile upon the British, they might find a way to gain the hill to the right of Bemis Heights, and push the Continentals out of the way. Hedging their bets with a practical goal, the British also would mount a heavily guarded foraging expedition to harvest the wheat that was growing between the lines of the opposing armies.

At noon on October 7, Burgoyne assembled 1,500 men with 10 cannon and led them out of the British camp. Fraser led the vanguard consisting of the 24th Foot and Alexander Lindsay, the Earl of Balcarres' battalion of light infantry. He was followed by Riedesel with a German detachment and a battalion of grenadiers under Major Acland, who had returned to duty after recovering from injuries suffered in the fire in his tent.

Map © 2022 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



Both: Wikimedia

ABOVE: Burgoyne had hoped to seize a hill to the right of Bemis Heights on October 7, but the Americans assailed his center and flanks driving his army back to its redoubts. LEFT: Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold (left) and Brig. Gen. Simon Fraser.

The Americans had posted pickets at Joshua Barber's farm, which was situated a half mile southwest of the British redoubts. They rushed back to report the sudden appearance of a heavy British force. Lt. Col. James Wilkinson, who served as deputy adjutant general on Gates' staff, went forward to observe the enemy advance. Fraser had deployed Lord Balcarres' troops on his right. The light infantry disappeared into the woods west of the field. The 24th Foot and the Germans held the center, with the grenadiers holding the left. Burgoyne, Phillips, and Reidesel perched on the roof of Barber's cabin, scanning with their field glasses but seeing little beyond the farm but a panorama of forest.

Wilkinson reported the enemy's position to Gates, and warned that the British would try to attack the American left. Gates sent Morgan's riflemen in first, this time closely supported by Dearborn. Brig. Gen. Enoch Poor and Brig. Gen. Ebenezer Learned followed behind with their two brigades.

Morgan struck first, falling upon the British right. Some of Fraser's sharpshooters and Indians temporarily slowed Morgan down. In the meantime, Poor confronted the grenadiers. Acland's

outnumbered men wavered amid a massive volley from Poor's brigade that cut down numerous men and left Acland shot in both legs. The Americans surprised the grenadiers with a bayonet charge, and drove them back.

Learned's advance against the 24th Foot and German troops was slowed by a pair of German 6-pounder guns. Although Arnold had no official place in the chain of command, he appeared on the field and took it upon himself to send three of Learned's regiments to charge the enemy line. For a time, they made little headway.

To the right of the 24th Foot, Morgan's riflemen whittled away Balcarres' men. Fraser, concerned about this threat, rode over to steady the light infantry. A rifle bullet tore into his stomach, and he fell with a mortal wound.

Fraser's fall shocked the outnumbered British and Germans. Worried about the potential collapse of his line, Burgoyne ordered the men in the field to fall back to the redoubts.

As the redcoats rushed to their field fortifications, Poor's Brigade focused on a small outwork on a rise that shielded the Balcarres Redoubt from the north. The Americans overran the work, but took such heavy casualties that the spot became known afterwards as "Bloody Knoll."

Although other small outworks fell, the main redoubts with their artillery and thick walls held firm. Arnold and other officers pressed the attack against the Balcarres Redoubt, but the British held.

A short distance to the right, though, the isolated Breymann Redoubt was also a target of determined attack. The smaller work was held by Lt. Col. Heinrich von Breymann and 200 German troops. Arnold rode ahead of his men to urge them onward. The general was shot in his left leg, but his men swarmed over the walls and poured into the German-held redoubt.

Breymann was outraged at the failure of his men to stop Arnold's attack. Swinging his saber in a blind rage, he hacked down four of his men with his saber until a British soldier halted the rampage by shooting him dead.

The capture of the Breymann Redoubt threatened the entire British army. Burgoyne ordered the work retaken, but it proved impossible. Just as in the first clash of September 19, darkness brought a halt to the firing. The British suffered an additional 700 casualties. In contrast, the American lost just 150 men, most of who had fallen in the assault on the Balcarres Redoubt.

With the vital Breymann Redoubt lost, along with a substantial portion of his irreplaceable troops, Burgoyne decided to withdraw toward Ticonderoga. As details of soldiers kept the campfires blazing bright, the rest of the dispirited redcoats abandoned their works in the gloom of the night. They gathered near the Hudson.

Under sharp sniper and artillery fire, Burgoyne's troops spent October 8 huddled near the river, preparing their withdrawal. Fraser died of his wounds in the morning. Before dark, a chaplain conducted an Anglican burial service. In the distance, American gunners saw a small crowd gathering. Unaware of the crowd's purpose, Gates' guns opened fire and dropped cannon balls around the mourners. The incoming shot threw dirt on the chaplain and the funeral party, but did them no harm. After the burial, all through the night of October 8-9, the British marched out of their camps and headed north.

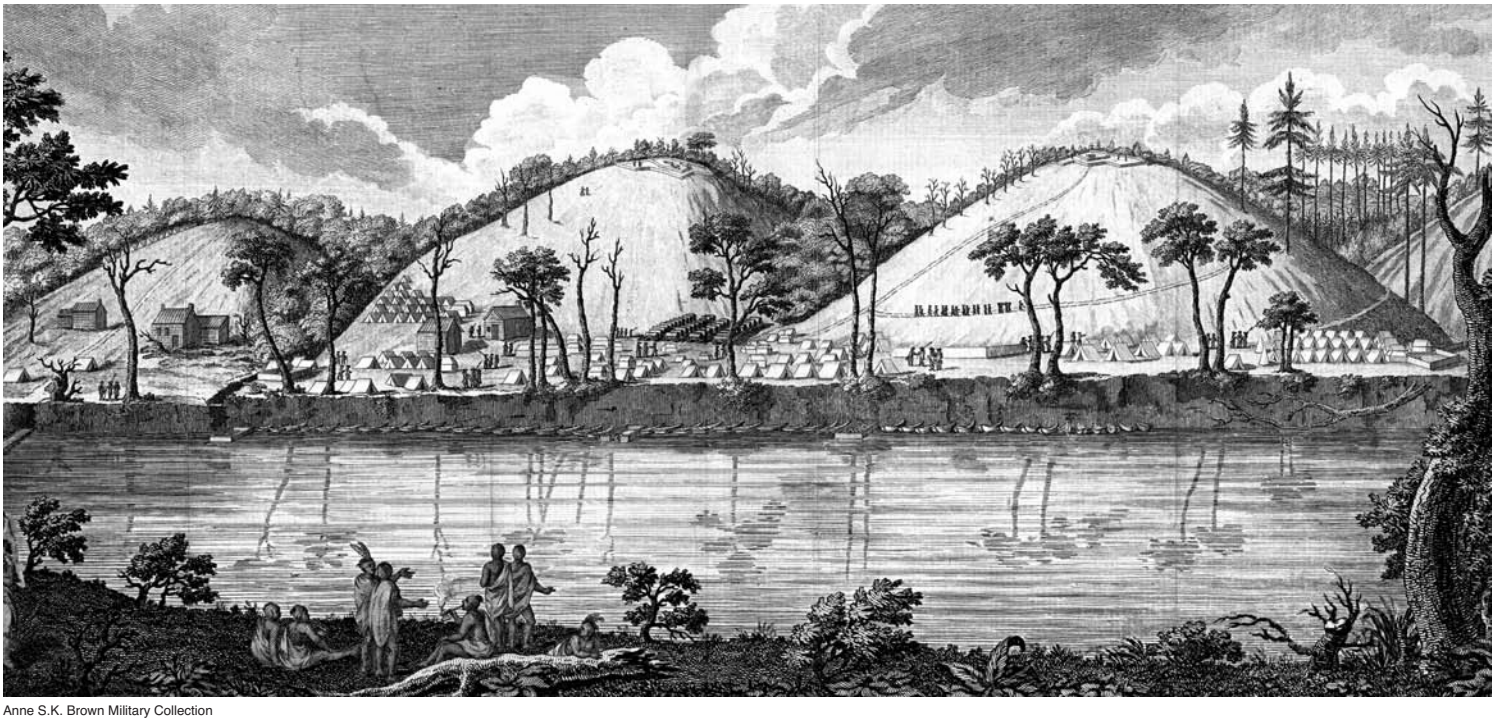
Burgoyne intended to cross the Hudson, but the morning of October 9 revealed that American troops were dug in to block the intended crossing. The British could do nothing but slog ahead on the west bank of the river. Rain poured down, and hooves, wagon wheels, and human feet alike sank deep into the muddy ground.

The march slowed to a crawl until the redcoats made camp near Saratoga, taking over the Schuyler farm. After the grim day of trudging through the rain and mud, the bone-weary soldiers "although wet with rain, were indisposed to cut wood for their fires, and rather desirous to lie down in their drenched clothes," recalled Sergeant Roger Lamb of the 9th Foot.

Lamb and a few of his fellow redcoats found shelter in the hen house of Schuyler's farm. But the little building caught fire and the tired soldiers "would have been consumed," said Lamb, were it not for some alert officers who spotted the blaze. Lamb and the others then "joined their companions, who were unhoused and exposed to the wet and night air," he said.

Elements of the Continental Army drew near, and the British dug new entrenchments rather than risk being attacked while they were on the move. Musket and cannon fire menaced the trapped redcoats, but the simmering attacks never grew into another battle. Outnumbered and surrounded, Burgoyne requested terms on October 13.

Gates demanded unconditional surrender, but wavered and after some negotiations accepted Burgoyne's offer. Surrender terms were quite



Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: Burgoyne surrenders to Gates as American officers, one of whom is Daniel Morgan in a white hunting shirt, look on in a period painting by John Trumbell. The painting depicts the Gates' refusal to accept Burgoyne's sword. OPPOSITE: A period engraving of the British camp at Saratoga shows Fraser's funeral procession marching up a hill in the distance. Also visible are fortifications crowning both hills with the British camp depicted below.

lenient, and included the provision that the British troops would return to England, but would not fight again in the war.

After that, Burgoyne learned that Clinton had captured the Continental outpost at West Point on the Hudson. Burgoyne's hopes soared once again, and he tried to stall the final arrangements in the hope of delaying affairs long enough that Clinton could somehow get him off the hook.

But help never arrived. Burgoyne eventually gave up his trapped army on October 16. As he signed the necessary papers at Saratoga, the two clashes fatal to the British cause became better known as the Battle of Saratoga, rather than the battles of Freeman's Farm or Bemis Heights. British and German troops marched to stack their muskets near the Hudson at Fort Hardy, another one of the many abandoned outposts of the French and Indian War. The disarmed redcoats marched back, passing between two long files of Continentals and militia.

The articles of the Convention of Saratoga spelling out the terms of surrender applied to the 3,400 British, 2,500 Hessians, and 600 women and children who were camp followers. Six of the captured officers also were members of the British Parliament. The Americans allowed the French-Canadians and the American Loyalists to depart, as well as sailors from the Royal Navy. With the prisoners came a windfall for the American forces. They took possession of 37 cannons and mortars, 4,647 muskets, 72,000 cartridges, and piles of other equipment. Burgoyne offered his sword to Gates, who refused to take it.

After the dignified surrender ceremony, events would not run as easily as the captives hoped. The long march under guard of the 5,900 troops of the Convention Army to Cambridge, Massachusetts was, in the words of Patriot Mercy Otis Warren, "solemn, sullen, and silent."

While the soldiers of the Convention Army waited for passage to England, angry delegates in the Continental Congress tried to cancel what ardent Patriots saw as an overly lenient agreement. At last, they declared that the prisoners would not be paroled until London ratified the terms.

The British Crown refused to enter into negotiations with the Patriots whom it continued to regard as rebels. Burgoyne and a few officers obtained parole and left for England, but most of the prisoners stayed under guard. Many hundreds of the soldiers escaped, and fewer than 1,000 were still held by early 1781. The last were released only in 1783, after the Treaty of Paris ended the hostilities.

Saratoga marked the high point of the checkered career of Benedict Arnold. Capable of inspired leadership, and plainly displaying great courage in both of the battles of Saratoga, his pride and ambition doomed his career. He resented the promotions of other officers, including some incompetent ones, ahead of him. Corrosive jealousy combined with the lure of money led him to collaborate with the British.

At first Arnold sold military intelligence, but he then developed a plot to hand over the stronghold of West Point, which the Patriots again held, to the British. The plot failed in 1780, but Arnold escaped to the British and received a brigadier general's commission. It was small recompense for turning himself from an American hero into the very archetype of a traitor.

The importance of the outcome of the clash at Saratoga to the Continental cause can hardly be overestimated. Long wishing to even their score with the British after the Seven Years' War, the French eyed the growing colonial rebellion with great interest. But as in the case of the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, which had threatened to topple the British throne, the French initially believed the Americans had little chance of success and that to join with them was too risky.

But at Saratoga the Americans had forced the surrender of a large, professional European army. Because of this, they suddenly looked much more impressive than they had at first glance. Paris believed it was safe to offer French aid, and their intervention gave new life to the Continental cause and led to the French-American victory over Great Britain. When Lord Charles Cornwallis ended his ill-fated campaign at Yorktown, Virginia, he signed the surrender papers for another British army on October 19, 1781, four years and two days after Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga. ■

The Marines sought to contain North Vietnamese infiltration south of the DMZ through Operation Prairie. The communists responded with a vicious assault on Con Thien on May 8, 1967.

By William E. Welsh

Courageous Stand at CON THIEN

As the sun rose on May 8, 1967, it illuminated the 525-foot-high hill known as Con Thien where the Marine Corps had established a firebase two miles south of the Demilitarized Zone in South Vietnam. Recognized as a critical defensive position in the First Indochina War, the French had built a fort atop the highest of the small mountain's three knolls. The Leathernecks stationed at Con Thien used the outpost both as an artillery firebase and an observation post.

Con Thien, which in Vietnamese means "small mountain of heavenly beings" was translated by the Americans into "Hill of Angels." The hill actually comprised three knolls in close proximity to each other. Two of the knolls were side by side and the third was situated south of the left hill.

The Americans, as the French did before them, found the hill to be a superb observation post offering a magnificent, panoramic view of the lush lowlands that were traditionally planted with coffee, pineapple, and bananas.

Standing on the red dirt of Con Thien's bulldozed plateau, a Marine could look north out over the sand-bagged bunkers, trenches, and barbed wire-laced perimeter, beyond the DMZ into North Vietnam; looking west, he could see the rolling hill country and mountains that led toward Laos; to the east he could see not only the Gio Linh outpost six miles away, but on a clear day even the U.S. Navy warships on the South China Sea.

The heavy fighting begun the previous year along the DMZ had driven out the Vietnamese peasants—the ground around Con Thien was a wasteland, pockmarked with thousands of craters from the shells and rockets fired daily by Communist forces at the imperturbable Marines, although the red soil still boasted dense vegetation in places.

Following the arrival of the first contingent of U.S. Marines at Da Nang Air Base on March 8, 1965, the Marines began carving out safe zones for their forces in I Corps, the northernmost of four tactical zones in South Vietnam established by the U.S. military joint-service command known as Military Assistance Command Vietnam.

Major General Lewis J. Fields' 1st Marine Division arrived in South Vietnam in early 1966 joining the 3rd Marine Division already in-country. As the war progressed, the 1st Marine Division in the southern part of I Corps fought a mostly counter-insurgency war against Viet Cong forces, while the 3rd Marine Division in northern I Corps engaged the communist Peoples' Army of Vietnam forces in

Marines maintain a M48A3 Patton tank parked in the rocky, red clay soil at Con Thien in a painting by Navy combat artist Verciell Tossey. The outpost was an anchor point in the defense of the northern border of South Vietnam.

continuous fighting similar to that of a conventional war. By the end of 1966, Maj. Gen. Lewis Walt's III Marine Amphibious Force would number 70,000 Marines.

Most of the population of South Vietnam lived in the lush coastal plain along the South China Sea where they grew rice in the fertile river valleys. During their first year in South Vietnam, Marine Corps forces commanded by Maj. Gen. Lewis Walt, who commanded both the 3rd Marine Division and the III Marine Amphibious Force, focused on pacifying the villages of I Corps' lowlands and cleansing them as much as possible of Viet Cong and military forces. Walt's 3rd Marine Division comprised the 3rd, 4th, and 9th Marine regiments.

When Walt received a promotion to lieutenant general in March 1966, he continued to command the III Marine Amphibious Force, but command of the 3rd Marine Division went to Maj. Gen. Wood Kyle. Walt continued to direct Marine strategy in I Corps in his role as III MAF commander and as the senior U.S. advisor to I Corps.

A heated policy dispute erupted in mid-1966 when General William Westmoreland, the commander of Saigon-based MACV, pressured the highest echelons of the Navy and Marine Corps to switch their focus from pacification to engagement of North Vietnamese forces infiltrating across the DMZ into Quang Tri Province, the northernmost of the five provinces in South Vietnam's I Corps.

Westmoreland's reason for wanting the Marines to aggressively defend the ground south of the DMZ was that he did not want to abandon large swaths of the South Vietnamese interior to the North Vietnamese. Moreover, he wanted to wipeout North Vietnam's People's Army of Vietnam forces with search and destroy missions.

Walt vehemently objected to a switch from pacification to the search-and-destroy strategy advocated by Westmoreland. He argued against having Marine units in static positions south of the DMZ because it ran contrary to mobile warfare doctrines.

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ABOVE: Marines assault entrenched North Vietnamese forces during Operation Hastings in July 1966. That year the Marines changed their focus from pacification of the populated coastal lowlands to countering enemy infiltration south of the DMZ. OPPOSITE: Marines work earnestly to construct bunkers at Con Thien to protect them from incoming North Vietnamese mortars, rockets, and heavy artillery.

Westmoreland prevailed in the clash with Walt over military strategy when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington pressured Admiral U.S. Grant Sharp, Walt's commanding officer, into ordering Walt to comply with Westmoreland.

McNamara signed off on Westmoreland's strategy to defend the DMZ, which called for the Marines to establish a forward supply base at Dong Ha and six fortified outposts south of the DMZ at Con Thien, Gio Linh, Cam Lo, Camp Carroll, the Rockpile, and Khe Sanh. Walt shifted the 3rd Marine Division's headquarters 50 miles north from Da Nang to Phu Bai so that it might better focus on defending the ground south of the DMZ.

McNamara had also developed a plan for installing a defensive barrier south of the DMZ to assist Marine Corps forces against North Vietnamese incursions into eastern Quang Tri Province. McNamara's "Strong Point Obstacle System" would consist of a belt of land cleared of vegetation that would be sown with mines and electronic warning devices. The first phase of the project involved the construction of the barrier between the forward outposts of Con Thien and Gio Linh.

Westmoreland had received reliable intelligence in April 1966 that elements of the 8,000-strong North Vietnamese 324B Division were operating south of the DMZ. He instructed Walt to begin conducting regular reconnaissance patrols to determine the location and extent of the infiltration. The patrols began on June 20.

Colonel Donald W. Sherman, the commander of the 4th Marine Regiment, tasked Major Dwain A. Colby with directing Task Unit Charlie, which consisted of two reconnaissance platoons, Company E from the 2nd Battalion of the 1st Marine Regiment, and an artillery battery. The task unit deployed to the large forward base at Dong Ha and the outpost at Cam Lo. Task Unit Charlie quickly confirmed the MACV intelligence that the 324B Division was operating south of the DMZ.

Of the 18 reconnaissance patrols it sent out in a two-week period in July to look for PAVN units, 14 had to be extracted early because of enemy contact. "No patrol was able to stay in the field for more than a few hours, many for only a few minutes," Colby said.

Having verified the presence of large enemy forces, the 3rd Marine Division kicked off a series of major offensive operations in the second half of 1966 against the 324B Division. The first of these was Operation Hastings that began on July 15 and lasted nearly three weeks. Six Marine and five ARVN infantry battalions engaged in a series of savage skirmishes with elements of the 324B Division, inflicting 700 casualties on the North Vietnamese.

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Three Marine Battalions remained in place after Hastings, and soon found themselves under fresh attack by the 324B Division. Because of this, the Marines launched Operation Prairie on August 3. Unlike Hastings, Prairie was designed to be a long-term, continuing operation. The first phase began on August 3, 1966, and the fourth and last phase ended on May 17, 1967.

The situation along the DMZ seemed to be rapidly intensifying—Westmoreland informed Walt and Kyle that U.S. intelligence indicated the PAVN 304th and 341st divisions had moved into supporting positions just north of the DMZ to assist the 324B Division. Marine F-4 Phantom and A-4 Skyhawk fighter-bombers flew sorties against suspected enemy positions from Da Nang Air Base, and Air Force B-52s Stratofortresses based in Thailand and Guam conducted Arc Light missions along the DMZ.

Marine reconnaissance efforts called for using a UH-1E Huey helicopter to insert four- or five-man reconnaissance teams along a suspected route by which the enemy advanced south from the DMZ into northern Quang Tri Province. If the team ran into trouble, Marine infantry battalions at Cam Lo and Dong Ha stood poised to respond immediately. Just like the 1st Cavalry Division, the Marines conducted heliborne assaults to engage the North Vietnamese forces before they could escape.

The fighting along the DMZ between the well-trained and highly disciplined Marines and the dedicated and determined North Vietnamese infantry throughout the second half of 1966 consisted of small unit engagements. In every one of these instances, the Leathernecks hurled back the communist troops. The North Vietnamese, though, retreated north only to replace their losses, regroup, and advanced again using the terrain to their advantage. Marine units sweeping the area south of the DMZ found sprawling underground complexes replete with bunkers, medical stations, and tactical command centers.

General Vo Nguyen Giap, the North Vietnamese minister of defense and commander-in-chief of its military forces, ordered the generals commanding the PAVN divisions to put heavy pressure on Marine Corps outposts that stretched from Khe Sanh in the highlands to the area known as Leatherneck Square, a quadrilateral connecting Con Thien, Gio Linh, Cam Lo, and Dong Ha in the south. Regarding the outpost at Con Thien, Giap told his generals to neutralize the ARVN and U.S. Special Forces garrisoning it.

Giap viewed the buildup of U.S. Marine Corps forces as a promising development. As part of his grand strategy, he was keen to draw the Americans away from the heavily populated coastal areas of South Vietnam so that he could engage them in a grinding war that would produce high casualties and fuel the anti-war sentiment in the United States. The Marines had to defend more than 230 square miles of hills, forested jungle, and verdant lowlands just below the DMZ. They garrisoned scattered outposts that were vulnerable to both constant guerilla attacks and occasional main force assaults.

Most of the fighting took place north of Route 9, which ran west for from Dong Ha on the coast to Khe Sanh near the Laotian border. Westmoreland sent the 3rd Marine Division a battalion (12 guns) of the U.S. Army's M107 self-propelled 175mm guns to augment the Marines' organic 155mm and 105mm howitzers. The monster howitzers could hurl a 47-pound shell up to 20 miles and pummel North Vietnamese forces moving through the DMZ. Giap saw the 175mm guns as a particular threat to his forces and ordered the generals of the divisions deployed along the DMZ to take out the guns by any means necessary.

The Marines made good use of their F-4 Phantom and A4-4 Skyhawk fighter-bombers, which flew regular missions against North Vietnamese ground forces. In addition, the Navy sent carrier-based aircraft to pound enemy positions, as well. Navy cruisers and destroyers could also fire on targets near the coast.

The North Vietnamese had their own impressive arsenal of artillery and rocket batteries that included Soviet-designed 85mm, 100mm, 122mm, and 130mm guns, 120mm mortars, and 122mm Katyusha rockets. They had acquired the large Soviet artillery and rockets by early 1966 and Chinese Communist 107mm and 140mm rocket systems by late 1966. The rocket systems,

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Map © 2022 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

TOP: An F-4 Phantom takes off on a ground support mission in May 1967. When Marine reconnaissance patrols made contact with the enemy south of the DMZ, they relied heavily on organic tactical air support. BOTTOM: Hanoi deployed three army divisions totaling 24,000 troops along the DMZ in spring 1967 to engage the 3rd Marine Division in Quang Tri Province. OPPOSITE: Elements of the 4th Marine Regiment arrive in Con Thien in April 1967 to furnish security for Marine engineers and Navy Seabees working on Defense Secretary McNamara's 14-mile long defensive barrier between Con Thien and Gio Linh.

which were lighter and more mobile than the heavy artillery, proved more effective for striking large targets than artillery.

Walt and his Marine Corps generals had 35,000 troops defending the ground south of the 47-mile-long DMZ by late spring 1967. The North Vietnamese Army's three divisions on the DMZ totaled at least 24,000 troops. The composition of the garrison forces at Con Thien changed substantially at that time as work began on McNamara's Strong Point Obstacle System. Up to that point, the garrison at Con Thien had consisted of ARVN troops and a handful of U.S. Army Special Forces commanding a group of Civilian Irregular Defense Force troops.

The CIDG troops were Nung tribesmen. The ARVN and Nung distrusted each other, and therefore did not fight effectively together. The composition of the garrison began to change when Company C of the 11th Engineer Battalion arrived in April to begin construction of McNamara's defensive barrier. They set to work using bulldozers to clear a 14-mile strip that was 218 yards wide. Once they had cleared the vegetation, work would begin on sowing the cleared ground with mines and installing electronic equipment to detect the movement of enemy troops through the zone.

The Marines—from the most senior general down to the lowest rank grunt—scoffed at the efficacy of such a zone. Even worse, the barrier was ineffective at stopping the North Vietnamese, who did not allow it to slow their infiltration. "It was nothing to us," Le Van Cho, a North Vietnamese soldier, said in a post-war interview. "Every night we would go across it."

The 3rd Marine Division received its third commander in three years when Maj. Gen. Bruno Hochmuth replaced Kyle on March 18, 1967. Hochmuth would meet a tragic end eight months later when a UH-1E transporting him on an inspection tour of outposts exploded in mid-air and crashed upside down in a rice paddy killing all six onboard.

The Marine engineers cleared the vegetation in the trace between Con Thien and Gio Linh in just two weeks in April, 1967, despite daily shelling from North Vietnamese artillery and mortars. After finishing that job on May 1, the engineers began clearing a 550-yard-wide strip around the Con Thien outpost. They intended to replace the outposts' makeshift and haphazard perimeter defenses, in which the standard barbed wire defenses were augmented by hand-grenade booby traps and trip wires, with a more sophisticated system consisting of concertina wire, antitank mines, and anti-personnel explosive devices. In addition, the engineers planned to construct new bunkers that could withstand direct hits by North Vietnamese heavy artillery.

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North Vietnamese soldiers fought with weapons supplied by communist China and Russia. They went into battle armed with the Soviet 7.62mm AK-47 assault rifle. For suppressive fire, infantry units used the Soviet-designed 7.62mm RPD light machine gun, the Soviet wheel-mounted DShK 12.7mm heavy machine gun, and the Chinese Type 56 light machine gun.

To take on American tanks, halftracks, and other vehicles, they used the shoulder-fired RPG-2 40mm anti-tank grenade launcher and the RPG-7 rocket-propelled grenade launcher that fired a 40mm high-explosive, anti-tank missile that could penetrate nine inches of armor.

The Marines had a healthy respect for the North Vietnamese soldiers with which they went toe-to-toe south of the DMZ. "The NVA had great fire discipline and good marksmanship skills," Westmoreland wrote in his memoirs. "They built excellent fortifications and incredibly impressive trenches and emplacements."

The Marines revived their counteroffensives against the North Vietnamese with the six-week-long Prairie II that kicked off on February 1, the four-week-long Prairie III that began on March 19, and the three-week-long Prairie IV began on April 20. The operations began with the usual patrols and sweeps designed to find and destroy the North Vietnamese operating south of the DMZ.

Elements of Lieutenant Colonel Theodore J. Willis' 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, arrived in early April to furnish security for the engineers building the trace between Con Thien and Gio Linh. Elements of the Marine 3rd Tank Battalion and a platoon of U.S. Army M-42 Dusters also arrived to furnish crucial firepower in case of a North Vietnamese ground attack. While the engineers toiled on their construction project, enemy snipers fired on them and mortar crews lobbed rounds. The engineers had completed half their work when Operation Prairie III ended on April 19 with the North Vietnamese suffering 252 killed and the Marines losing 56. Operation Prairie IV began the following day.

The North Vietnamese had shown in previous operations that they could maneuver largely undetected around Con Thien. But they suffered from flawed intelligence regarding ARVN and Marine positions.

Unknown to the North Vietnamese, two reinforced battalions, companies A and D, of Lt. Col. Theodore J . Willis' 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, had replaced the ARVN troops stationed at Con Thien in April 1967 when construction began on the trace between Con Thien and Gio Linh. A few U.S. Special Forces remained on the outpost to command the Nung mercenaries, who also remained stationed at the outpost. The Nung irregulars lacked the training to stand up in battle to the North Vietnamese, though. In addition, three M48A3 Patton tanks of Alpha Company, 3rd Tank Battalion, were stationed at intervals along the north side of Con Thien's perimeter.

The senior command of two battalions of North Vietnamese massing to the north of Con Thien in late April mistakenly assumed that only ARVN and Green Beret-led Nungs defended the outpost.

Since the engineers were still hard at work during the daytime clearing trees and brush from a 550-yard-wide strip the around the perimeter at Con Thien, North Vietnamese snipers and mortar teams lurked nearby to harrass them. What is more, occasionally a North Vietnamese artillery shell or rocket exploded in their midst. Anyone of those threats could produce one or more casualties and send a corpsmen and litter bearerz s to whisk the injured grunts to the battalion aid station inside the perimeter. But as everyone headed for their respective bunkers the evening of May 8 they could breathe a collective sigh of relief for on the whole the night was a lot safer than the day at Con Thien.

The hill's two knolls in the northern half of the outpost were situated side by side. The western one was observation post #1 and the eastern one was observation post #2. Observation post #3 was situated directly behind observation post #1 on the third knoll.

Company D defended the northern half of the perimeter, Company A defended most of the southern half, and the Green Berets and Nungs defended the southeastern corner of the outpost. Although the Green Beret and Nungs should have been tied tightly into the right flank of Company D and the left flank of Company A, the Marines had cordoned them off with concertina wire because they did not trust the Nungs.

After sunset, a battalion of North Vietnamese moved into position for an assault from the northeast to strike Company D's section of the Con Thien perimeter, and another battalion took up positions to the southeast opposite where the Green Beret and Nungs were positioned on the perimeter. The forces consisted of the 4th and 6th battalions of the 812th North Vietnamese Regiment of the 324B division.

The standard NVA battalion had a headquarters platoon of approximately 20 men and three

60-man companies. Two groups of sapper penetration teams would lead the attack and establish gaps in the perimeter not only for sapper assault troops, but also for the North Vietnamese main force. The sappers entrusted with penetration of the perimeter carried Bangalore torpedoes, wire cutters, and AK-47s. The sapper assault teams were armed with AK-47s, RPG-2's firing antitank grenades, and RPG-7s firing shaped charges.

For the next few hours, North Vietnamese officers reviewed the plan of attack with their troops for one last time. Although sapper commandos routinely carried satchel charges to take out U.S. heavy weapons positions, many of the follow-on troops also carried satchel charges with instructions to destroy the Marine engineers' construction equipment and to help them destroy bunkers both in the heart of the compound and along the trench line.

The North Vietnamese timed their attack on the outpost at Con Thien to coincide with the 13th anniversary of the French surrender at Dien Bien Phu. At 2:55 a.m. a North Vietnamese soldier fired a green flare that lit the sky on the southeast side of the Con Thien perimeter signaling the commencement of a furious 300-round bombardment by mortars and artillery that lasted for 15 minutes. The artillery rounds came screeching in with a roar. The shells slammed into the hilltops, slopes, and level ground of the outpost. The Marines learned after the assault by interrogating captured North Vietnamese prisoners that the NVA mortar teams had painstakingly registered their mortars on positions inside Con Thien for many weeks. To pin down U.S. relief forces at nearby outposts, the NVA simultaneously shelled Gio Linh, Camp Carroll, and Dong Ha.

While the rockets and shells slammed into the outpost, highly trained NVA sapper commandos rushed forward with bamboo Bangalore torpedoes to blow gaps in the perimeter defenses. They succeeded in some sections of the northern perimeter, marking the gaps they created in the northern perimeter defenses where Company D was situated with small, pennant-shaped red flags for the troops following them. Next came NVA sappers with satchel charges. Meanwhile, the NVA outside of the perimeter laid down a strong covering fire to assist the sappers.

The main force of the North Vietnamese rose up and raced towards the outpost en masse at 4 a.m. Armed with AK-47s, RPGs, and several flamethrowers, the communist soldiers poured through the gaps on the north side of the outpost and the southeast side. Although the main attack was directed at Captain John F. Juul's Company D on the northern section of the perimeter, another attack targeted the section of the perimeter defended by the Nung irregulars.

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TOP: The crew of a Marine 105mm howitzer shells suspected enemy positions near Con Thien in 1967. To boost Marine firepower, the U.S. Army loaned some of its self-propelled 175mm guns that had a range of 20 miles. BOTTOM: Well-trained North Vietnamese forces preferred to launch assaults on U.S. Marine positions at night. OPPOSITE: As fighting south of the DMZ reached a fever pitch in 1968 the Marines boosted their firepower by deploying more tank battalions in forward positions. The M48A3's powerful 90mm gun proved highly effective in destroying enemy bunkers.

Those bearing the satchel charges hurled them at the trench-line bunkers. They blew up a number of these bunkers, and the explosion left the defensive positions a jumble of collapsed beams and torn sandbags. They also sought to take out the bulldozers, 81 mm mortar positions, and the command bunkers.

North Vietnamese sappers and soldiers armed

National Archives

with satchel charges crept in low crouches and crawling forward on their stomachs to hurl one-quarter-pound blocks of TNT into the trenches where the Marines were hunkered down. These TNT explosions equaled mortar blasts and produced many of the casualties that the Americans suffered in the night attack. Meanwhile, the three flamethrower teams, which had come through the gaps in the wire with the main assault force, sprayed fire into several of the bunkers—a number of Marines huddled inside were suffocated and burned to death by the flaming fuel.

Captain Juul, the commander of Company D, went down early in the assault with bullet wounds to both legs. He continued firing his .45 caliber pistol at the enemy and speaking into his radio handset. "Stay put in your trenches," shouted Sergeant Mailon Hall of Company D to the nearby Marines. He did not want the Marines becoming mixed up with the enemy and killed by friendly fire. "We are going to kill anything that moves." Despite being badly wounded, Juul requested reports on the extent of enemy penetration from elements of his company. After making an assessment of the situation, Juul had two Marines hold him in a standing position while he skillfully coordinated a counterattack on the North Vietnamese force. He later received the Silver Star for his valor.

Marines wielding faulty M-16s had to discard many of their weapons because they jammed. They did not have time, in the heat of battle when every second counted, to assemble their cleaning rods in order to clear a jammed shell casing out of their rifles. The engineers, who were armed with reliable M-14s that did not jam, charged over to Company D and helped plug the gaps in the north side of the perimeter. The engineers poured a steady fire into the attacking NVA and played a significant role in helping slow the enemy's advance.

The defenses of the CIDG section on the southeastern corner of the perimeter collapsed completely. NVA forces poured into the CIDG area. Green Beret Captain Craig Chamberlain and two Green Beret sergeants of Detachment A-110, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, who were in a separate command bunker in the Nung section of the outpost, fought off repeated assaults. An NVA flamethrower operator stuck the nozzle of his weapon spraying jellied liquid in one of the bunker's aperture, but the Green Beret soldiers survived the ordeal because the fuel did not fully ignite inside the bunker. At that point, the three Green Beret withdrew to a Navy Seabee position where they continued engaging the enemy.

When the assault began, the NVA fired a rocket-propelled grenade at the center tank that penetrated the turret and exploded severely injuring the crew inside. Despite his wounds, Sergeant David Danner, the tank platoon's mechanic who was in the gunner's seat, helped the other members of his tank crew out of the tank and to the medical bunker. Danner had fragment wounds to his back and arms and was badly burned as well.

Corporal Charles D. Thatcher, the commander of the right tank on the northeastern side of the perimeter, was asleep under his tank in order to protect himself from possible random enemy artillery shelling that occasionally occurred at night. In the first few minutes of the attack, he stayed in his position to avoid being shot by the sappers.

But Lance Corporal David Gehrman, who was a member of Thatcher's crew, climbed into the tank and opened fire with its .30 caliber machine gun. An NVA high-explosive, anti-tank round penetrated the turret filling it with smoke. Gehrman yelled for the men to evacuate the tank. The other two crew members in the tank, though, had received wounds that would prove fatal. A second blast struck the tank sending Gehrman flying through the air. Gehrman struck the ground, and when he rose up, an enemy soldier fired at him striking his leg. While dragging himself to a trench, Gehrman was shot in the other leg. Two Marines saved his life by dragging him into their bunker.

Thatcher, who had been beneath the tank, was wounded in the neck and back by shrapnel from the rocket-propelled explosives that struck the tank. Despite his wounds, he climbed into the tank and fired the remaining .30 caliber ammunition. Upon exiting the smoldering wreck of the tank, he snatched up a Marine rifle from the ground and killed an enemy RPG team preparing to fire on the left tank in the northwestern corner of the perimeter.

Meanwhile, Sergeant Danner returned to the center tank, grabbed the .30 caliber machine gun and ammunition boxes. He set up the machine gun on open ground and began spraying the attacking North Vietnamese with it in an attempt to prevent them from reaching the main command bunker. Both Thatcher and Danner later received the Navy Cross acknowledging their valor.

Gunnery Sergeant Barnett Person, the commander of the left tank in the northwestern section of the perimeter, gathered his crew, started up his tank, battened down the hatches, and began rumbling into action against the NVA inside the perimeter before the North Vietnamese could target his tank. The 52-ton steel monster rumbled around the perimeter firing at the North Vietnamese with its 90mm cannon, as well as its coaxially mounted .30 caliber machine gun. The situation called for anti-personnel rounds, rather than high-explosive rounds, and Person directed his loader to use canister and beehive rounds. The latter contained scores of deadly metal darts known as flechettes.

North Vietnamese soldiers tried several times to knock out Person's tank by climbing atop it in order to hurl a grenade or satchel charge into the turret through the commander's copula, but they were unsuccessful given that Person had secured the hatch. Person's tank enabled the Marines of Delta Company to halt further penetration of their section of the perimeter.

The men of Alpha Company were crouching in their fighting holes and trenches when the two NVA battalions attacked. The commander of Alpha Company dispatched his 1st platoon to reinforce the hard-pressed Marines of Delta Company, while keeping his 2nd and 3rd platoons manning the southern perimeter. The 1st Platoon also was tasked with helping protect an ammunition resupply convoy coming from a nearby base.

The Marines of Delta Company who survived the initial attack fought back fiercely against the North Vietnamese troops inside the wire. With reinforcements from Company A, the engineers, and the tank crewmen, they were holding their own, but many of their M-16s had also jammed and been discarded, and they, too, were running low on ammunition.

An hour after the main force attacked, the North Vietnamese inside the perimeter had passed between observation points one and two, which were on the northwestern and northeastern knolls, respectively, and were heading towards a landing strip on the south side of the outpost and the medical aid station. The 1st platoon of Company A ran headlong into the enemy troops and engaged them. At that time the Marines south of Observation Point #2 manning the 81mm mortars ran out of illumination rounds, but fortunately a flare plane arrived on station with enough flares to light up the outpost until daylight.

An ammunition resupply convoy comprising an Army M42 Duster, two tracked howitzers (known as Landing Vehicle Tracked Howitzer, or LVTH), and two ¼-ton utility trucks (like a jeep) dispatched from a nearby location at the start of the battle was approaching Con Thien when an NVA soldier fired an anti-tank rocket that set the Duster afire. A North Vietnamese sapper then hurled a satchel charge at the second vehicle in line, which exploded under it setting it afire, as well. The crew of the LVTH survived the explosion and jumped out of their vehicle. The second LVTH became entangled in concertina wire. The trucks, though, with covering fire from the platoon from Alpha Company, succeeded in getting inside the perimeter.

Delta Company completely sealed off the northern perimeter just before daylight. The fight had lasted two hours, from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. At daylight, the main force of the NVA outside the perimeter withdrew. For the next several hours the Marines mopped up inside the perimeter. They had succeeded in killing or capturing those inside the perimeter by 9 a.m.

Because the Marine engineers and Seabees had completed clearing brush around Con Thien's perimeter, the Marines were able to deny close cover to the attacking communist force and easily target them in the open as they advanced and retreated. The three M48 Patton tanks, as well as the two LVTHs, both fired beehive anti-person-

North Vietnamese sappers targeted U.S. combat outposts' trench and command bunkers

North Vietnamese sappers perfected the art of sneaking into heavily defended U.S. fixed installations in South Vietnam during the eight-year period from 1965 when the first U.S. troops arrived South Vietnam to 1973 when U.S. ground support ended.

The term sapper originated from the French word "sappe" and became associated with the concept of an attacking army by digging covered trenches so that it could steadily advance its guns and infantry toward the walls of a fort. Sappe signifies not only the breach that is made, but also the act of creating the breach. Trenches were called "saps" and soldiers who dug tunnels under the walls in order to collapse them were called "sappers."

North Vietnamese sapper units contained elite soldiers who had trained for up to a year to perfect the skills necessary to breach and exploit enemy defenses in night assaults. The individual soldiers in a North Vietnamese sapper assault team had different responsibilities. Those who spearheaded the night attacks perfected the art of breaching concertina wire and mine obstacles arrayed around the perimeter of a base.

Such activity required constant practice, strong determination, and nerves of steel. Sappers used soot camouflage to blend into the terrain at night so that the enemy would have great difficulty spotting them as they went about their work. They either wore khaki shorts or went naked to avoid getting their clothing caught on the concertina wire, and also to have as much skin as possible exposed in order to feel wire, booby traps, and mines.

North Vietnamese sappers fought in independent units. A typical sapper raiding party for a major operation had two assault teams, as well as security, fire support, and reserve elements. Each of the two assault teams comprised three or four cells for a total of about 30 men backed by 45 men in the three support elements.

Each assault team contained a four-man penetration cell that was armed with AK-47s, Bangalore torpedoes, and wire cutters. Five-man assault cells followed. A typical assault cell contained one soldier with an RPG-2 firing anti-tank grenades, one armed with an RPG-7 firing shaped charges, and two armed with AK-47s. The soldiers in the assault teams were well-trained at demolitions and carried satchel charges made of dynamite and other explosives and in some cases used C-S gas.

Sapper teams often attacked an objective from different directions under cover of a mortar attack carried out by the fire support element. Once the sappers using wire cutters and Bangalore torpedoes had opened gaps in the perimeter by cutting wire and disarming mines, the assault troops poured into the outpost or base. They split up to take out key targets, such as trench bunkers, heavy weapons positions, and command bunkers. The sapper phase of the attack typically lasted 30 minutes.

Hanoi established a Sapper Headquarters and Department in May 1967 that was part of the People's Army of Vietnam Joint General Staff. General Vo Nguyen Giap, the North Vietnamese minister of defense and commander-in-chief of its military forces, had great confidence in the sapper branch of his military forces. "Regardless of how strong the U.S. or puppet troops defended, they can easily be destroyed by our crack and special troops with their special combat tactic."

—William E. Welsh

National Archives

Marines search an abandoned enemy bunker shortly after the nighttime assault on Con Thien. Immediately after the attack, the Marines discovered a North Vietnamese army underground complex 2,000 yards north of Con Thien that included a regimental command post.

nel rounds. The M48 Patton tanks used APERS-T beehive rounds for their 90mm main gun.

The Marines lost 44 killed and 110 wounded for a total of 154 casualties. The NVA lost 197 killed and eight captured for a total of 205 casualties. The retreating NVA force took with it an unknown number of wounded communist soldiers. A conservative estimate is that they likely carried off as many as 200 wounded. In addition, another 200 North Vietnamese were probably killed by U.S. airstrikes and artillery fire as they retreated north.

The Marines recovered 72 abandoned weapons, including 19 RPGs, three light machine guns, and three flamethrowers. The firefight marked the first time that the NVA had used flamethrowers against the Marines.

During and after the assault, NVA casualty teams transported the wounded to an underground field hospital 2,000 yards north of Con Thien. An NVA command post also was located underground in the same general area.

The Marines learned afterwards that the NVA had mistakenly believed that ARVN and CIDG troops defended Con Thien. They did not know that Marines had arrived to defend the outpost. Moreover, the NVA showed an inability to modify their tactical plans in the middle of a firefight. They had attacked the strongest part of the perimeter, and they had continued to press their attack on that sector even when it became apparent they were suffering heavier resistance than they had expected.

In late May 1967 the Marines and ARVN forces undertook a series of coordinated joint operation into the southern half of the DMZ to clear out North Vietnamese staging areas for attacks against Leatherneck Square, but this proved to be only a fleeting reprieve.

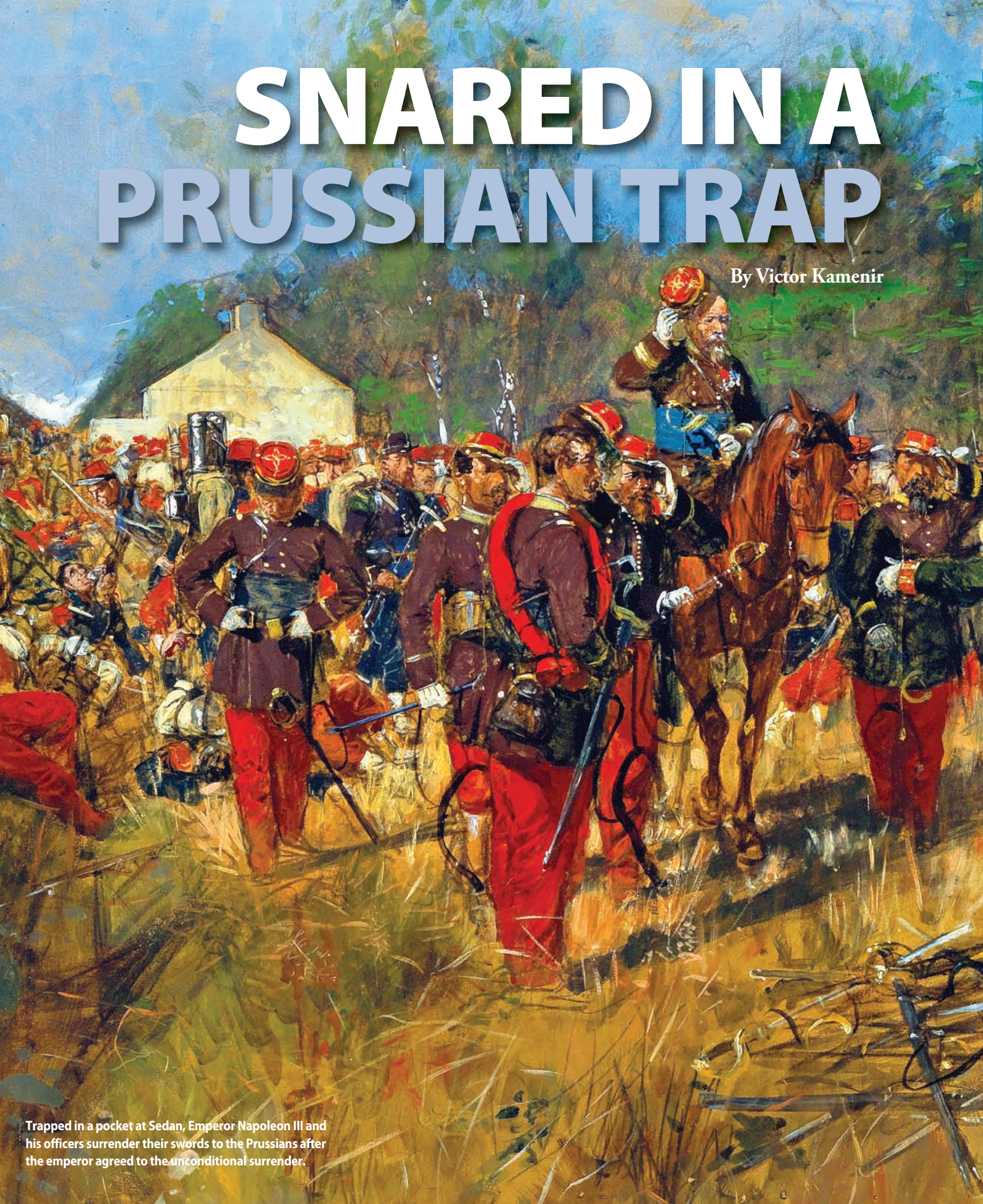
The North Vietnamese tested the Marine defenses at Con Thien again two months later. After the North Vietnamese 325C Division lost a struggle for the strategic hills north of Khe Sanh, the North Vietnamese leadership decided to reinvade eastern Quang Tri Province. For a two-week period in the first half of July, the North Vietnamese again launched attacks in eastern Quang Tri Province. The Marines defending Con Thien suffered heavy losses, but hurled back the communists with a combination of air and artillery strikes. The Marines then launched another counterattack. This one, known as Operation Buffalo, inflicted 1,290 killed in action on the North Vietnamese 90th Regiment at the cost of 160 Marine lives.

The fighting around Con Thien resumed anew on September 11. In an attempt to conquer Quang Tri Province, the North Vietnamese launched their heaviest bombardments of Con Thien in the war. For the next seven weeks, the fighting see-sawed back and forth, but the North Vietnamese broke off their attacks at the end of October having lost another 2,000 soldiers.

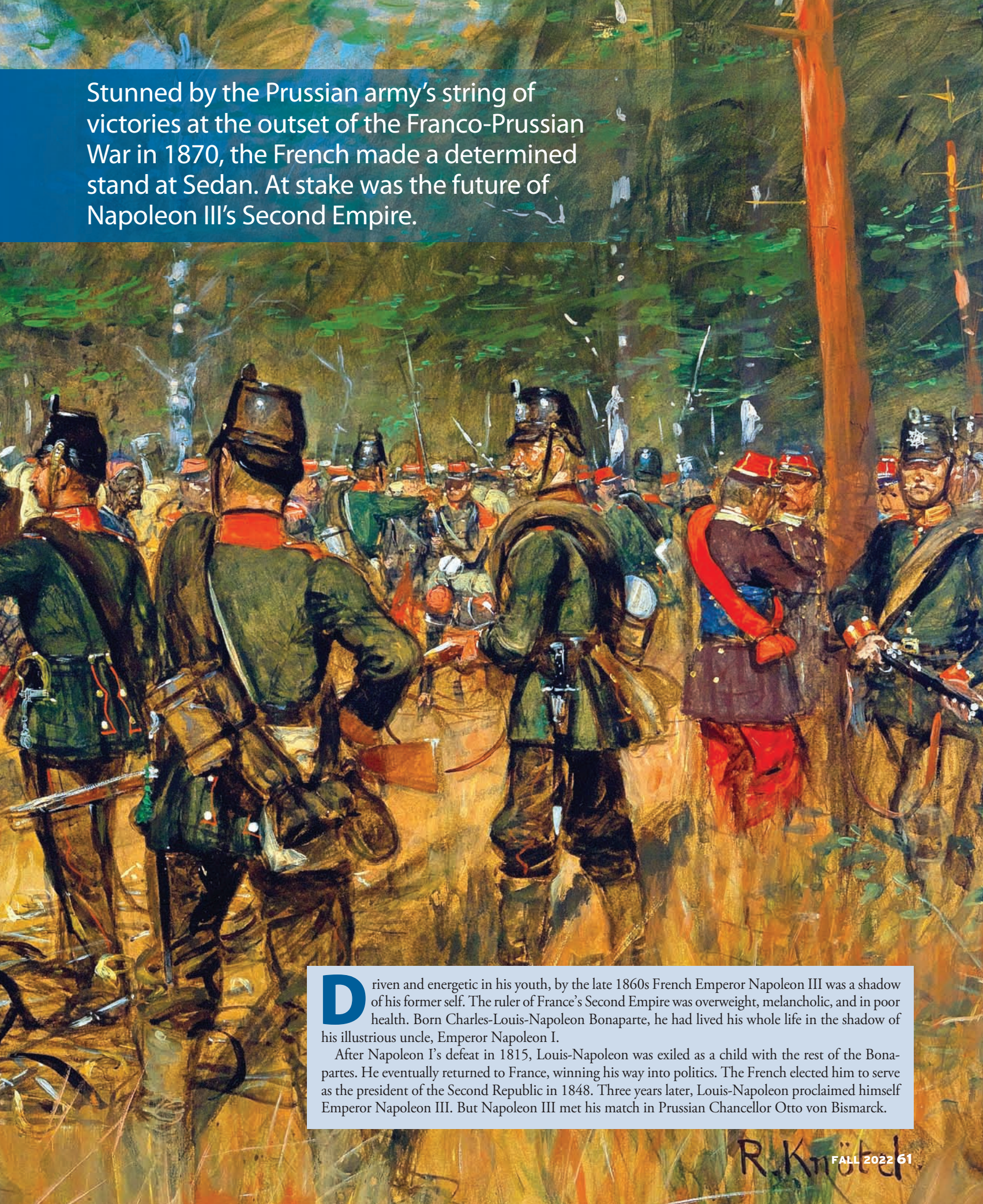
Although the North Vietnamese Army had suffered heavy losses in the fighting around Con Thien, Giap had succeeded in drawing the Marine Corps units away from the population centers on the coast in preparation for the coordinated series of offensives throughout South Vietnam that would be known as the Tet Offensive of 1968. Giap's plan, which would work, was to show that despite a huge military commitment to South Vietnam, the U.S. military was not winning the war in South Vietnam. Although the U.S.-ARVN forces would win the tactical battle, Giap would win the all-important propaganda war that pushed the Americans towards a gradual withdrawal during the Nixon administration. ■

SNARED IN A PRUSSIAN TRAP

By Victor Kamenir



Trapped in a pocket at Sedan, Emperor Napoleon III and his officers surrender their swords to the Prussians after the emperor agreed to the unconditional surrender.



Stunned by the Prussian army's string of victories at the outset of the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, the French made a determined stand at Sedan. At stake was the future of Napoleon III's Second Empire.

Driven and energetic in his youth, by the late 1860s French Emperor Napoleon III was a shadow of his former self. The ruler of France's Second Empire was overweight, melancholic, and in poor health. Born Charles-Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, he had lived his whole life in the shadow of his illustrious uncle, Emperor Napoleon I.

After Napoleon I's defeat in 1815, Louis-Napoleon was exiled as a child with the rest of the Bonapartes. He eventually returned to France, winning his way into politics. The French elected him to serve as the president of the Second Republic in 1848. Three years later, Louis-Napoleon proclaimed himself Emperor Napoleon III. But Napoleon III met his match in Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck.

Prussian Guard Dragoons charge the French in the engagement at Mars-la-Tour. The French failed to realize they outnumbered the Prussians four to one.

Prussia's defeat of Denmark in the Second Schleswig War of 1864 resulted in Prussia's annexation of the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Afterwards, Bismarck secured an alliance with Italy in order to wage a two-front war against Austria. When Austria declared war on Prussia in June 1866, the Prussians invaded Austria and smashed the poorly led Austrian army at Konnigratz on July 3. Austrian emperor Franz Joseph I sued for peace three weeks later.

Following the victory over Austria, Bismarck drove the unification of German states with an iron hand. He stitched together the smaller German states of northern Germany into the North German Confederation in July 1867, and also exerted his influence over the substantially larger states of southern Germany, including Bavaria, Baden, Saxony, and Wurttemberg. Thus, the previously disparate German states came under the guidance and protection of Prussia. Bismarck's efforts laid the ground work for eventual German unification.

Bismarck's drive for German unification was at odds with Napoleon III's quest to limit Prussian expansion. Bismarck intended to furnish Emperor Napoleon III with a reason to declare war on Germany. It was all part of a well-choreographed scheme by Bismarck to defeat France and complete the unification of Germany.

After the Spanish Queen Isabella II was deposed in 1868, the new Spanish government began the search for a suitable monarch. Both France and Prussia advocated for their respective candidates for the Spanish throne. Spain offered the throne to German Prince Leopold von Hohenzollern, a cousin of Prussian King Wilhelm I in June 1870. Prompted by Bismarck, the prince reluctantly accepted the offer.

Napoleon III found the situation entirely unacceptable for it would mean that France was bordered on all sides by Prussian allies. Bringing all of his political clout to bear, Napoleon III pressured Leopold, who withdrew his candidacy on July 12. Moreover, the French emperor demanded that Prussian King Wilhelm I also acknowledge in writing Prussia assurances not to cause future affront to France.

In what became known as the "Ems Dispatch," Bismarck insultingly gave a negative reply designed to infuriate the French people. The actual dispatch was a Prussian internal memorandum reporting the demands made by the French ambassador. Bismarck released a statement to the press that stirred up emotions in both France and Germany. Bismarck made it seem as if the French government had insulted the Prussians. The French government, angered by the Prussians, declared war on Prussia on July 19, 1870, despite Napoleon III's misgivings on the matter.

The French were confident of victory. "So ready are we, that if the war lasts two years, not a gaiter button would be found wanting," wrote French Marshal Edmond Leboeuf, who served as France's minster of war from August 21, 1869, to July 19, 1870. Despite some improvements that Napoleon III had instituted after the army's poor showing in both the Crimean War of 1853-1856 and the Italian War of 1859, the French army was in poor shape. Specifically, its logistics, administration, and training all were in shambles. France's standing army of 600,000 soldiers was backed up by an additional 400,000 poorly trained reservists. The core of the reserve was long-serving veterans who were well past their prime.

The French armed their soldiers with the superb Chassepot needle gun, which was superior to the Prussian Dreyse needle gun in range, accuracy, and stopping power. The French army's La Hitte muzzle-loading cannons made of bronze, however, were substantially inferior to the Prussian army's Krupp breech-loading guns made of steel. The Prussian Krupp guns outshone the French guns in terms of accuracy, range, and rate of fire. Even though its field artillery was inferior, the French army possessed 25-barreled Mitrailleuse volley guns, which could easily shatter an enemy infantry charge.

With the exception of the French Guards, the French army did not have a permanent corps and division structure and their formation immediately before the war was to have a negative effect on army cohesion. Furthermore, the French army lacked detailed war plans, which its staff officers had to create from scratch once war was declared.

In contrast, Prussia was ready for war. Under the leadership of Generalfeldmarschall Helmuth von Moltke, the excellent Prussian General Staff had been working on detailed plans for war with France since 1866. Reforms begun in 1858 had

continued under Prussian Minister of War Albrecht von Roon. These reforms transformed the Prussian army into a well-oiled war machine that performed impressively in the conflicts with Denmark and Austria.

The Prussians also excelled in training and martial discipline. The Prussian army conducted regular training by which it instilled discipline in its officers and soldiers. Under compulsory military service, each 20-year-old male served three years on active duty, then four years in the reserves, and lastly five years in the Landwehr militia. Territorial expansion further increased the army and military reforms were extended to the armies of the North German Confederation as well. The Prussian-led confederation could field 1.2 million men.

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TOP: Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke directed the swift advance of the Prussians through northeastern France. The Prussians overtook the retreating French at Beaumont, forcing them to withdraw to Sedan. BOTTOM: A French artillery crew poses with its gun at Sedan. The frontier fortress was sorely outdated by the time of the battle and offered no real protection from Prussian long-range guns.

The Franco-Prussian War began on July 19, 1870. From the outset, the war went badly for France. In the so-called frontier battles, the Prussian forces enjoyed numerical superiority and qualitative advantage in artillery. Even though the French lost a string of battles on the frontier, their infantrymen inflicted heavy casualties on the Prussians with their Chassepot rifles.

After the defeat at the pitched battle at Gravelotte-St. Privat on August 18, Marshal Francois Bazaine's Army of the Rhine became trapped in Metz by elements of the Prussian First and Prussian Second armies. Two other Prussian armies, the Third Army under Prussian Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm, and the Fourth Army under Saxon Crown Prince Albert, began advancing on Paris from the west. The two armies were made up of units not only from Prussia, but also from Bavaria, Saxony, and Wurttemberg.

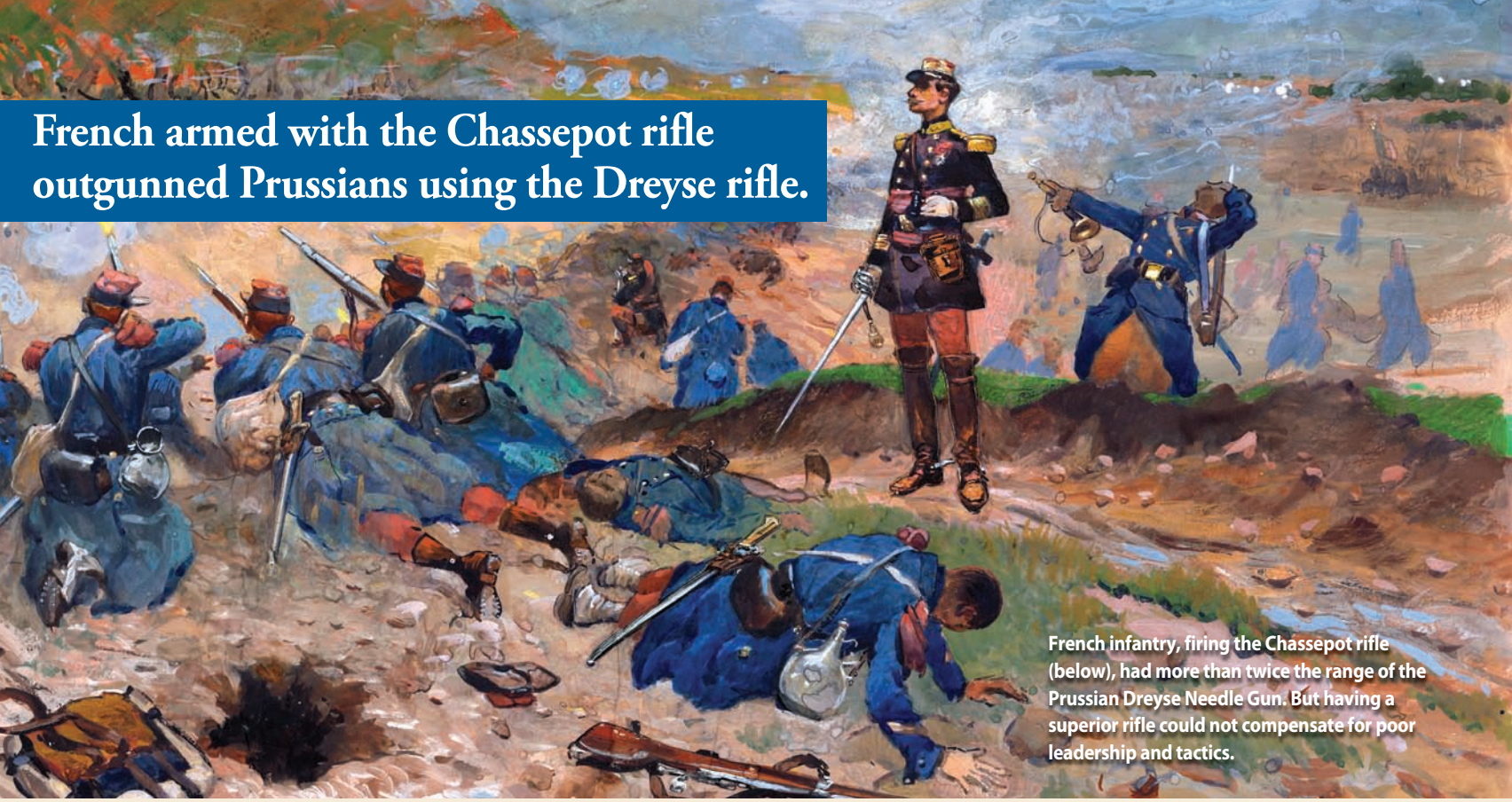
Napoleon III, who initially accompanied Bazaine, departed for Chalons where Marshal Patrice de MacMahon was organizing a relief army of 120,000 men. MacMahon's initial intentions were to withdraw his army to defend Paris. Napoleon III had taken no steps to lead the army, and therefore MacMahon assumed the duties of commander-in-chief. Charles Cousin-Montauban, who succeeded Leboeuf as France's minister of war, pressured him into marching to the relief of Bazaine. MacMahon decided on a flanking maneuver to reach Bazaine that would take his Army of Chalons along the Belgian border.

When he learned of the French maneuver, Moltke turned the Third and Fourth armies north to intercept MacMahon. With the Germans in hot pursuit, MacMahon halted his army at Sedan on August 30. He vacillated over whether to withdraw west, to Mezieres, or to push on to Metz via Carignan. Napoleon III joined MacMahon at Sedan the following day with his 70-man retinue that included 40 servants.

Regardless of which direction he chose, MacMahon did not intend to remain at Sedan for long. When General Felix Douay, the commander of the French 7th Corps, suggested the troops dig trenches, MacMahon told him he did not want to hold a stationary position as Bazaine had in Metz; instead, he wanted to be able to maneuver. "I had no intention of giving battle [at Sedan], but I wanted to rally the army and replenish it with food and ammunition," wrote MacMahon after the war.

At the time, MacMahon believed he was facing no more than 70,000 German troops. It would turn out that he had greatly underestimated the German strength—for the two German armies converging on Sedan totaled 200,000 men and 800 guns. MacMahon also felt a false sense of security in the notion that the Meuse River protected

French armed with the Chassepot rifle outgunned Prussians using the Dreyse rifle.



French infantry, firing the Chassepot rifle (below), had more than twice the range of the Prussian Dreyse Needle Gun. But having a superior rifle could not compensate for poor leadership and tactics.

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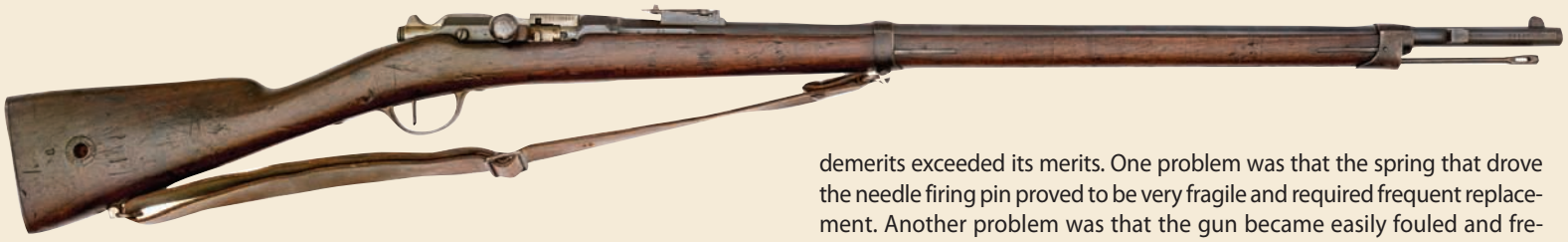


At the time when most armies still fired muzzle-loading guns, the weapons carried by the Prussian and French infantrymen in 1870 were the next step in the military technology. The breech-loading "needle guns," so named after a needle-like firing pin that fired a self-contained round of ammunition, sharply elevated the level of carnage that an infantryman could deliver on the battlefield.

The Prussians fielded the new rifle first. The needle-gun which became known as a Dreyse, was named after its German inventor, Johann Nicolaus von Dreyse. The Prussian Army adopted it for service in 1840. The weapon received the initial nomenclature of Light Percussion Rifle M1841. The Prussian army renamed it the Ignition Needle Rifle M1841 in 1855.

Conducting multiple experiments since 1824, Dreyse created the first bolt action design which allowed the weapon to open and close the firing chamber. The firing pin, or needle, would pierce the paper cartridge to strike the percussion cap at the base of the bullet.

The cartridge itself was a major invention. When gunpowder ignited, the whole force of the gas was directed at the bullet, minimizing the escape of gas through the breach and diminishing the stress on the gun. The Dreyse had an effective range of 600 meters, and an infantryman could fire six rounds per minute.

The British conducted trials with the Dreyse needle gun and found that it had a number of shortcomings. Moreover, they concluded that the gun's demerits exceeded its merits. One problem was that the spring that drove the needle firing pin proved to be very fragile and required frequent replacement. Another problem was that the gun became easily fouled and frequently misfired. Yet another problem was that the weak force of the bullet resulted in low penetration.

Despite these shortcomings, the superbly trained Prussian infantryman made superb use of its rapid rate of fire in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866, and the gun contributed greatly to the Prussian victory in that conflict.

The French armed their infantrymen with a needle-gun known as the "Chassepot Fusil Modele 1866." Antoine Alphonse Chassepot, who invented the gun, began experimenting with bolt-action rifles later than his counterpart Dreyse, and was able to adopt already existing improvements into his rifle.

Chassepot used an expandable rubber gasket to tightly seal the chamber and reduce gas leaks during firing. Yet this system was fragile and had to be replaced frequently for proper functioning. The Chassepot rifle replaced the French Minie muzzle-loading rifle in 1866 and made its combat debut the following year in Italy.

Although the Chassepot rifle fired a smaller caliber bullet than the Dreyse, 11mm compared to 13.6, respectively, its ammunition packed more gunpowder and achieved a greater velocity than the Dreyse. At the rate of fire of five to seven rounds per minute, the Chassepot's effective range was 1,200 meters, which was double that of the Dreyse. During the Franco-Prussian War, the Chassepots served the French well despite their defeat.

—Victor Kamenir

the rear of his army. This was not the case, though, because his troops had failed to blow up the bridge over the Meuse at Donchery as instructed.

The antiquated frontier fortress of Sedan was state-of-the-art in the 17th century, but by the time of the battle it was outdated as a result of improvements in the range and effectiveness of artillery. Situated on a bend in the Meuse River, it offered no real protection from Prussian long-range guns.

Upon his arrival at the frontlines, Moltke found the French army packed into a narrow space between the Meuse River and the Belgian border northeast of the fortress. He considered the possibility that the French, caught in the pincers from east and west, might attempt to escape to the north into Belgium. So he informed Bismarck of the situation in hopes that he could rectify it.

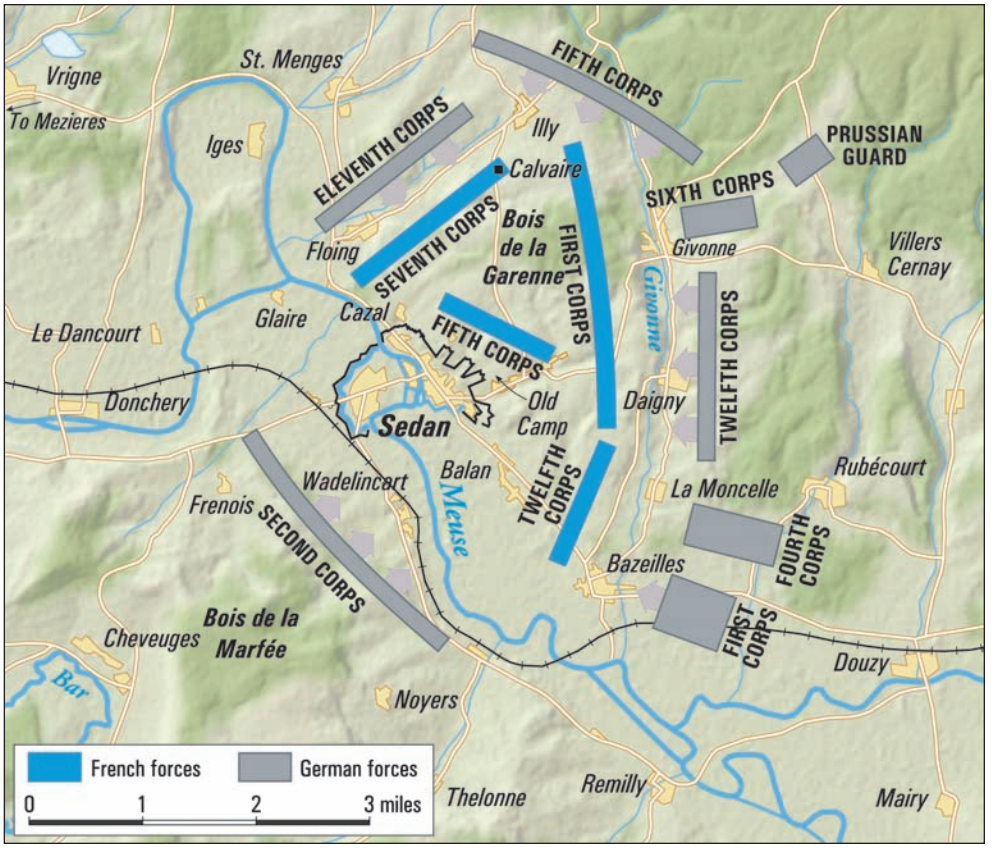
Bismarck took prompt action to deal with this predicament. He informed the Belgian government by telegraph that it must immediately disarm and confine any French troops that crossed into its territory. If the Belgians failed to do this, Bismarck threatened that Prussia would invade Belgium. The Belgians promptly complied.

On the evening of August 31, MacMahon arrayed his Army of Chalons in a tight triangle. The French commander deployed his best troops, the XII Corps under General Barthelemy Lebrun, at Bazeilles, about three miles southeast of Sedan. In compliance with the orders, Lebrun deployed his troops on the heights to the north on the western side of the Givonne valley.

General Auguste-Alexandre Ducrot's I Corps formed the line from the town of Givonne north to Illy, the apex of the French position, where it linked with Douay's VII Corps, which extended down to the village of Cazal on the bank of the Meuse. The French I and VII Corps were positioned back-to-back northeast of Sedan with the woods of Bois de la Garenne between them. As for General Pierre Louis Charles de Failly's V Corps, which the Germans had battered the previous day at Beaumont, MacMahon placed it in reserve north of Sedan at a location known as the Old Camp.

Observing the French dispositions, General Ducrot gloomily described the situation to his friend Dr. Charles Sarazin, a surgeon assigned to the French I Corps. "We are in a chamber pot and about to be shit upon," Ducrot said using the language of a commoner. Douay agreed with the assessment. "I think we are lost," he told his chief engineer. "It only remains for us to do our best before going under."

General Emmanuel Felix de Wimpffen arrived from Paris on August 31. MacMahon decided to replace de Failly, the disgraced commander of the V Corps, with Wimpffen. Wimpffen carried a letter of authorization with him from Montauban



The day before the battle, the Prussian XI Army Corps cut the only railroad to Sedan through which reinforcements and supplies could flow to the French. Marshal MacMahon committed a major blunder by leaving the bridges above and below Sedan intact for the Prussians to cross.

that authorized him to take charge of the army in case MacMahon became incapacitated. Because of tension between the two high-ranking officers, Wimpffen chose to keep the letter from Montauban secret.

Interpreting French redeployments as a sign that they were intending to withdraw northwest to Mezieres, Moltke put his forces in motion shortly after midnight. The Prussian Third Army under Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia was on the move by 3 a.m. on September 1. By 7 a.m. it had crossed to the north bank of the Meuse River.

Prussian King Wilhelm was on hand, and he was accompanied by Moltke, Bismarck, and various foreign observers. One of those observers was U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Phillip Sheridan, who had asked U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant to send him to report on the events in the Franco-Prussian War.

The vanguard of General von der Tann's I Bavarian Corps of the Third Army, cloaked in the dark of night and fog, crept toward Bazeilles at 4 a.m. Von der Tann hoped to capture the village by surprise. The French 3rd Marine Regiment defended the village. Its veteran troops had transformed the village into a fortress by barricading the streets and creating firing positions in the houses by making loopholes in the walls.

The leading Bavarian companies reached the main street of Bazeilles before French pickets opened fire. As the firefight heated up, commanders on both sides fed more troops into Bazeilles. The Bavarians established a foothold in the northern edge of the village but their attack temporarily stalled when they encountered the French Marines in a strong position in the two-story, elongated structure known as the Villa Beurmann.

Elsewhere in the village, a fresh French Marine regiment drove back the Bavarians until they found themselves in a small enclave on the southern side of the village. "The enemy was pursued in yards, in gardens, in outbuilding and in the houses right up to the attics," wrote Louis Rocheron, a French marine. "It was hand-to-hand fighting: men butchered and killed each other without pity and with equal fury."

Von der Tann committed two more brigades to the fighting in Bazeilles as flames licked skyward from the burning village. By that time, the fighting had spread north to the village of La Moncelle. At first light of morning, the artillery of the Saxon XII Corps of the Fourth Army went into action on the heights above La Moncelle. French sharpshooters initially forced several of the Saxon artillery

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French Zouaves counterattack in the Bois de la Garenne north of the fortress, but are decimated by Prussian breech-loading artillery. Prussian gunners fired into the canopies of the trees so that shrapnel and splinters rained down on the French. OPPOSITE: French marines holed up in the village of Bazeilles fire on Bavarian troops in a painting by Alphonse-Marie-Adolphe de Neuville titled "The Last Cartridges."

batteries to pull back, but advancing Saxon infantry forced the sharpshooters to retire.

The fighting soon extended north toward the village of Daigny, which was defended by elements of Ducrot's I Corps. As the fog burned off, more German batteries came on line. The Prussian batteries succeeded in silencing the inferior French artillery batteries which could not compete with the greater accuracy and range of the Krupp guns. Without French guns to protect them, the French infantry units deployed around Bazeilles suffered badly from their exposure to the deadly Prussian artillery. As the Prussian infantry pressed its attack, it suffered greatly from the deadly fire of the French infantry armed with the Chassepot rifles. Because of this, the Prussian casualties began to mount.

MacMahon rode forward at first light to observe the fighting at La Moncelle, suffered a serious wound in his left leg that temporarily rendered him unconscious. When MacMahon came around, he turned over command of the Army of Chalons to Ducrot, even though the latter was junior in rank to both Wimpffen and Douay.

As more German units began arriving on the battlefield, Ducrot became increasingly convinced that the French position at Sedan was untenable. He issued orders for the French army to pull back to Plateau d'Illy in preparation for a general withdrawal 10 miles to Mezieres. He began moving back those brigades that were not already engaged.

Ducrot's elevation to army commander, however, did not last long. Apprised of Ducrot's promotion, Wimpffen presented to Ducrot his letter from Montauban. Ducrot immediately submitted to Wimpffen's authority. Wimpffen's first act was to override Ducrot's order to withdraw. Wimpffen believed that the situation at Bazeilles was stable and that there still was an opportunity to punch a hole in the Prussian line that would enable the French army to reach Carignan in order to join forces with Bazaine at Metz.

The real situation was far from stable. Despite determined French counterattacks, Daigny fell to the Prussians at 10 a.m. The Saxons, who were now being reinforced by the IV Corps of Crown Prince Albert's Fourth Army, put heavy pressure on the French at La Moncelle. The Bavarians succeeded in capturing Bazeilles an hour later following a hard fight for the Villa Beurmann. The Prussians mopped up in the village by firing their artillery at point-blank range against pockets of resistance by the stubborn French marines.

Enraged by heavy casualties in fighting for Bazeilles, some of the Bavarian infantry massacred several groups of French Marines who tried to surrender. Bavarian officers quickly intervened to prevent any further atrocities. Some of the French citizens in Bazeilles who had fought to protect their homes also were executed. The vengeful Bavarians torched a number of French houses in Bazeilles. The Bavarians essentially destroyed the village. Only a handful of homes escaped the conflagration. Although Wimpffen ordered Lebrun to retake Bazeilles, German artillery shattered the French counterattacks.

Prince August of Wurttemberg's Guards Corps of the Prussian Fourth Army hurried into action following the sound of the cannon. While one of the Guard troops assisted in the fighting at Givonne, the Second Guard Division pushed west to link up with the Third Army. Meanwhile, the artillery of the Prussian Guard Corps exchanged fire with the artillery of Ducrot's I Corps. It was an unfair fight, though. Outgunned by the superior range and accuracy of the Prussian guns, the French withdrew any guns that had not been knocked out.

In a desperate bid to keep the Prussian artillery at bay, the French committed a large number of skirmishers to cover the deployment of 10 guns at Givonne, but the Prussians captured the guns before the French artillerymen were able to unlimber them. At that point, the Prussians began shelling in the Bois de la Garenne.

The Prussians captured Givonne at 10 a.m. The majority of the French I Corps remained on the western slope of the Givonne valley where it suffered under the punishing enemy artillery fire. After being pounded for two hours by the Prussians guns, more French troops entered the Bois de la Garenne in the hope of escaping the German storm of iron.

The Bavarians and Saxons, with the continued support of the Prussian Fourth Corps, advanced from Bazeilles and Moncelle. Despite some strong resistance from the French, these German forces succeeded in dislodging the French from their positions east of Balan back to the Givonne ravine. Next, the Bavarians launched an assault on the village of Balan. They quickly captured the lightly held village, although a bloody fight occurred at a chateau situated on the west end of the village.

Shortly after noon the lead battalion of the Bavarians came to within a rifle shot of the old fortress of Sedan. At that point, a firefight erupted in the Givonne ravine between the Bavarians and the French. Reinforced by artillery and mitrailleuses, the French launched a spirited counterattack at 1 p.m. in which they succeeded in forcing back a Bavarian brigade, however, another Bavarian brigade quickly came up in support to recover the lost ground. The desperate fighting in that sector continued unabated for another hour.

Two French divisions advanced at 3 p.m. from the Givonne ravine against the 23rd Saxon Division. Assisted by the left wing of the Guard corps and Guard artillery, however, the Saxons halted the attack. "The energy of the French appeared to be by this time exhausted, for they allowed themselves to be taken prisoners by hundreds," wrote Moltke. Repulsing the French attack, the Germans brought up more batteries. By mid-after-

noon the Prussians had 21 batteries in action on a line that stretched from Bazeilles to Haybes.

On the west side of the battlefield, the Prussian V and XI corps of Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm's Third Army, together with the Wurttemberg Division of the Wurttemberg-Baden Corps, crossed the Meuse at Donchery, as well as by several pontoon bridges downstream. In the meantime, Prussian cavalry patrols penetrated as far as the road leading to Mezieres, but they reported no sign of the French withdrawing in that direction.

Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm ordered the Prussian units that already reached the Mezieres Road to turn east and strike Douay's VII Corps on the morning of September 2. By mid-morning, the Prussians had captured the village of Saint-Menges. At the same time, two Prussian infantry companies secured a foothold in the village of Floing.

The Prussians unlimbered three artillery batteries at Saint-Menges. The French had eight batteries at Floing with which to engage the enemy batteries at Saint-Menges. To even the artillery contest, the Prussians sent additional batteries to reinforce those already engaged at that location.

The Prussians soon had six batteries, totaling 72 guns, in action. With their greater range and accuracy, the Krupp guns turned the tide. The Prussian gunners systematically silenced all of the French guns. But when the Prussians began to advance their batteries, they came under devastating fire from French mitrailleuse gunners who mowed down the crews of the forward-most Prussian guns.

Wimpffen initially believed the Prussian advance from the northwest was a mere demonstration. By midday, though, he realized that the Prussians were conducting a major assault, so he dispatched two divisions from the I Corps to support Douay. Wimpffen also parceled out brigades from De Failly's V Corps to support sectors that appeared weak or in danger of being overrun by the Prussians.

In the early afternoon, under the cover of the Krupp guns, a brigade from Prussian XI Corps used the cover of a ravine to strike Douay's left flank between Floing and the Meuse River. This well-conceived tactic enabled the Prussians to seize the high ground overlooking Floing.

General Jean Margueritte's French First Reserve Cavalry Division, composed of light cavalry, occupied a position behind Douay's VII Corps at Calvaire d'Illy. As the Prussians continued their advance northeast toward the apex of the French defensive positions, Ducrot ordered Margueritte to attack the units of the Prussian left wing that were approaching Illy, as well as charge the Prussian guns at Saint-Menges.

As Margueritte rode forward to observe the ground over which his squadrons were about to charge, a bullet tore through both of his cheeks. Badly wounded, Margueritte turned over command of his division to General Gaston Gallifet.

The Light Cavalry Division was composed of three regiments of Chasseurs d'Afrique, one of French Chasseurs, and one of hussars. Gallifet deployed his horsemen in three lines. They advanced at a trot towards the enemy.

"The advance was over very treacherous ground, and even before the actual charge was delivered the cohesion of the ranks was broken by the heavy flanking fire of the Prussian batteries," wrote Moltke of Gallifet's charge. "With thinned ranks but with unflinching resolution, the individual squadrons charged the troops of the 43rd Infantry Brigade, partly lying in cover, partly standing out on the bare slope in swarms and groups, [as well as] the reinforcements hurrying from Fleigneux."

Moltke noted that the first line of the former was pierced at several points, and that a band of the intrepid troopers dashed from Casal through the intervals with eight artillery pieces blazing at them with case-shot, but the companies beyond

Musee d'Orsay

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

The renowned French Chasseurs d'Afrique thunder toward Prussian lines in a desperate attempt to open an escape corridor. Unable to break the Prussian line, the crestfallen survivors returned to their lines.

stopped their further progress. Other detachments cut their way through the infantry as far as the narrow pass of St. Albert where they were met by the battalions debouching from the pass, he said.

"These attacks were repeated by the French again and again in the shape of detached fights, and the murderous turmoil lasted for half an hour with steadily diminishing fortune for the French," continued Moltke. "The volleys of the German infantry delivered steadily at a short range strewed the whole field with dead and wounded horsemen."

Many of the French horsemen fell into the quarries or down the steep declivities, while others escaped by swimming the Meuse. Slightly more than half of these brave troops returned to the protection of the forest. Of the 2,408 men in Margueritte's division on the morning of September 1, just 1,327 remained in ranks the next day.

Douay's soldiers followed up with an attack to clear the Prussians from Floing, but after an hour of intense fighting Prussian reinforcements arrived to check their attack. But on the rest of the battlefield, French soldiers firing the deadly Chassepot rifle stopped the Prussians cold. When the soldiers of the Prussian XI Corps arrived at Fleigneuz, they were able to shake hands with members of the Prussian Guard at Olly. The meeting of the two units completed the Prussian encirclement of the French.

For two hours beginning at Noon, the French continued to fight in the vicinity of Calvaire d'Illy. As Ducrot's I Corps pulled back, it exposed the right flank of Douay's VII Corps. The Third Division of the French V Corps was sent to plug the gap, but it dissolved when it encountered devastating enemy fire. So many of its soldiers quit the ranks to seek the shelter of the woods that only one brigade remained in action. Prussian guns silenced any French battery that went into action. The French troops holding the Calvaire d'Illy, relinquished control of it to the Prussians at 2 p.m. and withdrew to the Bois de la Garenne.

At that point, the road leading to the Belgian border became a jumble of fleeing French soldiers, civilians, and wagons. Sarazin observed civilians fleeing together with the soldiers, "These poor folk were dragging their weeping children along with them and were carrying off, on carts or wheelbarrows, everything they had been able to throw together in haste," he wrote.

Moltke cataloged the Prussian successes. "The 87th Regiment seized eight guns which were in action, and captured 30 baggage wagons with their teams, as well as hundreds of cavalry horses wandering riderless," wrote Moltke. "The cavalry of the advanced guard of the Vth Corps also made prisoners of General Jean Auguste Brahaut [the commander of the cavalry division of the V Corps] and his staff, besides a great number of dispersed infantrymen and 150 draught-horses, together with 40 ammunition and baggage wagons."

By that point in time, the Prussian artillery had been fully deployed. Von Moltke began tightening the ring of steel around the French from east and west. Prussian artillery hammered the French I and VII corps from front and rear. French soldiers tried to seek shelter from the relentless bombardment in the Bois de la Givonne, but the artillery pummeled them even in the woods.

With disordered French divisions milling around in the Bois de la Garenne, Prince Kraft of Hohenlohe-Ingelfingen, the commander of the Prussian Guard artillery, directed his gunners to shell the woods at 2 p.m. "Our superiority over the enemy was so overwhelming that we [the artillery] suffered no loss at all," he wrote. "The batteries fired as if at practice."

Under the relentless pounding of the Prussian artillery, what little order and morale remained in the French units in the woods evaporated. "Can-

non boomed everywhere," wrote French Lieutenant Louis de Narcy. "The earth was ploughed up, trees splintered. From clearings in the woods we could make out clouds of fire and smoke in an arc all around us." He estimated that the Prussians had arrayed 600 cannon against the French.

At midafternoon the Prussian XI Corps entered the Bois de la Garenne. Despite knots of French soldiers still resisting, the Prussians scooped up thousands of prisoners. The woods were a charnel of slaughtered men and animals. "The picture of destruction I beheld [in] the Bois de la Garenne surpassed all the horrors that had ever met my gaze, even on the battlefield," wrote young Lieutenant Paul von Hindenburg, the future German field marshal and statesman.

The Germans were within reach of Sedan by late afternoon, but were kept at bay by French guns firing from the old fortress. But there was no further need for the German infantry to advance. As the French positions continued to shrink, the tempo of German artillery escalated. Disordered masses of men, horses and wagons rushed from the woods to the deceptive shelter of Sedan where French officers attempted to rally their men inside the fortress to no avail.

King Wilhelm watched the events with Moltke, Bismarck, and a number of minor German princes. The group observed the battle from the heights at La Marfee south of the river. Rumors that Napoleon III was in Sedan had reached Wilhelm and his staff, but they initially disregarded the rumors. "The old fox is too cunning to be caught in such a trap," said Bismarck to Sheridan. "He has doubtless slipped off to Paris."

Napoleon III, a passive observer in the Sedan fortress throughout the afternoon, had received a message from Wimpffen at 2 p.m. stating his intent to break out to the southeast and imploring Napoleon to capitulate. "Let Your Majesty come and place himself amid his troops, who will consider it an honour to open a passage for him," wrote Wimpffen. Realizing that the battle was lost, Napoleon III began to seriously contemplate surrendering to the Prussians.

But Wimpffen still had a lot of fight in him. Believing that the breakout to Carignan was still possible, he sent orders to Douay to act as the rear guard. Douay replied that his own line was barely holding. Receiving no further help, Wimpffen organized some troops around the old camp near Sedan, composed of several Marine units and one brigade from the V Corps and sent them against the Bavarians at Balan. The French counterattack pushed the Bavarians to the southern edge of the village where some French civilians joined in the fighting.

While Wimpffen was fighting for Balan, at midafternoon Napoleon III ordered a white flag to be raised above Sedan, and he instructed Ducrot to prepare a general order for ceasefire to be issued to the French units. Ducrot demurred on the matter, insisting that such an order was Wimpffen's responsibility. But Wimpffen was at Balan, and therefore was unavailable to consult on the matter. The stubborn commandant of the Sedan fortress tore down the first white flag, claiming that he only took orders from Wimpffen.

The Prussians eventually checked Wimpffen's advance and then steadily drove back his troops. As Wimpffen rode to Sedan to look for reinforcements in the late afternoon, he encountered the emperor's emissary to the Prussians. The emissary instructed Wimpffen to cease fire because negotiations with the Prussians were about to begin. Wimpffen refused and continued looking for any unit still intact. He cobbled together 2,000 men still under arms. He hurled them at Balan again, but the Bavarians shredded their attack. After the attack was repulsed, Wimpffen gave up all hope of breaking through the Prussian encirclement and returned to Sedan.

The majority of the Prussian artillery batteries had directed their fire in the late afternoon on the fortress of Sedan. The deadly shells killed soldiers and civilians alike. The civilians sought shelter in cellars as burning buildings collapsed around them. Another French white flag went up in the area of the southwest Torcy suburb, and the German fire gradually died down when it became evident the French were beaten.

King Wilhelm's staff officer, Lieutenant Paul von Schellendorff rode to Sedan with a demand for the French surrender. To his surprise, French staff officers took him to their emperor. Napoleon III, looking tired and dejected, had one of his officers, General Honore Charles Reille, accompany Von Schellendorff with a letter to King Wilhelm.

At 6:30 p.m. the two officers reached the king. Reille presented him with a note from Napoleon III. "Having been unable to die amidst my troops, it only remains for me to place my sword in your Majesty's hands," wrote the French emperor.

"Regretting the circumstances in which we meet, I accept Your Majesty's sword, and invite you to nominate one of your officers invested with full powers to negotiate the capitulation of your army, which has fought so bravely under your orders," replied King Wilhelm. "For my part, I have designated General Moltke for this purpose."

Hargesheimer Kunstauktionen

A dejected Emperor Napoleon III meets King William I and the Prussian high command after the battle. The Prussians took 100,000 French soldiers into captivity, but allowed the deposed emperor to go to England where he lived in exile.

The two sides subsequently held surrender negotiations that night at Donchery with Wimpffen representing the French and Moltke and Bismarck for the Germans. Wimpffen requested the French army to be allowed to march out with their arms and flags, under oath to sit out the rest of the war. Moltke and Bismarck categorically refused stating that they would accept nothing short of an unconditional surrender from the French. Wimpffen broke off negotiations, declaring that the French will continue to fight. He was given until 9 a.m. on September 2 before the

Continued on page 94

Lieutenant General Arthur Wellesley's invasion of Spain in 1809 prompted Spanish King Joseph Bonaparte to assemble a large army to defeat him. Wellesley braced for the French attack at Talavera. | By Mike Phifer

Ignoring the scorching summer heat, Lieutenant General Sir Arthur Wellesley climbed one of the towers on the ruined estate of Casa de Salinas 80 miles southwest of Madrid, Spain, to survey the surrounding countryside. It was July 27, 1809, and the British commander could see the two brigades of Maj. Gen. Randoll Mackenzie's Third Division along the Alberche River screening the Anglo-Spanish forces that were taking up position near Talavera de la Reina a few miles to the west. Wellesley was not, however, looking for his own troops, but those of the French. His eyes soon fixed on the advance of thousands of French soldiers.

The French soldiers of General Pierre Lapisse's Second Division, which led the way for Marshal Claude Perrin Victor's I Corps, moved stealthily through the nearby woods towards Wellesley's screening force. They quickly surprised lax British pickets and rushed toward Colonel Rufane Shaw Donkin's Brigade who was resting in the shade of some trees. The crash of musketry caused the British troops to scramble to arms and attempt to form up. Some did not make it.

The sudden fierce French attack drove back the soldiers of Donkin's Brigade and the 2nd Battalion of the 31st Foot of the Mackenzie's own brigade. Wellesley scrambled out of the tower and rode away. He barely escaped capture by the French troops.

Part of the green-coated 5th Battalion of the 60th Rifle Regiment fired into the flank of Marshal Victor's I Corps. At the same time, the 1st Battalion of the 45th Foot began firing rolling volleys into the French. The heavy fire from the British slowed the French advance.

Wellesley and the officers of the broken regiments quickly rallied their disordered troops. Under the cover of two supporting regiments and light cavalry, Donkin's two brigades withdrew to the main British line north of Talavera. The British lost more than 440 men in the late afternoon clash.

Victor followed the withdrawing British units. When he encountered Wellesley's main line, he ordered his artillery into action. In the gloaming, French guns began to hammer away at the British. The British artillery returned fire, but were badly outnumbered.

The artillery duel that lit up the evening unnerved the Spanish troops, allied with the British. When they spotted French cavalry, four Spanish battalions composed of green troops mistakenly fired at the French horsemen without orders. The Spanish fled to the rear apparently "frightened by the noise of their fire," wrote Wellesley. It was bad enough that they fled their positions, but the Spanish troops then plundered the baggage of the British army.

The artillery soon quieted down for the night. Word spread through the British ranks that the French likely would attack the next morning; however, Victor had other ideas. Once the rest of his corps

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Wellesley salutes soldiers of the 43rd Regiment as they collect their fallen comrades in the aftermath of the battle in south-central Spain.

Bold Stand at TALAVERA

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

came up, he intended to attack Wellesley's line in the darkness of night. In that way, the French marshal sought to obtain a quick victory over the British. But he failed to factor into the equation the resoluteness of the British rank and file and the tenacity of their intrepid commander.

The long war between France and Britain spread to the Iberian Peninsula during the War of the Fourth Coalition. After a sea invasion of Great Britain proved impractical in 1805, French Emperor Napoleon sought to defeat Great Britain economically the following year by establishing a Continental System through which he could control British trade with the European mainland. After his victory over the Austrians in the War of the Third Coalition, Napoleon became determined to force the Portuguese to close their ports to the British.

When the Portuguese crown refused, he sent General Jean-Andoche Junot with 30,000 troops to forcibly close the ports. With British assistance, the Royal Court of Portugal fled to Brazil, and Junot occupied Lisbon on November 30, 1807. Believing he might acquire additional territory in Portugal, Spanish King Charles IV agreed to assist the French in conquering Portugal. But Spain soon grew unstable, owing to the corrupt rule of its Bourbon royal house. In an attempt at reform Charles was replaced by his son, Ferdinand VII, who ruled for less than two months.

Taking advantage of the situation, Napoleon occupied Spain in March 1808 and subsequently proclaimed his elder brother Joseph Bonaparte as the new king of Spain. While the transfer of power was under way, the residents of Madrid revolted on May 2 and attacked the French garrison. Spain soon became engulfed in revolution, giving the British an opening to intervene militarily in the affairs of both Portugal and Spain. Despite the unrest, Joseph was crowned King of Spain on June 6.

Wellesley, at that time a major general, landed in Portugal with 18,000 troops on August 1. Junot boldly attacked the British position at Vimeiro 30 miles north of Lisbon on August 21. Heavily outnumbered, Junot launched piecemeal attacks that the highly disciplined British infantry easily shattered with accurate musket fire.

London recalled Wellesley, who they promoted to lieutenant general for his victory at Vimeiro, and replaced him with a more senior commander. Lt. Gen. Sir Hew Whitefoord Dalrymple arrived in Portugal to succeed Wellesley as commander of the British expeditionary force, but was removed from command after he signed a truce with Junot that angered London. Next, British Lt. Gen. Sir John Moore arrived to take command of the British expeditionary force. Moore invaded Spain in November 1808 to support the rebellion, but retreated north when Napoleon arrived with a large army determined to annihilate his army.

However, Napoleon soon departed for Paris to prepare to go to war again with Austria, leaving the pursuit of Moore to Marshal Jean-de-Dieu Soult. Moore withdrew to the port of Corunna in northwest Spain for extraction by a British fleet. In a sanguinary clash on January 16, 1809, at Corunna while the British were preparing to board the transports, the French attacked the British position two miles south of the port. Moore fell mortally wounded while rallying one of his units. His death would see Wellesley return for a second tour of duty on the Iberian Peninsula.

Soult eventually occupied Oporto, Portugal, but did not move quickly enough on Lisbon where Portuguese forces had fortified the city. Wellesley arrived in Lisbon in late April to great fanfare by the Portuguese. He quickly drove Soult out of Oporto and sent a dispatch to Captain-General Gregorio Garcia de la Cuesta, the commander of the Spanish army of Estremadura, in which he suggested a joint operation against the French forces in Spain. Cuesta, who commanded 30,000 men, accepted the proposal. Leaving the Portuguese army to defend its homeland, Wellesley set out with his British army in late June for the Spanish frontier.

The British army consisted of 22,000 men organized into four infantry divisions and a cavalry division. Maj. Gen. John Sherbrooke led the 1st Division, Maj. Gen. Rowland Hill led the 2nd Division, Maj. Gen. Mackenzie led the 3rd Division, and Brig. Gen. Alexander Campbell led the

4th Division. The cavalry division, commanded by Lt. Gen. William Payne, consisted mostly of dragoons. Wellesley had 30 guns in five batteries. Each infantry division had an artillery battery, and one was held in reserve.

Wellesley's British army reached Plasencia, Spain, which was 80 miles west of Talavera, on July 9. The following day he departed with an escort on a 40-mile ride to meet with Spanish commander Cuesta at Casa de Miravete near Almaraz. Arriving after dark, he reviewed Cuesta's troops by torchlight.

Wellesley did not like what he saw. For one thing, the Spanish officers lacked the degree of professionalism to which Wellesley was accustomed. In addition, the soldiers lacked good weapons and many did not have shoes. "[They were] little better than bold peasantry, armed partially like soldiers, but completely unacquainted with a soldier's duty," recalled Brig. Gen. Charles Stewart, who had accompanied Wellesley to the meeting.

The next day Wellesley had a tense four-hour meeting with the elderly Spanish general in which the two Allied commanders hashed out a plan. They decided to advance west along the Tagus River to Toledo and continue on to Madrid. Spanish guerillas had gathered good intelligence on the size and location of the French forces in Spain, and Cuesta passed along this information to Wellesley.

The intelligence indicated that General Victor had deployed the 20,0000 troops of his I Corps behind the Alberche River northeast of Talavera, and that General Horace Sebastiani's IV Corps, which also numbered 20,000 troops occupied a position at Madridejos 100 miles southeast of Talavera. In addition, King Joseph and Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jourdan had with them 12,000 troops at Madrid. King Joseph was the nominal commander of the French forces in Spain, but Jourdan, who was his chief of staff, served as the de facto commander. These three forces could concentrate within two days at Toledo, which was 55 miles east of Talavera.

Several other French corps in northwest Spain posed a threat to the operations of the Anglo-Spanish army—either by reinforcing the forces that eventually would face the British at Talavera or by threatening Wellesley's lines of communication to Portugal. These included Marshal Soult's II Corps, General Edouard Mortier's V Corps, and Michel Ney's VI Corps.

Napoleon, who was campaigning against the Austrians, sent a message to Joseph, which his brother received on July 1. The message instructed him to combine the three French corps in northern Spain into one army under Soult. "These three corps must maneuver as a single body, pursue the English relentlessly, defeat them, and throw them into the sea," wrote the emperor. But Napoleon assumed Wellesley was defending Lisbon, and he had no idea that Wellesley had invaded Spain.

Wellesley dispatched Sir Robert Wilson with a flank column of 1,500 troops to screen Wellesley's army against possible attack by any of the French forces that might arrive from northern Spain. For his part, Cuesta agreed to send General Francisco Javier Venegas's 26,000-strong Army of La Mancha to tie down Sebastiani and prevent him from joining the French army facing Wellesley; however, if Sebastiani should slip away to join Victor, then Venegas had orders to seize Madrid.

All: Wikimedia

TOP ROW: King of Spain Joseph Bonaparte, French Marshal Jean-Baptiste Jourdan, and French Marshal Claude Perrin Victor. BOTTOM ROW: British Lt. Gen. Sir Arthur Wellesley, Spanish Captain-General Gregorio Garcia de la Cuesta, and British Maj. Gen. Rowland Hill. OPPOSITE: Lieutenant General Sir John Moore oversaw a brilliant rearguard action to extract his expeditionary force by sea from Corunna. In the final hours of the battle, he was slain by a cannonball.

A sticking point, though, concerned the drastic supply situation facing Wellesley's expeditionary army in Spain. The area through which the British were marching had long since been stripped bare by French and Spanish forces. Wellesley threatened to withdraw his army if Cuesta failed to furnish his troops with provisions and wagons or carts to transport them. But the Spanish initially demanded payment for supplies. Wellesley received some funds from London before he entered Spain. Frustrated with the ongoing supply problem once he had crossed the Spanish frontier, Wellesley marched his troops to Oropesa where they rendezvoused with the Spanish on July 20. The Spanish, though, did not furnish any provisions to the British.

The British and Spanish armies set off two days later on parallel routes for Talavera, and on the way Spanish cavalry skirmished with French dragoons at Gamonal. When British cavalry came up, the French dragoons, who screened the main body of the French army, withdrew east to rejoin Victor's I Corps east of the Alberche River.

Wellesley urged Cuesta to participate in an attack the following day against Victor, who would be outnumbered by more than two to one by the Anglo-Spanish army. British troops moved into position during the night ready to pounce on the French at daylight, but to Wellesley's dismay the Spanish army failed to show up. Victor withdrew his corps and sent word to King Joseph and Jourdan that the British were nearby.

Cuesta wanted the Anglo-Spanish army to pursue Victor on July 24, but Wellesley refused to

do so until the Spanish furnished the provided the rations they had promised to give the British. By that time, the British troops had been subsisting on half rations.

But Wellesley did order Sherbrooke's 1st Division and Mackenzie's 3rd Division, as well as a detachment of cavalry, to cross to the east bank of the Alberche. While the British vanguard deployed, Wellesley reconnoitered the ground north of Talavera for a suitable defensive position should Jourdan reinforce Victor.

Cuesta, with whom Wellesley found it increasingly difficult to coordinate operations, eventually led his army in pursuit of Victor. "I should certainly get the better of everything," Wellesley wrote, "if I can manage General Cuesta; but his temper and disposition are so bad, that it is impossible."

As the Spanish army approached Torrijos, which was 25 miles beyond the Alberche, it came upon a consolidated French army under King Joseph that numbered 46,000 troops. King Joseph's Army of the Center comprised Victor's I Corps, Sebastiani's IV Corps, and a Reserve of three cavalry divisions from the French garrison at Madrid. Cuesta hastily withdrew his army, which reached the British position on the east bank of the Alberche on July 26. The following day Wellesley convinced Cuesta to cross to the west bank of the river where Wellesley had marked out positions for both armies. Sherbrooke's and Mackenzie's divisions covered the withdrawal of the Spanish army.

Wellesley's strong defensive position on July 27 stretched for two miles from Talavera to a 300-foot ridge known as the Medellin Hill. With its steep eastern face, the hill would furnish a place to anchor the British left flank. A lower ridge, known as the Cascajal Hill, was left unoccupied. A shallow stream, the Portina, flowed south from the Sierra de Segurilla mountains to the north, passing between the two ridges and eventually emptying into the Tagus River.

Wellesley directed Cuesta to deploy the bulk of his Spanish troops in three lines just north of Talavera, which was adjacent to the wide Tagus River. He did this partly because he knew the northern outskirts of the town consisted of buildings, stone walls, and cultivated fields that would afford ample cover for the mostly green Spanish troops. He also knew that the Spanish were incapable of maneuvering in battle. Cuesta's troops further strengthened their position by constructing makeshift breastworks.

Wellesley ordered Brig. Gen. Henry Campbell, who commanded the light infantry brigade of the 1st Division, to deploy on the east bank of the Portina to watch for the arrival of the French army.

He placed a British battery in earthworks atop a small rise known as Pajar de Vergara to anchor his right flank. Campbell's 4th Division deployed in two lines to the left of the battery. Sherbrooke's 1st Division deployed in the center of the British position with some of its troops on the southern slope of the Medellin Hill. The British front line continued north with Hill's 2nd Division squarely atop the Medellin Hill.

Wellesley placed Mackenzie's 3rd Division and the British cavalry in a second line behind Sherbrooke to strengthen the British center. On the far left, beyond the Medellin Hill, Wellesley placed Brig. Gen. George Anson's brigade of cavalry to screen the British left. The Allied army's reserve consisted of a Spanish infantry division and a Spanish cavalry division commanded by Lt. Gen. Jose Maria de la Cueva, the Duke of Albuquerque.

When Victor arrived with his 1st Corps, he deployed his troops facing the British. His 1st Division, which was led by General Francois Ruffin, went into position atop Cascajal Hill. Once the infantry had secured the ridge, French troops manhandled artillery to the top of the rise and opened fire on the British. At the same time, French cavalry probed the Spanish positions to the south.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

When the French guns fell silent at nightfall, Victor prepared to seize Medellin Hill in a night assault. He had observed that the British position on the high ground was not strong and sought to take advantage of the perceived weakness.

After dining in Talavera, General Hill returned to Medellin Hill where to his dismay he discovered his two brigades were not in their assigned positions. Maj. Gen. Christopher Tilson's 1st Brigade and Brig. Gen. Richard Stewart's 2nd Brigade had allowed their troops to encamp a half a mile from their assigned positions on the reverse side of the hill. The redcoats of Colonel Donkin's battered brigade of the 3rd Division, after their earlier retreat, had taken up a position on the southern slope of the ridge. As for the two King's German Legion brigades of Sherbrooke's 1st Division, which were led by brigadiers Ernest Langwerth and Sigismund von Low, they held a position to the southeast.

Victor intended to use Ruffin's Division to attack and seize Medellin Hill, while Lapisse's division created a diversion against the British center. Without bothering to seek permission from King Joseph, Victor ordered his men to advance at 10 p.m. Ruffin's men moved forward in the dark in three regimental columns with the 9th Light Infantry in the center, 24th Line Infantry on the right, and 96th Line Infantry on the left.

In the darkness the 9th Light Infantry veered south and stumbled into the sleeping troops of Low's Brigade. Surprised and confused in the dark by the French bayonet attack, the 7th and 5th battalions of Low's Brigade quickly gave way with heavy casualties. The 96th Line Infantry, though, had come under fire from Langwerth's Brigade which stalled its attack. The 24th Line Infantry attack fared little better as its troops became disoriented in the darkness. Wandering in the darkness, they strayed too far north of Medellin Hill.

The 9th Light Infantry continued its advance by pushing up the hill; in so doing, it flanked Donkin's Brigade. Meanwhile, General Hill prepared Stewart's Brigade to aid the Germans, although he did not believe they were being seriously threatened. The general rode with another officer to the top of the hill where he could see French musket flashes.

Hill soon found himself among enemy skirmishers who tried to capture him. Although his horse was wounded, he was able to gallop back to his troops; however, the officer accompanying him was slain. When Hill reached the relative safety of his troops, he ordered the 1st Battalion of Detachment, a battalion cobbled with companies from various units, to stop the French advance.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: Wellesley knew that the rag-tag Spanish army was full of raw troops who scarcely knew how to load a musket, much less withstand a concerted French assault. OPPOSITE: From his post atop Medellin Hill, Wellesley watched as his unwavering infantry mowed down the front of the attacking French columns.

With shouts of "Vive l'Empereur," the French troops pressed their advance. Flashes of musketry could be seen in the darkness as the 9th Light Infantry fired on the British. The French seized "some of our men by the collar and were dragging them away prisoners," wrote Sergeant Nichol of the 92nd Gordon Highlanders. The French captured 200 British prisoners, even though many of those captured managed to escape in the darkness.

Hill, who was still on his bloodied horse, led the 29th Foot of Stewart's 2nd Brigade into the fray. They fired a volley at the French and then charged the enemy with their bayonets. The French, who reeled in the face of the counterattack, retreated down the hill with the redcoats in pursuit. Their powerful volleys repulsed another French column as well. In the face of such stubborn resistance by the cream of the British army, the French withdrew from the hill.

Victor's night attack, which lasted for about an hour, achieved nothing. The French lost 300 men, while the British lost 400 men. The King's German Legion battalions of Sherbrooke's 1st Division incurred half of the British losses.

The French commanders had every intention of launching a full-scale attack at daylight. The French lit torches during the night not only to guide troops that were arriving on the field from their long march, but also to illuminate the work of artillerymen and engineers who toiled to construct earthworks atop Cascajal Hill for multiple batteries.

British officers had their men up before dawn in order to prepare for a fresh assault by the enemy. When the sun finally rose on July 28, French forces could be seen deploying for an assault on the British line. Victor's I Corps was still at Cascajal Hill facing the British left and center, while Sebastiani's IV Corps faced the British right above the Pajar de Vergara battery.

General Victor sent word to King Joseph of his plan for a major assault to which King Joseph reluctantly agreed. Victor intended to strike against Medellin Hill with the main attack entrusted to Ruffin's 1st Division. Lapisse's 2nd Division would make a diversionary attack against the British forces holding the southern slope of the ridge. General Jean Francois Leval's 3rd Division of Sebastiani's IV Corps would be responsible for pinning down the troops on the British right. As for General Eugene-Casimir Villatte's 3rd Division, it would serve as the French reserve.

One of the batteries on Cascajal Hill fired a single round at 5 a.m. that served as a signal for a French artillery bombardment to begin. Upon

that signal, 54 French cannon roared to life. The French gunners on Cascajal Hill plastered Medellin Hill with grapeshot and shell.

Throughout the Peninsular War, the British army faced a chronic shortage of artillery. The British had just 18 guns on the Medellin Hill with which to respond to the French artillery. The French gunners succeeded in silencing many of those guns.

As the French artillery fire slammed into the British positions on Medellin Hill, British officers ordered their men to lie down in efforts to save them from the hell being hurled at them. "The men were all lying in the ranks, and except at the very spot were a shot or shell fell, there was the least motion," wrote Ensign John Aitchinson of the 3rd Foot Guards of Henry Campbell's Brigade. After 45 minutes, the French guns fell silent.

Cannon smoke obscured the view of the British troops, but they could hear the French drums that signalled an advance. French skirmishers known as voltigeurs fanned out in front of dense infantry columns. The voltigeurs steadily forced back the British skirmishes facing them.

As the cannon smoke cleared, General Hill could see the French columns moving up the rocky slope. When the troops of the 24th Line Infantry closed to within 100 yards of the ridge line, Hill ordered his six battalions of infantry to stand up. They marched to the edge of the ridge where they fired crashing volleys at the French. The storm of British lead staggered the head of the French columns. Dazed survivors at the front of the French columns returned a ragged fire, but with little effect.

With the French formations in disorder, Hill ordered a bayonet charge. With their bayonets glittering in the sunlight, the redcoats surged down the hill. This was too much for the battered soldiers of the French 24th Line Infantry who fled across the Portina. The 96th Line Infantry attempted to assist them, but the 5th Battalion of the King's German Legion struck their flank.

Some of the charging redcoats crossed the Portina and pushed on toward Cascajal Hill. The French mowed down a substantial number of these troops, and the surviving British fell back to their lines. French guns pounded the British line for an hour. The French lost 1,300 men, while inflicting 750 casualties on the British. Both sides gathered their dead.

The French soldiers then began to cook their breakfast, while the half-starved British foraged for whatever they could find. Under the scorching sun of the summer morning, both sides drank from the tainted waters of the Portina stream.

The French high command convened on Cascajal Hill to discuss its next course of action. Victor wanted to renew the attack on the British with the assistance of Sebastiani's fresh troops, which were still arriving on the field. But Joseph, Jourdan, and Sebastiani all preferred to withdraw in order to cover Madrid and Toledo. The consen-

The King's German Legion performed admirably during the Peninsular War.

Among the most steady and reliable troops to serve under British commander Arthur Wellesley in the Peninsular War and at Waterloo were those that filled the ranks of the King's German Legion units. These German soldiers hailed mostly from the Electorate of Hanover.

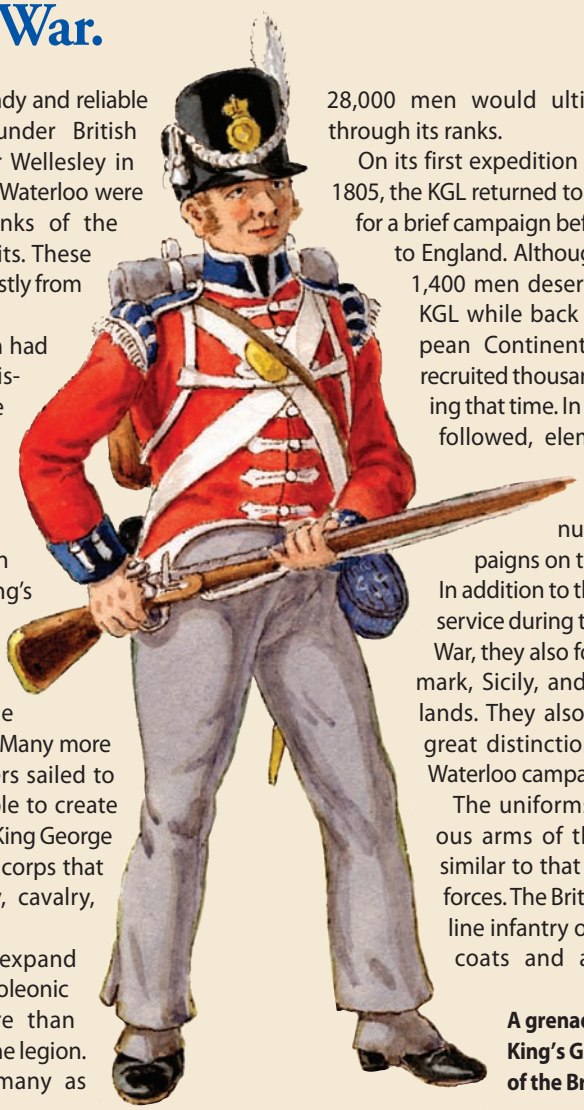
In May 1803, the French had invaded Hanover and disbanded its army. Because the British crown needed troops, King George III, who also was Elector of Hanover, gave his permission to Lt. Col. Friedrich von der Decken to raise a "King's German Regiment."

Von der Decken had recruited 450 expatriate Hanoverian troops for the regiment by that October. Many more former Hanoverian soldiers sailed to England making it possible to create additional KGL regiments. King George agreed to establish a KGL corps that would comprise infantry, cavalry, artillery, and engineers.

The KGL continued to expand during the protracted Napoleonic Wars and by 1812 more than 14,000 men belonged to the legion. Owing to attrition, as many as 28,000 men would ultimately pass through its ranks.

On its first expedition in November 1805, the KGL returned to its homeland for a brief campaign before returning to England. Although more than 1,400 men deserted from the KGL while back on the European Continent, the British recruited thousands more during that time. In the years that followed, elements of the KGL would take part in numerous campaigns on the Continent. In addition to their extensive service during the Peninsular War, they also fought in Denmark, Sicily, and the Netherlands. They also fought with great distinction during the Waterloo campaign of 1815.

The uniforms of the various arms of the KGL were similar to that of the British forces. The British issued the line infantry of the KGL red coats and armed them with India Pattern Brown Bess muskets. Some of the light troops, however, received the slower loading, but more accurate, Baker Rifle and wore green uniforms.



A grenadier of the King's German Legion of the British Army.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Serving in Portugal and Spain the fighting ability of the KGL earned them the respect of friend and foe alike. The valor exhibited by the KGL units are Talavera in 1809, and the heavy losses that they suffered as a result, led the British soldiers in Wellesley's army to readily accept the Germans as comrades-in-arms.

Another important milestone occurred on July 23, 1812, when two heavy dragoon regiments of the KGL earned enduring fame at the Battle of Garcia Hernandez in western Spain. During that sanguine clash, the German horse soldiers overwhelmed three French squares inflicting 200 casualties on the French and capturing 1,400 others. They achieved these feats of battle at the cost of just 120 casualties.

During the battle of Waterloo on June 18, 1815, 400 light troops of the KGL made a desperate stand at La Haye Sainte, a forward position in the center of the battlefield. Although heavily outnumbered, the Germans boldly held the fortified farmhouse for much of the day, contributing substantially to the Allied victory at Waterloo.

The British disbanded the KGL in 1816 and the flags of the legion were placed in an old garrison church in Hanover. At that point, a substantial number of its officers and soldiers joined the reconstituted Hanoverian army.

—Mike Phifer

Courtesy of the Council of the National Army Museum, London

The British 40th Regiment of Foot hurled back a French assault on the Anglo-Spanish center at the height of the battle.

sus was that Soult would attack the British rear when he arrived in a few days—then a messenger arrived with word that Soult had been delayed and would not arrive until early August—so Joseph agreed to renew the attack on the Allies in the hope of achieving a decisive victory.

Instead of attacking Medellin Hill head-on Joseph and Jourdan told Victor that he was to try to attack the strategic position from the northern plain that lay south of the southern slopes of the Sierra de Segurilla. Meanwhile, Sebastiani's troops would deliver the main attack against Wellesley's center. Because the French did not consider the Spanish troops to pose any real threat, they left them alone altogether.

In preparation for another attack against Medellin Hill, Wellesley instructed General Donkin to shift his 2nd Brigade of the 3rd Division closer to the summit of the hill. Wellesley rightfully sensed that the French would try to outflank the position from the north.

He also reinforced his left flank by deploying two cavalry brigades from his reserve along on the western end of the northern plain. These were Brig. Gen. Henry Fane's 1st Heavy Cavalry Brigade, and Brig. Gen. George Anson led the 3rd Brigade. Anson's brigade comprised light dragoons and hussars. Wellesley also ordered several cannon into position on the northern slope of the hill and ordered some infantry to march across the northern plain and take up positions on the lower slopes of the Sierra de Segurilla where they could help foil the anticipated assault on the British left flank.

When Wellesley saw dense clouds of dust to the east indicating that French reinforcements were arriving on the field, he sent an urgent request to Cuesta for reinforcements. The Spanish commander responded positively by dispatching Maj. Gen. Don Luis Alejandro de Bassecourt's Reserve Division of 5,000 troops, the Duke of Albuquerque's Cavalry, and a battery of 12-pounders.

Two Spanish heavy guns went into action west of the King's German Legion Battery, while the four other guns buttressed the British battery at Pajar de Vergara. Albuquerque's cavalry formed a second line behind Anson and Fane.

Eighty French cannon began pounding the British line at 2 p.m. in preparation for the third French attack of the battle. British foot soldiers hugged the ground in hopes of escaping the storm of iron. Although the main attack was scheduled to commence an hour later, Leval blundered by ordering his blue-coated infantrymen to advance half an hour early while the bombardment was still in progress. Struggling over stone fences and through olive groves, the French troops pressed forward toward the British line amidst the crashing artillery.

The soldiers of the Nassau Regiment resorted to a ruse in order to get as close to the British as possible without being fired upon. "Long live the English!" the green-uniformed soldiers shouted as they closed in on the British and the gunners of the Pajar de Vergara battery. The trick might have worked for a short time, but they revealed their identity when they shot at the British who promptly returned the fire. The British 2/24th Regiment poured heavy volleys into the right flank of the Nassauers. At the same time, the Spanish and British guns of the Pajar de Vergara battery mowed down an assault by the Nassauers who withdrew in disorder.

Redcoats from three of Campbell's regiments pursued the retreating French, capturing six

By John E. Spindler

‘A Most Lamentable Failure’

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

It is not always the actions of the brave and mighty that determine a battle’s outcome—victory or defeat can hinge on the most mundane of events. On December 10, 1899, one such occurrence, resulting in a severe British defeat, took place on a hill called Kissieberg near Stormberg Junction in the Cape Colony.

A Boer soldier suffering from diarrhea was preparing to relieve himself in the pre-dawn hours, when he noted glints off bayonets. After watching for a moment, he recognized the men as British. The soldier’s call for alarm brought forth a 60-man detachment from the Orange Free State’s Smithfield Commando stationed upon a nearby hill. Shortly afterwards, the British soldiers found themselves under intense fire.

“It did not take us a moment to realize that speed would be our only means of salvation,” wrote Pieter Kritzinger, a Boer soldier in the Rouxville Commando at Stormberg. Soldiers raced to the higher parts of the rocky hill, known locally as a “kopje,” and dug in before the British, commanded by Maj. Gen. Sir William Gatacre, could climb the hill’s more scalable part.

The Boers, led by Commandant Hans Swanepoel, opened fire from their positions at the top of the hill at 3:45 a.m. When they did so, the 7th Royal Irish Rifles rushed forward. Some went left and seized a smaller kopje, while most British infantrymen went to the right and had their momentum abruptly halted by a sheer cliff.

Drastically outnumbered, the soldiers of the Smithfield Commando detachment, supported by one Krupp howitzer, found themselves facing a 2,600-man attack force supported by a dozen Armstrong 15-pounder guns. After an exhausting night march in which the British force lost its way, Gatacre had planned to retake the Stormberg railway junction at first light via a surprise attack. But his battle plan went wrong at every stage.

The engagement at Stormberg Junction during the Second Boer War continued a long history of recorded conflicts in South Africa since the first Europeans arrived in the region in the mid-17th century. Jan van Riebeeck of the Dutch East India Company founded Cape Colony at Table Bay in 1652. The colony, which the Dutch established as a place for their ships traveling to and from the East Indies to resupply, existed in relative isolation

Their attack on Stormberg Junction went wrong at every stage, the first of three defeats during the British army's 'Black Week' in the Second Boer War.

Boer irregulars use the terrain to their advantages in a bloody clash at the outset of the Second Boer War. With their modern artillery and superior rifles, they proved more than a match for the British.

until the French Revolutionary Wars.

British forces in 1795 seized Cape Colony from the Netherlands, but they returned the territory to the Dutch in 1802. Fearful that France would seize control of Cape Colony, a British expeditionary force took control of it again four years later. The Netherlands formally ceded Cape Colony to Britain in 1814.

Dissatisfied with British colonial rule, a large number of Boers pioneers began migrating north of Cape Colony in 1837 to settle in the high veld. The mass migration of Boers that followed became known as the Great Trek. Britain recognized the independence of the Boer republics known as the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State, respectively, in 1852 and 1854.

A fragile peace in the region continued for another quarter century until the British, taking advantage of financial difficulties of the Transvaal government, annexed the republic in 1877.

Tired of Britain's policy of aggressive territor-

Both: Wikimedia

ABOVE: Seeking to remain independent from Great Britain, Boer pioneers migrated north during the Great Trek to settle in the high veld where they would be free from British rule. Britain recognized the independence of the two Boer republics in the 1850s. RIGHT: Major General Sir William Gatacre, an experienced British commander, had a bad habit of overestimating the capabilities of his soldiers.

ial expansion in South Africa, the Boers declared their independence on December 16, 1880, sparking the First Boer War. Four days later, at Bronkhorstspruit, Boer irregulars routed a similarly sized column of British troops. Underestimating the military capabilities and mobility of their enemy, Britain suffered loss after loss in the field and had some of their frontier forts besieged. Attempts to relieve these Boer sieges resulted in three major defeats in the span of one month. The battle at Majuba Hill on February 27, 1881, proved to be a particularly disastrous defeat for the British army.

These losses forced Prime Minister William Gladstone to repeal the Transvaal annexation and seek a settlement with the Boers. The two sides subsequently entered into a peace known as the Pretoria Convention.

Relations between the Boer republics and Britain further worsened in 1887. The catalyst for the political friction was the discovery three years earlier of gold deposits along the Witwatersrand, a 35-mile long escarpment in the Transvaal. Additional discoveries of gold in the region followed, which sparked a gold rush.

Both Transvaal and Orange Free State already had experienced, with the earlier discovery of diamonds, what could occur with a large influx of foreigners. The Boers called these interlopers "uitlanders" and regarded them with great disdain. Fearing another attempt by Britain to completely control Southern Africa after the annexation of Zululand, Orange Free State's President Marthinus Steyn signed an alliance with the Transvaal that included a mutual defense treaty by which the two Boer republics would come to each other's assistance in the event of another war.

In a 10-year span from 1886 to 1896, the population of Johannesburg skyrocketed to 100,000 as British, Australians, and Canadians flocked to South Africa to seek their fortunes. Under Transvaal's President Paul Kruger, the republic suddenly transformed from a poor, agrarian republic into the ranks of the world's wealthiest nations. As a significant percentage of the new arrivals were British nationals, conflicts arose due to differences in wide range of subjects ranging from business practices to morality.

Despite the uitlanders' contribution to the economic prosperity of Transvaal, they lacked political rights if they had not resided in the region for five years. While the gold prospectors, particularly the British nationals, did not want to relinquish their citizenship, many wanted to have the right to participate in the republic's political process.

When mining magnate Cecil Rhodes became the prime minister of Cape Colony he saw the plight of uitlanders as a means to obtaining his goal of British imperialism in Africa. Rhodes found allies in London with the election of the Unionist Party and the appointment of Joseph Chamberlain, who shared Rhodes's idea for British supremacy in Africa, to the post of colonial secretary. Because of these events, the Boers assumed that London wanted complete control of the states in South Africa.

Their fears were realized in January 1896. While working with a number of prominent, dissatisfied uitlanders, Rhodes contacted a Scottish friend, Leander Jameson, to help him reestablish British control of the Boer republics. Formulating a plan, which was secretly backed by Chamberlain, Jameson would launch a raid into Transvaal designed to promote and encourage an uitlander rebellion.

Jameson crossed the border into Transvaal on December 29, 1895, with 494 men, eight Maxim machine guns, and three light field guns. Word of the incursion spread rapidly and the Boers assembled a reaction force to stop the invasion. Setting out on January 1, 1896, Jameson's force had advanced 20 miles when it stalled in face of a Boer detail that blocked the road to Johannesburg. After a brief, yet fierce, engagement that resulted in 30 casualties, Jameson surrendered.

The scandal resulted in Rhodes' resignation as prime minster of Cape Colony. William Schreiner, a native of Cape Colony, succeeded him. Rhodes's influence was not totally erased since an ally, Sir Alfred Milner, was appointed High Commissioner for Southern Africa. Milner strongly shared Rhodes's view of British imperialism in Africa and devoted time and effort into how to achieve this goal.

Boer presidents Steyn and Kruger renewed the mutual assistance treaty between the two republics in 1897. German Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a telegram to Kruger congratulating him on thwarting the raid. Seeing a golden opportunity to strengthen his nation, Kruger entered into a strategic relationship with Germany. Kruger intended to use the revenue generated from Transvaal gold to strengthen his country's defense. Pretoria bought the newest rifles and howitzers from Germany, but in order not to rely on just one source, it also purchased artillery from France.

Despite the apparent inevitability of another conflict, moderates on both sides made attempts to avoid bloodshed. The Bloemfontein Confer-

ence in spring 1899 was the last major diplomatic effort to resolve the tense political situation.

On September 8, 1899, Britain voted to increase the number of troops in the region by an additional 10,000 soldiers transferred from India and the Mediterranean. With these additional troops, the British were able to form a 47,000-strong 1st Army Corps in England for transfer to South Africa.

Kruger and Steyn responded with the construction of new forts along the frontier. In Transvaal, commandos were dispatched to the borders of Cape Colony and Natal. By that point, another Boer War seemed unavoidable.

Kruger, with Steyn's support, dispatched an ultimatum to London on October 9 that set forth three key provisions. These were the withdrawal of British troops from the borders of Transvaal, the removal from South Africa all troops that had arrived since June 1, and the prohibition of any troops en route via sea to disembark in Southern Africa. Kruger further stipulated that if he did not receive British approval by 5 p.m. on October 11, then Transvaal and Orange Free State would consider a state of war to exist between Britain and the Boer republics. Colonial Secretary Chamberlain was delighted, as the Boers would initiate the war he desired.

Great Britain declined the ultimatum on October 11. Although many British officials felt the Boers would quickly submit, those in the charge of the armed forces were concerned that the number of British troops in South Africa was insufficient for the task at hand. When hostilities began in October, the British had just 22,500 men in South Africa, and more than half of those were stationed in Natal. As for artillery, the British had 60 field guns of various calibers.

General Sir Redvers Buller 1st Army Corps comprised the 1st, 2nd and 3rd divisions. Elements of Gatacre's 3rd Division would fight at Stormberg. The British distributed their mounted infantry and artillery brigades to support the infantry divisions.

The British forces that fought against the Boers were still essentially fighting the same style that they had successfully employed a century before in the Napoleonic Wars. With a succession of victories over native forces in Africa and India, the popular belief existed in the British military that no changes to tactics and strategy were required. While the Boers held the numerical advantage at war's declaration, London believed that once the British Empire had mobilized it would be able to bring in men and equipment since the Royal Navy controlled the high seas.

One recent change in the British Army, though, was the replacement of the traditional scarlet jacket with a khaki-colored uniform. In a war in which

General Sir Redvers Buller, the commander-in-chief of British forces in South Africa, sent three columns to invade Boer territory. Each column met with disaster in the same week.

Boer soldiers used guerilla-style tactics, the new khaki outfits would blend well in the reddish-brown terrain and arid climate of the veld.

The British Army had also begun updating its infantry weapons and some of the arriving units carried the new .303-caliber Lee-Enfield rifle with smokeless cordite ammunition.

But the majority of British troops still carried the .303-caliber Lee-Metford rifle firing black powder cartridges that produced clouds of telltale smoke. The Lee-Metford had a maximum range of 1,800 yards, but was most effective at less than 900 yards. For heavy fire support, each infantry, cavalry, or mounted infantry regiment received a pair of .303-caliber Maxim machine guns. Capable of firing 600 rounds per minute, these weapons similarly had a maximum range of 1,800 yards.

British soldiers in the Second Boer War were backed by mounted infantry and artillery. An artillery brigade consisted of six gun batteries. The horse artillery used 12-pounder field guns, while the field batteries were armed with 15-pounders. Although these were the most common, other calibers, such as the 7-pounder, were used as well.

Gatacre's force at Stormberg suffered from some of the weaknesses that plagued the British. In addition to being outnumbered at the outset of hostilities, the British lacked accurate maps for the areas in which they intended to conduct operations. Apart from a handful of units that had been stationed in South Africa, the majority of the British forces that served in the conflict possessed limited knowledge of local topography and climactic conditions.

Upon arrival of the 1st Army Corps in South Africa, Buller developed an offensive plan to deal with current situation in Natal and Cape Colony. He originally intended to use Gatacre's 3rd Division to force Boers that invaded the Cape Colony back across the Orange River. Additionally, he intended to use elements of the 3rd Division to secure key railway junctions in the colony.

But emergencies in other sectors sapped Buller's strength. A significant portion of his division was taken away from him to contend with the Boer sieges of Kimberley, Mafeking, and Ladysmith, as well as to shore up British weaknesses in various hotspots in Natal.

Energetic and physically fit, 56-year-old Gatacre had seen action in Burma, India, and the Sudan. He habitually pushed the men under his command to the point that he overestimated their capabilities. While considered a so-called soldier's general, the dictatorial way he drove his troops led them to give Gatacre the sobriquet of "Back-acher."

At the beginning of the conflict, several Orange Free State commandos had begun operating in the area of the Stormberg railway junction. Commandant Jan Olivier, the vice chairman of the Orange Free State's Volksraad, was the supreme commander of this force. Like many commandants, Olivier had no specific qualities to be leader. A large man over six feet tall, he was col-

orful, forceful, and greatly admired.

Commandant Jan Olivier of the Rouxville and Thaba Nchu commandos led the Boer force that crossed the Orange River and occupied Stormberg junction. Other Boer units operating in the area were the Bethulie commando under Veldcornet Floris du Plooy and the Smithfield commando under Commandant Hans Swanepoel. By the time Gatacre marched against the Boers occupying the area around Stormberg junction, the Boers had 760 Boer irregulars deployed to defend the position.

On October 12, the Boer force of 21,000 Transvaalers, under supreme command of Commandant-General Piet Joubert, and 15,000 Orange Free Staters had been mobilized for war. A large percentage of this force took the offensive and crossed the frontiers of Cape Colony and Natal.

While Joubert sent Assistant Commandant-General Piet Cronje and 7,000 Transvaalers and Free Staters to besiege Mafeking and the diamond center of Kimberley, he ordered another 14,000 Transvaalers and 6,000 Free Staters to cross at critical locations along the frontier. Within a couple of weeks, Boer forces besieged Kimberley, Mafeking and Ladysmith. Although a large number of British troops were surrounded, those sieges tied up a significant portion of Boer burghers and negated their advantages of numbers and mobility.

The first couple of battles, such as the clash at Talana Hill on October 20, were technically British victories, but the cost in casualties was high. While the Boers may have held a tactical advantage, it was a major strategic error to leave the region's crucial railway junctions in the hands of the British—allowing them to deploy troops throughout South Africa.

The need to force the Boers to raise their sieges compelled Buller to scrap his initial plan. The 1st Army Corps arrived in South Africa on October 31. The very next day, the Orange Free State troops seized a key bridge over the Orange River at Norvalspont. But Steyn deliberately checked the advance of his republic's commandos deeper into Cape Colony. He did this in the hope that a peace settlement might still occur. Once it became apparent that peace would not occur, Commandant Olivier advanced into the northeastern part of Cape Colony and secured the town of Aliwal North during the second week in November.

At Stormberg Junction, the 1st Berkshire Battalion had been stationed at the location long enough to build fortifications. Built in 1892, the junction guarded the East London to Bloemfontein railway. The Boers' crossing of Orange River unnerved British authorities who ordered a withdrawal from Stormberg Junction. The Smithfield and Bethulie commandos did not occupy Stormberg until November 26. Olivier dispersed other commandos to secure the immediate area. Boer irregulars made excellent use of nearby kopjes and narrow valleys to form strong, natural defensive positions.

Gatacre, having seen his division reduced to the size of a brigade, arrived in the sector in early December. Impatient and seeking glory, he decided to liberate Stormberg using the town of Molteno as his staging area. Although a veteran officer, Gatacre had never fought the Boers. He

Armed with modern weapons, Boer irregulars proved formidable foes.

In contrast to the professionalism of the British Army, the Boer army was composed almost entirely of irregular volunteers. The Boers held several advantages when war broke out in South Africa. First, the burghers had intimate knowledge of the terrain and climate. Second, the burghers were highly mobile, skilled with arms, and extremely self-reliant. Third, their marksmanship and ability to use the terrain to camouflage and conceal their positions made them practically invisible to British officers and soldiers.

Unlike the British organization of battalions and divisions, Boer forces used the commando system, which could be traced back to Dutch colonization of South Africa. The Boers divided their republics into districts from which each commando took its name. Within each district, all of the male citizens would answer the call to arms and elect a commandant.

The size of the commandos varied based on the district's population, ranging anywhere from 36 to 300 soldiers. Each burgher, or enfranchised citizen, from the ages of 16 to 60 was required to serve as well provide his own weapon, horse, and 10 days' worth of ration. Those unable to afford a weapon received one from governmental authorities.

The commando system did not provide the burghers with any kind of formal military training. A commando was led by a commandant and each ward by a veldcornet whose rank was similar to that of a senior non-commissioned officer.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Transvaal President Paul Kruger purchased new Mauser rifles from Germany for his citizen-soldiers.

The Boer army had neither uniforms nor insignias, and the burghers did not receive any pay for their service. The Transvaal and Orange Free State republics possessed the ability to call up 50,000 men to fight the British, but they never had more than between 30,000 to 40,000 under arms at any one time.

In 1896 the two Boer republics began purchasing modern arms in large volumes from European firms. The Transvaal purchased more than 37,000 7mm Mauser Model 1895 rifles and at least 40 million rounds of ammunition from Germany. The Mauser used smokeless cordite, which greatly enhanced the Boer guerilla tactics and enabled their front-line forces to fight from well-concealed positions.

Since the Mauser Model 1895 employed a five-round magazine carried in clips that Boer soldier could insert quickly, the Boers were able to fire faster than the British. The British rifles had 10-round clips, but the soldiers had to manually load the clips one at a time from loose ammunition carried in pouches.

The Transvaal and Orange Free State also bought modern German-built Krupp guns. Although the Boers mainly used 75mm pieces, they also fielded some 65mm mountain guns. The Transvaal State Artillery also possessed French-built 75mm Creusot guns, as well as four 155mm fortress guns, which outranged anything the British put into the field. For infantry support, the Boers relied on 37mm Vicker-Maxim automatic guns, referred to as Pom-Poms, and Maxim machine guns.

—John E. Spindler

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

Lieutenant General Lord Paul Methuen sought to turn the Boer flank at Belmont by sending his troops on night march to outflank the Boers similar to the one orchestrated by Maj. Gen. Sir William Gatacre at Stormberg several weeks later. Possessing faulty maps, the British became disoriented in unfamiliar terrain.

decided to conduct a night march to get his troops into position for a dawn assault on the Boer positions in the hills surrounding the junction. Gatacre intended to make his attack on December 8, but once in Molteno he found that it took longer for the infantry and field guns to arrive at the staging area than he had expected.

Three routes led north from Molteno to Stormberg. The right route passed through gorges and kopjes and came out four miles east of the railway junction; the center route, which was the most direct, followed the railway to the junction; and the left route led eight miles west and would require a sharp turn to the east to reach the junction. Gatacre initially planned to advance on the most direct route.

At 4 a.m. on December 9, Gatacre's men awoke and traveled by truck to Molteno where they were to board rail cars. Eight hours later the soldiers entrained, but were delayed by mules on the rail line. Rather than let the troops disembark, Gatacre forced the men to wait on the train for three hours in the blistering heat. In the meantime, Gatacre received intelligence, which later turned out to be false, that the Boers had deployed a strong blocking force astride his route of advance. Not wanting to undertake a night march through difficult terrain, he selected the left route.

When Gatacre left Molteno to retake Stormberg Junction, he had just one brigade composed of 2,600 soldiers. The brigade comprised the 2nd Irish Rifles Battalion, 2nd Northumberland Fusiliers Battalion, Cape Mounted Rifles, and two batteries of the Royal Field Artillery. Each infantry battalion possessed a Maxim machine gun. Other support elements included a Cape Police detachment, engineers, and a field hospital.

Owing to a mistake by a telegraph operator who forgot to transmit the message to the 1st Berkshires stationed 30 miles to the east at Penhoek, the battalion failed to arrive in Molteno. The battalion, which previously had been stationed in the Stormberg area, knew the terrain, and therefore would have been of considerable help. Unaware of the mistake, Gatacre did not understand why the 1st Berkshires had not arrived.

Although he failed to reconnoiter the route, Gatacre obtained the services of two Cape Colony policemen, who insisted they knew the area, as guides. The plan was to depart at 7:15 p.m., but the last of the troops did not arrive in Molteno until 8 p.m.

In spite of the lack of food and sleep, Gatacre ordered the troops to fix bayonets. They departed Molteno at 9:15 p.m. with the 2nd Irish Rifles leading the column. Behind the infantry battalions followed the artillery and mounted infantry. The rear of the column, which included the field hospital and the Irish Rifles' Maxim gun, did not know the route had changed. For that reason, they marched up the main road, but they soon returned to Molteno.

Olivier, who was with his troops in Stormberg, knew the British were on their way, but he did not know when they would arrive or from what direction they would launch their attack. While Gatacre was gathering his force at Molteno, the 300 men of du Plooy's Bethulie Commando and the 400 men from Burgersfort under Commandant Piet Steenkamp marched out of Stormberg and deployed on the Stormberg-Steynsburg Road. This left the 400 men of the Rouxville Commando and 290 burghers of the Smithfield Commando to defend Stormberg Junction. In addition, a detachment of 60 men from the Smithfield Commando deployed west of the town on a kopje overlooking Klipfontein, a farm owned by Louis van Zyl.

Gatacre's force had been marching up Steynsburg road for nearly three hours when it reached a rail line nine miles from Molteno. This meant that the column had missed the turn it was supposed to take to reach Stormberg. The column halted at 1 a.m. when Gatacre demanded to know the reason his troops were not on the proper course. A sergeant told him the guides had not erred; rather, they had decided to take a longer

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ABOVE: Reenactors in South Africa portray Boer irregulars. At Stormberg Junction, the Boers made excellent use of nearby kopjes and narrow valleys to form strong defensive positions. RIGHT: British reenactors portray the soldiers of the Middlesex Regiment. Gatacre failed to send scouts ahead of his column, and when contact was made it surprised the British as much as it did the Boers.

route to avoid rough ground that would hamper the movement of the field guns.

Gatacre ordered an hour's rest for which his troops were grateful. Having been exposed to the searing heat during the daylight hours with no food and very little water, they were exhausted. What is more, they had to march with fixed bayonets, which put an extra strain on the men since they had to carry their rifles for a long distance at an awkward angle.

After 3 a.m. on Sunday, December 10, the Irish Rifles marching in columns of four led the brigade through a defile and into a valley just north of Klipfontein. Some of the famished British soldiers broke ranks in order to try to capture some of Van Zyl's sheep.

It was while the famished men slaughtered the sheep that they were spotted by the Boer with diarrhea who had walked far out of camp to move his bowels. He had just lowered his trousers when he saw the glint of British bayonets. "Die kakies! Die kakies!" he shouted as he ran back to the camp to alert the burghers of the Smithfield Commando.

As the British approached the Boer positions, Van Zyl retrieved his rifle and began firing at the British soldiers slaughtering his ewes. Upon hearing the sounds of gunfire, the Rouxville Commando rode to investigate. The battle started about an hour later. Hendrik Coetzee, a Boer teenager who had quit school to join a commando, is believed to have fired the first shot of the battle. The 60 Boers of the Smithfield Commando moved into position quickly and began pouring a hot fire into the head of the British column. The alarm had been sounded, and all of the Boers in the area began to deploy to check the British advance.

Not once during the long march had Gatacre sent scouts ahead of the column to look for the enemy. For that reason, when contact was made it surprised the British as much as it did the Boers. Gatacre ordered the Irish Rifles to seize a kopje as the sun rose in the east. Unfortunately, only three companies of the battalion obeyed the order. The rest of the infantry paid no heed to any orders issued by Gatacre. Instead, they rushed to a slope to their right, which happened to be the location a Swanepoel's burghers. Upon reaching the slope, they suddenly realized that it led to a vertical cliff. While pondering their next move, they came upon a bushman's cave at the cliff's base. Some of them Irishmen climbed inside the cave. Because they were in a state of complete exhaustion, some of them fell fast asleep.

Maintaining their composure under pressure, the gunners of the British artillery batteries maneuvered their guns to support the infantry. Yet they had difficulty sighting their fire because they were firing toward the rising sun. While moving their guns forward to go into action, one of the heavy field guns became stuck in a steep ravine or "donga."

Some of the guns began firing upon the Smithfield Commando's position without effect as the Boer irregulars had constructed well-protected defenses that made them nearly invisible to the enemy. Some bold soldiers attempted to climb the kopje, but they came under fire from their own guns because of the poor marksmanship of the British artillerymen and the blinding sunlight. A number of Northumberland Fusiliers tried to use a donga as a defensive position, but it proved too wide and did not protect them from Boer rifle fire.

Gatacre and his officers had no idea of the enemy's strength, much less the location of his forces because they were so well hidden in the terrain. As the British situation began to deteriorate, Gatacre became increasingly desperate. He possessed enough presence of mind, however, to realize that if he could just reorganize his force then his plan of attack still might work.

The British soldiers rushing across the plain from the farm to the kopje under heavy fire faced a nearly insurmountable situation. Just over an hour into the firefight, Gatacre decided his best course of action would be to have his troops pull back to the far side of the valley and reorganize. As they attempted to withdraw, the mounted infantry could furnish them with covering fire. He therefore issued orders for his beleaguered infantry to pull back. During the withdrawal, the Boers' sole field gun shelled the British infantry. Even though there was just one gun arrayed against them, the British artillery crews could not silence it.

With the battle almost over, the mounted Bethulie and Burgersdorps commandos arrived upon the scene. While du Plooy split his force for flanking attacks, Steenkamp believed that a portion of the British force was trying to encircle the recently arrived Rouxville Commando. The burghers dismounted and found positions to fire

upon the British. The British infantry became increasingly demoralized by the fact that they were being shot at by an enemy they could not see.

The newly arrived Boer reinforcements made the British fear that they might become trapped, so Gatacre ordered a retreat to Molteno. The 11 remaining Armstrong guns kept up support fire until the last moment with the mounted infantry once again covering the withdrawal. Swanepoel ordered his detachment from the Smithfield Commando to rush the retreating British.

During the withdrawal, the British abandoned another field gun when it became stuck on the farm Klipfontein. After the battle, the Boers took possession of this gun, as well as the one that had earlier become stuck in the donga.

Gatacre was almost slain by friendly fire. While leading the rearguard, his own gunners fired upon him, mistakenly thinking he was a Boer. Shortly after Gatacre's force retreated, the British troops trapped at the kopje base surrendered. "The battlefield was literally gray with dead and wounded," wrote Boer burgher Jacobus Bosman.

The battle had lasted an hour and a half. Gatacre retreated by the direct route to Colenso and by 11 a.m. what remained of his brigade arrived in town after a long march in the heat. It was only then that he noticed that one-quarter of his force was missing. Dissolving into tears, he assumed the worst. Gatacre's disastrous operation had cost his brigade 29 dead and 57 wounded. As for the 633 officers and men who had been left behind, when they discovered that their general had abandoned them they raised white flags and surrendered. The Bethulie burghers rounded them up and took them into captivity.

Like previous encounters, the Boers chose not pursue the beaten enemy. Du Plooy and Steenkamp were keen to do so, as was Commandant Olivier initially; however, he countermanded the order, citing it was the Sabbath. Although a heated discussion ensued between Olivier and du Plooy, a pursuit would have been unlikely as many of Boer irregulars focused on recovering the abandoned British weapons. Of the approximately 800 burghers who saw action that day, only six Boers were killed and 27 wounded, one of whom was Commandant Swanepoel.

Gatacre told his wife several days later that the defeat was entirely his fault. It was "a most lamentable failure, and yet within an acre of being the success I anticipated," he said. "I went rather against my better judgment in not resting the night at Molteno, but I was tempted by the shortness of the distance and the certainty of success."

Many factors contributed to the defeat at Stormberg. Gatacre, like many British officers, underestimated the capabilities of the Boers. For one, the Boers had known that an attack was imminent and had ample time to prepare for it. Moreover, Gatacre rushed into battle without waiting for all of the troops available to him to arrive. Specifically, he failed to wait for the Brabant's Horse and the Cape Mounted Rifles to join the attack. Similarly, the telephone operator's mistake meant that the 1st Berkshires did not participate in the operation. Most critically, Gatacre overestimated the physical capabilities of his men. They were incapable of conducting a night march through unfamiliar territory after having sat most of the day under a baking sun without food or rest.

The clash at Stormberg was the first in a series of embarrassing military defeats for the British from December 10, 1899, through December 17, 1899, that became known afterwards as "Black Week." On December 11, the day after the Battle of Stormberg, Boer generals Piet Cronje and Koos de la Rey routed a British division at the Magersfontein south of Kimberley, inflicting 1,000 casualties on Lt. Gen. Lord Paul Methuen's force.

The worst of the defeats of Black Week unfolded on December 15 when General Louis Botha's Boer force defeated Buller's army at Colenso in Natal. In that engagement, the British suffered 1,243 casualties and lost 10 of their 12 field guns. When Buller suffered defeat in another advance at Spion Kop on January 24, 1900, London sacked him as overall commander replacing him with Lord Frederick Roberts.

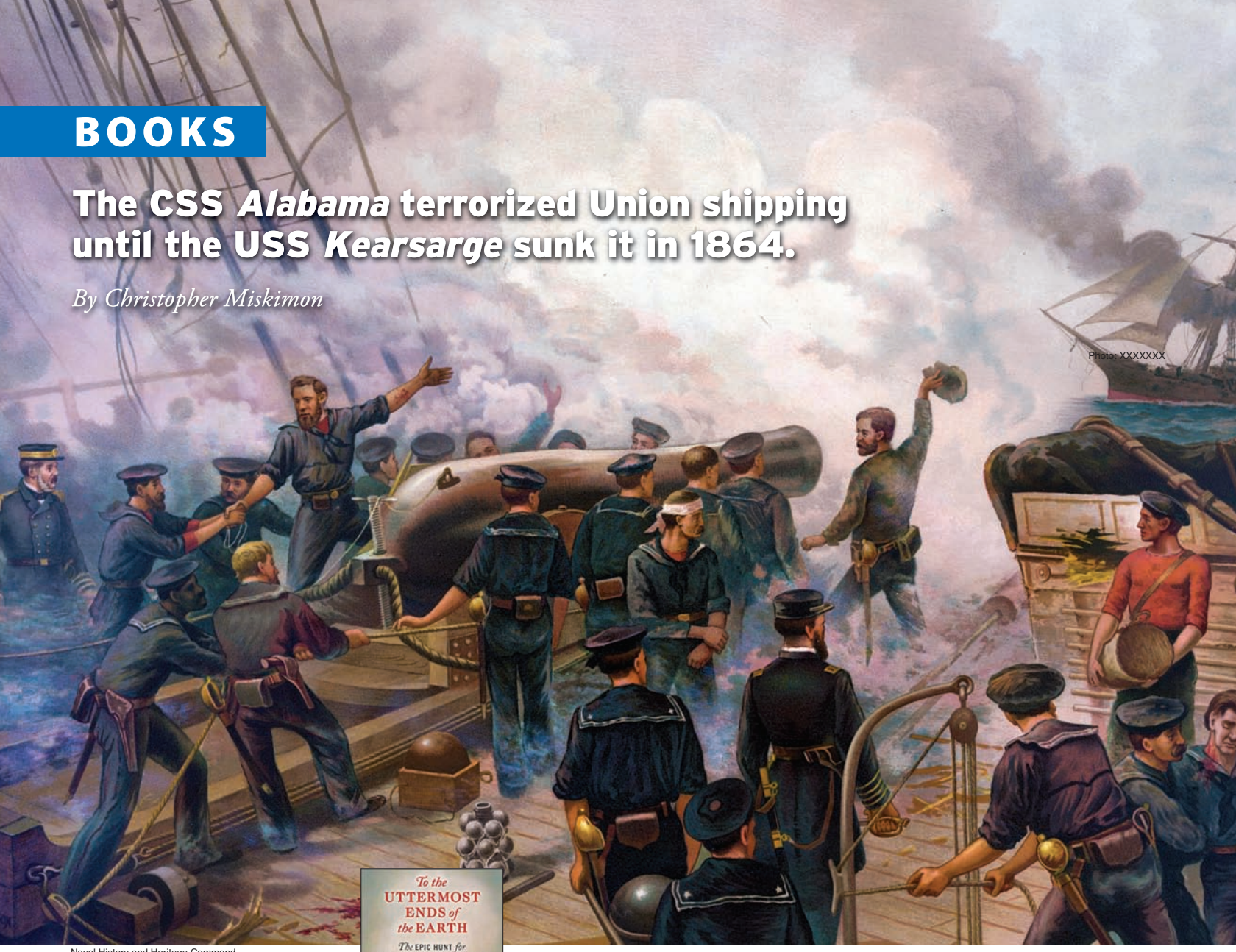
Following the string of defeats in December 1899, the British army undertook sweeping military reforms to improve its operations and modernize its weapons, communications, and reconnaissance capabilities. These reforms, coupled with better military leadership, ultimately enabled the British to defeat the Boers in 1902. ■

Having routed the British, the Boers set about recovering the weapons and equipment abandoned by the British during their rapid withdrawal. The defeats of Black Week compelled the British to undertake sweeping military reforms in order to prevail over the Boers.

BOOKS

The CSS *Alabama* terrorized Union shipping until the USS *Kearsarge* sunk it in 1864.

By Christopher Miskimon



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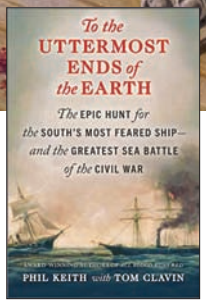
Naval History and Heritage Command



The crew of an 11-inch Dahlgren pivot gun aboard the USS *Kearsarge* cheers the surrender of the CSS *Alabama* on June 19, 1864, in J.O. Davidson's painting of the historic naval battle. Captain Raphael Semmes, the commander of the Confederate raider, struck his flag when his ship began sinking.

Cap'n! She's a-comin! She's comin' out!" The cry of the bosun rang out from his perch on the mizzen mast high above the deck of USS *Kearsarge*. Captain John Winslow, the ship's commander, called for his spyglass. The moment he had waited so long for might finally have arrived.

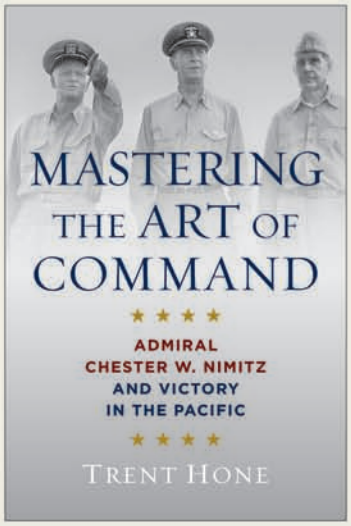
Winslow raised the instrument to his one good eye. He saw a large ship steaming out of Cherbourg harbor, gray coal smoke rising from its sleek form. It was June 11, 1864, and a long-awaited battle at sea was about to begin. The Confederate raider *Alabama* was coming out of the English Channel port to fight. Winslow called the crew to battle stations and pointed his own ship out to sea. He did not want to fight in French territorial waters, but once *Kearsarge* had sailed six miles from shore, he intended to destroy the *Alabama* and end its reign of terror on the high seas.

A veritable parade of ships followed *Alabama* as she made straight for her opponent. The French ironclad *Couronne* sailed first behind the Confederate warship. Close behind were two French pilot boats and the yacht *Deerhound*. Crowds lined the walls along the breakwaters, hoping to see the fight. When *Kearsarge* turned out to sea, many cheered, in the mistaken belief that the American ship was retreating. But Winslow desperately wanted to fight. Aboard the *Kearsarge*, Winslow traded his dress hat for an old sea cap, strapped on his pistol, and picked up a speaking trumpet so his commands could be heard above the din of battle.

Six miles out Winslow ordered his ship to turn toward *Alabama* and to put *Kearsarge* on the enemy ship's stern. If he could slip behind the Confederate ship and cross her stern, then he could rake *Alabama* with his starboard battery. A westerly wind blew the U.S. Navy ship's coal smoke to port away from her line of view on their opponent. The two ships then closed on each other at a combined speed of 25 knots.

Aboard the *Alabama*, Captain Raphael Semmes addressed his crew. "You have, at length, another opportunity of meeting the enemy," he said. "The first [opportunity] that has been presented to you since you sunk the *Hatteras*!"

He proceeded to praise them for destroying and driving under the protection of neutral flags one-



"Trent Hone perceptively analyzes how America's finest admiral not only carefully honed his own approach to leadership, but fostered it by example among everyone he led. Only an officer with Nimitz's managerial brilliance would have been capable of creating the agile command organization that efficiently waged the U.S. Navy's sprawling Pacific War. Engagingly and incisively written, this is a superb sequel to Hone's innovative *Learning War*."

—Jonathan Parshall, co-author *Shattered Sword: The Untold Story of the Battle of Midway*

September 2022

448 pp. | 6 x 9
Hardcover |
978-1-68247-595-9
$39.95 | Member Price: $23.97

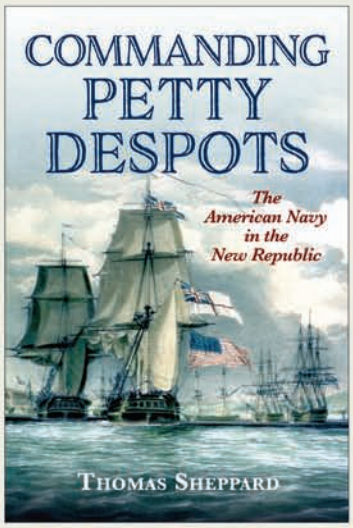
Mastering the Art of Command

Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and Victory in the Pacific

By Trent Hone

Mastering the Art of Command is a detailed examination of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's leadership during World War II. It describes how he used his talents to guide the Pacific Fleet following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, win crucial victories against the forces of Imperial Japan, and then seize the initiative in the Pacific. Once Nimitz's forces held the initiative, they maintained it through an offensive campaign of unparalleled speed that overcame Japanese defenses and created the conditions for victory. A new narrative history of the Pacific war, this book demonstrates effective patterns for complexity-informed leadership by highlighting how Nimitz maintained coherence within his organization, established the conditions for his subordinates to succeed, and fostered collaborative sensemaking to identify and pursue options more rapidly.

Trent Hone is an authority on the U.S. Navy of the early twentieth century and a leader in the application of complexity science to organizational design. Mr. Hone regularly writes and speaks about leadership, sensemaking, organizational learning, and complexity. His talents are uniquely suited to integrate the history of the Navy with modern management theories, generating new insights relevant to both disciplines.



"Sheppard's engaging account analyzes the complex interactions that led to the emergence of the U.S. Navy as an institution. He describes how formative principles like aggressive action, fierce independence, and a firm commitment to the primacy of civilian authority established a foundation that influences the Navy to this day."

—Trent Hone, author of *Learning War: The Evolution of Fighting Doctrine in the U.S. Navy, 1898-1945* and co-author of *Battle Line: The United States Navy, 1919-1939*

March 2022

264 pp. | 6 x 9
Hardcover |
978-1-68247-755-7
$44.95 | Member Price: $35.96

Commanding Petty Despots

The American Navy in the New Republic

By Thomas Sheppard

Commanding Petty Despots: The American Navy in the New Republic tells the story of the creation of the American Navy. Rather than focus on the well-known frigate duels and fleet engagements, Thomas Sheppard emphasizes the overlooked story of the institutional formation of the Navy. Sheppard looks at civilian control of the military, and how this concept evolved in the early American republic. For naval officers obsessed with honor and reputation, being willing to put themselves in harm's way was never a problem, but they were far less enthusiastic about taking orders from a civilian Secretary of the Navy. Accustomed to giving orders and receiving absolute obedience at sea, captains were quick to engage in blatantly insubordinate behavior towards their superiors in Washington.

Thomas Sheppard is an Assistant Professor of Military History at the Marine Corps University Command and Staff College in Quantico, Virginia. He earned his doctorate in military history from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His work has appeared in the *Journal of Military History* and *Strategic Studies Quarterly*. He lives in northern Virginia.

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half of the United States' maritime commerce. He also told them that the Confederate States of America appreciated their achievements. "The name of your ship has become a household word wherever civilization extends," Semmes said. "Shall that name be tarnished by defeat? The thing is impossible!"

Cheers rang along the deck. Semmes finished by challenging his men to uphold the tradition of the *Alabama*. They rushed to their stations. A few minutes later the ships stood one mile apart. *Alabama* turned to show her starboard side to the *Kearsarge*. The Confederates let loose a volley, smoke encasing the ship's side. Semmes looked through his telescope, but his gunners apparently had not scored any hits. At 1,000 yards, the *Kearsarge* replied with her own volley.

The ensuing battle between the *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama* became one of the most famous naval battles of the American Civil War. The *Alabama*'s long raiding cruise around the world did great harm to American shipping and made the vessel and its crew infamous. Their story, and that of the U.S. sloop of war that finally sank it, are told in ***To the Uttermost Ends of the Earth: The Epic Hunt for the South's Most Feared Ship – and the Greatest Sea Battle of the Civil War*** (Phil Keith with Tom Clavin, Hanover Square Press, Toronto, Ontario Canada, 2022, 304 pp., illustrations, bibliography, index, $29.99, hardcover).

The narrative on this book flows almost like a novel. It intertwines the stories of *Alabama*, *Kearsarge*, and the Union merchant and naval vessels that Confederate raider hunted. It is well-researched, providing rich detail about the personalities, ships, and places. The author offers detailed biographies of the two captains, their frequently intersecting paths, and the political and economic situation of the war. The book is a worthy addition to the body of work naval warfare on the American Civil War.

Give Way to the Right: Serving with the A.E.F. in France during the Great War (Chris Emmett, author, David Scott Stieghan, editor, University of North Georgia University Press, Dahlonega GA, 2021, 299 pp., photographs, appendix, bibliography, $24.95, softcover)

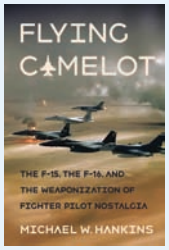
Within seconds of moving into the attack at the Battle of Saint Mihiel in September 1918 Chris Emmett watched a man die. The artillery barrage had just lifted from in front of them, a walking barrage which soon resumed two hundred feet away. Looking to his left, Emmett saw a young American soldier stand up, his rifle held in his left hand. Before he could take a step, the rifle fell from his grasp, the soldier bent forward just slightly, and then he fell over onto his face, killed by a machine gun bullet. It was only the beginning.

This memoir is an engaging account of Chris Emmett's experience in World War I. Emmett joined the war effort in 1917 and was part of the American Expeditionary Forces on the Western Front. He served as a non-commissioned officer in L Company, 359th Infantry, 90th Division of the American Expeditionary Forces.

Emmett wrote this account of his experiences after he was discharged from the U.S. Army. He did not intend it at the time for public consumption. The book is a bluntly honest record of what Emmett saw in the war. He chronicles the brutality of war for later generations that knew nothing of such horrors, describing a world in which men were not given proper medical attention when needed, officers were promoted without merit, and fighting in trenches that offered little protection. It is a memorial to the friends he lost and a reminder of World War I's peculiar horror.

To Risk It All: Nine Conflicts and the Crucible of Decision (Admiral James Stavridis, USN (ret.),

SHORT BURSTS



Flying Camelot: The F-15, the F-16, and the Weaponization of Fighter Pilot Nostalgia (Michael W. Hankins, Cornell University Press, 2021, $32,95, hardcover) This book is an in-depth look at fighter development, and the internal politics of the U.S. Air Force after the Vietnam War.

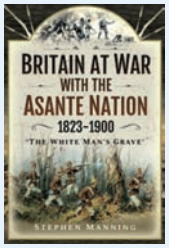
Fighting the Fleet: Operational Art and Modern Fleet Combat (Jeffrey R. Cares and Anthony Cowden, Naval Institute Press, 2021, $24.95, softcover) This primer on naval warfare discusses the facets of modern operations. It is detailed and includes discussion of the mathematical equations used to determine firepower and defense capabilities.

Laughter is the Best Weapon: The Remarkable Adventures of an Unconventional Soldier (Charles Ritchie, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $39.95, hardcover) Brig. Gen. Charles Ritchie served 38 years in the British Army. Along the way he used humor to cope with the vagaries of military life.

Korean War Imjin River: Fall of the Glosters to the Armistice April 1951 – July 1953 (Gerry Van Tonder, Pen and Sword Books, 2022, $22.95, softcover) The Korean War evolved into a bloody stalemate until it ended. This work covers that period of the conflict.

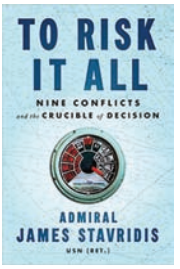
Greece Against Rome: The Fall of the Hellenistic Kingdoms 250-31 BC (Philip Matyszak, Pen and Sword Books, 2021, $39.95, hardcover) This book examines the struggle between the Greek kingdoms and Rome over the course of 250 years. The focus is on the point of view of the Greeks.

The Battle of Nordlingen 1634: The Bloody Fight between Tercios and Brigades (Alberto Ribas, Helion and Company, 2022, $44.90, softcover) This in-depth examination of the Battle of Nordlingen explores the action, placing it among the larger circumstances of the Thirty Year's War.



Britain at War with the Asante nation 1823-1900: The White Man's Grave (Stephen Manning, Pen and Sword Books, 2022, $34.95, hardcover) The various campaigns Great Britain waged against the Asante nation are given detailed attention in this new work.

The Supersonic Bone: A Development and Operational History of the B-1 Bomber (Kenneth P. Katz, Air World Books, 2022, $50.00, hardcover) The B-1 was designed as a Cold War strategic bomber but found combat service in the wars afterward. This well-illustrated edition reveals the aircraft's long service.



Penguin Press, New York NY, 2022, 323 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $28.00, hardcover)

Stephen Decatur, captain of the USS Intrepid, sprang his trap under cover of darkness on the night of February 16, 1804. His crew had spent many hours sneaking into Tripoli harbor. During that time, their ship had drifted slowly toward the captured American ship USS Philadelphia.

His crew tied up next to the Philadelphia in a quest to capture her. He quickly realized that the ship was in no condition to sail. He decided to destroy the Philadelphia rather than let her remain the enemy's prize. Armed with swords and pikes to avoid gunshots that would alert guards in harbor forts, the American sailors and Marines boarded and seized their target. The Americans moved swiftly through the ship setting fires as they went.

Decatur remained aboard the Philadelphia until he was sure the fire would consume Philadelphia; by then, the guards in the harbor forts had realized the ship was under attack. They fired their muskets at the Americans. Intrepid sailed out of the harbor 90 minutes later with its crew having accomplished their difficult mission. Decatur garnered famed for himself and for the fledgling U.S. Navy with this act of valor.

Decatur is one of nine profiles of courageous naval officers in this new work, which examines acts of daring and decision making under conditions of the greatest danger and stress. The author uses his long experience as a naval officer to study each case. In so doing, he sets forth the key factors that influenced the leader and the difficult situations they faced. His prose is clear, readable, and free of jargon.

SOG: A Photo History of the Secret Wars (John L. Plaster, Casemate Books, Havertown PA< 2022, 407 pp., maps, photographs, glossary, index, $49.95, hardcover)

The Studies and Observations Group of the Military Assistance Command Vietnam ranks among the most secretive of the Vietnam War's special operations organizations. Its members carried out daring, classified missions against communist forces. With the direct involvement of U.S. military forces winding down in South Vietnam in 1972, the organization destroyed all of its photographs.

The organization did this because it did not want the details of its activities made public for the simple reason that its techniques eventually would be needed in classified missions in future conflicts. Unknown to those in command, however, some veterans of the organization carried home hundreds of images. They bided their time in the hope that one day they might reveal the photographs to an interested world.

This new work gives fascinating insight into this shadowy organization. It features more than 700 of these photographs, highlighting the activities of some of the organization's best personnel. The volume delves into details of the group's training, organization, tactics, and missions. Each image is accompanied by a detailed caption and accompanying text to give the reader context and background information. The book also details the unique and technologically advanced weapons and equipment that members of the group used.

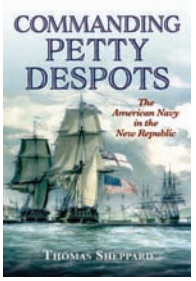
At The Gates of Rome: The Fall of the Eternal City, AD 410 (Don Hollway, Osprey Books, Oxford UK, 2022, 367 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

Roman General Flavius Stilicho defended the waning Roman Empire against numerous invasions. His dedication to the restoration of the empire was complete, but he faced enemies from within and without. In the early 5th Century CE, the greatest external threat came from the King Alaric of the Goths.

These two figures met in action several times, with Stilicho winning on the battlefield. Even so, Alaric always managed to evade capture. They eventually declared a truce after which Alaric's army went into the service of Rome. The truce did not last long as a result of Roman treachery. Alaric wanted to be a friend of Rome, but this betrayal made him an enemy. As a result, Alaric and his Goths marched to the gates of Rome, bringing about the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. A civilization that had lasted for centuries was gone in a generation.

The author uses the descriptions of ancient writers and more recent histories to create this account of the Western Empire's final years. A wide range of figures are included, giving depth and detail to the narrative and revealing the vast scale of the Roman Empire and its adversaries. With so much of the writing on the Late Roman Empire dated, it is refreshing to read a work that offers a fresh interpretation of the events.

Commanding Petty Despots: The American Navy in the New Republic (Thomas Sheppard, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2022, 241 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $44.95, hardcover)



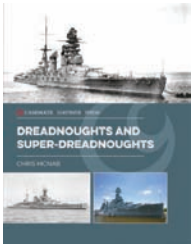
Captain James Lawrence climbed the rigging of the frigate USS *Chesapeake* in Boston Harbor on June 1, 1813, to get a better look at the unknown ship on the horizon. It turned out to be the British frigate *Shannon*.

By the second year of the War of 1812 the U.S. Navy had achieved some astounding victories. Lawrence determined to get some of that glory for himself and his crew. Aboard the British vessel, Captain Philip Broke also desired an engagement. Both commanders got their wish. The battle ended in just a few minutes, with three English broadsides wrecking the *Chesapeake*.

Broke's ship had a disciplined and well-drilled crew, while Lawrence's crew was new and untested. Lawrence suffered two wounds. "Don't give up the ship!" he famously shouted as he was taken below. It was an order his crew could not obey. The crew of the *Shannon* had suffered significant casualties, but the American ship was a leaderless wreck when boarded and captured.

This work examines the U.S. Navy in its early days when it achieved some notable victories and heroic examples of bravery; however, the service's personnel often were troublesome. The officers frequently quarreled with each other over petty matters. Even so, they remained ready, willing, and able to trade blows with the enemy. The sailors likewise were quarrelsome and difficult.

This new work reveals how the U.S. Navy gradually professionalized over its first decades of existence. The book has a clear focus and easy narrative, engaging the reader with its excellent prose.



Dreadnoughts and Super-Dreadnoughts (Chris McNab, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2022, 223 pp., technical drawings, photographs, bibliography, index, $49.95, hardcover)

HMS *Dreadnought* was such a revolutionary design its name became the byword for an entire class of warship. When the British commissioned the ship in 1906, the era of the big-gun battleship arrived. The vessel's balance of firepower, armor protection and speed made it the deadliest vessel afloat, so that other nations had no choice but to copy it outright. As the designs improved, so-called super-dreadnoughts evolved. These mighty ships were veritable floating arsenals built for an expanding arms race between the major powers.

These mighty ships battled each other in World War I. Many of the super-dreadnoughts survived to remain in service through World War II. Some of them gained great fame at battles such as Jutland, Dogger Bank, Pearl Harbor and Surigao Straight. While they were once numerous, today the only remaining dreadnought is the USS *Texas*, a museum ship.

The history of the dreadnought is well told in this extensively illustrated volume. The book contains more than 200 illustration, technical drawings, and photographs of various ships and their equipment, armament, and crews. The text delves into detail about the ships and their various design features. This book is an expanded edition of the publisher's new illustrated series, gathering firsthand accounts and primary sources to highlight some of the most famous warships of history.

Drone War Vietnam (David Axe, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 166 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

Unmanned aerial vehicles are generally thought of as a modern weapon of war, a product of the digital age. Like many of the vehicles and systems used by the U.S. military their origins can be traced back to the height of the American involvement in the Vietnam War in the 1960s.

One such system was the Model 147 reconnaissance drone, often known as the Lightning Bug. It was a relatively safe way to get information about communist North Vietnam and China without risking the lives of American pilots. Each drone averaged four completed missions before being lost to enemy fire, malfunctions, or other damage. Some greatly exceeded the average time in service. The record was set by a Model 147 nicknamed Tom Cat, which completed 68 missions before the North Vietnamese downed it over Hanoi on September 25, 1974. These early aircraft and missions paved the way for the reconnaissance and armed drones in use around the globe today.

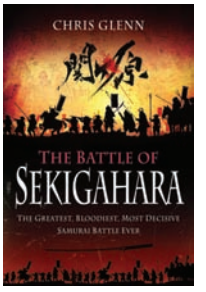
The author gathers firsthand accounts by drone operators, official histories and military records to create an interesting account of the early years of drone usage by the United States. The book is well illustrated with period photographs, and the author effectively links the drone missions to the wider war in Southeast Asia, in which the drones supported B-52 bomber missions and other activities. This work is an effective chronicle of the dawn of the drone in modern warfare.

Roman Conquests: Britain (Simon Elliott, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 219 pp., photographs, bibliography, index, $39.95, hardcover)

The Romans found Britain to be a terrifying land. They had little information about its people and they found it difficult to invade. Even the great general Julius Caesar failed to conquer it as he had Gaul. Later invasions by Roman armies succeeded, but only partially.

Still, the Romans learned from their failures and defeats and kept fighting until they achieved victory. They would need all this and more to hold onto Britain, a land populated by hostile tribes determined to resist.

This work covers the history of Rome in Britain from Caesar's failed incursions to the Claudian invasion and the later campaigns of expansion and pacification. The author is an acknowledged expert on the ancient world and uses the latest research and archaeology to enhance the narrative. He offers extensive information on the weapons, organization, tactics, and commanders. He also discusses at length how the two adversaries countered each other's strengths and exploited each other's weaknesses.



The Battle of Sekigahara: The Greatest, Bloodiest, Most Decisive Samurai Battle Ever (Chris Glenn, Frontline Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 204 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, a samurai and feudal lord, unified Japan and ushered in a period of peace for the war-torn nation. After he died in 1598, a power struggle began between Hideyoshi's supporters and those of the warlord, Tokugawa Ieyasu.

The loyalists assembled an army of 130,000 against Ieyasu's 80,000 troops. On October 21, 1600, the two armies clashed at Sekigahara on Japan's main island of Honshu. It proved a decisive engagement, with 30,000 Samurai killed. Ieyasu's army won, giving birth to the Tokugawa Shogunate that ruled Japan for the next 260 years.

In this account of one of Japan's greatest battles, the author covers the events which led to the war, the major figures, the details of the battle itself, and the aftermath. The work includes an informative section on the Samurai and their customs, weapons, and armor. The appendices help provide background information that will be useful to Western readers less familiar with Japanese history and culture. ■

GAMES

By Joseph Luster

THE ARMA SERIES RETURNS AFTER NEARLY A DECADE, AND BATTLEFIELD 2042 KICKS OFF ITS FIRST SEASON IN FULL FORCE

Arma Reforger

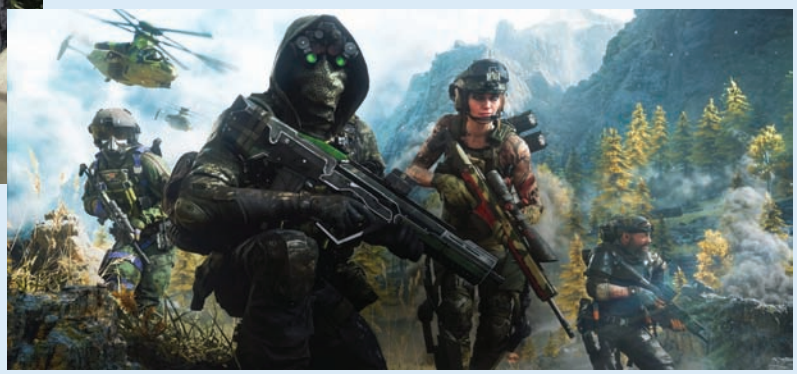
Genre: Shooter • Platform: PC • Publisher: Bohemia Interactive • Available: Now (Early Access)

Amazingly, it's been nearly a decade since the last main game in the *ARMA* series—2013's *ARMA 3*, which was followed by a standalone mobile game titled *ARMA Mobile Ops* in 2016 that we won't count as a true entry—was released. Earlier this year, the developers at Bohemia Interactive ended that drought with the announcement of *ARMA Reforger*, which wasn't just officially revealed, it was actually made available to play on the same day. That's because *Reforger* currently exists in the world of Steam Early Access, meaning players get to check it out while it's still in active development. The promise is already there for the title, which will have to tide us over until Bohemian eventually paves the way for *ARMA 4*.

As a series known for its dedication to authenticity—from ballistics and communications to overall physics—*ARMA* has always been demanding, and as such it's found a niche in the world of war gaming. *Battlefield* this is not, but those who stick it out will be rewarded for their occasionally Herculean efforts. Once you get a taste of *ARMA Reforger*, you may ask yourself why this one isn't just ARMA 4. According to Bohemia, *Reforger* is the "first step toward *ARMA 4* and a versatile, creative, fully-moddable platform for the future, offering a glimpse of things to come." While hands-on time has been light, the smaller scale and cross-platform plans—*Reforger* is coming to Xbox Series X|S in addition to its release on PC—support the idea that this is more of an experiment paving the way for something larger in the future.

In the meantime, there are a few other things that make this a unique entry in the series. First and foremost is the setting, which has players traversing a fully explorable 51km^2 island during the Cold War. That island just so happens to be Everon, which was featured in the first entry in the *Operation Flashpoint* series. Those familiar with *ARMA*'s history know it was formerly *Operation Flashpoint* prior to legal issues, and that first entry with Everon is now known as *ARMA: Cold War Assault*. Revisiting that location appropriately brings the series full circle before heading into the next flagship entry, so it should be interesting to see how the final game plays out.

The conflict pits U.S. troops against Soviet forces as both sides try to dominate the battlefield by capturing strategic positions and working with their squadmates to persevere through a dynamic environment. All weapons and vehicles have been meticulously recreated and can be used in multiplayer, and those who want more control over everything can take on Game Master mode to create their own events, missions or more. If you don't feel creative or just want to see what devious settings others can whip up, that same mode is available to challenge with others at the helm.



ARMA Reforger has more tools than ever to make the game your own beyond Game Master mode. The Enfusion engine lets players implement the same tools the devs use to make it, including the ability to introduce new mechanics and create new assets and textures. If you can envision it and script it, the sky is the limit with modding. Perhaps even more than the game itself, the real test of *ARMA Reforger*'s longevity will be just how creative the community gets with these tools. We can't wait to see what everyone creates when we take on the full experience for ourselves.

Battlefield 2042 Season 1

Genre: Shooter • Platform: PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X|S, PC • Publisher: EA • Available: Now

When *Battlefield 2042* Season 1 first dropped back in June, our first thoughts were, "hold on, didn't *Battlefield 2042* come out back in November 2021?" The answer is yes; it did indeed come out last November, yet the delayed first season launch just arrived in the past few months. That in itself isn't indicative of a smooth launch, but the proof is in the pudding, especially for hungry fans who just want more game to explore.

Dubbed "Zero Hour," the first season of *Battlefield 2042* content introduces the new Exposure map—featuring a range of cliffs along the western border of Canada and the U.S.—and the rocket launcher-equipped specialist known as Ewelina Lis. This all comes after a major selling point, the 128-player Breakthrough mode, was pulled from the game, and attempts were made to squash numerous bugs. It's been a bit of a mess but perhaps Zero Hour can truly turn things around.

Seasons in *Battlefield 2042* are available in both free and paid premium versions (with bonus content). No matter which you choose, it's ultimately going to come down to the success of this first major drop to determine how the rest of the road map performs. EA originally planned for four seasons per year of service, but with the first coming in after a delay, the whole timeline has been adjusted. Hopefully fans take to this and EA doesn't prematurely pull the plug. Or not. Either way, there will be more *Battlefield* in the future in some form. It just might not be set in the year 2042. ■

SOLDIERS

Continued from page 21

ships had been demasted.

D'Estaing's victories in summer 1779 in the Lesser Antilles resulted in the British admiralty issuing orders that all of the troops Clinton had transferred to the Caribbean the previous autumn to remain in the region. Although Clinton had counted on getting back at least half of the troops he had sent, not a single one returned to the North American mainland.

During d'Estaing's lengthy stay in the Leeward Islands, the British had captured Savannah, Georgia, in December 1778. Before returning to France, d'Estaing decided to make one more attempt to assist the Americans in an attack. The French admiral set sail in August 1779 for Savannah. The following month, in cooperation with American Maj. Gen. Benjamin Lincoln, d'Estaing besieged Maj. Gen. Augustine Prevost's 3,200 British troops garrisoning the city.

While Lincoln's Patriots sought to prevent the British from reinforcing Savannah by land, d'Estaing put ashore his French infantry. He launched a major assault on a key British position on October 9, but it was repulsed with heavy losses. Having failed the Americans a second time, d'Estaing departed Savannah for France on October 17.

D'Estaing, who had been wounded twice at Savannah, returned to France on crutches. He was widely criticized by the ministers of the French court, as well as the Americans, who felt he had not done enough to assist the Americans during his lengthy expedition. But to his surprise Louis XVI praised him for, in the king's words, adding laurels to his crown by capturing St. Vincent and Grenada.

D'Estaing staunchly defended Marie Antoinette at her trial in 1793 during the Reign of Terror phase of the French Revolution. Although he supported the reforms of the revolutionaries, the Committee of Public Safety regarded him as a reactionary. For that reason, he was sent to the guillotine on April 28, 1794.

Although there was never a question of d'Estaing's bravery in battle, he had been slow to engage the British at New York and Newport. Moreover, at Newport he seemed to doubt the military competence of the Americans to conduct a successful siege, and therefore abandoned them to their own fate.

Regarding his performance in the Leeward Islands, d'Estaing allowed four demasted British ships to escape after the Battle of Grenada when he should have taken them as prizes. Nevertheless, his capture of St. Vincent and Grenada reversed French fortunes in the Caribbean theater, tying down British warships and regulars that otherwise would have been committed to the fight against the Washington's Continental Army. ■

SEDAN

Continued from page 69

Germans would open fire again.

Wimpffen returned to Sedan to debrief the emperor on the progress of the surrender negotiations. At that point, Napoleon III decided to make an appeal in person. He met with Bismarck in Donchery at 6 a.m. where the chancellor politely yet firmly rejected his entreaty for an honorable surrender. Given that the French army was in no state to continue the struggle, the emperor directed Wimpffen to agree to the Prussian terms. A crestfallen Wimpffen signed a document containing an unconditional surrender five hours later.

The Prussians inflicted a catastrophic defeat on the French at Sedan. The French lost 3,000 dead and 14,000 wounded and 104,000 captured. Another 8,000 French soldiers had fled across the border into Belgium where the Belgians, in keeping with their agreement with the Prussians, confined the French soldiers for the duration of the war.

The Germans lost 2,320 killed, 5,980 wounded, and 700 missing. The Bavarians bore the brunt of the Prussian losses. While Prussian artillery inflicted the majority of the losses incurred by the French, French soldiers armed with the deadly Chassepot rifle inflicted the bulk of the casualties suffered by the Germans.

Although the French soldiers marched off to prisoner-of-war camps under heavy guard, the Prussians bundled off Napoleon III to comfortable captivity at the Wilhelmshohe Castle in Hesse. Seven months later they allowed him to depart for England where he remained in exile for the rest of his days. The deposed French emperor subsequently passed away at the age of 64 on January 9, 1873, in a surburb of London. Napoleon III had the dubious distinction of being the first French president and the last French emperor.

Following the collapse of Napoleon III's government, members of the National Assembly formed a provisional Government of National Defense. With MacMahon's army taken off the board, the Prussian Third and Fourth armies rushed to Paris, closing the ring around the French capital on September 15. With Paris besieged and no possibility of relief, Bazaine surrendered his army at Metz on October 29, 1870. After a valiant, but futile resistance, Paris also surrendered on January 28, 1871.

Even before Paris surrendered, Wilhelm I was proclaimed the German emperor. The Prussians combined the North German Confederation and Bavaria, Baden, Saxony, and Wurttemberg into the newly established German Empire. Bismarck had finally achieved his dream of a unified Germany. ■

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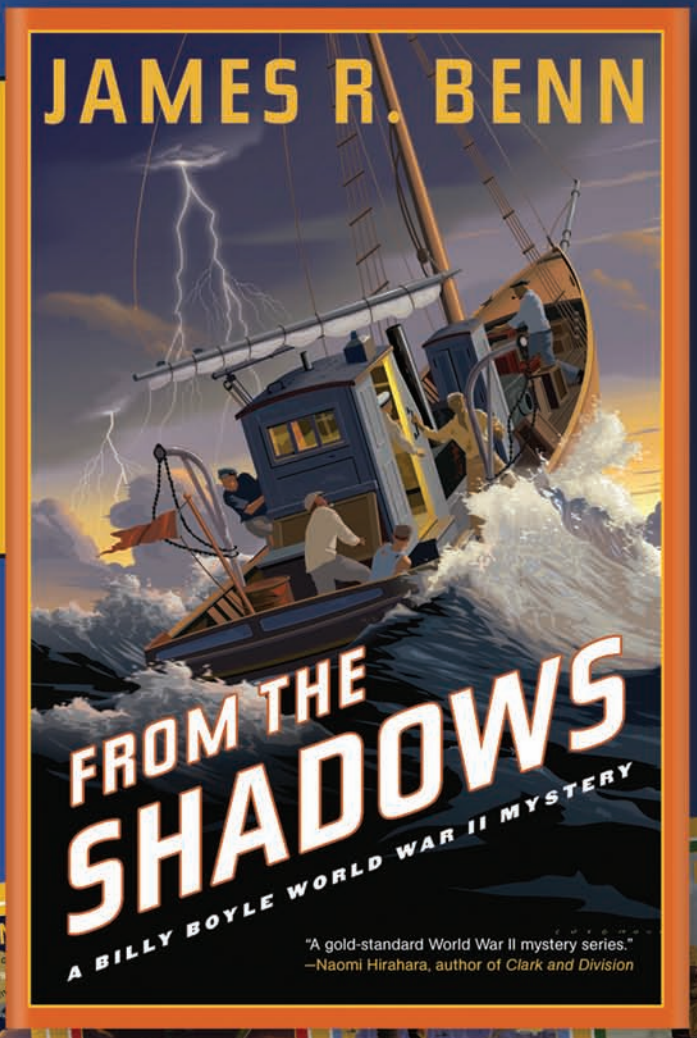

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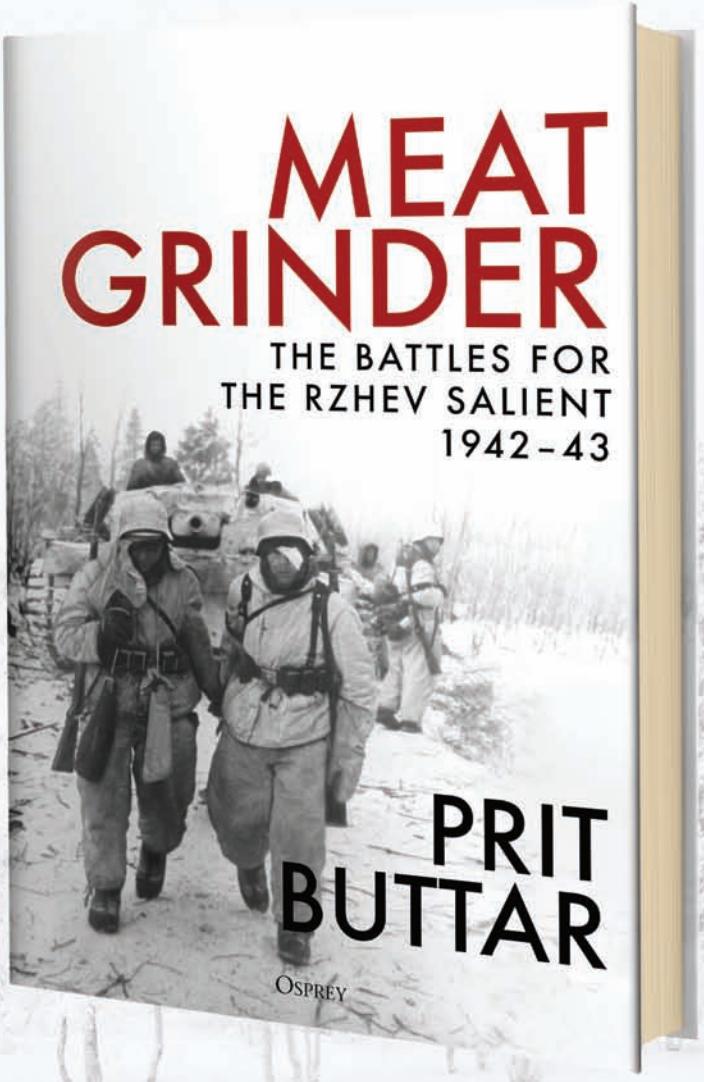

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