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EDITORIAL

Grant's Army of the Tennesee overcame adversity on the roundabout road to Vicksburg

MAJOR GENERAL ULYSSES S. GRANT SAT ON HIS HORSE IN LATE April 1863 next to a narrow bridge over a wide marsh on the west bank of the Mississippi River in northeastern Louisiana. He spoke kindly but forcefully to his troops as they tramped south toward a place where they could board transports to cross the mile-wide river. "Push right along men," he said. "Close up fast and hurry over."

Grant's Army of the Tennesee had to navigate its way through or around bayous, swamps, and bogs in search of a suitable embarkation point from which Union steamboats and barges could transport 40,000 Federal soldiers to the east bank where they could march on the Confederate citadel of Vicksburg.

Grant faced interminable challenges during the spring offensive in 1863 against Vicksburg, but he remained level-headed, flexible, and resourceful, conquering each obstacle he faced without ever losing sight of his goal, said Charles A. Dana, the assistant secretary of war, who joined him in the field that month.

Secretary of War Edwin Stanton had dispatched Dana to Grant's headquarters to keep a close eye on the army commander. Stanton had a keen desire to know how Grant was holding up as he slogged his way through a frustrating campaign to capture Vicksburg that had begun five months before.

Grant had intended to cross on April 29 from Hard Times Plantation, Louisiana, to Grand Gulf, Mississippi, but before he could do so, Rear Adm. David Porter's gunboats would have to silence the Confederate batteries commanding the Mississippi from the bluffs of Grand Gulf. "Porter made the attack with his entire strength present, eight gunboats," wrote Grant. "For nearly five and a half hours the attack was kept up without silencing a single gun of the enemy."

When it became apparent that he could not ferry his army across the Mississippi at that location, Grant ordered his army to march south to Disharoon's Plantation. "The troops marched across the point of land under cover of night, unobserved," Grant wrote.

Dana rode next to Grant on the way from Hard Times to Disharoon's in the black of night. When Grant's horse suddenly lost its footing, Dana expected Grant to be thrown from it. "I watched intently, not to see if he was hurt, but if he would show any anger," wrote Dana. "I had been with Grant daily now for three weeks, and I had never seen him ruffled or heard him swear. His equanimity was becoming a curious spectacle to me."

This gave Dana an opportunity to see first-hand the qualities that made Grant stand out in the crowded field of senior generals in the Union army. Grant put in place effective strategies, remained unflappable in the face of adversity, and showed he could handle enormous logistical challenges during the campaign to capture Vicksburg.

On April 30 Grant set foot on the east bank of the Mississippi River at Bruinsburg 40 miles south of Vicksburg. "I felt a degree of relief scarcely ever equaled since," he wrote. "Vicksburg was not yet taken it is true. But I was on dry ground on the same side of the river with the enemy. All the campaigns, labors, hardships and exposures from the month of December previous to this time that had been made and endured, were for the accomplishment of this one object."

—William E. Welsh

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National Archives

The highly reliable Browning Automatic Rifle filled the need of U.S. infantry for a mobile light machine gun from World War I through the Korean War.

By William F. Floyd Jr.

By dawn on June 9, 1944, the men of the Company C, 1st Battalion, 325th Glider Infantry Regiment, of the 82nd Airborne Division found themselves engaged in a fierce firefight with German troops at the village of Cauquigny just west of the Merderet River in Normandy's Cotentin Peninsula. The company's forward platoon soon became pinned down in a ditch by enemy fire. As they sought a way out of their predicament, the Germans maneuvered to outflank and annihilate them.

When it became apparent to New Yorker Private Charles N. De Glopper that his platoon might be slaughtered, he left the cover of the ditch and knelt in the roadway firing his Browning Automatic Rifle to cover the withdrawal of his fellow airborne troops.

He immediately attracted the enemy's attention. German soldiers began firing on him from several directions. Although he was soon

National Archives

ABOVE: Marines on Iwo Jima fire on the Japanese from a protected position with an M1918A2 BAR and an M1 carbine. To make it lighter and easier to carry, Marines armed with the BAR discarded its bipod and flash hider. LEFT: Lieutenant Val Allen Browning displays the BAR in 1918, the innovative weapon that was designed by his father, John Moses Browning.

wounded, he continued to fire burst after burst from his BAR until he was killed outright. For his remarkable courage and gallant sacrifice that day, De Glopper was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. De Glopper showed the value of the BAR in furnishing covering fire with a portable automatic weapon.

The first generation of machine guns, unveiled in the late 19th century, were far too cumbersome to be used in any manner except in fixed positions. Hiram Stevens Maxim, a native of

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Sangerville, Maine, was the first weapons designer to combine the words automatic and machine gun. He invented a recoil-operated machine gun that bore his name in 1884.

The Maxim gun, the first fully automatic machine gun in the world, used the power of the recoil generated from the power charge in the cartridge to produce the entire cycle of operation. All the operator of the Maxim gun had to do was release the sear—the part of the trigger mechanism that holds the hammer, striker, or bolt back until the correct amount of pressure has been applied. The internal workings of the gun performed all of the other actions for the weapon to fire. Maxim's simple mechanism was so successful that it remained unchanged for many years.

The BAR was designed by John Moses Browning a native of Ogden, Utah. John and his younger brother Matthew founded the Browning Arms Company in 1878. Browning made a discovery in 1889 that eventually would change the entire military world. While testing one of his rifles in Utah's salt marshes, he noticed that every time he fired the rifle the bulrushes parted from the blast for quite a distance from the muzzle. Browning believed that he could harness the force of expanding gases to generate automatic fire. Browning's M1895 Colt–Browning machine gun, based on a design dating to 1889, became the first gas-powered machine gun.

National Archives

The BAR remained the backbone of Army infantry squads during the Korean War in the 1950s. BAR gunners during the Korean conflict wore a 12-magazine belt and combat suspenders with several extra magazines in their pockets.

Browning worked during his long career for other arms makers, including Winchester, Colt, and Remington. He demonstrated a prototype of the BAR light machine gun in 1916 for the U.S. Army at Colt Firearms Company in Hartford, Connecticut. At the time, the U.S. Army equipped its forces in the Mexican Expedition against the paramilitary forces of Mexican revolutionary Francisco "Pancho" Villa with machine guns. The prototype performed well, and Army officials expressed a keen interest in the BAR.

The Army tested the BAR and liked the results. It negotiated a license with Colt, but Colt had too many other military orders and lacked the capacity to produce the BAR. For that reason, the Army awarded the production contract for the M1918 model to Winchester in September 1917. Winchester furnished more than half of the 102,125 BARs produced during World War I, but Marlin-Rockwell and Colt furnished the rest.

During World War I, U.S. infantry had access to new small arms technologies such as self-loading rifles, full-automatic machine guns, and semiautomatic pistols. The French in World War I were keen on automatic fire and passed on their enthusiasm to the Americans when they joined in the battles on the Western Front. The concept of

The Marine Corps requested the addition of a carry handle for the BAR that was delivered in December 1944, but its use in combat during World War II has never been documented.

"walking fire" developed and armies desired weapons that could put out heavy fire when clearing out an entrenched foe.

Browning's BAR employed a gas-operated system that relied on a piston moving within a cylinder assembly. The assembly was fitted under the barrel and the open-bolt action was housed in a rectangular, nearly featureless receiver. The magazine feed was located just ahead of the trigger unit, and the shoulder support of the weapon constituted a traditional rifle-style butt. It also had a hand guard under the forward mass of the weapon. The weapon had forward and rear iron sights for the operator to deliver accurate fire up to 1,000 yards.

Although intended as a light machine gun, it also came to be regarded as a heavy assault rifle. Regardless, it met the pressing need for a lighter, portable automatic rifle that could lay down sustained fire. The first models of the BAR M1918 had no bipod and were intended to be fired either from the hip or shoulder.

The BAR has chambered various types of ammunition over the course of its development, but most frequently it has used .30-06 Springfield. About 47 inches long, the BAR has a 20-round magazine. The 18-pound M1918 model had a firing selector that allowed the operator to choose between semi-automatic or full-automatic fire. In practical terms, the operator could fire the weapon as fast as 650 rounds per minute, but also could fire single shots or short bursts of two or three rounds to increase accuracy.

The BAR's principal drawbacks, however, were that it had a fixed barrel that could not be changed and that it had a low magazine capacity. The BAR did not have a water cooling jacket or an interchangeable barrel, found on various other machine guns to control heat buildup in the gun barrel.

In spite of these drawbacks, the combination of portability, fire power, and reliability made the BAR a popular weapon and it was in great demand. Indeed, the BAR stood up under even the worst of battlefield conditions and, as far as military firearms are concerned, it was practically indestructible.

The U.S. Army sought to make changes to the BAR that would improve it in the 1930s. Based on observations of soldiers using the BAR in combat, the Army knew that the most effective firing position was when the operator was lying prone on the ground. To stabilize the gun when used in the prone firing position, a bipod and a hinged bullet plate were introduced in 1937 with the BAR M1918A1 version. The upgrade consisted of modifying existing models of the previous version.

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To stabilize the BAR when used in the prone position, military contractors produced a bipod and a hinged bullet plate in 1937 for the M1918A1 version. The venerable BAR, which saw use from World War I to the early days of the Vietnam War, served U.S. ground forces well.

light machine gun for infantry squads that could be put into immediate use. The U.S. Army issued the M1918A2, adopted on June 30, 1938, as the sole automatic fire support weapon for a squad made up of 12 men.

The tooling equipment used by Colt had been in storage, and it was used to restart production. Colt was soon back in full production of the BAR making large-scale deliveries in 1942. A total of 208,380 were produced during World War II.

All of the soldiers in the U.S. Army were trained at the basic level how to operate and fire the weapon in case the designated operator in their squad was killed or wounded. At the beginning of the conflict most infantry companies had two-or three-man BAR teams. The teams comprised a gunner and one or two assistant gunners who carried extra ammunition magazines. Worth noting, the average combat life span of a World War II BAR soldier was estimated to be 30 minutes.

Fire and movement tactics centered on the M1 rifleman in the squad while the BAR man was detailed to support the riflemen in an attack and provide mobility to the riflemen with a base of fire. The doctrine was established early in the war after U.S. Army ground forces encountered German troops with automatic weapons that included fast-firing portable machine guns.

Some U.S. Army BAR gunners and nearly all of the Marine gunners in the Pacific Theater discarded the M1918A2's bipod and flash hider to save weight and improve portability. With these modifications, the BAR effectively reverted to its original role as a portable automatic rifle. Marines in the Pacific battles frequently positioned a BAR operator at the front or rear of a patrol or infantry column where he could help break contact on a jungle trail in the event of an ambush.

The BAR was used by American soldiers in all the major theatres during World War II. The M1918 mode that used .30-caliber ammunition was not capable of semiautomatic fire. It had two cyclic rates of full automatic fire, a fast one and slow one that could be adjusted by the shooter. The effective rate of fire varied from 120 to 150 rounds per minute.

Due to production demands, war priorities, subcontractor issues, and material shortages, orders for the M1918A2 were exceeding the number which could be manufactured. Even as late as 1945 some U.S. Army units were sent into battle still using the older model. Some units were receiving BARS with inoperable or malfunctioning recoil buffer mechanisms. Despite its many problems, the BAR proved to be rugged and reliable enough when field stripped and cleaned on a regular basis.

The U.S. Army continued to use the BAR during the Korean War. Indeed, the BAR remained the mainstay of the infantry squad during the conflict. A typical BAR gunner in the Korean War wore a 12-magazine belt and combat suspenders with three or four extra magazines in his pockets. As in World War II, gunners often chose not to use the bipod in order to save some weight.

During the Korean War, the M1918A2's range and penetrating power usually offset its lack of a quick-change barrel and weight (19 pounds empty w/o bipod) against light weight rapid firing enemy machine guns.

In combat the M1918A2 would frequently decide the outcome of attacks by North Korean and Chinese Communist forces. Communist tactical doctrine was based on the mortar and machine gun. Their attacks were designed to envelop and cut off United Nations forces from supply and reinforcement by placing their heavily camouflaged and protected weapons as close to U.N. forces as possible.

In times of greatest danger, a soldier or Marine equipped with a BAR could help bolster weak areas of a perimeter under heavy pressure by Communist forces. Moreover, it was frequently used to strengthen the firepower of forward outposts. Another important function of the BAR was to eliminate enemy sniper fire. In the absence of trained American snipers, the BAR proved more effective than the response fire of six M1 riflemen.

In comparison with World War II, U.S. infantry soldiers in Korea saw a huge increase in the number of night engagements. The additional firepower of the BAR rifleman and his ability to redeploy to hot spots around the unit perimeter proved indispensable in deterring night infiltration by enemy skirmishers as well as repelling large scale night infantry assaults.

While new production M1918A2's were almost universally praised for faultless performance in combat, a number of malfunctions were reported with armory reconditioned M1918A2. These reconditioned weapons did not replace operating recoil springs as a requirement of the reconditioning program. After years of complaints, the U.S. Army addressed the problem of maintaining the problematic gas piston on the BAR by issuing disposable nylon gas valves. By being able to replace the valves, it eliminated the tedious task of cleaning and polishing the old-style valves.

The M1918A2 also was used during the early days of the Vietnam War. The U.S. military delivered a quantity of obsolete second-line small arms to the South Vietnam Army and other groups fighting on their side. These included the Montagnard irregulars in South Vietnam. Advisers from the U.S. Special Forces preferred the BAR over most other available infantry weapons.

Today, the rugged U.S.-made BAR is still found in service with some foreign armies. From its first use in World War I to the early days of the Vietnam War, the BAR made a real difference to U.S. Army soldiers and Marines in combat. ■

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UNIFORM

English Man-at-Arms in the Wars of the Roses

By William E. Welsh, Artwork by Graham Turner

POLEAXE: Designs varied but were usually a four-to-six foot shaft with a metal head consisting of an axe-blade or hammer head on the face. The rear of the head was either a hammer or a fluke. In addition, a spike projected from the end of the shaft.

HARNESS: By the second half of the 15th century, new ways of forging iron to made stronger, more flexible suits of armor, or "harness." The main body armor consisted of plated metal parts that could slide freely across one another. The sturdy protection allowed its wearer to forego a shield and wield a poleaxe or other heavy weapons with two hands.

SALLET: A visored helmet was worn over a padded cap, with the outward curve extending from the back of the neck helped to deflect blows. A triangular metal plate known as a bevor worn just below the sallet protected the neck.

RONDEL: On the hip opposite his sword was a 15-inch steel dagger that tapered to a needle-like point. Some blades were round and others were triangular-shaped. Once a man-at-arms had knocked his opponent to the ground, he could use the rondel to stab through gaps in the armor or pry open the visor of a helmet in order to stab the opponent in the face.

SWORD: The sword varied in length and width: either a broad, single-handed sword that was two-and-a-half-feet long and designed for slashing and cutting, or a narrower two-handed version that was three and-a-half-feet long and used primarily for thrusting.

The Wars of the Roses (1455-1487) encompassed three civil wars that were fought between two rival branches, York and Lancaster, of the House of Plantagenet, for control of the English throne. Each army was composed of a professional core of armor-clad warriors who functioned as heavy infantry and were drawn from the landowning peerage or gentry. These warriors, known as men-at-arms, were led by a nobleman or knight who retained them.

Unlike the Hundred Years War between England and France, knights and men-at-arms dismounted before the battle began and fought on foot. Their presence among the light infantry, such as archers and billmen, raised morale and reduced their exposure to arrow fire. Battles often lasted just a few hours and the outcome almost always was decided by hand-to-hand combat between opposing men-at-arms. ■

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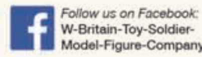

SOLDIERS

An expert in siegecraft, Ambrogio di Spinola revived Spanish fortunes against the Dutch in the Eighty Years' War.

By William E. Welsh

The crown of Spain and the wealthy banking families of Genoa had a symbiotic relationship during the Renaissance. King Philip III of Spain needed the financial clout of Genoese bankers to raise, supply, and pay Spanish and Italian troops serving in Hapsburg Spain's Army of Flanders that had been fighting the Dutch since 1568.

King Philip was the Duke of Milan and also sovereign prince of the Low Countries and formerly Burgundian dominions, such as Franche-Comte, in eastern France. Although the Republic of Genoa was not ruled by the Spanish crown, it enjoyed the benefits of a protected state. Genoa's wealth was derived from the goods it channeled from the Levant and Far East through its ports. Merchant ships from Constantinople and Cairo offloaded goods in Genoa that were then transferred to European merchant ships that carried them to northern Europe.

ABOVE: Justin of Nassau hands the keys to the city of Breda to Ambrogio Spinola in 1625 following his successful siege of a city that was considered impregnable at the time. LEFT: Spinola, a prosperous Genoese banker, sought to elevate his family's standing in Genoa over the rival Doria family through military service to the Spanish crown.

The Spanish crown neutralized French-backed conspiracies against Genoa and supported the ruling noble family in suppressing opposing factions within the city. In return, Spain had free access to the ports of Liguria, as well as the right to march troops arriving in Genoa from Spain to Milan. From Milan the Spanish armies marched north through Savoy, Franche-Comte, Lorraine, and Luxembourg to Flanders. This was safer than transport-

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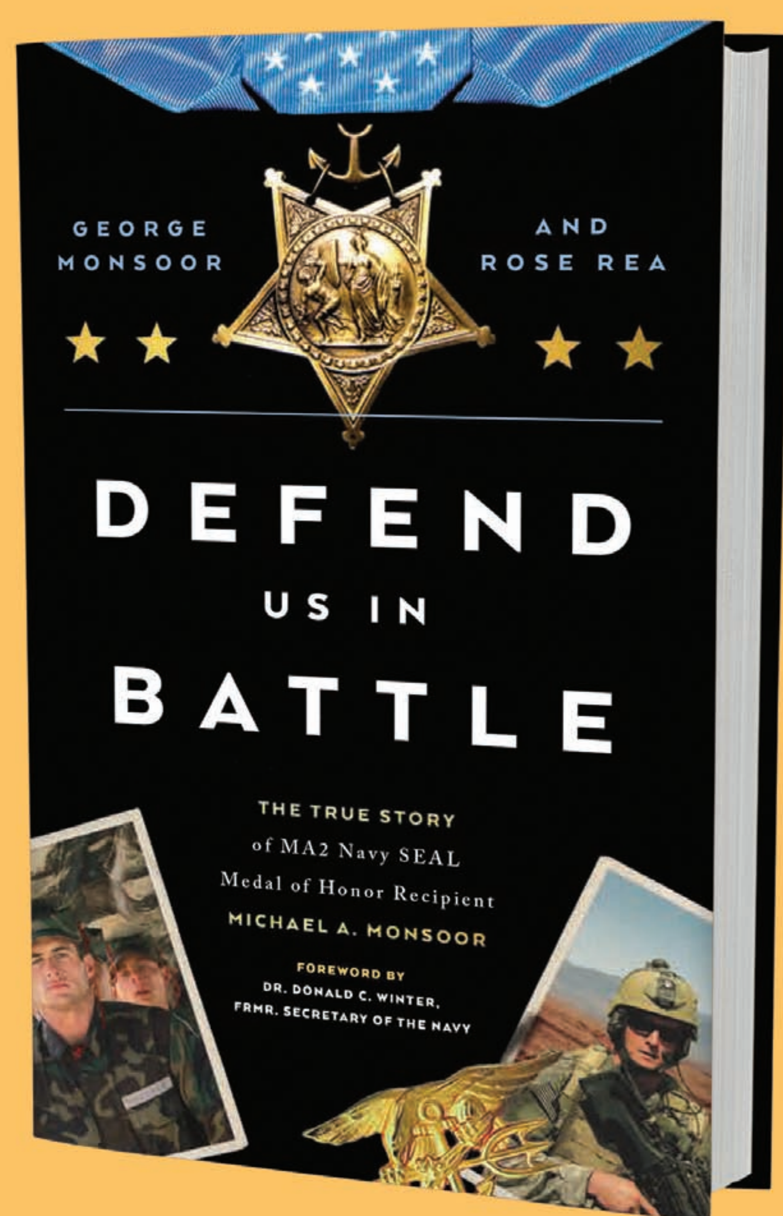

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ABOVE: Following Spinola's successful capture of Ostend in 1604, Spanish King Philip III gave him command of all Spanish forces in Flanders. OPPOSITE: Although Spinola captured Groenlo in Gelderland in 1606, he was unable to penetrate Dutch Stadtholder Maurice of Nassau's strong defenses protecting the heart of the United Provinces.

ing the soldiers by ship where they might be intercepted and sunk by the English or Dutch navies.

Ambrogio Spinola, the son of a prominent Genoese family of financiers, signed a contract with Philip III in 1602 to fund and raise 8,000 Spanish and Italian infantrymen for service in Flanders.

An ambitious sort, Ambrogio had succeeded marvelously as the head of his family banking business by shrewdly diversifying it, but he had no desire to remain simply a banker. He wanted to make a name for himself as a successful military commander so that his family had as much renown as the rival house of Doria in Genoa that had become famous because of the military achievements of Admiral Andrea Doria.

Spinola boasted to Philip III and his prime minster Francisco de Sandoval y Rojas, the Duke of Lerma, at the time of the contract that he could complete the siege of the Dutch the port of Ostend, which was in its second year, within one year of arriving in Flanders. But he said this would only be possible if they allowed him to fund the siege with his own money, so that the troops were paid and did not mutiny, and if they gave him sole command of the forces assigned to capture it. Eager to capture Ostend, they agreed to his terms.

Spinola arrived in Flanders with his troops, the majority of which were Italians eager to serve in the renowned Spanish army, in early 1602. Upon his arrival, he met with Archduke Albert, who served as the governor-general of the Spanish Netherlands.

Albert had besieged Ostend with 20,000 Spanish troops in July 1601. The garrison, which numbered 3,500 Dutch, was commanded by English captain Horace de Vere. Maurice of Nassau, the Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic, the commander of the Dutch army, reinforced the garrison by sea with an additional 3,500 troops. Albert, who was serving as the captain-general of the Army of Flanders, as well as the sovereign prince, had no knack for siegecraft.

Spinola returned to Genoa almost immediately to bring more troops, and he returned via the Spanish road with 8,700 more Italian troops. Spinola took charge of the Spanish forces besieging Ostend on September 29, 1603. De Vere had transferred out by that time and was replaced by Frederick van Dorp.

Spinola put his gifted Italian engineers to work mining Ostend's defenses. Spinola had a gift for uncovering the weak points in a defensive position. He preferred aggressive assaults against enemy defenses during a siege over a methodical reduction of the enemy's defenses. His disciplined Spanish troops successfully captured the port-city's strongpoints in a series of bloody assaults. True to his word, Spinola forced the garrison's capitulation in September 20, 1604, in less than a year's time. In reward for his victory, Spinola was made a Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece, a Catholic order of chivalry founded in the 15th century.

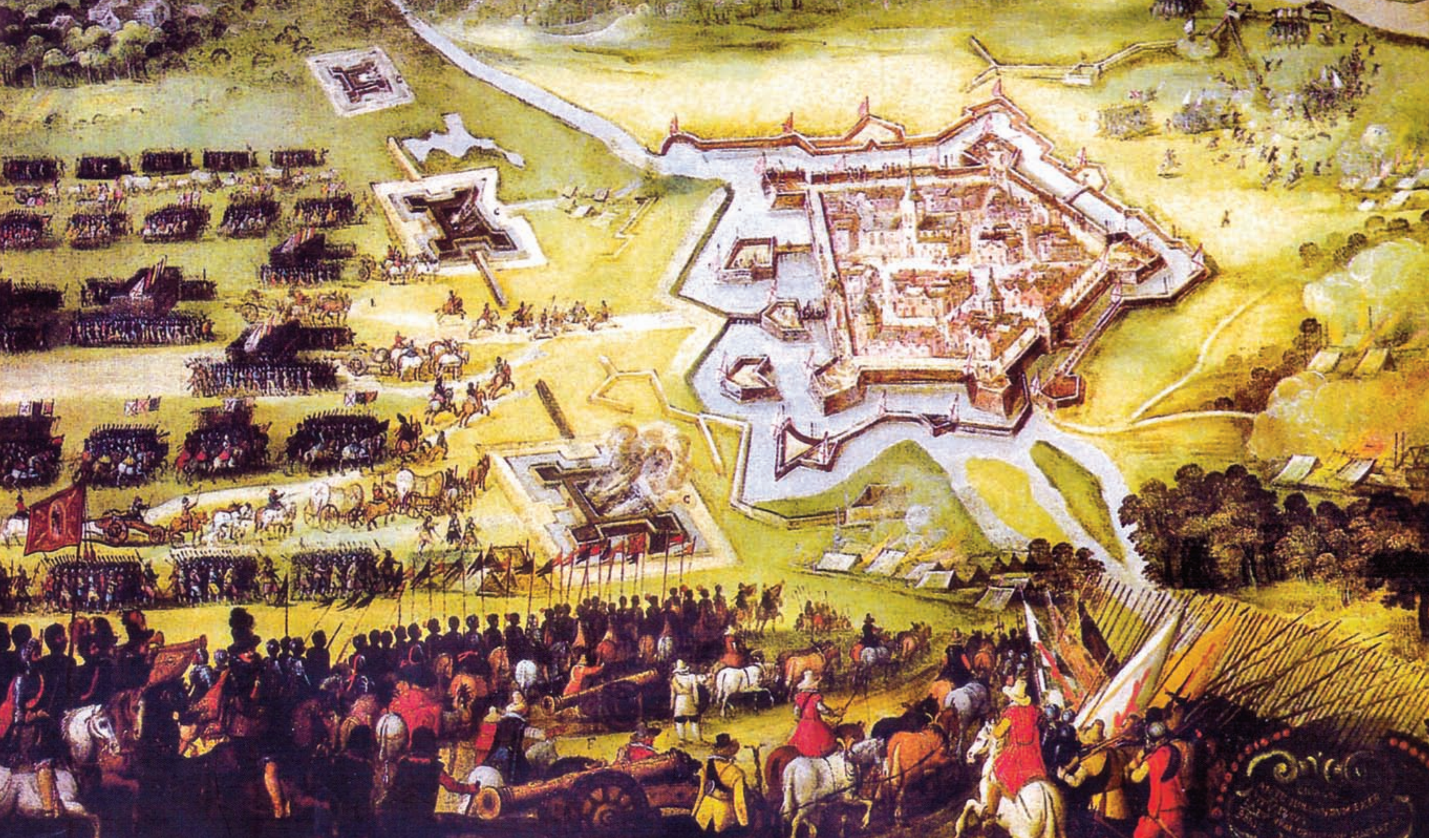
But the triumph over the Dutch garrison victory at Ostend was a pyrrhic victory. The Spanish had lost 40,000 troops capturing the port over the course of three years, it was in complete ruins, and the Dutch had made gains elsewhere.

Albert believed strongly in Spinola. He urged Philip III to appoint Spinola as the new captain-general of the Army of Flanders, but the Spanish king had certain misgivings about Spinola.

Spinola traveled to Madrid in 1605 to meet with Philip III. The Spanish king wanted Spinola to lead 10,000 troops in a siege of Sluis, while another Spanish commander invaded the United Provinces with the main army of 22,000 troops. Spinola did not like the plan, though, and he threatened to quit and return to his banking business in Genoa. At the time the Spanish crown was on the verge of bankruptcy, and the fact that Spinola could raise an additional five million gold florins to help finance the war effort against the Dutch was the deciding factor in Philip III appointing him as captain-general.

Meanwhile, Spinola's nemesis Maurice of Nassau had made great defensive strides. He fortified embankments and islands of the mouth of the Rhine delta in the United Provinces and constructed a chain of blockhouses on the west bank of the Ijssel River to thwart an invasion from the east by the Spanish army.

Spinola advanced north through the Hapsburg territory of Julich-Cleves-Berg and recovered Rheinberg in 1606, which had been lost to the Dutch in 1601. He continued north invading Overijssel, one of the eastern provinces of the Dutch Republic, but could not penetrate the Dutch defenses along the Ijssel. Spinola had suc-



ceeded in capturing six Dutch towns and cities that year despite the best efforts of Maurice to defend them. Unfortunately, 4,000 of Spinola's troops mutinied for lack of pay

When Philip III and Duke of Lerma, learned that Spanish troops in Flanders were once again mutinying, they gave serious thought to a ceasefire with the Dutch. The Dutch Republic had been growing in military strength steadily since 1597. In that time its army had doubled in size and the prosperous Dutch had quintupled their spending on fortifications.

Spanish and Dutch ministers began preliminary talks that year about a ceasefire, but it would not be until April 1609 that they entered into a long-term truce. That month representatives of both sides met in Antwerp and signed what became known as the Twelve Years' Truce. With the Spanish crown still unable to pay its troops in Flanders, Spinola poured all of his wealth into paying them in order to maintain a powerful army in the region.

Philip III instructed Spinola to invade the Protestant-controlled Lower Palitinate in the western part of the Holy Roman Empire in 1620 in an effort to relieve pressure on the Austrian Hapsburgs. The Thirty Years War pitting German Catholics and Protestants against each other had erupted in Bohemia two years earlier. In autumn 1620 Spinola marched 20,000 Spanish troops into the region and forced the capitulation of its principal cities and some of the fortresses on the Upper Rhine. Bolstered by English troops, though, the Protestant garrisons of Frankenthal, Heidelberg, and Mannheim held out.

The truce expired in April 1621 and Spinola again led the Spanish field army in Flanders against the Dutch forces. The previous month, Philip IV had ascended the throne. His new prime minister, Gaspar de Guzman, the Duke of Olivares, was jealous of Spinola's fame. In July 1621, Archduke Albert also died, and his wife, Infanta Isabella, became the sovereign ruler of the Spanish Netherlands.

As war spread throughout Europe, Spinola undertook operations to protect the Army of Flanders supply lines. He played a pivotal role in forcing the surrender of the Dutch garrison at Julich in February 1622, which posed a threat to movement on the northern terminus of the Spanish Road.

Spinola received orders from Madrid in spring 1624 to capture the Dutch-held citadel of Bergen op Zoom that summer. The fortress anchored the Dutch salient south of the Rhine, and to drive the Dutch from it would perhaps thwart the naval blockade of the Flemish port of Antwerp to the south.

Unfortunately for Spinola, two Protestant commanders, Ernst von Mansfeld and Christian of Brunswick, who previously led Protestant armies of the Elector Palatine Frederick V, had been dismissed from Palatine service. They allied themselves with the Dutch Republic and marched to the assistance of Maurice of Nassau. The added pressure by the Protestant reinforcements forced Spinola to raise the siege of Bergen op Zoom in October 1622 after just three months.

Stung by the defeat, he looked for a way to redeem himself. That opportunity came when Philip IV ordered him to capture Dutch-held Breda in Brabant, a region that was part of the Hapsburg Netherlands. Spinola faced a major challenge in reducing Breda and forcing its surrender because the Italianesque design had extensive water obstacles. A high earthen embankment behind a wide canal fed by the Mark River ringed the fort. The trace Italienne fortress boasted 15 bastions and each of its four gates were fortified as well. Olivares, who had advised Philip IV to order the siege, secretly hoped Spinola would fail.

At the time, the Army of Flanders numbered 70,000 troops, but two-thirds of that number garrisoned strongpoints throughout Flanders and adjacent Hapsburg dominions. Spinola took with him 23,000 Spanish troops to invest the 9,000 Dutch troops defending Breda. Rather than set-

Continued on page 90

VALOR

Alamy

Army combat engineer Paul Ray Smith saved wounded soldiers and broke up an enemy assault near a strategic roadblock during the Battle of Baghdad in 2003.

By William E. Welsh

The lead elements of the First Brigade of the U.S. Third Infantry Division became heavily engaged against Iraqi forces at the Saddam International Airport on the southwest outskirts of Baghdad on April 3, 2003, but by the end of the day they had secured it. Over the course of the next six days, the airport would serve as a vital logistics hub for U.S. military forces seeking to capture the Iraqi capital. Iraqi mortar fire had killed two U.S. servicemen in the battle for the airport, and more American casualties were sure to follow before Baghdad fell.

Paul Ray Smith was one of the soldiers who had arrived at the airport on April 3. Smith was born on September 24, 1969, in El Paso, Texas, but he grew up in Tampa, Florida. He had a knack from a young age for building things. He liked to work on cars, and during his high school years he became interested in carpentry to the extent that he landed a part-time job as a carpenter's assistant as a teenager.

U.S. Army armored vehicles fire on Iraqi positions near the Republican Palace in Baghdad during the six-day battle for the city in April 2003. INSET: Sergeant First Class Paul Ray Smith, a veteran of Bosnia-Kosovo and the Gulf War, fought in Iraq with Bravo Company, 11th Engineer Battalion, of the U.S. Army's 3rd Infantry Division.

Having graduated from Tampa Bay Vocational Tech High School in spring 1989, he joined the U.S. Army in October of that year. The Army sent Smith to undergo basic training at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri. After completing his basic training, he shipped out for Schweinfurt, Germany, where he joined the U.S. 9th Engineer Battalion.

Smith's first deployment to a combat zone occurred during the Gulf War of 1991. He subsequently served as part of the U.S. Army's 2nd Brigade Combat Team during operations Joint Endeavor and Joint Guardian, which were efforts to protect Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, respectively. He transferred into the 11th Engineer Battalion, the unit with which he would serve in Iraq, during Joint Guardian in 2001. A combat-hardened veteran by that time, he

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received a much-deserved promotion to sergeant first class the following year.

U.S. military aircraft began conducting preemptive strikes on military targets throughout Iraq on March 20, 2003, at the outset of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Next, 67,700 American troops invaded the country in the wake of dictator Saddam Hussein's alleged breach of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1441, which prohibited nations from stockpiling and importing weapons of mass destruction.

Smith had shipped out for Iraq with Bravo Company, 11th Engineer Battalion of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division. Bravo Company was tasked during the invasion with supporting the 2nd Battalion, 7th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division.

The combat engineer company crossed into Iraq on March 19, moved through Karbala Gap and across the Euphrates River, and into position with other elements of the mechanized infantry division to seize Saddam International Airport.

Smith, who was married at the time of his deployment to Iraq, had two children. In preparing for the rapid deployment to Iraq, Smith made sure that the soldiers of his platoon were proficient in handling their weapons and well versed in the challenges of urban combat. In a letter to the parents of one of his soldiers serving with him in Iraq, Smith pledged to look after the safety of his men. He said he was prepared to give "all that I am, to ensure that all my boys make it home."

Smith was part of a 100-man force tasked on the morning of April 4 with taking up a position one mile east of the airport on the main highway linking Baghdad to the airport. The troops had to establish a roadblock to protect U.S. Army forces at the airport from possible Iraqi sorties from Baghdad. In the process of establishing the roadblock, a skirmish developed in which the Americans captured some Iraqi soldiers. Smith and his engineer squad then set about looking for a safe place to temporarily detain the prisoners of war.

Combat engineers walk past a destroyed Iraqi plane at Baghdad International Airport. When Sergeant Smith spotted a large force of Iraqi soldiers in a trench near his position, he requested reinforcements and led an assault against the Iraqis. INSET Sergeant Smith's son, David, holds his father's Medal of Honor after President George W. Bush presented it to the family in a White House ceremony in April 2005.

Smith spotted a nearby walled courtyard that would serve their needs perfectly. Gathering additional help, he and 16 other soldiers used an armored combat earthmover to knock a hole in the south wall of the courtyard. Noticing that there was a gate on the north wall, Smith assigned several soldiers to guard it. Looking through the gate, they noticed that there were a fairly large number of Iraqi soldiers in a nearby trench. It would later turn out to be a company-sized force of approximately 100 men. They reported their observation to Smith, who immediately requested more firepower to counter the threat and protect the American soldiers defending the critical position.

In response to his request, two infantry platoons, three M113 armored personnel carriers, and a Bradley Fighting Vehicle arrived. The Americans then engaged the Iraqi troops, and a major firefight developed. Smith played a prominent role leading troops in the attack against the Iraqi position. In addition to using his rifle, he hurled hand grenades and fired anti-tank weapons at the enemy.

When Iraqi 60mm mortar and rocket-propelled grenades destroyed one of the M113s, wounding all three crewmen, Smith oversaw the speedy evacuation of the wounded soldiers. Fearing that the Iraqis might gain the upper hand in the firefight, Smith worked his way to one of the damaged APCs and began firing its Browning M2 .50-caliber machine gun at the enemy. Ignoring the danger inherent in being in an exposed position, he laid down a withering fire that helped shatter the enemy assault. It was in this position that he was mortally wounded. Five days after Smith gave his life in the line of duty, Baghdad fell to American forces.

"His courageous actions helped defeat the enemy attack, and resulted in as many as 50 enemy soldiers killed, while allowing the safe withdrawal of numerous wounded soldiers," states his Medal of Honor citation.

"Like every one of the men and women in uniform who have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Sergeant Paul Smith was a volunteer," U.S. President George W. Bush noted in presenting the posthumous Medal of Honor to Smith's family members at a White House ceremony held on April 4, 2005. "We recall with appreciation the fellow soldiers whose lives he saved and the many more he inspired." ■

ON January 25, 1945, every officer in Company B of the 15th Infantry Regiment of the American 3rd Infantry Division became a casualty in the fight for the "Colmar Pocket" except Lieutenant Audie Murphy. Assuming command, the young Texas native took stock of the day's fighting. "Our armor pulls ahead of us with gun barrels traversing," he recalled. "From the woodland comes a crash of shells. Two of the tanks burst into flames. Their escape hatches open and the still living members of the crew bail out. Blazing like torches and screaming horribly, they roll in the snow."

Despite this horrifying setback, the advance continued, with Murphy leading his company forward into stiff opposition. "As we advance, the fighting develops into individual duels," he continued. "Once I am pinned behind a tree by a stubborn Kraut using a huge pine tree for cover. Only a few yards separate us. We snipe at one another, but neither of us scores a hit." His precarious situation ended soon after, when one of his men managed to wound the German, allowing the officer to go in for the kill. "I nail him in the side," Murphy wrote. "As he drops to his knees, I finish emptying the ammo clip into his body."

The day's fighting was difficult because the Germans did not want to give up the Colmar Pocket, holding onto it bitterly with the few troops and armored vehi-

French and American field armies of the Sixth Army Group fought valiantly in early 1945 to destroy the 'Colmar Pocket'— the last German holdouts west of the Rhine River in the Alsace region of France.

BY CHRISTOPHER MISKIMON

cles they had available. Murphy was like thousands of other American and French soldiers involved in the operation to reduce the pocket and finish the Germans west of the Rhine River. They were doing their duty, but it was not easy.

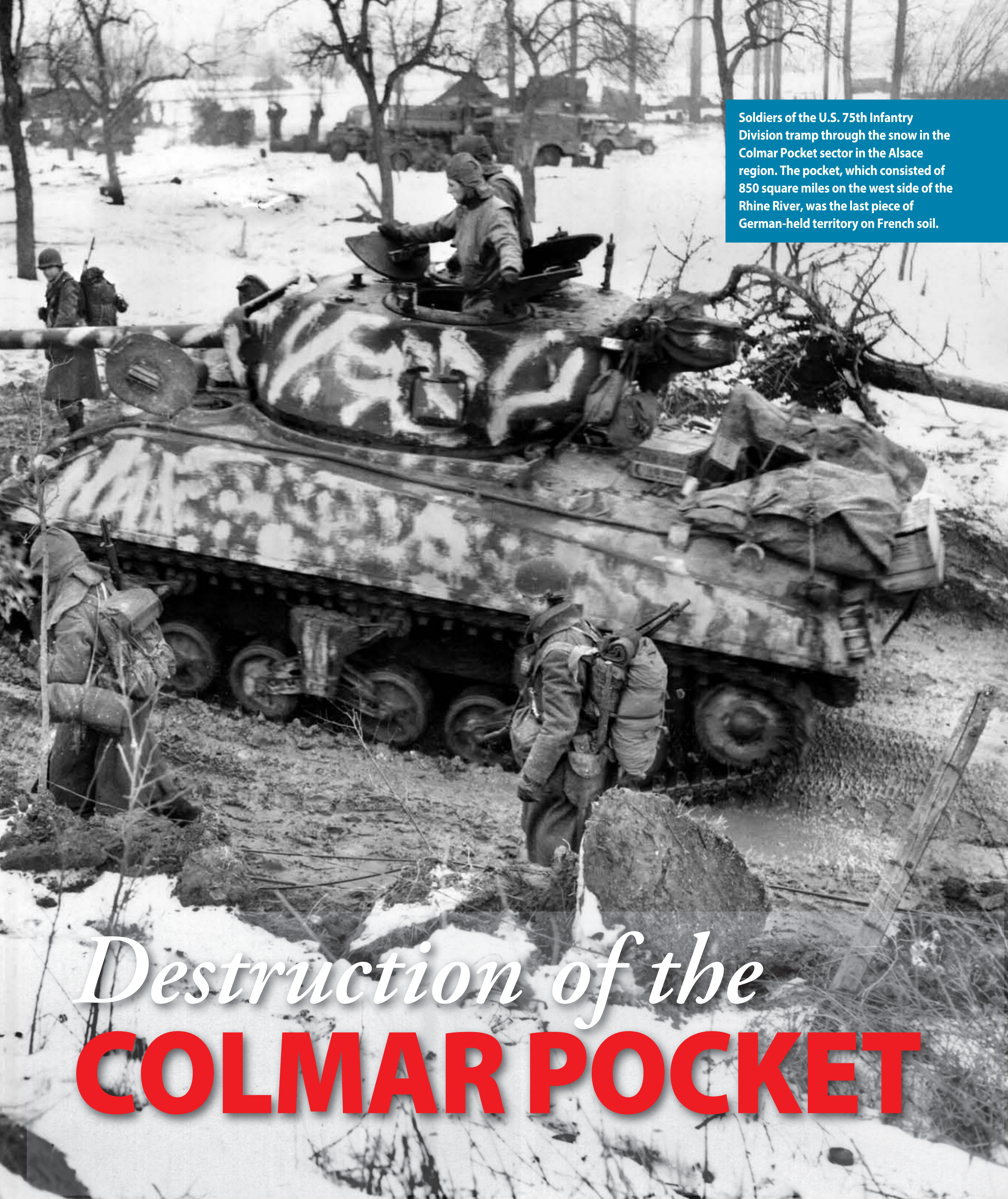
As the German offensive in the Ardennes ended in defeat for the crumbling Third Reich, another fierce battle raged to the south over a similar feature roughly centered on the city of Colmar. This block of territory, consisting of 850 square miles on the west side of the Rhine River, was the Germans' last piece of French territory.

Capturing this area would shorten Allied lines, allowing them to man the front with fewer soldiers and increase the number of units which could rotate to the rear for rest and reconstitution. A successful attack might also trap thousands of German troops on the west side of the Rhine and compel their surrender. Moreover, a victory would place Allied troops along the west bank of the Rhine to prepare for the eventual crossing of Germany's last large defensive geographical feature.

The German Nineteenth Army defended the Colmar Pocket with a mix of understrength units that nevertheless had a few veterans in their ranks. The veterans stiffened the units and enabled them to fight the kind of defensive actions required of them at that stage of the war.

Commanded by General of Infantry Siegfried Rasp, the Nineteenth Army consisted of Generalleutnant Max Grimmeiss' LXIV Corps and Generalleutnant Erich Abraham's LXIII Corps. Grimmeiss' corps had two infantry divisions and two volksgrenadier divisions, while Abraham's division had three infantry divisions. Rasp also had under his command the 2nd Mountain Division. His armor com-

Destruction of the COLMAR POCKET



Soldiers of the U.S. 75th Infantry Division tramp through the snow in the Colmar Pocket sector in the Alsace region. The pocket, which consisted of 850 square miles on the west side of the Rhine River, was the last piece of German-held territory on French soil.

plement initially consisted of an assault gun battalion and a tank destroyer battalion. The Germans suffered shortages of anti-tank weapons, and although there were plenty of artillery pieces, there was little ammunition for them. They did possess ample small arms ammunition, sufficient food stocks, and good wired radio communications down to the battalion level.

The terrain and weather also assisted in the defense. Much of the region was flat open ground with little cover. Numerous rivers and streams crossed the area, and each village could be made into a strongpoint. One town, Neuf-Brisach, was an old star-shaped fortress town designed by the Sebastien Vauban, the renowned 17th-century French military engineer.

The frigid, snowy winter weather made attacks more difficult, with temperatures hovering around freezing and up to three feet of snow on the ground at the time of the initial Allied attacks. More snow fell over the course of the battle. The defending Germans were mostly able to shelter their troops indoors, a crucial advantage. The attack could possibly have been delayed, but Allied weather forecasters predicted a thaw coming in early February which would turn the area into a muddy quagmire, complicating vehicular movement.

The French 1st Army under General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny assumed responsibility for eliminating the Colmar Pocket. Unfortunately, the French forces were in a weakened state with limited offensive potential.

De Lattre quickly realized that he needed reinforcements to achieve success and only the Americans could provide them. He conferred with his superior, Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers, commanding the U.S. Sixth Army Group. Devers gave him the French 2nd Armored Division and the U.S. 28th Infantry Division, with the possible addition of the U.S. 12th Armored Division if it became available. Since the 28th Infantry Division was badly depleted from fighting in the Ardennes, Devers specified it had to be placed in a defensive position.

De Lattre decided to conduct a double envelopment of the pocket to cut off the Germans and prevent them from escaping across the Rhine. De Lattre knew that the capture of the two remaining bridges over the Rhine were crucial to the success of the attack. At the southern end of the pocket the Neuenburg Bridge sat near the French town of Chalampe. Two miles east of the town of Neuf-Brisach sat the Brisach Railroad Bridge, which withstood so many Allied aerial attacks local German troops awarded it an honorary Iron Cross. The French 1st Army possessed two corps, and de Lattre assigned one to each end of the Colmar Pocket.

General Emile Bethouart's French I Corps, which comprised two infantry divisions, a mountain division, and an armored division, was responsible for operations on the southern end of the pocket. Bethouart's corps was a diversionary effort to draw German attention and reserves. Two French infantry divisions, the 2nd Moroccan and the 4th Moroccan Mountain, with tank support from the French 1st Armored Division, would make the initial attack, anchored to the 9th Colonial Infantry Division along the Ill River. This assault would cut the local road network after which both divisions would move toward the bridges on the Rhine. De Lattre scheduled the attack for January 20, two days before the main effort, to give the Germans the impression this was actually the main attack and force them to commit their reserves.

Joseph de Goislard de Monsabert's French II Corps was to go into action on January 22, launching an attack from the north. The II Corps would bypass Colmar and push to Brisach in order to cut off any German retreat. Monsabert's reinforced corps comprised the French 1st Infantry and 3rd Algerian divisions, as well as the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division. The French 5th Armored Division and U.S. 28th Infantry Division would support the attack. The U.S. 3rd Division received the 254th Infantry Regiment from the 63rd Division as a reinforcement. Extra engineer units were assigned to the operation to assist the Allied divisions in crossing the many rivers and streams in the area. To aid in the effort, logistics staff furnished Bailey bridges to the combat engineers.

Bethouart's I Corps attacked German forces from the south on the morning of January 20 beginning with a 30-minute artillery bombardment. A snowstorm blanketed the area and made the advance difficult, but the French I Corps soon found a unit boundary between two German divisions and exploited it. German resistance against the French left was weak, but the weather kept the advance slow. The snow piled three feet deep and made roads almost impassable.

The Germans put up a stiffer defense on the French right, and they even mounted a counterattack. Still, the French units there managed to advance about three miles. Even a frigid river proved no obstacle when the 5th Company of the

The German 19th Army defended the Colmar Pocket with under-strength units that had some veterans in their ranks. The veterans stiffened the units so that they could fight effective defensive actions.

TOP: The soldiers of the newly arrived U.S. 75th Infantry Division went into action immediately upon their arrival at the battlefront and made diversionary attacks to cover the Allied drive on the city of Colmar. BOTTOM: Lieutenant Audie Murphy of Company B, 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry Regiment, recreates his experiences in the Colmar Pocket offensive during the making of his autobiographical 1955 film, *To Hell and Back*.

23rd Colonial Infantry Regiment jumped off a half hour early. The French soldiers forded the river, braving low temperatures and the threat of frostbite to seize a factory on the far side of the river. The French used this small bridgehead to bring forward engineers to erect foot bridges. Further attacks inflicted heavy casualties on the defending Germans, who lacked effective artillery support. The day ended with a gain of several miles for the French, but they were still short of their initial goal of the town of Ensisheim.

The next day the weather worsened, slowing the French even further. The Germans, taking advantage of their warm quarters, launched several counterattacks supported by a small number of armored vehicles. The French troops, who had spent the previous night shivering in the open, were unable to make any further progress. Rasp requested from Berlin additional armor to defeat the attack, but by and large he was not overly concerned about the situation. The German high command rightly considered the French attack to be a diversion. To shore up the defense, the German high command dispatched a mobile antitank unit and the 106th Panzer Brigade. With the addition of the panzer brigade, Rasp had about 65 tanks and assault guns.

The weather improved substantially on January 22. This allowed the French to resume the offensive. The 9th Colonial Division made some progress, but reached a point where forest surrounded their positions and created concerns about converging German attacks emerging from them. Rather than fall back, the French commander decided to prepare artillery concentrations in case the Germans appeared. This decision proved prudent when an Alsatian deserter appeared that night, claiming a German attack would start at dawn.

The next morning a battalion of German tanks with infantry support appeared. They advanced steadily despite French artillery fire. Fighting raged all morning, but by midday the Germans had withdrawn. German losses in the counterattack consisted of 60 dead and 100 captured. To their credit, the French had knocked out seven German tanks and two armored cars. Further progress over the coming days proved slow due to weather and German resistance.

The northern attack began with the French 1st Infantry Division driving east and protecting the left flank of the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division. De Lattre admired the American unit's commander, Maj. Gen. John "Iron Mike" O'Daniel, and expected substantial progress from the division. O'Daniel had devised a plan known as Operation Grandslam in which each American infantry regiment would attack successively. The plan called for the first regiment to attack east, pierce the German lines on the Ill River between Guemar and Ostheim, continue east for several miles and then turn south for another five miles. The next regiment would then take over, driving east for a few more miles before turning south. In this way, O'Daniel hoped to side step his division all the way to the Colmar Canal northeast of Colmar. Success would open a path for 5th French Armored Division to reach Neuf-Brisach and link up with I Corps.

The U.S. XXI corps received reinforcements that included the U.S. 12th Armored Division, which pushed south in early February 1945 to cut off the retreating Germans and link up with the French I Corps advancing north.

The attack began at 9 p.m. on January 22 when the U.S. 7th Infantry Regiment advanced without artillery preparation to achieve surprise. The 30th Infantry Regiment followed three hours later. The men of the 7th Regiment's 1st Battalion, led by Lt. Col. Mackenzie Porter, wore white snowsuits and carried inflatable boats. They quickly crossed a bridge over the Fecht River, but almost lost Porter and his headquarters group to a bouncing mine which luckily did not explode. All the companies rendezvoused on the other side of the Colmar Woods. When the soldiers reached the Ill River, they decided that rather than wait for the engineers they would build a makeshift floating bridge using their inflatable boats. They soon advanced over another stream and kept going.

The rest of II Corps attacked the next morning, January 23. The French 1st Division made satisfactory progress, reaching Illhaeusern, a town at the juncture of the Ill and Fecht Rivers. A Foreign Legion Brigade rushed through the town and seized three intact bridges, including one able to support vehicles. Another Foreign Legion Brigade took over the attack east of the town, but soon ran into stiff German opposition at Moulin. The Germans counterattacked that evening. The German infantry advance with the support of heavy artillery and two tanks. They drove the French back into Illhaeusern. The Germans pursued the retreating French into the town, but ultimately were driven out with heavy losses.

In the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division zone, the 30th Infantry Regiment encountered difficulty around Riedwihr, five miles northeast of Colmar. The soldiers of Company A hid in some woods when they realized they were dangerously exposed to a nearby German unit, which fortunately did not spot them. Companies C and G were glad to see two platoons of 57mm antitank guns arrive to shore up their position. Engineers worked to strengthen the bridge over the Ill so tanks could get across, but the regiment was ordered to attack and seize the town right away. Soldiers spotted German tanks beyond the woods around the town of Riedwihr and feared attacking without their own armor, but advanced anyway.

The Germans let the Americans get close before opening up with machine guns and tank cannon. The soldiers of companies I and K attacked Holtzwihr and met similar resistance, but when the soldiers of Company I returned fire, they heard angry shouts in English to cease fire. Company K had made it into the village and began setting up a defense. Morale went up when a new soldier used a bazooka to drive off an approaching German tank, which backed away around a corner.

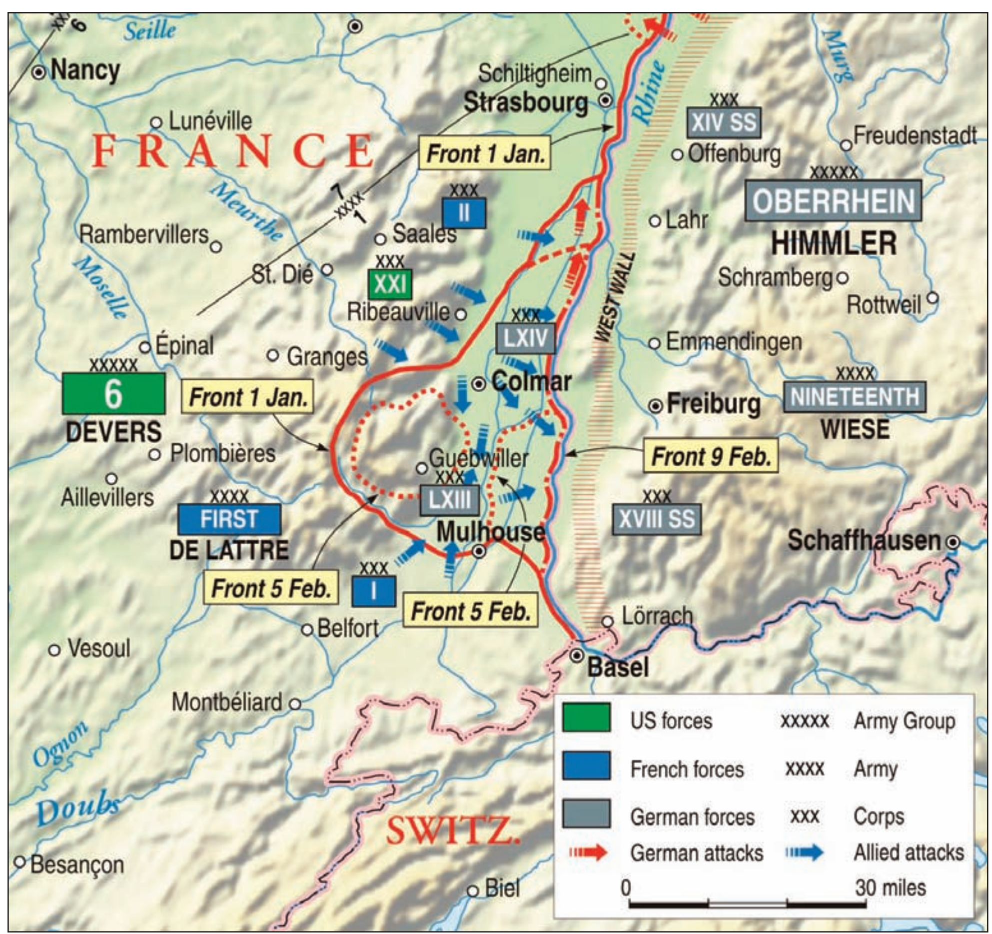
The soldiers' elation subsided when a German counterattack began 10 minutes later. The fighting became so confused that groups of American soldiers clearing houses ran into German troops doing the same thing. German tanks roamed the area around the towns as the sun went down, and repeated attacks forced the Americans out of the built-up areas and into the surrounding forest.

At the bridge over the Ill, the engineers thought they had reinforced the bridge sufficiently, but when a single Sherman tank moved across to test the span, it collapsed into the shallow river below. The bruised crew evacuated while the other tanks took up supporting positions along the west bank. The American infantry on the east bank set up defenses as the Germans increased the pressure.

The Americans sent out patrols to maintain contact between the different companies and battalions, but they were driven back by the intense firing. Whenever possible, American infantrymen called in artillery fire on the Germans, but with limited effect. Panic started to set in as men struggled between their obligation to fight and the powerful desire to flee and survive.

In many places small numbers of men snuck off for the safety of the rear, but here and there officers and noncommissioned officers took charge. A lieutenant in Company G ordered several sergeants to round up as many men as possible. The lieutenant then led the group to the enemy defenses around one of the crossing points where they entrenched.

Meanwhile, Colonel Lionel McGarr, the commander of the 30th Infantry Regiment, gathered



MAP: Lieutenant General Jacob Devers' Sixth Army Group's drive to eliminate the Germans inside the Colmar Pocket succeeded despite several setbacks, one being the slow progress of French I Corps. BOTTOM: A Stuart light tank of the 12th Armored Division rolls into Rouffach, France, east of the Vosges Mountains on February 5.

200 stragglers and retreating men, rallied them, and ordered them to be rearmed and reequipped. Next, he inspected the entire front line of the 30th Infantry, talking to the men in each foxhole and reorganizing the line to improve it. McGarr did this for five hours, even as tank and machine gun fire rained around him. A ricocheting bullet almost killed him, but he trod on, even arranging for blankets and hot coffee. It would take time, but the 30th Infantry was slowly reorganizing.

Meanwhile, the 15th Infantry Regiment prepared to enter the fight. At 8 p.m. on January 23, O'Daniel ordered the 15th to recapture a bridge near a manor house called Maison Rouge. By 5 a.m. Companies I and K succeeded in retaking the bridge, lost to the earlier German counterattack. The Americans tried to entrench, but the couldn't dig in the frozen ground. The Germans soon returned to reclaim the bridge. Artillery slowed them down, but they soon overran the defending Americans, first I Company and then K. Those American infantrymen not captured retreated toward the west bank of the Ill.

Many took refuge in the Maison Rouge, where they passed around a newly discovered bottle of whiskey. Most believed the Germans would soon arrive and capture them, but one officer resolved to call artillery down on the house if he must. At 9:30 a.m., the situation stabilized when large amounts of U.S. artillery began crashing down on the nearby Germans, disorganizing them and breaking up their attack. Nearby, American engineers finally completed a stout bridge, and American tanks crossed over the Ill.

Early that afternoon, the 1st Battalion of the 15th Infantry Regiment counterattacked and drove the Germans back from the bridge for good. The soldiers even found most of the weapons and equipment abandoned by the 30th Infantry during chaos of the battle. It was gathered up for reissue. Many veteran infantrymen said the fighting was as severe as that they had experienced at Anzio a year earlier.

The 15th Infantry advanced on Riedwihr with armor support on January 25, but it proved slow going, with men advancing tree to tree. They reached the outskirts of the town at 2 a.m. the following day but soon ran out of ammunition. Meanwhile, the attached 254th Infantry moved against Jebsheim.

The Germans counterattacked again on January 26, overrunning several American companies. One of these was Company B of the 15th Infantry Regiment, which was commanded by Murphy. Over the course of the previous day, Company B had suffered 102 of 120 men killed or wounded without even reaching the town. This left Murphy and 17 men to defend his zone.

Against this tiny force came two companies of

German infantry backed by six tanks. The woods were sparse with little underbrush. A nearby artillery observer, Lieutenant Walter Weispfenning of the U.S. 39th Field Artillery Battalion watched tanks firing at Murphy and his men as they went past, giving wide berth to a burning American M-10 tank destroyer. The German panzer crews feared it might explode. Weispfenning directed artillery fire while other soldiers fired bazookas at the German vehicles, as about 250 German infantrymen came across a small field at them. Small arms fire flew all around Murphy and his men.

With the Germans only 100 yards away, Murphy climbed onto the burning tank destroyer and manned the .50-caliber machine gun. If the fire reached the gasoline or ammunition, Murphy would be killed in the explosion. Despite the risk, he began firing bursts into the advancing Germans, cutting down many of them. The enemy tanks shot at him, Nazi infantry fired rifles and submachine guns, but Murphy stayed at his exposed position. His well-aimed fire cut down a dozen Germans in a ditch 50 yards away as they tried to outflank him. Bullets ricocheted off the tank destroyer's hull and two shells struck it, but the young American officer remained in action even as near misses shredded his uniform.

The enemy tanks which had earlier passed by returned to support their lagging infantry, pinned due to Murphy's fire. Even then he stayed atop the tank destroyer, remaining there for an hour despite every German attempt to dislodge him. "The German infantrymen got within 10 yards of the lieutenant, who killed them in the draws, in the meadows, in the woods—wherever he saw them," recalled Sergeant Elmer Brawley.

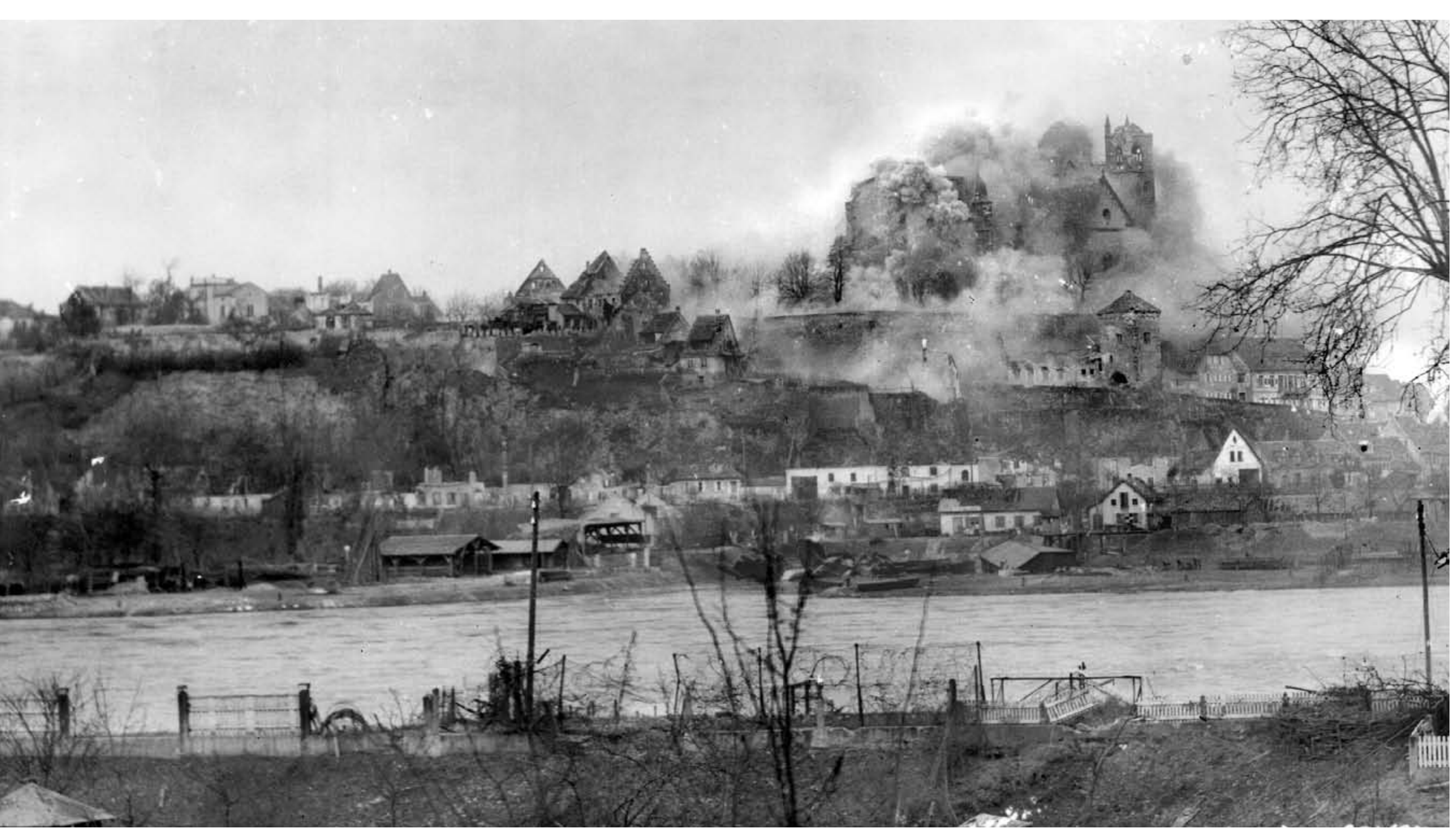
Brawley believed Murphy must have hit at least 35 enemy soldiers, despite being covered in soot and surrounded by smoke which obscured his vision. It turned out, though, that he had actually struck as many as 50 enemy soldiers. Eventually a round hit him in the leg, but still he refused to take cover or leave his gun. His fire caused the entire German attack to falter, as German troops fell back, and with the loss of their supporting infantry, the tanks withdrew as well.

With his ammunition expended, Murphy climbed down from the tank destroyer's engine deck, went over to his men, and organized them for a counterattack. He refused any medical aid as he led his men on their unexpected assault, forcing the Germans back. Murphy even called in additional artillery fire on the retreating enemy. His actions completely stopped the German attempt to take the American-held woods and kept his company from being encircled, killed, or captured. He only agreed to medical attention after his mission was complete. For his bravery and determination, Murphy would later be awarded the Medal of Honor.

While the U.S. 15th and 30th infantry regiments fought around Riedwihr, the 7th Infantry Regiment made progress toward Colmar. The 1st Battalion got the job to seize a manor house called the Chateau de Schoppenwihr, a large stone structure with outbuildings surrounded by a seven-foot-high stone wall.

The plan was to send Company A in from the north with tank support while companies B and C attacked from some woods to the east. As Company A moved down a road to the chateau, its GIs ran into some soldiers in white camouflage. One of the GIs went forward to identify them, thinking they were other Americans supposed to be in the area. When he asked whether they were American soldiers, the white-clad men leapt into foxholes and trenches and opened fire.

The Americans hit the ground as German rifle and machine gun fire started up. Within a few minutes, however, a Sherman tank rumbled



ABOVE: Armored troops of the French II Corps advance in U.S. tank destroyers during combat operations in the northern sector of the pocket. OPPOSITE: The U.S. 30th Infantry Regiment fires on German targets with its 155mm howitzers at Neuf Breisach on the Rhine River.

down the road. Its cannon barked and its machine guns chattered, killing several Germans and setting fire to a haystack. As other German troops got up to retreat, they were silhouetted against the flames enabling the Americans to shoot them down. More fire came from the chateau, so the men of Company A took cover in some nearby woods, still protected by the friendly tank.

With A Company out of action for the moment, companies B and C took over the assault after a heavy artillery barrage, Company B in the front and Company C following behind. Company B's 1st Platoon lead the way, but when they were about 200 yards from the stone wall a group of Germans opened fire from the far side of a raised road with machine guns and rifle grenades. A German tank appeared 150 yards to the south and added its fire to the battle as well. The company commander realized his men were trapped in the open and there was nowhere to go but forward. He led them ahead even under the heavy fire until they reached the near side of the raised road. They could hear the Germans on the other side, 20 yards away. C Company also took casualties and pulled back to the woods.

Even with the cover of the road bank, Company B was in trouble. Grenades came sailing through the air at them and the tank still had a clear field of fire. A soldier fired a few rifle grenades at the looming armored vehicle but was hit and killed moments later. Casualties began to mount, so Lieutanant Richard Kerr decided to keep going forward. As he started across the road, he shouted for his soldiers to follow him.

Many men got up and followed him, screaming and firing. The shocked Germans lost their morale; many surrendered, but some had to be killed by grenades tossed into their foxholes. The GIs kept going until they cleared the perimeter defenses and arrived at the stone wall. Two bazooka teams worked their way around the panzer and drove it away. The American artillery barrage had blown several holes in the wall, so Company B went through and attacked the chateau. There was little resistance, and it was soon in American hands. Rumors spread that Heinrich Himmler had recently stayed in the house, so the victorious GIs wanted to see its opulence for themselves and maybe even grab a few souvenirs.

At Jebsheim, the 254th Infantry found the going rough. Four artillery battalions shelled the town at 2:45 a.m. on January 26 just before the regiment's 1st and 2nd battalions attacked. Despite the preparation, the Germans repulsed the American infantry assault. During their attack, the GIs came under heavy fire from Jebsheim Woods. The 3rd Battalion went into the woods and cleared it out in a day and a half of fighting. Meanwhile, the attack on the town was renewed, this time with eight battalions of artillery in support. It took three days to clear the town, with help from the French 5th Armored and 1st Infantry Divisions, and cost 600 dead.

On January 27 the two reconstituted battalions from the 30th Infantry Regiment joined a French armored unit, passed through the lines of the 15th Infantry, and took the crossings of the east-west Colmar Canal, between the Ill River and Muntzenheim. The pressure began to mount on the Germans, but they could do little to improve their situation other than hold on and try to exact

a high toll on their opponents.

By that time the French were running low on infantry, and the weather remained difficult. De Lattre voiced his concerns to Devers, who had received five new American divisions along with support troops. Devers ordered the U.S. XXI Corps to go into action between the two French corps. It took charge of the battle-weary U.S. 3rd and 28th infantry divisions along with the newly arrived U.S. 75th Infantry Division and, backed by the French 5th Armored Division, were slated to attack towards Neuf-Brisach and capture the bridges over the Rhine.

The XXI Corps took control of its assigned zone on the morning of January 28 and attacked toward Neuf-Brisach the next day. The 3rd Infantry Division acted as the main effort, attacking across the Colmar Canal. The 28th Infantry Division would carry out demonstrations and raids to keep the enemy's attention and be ready to exploit any German withdrawals. The French 5th Armored would attack in several columns when ordered, and the newly arrived 75th Division was still assembling its regiments but would follow by January 30. The assault across the Colmar Canal met little resistance, though it took another day to get tanks across. The 3rd Infantry Division made good progress, even repulsing a German counterattack on January 30 and clearing Muntzenheim.

The 7th Infantry Regiment, relieved by a regiment from the 75th Infantry Division on the night of January 30, advanced to take Horbourg, a suburb west of Colmar. If the Americans could seize the town, they would succeed in closing the last German escape route west of Colmar. The 2nd Battalion of the 7th Infantry, down to 30 men each in its rifle companies, led the way. The battalion commander, Major Jack Duncan, approached a nearby French armored unit to enlist their aid but they refused. Disgusted by the lack of French cooperation, Duncan prepared his men to attack at 9 p.m.

As the American infantrymen moved out, Company E led the way supported by two tanks. When the soldiers were 20 yards from the edge of the town, German machine guns opened fire, wounding five men and driving the rest to the ground, crawling forward.

One of the Sherman tanks blasted the house containing the machine guns, so the Germans moved to another. The tank crew soon destroyed that one as well. The Company E men quickly occupied the first house and covered a platoon as it took the second. The Germans fled, abandoning their machine gun, but an antitank gun opened fire, forcing the American tank to take cover. When they tried to outflank the Germans, the Sherman rumbled into a tank trap and was disabled. Fortunately, when the second tank arrived, the Germans retreated.

The Americans continued up the street with the tank methodically firing into houses as they advanced. They used small arms and grenades to clear the houses on both sides of the street. This gave them a foothold in Horbourg, but German infantry armed with antitank guns and panzerfausts counterattacked. The Americans took cover in the houses for the night, and in the morning mortar fire pounded them. Still, they managed to fight off another German attack. In the early afternoon the French armor finally joined the fight and advanced with the Americans.

The combined Franco-American assault force shattered the German defense, killing 40 and capturing 70 prisoners. Sporadic fighting continued into the night until 11 p.m. when the 289th Infantry from the 75th Infantry Division took

Lost opportunities in Operation Dragoon allowed the Germans to regroup in Alsace.

The German Nineteenth Army had successfully withdrawn north from France's southern coast into the mountainous terrain of the Alsace region in autumn 1944 thwarting the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force's plan to destroy it as an effective fighting force.

The Allies codenamed the landing on the French Riviera "Dragoon." British General Maitland Wilson, the commander-in-chief of Allied forces in the Mediterranean, tasked American Lt. Gen. Devers, with planning the landings on August 15, 1944. Maj. Gen. Lucian K. Truscott's U.S. Sixth Corps spearheaded the amphibious landings. The second wave of troops to come ashore consisted of General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny's French Army Group B.

Devers and de Lattre faced General of Infantry Friedrich Wiese's Nineteenth Army. Wiese's army, which was composed of third-tier German soldiers, wounded veterans, and conscripts from Eastern Europe, was woefully ill-equipped to defend the southern gateway into Germany through the Alsace region of France.

The Germans retreated steadily north up the Rhone Valley for the next 30 days losing half of its strength in the process. Although Wiese lost 158,000 men, he still had 130,000 troops with which to resist the Allies.

General Dwight Eisenhower, the commander of SHAEF, assumed command on September 15 of all of the French and American forces that had participated in Operation Dragoon. Hard-charging Truscott argued forcefully for an immediate attack into the Belfort Gap between the Vosges and Jura Mountains to keep the Germans off balance, but his recommendation went unheeded.

The front remained largely inactive for nearly two months. Wiese had nine fragile divisions defending an 80-mile front in November that stretched from the Swiss border to Strasbourg on the west bank of the Rhine. The Sixth Army Group, comprising Lt. Gen. Alexander Patch's Seventh Army and de Lattre's French First Army, held positions on the west side of the Vosges.

De Lattre faced a daunting task that autumn integrating 137,000 French Forces of the Interior (resistance fighters) with little or no formal military training into his ranks to replace some of his North African troops. The French relied almost entirely on the Americans for all of their fuel, rations, and ammunition, and De Lattre frequently complained that his army received far fewer supplies than Patch's army.

Devers eventually ordered an attack into the Belfort Gap to gain the Alsatian Plain and reach the Rhine. De Lattre spearheaded the attack that began on November 14 by sending three French tank columns against the Germans. They secured the town of Belfort and reached the Rhine five days later.

Hitler responded by dispatching crack Waffen SS troops and a brand-new brigade of Panther tanks to bolster Wiese's third-rate troops. Patch attacked next sending the French 2nd Armored Division through the Saverne Pass in the Vosges into the Alsatian Plan. The attack succeeded and on November 22 the French entered Strasbourg.

These attacks left the Germans occupying a bulge around the town of Colmar on the west bank of the Rhine that became known as the Colmar Pocket. Berlin replaced Wiese with General of Infantry Siegfried Rasp on December 15. The front remained relatively stable until the Allies attacked the Germans in the pocket on January 20, 1945.

— William E. Welsh

TOP: U.S. and French colonial soldiers celebrate their success against the Germans after linking up at Rouffach. The Germans lost 25,000 troops over the course of the three-week Allied offensive. BOTTOM: German prisoners support a wounded American soldier at the end of the offensive. The elimination of the Colmar Pocket enabled the Allies to focus exclusively on crossing the Rhine and advancing into the German heartland.

over. Further German efforts to retake the town and keep their escape route open were defeated. More French tanks appeared and Horbourg was in Allied hands by January 31.

On February 1 more American infantry supported by French tanks reached the Rhine-Rhone Canal, just a few miles west of the Rhine River. By evening the 3rd Division's lead regiments were only a mile from Neuf-Brisach and two miles from the Rhine. Antiaircraft units covered the troop's advance, firing 22,000 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition. When two German tank destroyers blocked the 7th Infantry's advance, Private Joseph Duncan knocked one out with his bazooka at 500 feet. The other quickly withdrew. American artillery fire repulsed several small German counterattacks.

Another act of courage took place in the early hours of February 2. As American infantry entered the town of Biesheim a large German force attacked, forcing the GIs to take cover in some nearby ditches, which turned out to be full of German soldiers. Fierce hand-to-hand combat followed. Technician Fifth Grade Forrest Peden, a forward observer from the U.S. 10th Field Artillery Battalion, gave aid to two wounded soldiers while under enemy fire. Discovering his radio inoperable, he ran 800 yards through more enemy fire to reach a battalion command post. Once there he saw two light tanks. He climbed aboard one of them to show them the way to the ditches where the wounded soldiers were located. As the two tanks reached the ditches, the one carrying Peden was struck by enemy fire, which killed Peden. For his valor, Peden posthumously received the Medal of Honor.

The moment arrived to take the town of Colmar. The 28th Division attacked and by the morning of February 2 arrived at the northern gates of Colmar despite heavy resistance. The French 5th Armored was allowed to enter the city first, and after being greeted by the citizens, the division split into three columns. One moved west to guard against an attack from the Germans in the Vosges, the second went south of the city to block the approaches there, while the third stayed in the city to help the Americans clear the town.

On February 2 the Germans began to fall back all along the line, most of them trying to get over the Rhine to safety. The road through Rouffach to the south of Colmar was the last place for the Germans in the Vosges to get away, so XXI Corps started to push south to cut them off and link up with French I Corps, still pushing north. The corps received the U.S. 12th Armored Division to help with this effort. Combat Command B of the 12th Infantry attacked on February 3 and made some progress before one of its columns was stopped. The 28th Infantry Division took over their positions while Combat Command A attacked, getting held up by antitank guns for a day before seizing the town of Hattstatt.

Just before dawn on February 5, the Americans reached the northern edge of Rouffach. The 2nd Platoon of Company D, 43rd Tank Battalion, found a roadblock, so platoon leader, Lieutenant Charles Ippolito, went ahead on foot to scout for

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In his first independent command on the Continent, the Black Prince and his English army exceeded expectations at Poitiers during the Hundred Years' War and captured French King John II.

BY JOHN E. SPINDLER

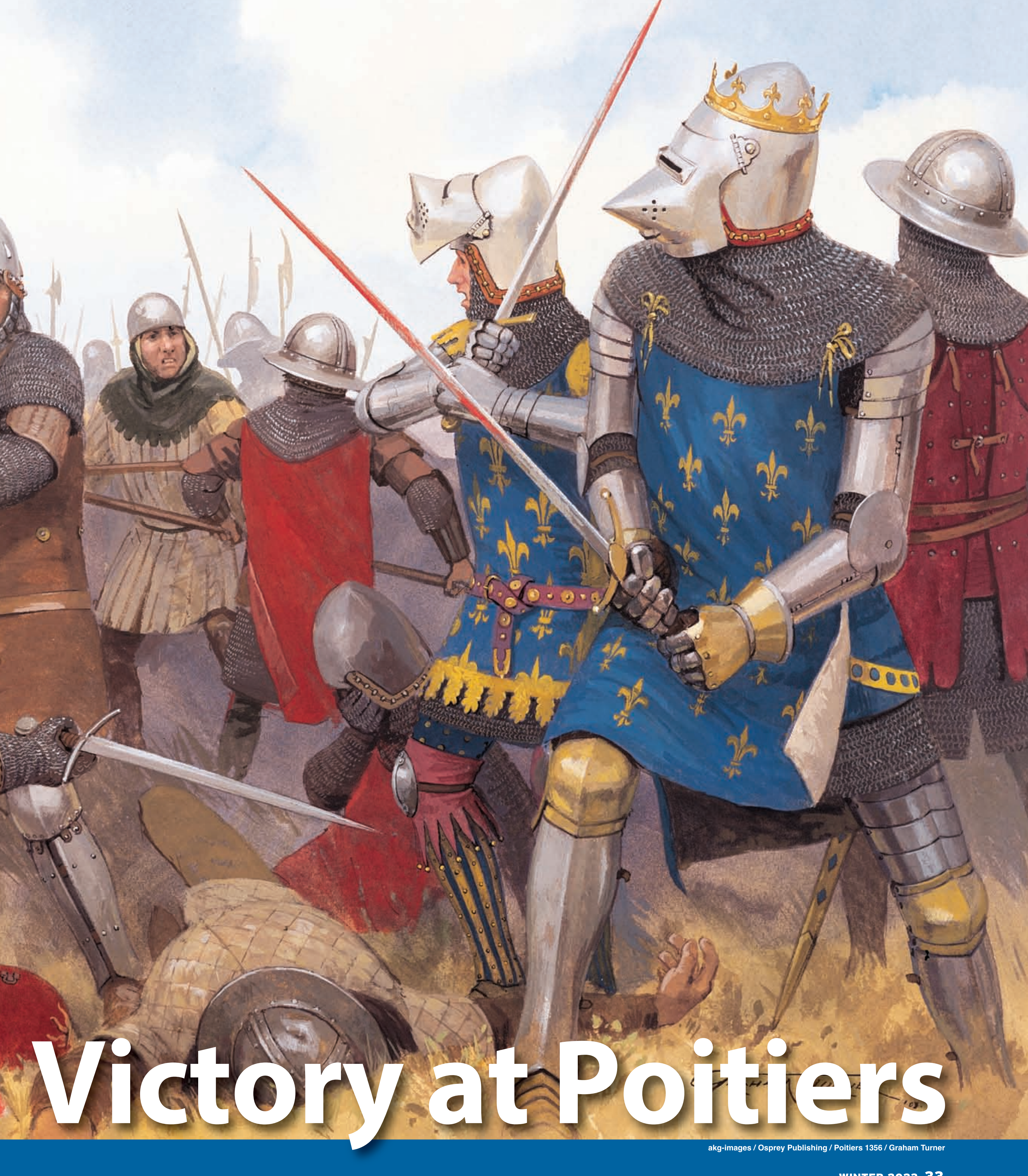
Denis de Morbecque (center), a French squire from Artois in the service of the English, calls on King John II of France (right) to surrender in the climax of the battle. With the attack of his division failing, the king agreed to surrender.

Stunning English

Denis de Morbecque, an exiled French knight in the service of the English crown, thought the fighting in the hawthorn hedgerows near Poitiers would never end. Prince Edward, the leader of the Anglo-Gascon army, had instilled the courage in his soldiers to overcome a mounted charge by French men-at-arms and survive the grueling two-hour melee with French knights that followed it. When the English succeeded in repulsing the first division led by Dauphin Charles, victory seemed near. Yet French King John II attacked with a second division of soldiers, and Edward's weary men fought on in a grim struggle for survival.

Having spent the last five years in English service, the past one under Prince Edward's banner, Morbecque knew his commander had a plan. At a critical moment during the French assault on September 19, 1356, the prince counterattacked. Unexpectedly, the French army broke. Only small groups of resistance remained. Like every man in the Anglo-Gascon army, whether an English lord or a Gascon spearman, Morbecque searched for the French king in the hope of capturing him.

The capture of King John would not only end the battle, but bring fortune upon that individual. As Morbecque fought on, he observed a French knight who was still gallantly fighting. He had already seen a handful of French knights dressed identically; however, this knight wielded a battleaxe with an exceptional amount of skill. Sensing



Victory at Poitiers

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it might be the French king, Morbecque made his way over to his position just about the time the knight's helmet came off. The knight was indeed the king of France.

King John wished to surrender directly to his cousin, Prince Edward, and he inquired as to the location of the prince. Morbecque informed him that although Prince Edward was not nearby, he could take the French king to his cousin once he surrendered. King John inquired as to his captor's name and background. "I surrender myself to you," the king said, handing Morbecque his right-hand glove. He had the unfortunate distinction of being the first and only French king captured by England.

By the time of the clash at Poitiers, England and France had been fighting in what would be known as the Hundred Years' War for two decades. The seeds for this conflict can be traced back to the Norman conquest of England in 1066. William I ruled both England and Normandy. English King Henry II became king of England, Duke of Normandy, and Count of Anjou in 1154. Through his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, Henry II also acquired the Duchy of Aquitaine, which included the province of Gascony. Yet by the first part of the 14th century, English holdings on the Continent had been drastically reduced and all that remained was the Duchy of Aquitaine, which included the prosperous province of Gascony with the bustling port of Bourdeaux.

England possessed a steady monarch in Edward III who ascended to the throne in 1327. France, however, experienced considerable disorder. The situation was exacerbated when French King Charles IV died in 1328 without a male heir. Through the intricacies of intermarriage among Europe's royalty, the closest male relative of Charles was Edward. This prospect disturbed the French nobility, spurring them to change the rules in inheriting the throne. The French crowned Philip VI as their king later that year. As the Duke of Aquitaine, Edward was a vassal of the king of France.

Philip resolved in 1337, however, that the Duchy of Aquitaine, must revert back to France on the grounds that Edward had not fulfilled certain obligations as a vassal. The English king responded by challenging Philip's right to the throne, which ignited the Hundred Years' War. An English fleet routed a larger French fleet in the Battle of Sluys fought in June 1340. For the next several years, fiscal challenges prevented Edward III from invading France.

Edward launched his first major invasion six years later. Landing in Normandy on July 12, 1346, his expeditionary force quickly captured Caen. While Edward marched east towards Flanders, Philip issued a call to his nobility to assemble an army. In late August, the two armies clashed near Crecy.

One of Edward III's subordinate commanders at Crecy was his eldest son, Prince Edward, better known to history as the Black Prince. The Black Prince, assisted by the earls of Warwick and Northampton, led the English vanguard. The English force that Philip eagerly sought to engage in battle differed in both tactics and composition. In lieu of the conventional clash of mounted men-at-arms, which included knights and squires, the king employed tactics honed from fighting the Scots. He ordered his armored cavalry to fight dismounted.

In addition to men-at-arms, a significant portion of England's army consisted of archers who were skilled in the use of the longbow, a weapon unique to England and Wales. Although it took

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LEFT: Prince Edward of Woodstock, King Edward's eldest son, better known to history as the Black Prince, conducted effective raids against targets in southwestern France from his base in Gascony. BELOW: King John II of France inherited the war with the English from his father King Philip VI of France. OPPOSITE: English King Edward III won a decisive victory over the French in 1346 at Crecy at the outset of the Hundred Years' War with his dismounted knights and fearsome longbowmen.

a decade to master the longbow, an experienced longbowmen could fire his weapon faster and farther than a crossbow. As if that were not enough, the longbow had greater penetration power than the crossbow.

The English longbowmen at Crecy dug pits in front of their positions and outfought the Genoese crossbowmen employed by the French. As the battle progressed, Philip grew impatient and ordered his mounted knights to advance before the rest of his army was properly positioned for attack. The English archers shattered numerous uncoordinated charges by the mounted French cavalry. English men-at-arms easily cut down the small number of French who reached the English line. After his decisive victory at Crecy, Edward resumed his march and captured Calais on August 3, 1347.

Both sides signed the Truce of Calais, openly welcomed by both monarchies given that their treasuries were drained from the costs of war. Although the truce was extended to 1355, small-scale clashes still occurred.

When Philip died in 1350 the throne passed to his son, Duke John of Normandy. Crowned John II that September he was so well regarded among his subjects for his festive nature that he earned the nickname "The Good." The new king declined a chance to end the war in April 1354 by refusing to ratify a new agreement, known as the Treaty of Guines. As a resumption of the war seemed inevitable, King John established garrisons and built new fortifications at crucial locations in northern France. Yet his attempts to raise a field army failed owing to a chronic lack of funds and disunity among the French nobility.

England was not the only kingdom with which John had political problems. The Kingdom of Navarre, located in the western end of the Pyrenees Mountains, was ruled by Charles II who possessed land in Normandy. A failed peace in 1354 led to Charles forging an alliance with England's Henry of Grosmont, Duke of Lancaster. Another try for peace collapsed when John arrested Charles while the Navarrese king was attending a banquet held by Dauphin Charles. This impetuous move cost the French king considerable support in Normandy.

A prominent Gascon nobleman known as Jean III de Grailly journeyed to Edward's court in January 1355 to request English troops for an offensive against the French in southwestern France. Grailly held the title of Captal de Buch, and as such was the lord of the port of Buch in Gascony. Up to that point, the Gascons had been holding their ground against the French, but de Grailly feared that French raids would increase in scale. Familiar with the Black Prince's feats at Crecy, de Grailly requested that Edward send the prince to lead the English expeditionary force. Edward III agreed to the proposition, and in April he ordered operations against the French to begin in both Normandy and Gascony. Crossing into France, Edward's Anglo-Gascon force terrorized the Languedoc region, marching southeast then turning east towards the Mediterranean Sea. The invaders lived off the land, sowing further devastation to a region still recovering from the Black Death. Having encountered little resistance, Edward reached the wealthy city of Narbonne in the Occitanie region on November 8. The fast-moving strike force did not include siege engines, so Edward did not attack the walled city. The French made their first attempt to intercept the English near Toulouse on November 20. In the clash that unfolded, Edward defeated the French. The raid ended with his return to the safety of Gascony on December 2. In the course of his grand chevauchée, the Black Prince had sacked and torched 500 towns and villages.

By early 1356 French forces had retaken 30

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English longbowmen were not peasants, they were actually highly trained professional soldiers.

The forces of William the Conqueror invading Wales in the late 11th century encountered archers wielding deadly longbows. After inflicting significant losses on the Normans, Welsh longbowmen became a staple of the English armies. Considered the best longbowmen on the British Isles, Welshmen served alongside Englishmen as archers on campaigns for more than five centuries.

Traditionally carved from the yew tree, other types of wood were also used for longbows. A longbow "should be of yew or boxwood, seventy inches between the points of attachment for the cord," wrote Count Gaston III of Foix in 1388. The Welsh archers of Gwent constructed the weapon from elm, according to Gerald of Wales, a 12th-century Welsh historian.

With a longer range and higher rate of fire than a crossbow, the longbow required years of training before its user became proficient and deadly with it. Most archers who served in the English armies of the Hundred Years' War were not peasants but professional soldiers. For deployment in war, the English king had his longbowmen uniformly armed and equipped with arrows tipped with a variety of different heads.

The years of training and use in combat took its toll on the body of English longbowmen. With a draw force of between 100 and 180 pounds, the constant drawing of the bowstring physically deformed an archer's body. Skeletal remains of longbowmen reveal enlarged left arms and over-developed shoulders.

Due to their influence on the field of battle, England banned the export of bows and arrows in 1357 and 1369. Between the bans, Welsh and English longbowmen were forbidden to leave the British kingdom without a Royal license. At some time this restriction was lifted and British longbowmen saw employment as mercenaries on the Continent after the conclusion of the Hundred Years' War in 1453.

Despite their aura on the battlefield, longbowmen were not invincible. Poor weather detrimentally affected the effectiveness of their weapon. While windy conditions reduced an arrow flight's accuracy, rain and snow had a negative effect on longbow's structural integrity. During later stages of the Hundred Years' War, French forces overcame English archers when the latter were unable to prepare adequate field defenses.

Although the longbow was still being used into the 17th century, it was gradually phased out as the effectiveness of gunpowder-based weapons improved with advances in the field.

— John E. Spindler

William Montague, the Earl of Salisbury (top left), directs his longbowmen deployed on the English right flank at Poitiers. They wear for protection in battle either short sleeved mail shirts or thickly quilted gambesons.

towns and castles lost to the English. In spite of being able to retake villages, the French crown was bankrupt. After Prince Edward's 1355 arrival in Bordeaux, John had suspended debt payments until the following Easter. The Black Prince intended to resume his raiding the next year on the hope of inflicting even greater damage on the French. King Edward provided the funds necessary for chevauchées in Normandy and Gascony, and he sent his son 600 more archers.

As a result of King John's actions in Normandy, including besieging the city of Breteuil, Norman nobles appealed to Edward III for aid. The French king altered his plan from operations in Brittany to Normandy. In conjunction with Lancaster's campaign, Edward issued orders for an army to mass in Southampton ready to sail for Calais. From there the English army would drive towards Paris with Lancaster. Any chance of Edward's participation disappeared when an Aragonese naval force, allied to France, arrived in the English Channel and disrupted operations.

Wanting to help, the Black Prince received orders to conduct another chevauchée into southern France. The French knew Prince Edward planned on conducting another chevauchée, but they did not know where. Edward's army arrived near the end of July at Bergerac on the Franco-Gascon border with 4,000 men-at-arms, 3,000 archers, and 2,000 Welsh, Irish, and Gascon foot soldiers. The Black Prince entered into French territory on August 4 with the four earls who had guided him so well the previous year. The Captal de Buch commanded the Gascon troops.

A majority of the army, specifically men-at-arms and archers, rode to allow the force to move at a more rapid pace and inflict more damage. Whereas the English and Gascon knights and squires fought with similar weapons and wore comparable armor as John's men-at-arms, the missile troops differed significantly. The French king hired Genoese crossbowmen, while the Black Prince relied on the legendary longbowmen. A veteran longbowmen could hit targets at a range of up to 350 yards. Although a crossbow might be able to fire as far, it would not be nearly as accurate. Carrying 60 to 72 arrows, a well-trained longbowmen could fire up to 18 arrows a minute, but dared not waste his arrows so quickly. Even the typical six arrows per minute outperformed a master crossbowman's four bolts per minute.

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The Black Prince conducted his first chevauchée through Languedoc in autumn 1355 and then launched another chevauchée into northwestern France the following summer that culminated in the clash of arms at Poitiers.

The Black Prince deceived the French into believing his intentions would be once more to target Languedoc. For the first couple of days, the Anglo-Gascon force moved in a northeasterly direction before turning north. The raiders proceeded to the Vienne River at Manot. Toward the end of the day on August 14, the English reached Lesterps where they encountered the French defenders for the first time. After defeating them, Prince Edward separated his force into a vanguard, middle guard and rearguard that marched spread out over many miles. To counter the English operations, King John responded by assembling a large royal army. The French king focused throughout the summer on defending northern France.

As Prince Edward's chevauchée had inflicted considerable destruction on southwestern France, King John knew he had to do something. After working out an arrangement on August 20 to conclude the siege of Breteuil, he appealed to the French nobility for its support. He outlined a plan in which existing forces hold the Loire until he brought an army in early September. Troops were to be sent south of the Loire to observe and harass the enemy. His army south of the Loire slowly began to assemble at Chartres under John de Clermont and Arnoul d'Audrehem, both of whom were Marshals of France.

Prince Edward maintained his northward track. He laid waste to a number of villages over the next 10 days, including Le Dorat, St. Benoit, Argentan, Chateauroux, and Issoudon. The English vanguard ran headlong into a 200-man French detachment on August 28. Instead of shadowing the enemy and reporting on their movements as directed, the leader of the detachment made the poor decision to attack the English. In the aftermath of the one-sided affair, just 30 captured French knights survived. The English held them for ransom. The Black Prince learned that the French king was gathering an army and intended to march on Tours.

The French king assembled his army upon reaching an agreement with the nobles in which they and their men would serve the king for 40 days without pay, after which payments would be disbursed. Placing a premium on mobility in order to catch Edward, John opted to leave behind most of the lower-grade infantry. John's four sons, Dauphin Charles, Louis, John, and Philip rode alongside their father and his brother Philip, the Duc d'Orleans. King John would rely most heavily on Gautier IV de Brienne, the Constable of France, and marshals Clermont and Audrehem for leadership in the coming clash of arms.

After meeting with his division commanders, Prince Edward struck out for Tours, but ran into delays at Romorantin. The English prince allowed himself to become distracted besieging a castle at that location for four days. Arriving on the southern banks of the Loire a few miles west of Tours on September 7, the Black Prince found all the bridges in the vicinity destroyed. Still believing he might join up with Lancaster, Edward camped along the Loire, enduring rainy weather.

Realizing John's army was moving to intercept him, the Black Prince decided to return to Gas-

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“Arming himself with a battle axe, King John II had 19 knights dress identically to him.”

cony. He set out on a march south four days later moving at a moderate pace. The prince still wanted to fight the French, but he wanted to do so on terms favorable to him. While the opposing armies were maneuvering against each other, Pope Innocent VI dispatched Cardinal Talleyrand of Perigord to broker a peace settlement.

News arrived that the French had crossed the Loire near Amboise, which placed the English, suffering from low provisions, in a bad spot. The Cardinal of Perigord met with Prince Edward at Montbazon on September 12. The cardinal told the prince that the dauphin had entered Tours with 1,000 men.

Over the course of the next week Edward and John continued to maneuver, each hoping to gain an advantage. John eventually got around Edward. Having learned that the French were approaching Poitiers faster than expected, Edward moved on September 17 to intercept his cousin.

Both sides dispatched scouting parties that collided in a sharp skirmish. King John was present at this skirmish, but he retreated to avoid becoming a casualty. Edward knew he had to take decisive action because his provisions were nearly exhausted and his men were thirsty. Scouts informed him that the Miosson River was nearby and that the ground north of Nouaille-Maupertuis offered a good defensive position.

The next morning the Anglo-Gascon army occupied a hill north of the Nouaille Woods, about five miles south of Poitiers, and the parched men quenched their thirst. Being Sunday, the odds of a battle were low, after all the so-called Truce of God forbade fighting on holy days. Throughout the day, Cardinal Talleyrand traveled between Edward's position and the French camp three miles to the north. Edward and John could not agree on peace terms. While the cardinal tried to achieve a peaceful solution, both sides prepared for battle. Edward's 3,000 men-at-arms, 1,000 foot soldiers, and 2,000 archers took up battle positions. The earls of Warwick and Oxford commanded the first division, Prince Edward led the second division, and the earls of Salisbury and Suffolk commanded the third division.

In front of a wooded tract, Edward deployed his divisions behind a hawthorn hedgerow that ran the length of his line and only had one large gap, which the prince defined as wide enough to fit four knights riding abreast. In front of the hedgerow were thickets and vines on a slope. At the bottom of the slope was open ground that rose up towards the French camp.

The English vanguard deployed near the Miosson River on the left flank. It had access to the Gue de l'Homme ford, a ready escape route should one be needed. Warwick, with subordinate commanders Oxford and Captal de Buch, had 1,000 English and Gascon men-at-arms.

To their left, extending along the marshy banks of the Miosson, were 1,000 Welsh and English archers. Situated on the right flank were the earls of Salisbury and Suffolk with 1,000 men-at-arms and 1,000 archers. The archers dug trenches and overturned wagons to serve as field fortifications. Edward's division consisted of the Gascon foot soldiers and 1,000 men-at-arms. He took up a position with a reserve force of 400 men-at-arms.

John arrived at Poitiers with 8,000 men-at-arms, 2,000 mounted Genoese crossbowmen, and 1,000 light infantrymen. These men-at-arms, the proverbial flower of the French chivalry, and some allied Germans, would battle alongside 200 Scottish knights under Lord William Douglas and 90 members of the Order of the Star, which was King John's personal bodyguard.

As with the English, the French took advantage of the truce with men arriving throughout day, ranging from 1,000 to 4,000 stragglers. King John listened to the advice of Lord Douglas who had fought the English. The Scottish lord suggested that the French men-at-arms should fight dismounted like the English.

Agreeing with the idea, the king made one alteration. He formed a mounted shock force composed of two companies each with 200 mounted armored men-at-arms. Led by marshals Clermont and Audrehem, their task was to disrupt the English archers at the start of the battle. Following as close as possible behind these troops would be a large French force led by Constable of France, Lord Douglas, and a number of German men-at-arms and the majority of crossbowmen.

King John organized the rest of the army into three divisions. Shortly after the vanguard struck the enemy's lines, the dauphin's first division of 4,000 troops would attack. As it was his first battle, the Duc de Bourbon accompanied the dauphin. The inexperienced Duc d'Orleans led the second division composed of 3,200 men-at-arms. King John took command of the third and last division. Accompanying the king was his son, Phillipe, standard bearer Geoffrey de Charny, 2,000 men-at-arms, and a small number of the Genoese crossbowmen.

The sun rose at 5:40 a.m. on September 19. The English and Gascons woke hungry, having slept in or near their defensive positions. Over the next couple of hours, both armies were active. Prince Edward had mass performed while Cardinal Tallyrand made one last attempt at peace. John ordered his divisions to form up outside of the longbow's range. Arming himself with a battle axe, he had 19 knights dress identically to him.

Edward decided that morning to move his baggage train across the Miosson via the Gue de l'Homme ford. The Earl of Warwick provided escort detail. It is unclear whether this was an attempt to move the train to a safer position or whether the prince was trying to withdraw. It might have been neither for the prince may deliberately have been seeking to goad the enemy into making a rash attack. Prince Edward visited the men in all of his divisions, imparting words of courage to each group of soldiers.

King John and his senior commanders began receiving reports that the Black Prince's banner had disappeared behind the hill. Many of the French commanders assumed that the enemy was retreating and that immediate action had to be taken to prevent their escape. Marshal Clermont and Lord Douglas both advised that the army should maintain its existing position. They believed that Prince Edward was nearly out of provisions and that the French had only to bide their time and the English army would surrender. Audrehem challenged Clermont's honor. He advised King John to attack the English immediately. He went so far as to say he was going to charge the enemy regardless. At that point, Clermont reluctantly agreed to join the planned attack.

At mid-morning the French vanguard began its attack. Audrehem directed his company against the positions held by the earls of Warwick and Oxford. In his wake marched the dismounted men-at-arms led by the Constable of France and Lord Douglas. Clermont began his assault shortly afterwards. Since Audrehem was farther away from the English than Clermont, the result was that both French mounted companies struck the English position at the same time. As the mounted nobles thundered across the land between the armies, the English archers on both flanks opened fire. To their dismay, the plate armor of both the French knights and their horses rendered their arrows ineffective.

Upon hearing the sounds of battle, Warwick and his men began returning. In his absence, Oxford made the timely decision to have his archers push forward, probably using the marshy terrain as a natural barrier, to get into a position to fire into the unprotected flanks and rear of the war mounts. The tactic succeeded as horses began to falter when the arrows struck home. These horses, with or without riders, caused some disruption among the dismounted French men-at-arms following the mounted charge. Nevertheless, the troops under Lord Douglas and the Constable of France succeeded in reaching the hedgerow.

Although his force was a shorter distance from Salisbury's line, Clermont was unable to take a direct route; instead, he had to move around more vineyards and thorn bushes than Audrehem's

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Although the advance guard of the French army attacked mounted as their predecessors had done at Crecy, King John ordered the men-at-arms in the large divisions that followed to fight dismounted. The French army lacked the superb generalship and unshakeable resolve of their English foe. OPPOSITE: French King John II desperately defends his position in a 19th-century painting by French artist Eugene Delacroix. Wielding his battle axe with expert skill, the king outfought those who engaged him in single combat until he voluntarily surrendered.

men. His men were forced to narrow their attack front upon reaching the hedgerow gap. Some attackers penetrated the large gap. At some point, the supporting crossbowmen arrived and tried to put down suppressing fire. Salisbury counterattacked. His troops slaughtered those French men-at-arms inside the English position and hurled back the enemy.

Audrehem's attack also proved ineffective. The French vanguard had suffered horrific casualties in exchange for creating a few additional gaps in the English line for the next French division. Marshal Clermont and Constable de Brienne lay dead on the battlefield. While a wounded Lord Douglas escaped, the English captured Marshal Audrehem.

As the battered remnants of the French vanguard made their way back, the second division marched forward. Any chance of a concentrated assault evaporated when members of the vanguard collided with part of the dauphin's division. The scope of the vanguard's defeat may have been unrealized as some of the first wave's men still battled at the hedgerow. Instead of targeting the flanks, the dauphin attacked the English defenses just right of center, Prince Edward's sector. The 4,000 French men-at-arms began to tire after crossing the open field being showered by arrows, with the last stretch uphill through vines and thickets.

The sanguinary clash of arms at Poitiers lasted nearly four hours, which was longer than most battles of the period. The dauphin's division and its Anglo-Gascon foe slugged it out for two hours with no quarter asked for and none given. As swords clashed or met shields, casualties mounted for both sides. The French men-at-arms made their way through minor gaps or hacked through hedgerows to create new ones. At one point in the battle, the French breached the Anglo-Gascon defense, yet Edward still did not commit his reserve.

The earls of Salisbury and Suffolk moved among their men redirecting the archers and raising the morale of their troops. They drove back the French. It was during this phase of the battle that the Duc de Bourbon was slain. The dauphin's guardians removed him from the battlefield for his safety. His brothers Louis and John also were escorted off the field in the direction of Chauvigny.

For reasons that are unclear, the Duc d'Orleans, also withdrew to Chauvigny. He claimed that he did so under orders from the king, but few believed the claim. Of his 3,200 men, just short of one-half followed him. A small number carried on, resulting in a feeble attempt easily repulsed. Those who either did not follow the Duc d'Orleans or attack joined the king's division. Edward's battle-weary men took advantage of the brief lull to take a moment to rest. During this time they moved their wounded to the rear and scavenged the battlefield for intact French weapons and usable arrows. Edward knew that he had to maintain a reserve to counter the attack of King John's men, so he reorganized his men into one large group. He also instructed Captal de Buch to pick 60 mounted knights and 100 mounted archers, swing around the French flank, and attack the enemy from the rear.

About midday, King John ordered the division forward. Absorbing survivors from the first two assaults and men from his brother's division, the force swelled to 4,000 men-at-arms and 300 crossbowmen. John instructed Charny to raise France's sacred banner, the blood-red Oriflamme. He also issued orders that the French were not to take prisoners. As the French marched forward behind a wall of shields, the Genoese crossbowmen maintained a steady fire. The English archers had a limited ability to respond given that they were saving their few remaining arrows.

The sight of a fourth French attack force with the unfurled Oriflamme demoralized the exhausted Anglo-Gascon soldiers. Morale dropped further at the sight of the Captal de Buch and his force riding away, as not all had not been informed of the flanking tactic. Seeing his men's confidence start to waver, Prince Edward issued orders for an advance to meet the French. The strength of the English counterattack was Edward's reserve of 400 men-at-arms.

The Captal de Buch's mounted force forded the River Miosson at the Gue de l'Homme and re-crossed at the Gue de Russon ford. Using a hill as a screen, the strike force arrived behind the French king. Once in position, the St. George standard was raised for Edward to see. Captal de Buch spurred his men into action and charged into the unsuspecting French.

At the same time, Prince Edward ordered a forward advance. Salisbury's troops struck King John's men head-on, while Warwick's men crashed into the French right flank. After expending all their arrows, the English archers exchanged

ABOVE: Although King John II of France is depicted incorrectly as mounted when he was actually on foot during the battle, this 14th-century illustration accurately depicts English longbowmen behind a hawthorn hedge. OPPOSITE: The Black Prince (right) greets his defeated cousin, King John, at the end of the bloody battle. The captured French king was taken to England where he died at the age of 44 in 1364.

Wikimedia

their bows for swords, axes, and clubs and joined the melee.

Even though the fourth French division contained most of the best knights in France, the abrupt shock of the unexpected charge into their rear broke their morale and cohesiveness. In contrast to the exhausting slugfest when Dauphin Charles fought, this phase of the battle went quickly. Many Frenchmen fled either trying to escape across the Miosson or by running five miles to Poitiers. The English pursued the retreating French to the gates of the city. Seeing the English approaching behind them, the citizens of the town refused to open the gates. The English proceeded to slaughter the French men-at-arms.

A small pocket of French troops stubbornly fought on. They soon found themselves pushed into a loop of the Miosson that became known as the Champ d'Alexandre. The crack troops of the Order of the Star continued protecting their nobles. Both sides took note when the Oriflamme fell to the ground, its standard bearer slain. Swinging his battle axe, King John outfought those who engaged him in single combat, although these souls were unaware of whom they fought. Not until Denis de Morbecque discerned his identity and negotiated the French king's surrender was the truth revealed. With the capture of the king, the battle essentially ended. "Never before had there been so disastrous a rout," wrote chronicler John Froissart of the French defeat.

The Black Prince dined later that evening with the French king in his tent. The Anglo-Gascon army stayed in the vicinity of the battlefield until September 22. Ten days later the Black Prince's army arrived in Gascony with its prisoners and precious loot.

The French suffered 2,500 killed and 2,600 captured, compared to 1,000 English killed. The French dead included the Duc de Bourbon, the Constable of France, and Marshal Clermont. Among the 42 French nobles taken captive were King John, Prince Phillippe, and Marshal Audrehem. For capturing the French monarch, Morbecque received a lifelong pension from King Edward III.

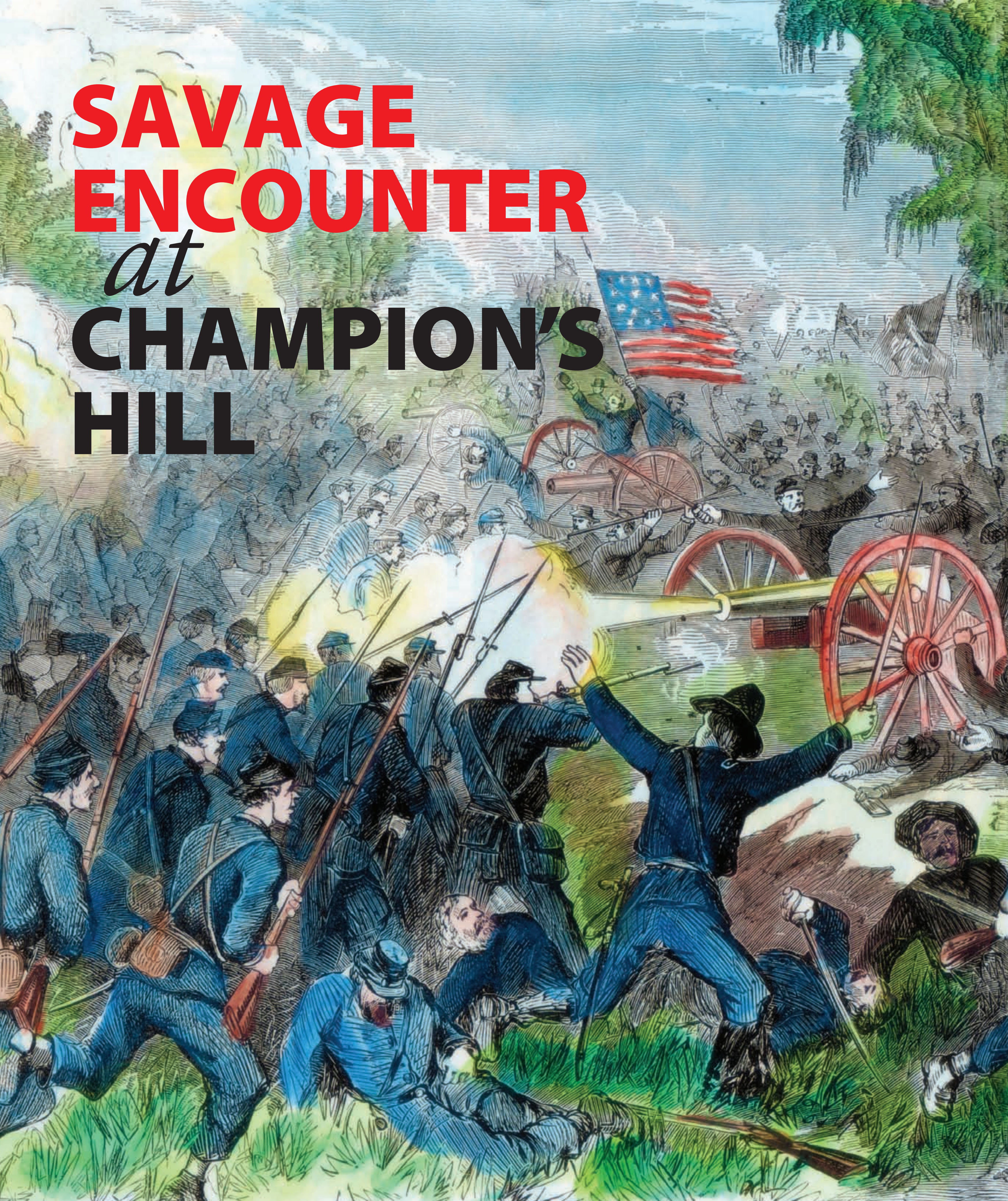
For a number of months, lack of effective central government brought about a situation close to anarchy in France. Dauphin Charles was proclaimed regent in March 1358 as his father remained a prisoner indefinitely in England. Four years after the battle the two sides signed the Treaty of Bretigny. The terms of the treaty dictated that the French had to cede large swaths of southwestern France to England. Moreover, the French would have to pay the English crown three million gold ecu for King John's freedom.

King John reigned until his death in 1364 at which time the dauphin took the throne as King Charles V. Expected to follow his father as the next king of England, the Black Prince continued fighting the French in Spain and defending Aquitaine. He died on June 8, 1376, nine months before his father. Edward III was succeeded by Richard of Bourdeaux, the Black Prince's son, who became King Richard II.

At Poitiers, Edward had been able to force the French to fight on terrain of his choosing, and his army had received their attack in a strong defensive position. Under his capable leadership, the Anglo-Gascon troops marched and fought together for another year. For his part, King John had failed at Poitiers largely because of an inability to foster close cooperation among French units on the battlefield. In all the battles between England and France, the clash at Poitiers is remembered as the one in which the French king became prisoner of England.

Although the English would prevail in several famous battles, most notably at Agincourt in 1415, the tide of war gradually shifted to the French in the aftermath of the successful relief of the besieged city of Orleans on the Loire River in north-central France in 1429. Two French victories, at Formigny in 1450 and Castillon in 1453, capped the French counteroffensive. Although the clash at Castillon is considered the last battle of the Hundred Years' War, England and France remained at war for another 20 years. The instability of the English throne, though, meant that the English were no longer able to defend their claims in France, and they lost all of their territory except for the port of Calais. France finally retook Calais, the last continental possession of England, on January 7, 1558, in another war between the two crowns. ■

SAVAGE ENCOUNTER *at* CHAMPION'S HILL



Ulysses S. Grant marched into central Mississippi in May 1863 to isolate the Confederate garrison at Vicksburg. When the Confederates marched out to meet him, they collided at Champion's Hill.

BY ROBERT L. DURHAM

The barren summit of Champion's Hill presented an ideal site for Lt. Gen. John C. Pemberton's Confederate army to deploy artillery batteries on the morning of May 16, 1863. If the Union soldiers of Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's Army of the Tennessee wanted to take out the artillery, they would have to push through deep ravines choked with tangled underbrush in order to reach the summit.

But that was exactly what they did at the start of the battle. As the Yankees of Brig. Gen. George F. McGinnis' brigade neared the crest of the hill, Captain James F. Waddell's Alabama Battery loaded its guns with canister rounds designed to repulse infantry at close quarters.

McGinnis' Yankees fixed bayonets as they made their way towards the summit and the menacing Confederate artillery. When they were 75 yards from the battery, McGinnis issued orders for his troops to lie down to avoid the Confederate artillery fire. When the Confederate gunners fired their guns, the tin cans containing the iron balls tore open as soon as they left the barrel, but their contents whisked over the heads of the prone Federals.

The 11th Indiana was the first unit to gain the crest of Champion's Hill, but McGinnis brought up Colonel Thomas H. Bringhurst's 46th Indiana to reinforce the other Hoosiers already on the summit. The 46th Indiana came on at the double-quick and captured the guns. Confederate infantry, however, rallied

Union troops assail the Confederate center at Champion's Hill midway between the state capitol of Jackson, Mississippi, and the stronghold of Vicksburg. The action at Champion's Hill proved to be the decisive action of the Vicksburg campaign.

Alamy

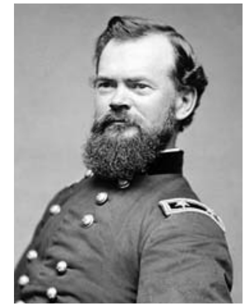
and counterattacked in a bid to retake the guns.

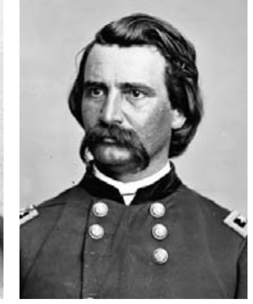
"At this point occurred one of the most obstinate and murderous conflicts of the war," wrote McGinnis. The two sides fired on each other at point-blank range and fought each other with clubbed muskets and bayonets. Some fell to the ground dead, while others screamed in agony from terrible wounds. Charge followed countercharge as each side sought to vanquish the other atop Champion's Hill. The struggle for the Confederate guns on the crest of the hill would prove to be one of the most savage contests of the battle.

The culmination of Grant's four-month campaign to secure the most formidable Confederate stronghold remaining on the Mississippi River at Vicksburg began on April 30, 1863. Vicksburg held an almost impregnable position on the east bank of the Mississippi River. The Confederates possessed Vicksburg, Mississippi, and Port Hudson, Lousiana, which prevented the U.S. Navy's brown-water naval squadron from accessing a 130-mile stretch of the Lower Mississippi River. Holding this crucial section of the river also enabled Richmond to keep a line of communications open with Confederate forces in the Confederacy's Trans-Mississippi Department.

Grant dispatched Colonel Benjamin Grierson on April 17, 1863, on a cavalry raid through the heart of Mississippi in order to draw off Confederate troops from the Vicksburg defenses. At the same time, Colonel Abel Streight set off two days later on a raid to destroy parts of the Western and Atlantic Railroad in north Georgia in order to pry

credit





Clockwise from top left: Brig. Gen. John S. Bowen, Maj. Gen. James B. McPherson, Maj. Gen. John A. Logan, and Brig. Gen. Seth M. Barton.

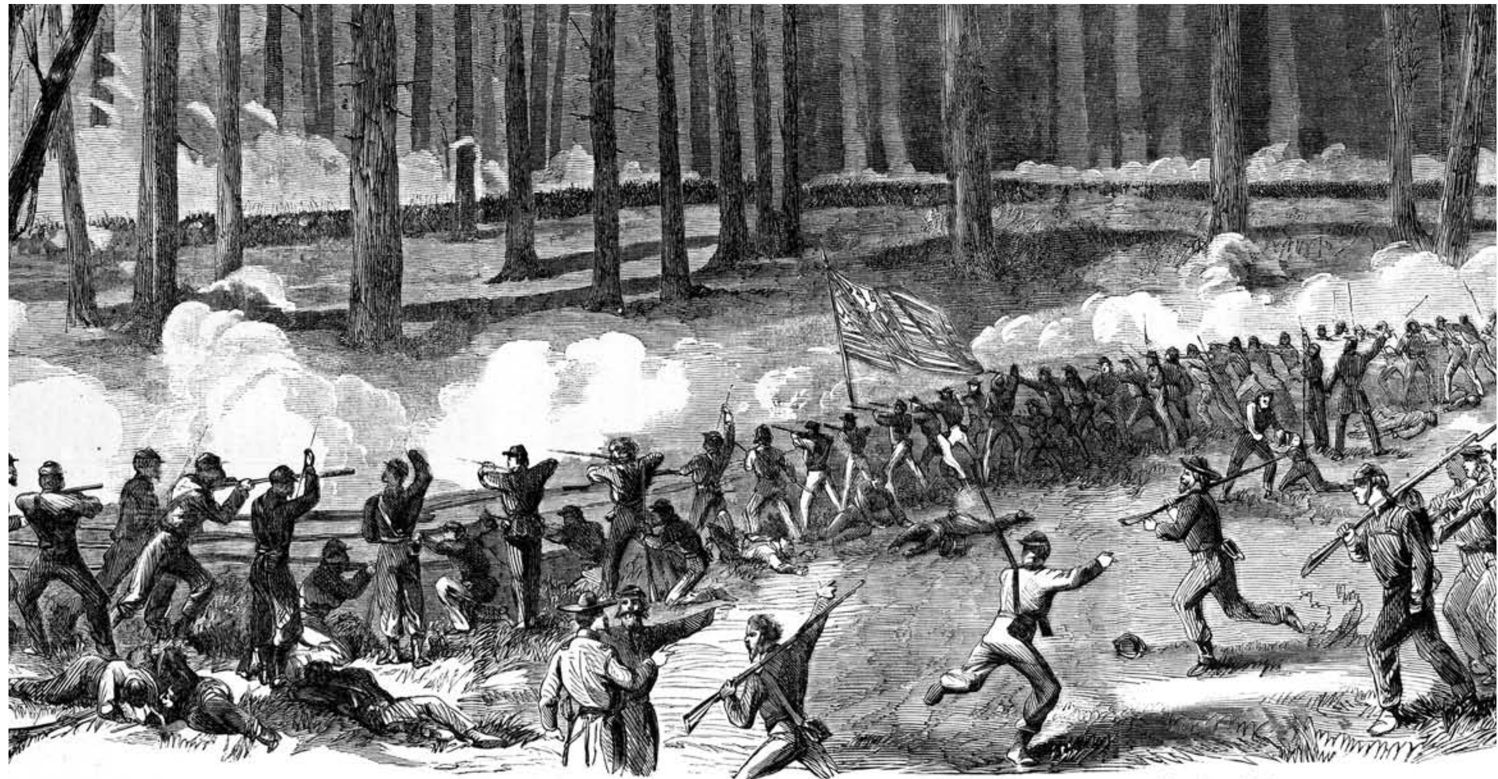
the Confederates from Chattanooga, Teneseee. The Union high command reasoned that if the Confederates could conduct successful mounted raids into enemy-held territory, so could the Union army.

Grant and Rear Admiral David D. Porter maintained steady pressure on Confederate forces holding the last section of the Mississippi River. Porter steamed past the Vicksburg batteries on two occasions in mid-April with his gunboats and transports. These successful naval expeditions made it possible for Grant to transport 17,000 troops across the Mississippi River below Vicksburg.

Grant marched his troops down the west bank of the river in April to Bruinsburg, Mississippi. From that location, Porter's transports ferried them to the east side of the river on April 30. Grant's troops began marching inland the following day.

Pemberton commanded the Confederate Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana. The Confederate government entrusted him with holding Vicksburg for the Confederacy. The Pennsylvania-born Confederate commander expressed surprise that Grant succeeded in getting his troops across the Mississippi. But he knew that Grant was up to something since he had been receiving regular reports that the Union commander was moving troops south along the west bank of the river.

Instead of sending troops to block possible landing points on the east bank, Pemberton dispatched a portion of his infantry to counter the advance of Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's XV Corps into northern Mississippi. Lacking sufficient cavalry to screen Sherman's advance, Pemberton had no other option but to send a large force of infantry to check Sherman's movements. Grant ordered Sherman to conduct a feint against Confederate forces at Snyder's Bluff, north of



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ABOVE: Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant defeated Confederate General Joseph Johnston at Jackson two days before Champion's Hill. To deny the state capitol's use to Johnston, Grant torched its buildings, cut its telegraph wires, and tore up its railroad tracks. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Brig. Gen. John Gregg's brigade fought a six-hour delaying action on May 12, 1863, at Raymond, Mississippi, against Maj. Gen. James McPherson's XVII Corps before falling back toward Jackson.

Vicksburg, while the other two union corps crossed the Mississippi River below the city. Sherman subsequently marched south and crossed the Mississippi in a similar fashion to Grant's other two corps.

As soon as Grant had established his bridgehead at Bruinsburg, he sent Maj. Gen. John A. McClernand's XIII Corps to lead the march into the Mississippi interior followed closely by James B. McPherson's XVII Corps.

McClernand ran headlong into Brigadier General John S. Bowen's infantry division, which Pemberton had dispatched to slow Grant's advance. In the sharp clash that followed, McClernand prevailed. After brushing aside Bowen, McClernand set off for Raymond, Mississippi, which was situated just 20 miles from the Mississippi state capital at Jackson.

Grant had orders from Washington to march south and link up with Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Banks, the commander of the Army of the Gulf, in order to capture Port Hudson. Once he had united with Banks, the combined force was to countermarch north to capture Vicksburg. Grant did not like the idea, however, given that Banks had seniority over him. Fortunately for Grant, Banks, who was campaigning west of the Mississippi River, decided to march against Confederate forces under Maj. Gen. Richard Taylor in Alexandria, Louisiana. With Banks deliberately avoiding an attack on Port Hudson, Grant was free to continue his offensive against Vicksburg without interference from Banks.

Pemberton committed his troops in a piecemeal fashion against Grant. He sent Brig. Gen. John Gregg's brigade to take up a blocking position behind Fourteen Mile Creek. McPherson, who outnumbered Gregg by more than three to one, smashed his meager force in the Battle of Raymond on May 12.

To strengthen the defense of Vicksburg, Confederate President Jefferson Davis had ordered Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston to Mississippi on May 9 to take personal command of the effort to defend Vicksburg. Johnston arrived by train in the Mississippi capital on May 14 after a circuitous train ride from Tennesee that took him through Atlanta, Montgomery, Mobile, and Meridian. "I arrived this evening finding the enemy's forces between this place and General Pemberton, cutting off communication," he wired despondently to the Confederate government in Richmond, Virginia. "I am too late."

Grant initially had planned to move directly on Vicksburg from Raymond, but when he learned that Johnston had scraped together Confederate reinforcements at Jackson, Grant decided to knock Johnston out of the fight before turning west to Vickburg. Grant sent the two corps of McPherson and Sherman to capture Johnston's position at Jackson.

As two-thirds of Grant's army advanced on Jackson, Johnston ordered an evacuation of the city. Johnston had just two brigades, those of Gregg and Brig. Gen. W.H.T. Walker, totaling 6,000 men at Jackson. Gregg had marched to Jackson from Port Hudson, while Walker had arrived from the east as reinforcements from General P.G. T. Beauregard's Department of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida.

Johnston faced 25,000 Union troops at Jackson. Knowing he was heavily outnumbered, Johnston instructed Gregg to fight a delaying action to cover the evacuation of the city. Once the evacuation was over, Johnston intended to abandon the city.

After hard marching on muddy roads in torrential rains, Sherman's troops approached the town from the southwest on May 14 while McPherson bore down on it from the northwest astride the Vicksburg and Jackson Railroad. McPherson attacked the main Confederate position two miles outside the city at 11 a.m. Sherman joined the action immediately. The leading divi-

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sions of the two Union corps drove Gregg's troops into the city's fortifications.

When the last Confederate supply train exited the town at mid-afternoon, Gregg withdrew his men north to join the rest of Jackson's troops. The Confederates sacrificed 17 guns in the process as they withdrew seven miles north of the city to Tugaloo where Johnston planned to wait the arrival of reinforcements from the East. Union troops took possession of the city in the late afternoon and unfurled the Stars and Stripes atop the state capitol building.

Grant wanted to wreck the railroads in Jackson so that it could no longer serve as a transportation hub for the Confederacy. He ordered Sherman "to remain in Jackson until he destroyed that place as a railroad center and manufacturing city of military supplies." Sherman's troops set fire to foundries, machine shops, warehouses, factories, arsenals, and other public property.

Having driven Johnston out of Jackson, Grant abandoned the city and turned back towards Vicksburg. Grant's Army of the Tennessee, which was traveling on three parallel roads, passed through Clinton on the morning of May 16 and continued west toward Edward's Station on the east bank of the Big Black River. As the Union army advanced westward, it ran into Pemberton's defenses along Ratliff Ridge overlooking Jackson Creek that covered the Middle Road and the Raymond Road.

Ratliff Ridge extended south Champion Hill, a commanding height that rose 100 feet above the surrounding terrain. The area in which Grant and Pemberton would do battle that day consisted of ridges, ravines, sunken farm lanes, and stands of timber. Champion Hill itself "was bald, giving the enemy a commanding point for his artillery, and was really the key of the position," wrote McPherson.

Baker's Creek skirted the battlefield to the west and three roads crossed it. Raymond Road crossed Baker's Creek on the Lower Bridge. At the time of the battle, the torrential rains of the previous day had carried away the bridge. Pemberton instructed Major Samuel H. Lockett, his chief engineer, to oversee the immediate repair of the bridge.

A second road, known as Middle Road, paralleled Raymond Road to the north. A third road, known as Jackson Road, ran in a north-south direction across Champion Hill. It met the Middle Road on the other side of the hill, at a crossroad. From there, the Middle Road became part of Jackson Road. The latter turned west and crossed Baker's Creek by way of the Upper Bridge. The north-south road, at that point became the Ratliff Road, and it continued to join the Raymond Road at the Coker farmhouse.

The first contact came at midmorning on the Raymond Road when the skirmishers of Brig. Gen. Andrew J. Smith's Tenth Division of McClernand's corps made contact with the skirmishers of Maj. Gen. William W. Loring's division. Grant had given McClernand explicit orders not to bring on an engagement, and the corps commander had passed those along to Smith. Smith in turn told Brig. Gen. Stephen G. Burbridge, who commanded the first brigade of the division, to scout the enemy position but not to bring on a general engagement until the rest of the division had come up.

As the two sides skirmished, Loring fell back to Coker House Ridge. Smith mistakenly believed he had succeeded in driving back Loring's troops, but Pemberton had ordered Loring to pull back his troops to the ridge. The skirmishing continued with other units on both sides deploying skirmishers as well. With the Union guns already in action, the Confederates began firing their artillery as well.

Brigadier General Peter J. Osterhaus' Ninth Division of McClernand's corps came up against Brig. Gen. Stephen D. Lee's Second Brigade of Maj. Gen. Carter L. Stevenson's Division on the Middle Road in front of the crossroads. The crossroads was a strategic intersection of the Jackson

Road, the plantation road, and the Middle Road, which led southeastward to Raymond.

Osterhaus, operating under the same orders as Smith, did not press the Confederates. He established a skirmish line, unlimbered his artillery, and awaited further orders.

Although neither side moved aggressively against the other, casualties occurred in the fighting along the Middle and Raymond roads. A well-aimed shot by Confederate artillerists struck one of Osterhaus' caissons causing a large explosion. Union artillery also caused considerable carnage.

As Pemberton listened to the sounds of skirmishers on the southern half of the battlefield, a messenger arrived with an urgent dispatch from Johnston. The dispatch contained a message from Johnston informing Pemberton that he had evacuated Jackson. It also contained orders instructing Pemberton to join forces with Johnston in the vicinity of Clinton, which was situated 14 miles west of Jackson.

Although Pemberton desired to link up with Johnston, his 22,000 troops were spread out over a wide area and engaged against the vanguard of Grant's army. Pemberton did, however, send a reply to Johnston informing him that he would attempt to pull back to Edwards Station and march his troops from that location to Clinton.

As a preliminary step, Stevenson sent a detachment to escort Pemberton's train of 400 wagons toward Baker's Creek, and stand guard at the crossroads. While the opposing forces continued skirmishing, the Confederate wagons began withdrawing.

The northern half of the battlefield where Champion's Hill was situated experienced a different type of fighting than that which had unfolded on the southern half of the battlefield along the Raymond and Middle roads. Brig. Gen. Alvin P. Hovey's Twelfth Division of McClernand's corps and Gen. John A. Logan's division of McPherson's XVII Corps proceeded west along the Jackson Road toward Champion's Hill. Grant accompanied McPherson. He was eager to trap Pemberton before he had a chance to join forces with Johnston.

Spying the Union infantry advancing along Jackson Road, Confederate skirmishers deployed on the hill notified Lee. The intrepid Confederate brigadier led the five regiments of his Alabama brigade from their position on Middle Road to the crest of Champion's Hill. To maintain the integrity of the Confederate line of battle, Brig. Gen. Alfred Cumming's Third Brigade of Stevenson's division deployed his troops in Lee's former position on the Middle Road.

Grant, who had 32,000 troops on hand with which to engage Pemberton, established his headquarters at the Champion house. McGinnis, of Hovey's division, sent skirmishers forward to drive off a Confederate patrol. McGinnis first rode to within 300 yards of Champion's Hill to reconnoiter the Confederate position. He then rode to Grant's headquarters where he informed the Union commander of the nature of the terrain on which they would be fighting.

McGinnis informed Grant that the ground consisted of cultivated fields, as well as hills and ravines covered with timber and choked with undergrowth. Despite the rugged terrain, Hovey urged Grant to attack the Confederates; however, Grant told him he would not make a general attack until all of McPherson's troops were at hand.

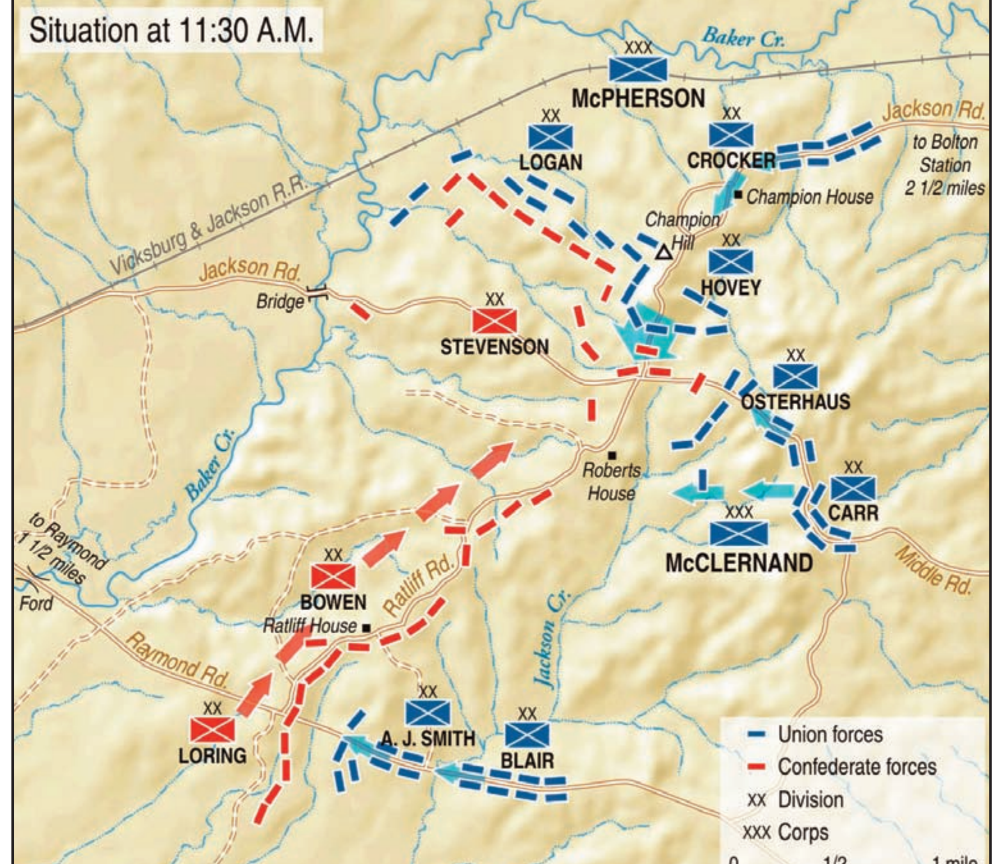
Hovey, whose Twelfth Division was composed of just two brigades, returned to his command and completed the deployment of his command by moving Colonel James R. Slack's Second Brigade into position to the left of McGinnis' First Brigade. Logan arrived at 10 a.m. and deployed his troops in a way that extended the Union line to the west.

Logan positioned Brig. Gen. John E. Smith's First Brigade and Brig. Gen. Mortimer D. Leggett's Second Brigade to the right of McGinnis while holding Brig. Gen. John D. Stevenson's Third Brigade in reserve. A half hour later, the Union troops began their advance on the northern half of the battlefield. Hovey's troops moved up the north slope of Champion's Hill and Logan's two brigades advanced on his right. Three Union batteries went into action to support the attack.

Lee's Confederates had just reached the crest of Champion's Hill when the Union vanguard attacked. Lee's Alabamans fired crashing volleys that checked the advance of Hovey's blue ranks. "Our artillery was hastened forward from point to point, over the numberless hills of this most rugged country, and poured its deadly fire into the Confederates," wrote Reverend Thomas M. Stevenson, the chaplain of the 78th Ohio.

John Stevenson brought his Third Brigade

Map © 2023 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



ABOVE: Union Maj. Gen. John McClernand on the Union right pressed his attack on making the most of the open terrain north of Champion's Hill. A counterattack by Brig. Gen. John S. Bowen's division brought a brief reprieve, but Confederate Maj. Gen. Carter L. Stevenson's troops ultimately found themselves outflanked and retreated. OPPOSITE: Deep ranks of Union troops advance at the double quick against outnumbered Confederates in the tangled woods south of Champion's Hill. The broken terrain south of the hill was cut up by ravines, hills, and forested tracts.

around to the far right of Brig. Gen John E. Smith's brigade and swept around Lee's flank. The soldiers of one of Stevenson's regiments, the 32nd Ohio, were eager to restore their reputation, which had been tarnished the previous year when they surrendered at Harper's Ferry. Colonel Benjamin F. Potts led the Buckeyes in a furious charge against the Confederates.

Meanwhile, McGinnis' First Brigade of Hovey's division moved forward to engage Lee's Alabamians until he discovered another body of Confederates closing in on his right flank. He halted his troops and redirected them to fire on the advancing Confederates. McGinnis' infantrymen fired heavy volleys into the enemy, while

two right regiments had to stay where they were to protect an Alabama battery stationed at the crossroads. Equally troubling for the Confederates, a 300-yard gap also existed between Cumming's forward position and the regiments at the crossroads. Cumming was in the process of straightening his battle line when the Federals struck. Their musketry staggered the Georgians.

Carter Stevenson observed the fighting on Champion's Hill and requested reinforcements from Pemberton. Pemberton responded by ordering Brig. Gen. Seth Barton's Georgia Brigade to his assistance. Barton, whose troops were deployed in support of Cumming's two regiments at the crossroads, detached one regiment and a section of

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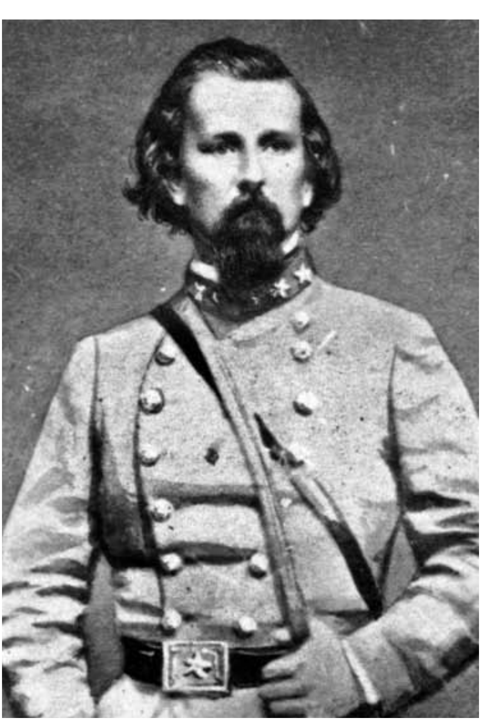

ABOVE: A soldier of the 11th Indiana Infantry, left, the regiment that was first to gain the crest of Champion's Hill. At right, Confederate Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman, who commanded a Mississippi brigade on the Confederate right, was mortally wounded by shrapnel from a Federal shell that exploded near him. OPPOSITE: A Kurz & Allison lithograph commemorates the Union victory at Champion's Hill. As the afternoon wore on, Pemberton's army collapsed under the weight of Grant's superior numbers.

Union artillery pounded the Confederates. The combination of musket and artillery fire stopped the Confederates cold. "From the edge of the timber we drove the enemy, step by step, for nearly 800 yards, over deep ravines and abrupt hills," wrote McGinnis.

Cumming's Georgians came up at this time minus two regiments left behind to contain Osterhaus' troops. They went into position to the right of Lee's Alabamians. Cumming formed his brigade on rough ground that was heavily timbered.

A gap soon appeared between Lee and Cumming. To address the problem, Cumming detached his left regiment to fill the gap, but the

artillery to secure the Lower Bridge at Baker's Creek. Barton then ordered the rest of his Georgians into position to the left of Lee's Alabamians. With hardly time to deploy, they drove John Stevenson's skirmishers back into the brigade's main line.

McGinnis' Hoosiers had prevailed in the bloody struggle for Waddell's guns atop the crest of Champion's Hill. After hand-to-hand fighting that lasted about five minutes, two of the three regiments of Cumming's Georgia Brigade were routed. Slack's Midwesterners then struck Cumming's right flank hard, which made the rout complete. In the process, they captured four more

Confederate guns.

As the contest for Champion's Hill heated up, McPherson ordered both Logan and Hovey to assault the Confederates holding the crest of the hill. Captain Max Corput's Cherokee Georgia Artillery, which was attached to Barton's brigade, opened a brisk fire on Logan's men.

Logan's troops, who had been marching at the double-quick, arrived on the battlefield eager to join the fight. McPherson and Logan rode down the line and stopped next to the 31st Illinois of Smith's brigade. Logan knew the Illinoisans having helped raise the regiment at the start of the war. "We must whip them here or all go under the sod together," shouted Logan, adding, "Give 'em Hell!"

A Confederate battery on top of Champion Hill shelled Smith's men as they swept forward. The Yankees had to cross some high rail fences before they could reach the Alabamians at the bottom of the hill. Smith's men pitched into the outnumbered Alabamians and with loud cheers drove them back up the hill.

Cumming's retreat had left Lee's right flank open, so Lee withdrew his brigade from Champion's Hill. Several regiments of Barton's Georgia Brigade on the right subsequently became disorganized as John Stevenson pressed his attack. By 1:30 p.m. the Federals had captured Champion's Hill. With no fight left in them, Carter Stevenson's men streamed in full retreat towards the crossings at Baker's Creek.

Pemberton and his staff rode among the dispirited Georgians in an attempt to rally them. The Confederate commander called for help from division commanders Bowen and Loring, but both refused. Neither liked Pemberton, and they were not going to risk the lives of their soldiers to assist him. Both generals informed Pemberton that they were under too much pressure on their own fronts to come to his assistance. This was not true, though, because neither Osterhaus nor Smith showed any inclination to engage the Confederates in front of them. Pemberton later blamed Loring for not reinforcing the Confederate left on Champion Hill, but if Loring had come to his aid, he would have left the Raymond Road undefended.

Since his dispatches to his division commanders had not produced any results, Pemberton rode south to see if he could find some fresh troops to assist Carter Stevenson's exhausted command. Pemberton found Bowen and ordered him to go into action with his two divisions on Stevenson's right flank. Leaving skirmishers and artillery behind to hold Osterhaus, Brig. Gen. Francis Cockrell, who commanded a brigade of Missourians, and Brig. Gen. Martin Green, who commanded a brigade of Arkansians, maneuvered

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their rough and ready western troops against Slack's brigade. Cockrell's Missourians advanced on the left of Bowen's line, while Green's Arkansians pushed forward on the right of Bowen's line.

These veteran Confederate troops went into action with great determination. On their way to engage the Yankees they passed through the ranks of Cumming's demoralized Georgians. Cockrell, a colorful personality, rode among his men with his reins and a large magnolia in his left hand and his sword in his right.

As they advanced, a group of Southern women in the yard of Isaac Roberts' house, which Pemberton had chosen as his battlefield headquarters, sang "Dixie" to the Missourians and Arkansians to cheer them on. "With a shout of defiance and with gleaming bayonets and banners pointing to the front, the grey line leaped forward, and moving at quick-time, across the field, dislodged the enemy," wrote Colonel Robert S. Bevier of Cockrell's Brigade.

Bowen's men charged the Union line on Champion's Hill at 2:30 p.m. and broke it. In their hurried retreat, the Yankees abandoned many of the Confederate cannon they had fought so hard to capture. Bowen's men pressed their advantage forcing Hovey's men back up the Jackson Road to their starting point. It was an amazing feat of arms, considering Bowen's men received no assistance from any other Confederate regiments.

The Federals, however, still had plenty of fight in them. They reformed and once again climbed the steep slope of the hill in a bid to retake the summit. When they were within eight feet of the summit, the Confederates fired well-aimed volleys into their ranks. That section of the Union line collapsed so suddenly, it seemed the entire Union line might crumble and melt away. Stunned by the reverse, the Union soldiers gloomily returned to the base of the hill.

The gallant Southerners, however, soon ran out of ammunition. Carter Stevenson had sent the ammunition supply wagons to the far side of Baker's Creek in order to prevent the enemy from capturing them. Thus, the gallant Confederate charge that almost split the Union army in half, ground to a halt for want of ammunition. The Confederates on Champion's Hill began searching through the cartridge boxes of dead and wounded soldiers in a quest to replenish their ammunition. Even so, their advance stopped 300 yards from the Champion House.

Bowen tried his best to keep the attack going. Pemberton rallied parts of Barton's and Cumming's brigades and sent them forward. The reformed troops deployed between the brigades of Cockrell and Green. Lee also sent two of his Alabama regiments to reinforce Bowen's division with orders to deploy on Cockrell's left flank. When the Alabamians began crossing a fence, they came under heavy fire from Captain Samuel De Golyer's 8th Michigan battery attached to Logan's division. As the shells exploded among them, the Alabamians withdrew to the refuge of a copse of trees.

Grant and his two corps commanders methodically set about organizing a counterattack. Brig. Gen. Marcellus M. Crocker's Seventh Division of McPherson's XVII Corps moved up to threaten the Confederate left flank, and Colonel George B. Boomer's Third Brigade of Crocker's Division advanced to plug the breach in the Union center caused by Bowen's counterattack.

Boomer's four regiments attacked Bowen's division, but Green's Arkansians outflanked Boomer on his left. In a bid to support the Union troops engaged, Hovey massed 16 guns from his three batteries southeast of the Champion House. The Union artillery pounded Green's men.

Meanwhile, Colonel Samuel A. Holmes Second Brigade of Crocker's division went into action on Boomer's right. This checked the Confederate advance. It also bought time for Hovey to reform his troops. Determined to overwhelm Pemberton's Confederates, Grant brought forward yet another Union brigade to align on Boomer's right flank. He also shifted John Stevenson's brigade of Logan's division from the right to support the Federal center.

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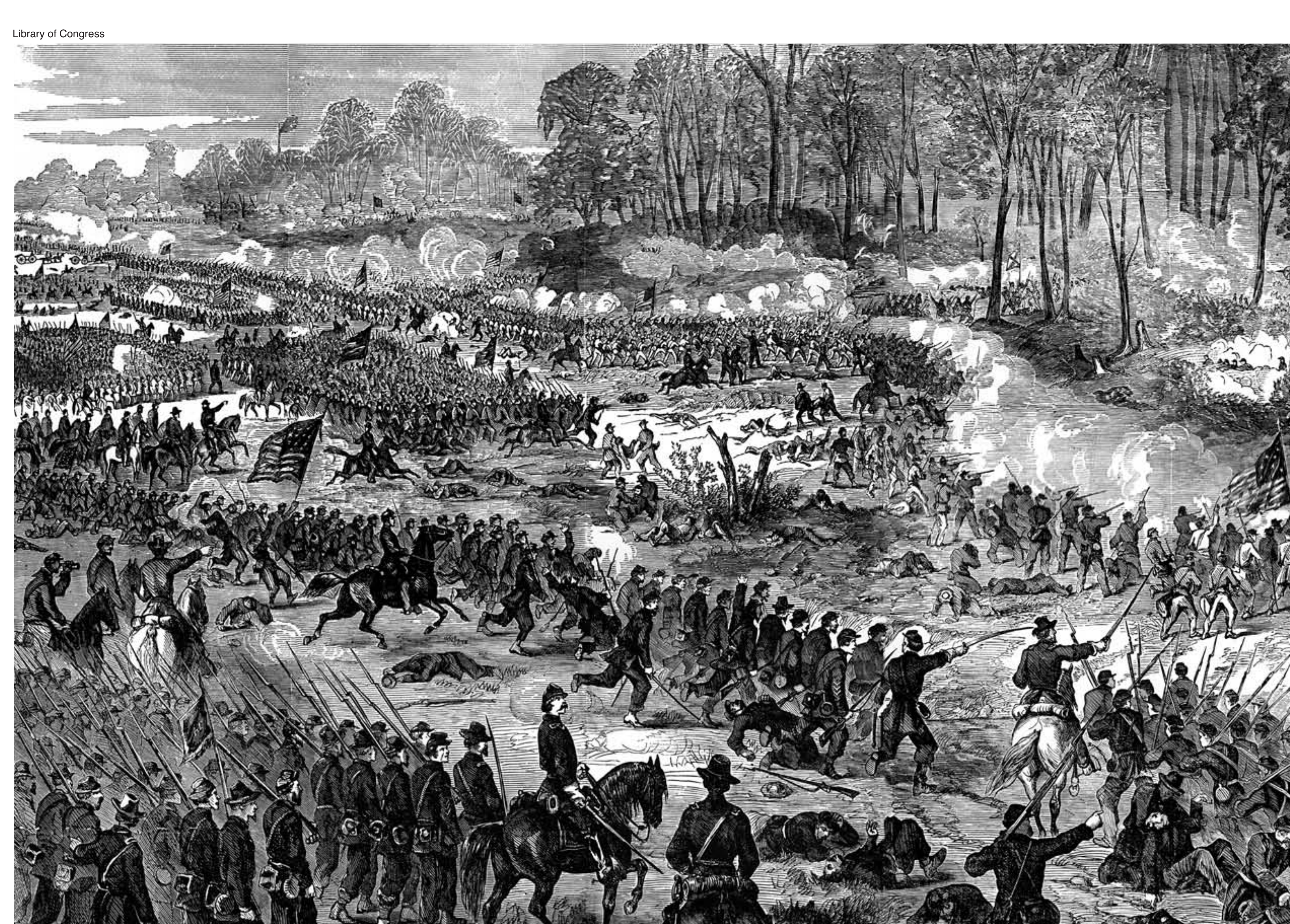

The 33rd Illinois of Brig. Gen. William P. Benton's Brigade advanced rapidly and retook the area lost to the Confederates. Thus, Bowen's gallant charge ended, and his brave soldiers fell back to the foot of the hill. At that point, most of the men in the 46th Alabama found themselves cut off. With no other recourse left to them, they surrendered.

Bowen then received word that fresh Union troops were threatening his right flank. McClernand had finally put his troops in motion at mid-afternoon after receiving orders from Grant explicitly directing him to advance against the enemy forces in front of him. McClernand in turn ordered Osterhaus to advance on the Middle Road with his two brigades against Bowen's troops. At the same time, McClernand ordered Smith's division to move forward along the Raymond Road.

Brig. Gen. Theophilus T. Garrard's First Brigade spearheaded the advance of Osterhaus' division. Garrard's men overran a Confederate picket and came within 500 yards of the crossroads when Osterhaus, who was overseeing the advance, ordered Garrard to stop.

When Bowen pulled his division off the Middle Road, Loring had shifted his troops north to fill the gap. The division held a line 600 yards west of the Coker House. Loring had posted Brig. Gen. Abraham Buford's brigade on the left, Brig. Gen. Winfield Featherston's brigade in the center, and Brig. Gen. Lloyd Tilghman's Brigade on the right. Buford and Featherston blocked the Union advance along the Middle Road, while Tilghman held a strong position on Cotton Hill astride the Raymond Road.

Bowen's division soon collapsed under the weight of Grant's powerful counterattack. Arkansians and Missourians joined Georgia and Alabamians already in full retreat towards the bridges spanning Baker's Creek. Fortunately for the retreating Confederate infantry, Cockrell's three batteries of artillery maintained a steady fire on Osterhaus' line, which bought precious time for the battered infantry belonging to Carter Stevenson and John Bowen to make their escape.

With two of his divisions in full retreat, Pemberton continued to search for Loring. As he rode south, he came across Buford. He told Buford to send two regiments to the crossroads and take the rest of his regiments north to defend the Jackson Road. Buford sent the 12th Lousiana and 35th Alabama towards the crossroads with orders to guard against any attempt by the Union forces to

Grant plugged a breach in the Union center made by Bowen's counterattacking Confederates, and then he organized a counterattack that swept the Confederates from the field. The following day the Union army won another victory at Big Black River that further depleted Pemberton's ranks.

capture Cockrell's guns.

Having failed to find Loring, Pemberton returned to his headquarters at the Roberts' house. Before leaving the Roberts' house, he issued orders to his division commanders for a general retreat to the Big Black River. He advised Carter Stevenson and Bowen to withdraw their battered commands to the Raymond Road and lead them across the Lower Bridge over Baker's Creek.

Major Lockett's engineers had labored throughout the day to rebuild the Lower Bridge. Fortunately for the Confederates, the water level in the creek had been dropping steadily throughout the day. Indeed, the waters had dropped to such a point that the creek was also fordable in some points near the Raymond Road, thus allowing for the retreating Confederates to cross the creek simultaneously at several places.

Loring rode to the Middle Road where he began deploying his troops for a counterattack to retake the crossroads. But when a member of Pemberton's staff handed him orders for a general retreat, he broke off his preparations for a counterattack. Pemberton's orders instructed Loring to cross Baker's Creek and take up a position at Edward's Crossing prepared to fight a rearguard action to allow Pemberton's other two divisions to make it safely back to Vicksburg.

By 4:30 p.m. McPherson's corps had taken passion of the entire length of the Jackson Road, Champion's Hill, and the Upper Bridge on Baker's Creek. On the southern half of the battlefield, McClernand's corps had secured Ratliff Ridge. From the heights of Champion's Hill and Ratliff Ridge, Union brigade commanders halted their commands to dress their lines and scoop up hundreds of Confederate soldiers who were at the rear of the disorganized ranks trying to cross Baker's Creek.

The Union soldiers who had been in the thick of the fight knew they had achieved a great victory, but the heat and exertion involved in fighting in rugged terrain had completely sapped their energy. Although it was clear to them that the majority of Pemberton's army was in full retreat, they still saw Loring's three brigades holding an intact line between Ratliff Ridge and Baker's Creek.

As the Confederates retreated across Baker's Creek at the Lower Bridge, Tilghman's Mississippi artillery batteries dueled with Andrew Smith's divisional guns deployed with Burbridge's Midwestern infantry. Burbridge sent his sharpshooters to take possession of a group of slave cabins in the intervening ground between the opposing infantry brigades. The Yankee sharpshooters began steadily picking off the soldiers in the front rank of Tilghman's line of battle. Tilghman ordered the sergeant commanding one of the 12-pounder howitzers to shell the enemy-occupied cabins.

To ensure the rounds hit the targets he desired, Tilghman dismounted and personally sighted the howitzer. As he did so, a Union artillery shell burst near him sending a jagged chunk of shrapnel into his chest. The white-hot chunk of iron passed completely through his body inflicting a fatal wound. Command of the brigade devolved to Colonel Alexander E. Reynolds. Unsure of his responsibilities, Reynolds asked Loring for instructions. The division commander told Reynolds that he was to hold the Raymond Road at all costs.

Meanwhile, Pemberton supervised the passage of the routed Confederates across the creek. When Bowen reached the far side of Baker's Creek, Pemberton tasked him with reorganizing the remnants of his command in order to cover Loring's retreat across the creek.

While several of McClernand's brigades put pressure on Loring's troops, Loring tried to get his troops across Baker's Creek. But by the time he was ready to cross, Union artillery had begun shelling the Lower Bridge and adjacent fords. Realizing that he could not get his troops across, Loring led his men south along the east bank of Baker's Creek in search of another crossing point.

Loring realized after nightfall that he was not likely to find another ford. He therefore resolved to march east to rendezvous with Johnston. The darkness and the muddy condition of the roads compelled Loring to order his troops to abandon the artillery and ordnance wagons. The gunners disabled the cannons, but took the horses and harnesses for future use. Having given up on rejoining Pemberton, Loring led his troops on a roundabout route that took them to Crystal Springs and then north through Jackson to unite with Johnston. The Union army had suffered 2,441 casualties at Champion's Hill, while the Confederates lost 4,700 killed and wounded and 2,400 captured.

While Loring set off on the night of May 16 to rendezvous with Johnston, Pemberton burned the supplies at Edward's Station and then struck out with his two battered divisions for Vicksburg. He left three brigades under Bowen to defend the east end of the railroad bridge over the Big Black River on the mistaken assumption that Loring was following close behind him and would need to cross the river quickly.

McClernand's corps attacked the Confederates who manned breastworks made of cotton bales covered in dirt. The Union troops broke through the weak defenses, routing the Confederates. The victory at Big Black River, in which McClernand captured 1,800 Confederates and 18 guns, gave Grant yet another victory that enhanced the morale of his Army of the Tenneseee and dampened the morale of Pemberton's dwindling army.

Grant's troops arrived on the outskirts of Vicksburg on May 19, but formal siege operations did not begin until May 25. Following sustained fighting and bombardment over the course of the next six weeks, Grant compelled Pemberton to surrender on July 4. Unable to take the 30,000 Confederate troops who surrendered into captivity, Grant paroled them. When Port Hudson fell to Union forces five days later, the Union had at last secured the Mississippi River. ■

Abel Streight's Union Mule Brigade met disaster on raid through northern Alabama.

Colonel Abel Streight rode at the front of the long column of Union infantry mounted on mules as it snaked its way uphill from the narrow confines of Day's Gap to the tableland of Sand Mountain at the southern end of the Appalachian Mountains on the morning of April 30, 1863. Not long after dawn the sun burned away the gray mists of morning giving way to a beautiful spring day in northeastern Alabama.

Streight and the approximately 1,500 men of his so-called Mule Brigade felt a sense of exuberance that morning as they moved into the pro-Union section of the Confederate state. But the sound of crashing muskets and booming cannon at the rear of the column at the western base of Day's Gap put an abrupt end to their high spirits. Only halfway to their objective of Rome, Georgia, which housed a Confederate armory and railroad facilities, the fighting hundreds of feet below signaled that a sizeable Confederate force had overtaken them.

With William S. Rosecrans' Army of the Cumberland and Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennesee still experiencing a stalemate in southeastern Tennesee, Streight proposed to Rosecrans a raid that would sever Bragg's long communications and supply lines into northern Georgia. At the same time Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant threatened Vicksburg, Streight's raid might force the collapse of Bragg's position in southeastern Tenneseee.

Although Rosecrans lacked surplus horses for the raid, he agreed to furnish Streight with quartermaster mules to mount four regiments of Union infantry, one of which was his 51st Indiana, and two companies of Unionist Alabamians. Streight's command set out from Eastport, Mississippi, on April 19 on a 220-mile ride to Rome, Georgia, and Georgia's Western and Atlantic Railroad.

Bragg dispatched Brig. Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest on April 23 with a brigade of Tennesee cavalry and eight guns to harrass Union troops operating in northern Alabama. After skirmishing with Maj. Gen. Grenville Dodge's Union division, Forrest set off on April 27 to overtake Streight's raiders.

A running battle ensued on April 30 with Forrest launching three separate attacks on Streight's column. Over the next 72 hours, the fighting between the two mounted columns fell into a pattern with Streight establishing ambushes to slow Forrest's pursuit and Forrest rotating his troops in order to keep them fresh and rested. Unlike Forrest's command, Streight's men had no chance to sleep. They stayed in the saddle around the clock.

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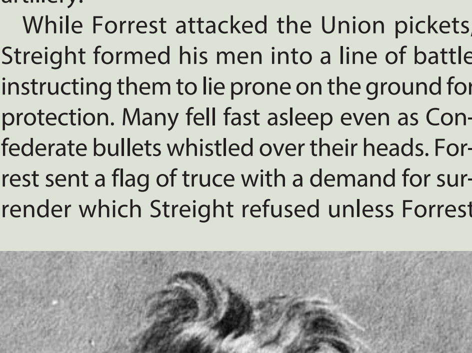

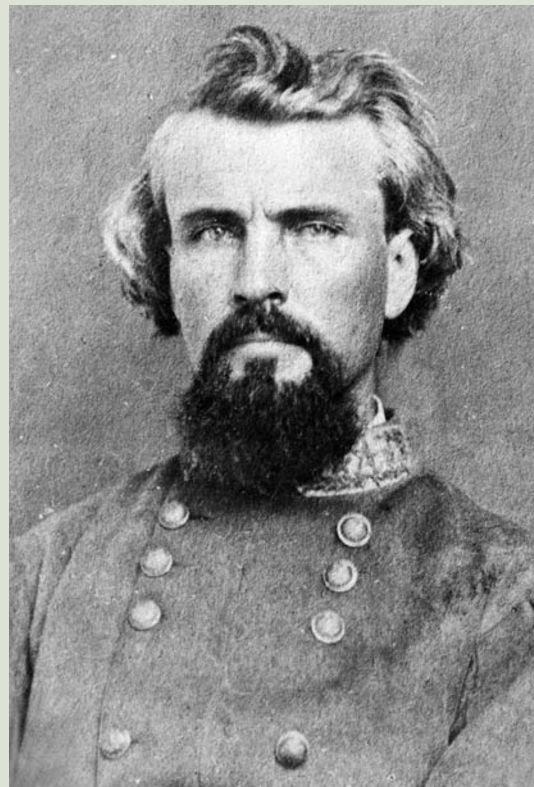

Colonel Abel Streight, left; General Nathan Bedford Forrest, right.

To prevent Streight from turning back to unite with Dodge, Forrest divided his 1,577 troopers sending two regiments to block Streight from the north and west, while Forrest continued the pursuit with the other two regiments and an artillery battery.

When Streight's column reached Cedar Bluff on the Chattooga River, they found that locals had removed the ferry barge. The Mule Brigade marched six miles north and crossed on a bridge at Gaylesville, once again burning it behind them, on the morning of May 3. Streight halted the column on a plantation on the east side of the river to allow his men to rest. Forrest, however, had his troopers swim the river with their horses and haul across a section of artillery.

While Forrest attacked the Union pickets, Streight formed his men into a line of battle instructing them to lie prone on the ground for protection. Many fell fast asleep even as Confederate bullets whistled over their heads. Forrest sent a flag of truce with a demand for surrender which Streight refused unless Forrest could prove Streight was outnumbered. Forrest resorted to a ruse, having his troopers change positions and his artillery march in around a hill to appear he had more men and guns than he actually possessed.

Streight surrendered the 1,466 that remained with him in his column. The Union colonel had showed great daring and initiative, but suffered a string of bad luck, that enabled Forrest to overtake him 20 miles short of his objective. Although Streight's Mule Brigade failed in its purpose, it did keep Forrest from raiding Maj. Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's supply line as he advanced against the sizeable Confederate force in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

—Robert L. Durham

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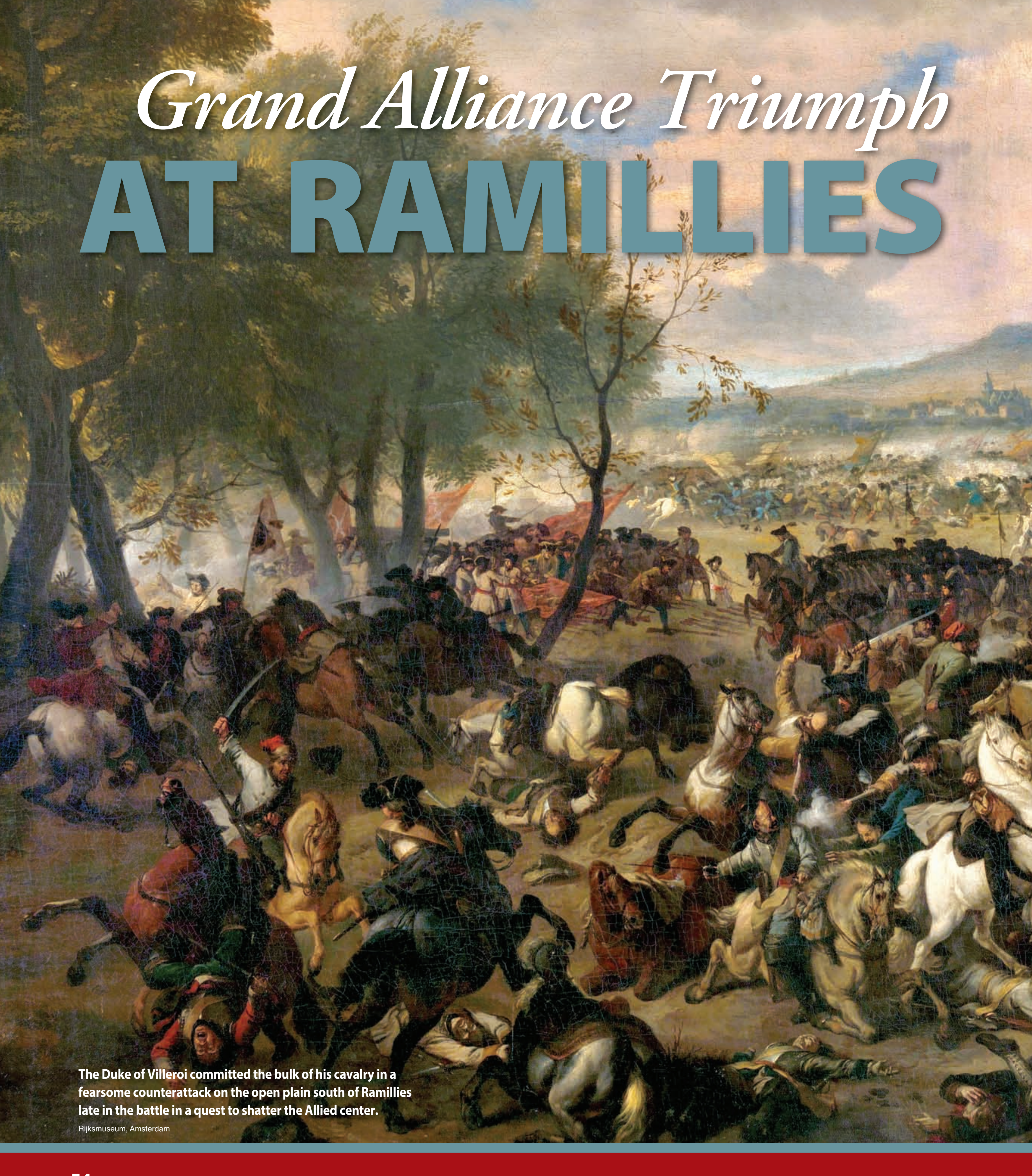
Grand Alliance Triumph AT RAMILLIES



The Duke of Villeroi committed the bulk of his cavalry in a fearsome counterattack on the open plain south of Ramillies late in the battle in a quest to shatter the Allied center.

Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

French King Louis XIV sent the Duke of Villeroi to attack an allied army led by the Duke of Marlborough at Ramillies in 1706. Marlborough outfought his French opponent at every turn.

BY JOSHUA SHEPHERD

Johan Philip Lemke

ABOVE: Opposing cavalry fought at close quarters with pistols and sabers in the War of the Spanish Succession. France, which possessed the largest organized cavalry force in Europe, employed its horsemen, not its foot soldiers, as its striking force. OPPOSITE: Marlborough directs his troops at Blenheim in 1704. One of the great captains of the 18th century, he marched deep into Germany and defeated the vaunted French on the banks of the Danube River.

Late in the day on May 23, 1706, the troops of the Colonel William Borthwick's regiment of Argyll's Scots Brigade formed up for an unenviable assignment. Although repeated English attacks on the Flemish village of Ramillies had failed, Borthwick was determined to see his men break the enemy defenses.

His objective was the village church, which included a walled compound occupied by the French Picardie Regiment. While his musketeers kept up a fire on the French, Borthwick's grenadier company would smash its way through the church gate and force an opening. Despite the straightforward plan, the grenadiers, who would clearly suffer heavy casualties, constituted a forlorn hope.

Unmoved by the consequences, 19-year-old Ensign James Gardiner gripped the Scots colors and moved forward with the grenadiers amid a blinding storm of smoke, lead, and dying men. Nearing the churchyard, the grenadiers stalled amid the heavy fire, faltered, and began to fall back. Hoping to rally them, Gardiner drove the colors into the ground and turned to shout encouragement to his men. As he did so he was struck in the mouth by a French musket ball and fell to the ground.

Two grenadiers dragged the stricken ensign to safety and propped him up against the churchyard wall. Bleeding profusely and unable to retreat, the young ensign was left alone where presumably he would die. Although the killing would continue until sunset, the sanguinary clash between a Grand Alliance army and a Franco-Bavarian army at Ramillies in the Spanish Netherlands had ended for young James Gardiner.

The inglorious bloodletting that would redden the fields of Ramillies was the direct result of an epic dynastic struggle for domination of the European mainland. By 1706 Europe was locked in its fifth year of war as the continent's rival powers clashed over a disputed succession to the Spanish throne.

The death, and childlessness, of a single man had plunged millions into conflict. Charles II of Spain, an unfortunate soul who had been plagued for his entire life by ill health, physical deformities, and outright bad luck, died without an heir in 1700. At that time, Spain's possessions were considerable. They encompassed the Spanish homeland on the Iberian Peninsula, southern Italy, Sicily, Sardinia, and the Spanish Netherlands. In addition, Spain possessed a vast overseas empire that included much of South America.

The initial prospect, however, for a peaceful compromise over the throne seemed within reach. Charles had previously selected Josef Ferdinand of Bavaria, grandson of Holy Roman Emperor Leopold I, as his heir. The young prince was viewed as a compromise candidate for the Spanish throne. He was related to Austria's House of Hapsburg, but acceptable to France's ruling Bourbons. Quite unexpectedly, though, Josef Ferdinand fell ill, and, to the consternation of Europe's monarchs, succumbed to the sickness.

Josef Ferdinand's unfortunate death entirely destabilized the delicate diplomatic arrangement that had promised peace. King Charles of Spain, his own health quickly deteriorating, was forced to nominate a new heir, and his choice would virtually guarantee war. Charles selected Philippe of Anjou, the second grandson of King Louis XIV, France's powerful Bourbon monarch at the time, who called himself the Sun King. Charles' own death in autumn 1700 only served to escalate the likelihood of hostilities.

To France's enemies, the proposed accession of a French prince to the Spanish throne threatened an unacceptable consolidation of power to the Bourbon monarchy. Fearful that France would continue to expand its influence, Austria was quick to act, invading the Spanish province of Milan. Despite last-minute diplomatic efforts, the situation rapidly deteriorated. In May 1702 England, the United Dutch Provinces, and the Holy Roman Empire issued a joint declaration of war against France. For his part, Louis XIV enjoyed alliances with Spain, Bavaria, and Cologne. The dispute over the Spanish succession had been transformed into a major war that would engulf the European Continent.

During summer 1702, Captain General John Churchill, Earl of Marlborough, arrived on the continent to take command of disparate Allied forces. Although he had never commanded a large army in the field, Marlborough was given command of the English, Dutch, and other allied forces. Churchill would wage a frustrating war of maneuver over the following two years, beset by

logistical constraints and grudgingly slow support from hesitant allies. Marlborough scored a major victory in August 1704, smashing a Franco-Bavarian field army at Blenheim in northern Bavaria. Queen Anne elevated Marlborough to duke for the feat, and while widely considered one of the major tactical masterpieces of military history, the clash at Blenheim failed to materially alter the course of the war.

Marlborough hoped to break the stalemate by changing course. Rather than continue a seemingly fruitless fight in the narrow confines of the Low Countries, Marlborough made plans in 1706 for a concentration of Allied forces that would then execute a grand campaign in Italy and southern France. The plan constituted audacious and original strategic thinking, but the idea met with a cool reception from Dutch and German allies.

French advances along the Rhine River further destabilized the strategic situation in northern Europe, and the setbacks had rendered Marlborough's plan for a grand campaign into Italy and southern France out of the question. The English duke, however, was disinclined to see the Allies assume a defensive posture. True to his aggressive nature, Marlborough opted to seize the strategic initiative by launching an alternate offensive into the Spanish Netherlands.

Certainly ahead of his time as a military thinker, Marlborough's plan for the coming campaign broke the centuries-old European tradition of seizing and holding the enemy's fortified strongholds. Realizing that such positions could be choked off easily if they lacked adequate logistical support, Marlborough opted to target the strategic head of the French war effort in Flanders. That target was Marshal Francois de Neufville, Duke of Villeroi's Franco-Bavarian army. Villeroi had 60,000 troops and 70 guns.

Largely ignoring all other objectives, Marlborough single-mindedly tailored his campaign to seeking out Villeroi's forces, forcing them into a decisive engagement, and destroying them in detail.

Marlborough led his troops out of The Hague on May 9, groping his way south and west in the hope of pinpointing Villeroi. Despite his previous frustrations in securing Allied support, the duke was at the head of an imposing force. The Allied army had 62,000 men and 120 guns.

Marlborough continued to play a delicate balancing act as both soldier and diplomat, struggling to forge a cohesive force out of a diverse collection of battalions. The army that he led into the field was a veritable European melting pot. Although largely composed of English and Dutch troops, the army included contingents of Danish, Swiss, Swedish, and Hessian auxiliaries. Despite the army's tapestry of language and culture, the Allies were united in their repugnance for French dominance.

But in a crucial bit of unconventional generalship, Marlborough made the decision to attach a large train of Dutch siege artillery to his field army. Although the heavy guns would prove cumbersome on the march, they could furnish the duke with overwhelming firepower when used to bolster the smaller guns of the Allied field artillery. If the Allies were successful on the field, the siege train could be employed quickly against France's network of fortified bastions along its frontier.

By May 17, Marlborough's columns had converged at Tongeren, a Flemish town situated west of the Meuse River. Despite his swift movement and decisive posturing, the duke feared that the French would never allow themselves to be forced into a decisive battle. In a private letter, Marlborough confessed his fears. "I have no hope of doing anything considerable, unless the French do what I am very confident they will not, namely, come out and fight," he wrote.

But Marlborough's fears were misplaced. The war thus far had seriously depleted the French treasury and Louis XIV, hoping to hasten the end of the conflict, had ordered Villeroi to adopt an aggressive posture. Compelled to comply with the wishes of his sovereign, Villeroi began moving south and east in the presumed direction of the Allied army. To further strengthen his field army,

Marlborough House, London

the French general stripped much of the region's fortified strongholds of their garrison troops. Villeroi's unexpected eagerness to give battle would afford Marlborough just the opportunity that he sought.

Quite unexpectedly, that opportunity began to materialize on the morning of May 23, 1706. The army's quartermaster general, William Cadogan, led about 600 men westward, simply searching for a good campsite for the army for the coming evening. Marlborough had plans to take up positions on high ground just to the west of a stream known as the Petite Gheete. It was expected that the French, still thought to be maintaining a passive defense along the Dyle River, would pose no immediate threat. But as the van of Cadogan's column inched its way forward through a dense morning fog, it abruptly encountered a patrol of enemy cavalry. Cadogan had inadvertently stumbled on the French.

The startled troopers from both sides opened up a confused exchange of gunfire, then untangled and fell back. Suspecting that the bulk of the French army could be nearby, Cadogan organized his men into a defensible line on high ground east of the valley of the Petite Gheete and sent news of his discovery to Marlborough. Waiting for the fog to break, Cadogan sat tight and awaited developments.

When Marlborough was apprised of the news, he acted quickly, dispatching mounted reinforcements to Cadogan and hurrying along the main body of his army. By midmorning, Marlborough and Cadogan met to confer, but heavy fog left the

All: Wikimedia

Clockwise from top left: François de Neufville, Duc de Villeroi; John Churchill, Earl of Marlborough; George Hamilton, Earl of Orkney; and Pierre de Montesquiou, Comte d'Artagnan. BELOW: The British 16th Regiment of Foot charges white-uniformed French infantry. Both sides struggled mightily through the mud in low-lying areas to engage their counterparts.

officers unsure of the enemy's true numbers and disposition. The ever-aggressive Marlborough made plans to launch a cavalry movement straight across the valley and drive in the French pickets. But before he could do so, the fog began to lift. As it did, it revealed a truly shocking sight. Across the valley floor and situated on formidable rising ground was a massive enemy force. It was clear that Villeroi, far from shunning battle, had come out of his defenses looking for a fight.

True to his nature, Marlborough was eager to accommodate. The duke immediately issued orders for the bulk of his army to hurry forward and form up for battle along the high ground east of the Petite Gheete. As they did so, one of the Dutch observers attached to the army, Sicco van Goslinga, voiced his opposition to Marlborough's dispositions. The Allied army was far too dispersed to give battle, warned the startled Dutchman, and was courting an outright catastrophe by not exercising greater caution. Marlborough, far from being dissuaded by the pessimistic outburst, brushed it aside and proceeded to prepare for battle.

For his part, Villeroi did the same. Equally pleased that he was finally coming to grips with his nemesis, Villeroi made his final dispositions, with his center situated on the village of Ramillies. On the right, his flank was anchored on high ground bordered by the Vissoule Stream. His left, fronting the swollen Petite Gheete, was anchored around the village of Autre Eglise. It was a good position, bolstered by a string of walled farmhouses that could be transformed into strongpoints. Villeroi could also count on the services of two very capable commanders, who were lieutenant generals Pierre de Montesquiou, Comte d'Artagnan, who commanded the Bourbon center, and the Marquis Antoine de Guiscard, who commanded the right wing. Villeroi took per-

National Army Museum

Map © 2023 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

Marlborough ordered the Earl of Orkney to attack the French left flank, which prompted Villeroi to move troops from his center to reinforce his left. Marlborough then recalled Orkney and attacked the weakened French center, precipitating the collapse of the French army.

sonal command of the left wing.

As both armies readied for the inevitable, they began to open fire with their heavy guns. The dull thud of artillery fire echoed across the valley floor, the harbinger of a coming fight. The English, however, with the added firepower of the Dutch siege guns, would eventually gain the upper hand in the artillery duel.

Marlborough was keen to open the battle. He ordered Colonel Hans Felix Werdmuller to swing to the left with four battalions of the Dutch Guards and clear enemy outposts in front of the French right. Werdmuller ran into trouble almost immediately. As his men trudged toward the hamlet of Franquenee, they were met with heavy fire from dismounted enemy dragoons that had taken cover around the village. Werdmuller, whose infantry was backed up with a pair of light guns, deployed in line of battle and pushed toward the farmhouse. His force quickly overwhelmed its defenders with heavy volleys of musketry. Outnumbered and outmatched, the dragoons fled for the rear.

As they did so, they sought protection in the hamlet of Taviers, a key outpost that secured Villeroi's right flank. Although the French general had planned for three battalions to defend the village, the locale was only occupied by a single company of Swiss troops when Werdmuller's column approached. After a brief but sharp fight, Werdmuller's men forced their way through the village, pushing out the Swiss defenders and driving for the confluence of the Vissoule Stream and the Mehaigne River.

Apprehending the threat to their right, French commanders on the ground acted quickly to secure the flank and halt Werdmuller's advance. The Marquis de Guiscard, the lieutenant general in overall command of the French right, sent forward five dragoon regiments from his rear line in an effort to quickly blunt the Allied thrust. As they neared the swollen waters of the Vissoule, the dragoons encountered muddy bottom ground and dismounted before pressing forward.

As they struggled through the mud, they were taken under heavy fire from Werdmuller's infantry. Exultant after their successful fight that morning and afforded ample time to receive a counterattack, they fired a powerful volley that caught the enemy dragoons in the open. The musketry stalled their advance and inflicted heavy casualties. Officers suffered disproportionately. The Siegneur d'Aubigne, gamely leading his men forward, was cut down by Dutch musketry.

Guiscard fully realized the threat that Werdmuller's attack posed to the French right, and so he ordered two full infantry brigades to move out in support of the dragoons. Although the Bourbon forces enjoyed a healthy numerical advantage over Werdmuller, their troops were unfortunately arriving in action in a piecemeal fashion, affording Werdmuller the opportunity to fend off the counterattacks individually.

Two French battalions, Provence and Bassigny, happened to stumble astride Werdmuller's right flank. They poured enfilading fire into the Dutch line. The Dutch commander, however, remained unflappable. Turning his right flank to meet the threat and unleashing a heavy fire of his own, Werdmuller succeeded in holding on to his position. The uncoordinated French counterattacks ensured that the hapless Bourbon infantry was destroyed in a vain attempt to dislodge the Dutch.

Despite a decided edge in manpower, the piecemeal Bourbon attack degenerated into a fiasco. One regiment after another became bogged down in the muddy ground as it struggled to fight its way forward toward the Dutch. Lt. Col. Jean de la Colonie attempted to get his troops in position to attack the Dutch, but panic in the face of heavy musketry had become contagious. Colonie recalled the perilous approach, explaining that his men had struggled through the knee-deep water. "The dragoons and the Swiss who had preceded us [had come] tumbling down upon my troops in full flight," he wrote, "and a number of my men turned and fled with them."

Villeroi faced a major setback on his right. Colonie and a handful of fellow officers succeeded in rallying about four ragged battalions of infantry to offer the Bourbon right a semblance of defense, but the morning's clash had been nothing short of calamitous. Superior numbers had been wasted in a vain and clumsy attempt to push back Werdmuller, and the French right had been nearly wrecked.

In front of the French left, Marlborough would

soon launch another attack. At 2:30 p.m. Lt. Gen. George Hamilton, Earl of Orkney, led forward a strong contingent of Marlborough's infantry. Consisting of 5,000 men, the troops were experienced, possessed good morale, and were led by capable officers. Angling for the villages of Offus and Autre-Eglise, Orkney aimed at nothing less than the destruction of the French left.

His troops struggled mightily as they advanced through deep mud to come to grips with the enemy line. It was the same kind of ordeal that had undone their French counterparts on the opposite flank. Harassed by French pickets and bombarded by enemy artillery, Orkney's men suffered galling casualties as they fought to close the distance to the enemy. The Petite Gheete, intersected by numerous small tributaries, slowed the advance. Well-aimed artillery tore apart assault formations. Dead and wounded men blanketed the hillsides and bloodied the creeks.

Yet Orkney's hardened troops pressed forward despite the terrain obstacles. Orkney himself, wildly waving his sword, personally led his men forward on foot. Leaving his left-most battalions near the Petite Gheete to tie down the French line, he ordered his right to angle toward Autre-Eglise.

The German and Walloon infantry that held the town let loose devastating volleys of musketry. Under such heavy fire, the redcoats pressed forward, and were soon threatening the Bourbon left. Lt. Gen. Count Christian von Birkenfeld, sensing the danger to Villeroi's flank, ordered a counterattack by the French Regiment du Roi. Tearing into the Allied column, the French halted the advance. A brutal melee then ensued. Wielding bayonets and clubbed muskets, the Frenchmen succeeded in driving off the redcoats.

Far from undone, Orkney ordered a renewed push and watched as his men streamed forward. Orkney was a seasoned veteran, but even he found the musketry and artillery fire to be the heaviest he had ever seen. "Indeed, I think I never had more shot about my ears," he wrote. But by his reckoning, his troops, still intact after the initial fighting, were ready to overwhelm the enemy in Autre-Eglise. However, before the final attack could be launched, fresh orders arrived from Marlborough instructing Orkney to disengage.

The irascible earl was dumbfounded. Certain that the duke misunderstood the tactical situation in front of Autre-Eglise, Orkney refused to follow the order, and a string of frustrated aides received the same response, which was that the Scottish earl refused to budge. Exasperated by the stubborn response, Marlborough dispatched Cadogan with direct orders for Orkney to fall back. Only after a contentious argument did Orkney relent. In something of an understatement, he later explained that "it vexed me to retire."

Marlborough, however, seems to have had no intention of forcing the Bourbon left, but rather deceiving the enemy as to his true intentions. While Orkney and his stalwart redcoats had battled it out on that flank, Marlborough put in motion an audacious plan to smash the opposite end of Villeroi's line. While the French general distributed his battalions widely to meet the attacks on his left, Marlborough concentrated his forces against the Franco-Bavarian army's weakened center and right.

Having set the trap, Marlborough made the decision to unleash a grand charge against the French right that had already been pushed back by Werdmuller's earlier attack. The attack would be commanded by Field Marshall Hendrik van Nassau-Ouwerkerk. Ouwerkerk was the ideal commander for such an attempt. An experienced officer and thoroughgoing enemy of French and Spanish interlopers, the fiery Dutch nobleman was in his element for the most important battle of his life.

Ouwerkerk commanded an impressive force, roughly half of the army's mounted arm, consisting of 69 squadrons of horsemen. Arrayed in three dense lines, they were composed of a diverse lot of Allied troopers, including Dutch, Danes, and Germans. To bolster the attack, Marlborough sent additional reinforcements to support Ouwerkerk. Lt. Gen. Matthias Hoeufft, leading 21 squadrons of cavalry and dragoons, was ordered to take up positions behind Ouwerkerk. So long

The 18th century saw major changes in infantry firepower, but few changes in cavalry tactics.

The dynastic conflicts of the 18th century, such as the wars of the Spanish, Polish, and Austrian successions, witnessed remarkable changes in the art of warfare and firepower tactics.

By the turn of the century, the more prosperous nations of Europe fielded standing armies that swelled in number at the advent of war. France's King Louis XIV, the ruler of the wealthiest nation in Europe at the time of the War of the Spanish Succession, could field nearly 400,000 troops. King George III of Britain mobilized 98,000 troops during the conflict. Other members of the Grand Alliance, such as Hapsburg Austria and the United Dutch Provinces, fielded 100,000 and 120,000, respectively.

Logistical factors restricted the size of field armies to between 40,000 to 60,000 troops, and these field armies nearly always operated in fertile areas, such as the Low Countries, Middle Rhine, and Northern Italy, which could sustain them during campaign season. A field army of 60,000 men usually marched with 40,000 horses, and finding sufficient rations and fodder for the horses always posed a daunting challenge. This could be alleviated partially by stockpiling provisions at magazines located in friendly fortresses, a tactic employed by the French.

Both the English and Dutch were the first to capitalize on the formidable power embodied on the battlefield by advances such as the adoption of the flintlock musket and socket bayonet. The flintlock offered a massive improvement in rate of fire over the matchlock rifle. A soldier firing a flintlock could get off two or three shots in a minute, whereas before with a matchlock he was lucky to get off two shots in three minutes. Worth noting, the English flintlock musket fired a lead ball that was heavier than the French musket ball, which gave the English an advantage by making their volleys more deadly.

French troops drilled regularly. The French monarch knew full well that the increased effectiveness of firepower would result in heavy casualties among opposing infantry. He therefore reasoned that regiments and battalions that could still perform their weapons drill while taking losses could very well mean the difference between victory and defeat.

While infantry were organized into regiments during the period, the basic tactical unit was the battalion. A regiment contained one or more battalions. French battalions typically had 800 men that were grouped into 12 to 16 companies of 40 to 50 men each.

Cavalry, for its part, remained largely unchanged both in regard to weapons and tactics bearing many similarities to cavalry of the Renaissance period. The cuirassiers' primary weapon was the three-foot-long, straight-bladed sword. John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, discouraged his cavalry from using pistols and carbines and limited their ammunition to make sure they did rely on their firearms. In contrast, French cavalry tactics called for firing a volley of pistol shot at the enemy before charging them with the sword. One major change from the previous century, however, was that most cuirassiers no longer wore an armored breastplate.

— William E. Welsh

as the French were denied the ability to reinforce their own cavalry, the Allies would enjoy a decided advantage in numbers.

Ouwerkerk's leading columns advanced slowly, saving their energy for the final clash. Passing south of the village of Ramillies, the Allied horsemen quickly caught sight of the enemy. French cavalry in crisp ranks awaited them. At the front of the French cavalry was the Maison du Roi, the French king's elite guard horsemen. They were determined to maintain the field and uphold the honor of their king.

Hoping to break up the Allied attack before it could gather momentum, Guiscard ordered the guardsmen forward. As the French came forward at the gallop, the commander of the Allied first line, Lt. Gen. Count Friedrich Cirksena of Oostfriesland, ordered his troopers to close ranks in order to present a solid wall of horse to the enemy. In the final moments, both sides spurred their horses to a gallop.

They met in a thunderous crash that survivors never forgot. In a swirling maelstrom of tumbling horses, flashing steel and stricken men, Europe's mounted warriors struggled in one of the largest cavalry clashes of the century. In short order, the French gained the upper hand, driving deep into Cirksena's lines and plunging into the rear ranks of Allied horsemen.

The fighting shifted east as Ouwerkerk's troopers, overwhelmed by French pressure, gave ground and fled to the south of Ramillies. Exultant French horsemen pressed their advantage, but were met with renewed resistance as Allied officers rallied their men and turned on their pursuers. As both sides funneled more men and horses into the battle, the fight degenerated into a brutal brawl in which neither side could gain the upper hand.

Marlborough sent orders for more Allied cavalry to reinforce Ouwerkerk, and then personally trotted into the scene to bring order to his demoralized horsemen. Amid the confusion of retreating men, the duke became separated from his escort. As French cavalrymen closed in, he turned his horse to the safety of Allied lines, but was thrown to the ground by his mount. Seeing that Marlborough was about to be captured or perhaps even killed, Maj. Gen. Robert Murray ordered a group of his Protestant Swiss troops forward to rescue him. The troops saved Marlborough just in the nick of time before the French horsemen reached him.

To the north of the cavalry fight, Marlborough issued orders that would deliver a fatal blow to the Bourbon army on the battlefield. In front of Ramillies village, a strong contingent of the Allied infantry had formed up in three deep lines in preparation for a massive assault on the enemy's center. The lead troops, commanded by Colonel Karl Wilhelm von Sparre, were sure to suffer terrible casualties as they spearheaded the attack.

Wikimedia

The Irish in French service (left) attack the Irish fighting for the Allies. Because of their blood feud, no quarter was given.

As they moved forward in crisp formations, the Allied infantry was subjected to heavy artillery fire but pressed on. Fortunately, the rolling terrain offered a modicum of protection when intervening rises in the ground temporarily obscured the troops from French gunners. But as they neared the town, they were greeted with heavy small arms fire. A determined body of Bourbon infantry defended Ramillies where they fired from the protection of homes, wood fences, and stone walls. Bavarian infantry held the right of the line, while the French Picardie Regiment defended the left of the line.

As the attack of the front rank stalled under a galling fire, the commander of the rear lines, Willem van Soutlande, ordered reserve troops to spread out and cover the flanks: the Dutch Scots Brigade to the north and the Dutch Guards to the south. With the Allied lines extended far beyond their own flanks, the Bourbon defenders of Ramillies grew increasingly demoralized. The Dutch Guards, after they succeeded in making their way to the front of the Bavarian position, dressed ranks and made a mad charge toward the enemy. Rattled by the ferocity of the attack, the Bavarian troops broke and ran for the rear.

The outer defenses of Ramillies had begun to crack but were far from broken. With Sparre's troops stalled east of the village, help was on the

Alamy

ABOVE: Villeroi hesitated to commit his cavalry reserve; and when he finally did order it forward, it was too late to change the course of the battle. OPPOSITE: Allied horse and foot harass the retreating French. Marlborough's decisive victory at Ramillies opened Flanders to the Allies who quickly captured a number of fortified cities, among them Antwerp, Dunkirk, and Ghent.

way from the northeast. Marching fast toward the battle was the Scots Brigade under the command of Brig. Gen. John Campbell, Duke of Argyll. Aiming for the church steeple in the city center, the fiery Argyll, waving a sword above his head and shouting orders to his men, personally led the attack through the town.

As they approached their target, French soldiers poured fire into the front ranks of the Scots as they approached the walled courtyard of the church. While his line companies returned fire on the French defenders, Colonel William Borthwick ordered his grenadiers to batter down the churchyard gate. The Scottish grenadiers reeled under the French fire. It was at this time that Ensign Gardiner was wounded by enemy fire.

As the Scots regrouped, they were suddenly attacked at close quarters by a battalion of Irish troops under the command of Colonel Charles O'Brien, Viscount of Clare. What developed was a vicious blood feud, carried out with little quarter asked or given. The two opponents both wore nearly identical red coats, which contributed to the confusion of the fighting. Borthwick was killed outright during the struggle, and Clare was mortally wounded. The Scots' attempt to seize Ramillies had stalled.

On the left, the fortunes of battle would soon turn in Marlborough's favor. Ouwerkerk, who had been holding his own against the French cavalry, was reinforced with a contingent of 4,000 Danish horsemen. As the Danish horse plunged into the fight, their added numbers unexpectedly turned the tide of battle. Overwhelmed at last, exhausted and demoralized French horsemen began falling back. Guiscard was obliged to order a retreat.

Riding west and then north, the Bourbon cavalry attempted to reorganize in the rear of Villeroi's battle line, but lost men due to straggling in the process. Ouwerkerk gave chase, then stopped on high ground west of Ramillies to regroup his victorious squadrons.

Realizing that the center of the Bourbon line would soon face renewed pressure, d'Artagnan positioned five battalions in a south-facing line as a modicum of protection from the Allied cavalry. It was little more than a desperate measure to buy time. Sparre and Soutelande again got their infantry battalions moving, attacking the beleaguered defenders of Ramillies. Once again, the Bourbon troops gave a good accounting of themselves, but the mounting pressure from Marlborough's infantry ultimately rendered the Bourbon position untenable.

Brigadier General Alessandro Scipione, Marquis de Maffei, commanding the Bavarians manning the southern defenses of the town, ordered a retreat. D'Artagnan personally took command of the northern defenses of the village, rushing forward dwindling reserves in a desperate attempt to hold onto Ramillies.

For Villeroi, matters only worsened. Having entirely outgeneraled his French counterpart, Marlborough was able to continue throwing overwhelming numbers of fresh troops into the crucial sector of the battlefield. Marlborough ordered two additional brigades, commanded by brigadiers George Macartney and Phillip von Donop, to cross the Petite Gheete north of Ramillies. Their attack, which threatened to cut off the defenders of Ramillies, elicited a desperate response from d'Artagnan.

The Frenchman pleaded for immediate assistance from the Marquis de Montpesat, who commanded nine battalions of French and Swiss Guards. The elite troops had been held in reserve for emergency, and launched a ferocious counterattack, smashing Macartney and Donop's brigades and sweeping across the Petite Gheete. The impetuous and costly attack succeeded brilliantly, but afforded the Bourbon army only a temporary reprieve from the inevitable.

Realizing that his position had become untenable, Villeroi ordered a withdrawal and a redeployment centered on the village of Offus. He hoped that the Bourbon army would be able to hold off the Allies long enough at that location to disengage once again and withdraw toward Louvain. Troops trapped in Ramillies were ordered to abandon their baggage and artillery and break out as best they could.

Marlborough, though, gave his opponent little respite. With the momentum of the battle clearly turned in his favor, the duke sought to deliver the coup de grace to the Bourbon army. Ordering Ouwerkerk's reinforced and regrouped cavalry squadrons to launch a fresh attack, Marlborough turned loose nearly 18,000 horsemen in a broad sweep across the enemy's rear. Effective Bourbon resistance crumbled in front of the impressive charge, and Ouwerkerk's horsemen wrought havoc among stragglers, baggage trains, and disrupted enemy units.

On the Allied right, Orkney witnessed Bourbon forces falling back from Autre-Eglise and decided to pounce, sending forward his infantry in a belated push for the town. On the far right, Lt. Col. Lord John Hay led Scottish and Irish cav-

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

alry in a thundering charge that caught the French Regiment du Roi entirely by surprise. The French guards were hastily gathering their baggage and unprepared for the attack. Hay's horsemen tore up two battalions of the regiment, capturing a large lot of prisoners, before the rest of the French guards were able to form up and drive off their attackers with several well-directed volleys.

Despite the near-collapse of the Bourbon army, Villeroi still had infantry units capable of putting up a fight. Without infantry support, English cavalry ranging around the enemy left was incapable of doing much execution against stubborn ranks of Bourbon foot soldiers. Villeroi's army had been badly shattered, but its complete destruction remained unattainable. The aggressive Orkney, disappointed to see the enemy escaping, vented his frustrations. "It vexed me to see a great body of them going off," he wrote.

Dazed by the reverse he had suffered at the hands of Marlborough, Villeroi ordered a general retreat. He issued orders to his subordinates directing them to extract their troops as best they could and regroup at Tirlemont on the Dyle River. Allied horse and foot harassed the retreating Bourbon troops until darkness put an end to the fighting. Villeroi narrowly succeeded in pulling the core of his army out of the noose, but it had been wrecked as a functioning field force.

The charred battlefield itself would reveal an Allied victory of staggering proportions. Marlborough's exultant troops had captured scores of enemy cannon and 80 enemy flags. Whereas the Franco-Bavarian army lost 13,000 men, Marlborough's Grand Alliance army had suffered just 4,000 casualties.

Among the survivors of the clash of arms was Ensign James Gardiner. The ball which struck him had miraculously passed through his mouth and neck without striking teeth, bone, or artery. Though in great pain, he was rescued the following morning.

Despite the tragic loss of life, the fallout of the battle proved even more disastrous for King Louis' war effort. In the wake of the fight at Ramillies, Marlborough continued to pursue and harrass Villeroi's defeated army, pushing it toward the frontiers of France. The duke then proceeded to snatch up the weakened garrisons of towns and fortresses across the Spanish Netherlands. Louvain fell to the Grand Alliance on May 25, Brussels on May 27, and Antwerp on June 5. By the close of the campaign season, French forces had largely been driven west of the Meuse River.

In a broad arc across Europe, Bourbon forces were placed on their heels due to the staggering defeat at Ramillies. In an effort to rebuild defenses in Flanders, Louis XIV transferred French and Spanish troops from Spain and Italy, ensuring that the strategic initiative would rest with Allied forces. For her part, the English monarch Queen Anne was ecstatic over the potential fruits of Marlborough's victory. "Now we have, God be thanked, so hopeful a prospect of peace," she wrote.

The Treaty of Utrecht signed in 1713 allowed King Philip V of Spain to keep the Spanish throne in return for permanently renouncing his claim to the French throne. For his part, Louis XIV agreed that the crowns of France and Spain should not merge. The war dragged on, however, between the Holy Roman Empire and France until Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI signed the Treaty of Baden the following year.

France would persist as a major world power, but the War of the Spanish Succession was a harbinger of the French monarchy's waning influence. The ultimate lesson of the long war for the great powers was that maintaining a careful balance of power was more important than dynastic rights.

Louis XIV, who had made war a way of life for the French people, realized that the French power had been curtailed in the wake of many defeats at the hands of the Grand Alliance. Attempting to console Villeroi for the shifting fortunes of the battlefield, the French king told him, "At our age, marshal, we must no longer expect good fortune." ■

LIGHTNING VICTORY *in the* PERSIAN GULF

International coalition forces shattered the Iraqi army occupying Kuwait during the brief but bloody Persian Gulf War.

BY VICTOR KAMENIR

IN November 1990 the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution authorizing the use of force against Iraq if it failed to withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. With just nine days to go in the countdown to what would become the Persian Gulf War, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein delivered a speech to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the modern Iraqi Army.

"The battle in which you are locked today is the mother of all battles," he said, brandishing a rifle in a bellicose speech to his armed forces. "A battle of such scope requires great sacrifices both in quality and quantity irrespective of the foreseen and unforeseen consequences, which will no doubt please the friend and anger the enemy."

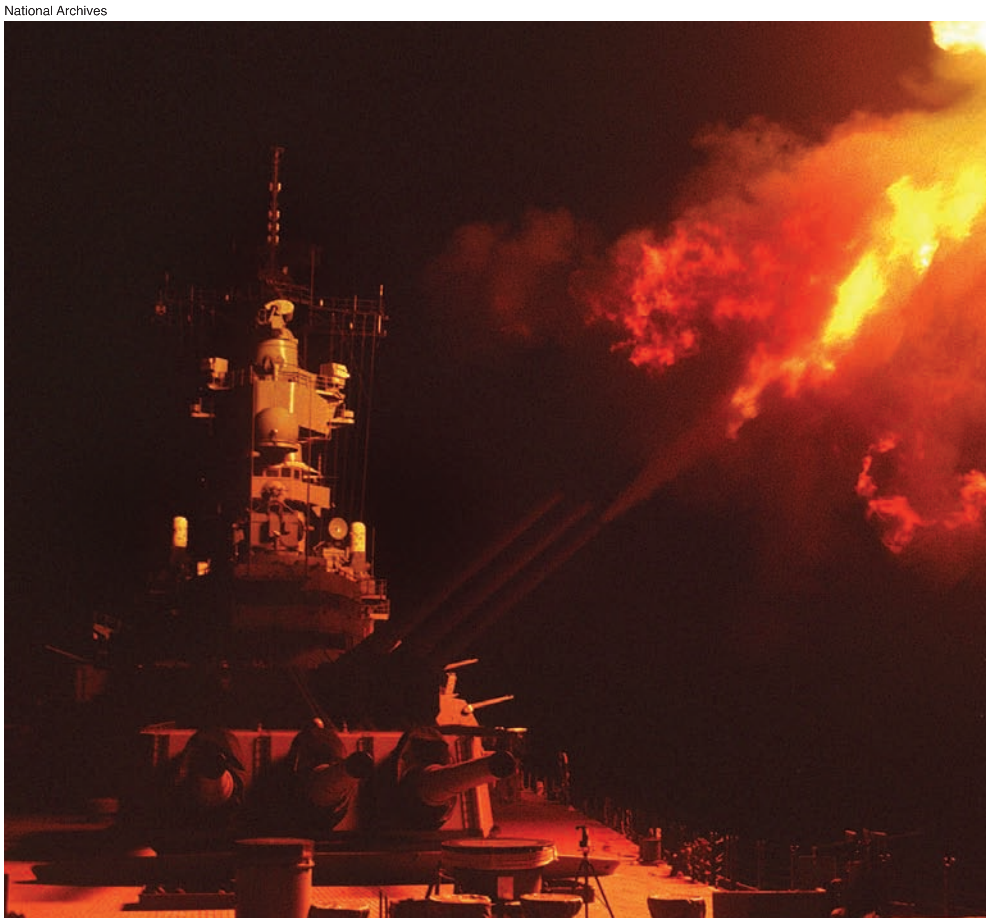
When the Iraq-Iran War ended in 1988, the Iraqi government sought to find a way out of the state of impoverishment in which it found itself after the eight-year conflict. Iraq not only owed money to the neighboring Islamic nation of Kuwait, but also found that high oil production in Kuwait depressed the price of Iraqi oil exports.

Hussein invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, claiming that the small country at the tip of the Persian Gulf was Iraq's 19th province. In just 48 hours, the Iraqi Republican Guard overran Kuwait forcing the country's surviving military units to flee to neighboring Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. As a result of his swift conquest of Kuwait, Hussein controlled one-fifth of the world's oil reserves.

Alamy

Thick black smoke seen in the distance beyond a burned-out Iraqi tank streams skyward after Iraqi forces withdrawing from Kuwait set fire to the Arab emirate's oil fields.

National Archives



The USS *Wisconsin* fires her 16-inch guns at Iraqi targets near Khafji. The battleship shelled command posts, artillery batteries, infantry bunkers, and SAM sites in a series of support missions.

Hussein had no intention of giving up his prize without gaining political and financial benefits. Fearing his next move, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Iraq in an effort to get Hussein to withdraw his forces from Kuwait. Meanwhile, a powerful coalition of 35 western and Arab countries responded to the Iraqi aggression by deploying 580,000 troops along the Saudi-Arabian border in Operation Desert Shield. Six carrier battle groups sailed into the theater of operations to support the Coalition offensive to liberate Kuwait. Western intelligence services estimated the strength of Saddam's army to be 500,000 troops, though the actual number turned out to be much smaller.

Iraqi armaments and equipment were mainly made by the Soviet Union, and its warfighting doctrine followed the Soviet model as well. Thus, the Iraqi Army relied heavily on artillery and rocket units. Its Soviet-made R-11 and R-17 "Scud" intermediate-range ballistic missiles could reach targets up to 400 miles away.

Iraqi infantry divisions formed the first line of defense. They were deployed in line from the Persian Gulf along the Kuwaiti border and within 100 miles along Iraq's southern border with Saudi Arabia. The Iraqi military placed behind them two mechanized and three armored divisions to serve as a mobile reserve, halt anticipated breakthroughs by Coalition forces, and conduct counterattacks. Twelve other divisions, including all five divisions of the Republican Guard Corps, formed the strategic reserve.

Hussein had micromanaged Iraqi forces during the war with Iran, and he actively discouraged his generals from showing initiative. The top commanders of the Coalition forces hoped that if they could take out Iraqi command and control with precision air strikes, then Iraqi units would be rendered ineffective and Iraqi resistance would collapse.

The weakness of the Iraqi army was its stiff command structure, poor personnel training, and equipment maintenance. The Iraqi Army's battle tank component included aging T-72 tanks that dated from early 1970. It also included second-line tanks such as the T-62 and T-55, as well as Chinese Type-59s and Type-69s. Iraqi tanks lacked thermal sights and laser rangefinders, and did not possess the long-range capability of Western main battle tanks.

Iraqi defensive plans centered on the assumption that the Coalition attack, when it came, would be delivered against Iraqi forces in Kuwait in line with the U.N. Security Council's stated goal of liberating Kuwait. In expectation of Coalition attack, the Iraqis built extensive layered networks of minefields, anti-tank ditches, and 15-foot-high sand berms. The Iraqis intentionally left breaks in the sand berms in an effort to channel Coalition forces into kill zones for their artillery.

President George H. W. Bush placed General Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. Central Command, in overall command of Coalition forces. Schwarzkopf organized the Coalition forces into five major commands deployed from east to west as follows: Joint Forces Command East (JFC-E), I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF), Joint Forces Command North (JFC-N), U.S. Army VII Corps, and the U.S. XVIII Corps.

The January 15 deadline passed without Iraq making any attempt to withdraw, and Operation Desert Shield transitioned into Operation Desert Storm. At 3 a.m. local time on January 16, Coalition jets streaked over the border, striking Iraqi high-value targets deep inside Iraq and Kuwait as coalition artillery and missiles rained on targets closer to the border. Having established air superiority on the first day of the war, over the course of the next 42 days Coalition air forces flew approximately 100,000 missions in a relentless campaign in which they dropped about 90,000 tons of bombs.

Hussein responded by ordering Iraqi batteries to launch Scud missiles against Saudi Arabia and Israel. By attacking Israel with Scud missiles, Hussein hoped to start a holy war by provoking the Jewish state into attacking Iraq. Hussein hoped that this would anger Arab states of the Coalition and fracture the alliance.

President Bush responded by reassuring Israeli leaders that the United States would protect them from Hussein's Scud attacks. He immediately made plans to send U.S. Patriot missile batteries to Israel to down the missiles in flight. By doing so, Bush foiled Hussein's plan to provoke Israel into a holy war. As the Coalition air forces and special operations forces began hunting Scud batteries deployed in Iraq, the number of Scud attacks dropped significantly.

Under the relentless Coalition air strikes, Saddam could no longer maintain a passive defensive stance. On the evening of January 29, 1991, elements of three Iraqi divisions struck south across the Kuwaiti border into Saudi Arabia. The Saudi-Kuwaiti border zigzags west from the shore of the Persian Gulf, forming a heel, and then runs roughly north and turns west at an elbow. Brigades from 1st Mechanized and 3rd Armored Divisions engaged Marine outposts in the sector between the heel and the elbow.

In the meantime, the 15th Mechanized

Brigade from the 5th Mechanized Division struck toward Khafji, a small Saudi town on the shore of the Persian Gulf. The Iraqis quickly occupied the town; as they did so, they drove back a screen of Coalition forces. Hussein's intentions were to engage the Coalition ground forces and then quickly fall back in an effort to entice them to attack entrenched Iraqi positions.

Saudi King Fahd, however, could not let the affront stand. He insisted that the town be swiftly retaken and that the honor of liberating Khafji should fall to Arabs troops. As the Saudis made preparations to achieve this objective, Coalition aircraft and Marine artillery pummeled Iraqi units at Khafji. Two Saudi battalions and one Qatari company, supported by Coalition air and Marine artillery, launched a somewhat disorganized but spirited attack on January 31. The mixed force succeeded in breaking into Khafji that afternoon. By the following morning, Coalition forces had recaptured Khafji.

In mid-February battalion-sized task forces of the U.S. Army and Marines began to conduct artillery raids and anti-reconnaissance missions along the Saudi-Kuwaiti border. These probes aimed to engage frontline Iraqi units to in an effort to provoke them into a response. Schwarzkopf believed that this would force the Iraqis to reveal the positions of hidden artillery batteries. Once the batteries were unmasked, Coalition aircraft and artillery could neutralize them.

To continue focusing Iraqi attention on the Kuwaiti border, Coalition forces conducted a number of defensive measures. They maneuvered their naval vessels close to the Kuwaiti shore, hoping to give the Iraqis the impression that Marine amphibious landings were imminent. Electronic warfare units sent out radio traffic to simulate the location of Coalition ground forces and convoys, raising clouds of dust drove back and force to simulate logistical operations.

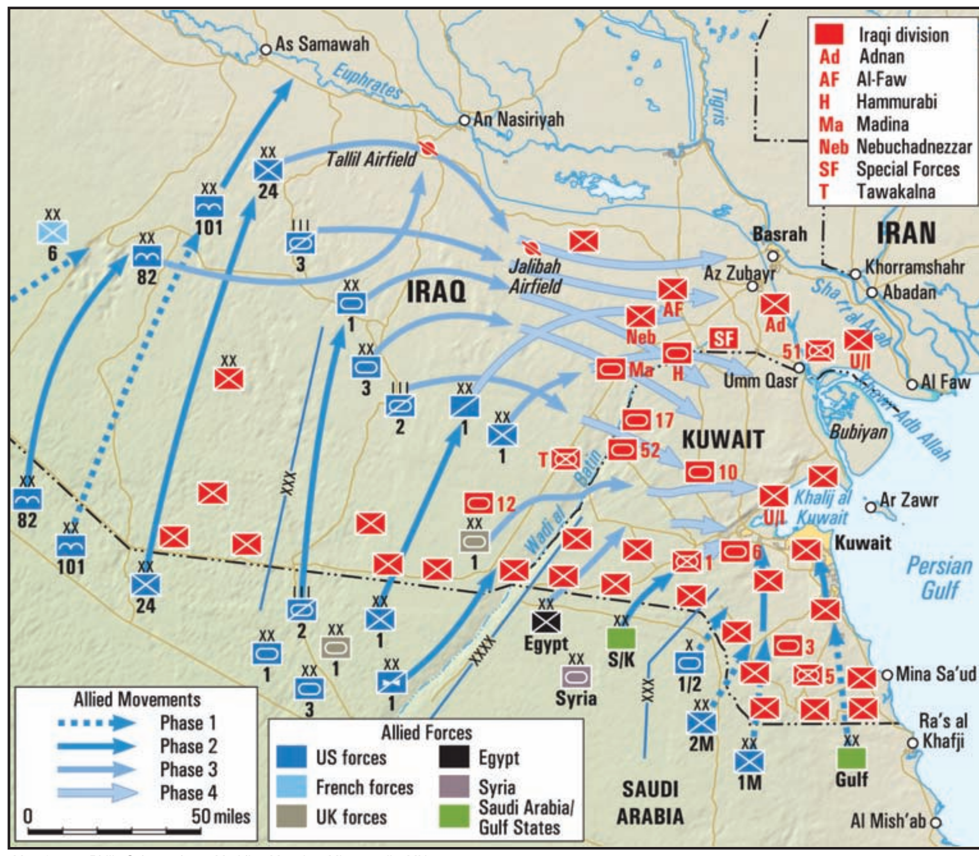
Deception efforts and Coalition air superiority left Iraqi intelligence blind to actual allied troop dispositions. This allowed Schwarzkopf on February 23 to rapidly shift the XVIII Air Airborne Corps to the west placing it opposite the weakly defended Iraqi right flank. Schwarzkopf's plans called for deep penetration of Iraqi defenses by the VII Corps and XVIII Airborne Corps. Once they had penetrated enemy lines, these forces would turn east to encircle and destroy the elite divisions of the Iraqi Republican Guard Corps.

Operation Desert Saber, the name for the general ground offensive, began at 4 a.m. on February 24 following a three-hour artillery barrage on the entire 300-mile length of the battlefront. On the Coalition's right flank, five mechanized brigades composed of Arab troops of JFC-E advanced along the coastal road encountering very light resistance. Schwarzkopf ordered the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade to transfer a battalion from ships in the Persian Gulf by helicopter to the Al Wafra oilfield just north of the Saudi-Kuwaiti border inside Kuwait. Once at that location, the Marine battalion would establish a new defensive position.

On its left, I MEF faced a much denser concentration of Iraqi units defending Kuwait City 35 miles away. The MK154 Mine Clearing Launchers deployed on AAV-7 Amphibious Assault Vehicles fired line charges to clear passages

National Archives

ABOVE: Iraqi anti-aircraft fire lights the night sky during Coalition air strikes on Baghdad. The sustained six-week air attack saw Coalition aircraft conduct an average of 2,000 sorties per day. BELOW: U.S. Central Command's ground strategy called for the U.S. VII and XVIII corps to execute a left-hook assault from Saudi Arabia into the Iraqi desert while the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force and Arab coalition forces struck north along the Kuwaiti coastline.



Map © 2023 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

A Marine engages Iraqis with the M2 Browning .50-caliber machine gun mounted atop a HUMVEE during the counterattack at Khafji on January 31. Iraq's only ground offensive of the war appears to have been an attempt to capture Coalition prisoners to gain a negotiating advantage.

National Archives

Marines repulsed a powerful Iraqi armored assault at the Saudi Arabian city of Khafji.

A thin chain of observation and listening posts operated by U.S. Marine and U.S. Army Special Operations troops served as a tripwire south of the Kuwaiti border inside Saudi Arabia in the sector of I Marine Expeditionary Force and Joint Forces Command-East.

Twenty-two year-old Corporal Stephen Beaver's 5th Platoon of the 1st Force Recon Company manned an observation post immediately north of Khafji. The four teams of the 5th Platoon rotated duties at the border with rest periods at a sports complex in Khafji.

Iraqi artillery rounds began exploding on the complex shortly after nightfall on January 29, 1991, and they were soon followed by the unmistakable rumble of approaching Iraqi armor. Beaver's team fell back; and as it did so, it called for air support. Soon Navy and Marine Corps A-6 Intruders, AV-8B Harriers, and U.S. Air Force A-10 Thunderbolts arrived to furnish close air support.

Beaver's team took up a protected position in a building on high ground. No sooner had they redeployed than a unit of Iraqi infantry approached the building along a paved road. The Iraqis were not advancing in any semblance of formation. Placing his M60 general purpose machine gun on the roof, the young corporal opened fire on the disordered group of enemy soldiers closing on his position. The machinegun bursts drew return fire from Iraqi T-62 tanks and Soviet-made MT-LB tracked armored fighting vehicles. With shells exploding around them, the Marines switched to their escape-and-evade mode and escaped through the darkness of night.

Unlike Corporal Beaver's team, two teams from Marine 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion were not able to disengage and withdraw from Khafji. They remained in town in radio contact and relayed the location and movement of Iraqi units. About the same time, Iraqi forces made a heavy push along the narrow sector known informally as the "heel and elbow" of the Saudi-Kuwaiti border.

At Observation Post Number Four, a platoon from Marine 1st Reconnaissance Battalion met the Iraqis with machinegun fire. As a company of Light Armored Vehicle-25s (LAV-25) and Light Armored Vehicle Anti-Tanks (LAV-AT) from the U.S. Marine 3rd Light Armored Infantry Battalion moved up to cover the withdrawal of the recon platoon, they became engaged in a firefight with the advancing Iraqis. Believing that they were engaging an Iraqi tank, the crew of one of the LAV-ATs fired an anti-tank missile at another LAV-AT, completely destroying it and killing its four-man crew.

Coalition air support soon arrived in numbers and began inflicting heavy damage on the advancing Iraqi armor. To the right and left of Observation Post Number Four, companies from 1st and 2nd light armored battalions met the advancing Iraqi armored vehicles with wire-guided anti-tank missiles and 25mm Bushmaster cannons. Aided by air support, the Marines fought the Iraqis to a standstill.

In another tragic friendly fire incident, an A-10 Thunderbolt fired a Maverick air-to-surface missile that struck a Marine LAV-25, killing seven crewmen. A subsequent investigation revealed that a missile malfunction was the most likely cause of the tragedy.

Iraqi forces suffered 300 killed and wounded and 400 captured in the battle, which was the first major ground engagement of the Gulf War. In addition, they lost 90 of their 180 armored fighting vehicles. By the morning of January 30, Marine forces at Khafji had stabilized the situation. At that point, the Marines transferred the task of liberating Kuwait to Saudi and Qatari troops.

— Victor Kamenir

National Archives

U.S. Air Force fighter aircraft fly through a thick screen of smoke caused by burning oil wells that coincided with the Coalition's air strikes. Several F-15 pilots shot down Iraqi aircraft on the first night of the war, while F-16 pilots participated in deep-penetration strikes against command-and-control bunkers, SCUD targets, and airfields.

through minefields. The line charges, however, frequently failed to detonate due to a faulty igniter. To remedy this, Marine combat engineers exited their assault vehicles to manually fire the mine clearing charges.

Once they had been fired, M60A1 tanks equipped with mine plows would finish clearing the lanes, leading the lighter-armored AAVs through the obstacles. Battalion-sized task forces from the 1st Marine Division then pushed through toward the Al-Jaber Air Base 15 miles into Kuwait. On the way to the airbase, the 1st Marine Division destroyed 20 Iraqi T-55 and T-62 tanks.

On its left flank, the 2nd Marine Division and the 1st Brigade from Army's 2nd Armored Division made good progress through the berm but needed mine clearing charges to make passage lanes in extensive minefields. In both sectors, faced with U.S. Marine M60A1 and U.S. Army M1A1 Abrams tanks and battered by artillery and air attacks, hundreds of Iraqi soldiers began laying down their arms. In this phase of the campaign, an entire Iraqi tank battalion surrendered to Maj. Gen. William M. Keys' 2nd Marine Division. The flow of Iraqi prisoners to the rear quickly became so great that it temporarily blocked one of the passage lanes. As American combat units approached Kuwait City, the Iraqis began setting Kuwaiti oil fields on fire.

Brig. Gen. Bernard Janvier's French 6th Light Armored Division, which was deployed 200 miles to the west with a brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division, crossed the Saudi-Iraqi border on Coalition's far left flank. On the way to Al-Salman 60 miles into Iraq, the 6th Light Armored rumbled through the ground initially held by the Iraqi 45th Infantry Division, which had been severely depleted by Coalition air strikes.

Janvier's attack was spearheaded by missile-armed Gazelle attack helicopters that pulverized dug-in Iraqi tanks and bunkers. The brief clash cost the 6th Light Armored two killed and 25 wounded, the French troops routed the Iraqi division. In so doing, they captured 2,500 prisoners.

Delayed by bad weather for three hours, hundreds of Blackhawk and Chinook helicopters, in the largest helicopter-borne operation in history, delivered a brigade from the 101st Airborne Division to the Al-Salman airfield. After a brief fight with a reserve battalion from the Iraqi 45th Infantry Division, the airborne troops established a forward operations base that they named Cobra.

Schwarzkopf's plans initially called for engaging the Iraqi on both flanks on February 24 and committing the VII Corps and the rest of the XVIII Airborne Corps on the following morning. But surprisingly weak Iraqi opposition and speed of advance by the French and the leading elements of the 101st Airborne caused Schwarzkopf to move up the schedule by 14 hours.

The 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) from the XVIII Airborne Corps went into action at mid-afternoon Advancing against unexpectedly light opposition, the 24th Division halted 75 miles inside Iraqi territory by midnight. Satellite navigation and image-enhancing equipment allowed American units to navigate safely at night.

The U.S. Army's VII Corps also advanced ahead of schedule. On its right flank, the 1st Cavalry Division attacked through Wadi Al-Batin, running along the north-south border between Iraq and Kuwait. The division's mission was to engage and pin down Iraqi divisions to its front while the main forces of the VII Corps hit hard to its left.

Coalition tanks equipped with mine plows, D7 Armored Combat Earthmovers, and M728 Combat Engineer Vehicles from the 1st Infantry Division smashed through the sand berms and Iraqi trenches just behind them. A diamond formation of two M1A1 Abrams tanks and two Bradley fighting vehicles protected the vulnerable bulldozers as they attacked the sand berms.

Bradley fighting vehicles climbed the slopes

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: The M1A1 Abrams main battle tank performed exceedingly well during the Gulf War. The presence of the fearsome tanks, which knocked out large numbers of Iraqi tanks, compelled many Iraqi soldiers to lay down their arms. INSET: Elements of the British 1st Armored division destroyed this Iraqi Type 69 Chinese tank.

and enfiladed the Iraqi trenches while heavy-tracked vehicles ran over the trenches. Hundreds of Iraqi soldiers were killed and captured, while the U.S. mechanized troops did not suffer any casualties. Lead battalions cleared multiple lanes through the forward Iraqi positions to allow units of the 1st Infantry Division to pour through the enemy lines.

To the west of the 1st Infantry Division, the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment cleared the way for U.S. 1st and 2nd armored divisions to exploit the breakthrough in depth. After advancing 2 into Iraqi territory, Lt. Gen. Frederick M. Franks, the commander of the VII Corps, halted the two armored divisions to keep them in contact with the 1st Infantry Division. By the end of the day, the VII Corps had destroyed several small Iraqi units and captured 1,300 prisoners.

The 82nd Airborne Division on February 25 advanced overland and reached Forward Operating Base Cobra where it joined the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne and the French 6th Light Armored. Meanwhile, the 3rd Brigade of the 101st Airborne leapfrogged forward. It severed Highway 8 and then continued north to the Euphrates River west of the town of Al-Nasinyah. By the end of the day the brigade was 140 miles north of the Saudi-Iraqi border.

Maj. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the aggressive commander of the 24th Infantry Division, began moving his brigades forward before dawn. Faced with feeble resistance from two Iraqi infantry divisions, the 24th Infantry Division had reached all of its objectives and captured hundreds of prisoners by the end.

At that point in the ground campaign, a problem developed on the right flank of the VII Corps in the seam where right flank of the VII Corps met the left flank of the Arab forces of the JFC-N. The Syrian and Egyptian units failed to advance as instructed, and this failure left a glaring gap in the Coalition line. With the British 1st Armored Division still in the process of crossing the Saudi-Iraqi border, Franks ordered the 2nd Armoured Cavalry Regiment to advance along the Wadi al-Batin.

While Franks' right flank halted, the 1st and 3rd armored divisions on the left flank advanced. In the 1st Armored Division's zone, Iraqi units generally surrendered after brief resistance. One determined Iraqi armored battalion of 50 T-55 tanks launched a counterattack, but Abrams tanks destroyed them at close range.

By late morning, Arab units from the JFC-N finally began moving forward. This allowed the VII Corps and the Marines on both flanks of the Arab forces to continue to press their attacks. The 1st Infantry Division overran the rear echelons of the Iraqi 26th Infantry division, capturing an Iraqi brigadier general. The British 1st Armored Division moved up on the line in preparation for their attack. The 1st Armored Division approached close to the town of Al-Busayyah. At the same time, the 2nd Armored Cavalry and the 3rd Armored Division reached their respective objectives. They made preparations to pivot east the next day and continue their advance.

In I MEF's sector, the Iraqis mounted a predawn counterattack against the 2nd Marine Division in the area of Burqan oilfield. The fighting took place in a nightmarish scenario among burning oil wells where the pall from the smoke blocked out the sun even well into the afternoon. In a fast-moving tank clash that would become known afterwards as the "Reveille Engagement," a battalion of 39 Iraqi tanks sped across the position of Bravo Company of the Marine 4th Tank Battalion. The reserve company was the only

Marine unit equipped with M1A1 Abrams tanks. In an engagement that lasted under two minutes, the Abrams tank crews knocked out all of the Iraqi tanks.

Later that same morning the Iraqis made a heavy push against the forward headquarters of the 1st Marine Division. Under cover of smoke, elements from the Iraqi 5th Mechanized and 8th Infantry Divisions were able to approach dangerously close. The Marines repulsed three determined Iraqi attacks over the course of the next four hours. Yet again U.S. firepower proved superior. The Marines destroyed 100 Iraqi tanks and armored fighting vehicles without losing a single tank.

Not all fighting was one-sided. In the fight for the Al-Jaber airfield, a defending Iraqi artillery brigade, the 449th Artillery, delivered surprisingly accurate fire on the advancing Americans. In the sharp clash, one Marine was killed and 12 wounded before the airfield was captured.

While the Iraqi units were being demolished on the ground, Iraqi Scud batteries continued to fire their missiles at targets in Israel and Saudi Arabia. One Scud hit the U.S. Army barrack in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. The blast that occurred at 8:40 p.m. on February 25 killed 28 and wounded 90 U.S. reservists of the 14th Quartermaster Detachment. The Scud strike was the highest incident of American casualties during the war.

Heavy fighting erupted on the morning of February 26 on the approach to Kuwait International Airport. Sixteen-inch guns from the battleships USS *Wisconsin* and USS *Missouri* fired 2,700-pound shells in support of the Marine offensive. Throughout the day Marine battalion task forces steadily ground down pockets of Iraqi resistance in rugged terrain. After the Marines secured the outside perimeter of the airport, Iraqi snipers continued fired on targets in the airport's buildings. To remove the threat, U.S. Army Special Forces hunted the Iraqi snipers, conducting sweeps in which they systematically cleared every room in every building.

In the area of operations of Lieutenant General Gary Luck's XVIII Airborne Corps, the 24th Infantry Division, with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment on its right, turned east toward airfields at Jabbah and Tallil. These forces ran into strongly fortified positions in a chain of low hills defended by the Iraqi 47th and 49th Infantry Divisions, the Nebuchadnezzar Division of the Republican Guard, and the 26th Commando Brigade.

Iraqi tanks, artillery, and machine guns unleashed a barrage of fire on American units. The counter-battery fire of American artillery steadily silences one Iraqi battery after another. Thermal-imaging systems on American combat vehicles and helicopters allowed them to spot and hit Iraqi vehicles at more than 4,000 yards before Iraqis even saw them. By late evening resistance west of the two airfields ceased, and thousands of Iraqi soldiers surrendered. The 24th Infantry Division halted for the night and made preparations to attack Jalibah and Tallil the following day.

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Iraqi troops carrying white flags move cautiously towards Coalition forces in Kuwait City. By the close of the ground offensive, 100,000 Iraqis had surrendered to Coalition forces.

The 1st Armored Division from the VII Corps advanced on the small town of Al Busayyah, defended by an Iraqi battalion from the 26th Infantry Division, which included a dozen T-55 tanks in hull-down positions. The leading American battalions quickly silenced ineffective Iraqi small-arms fire.

Several Iraqi T-55s that attempted to engage the American battalions were dispatched promptly with sabot rounds. An American infantry battalion encountered resistance inside the town, which was suppressed with artillery fire. Charging forward, the 1st Armored Division overran the headquarters and rear echelon units of the Iraqi VII Corps. Next, the 1st and 3rd armored divisions engaged the elite Tawakalna Division of the Republican Guards Corps in a slugfest that lasted well into the following morning.

In the area of grid reference known as "Phase Line Bullet" in southern Iraq, lead elements from the 3rd Armored Division ran into strongly fortified positions of a brigade from the Tawakalna Republican Guard Division. A platoon of 14 M3 Bradley scout vehicles came under fire from enemy T-72 tanks, anti-tank missiles, and machine guns. As the Bradleys returned fire, they were mistaken for enemy vehicles and fired upon by an American tank company. Three Bradleys became victims of friendly fire, which took the lives of two American soldiers. Iraqi forces damaged three others.

The battered scout platoon pulled back while the Iraqis withdrew during the night, leaving behind more than 20 tanks and armored fighting vehicles destroyed or abandoned. The action at Phase Line Bullet was one of a few cases where a Coalition unit was forced to fall back without breaching Iraqi defenses.

At this point, the frontage of the VII Corps swung to face east with the 1st Armored Division on the left flank, the 3rd Armored Division and 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment in the center, and the 1st Infantry Division on the right. Further south was the British 1st Armored Division and U.S. 1st Cavalry Division, which became part of the VII Corps.

As the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment advanced east through a dust storm, it began encountering a growing volume of Iraqi fire from prepared positions. With its three line squadrons in line, the regiment pressed on after eliminating every pocket of resistance. Its mission was to locate and pin the enemy in place until the arrival of the 3rd Armored Division; however, with the armored division heavily engaged in its own sector, Franks ordered the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment to advance on its own. By midafternoon the dust storm subsided enough to allow the choppers of its 4th Squadron to take to the air in support of its ground brethren.

Serious opposition came at 4 p.m. at 73 Easting, a north-south grid line on a military map,

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when the regiment ran into adjoining flanks of the Tawakalna Division of the Republican Guard Corps and the 12th Armored Division, one of the best units of the Iraqi regular army. Lacking intelligence assets to determine the location of American units, the Iraqis had to ascertain the situation by moving to contact.

Braving deadly fire from M1A1 Abrams tanks and tube-launched, optically tracked, wireless-guided missile systems mounted on Bradley fighting vehicles, Iraqi T-72 and T-62 tanks came in waves. Unlike previous encounters where Iraqi units ran or surrendered after suffering first losses, troops of Tawakalna and the 12th Armored Division continued to fight. In the long run, though, their bravery proved futile when pitted against superior American technology and training.

In one instance, two Bradley scout vehicles armed with 25mm Bushmaster cannons and two more with mounted TOW missile launchers engaged an entire company of Iraqi T-72s. They destroyed five tanks before 2nd ACR's own tanks arrived. In a tragic accident, one of the Bradleys launched a missile at a friendly vehicle, wounding its three crewmen.

By late afternoon, the 2nd ACR wiped out two Iraqi brigades, destroying 160 tanks and 250 other vehicles. During the night, the 2nd ACR halted to regroup and resupply, allowing the 1st Infantry Division to pass through them and press on.

Shortly before 1 a.m. on February 27, the1st Infantry Division and the British 1st Armored Division engaged two brigades from the Tawakalna and Hammurabi division of the Republican Guard Corps and elements from at least 10 more Iraqi divisions roughly two miles east of 73 Easting. The engagement, which became known afterwards the Battle of Norfolk, was the largest tank battle of the war and one of the largest in American history.

Pummeled by massive artillery barrages, the Iraqi units largely lost their offensive capabilities and mainly offered static resistance. Keenly aware of Coalition's thermal imaging devices, the Iraqi tankers did not turn on their engines until the last moment, resulting in American units unknowingly bypassing silent Iraqis. Night fighting occurred at close range and was punctuated by muzzle flashes and exploding combat vehicles.

Next, the British 1st Armored Division engaged the Iraqi 52nd Armored Division and elements of four infantry divisions. By the end of the engagement, at least eight Iraqi divisions were destroyed, and hulks of hundreds of Iraqi fighting vehicles littered the desert floor. The Iraqis knocked out four Abrams tanks and five Bradley fighting vehicles. A short distance away, at another key objective, the 3rd Armored Division mauled several more Iraqi brigades, knocking out 200 more Iraqi armored vehicles.

On the left flank of the VII Corps, two brigades from the 1st Armored Division and a brigade from the 3rd Infantry Division engaged the Medina and Adnan divisions of the Republican Guard Corps at a low rise southwest of Basra, which became known as "Medina Ridge." At that location, the Iraqis deployed a number of their tanks on reverse slopes to take American fighting vehicles under fire as they topped the ridge.

American aircraft and attack helicopters, including the 1st Armored Division's aviation brigade, launched repeated attacks against entrenched enemy positions. The Iraqi air defenses accounted themselves well. They not only downed an A-10 Thunderbolt, but also downed two AH-64 Apache helicopters. In another major tank clash, the American units destroyed 120 Iraqi tanks and armored fighting vehicles at the cost of two Bradleys fighting vehicles.

To the north, the 1st and 2nd Brigades from the 24th Infantry Division attacked Jalibah airfield southeast of Al Nasinyah on the morning of February 27. The 197th Brigade moved against Tallil Airfield south of the city. Between the two airfields lay a key objective in the form of a large logistics hub defended by elements of two Iraqi infantry divisions backed by the elite Nebuchadnezzar Division of the Republican Guards.

The Iraqi units defending Jalibah put up a good fight. They knocked out two Bradleys, killing two Americans and wounding several others. Despite the resistance, by late morning, the two airfields were in American hands, and surviving Iraqi units were retreating. By nightfall, the 24th Infantry Division halted just 30 miles west of Basra.

Throughout the day, panicked flight of Iraqi

units continued north along Highway 80, only to enter the maelstrom of fire from Coalition air, artillery, and ground units. The highway, which was littered with destroyed, burned, and abandoned vehicles, became known afterwards as the "Highway of Death." Demoralized Iraqi soldiers continued surrendering in large numbers.

In just four days of fighting, the 24th Infantry Division covered 260 miles, destroyed 360 armored vehicles, and rounded up thousands of prisoners. The success came at unexpectedly minor casualties, which amounted to eight killed and 36 wounded in action. The division lost only three damaged M1A1 tanks and one destroyed.

By the end February 27 the VII Corps had destroyed 1,300 Iraqi tanks and 1,200 armored fighting vehicles, inflicted thousands of casualties, and took 20,000 prisoners. The Marine Corps' materiel losses came to seven damaged M1A1 tanks, 15 Bradley fighting vehicles, two armored personnel carriers, and one Apache helicopter.

To the east of the VII Corps, the 2nd Marine Division and the 1st Brigade from Army's 2nd Armored Division continued advancing north, while the 1st Marine Division hooked to the east to Kuwaiti City. The Army's 1st Brigade charged toward Al Jahrah, a western suburb of Kuwait City, to capture vital crossroads to prevent Iraqi units from escaping north to Iraq.

U.S. Army tank crews navigated their way through minefields and enemy bunker complexes destroying dozens of Iraqi armored vehicles and capturing hundreds of prisoners.

As the leading Abrams tanks topped the low Mutla Ridge, they observed an incredible scene on Highway 80 running north to Iraq. The previous day Coalition aircraft had begun strafing and bombing rear-echelon Iraqi units. Many of these Iraqi troops had commandeered civilian cars and were fleeing north in what Coalition forces derisively called "the Mother of all retreats." Abrams tank crews fired sabot rounds, adding their weight to the destruction.

While hundreds of Iraqi soldiers surrendered, a determined group of 40 Iraqis took positions in the Mutla police station north of Kuwait City. A company of Army infantry had to clear out the building room by room, wiping out the resistance. During the fight, an Army sergeant was killed by an Iraqi sniper.

The Iraqis met the 1st Marine Division's drive toward Kuwait City with two counterattacks. Marine ground units and artillery, as well as Coalition air support, smashed the feeble counterattacks. The Iraqi defenses in depth, consisting of elements from several Iraqi divisions with entrenched artillery, were gradually overcome with Marine M60 Patton tanks outfighting Iraqi T-72 tanks. The fighting cost the Marines 15 killed, 12 wounded, and one M60 Patton tank disabled. The Iraqi army lost 300 tanks.

By the end of February 27, the fourth day of the war, Coalition forces had liberated Kuwait City, and either destroyed or forced the retreat north of Iraqi units in Kuwait and southern Iraq. U.S. senior military commanders began disseminating warnings that a ceasefire would come the next day.

"Kuwait is liberated," President Bush informed American citizens that evening. "Iraq's army has been defeated. Our military objectives have been met." Coalition forces set conditional ceasefire and suspension of active combat operations for the following morning. Sporadic skirmishing continued throughout the night, but as expected weary but jubilant Coalition forces stood down the following morning.

Operation Desert Storm was one of the most one-sided victories in the history of warfare. Western investments in weapons, technology, and training enabled Coalition forces to outmaneuver and outfight woefully inadequate Iraqi formations. Among the most instrumental technologies in bringing about a rapid victory were thermal-imaging and laser range-finding equipment that enabled Western mechanized units to move fast and fight at night. The superior tanks and fighting vehicles of the Coalition forces easily outfought Iraqi tanks outside their effective ranges.

By the time the ceasefire went into effect at 8 a.m. on February 28, just seven of the 43 Iraqi divisions remained operational. Coalition forces had destroyed 3,800 of the 4,300 Iraqi tanks, as well as 1,400 armored personnel carriers and 3,000 artillery pieces.

The cost to the Coalition forces was 60 tanks and armored fighting vehicles. The Coalition forces suffered 1,378 killed and wounded. The bulk of these were U.S. and British troops. In contrast, the Iraqi Army suffered 22,000 casulaties.

Under the U.N. mandate that liberated Kuwait, President Bush ordered a halt to offensive combat operations when the 101st Airborne Division was just 120 miles from Baghdad. Yet when the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, his son, 43rd U.S. President George W. Bush, drove Hussein from power. American troops captured Hussein on December 13, 2003, and an Iraqi Special Tribunal sentenced him to death by hanging three years later for crimes against humanity. ■

National Archives

ABOVE: U.S. Marines walk through a desert landscape charred by burning oil fires. U.S. forces benefitted in the Gulf War from sophisticated technologies, including night-vision goggles for soldiers and Marines, forward-looking infrared pods for aircraft, and thermal and optical gun sights for tank crews. OPPOSITE: U.S. aircraft destroyed as many as 2,000 vehicles on February 26 as Iraqi forces fled west from Kuwait along six-lane Highway 80. General Norman Schwarzkopf defended the strikes on the grounds that he wanted to destroy as much Iraqi military equipment as possible.

Grand Assault on GIBRALTAR

British Lt. Gen. George Augustus Eliott points to the rescue of defeated Spanish sailors on when the British destroyed the Franco-Spanish fleet's floating batteries late in the siege in a painting by John Singleton Copley.

A powerful Franco-Spanish fleet sought to capture the British naval base of Gibraltar for the Spanish Crown during the American Revolutionary War. A powerful attack in September 1782 put the British defenses to the test.

BY DAVID A. NORRIS

Great Britain's war with her rebellious American colonies was about to conclude as diplomats crafted a peace treaty. At the same time, across the Atlantic Ocean from the almost-independent United States, the British outpost of Gibraltar faced its greatest threat since the Union Jack had first floated over the little peninsula. Backed by 47 Spanish and French ships of the line, 200 siege guns of the Spanish Army opened fire.

On the water, an ominous line of 10 formidable floating batteries loomed ever closer to Gibraltar's defenders. Shielded with three feet of massive oak timbers, the specially built Spanish vessels carried a daunting broadside of heavy guns. Reaching their firing positions, the floating batteries dropped their anchors and threw a nonstop barrage of shot and shell into the British works. Guns blazed in reply from Gibraltar, but even red-hot shot

Alamy

seemed to bounce off of the oak timbers to splash sizzling harmlessly into the sea. The grand assault of September 13, 1782, threatened to end the British possession of the Rock of Gibraltar.

A little peninsula, three miles long and three-fourths of a mile wide, Gibraltar was attached at its northern end to the Spanish mainland. Looming over the peninsula was the "Rock," a massive stone mountain that overlooked the Straits of Gibraltar. Known to the Romans as Mons Calpe it was, along with Mons Abyla on the shore of North Africa, one of the twin "Pillars of Hercules" flanking the eight-mile gap between the continents of Europe and Africa, where the Mediterranean Sea met the Atlantic Ocean.

The peninsula of Gibraltar forms the eastern edge of the Bay of Gibraltar, which is five miles wide and six miles long from north to south. The lower end is open to the strait. On the western edge of the bay, opposite Gibraltar, is the Spanish port of Algeciras.

When the War of the Spanish Succession broke out in 1701, Gibraltar was part of Spain. After centuries of contention with the Moors, possession of the peninsula was a point of pride for Spain. Spanish silver coins showed an allegorical version of the Pillars of Hercules in the form of two classical columns. British forces seized Gibraltar in 1704, and London gained formal control of the strategic peninsula through the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 that ended the long war.

Spanish inhabitants of Gibraltar left the peninsula after the treaty. British merchants, artisans, clerks, apprentices, and servants arrived to replace them. Jewish refugees from around the Mediterranean, many of whom were born in North Africa, found homes there. Other residents hailed from Genoa, Savoy, or Minorca. Genoese and Portuguese fishermen helped feed the British garrison with their catches. A census count of the civilian population in 1777 found 506 Protestants of British blood, 1,832 Catholics (only 13 of British extraction), and 863 Jews.

The nation that possessed Gibraltar had a powerful military and naval base to exert control over sea traffic entering or leaving the Mediterranean Sea. The enormous numbers of European and Ottoman ships passing through the Strait of Gibraltar were a substantial portion of the world's maritime trade.

Passage through the strait might be delayed for days or weeks by contrary winds, so a friendly port nearby was an invaluable asset for Great Britain. A Spanish siege in 1727 did not force the British out. Gibraltar was only seriously threatened afterward when the American Revolution widened from a colonial rebellion to an international war involving Europe's major powers. France allied with the American rebels in 1778, and was soon joined by the United Provinces of the Netherlands and Spain.

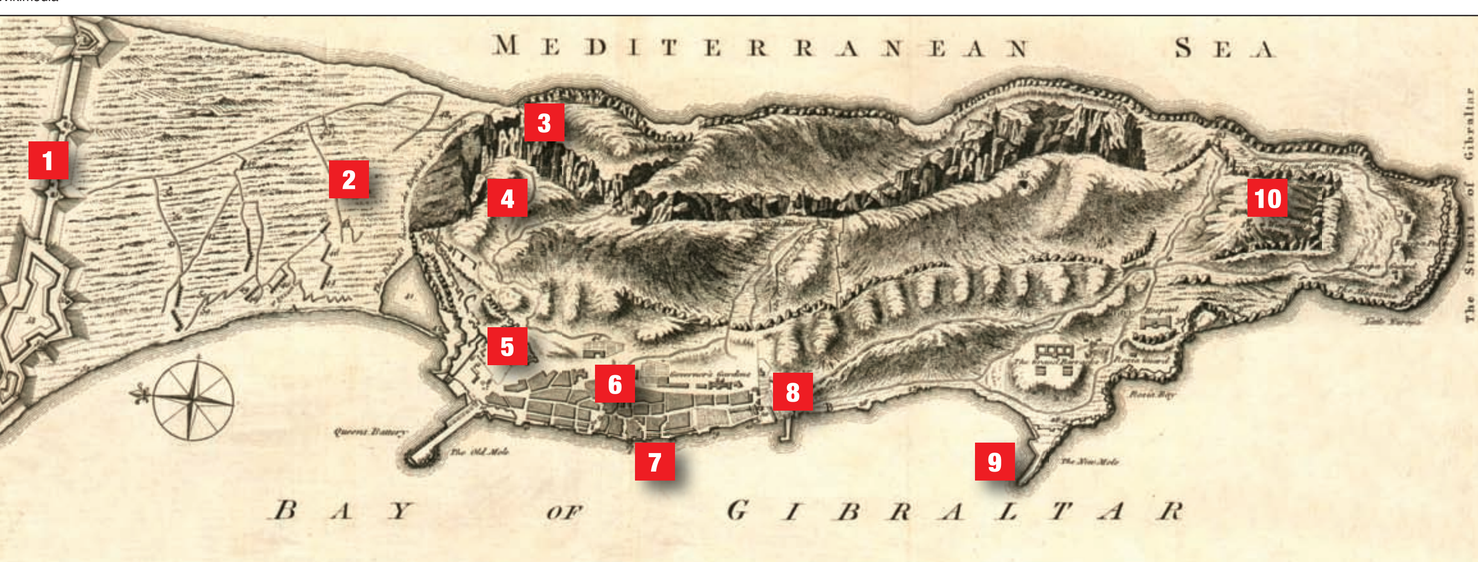
The Spanish did not plan to send troops to join American General George Washington. Instead, with the help of the French army and navy, Spain hoped to regain possessions lost to the British in previous wars. The alliance against London looked like Spain's best chance yet of getting Gibraltar back.

It fell to sexagenarian British Lieutenant General George Augustus Eliott, who had taken over as governor in 1777, to defend Gibraltar. A veteran of four decades of service, he had reaped enough prize money from the capture of Havana in 1762 to buy a large estate. Quite unusually among his peers, Eliott was a vegetarian and teetotaler; just the same, he allowed his men their customary rations of alcohol.

Gibraltar's Rock, a limestone ridge two miles long and up to 1,398 feet high, is the main feature of the peninsula. The Rock's steep eastern side, facing the Mediterranean, plunges downward into the water with little interruption, and offers no landing places to forces of any size. Beyond the northern slope of the Rock, access to the British works was partially blocked by a marshy stretch called the Inundation, near the northwest corner of the Rock. Two narrow passages around the Inundation were blocked near the Bay of Gibraltar by the Bayside Barrier and to the east by Forbes' Barrier. Beyond the barriers was 300 yards of sand, used in peacetime as garden space by the British, but now menaced by enemy guns.

Passages from the two barriers led to the Land Port, behind which loomed the guns of the Grand Battery. South and east of Forbes' Barrier rose the sharp slopes of the north face of the Rock. Already steep and forbidding, the slopes and crown were protected by Willis' Battery, and higher up between that point and the Grand Battery, the venerable medieval walls of the Moorish Castle. Further east of Forbes' Barrier, the steep slopes of the Rock curved south toward the easily defended eastern face. Gibraltar's fortifications, port, town, and other assets were situated on its western edge, facing the bay.

Wikimedia



ABOVE: Key positions during the Great Siege of Gibraltar are (1) Spanish defense works, (2) siege trenches, (3) the Rock, (4) Willis' Battery, (5) Grand Battery, (6) Gibraltar town, (7) King's Bastion, (8) South Bastion, (9) New Mole, (10) and Windmill Hill. OPPOSITE: Lt. Gen. George Elliot and an unidentified officer observe Royal Artillery batteries firing on Spanish ships in the harbor. The first artillery exchange occurred in September 1779. "Every battery and angle bellowed with rage, and foamed with destruction," wrote an observer.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

West of the Grand Battery, the Old Mole jutted out into the bay. Faced with stone battlements, the mole partially sheltered the small Water Port. Spanish artillery could easily reach this area, so it would be of little use for landing cargo during the siege. South from the Old Mole, the town of Gibraltar sprawled along a narrow shelf at the foot of the Rock. In the middle of the town's shoreline, the new King's Bastion extended into the bay, armed with 26 guns. The south end of town was guarded by the South Bastion and the Citadel. A small wharf known as the Ragged Staff stood nearby.

After a rather empty stretch, there was another little harbor formed by the New Mole. The barracks and the naval hospital were just beyond. On the south end of the Rock was Windmill Hill, where steady breezes kept millstones turning. Europa Point and the surrounding ground, at the southern tip of the peninsula, were largely vacant.

Encouraged by its ally France, Spain went to war with Great Britain in June 1779. Elliott's garrison then numbered 5,352 soldiers organized into five British and three Hanoverian battalions, the latter of which were commanded by Maj. Gen Auguste de la Motte. There was a contingent of marines, as well as a company of artificers—military engineers—and five companies of the Royal Artillery.

The Royal Navy's flotilla at Gibraltar during the siege included a small and varying collection of vessels, headed by the 60-gun ship Panther and the 28-gun frigate Enterprise and some smaller vessels. Also on hand were a few privateers. Captain Robert Curtis and 900 sailors served on shore as marines.

General Martín Álvarez de Sotomayor led the Spanish army that initiated the siege in July 1779. Numbering 7,000 soldiers by September, they camped along the north shore of the bay while they constructed siege works across the neck of the peninsula.

Admiral Don Antonio Barcelo's Spanish fleet, based at Algeciras, began a blockade. Barcelo's fleet fluctuated in numbers, but he generally had one or two ships of the line and a few frigates with a horde of smaller warships, gunboats, and galleys.

Barcelo had many Mediterranean-style vessels, such as the xebec, settee, tartane, and polacre. Xebecs were versatile North African-style ships, used by traders and Barbary pirates before their adoption by the Spanish and French navies. These exotic-looking vessels had sharp bows and sterns jutting far out from the hull. Propelled by lateen sails, xebecs were swift and maneuverable and carried from perhaps a few cannon up to about 30 guns, about the capacity of a small frigate.

Other common regional vessels included the settee, with a single deck and lateen sails. The tartane was similar, but with only one mast. The polacre, or polacca, had three single pole masts with a combination of square and lateen rigs. Small vessels like these could carry at least one large gun within range of the British and bombard Gibraltar's town and forts.

In preparation for the Spanish attack, Eliott sent away as many civilians as he could. A log boom blocked the Old Mole against enemy landings, and ships were sent further down to the New Mole, where they'd be a little further away from enemy siege guns. The north face of the Rock had some vulnerable approaches, so engineers cut steep scarps to eliminate gentle slopes, and built new palisades.

On September 12, 1779, Eliott opened fire on the enemy works. Sergeant Samuel Ancell, a clerk with the 58th Regiment of Foot, described how an officer's lady, curious to see the event, was encouraged to strike the match for the first gun to be fired. Eliott then gave the order "Britons strike home," wrote Ancell, and at that point "every battery and angle bellowed with rage, and foamed with destruction."

Spanish land batteries along the bay joined those in the siege lines north of the peninsula. Barcelo's gunboats slipped in close at night to bombard the British at closer range. Sotomayor intended to blockade and starve out the garrison. Hemmed into their little enclave, the British ran short of food and supplies. In peacetime, gardens on the sandy stretch north of the Rock supplied fresh produce, but as the siege got under way enemy guns commanded the garden plots. Civilians grew gardens on little scraps of land, but most

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

of the rocky peninsula was harsh ground for trees or gardens. The hungry foraged for dandelions, thistles, and wild leeks.

Merchant ships and smugglers continually evaded the blockade and brought in a small flow of food and supplies, although never enough to satisfy the needs of the thousands of troops and civilians in Gibraltar. On January 15, 1780, it was joyous news when a British brig made it to port just ahead of the news of the imminent arrival of a relief fleet.

Admiral Sir George Rodney had sailed from England in December 1779. He escorted a vast armada of supply ships. A portion departed from him for the West Indies, while the rest sailed for Gibraltar. Rodney clashed on January 16, 1780, with a Spanish fleet under Admiral Don Juan de Langara. The fighting continued into the night, and in what became known as the moonlight battle of Cape St. Vincent, four ships of the line were captured and another sunk. The British captured de Langara.

The first ship of Rodney's convoy reached Gibraltar that same day and the rest arrived over the course of the next 10 days. With Rodney was Rear Adm. Robert Digby. Aboard Digby's flagship, the Prince William, was Midshipman William Henry, the third son of King George III. Nearly a half century later, William would ascend to the throne as King William IV in 1830.

While still a prisoner, de Langara visited Digby aboard the . The royal midshipman informed de Langara before his departure that his boat was ready. The Spanish admiral was impressed that in Great Britain, in his words, "the humblest stations in her navy are supported by princes of the blood."

Less impressive was a royal visit to Gibraltar town. Prince William and some companions went to a tavern. After they drank for some time, a fight broke out between the prince's party and some soldiers who insulted the Royal Navy. The brawlers were arrested, although the prince was quickly released when his identity became known.

Rodney and Digby departed on February 13. With them went several Spanish prize ships and several hundred Gibraltar civilians. Diverted from their intended destination of Minorca, 900 men of the 2nd Battalion of the 73rd Highland Foot stayed behind to augment the garrison.

Fishing boats still plied the bay, their crews warily filling their nets and bringing their catch back to help feed the garrison. British privateers and merchant ships continued to bring a steady trickle of supplies. Small boats slipped in from British-held Minorca, Moorish ports in Tangier and Morocco, or smuggler's lairs in Spain.

The British garrison got by as best as it could. Ancell noted the arrival of a boat laden with chickens from Morocco. The crew had to kill the roosters, lest they crow and proclaim their presence to the Spanish Navy. Together these boats partially stocked the garrison with oranges, lemons, fowls, sheep, bullocks, wine, olive oil, leather, and shoes. Leather was scarce, and during the siege most enlisted men and many officers ended up wearing canvas shoes, with soles made of spun yarn.

Early on the morning of June 7, 1780, lookouts aboard the frigate Enterprise saw several ships approaching from the west. The sailors hailed the mystery ships, but no one answered. Flames appeared and quickly rushed up the masts and sails of the vessels, revealing nine fire ships bearing down on the shipping at the New Mole.

Amid a fierce cannonade from the Enterprise and the Panther, boat crews rowed toward the blazing vessels. British sailors hurled lines attached

British gunners exchange fire with Spanish ships from the King's Bastion. In spring 1781 the Spanish fired an average of 11,000 rounds a week at the British positions.

to grappling irons onto the fire ships. The boats turned six of the menacing hulks away, and they burned themselves out. Three more fire ships had aimed for the Panther, but one was diverted by boat crews and the other two drifted out to sea.

The wrecks of the fire ships were later plundered of their remaining undamaged timbers as well as their charred planks, providing a welcome source of firewood and charcoal. Captain John Drinkwater observed the persistent scarcity of firewood on the rocky and crowded peninsula. Much of the garrison's supply was "wood from ships bought by the Government and broken up for that purpose, but which had so strongly imbued the salt water, that it was with the utmost difficulty we could make it take fire," he wrote. A storm in December 1779 provided a welcome supply of driftwood after the waves washed up masses of shattered trees and logs onto the shore.

Eliott dealt with intensifying bombardment from land batteries and enemy gunboats. In November 1780 it was necessary to order a blackout. Eliott forbade lights to show, in his words, from house, barrack, or guard-house, towards the bay after 7 p.m. The governor detailed soldiers and civilians parties to dig up the town's paved streets, using a special plow drawn by 80 men. The stones were dropped outside the line wall. "[This was done] to prevent the havoc that would ensue from the explosion of the enemy's shells," wrote Ancell, "as the great weight they fall buried them under the surface of the ground, and when they burst, they scatter whatever is near them for 70 or 80 yards around."

Hot shot and incendiary carcasses were potent artillery ammunition for Gibraltar. Furnaces resembling lime kilns were built near the various batteries to heat cannonballs to a glowing red, or even a white heat. In a pinch gunners could stack cold shot in the corners of a ruined stone house, bury it under a pile of wood and charcoal, and set it afire. The superheated iron could start fires when lodged in the timbers of a ship, or the wooden supports of a land battery.

Carcasses were large shells with three to five holes drilled in them and filled with varying mixtures of gunpowder, sulfur, and saltpeter along with flammable substances such as pitch, tallow, and turpentine. After impact, a carcass might spew its flames for 15 minutes. Carcasses were devastatingly effective against wooden buildings and ships, as well as the wooden fascines, gabions, and timbers of earthworks.

For decades, Gibraltar had enjoyed fresh fruit and meat from North Africa. In January 1781 the Sultan of Morocco sided with the Spanish, and closed his ports to the British. Three months later a fleet of relief ships escorted by Vice Adm. George Darby reached Gibraltar. Sotomayor and the Spanish commanders vented their frustration over Darby's safe arrival with an intensified bombardment, but the garrison was reasonably well protected in sturdy fortifications, including tunnels dug into the Rock itself.

Some soldiers told stories of narrow escapes from death. "A bomb shell fell so near a sergeant of the garrison that the fuse set fire to his coat; happening to be running at the time, he continued his career with his clothes in an entire blaze; when out of danger from the bursting of the shell he stripped, and escaped completely unhurt," wrote B. Cornwell, a civilian who witnessed the siege.

Another soldier "had the muzzle of his firelock closed, and the barrel twisted like a French-horn, by a shell, without injury to his person," wrote Drinkwater. He noted another peculiar incident, when an enemy shell struck the Rock [of Gibraltar] and ricocheted "nearly at right angles with its range." The shell exploded on the platform of a 32-pounder, "and a splinter cutting the apron on the gun fired it off: the shot took away the railing at the foot of the glacis, and lodged in the line-wall."

Spanish land and naval artillery pounded the town of Gibraltar. Enemy shells set fire to supplies that were tucked away in the old Spanish church. Soldiers saved most of the food. Salvaged barrels of flour were taken to form emergency traverses inside the King's Bastion. Barrels damaged by enemy fire were deemed fair game by the troops, who scooped out the flour and fried it into pancakes. The soldiers had emptied so many of the accessible barrels in the lower tiers that the weight of full barrels higher up brought about the collapse of the stacks. Other wood was found to build new traverses in the bastion.

"The streets of the town are like a desert, and almost every house burnt, or torn with shot and shells," wrote Ancell. "In some parts the shot and broken pieces of shells are so thick, that in walking your feet does not touch the ground." Walls and roofs crumbled as buildings collapsed into rubble.

Temptation lured soldiers through gaps in the crumbling walls into store rooms filled with rum, wine, and other coveted commodities. Some soldiers stayed drunk for several days, defying all orders to return to their duties. Captain Drinkwa-

Seige of Gibraltar Military Commanders

BRITISH COMMANDERS

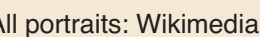
Lieutenant General George Eliott: Known to history as the "hero of Gibraltar," Scottish-born Eliot received officer training at the French military academy at La Fere in French Flanders. He served King George II as an aide-de-camp during the Seven Years' War, and rose to the rank of major general in 1759. He learned firsthand the challenges of siege operations serving as the deputy commander of the British forces that captured Havana from the Spanish in 1762. In 1777, the British crown posted him as governor of Gibraltar. Although a strict disciplinarian, he treated his men fairly. His iron discipline enabled him to furnish the leadership necessary for the garrison to weather the long siege. The tight blockade of the garrison that began in the second year of the siege tested his leadership skills, but he persevered until the British Royal Navy to come to his relief.

Major General Auguste de la Motte: Motte commanded the three Hanoverian battalions stationed at the Rock. He had considerable combat experience having led Hanoverian troops during the Seven Years' War. British officers inspected Motte's troops upon their arrival at the Rock and found them to be excellent soldiers fit for any type of service. During the course of the siege, Motte proved to be an able commander and his soldiers were among the steadiest and most reliable infantrymen posted to defend Gibraltar.

Captain Sir Roger Curtis: As commander of the British 28-gun frigate HMS *Brilliant*, Curtis escorted a large relief convoy to Gibraltar during the height of the siege in April 1781. Staying on to help in whatever way needed, Eliot made him an acting brigadier in command of the Marine Brigade formed in late August 1782. Popular with the sailors and soldiers, his energetic ways breathed life into the counter-siege operations. The marines manned six of the 12 gunboats designated to destroy the Franco-Spanish fleet's floating batteries. Curtis led them in three successful attacks on the fireboats in September and October 1782.

FRANCO-SPANISH COMMANDERS

Captain-General Louis des Balbes de Berton, Duc de Crillon: With the siege having become a stalemate after two-and-a-half years under Spanish leadership, the French crown dispatched Marshal Crillon in May 1782 to launch a massive attack designed to capture the British naval base. Crillon brought French warships, soldiers, and floating batteries. An experienced commander, he had led French troops in 22 sieges throughout his long military career. Having worked alongside Spanish commanders during the unsuccessful invasion of Portugal in 1762, he was well suited for the assignment. His failure to capture Gibraltar put an end to his military career.



All portraits: Wikimedia

Colonel Jean Le Michaud d'Arcon: A gifted officer and member of the French Corps of Engineers, d'Arcon suggested that the French employ floating batteries to break the British defenses at Gibraltar and destroy the garrison's will to resist. To his credit, the floating batteries posed the only real threat to the British defenses during the siege. Unlike Crillon, whose reputation was forever tarnished by his defeat at Gibraltar, d'Arcon did not suffer any fallout from the failure of the floating batteries. Indeed, he rose to become a major general during the War of the First Coalition, as well as an inspector of fortifications.

Vice Admiral Antonio de Barcelo: A rough and uncultured seaman who rose from common sailor to become commander of a Spanish naval squadron, Barcelo had made a name for himself in his early career as a Spanish corsair defending the southern coast of Spain against Algerian pirates. His lack of formal military training and high birth prevented him from becoming a full admiral. Despite this, the Spanish crown entrusted him with command of the Spanish warships that blockaded Gibraltar. He deftly deployed Spanish small craft and gunboats during the siege to harrass the British forces defending the Rock. He resented Admiral Luis de Cordova, who arrived in 1782 to take command of the Spanish naval forces, and he did not give Cordova his full support.

— William E. Welsh

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

A wounded Spanish officer refuses aid from British officers during a sortie by the garrison designed to stop the steady advance of the enemy's siege works in late November 1781.

ter knew of a band of miscreants who roasted a stolen pig with an extravagant fire of stolen cinnamon. Eliott restored order with countless floggings, and ordered executions for soldiers found guilty of looting, as well as those caught drunk or asleep on duty.

With their homes in ruins, townspeople took shelter near the southern end of the peninsula. Refugees clustered in a makeshift settlement, built of planks and timbers filched from ruined buildings in the town. The enemy's land artillery could not reach the area, except when strong winds gave long-range projectiles an extra push, but the Spanish gunboats still menaced the sprawling shanty town. Cynical soldiers called it "Coward's Town," although eventually some of the garrison spent their off-duty time there. Later sailors serving ashore put up a camp near Europa Point, using spars and sails to make tents.

A slow trickle of deserters, including soldiers as well as apprentices and other civilians, tried to escape from Gibraltar. Some made it to the enemy lines; others disappeared. Ancell noted with great precision, that on March 7, 1781, a deserter bolted over the palisade. Besides hurling several blasts of grapeshot, "the several guards fired 1,143 musket shot at him…but he entered the Spanish lines in triumph."

Occasionally the fate of a deserter was revealed by the discovery of a corpse afloat in the bay or a body lying limp and shattered after plunging from the heights of the Rock. One deserter drowned while apparently trying to swim from the Water Port. Sailors on a gunboat, "imagining some large fish had got foul of their cable, darted a harpoon into the body, but soon found out their mistake," wrote Drinkwater.

Spanish deserters, some of them from Walloon regiments from Flanders, slipped into the British lines. Among them were spies sent to glean what close-up glimpses they could get of the defenses or to plant false information.

Minorca fell on February 5, 1782, severing a valuable supply line for Gibraltar. Except when provision vessels came in, the only fresh meat available was pork. It was "very indifferent and scarce, bring fed on the filth of the place," wrote Ancell.

The scarcity of fresh citrus fruit and produce triggered an outbreak of scurvy. Ancell saw men so badly afflicted "they they have lost the entire use of their limbs, and represent the picture of decrepit old age." Under Eliott's orders, quartermasters served daily rations of one pound of onions to 10 men to combat the disease. They gave hospitalized victims two oranges or lemons a day.

Gibraltar's batteries could slow but not stop the steady advance of the enemy siege works. By November 1781, another zigzag of the works ended within 700 yards of the Land Port. Choosing a new tack, Eliott launched a sortie against the enemy lines.

The sortie was begun in the utmost secrecy. Brig. Gen. William Ross led the advance, with a heavy concentration of sharpshooters and light companies, with gunners and artificers. Following in the second wave was Colonel William Picton with two regiments of foot. There was no chance of a deserter warning the enemy for none of the men knew about the attack until well after dark on November 26 when they were ordered to assemble.

Picton moved through the outer gates at 2 a.m. on November 27. His men found the attack a much easier task than expected. In designing their siege works, Spanish engineers planned well against artillery, but gave little consideration for infantry assaults. Spanish guns were deployed to fire upward into the British works, and could not be depressed to repel an infantry attack. Little more than a picket guard defended the works, and the redcoats easily swept them away.

Protected by their infantry, crews of British gunners and artificers went about spiking guns and setting the works on fire. Spanish guns further to the rear opened fire, and the guns on the Rock responded. The shells flew high overhead and did not interfere with the destruction of the captured works. As they withdrew, the British lit powder trains leading to the Spanish magazines. The explosions came when the raiders were safely out of the way. Some of the batteries burned for

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

another four days before their last timbers were consumed.

The bold attack cost Eliott only four enlisted men killed, and the number of wounded came to just 25, with one man missing. Reportedly not a single musket nor any tools or implements were left behind, although a soldier of the 73rd Highland Foot reported the loss of his kilt.

Returning to their camps, many of the redcoats carried cabbages or cauliflowers. Their route across the sandy flats took them through the long-neglected gardens between the inundation and the Spanish lines. Swept by fire from both sides, the treasured vegetables had been out of reach until the sortie.

Captain-General Louis des Balbes de Berton, Duc de Crillon, assumed command of the siege in March 1782. A French-born noble who served in the Spanish Army, the Duc de Crillon had led the forces that captured Minorca. De Crillon stepped up the battle against Gibraltar. In late May 1782, 100 Spanish transport vessels loaded with reinforcements and supplies reached Algeciras. France sent a large transport fleet with 5,000 troops to join them in June. Soon 40,000 men with 266 guns and mortars faced the Gibraltar garrison.

The Spanish used their small gunboats and mortar vessels to great effect in constant bombardments. To counter them, the British cut down two store ships into gunboats, named the Vanguard and Repulse. Moored to the Old Mole, they served as additional batteries against the Spanish gunboats. In March 1782 several disassembled gunboats arrived on a merchant vessel, greatly enhancing the collection of British small craft available to serve in the bay.

Much more than traditional siege works would soon menace Eliott's garrison. Colonel Jean Le Michaud D'Arcon, a French engineer, envisioned waterborne fortifications in the form of a line of 10 floating batteries. In May the British noticed workmen toiling aboard the dilapidated old vessels. D'Arcon would convert these creaking and clumsy hulks into what he hoped would be invincible floating fortresses, mounting from 10 to 26 guns each.

Each main deck of these so-called battering ships was covered with a casemate of heavy oak timbers. The casemate, resembling a huge cabin, had sloping roofs to deflect enemy shot. Rope netting held down a layer of animal hides, which were kept wet to prevent fire from catching hold in the timbers. The port sides, which would face the British, were shielded with extra layers of oak timbers, packed with wet sand between the layers. Heavy bracing and large iron bolts secured the timbers.

D'Arcon shifted the ballast to the starboard to compensate for the weight of the guns and shielding. He had ordered work parties to trim the masts and rigging, but had instructed them to leave enough sail to maneuver the hulls. A fire suppression system of pipes and pumps, fed by onboard reservoirs, would squelch fires on the roof or sides before they spread out of control.

On September 13, spread out in a line stretching over two-thirds of a mile, the battering ships slowly approached Gibraltar at 7 a.m. They halted in line 1,000 yards from the Gibraltar shore and dropped their anchors. Thousands of Spanish spectators lined the distant shores and hills, to watch from a safe distance as the panoramic spectacle unfolded.

British gunners opened fire with cold shot, and were shocked to see even 13-inch mortar shells bounce off the oaken roofs and sides of the floating batteries. Six hours of constant bombardment made no impression on the seemingly invulnerable hulls.

It took until early afternoon for the shot furnaces to turn the iron projectiles red hot. Hot shot was lifted from the heat with iron tongs, and carried to the guns in iron ladles with long handles. On that day the runners could not keep up with the desperate demand for ammunition. Finally, wheelbarrows loaded with sand ferried six hot, glowing rounds at a time.

The first signs that the heated shot was taking effect came at 2 p.m. that day. Smoke rose from the Talla Piedra and the Pastora, two of the largest battering ships.

British gunners stayed at their work, some slaking their thirst with the filthy water from the sponge buckets. One after another, the floating batteries slackened their fire. Masts and spars were

shot away, leaving the damaged ships immobile. Abandoning their guns, sailors milled about on the roofs, hoping to be taken off the doomed ships. But ship's boats rowing toward the battering ships were driven away by British fire.

By evening, the only firing from the battering ships was of signal rockets, sent soaring into the night skies to summon help. Captain Curtis led several longboats to pick up survivors. First one, then another, of the battering ships exploded. The blasts were powerful enough to "burst open doors and windows at the Naval Hospital," wrote Captain John Spilsbury of the 12th Foot. By 4 a.m. six of the floating batteries were wrapped in soaring flames, casting a glare that lit the British batteries as if it were daylight.

Curtis returned to shore with 357 prisoners, including many wounded, taken from the wreckage or plucked from the water. They were a mixed lot that included Spanish sailors, marines, and soldiers, along with a few French soldiers and three chaplains.

When a party of Spanish prisoners trudged by the New Mole, they noticed that one of the shot furnaces was still in use. They saw scores of heated projectiles, some of them heated so much that they were melting. "They shrugged their shoulders and gave a piteous groan at what their eyes beheld," wrote Ancell. "The wounded were carried into the Naval Hospital. Uninjured prisoners were confined at Windmill Hill; this height near the tip of the peninsula was about as far from the Spanish lines as one could get."

The sun rose to reveal the devastation wrought upon the battering ships. By midday five of D'Arcon's wooden fortresses had exploded. Three that had been burnt to the waterline still smoldered. The last two also were afire, set ablaze to prevent capture.

Land batteries and gunboats continued bombarding Gibraltar. Once again, British supplies were running short when Admiral Richard Howe shepherded another fleet of relief vessels to the garrison in October.

This third resupply of the British put the capture of Gibraltar out of reach for many more months. With hints of the end of the Anglo-Spanish war, de Crillon's siege began winding down. Firing diminished, and work continued at a slower pace on the fortifications as soldiers departed for other posts.

Word arrived in February 1783 that the warring powers were close to signing a peace treaty. Eliott's gunners fired a final shot on February 5. The siege, which had lasted for three years, seven months, and 12 days, ended the next day.

Eliott's redcoats had successfully fended off the attacks of the Spanish officers and soldiers. To 258,387 rounds of incoming shot and shell, the Gibraltar garrison responded with 205,328,333 rounds of shot and shell. The British army distributed £30,000 in prize money to the soldiers of the garrison for the destruction of the floating batteries and the sale of a captured Spanish warship. British losses amounted to 536 who died from disease, 1,108 who were wounded in battle, and 43 who deserted. In contrast, the Spanish suffered approximately 100 killed and 200 wounded.

Eliott's successful defense of Gibraltar was a tonic for the British, who had just lost their North American colonies. A grateful crown knighted Eliott. He was made Baron Heathfield of Gibraltar in 1783. Still serving as Gibraltar's governor in 1790, he died in the free imperial city of Aachen in the Holy Roman Empire while traveling to restore his health. Great Britain made good use of Gibraltar as a major naval base in the Napoleonic era and during the world wars of the 20th century. A British Overseas Territory, it remains a valuable British strategic possession to this day. ■

BELOW: Admiral Richard Howe led 150 merchant ships bearing supplies into the harbor in October 1782. In the last major action of the siege, he then sailed to Cadiz to engage the Franco-Spanish fleet. OPPOSITE: British guns firing heated shot destroyed Allied battery ships on September 13, 1782. Captain Roger Curtis' sailors in longboats plucked several hundred survivors from the water.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

BOOKS

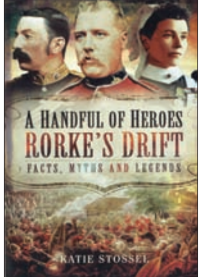
New sources of information on Rorke's Drift offer a greater understanding of one of the British Empire's greatest battles.

By Christopher Miskimon

Naval History and Heritage Command

This famous painting of the defense of Rorke's Drift by Alphonse de Neuville was based on eyewitness accounts of the battle. It shows wounded men being carried from the burning hospital as well as wounded Corporal Paul Allen handing ammunition to Lt. John Chard at right. Private Frederick Hitch is shown at center, standing behind Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead.

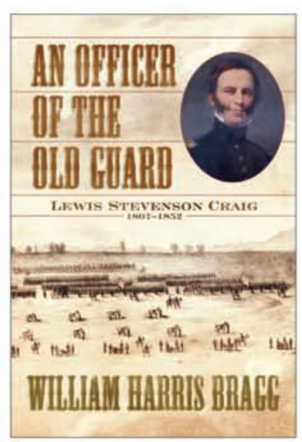
"It was chiefly due to the courageous conduct of these men that communication with the hospital was kept up at all," stated an article that appeared on the *London Gazette* on May 2, 1879. "Holding together at all costs a most dangerous post, raked in reverse by the enemy's fire from the hill, they were both severely wounded, but their determined conduct enabled the patients to be withdrawn from the hospital, and when incapacitated by their wounds from fighting, they continued, as soon as their wounds had been dressed, to serve out ammunition to their comrades during the night."



This newspaper account describes the actions of Corporal William Allen and Private Frederick Hitch of the 24th Regiment of Foot, later known as the South Wales Borderers, during the fighting at Rorke's Drift in Natal, South Africa on January 22-23, 1879. Each fought with valor and determination against repeated Zulu attacks. There were many acts of bravery carried out during the battle. Eleven Victoria Crosses were awarded to participants. Ultimately, the garrison succeeded against the Zulu force, which withdrew after sustaining heavy casualties.

Corporal Allen took up a position against Zulu snipers firing from a nearby set of caves which overlooked the British position from 200 yards distance. A skilled rifleman, Allen soon reduced the Zulu rate of fire, but received a bullet wound to his right arm. Despite the injury he stayed at his post until he could be treated. After the battle he was sent back to Great Britain to recover from his wound, even though his wound never entirely healed. He received his Victoria Cross from Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle. He remained in the army as a sergeant where he taught musketry, but he died from influenza at age 46 in 1890.

Private Hitch had an equally important role at Rorke's Drift. The commanding officer at the outpost, Lieutenant John Chard, placed Hitch on the thatched roof of the hospital building as a lookout. The private was the first man to spot the approaching Zulus at the beginning of the battle. Next, he



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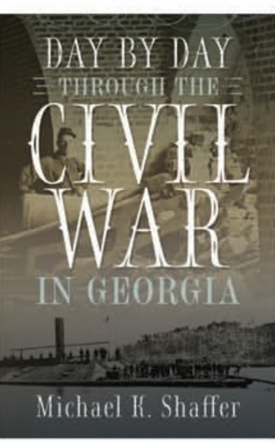

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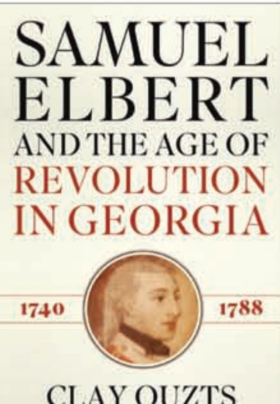

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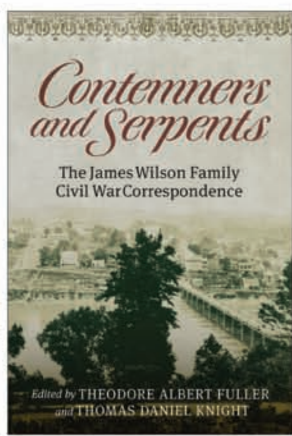

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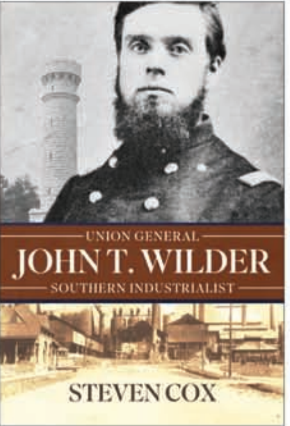

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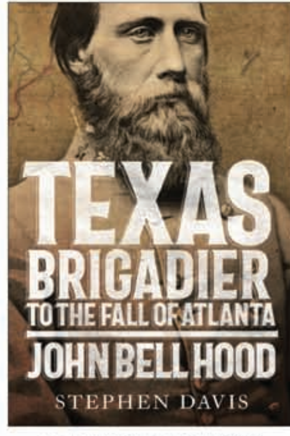

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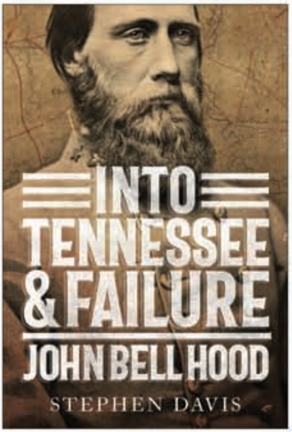

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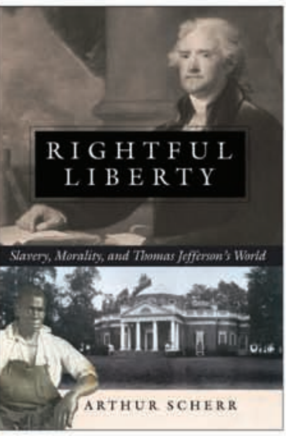

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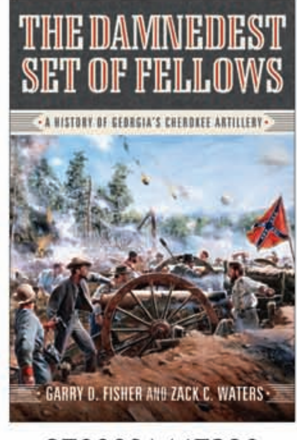

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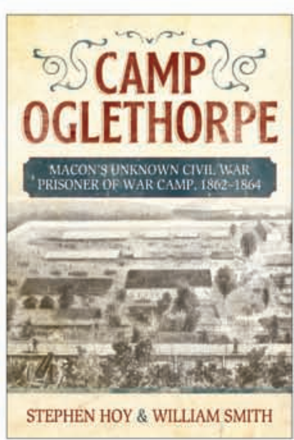

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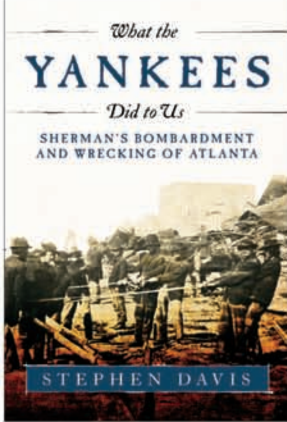

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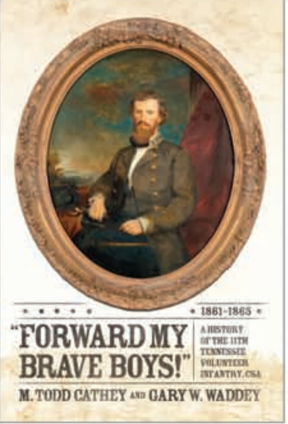

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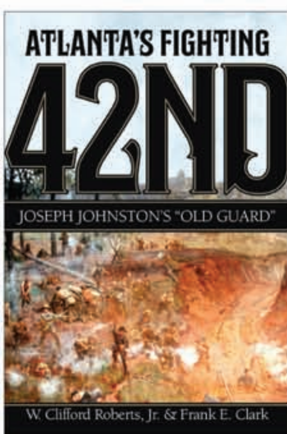

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was sent to the hospital's veranda to support the weakest part of the defenses. The ground sloped away drastically from the front of the hospital, but there had not been time to build up an adequate barrier. The improvised wall was only waist high. Bushes and scrub brush dotted the area in front of the wall, giving the Zulus concealment to approach within 15 feet of it.

The Zulus attacked this point with a charge, giving the British troops enough time to fire a volley but not enough to reload. The fighting there quickly came down to the bayonet and the assegai, a short Zulu spear good for thrusting and stabbing. Hitch recalled how one Zulu grabbed the end of his rifle and tried to disarm him. As they struggled for control of the weapon, Hitch was able to insert another cartridge into the rifle's chamber and fire it. The bullet tore through the Zulu's chest and knocked him off the barricade.

Hitch later fought side by side with his officer, Lieutenant Gonville Bromhead, until he was wounded in the shoulder. He isolated the wound with his waist belt and borrowed Bromhead's revolver to continue the fight. He eventually passed out, but his comrades saw him again later, after his wound had been set, passing out ammunition to other soldiers. His act of bravery, and many other facts about the Battle of Rorke's Drift, are found in ***A Handful of Heroes: Rorke's Drift Facts, Myths and Legends*** (Katie Stossel, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 201 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, index, $26.95, softcover).

While the Battle of Rorke's Drift is well-documented, recently some new letters and papers have come to light, expanding on the body of knowledge of this famous action. The author does creditable work in this new volume, taking advantage of the new material while expertly weaving it into the existing narrative, creating an interesting and engaging book.

The author also delves into the reliability of the existing evidence, in the desire to attain the most accurate possible account of one of the British Empire's most famous battles. The text also examines little-known facets of the defense, such as how the outpost already had partially constructed field works before the Zulus arrived. Many readers likely are familiar with the Battle of Rorke's Drift through the 1964 film *Zulu*. This book gives those people a far greater and more accurate understanding of the battle.

More Precious than Peace: A New History of America in World War I (Justus D. Doenecke, University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend IN, 2022, 500 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover)

In just 19 months the United States mobilized and sent overseas two million troops and built an industrial war machine that greatly aided the Allies in winning World War I. This victory, however, did not come without a significant amount of strife and crisis. Some Americans opposed the war. Americans of German heritage claimed that the government showed an overt preference for England over their homeland. Others feared that Britain and France wanted to absorb the newly arrived American troops into their own depleted forces.

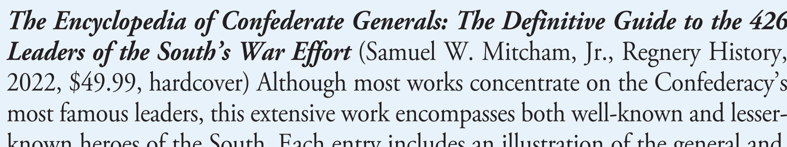
It also took time for American industry to retool factories and to develop and produce modern weapons. After the Russian Empire collapsed into civil war, it became necessary to send American soldiers there as well in an ultimately doomed attempt to bolster the anti-Bolshevik forces.

The full experience of America's involvement in the Great War is thoroughly examined in this scholarly account. The book covers combat on the Western Front, conscription at home, and scandals surrounding training and production problems faced by a rapidly expanding military. The book also covers the American reaction to the Russian Revolution. The author balances the various controversies and uses his detailed research to create a vivid narrative even when discussing the mundanity of politics.

Crecy: Battle of Five Kings (Michael Livingston, Osprey Books, Oxford UK, 2022, 303 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

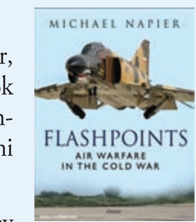
King Edward III of England placed his army on high ground where the Hesdin Road passes

SHORT BURSTS

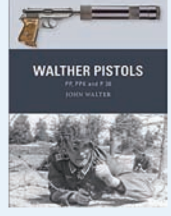


The Encyclopedia of Confederate Generals: The Definitive Guide to the 426 Leaders of the South's War Effort (Samuel W. Mitcham, Jr., Regnery History, 2022, $49.99, hardcover) Although most works concentrate on the Confederacy's most famous leaders, this extensive work encompasses both well-known and lesser-known heroes of the South. Each entry includes an illustration of the general and a detailed entry on his life and service.

The Somme 1916 Beyond the First Day: Beaucourt and Mametz Wood to the Butte De Warlencourt (Jon Cooksey and Jerry Murland, Pen and Sword, 2022, $28.95, softcover) The author's second visitor's guide to the Somme focuses on the secondary battles of the offensive. The well-illustrated work contains invaluable details on the nature and location of each of the these battles.



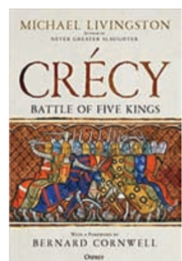
Flashpoints: Air Warfare in the Cold War (Michael Napier, Osprey Books, 2022, $45.00, hardcover) This coffee-table book is lavishly illustrated and contains in-depth combat accounts of various late 20th-Century air conflicts. It includes chapters on the Arab-Israeli wars, Indo-Pakistani wars, and the Falklands War.



Walther Pistols: PP, PPK and P-38 (John Walter, Osprey Books, 2022, $22.00, softcover) Walther pistols saw extensive use by military forces during the 20th Century. This work highlights their development, design, in conflicts around the globe.

Battlegroup! The Lessons of the Unfought battles of the Cold War (Jim Storr, Helion Books, 2021, $44.16, softcover) War between NATO and the Warsaw Pacts during the 1980s presented a series of fascinating hypothetical scenarios for military enthusiasts. This work plays out some of those scenarios while examining how the two sides were organized, equipped, and trained.

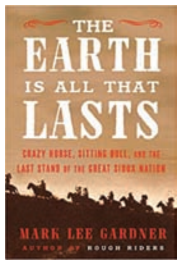
War Transformed: The Future of Twenty-First Century Great power Competition and Conflict (Mick Ryan, Naval Institute Press, 2022, $39.95, hardcover) This work, which is penned by a major general in the Australian Army, examines the factors that influence modern warfare. He suggests ways future leaders can prepare for the difficult challenges they will face.



alongside the Forest of Crecy on August 26, 1346. Where the road crossed the high ground, there were more woods atop a hillock. Edward centered his force between these two woods. He also closed off open spaces with his wagons, turning them on their side to form a wall.

His men were tired from marching and the wall furnished extra protection. His army is believed to have comprised 2,500 men-at-arms, 8,700 archers, and 2,700 spearmen. They faced 20,000 French troops. The French chose to attack, and they were soundly defeated. Edward decisively overcame a larger force in one of medieval warfare's greatest battles.

In this new work, the author argues that much of what is accepted about the contest of arms at Crecy is likely wrong. He uses archived manuscripts, satellite data, and traditional field work to create a new view of the battle. He then makes an effective case for his account of the battle and his conclusions. He also explains how he found the location of the battlefield during his archaeological study.

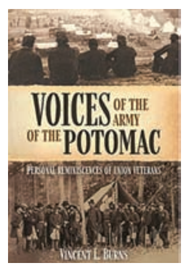


The Earth is All that's Lasts: Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, and the Last Stand of the Great Sioux Nation (Mark Lee Gardner, Mariner Books, New York NY, 2022, 543 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $28.99, hardcover)

Lakota war leaders Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull grew up on the high plains of the American West and had never known life without white men. Native American contact with explorers and mountain men soon expanded to include waves of settlers, buffalo hunters, prospectors, and soldiers. Conditions for the Native American tribes steadily worsened as buffalo numbers dropped drastically, tribes were pushed away from useful land, and conflicts increased.

It all came to a head in the clash that unfolded on June 25, 1876, in the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Both leaders inspired warriors to swarm Colonel George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry and utterly defeat the regiment. It was also a pyrrhic victory, and marked the beginning of the end for the Lakota and their allies as the U.S. Army marshaled its strength to defeat the tribes. In the end, both Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull met violent and similar deaths.

The author has several award-winning history books on topics related to the American West. This new work joins those with its clear prose and rich narrative. It is a dual biography of two of the most famous Native American war leaders, showing how their lives intertwined near the end of the Indian Wars. The volume effectively brings the Native American viewpoint to the fore, and it gives the reader a thorough account of important events in American history.



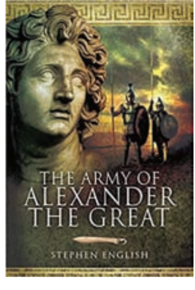
Voices of the Army of the Potomac: Personal Reminiscences of Union Veterans (Vincent L. Burns, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2022, 359 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $37.95, hardcover)

New York-born Colonel Thomas C. Devin wanted to encourage Brig. Gen. John Buford that the First Division of the U.S. Cavalry Corps defending Gettysburg could hold off Confederate infantry until the main body of the Army of Potomac arrived. It was the evening of June 30, 1863, just hours before the start of the three-day clash at Gettysburg.

Buford intended to do his duty, but he had no illusion it would be easy. "They will attack you in the morning and they will come booming—skirmishers three deep," he told Devin, who commanded the Second Brigade of the First Division. "You will have to fight like the devil to hold your own until supports arrive. The enemy must know the importance of this position, and will strain every nerve to secure it, and if we are able to hold it, we shall do well."

The Union cavalry, arrayed on the ridges west of Gettysburg, succeeded in its mission on the morning of July 1 in the face of a determined attack by Maj. Gen. Henry Heth's Division of the Confederate III Corps. Although sorely pressed, the cavalrymen kept their foe at bay until the arrival of Maj. Gen. John Reynolds' I Corps.

Military historians are fortunate that so many of the American Civil War's participants were literate and left behind detailed accounts of their service. This works collects many of them into an interesting volume on the Army of the Potomac. The author illuminates their thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions of the war raging around them. Interestingly, these views are not always the same ones held by their superiors.

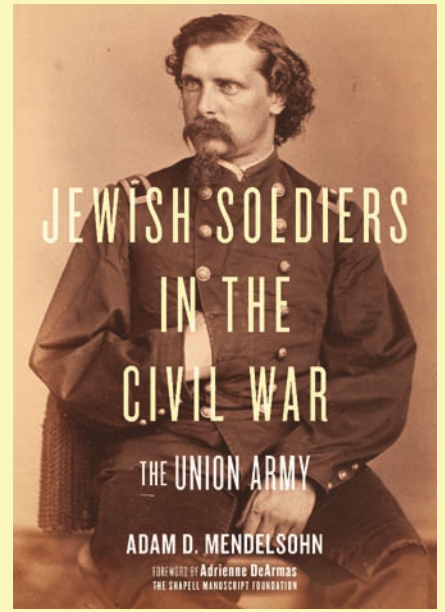


The Army of Alexander the Great (Stephen English, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 164 pp., photographs, notes bibliography, index, $26.96, softcover)

Alexander the Great was

JEWISH SOLDIERS IN THE CIVIL WAR

BY ADAM D. MENDELSOHN



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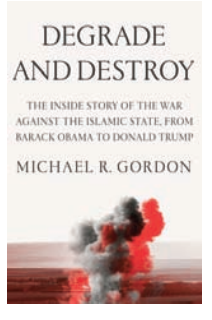
a commander without equal in the annals of military history. He not only excelled in both strategy and tactics, but also mastered irregular warfare in the rugged lands southwestern Asia.

Yet he did not win his victories alone. His skilled heavy infantry used their long spears with devastating effect. The Hypaspists, who constituted Alexander's bodyguard, showed an allegiance to him that eclipsed their loyalty to their tribe. They were elite infantry that defended the flanks of his phalanx formations. Alexander used his infantry to pin the enemy in place while his heavy cavalry maneuvered to breach and disrupt the enemy's line of battle. Alexander also used a siege train that enabled him to capture every city he besieged. Alexander spent most of his reign campaigning, and his powerful and veteran army enabled him to conquer any foe in his path.

The author brings every element of Alexander's troops to light in this new book. He covers the army's recruitment, weapons, and armor. He also discusses at length its organization, tactics, and capabilities. Each chapter of the book explores a different aspect of the Macedonian army. Even the relatively unknown Greek naval forces are given detailed examination, as are Alexander's key allies.

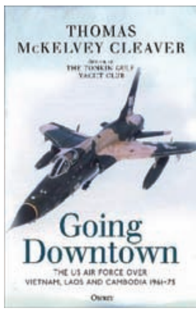


Degrade and Destroy: The Inside Story of the War Against the Islamic State, from Barack Obama to Donald Trump (Michael R. Gordon, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York NY, 2022, 496 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

During summer 2014 Iraqi insurgents from the Islamic State seized the city of Mosul, proclaimed a new caliphate, and began to launch attacks in Iraq and abroad. U.S. President Barack Obama decided to send American troops back to Iraq after largely withdrawing them a few years earlier. The new strategy called for counter-operations by a range of allies, with support from the United States and its allies and through a U.S. legal and diplomatic framework.

As it played out, the war against the Islamic State involved extensive participation by U.S. forces. The U.S. military employed artillery, missiles, attack helicopters, a wide range of air support, and Special Forces. Presidential candidate Donald Trump in 2016 promised a new plan to finish off the Islamic State, but once in office he continued the existing strategy from the Obama administration. It took time, but the United States and its allies eventually defeated the Islamic State.

The author presents the military operations, political debates, and diplomatic maneuvering that characterized the war against the Islamic State. As a war correspondent covering the conflict, he conducted interviews with high-ranking officers and civilian officials, as well as troops in the field. The author sheds light on how two very different U.S. presidential administrations made decisions and carried out chosen policies.

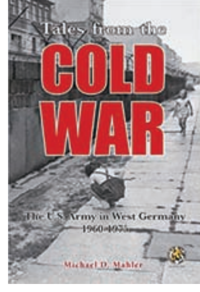


Going Downtown: The U.S. Air Force Over Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, 1961-75 (Thomas McKelvey Cleaver, Osprey Books, Oxford UK, 2022, 352 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30.00, hardcover)

U.S. Air Force involvement in Vietnam began with the training of Vietnamese pilots to operate over the Ho Chi Minh Trail through Laos and Cambodia. It ended officially in 1972 after the bombing of Hanoi by B-52 bomber fleets. Unofficially, American pilots kept flying missions over the trail until the final end of the Vietnam War in 1975. Along the way there were major operations, such as Rolling Thunder and Linebacker I and II. Within them were countless small missions against bridges, radar installations, and missile defense sites, as well as rescue operations to extract downed pilots and aerial combat with MiG interceptors.

The Air Force had to develop new weapons, such as air-to-air missiles and anti-radiation missiles to knock out radar sites. While fighting in the skies over South Vietnam involved close air support, fighting in the skies over North Vietnam meant going up against a sophisticated Soviet-supplied air defense network. The Air Force enjoyed considerable success, but at a substantial cost in lives and aircraft.

As an overview of the air war over Vietnam, this book is comprehensive, detailed, and well written. It contains many personal accounts and previously unpublished material. The author has written many books about aerial combat in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and this latest book is a worthy addition to his body of work.

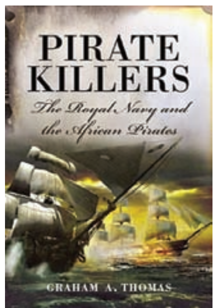


Tales from the Cold War: The U.S. Army in Germany 1960-1975 (Michael D. Mahler, University of North Georgia Press, 2021, 174 pp., $19.99, softcover)

Michael Mahler first arrived in Germany in 1960 as a young lieutenant. He and his new wife shared a small apartment that seemed to the couple to always be cold. As an armor officer, he commanded tank units using the M41 Walker Bulldog light tank and the medium M48 Patton tank. All of his senior leaders were World War II veterans and many captains had seen service in the Korean War. One of his first company commanders still dove into the nearest ditch whenever a German plane flew overhead.

Mahler had good sergeants serving under him and most of the soldiers were draftees. As time wore on, he assumed all of the various roles expected of junior officers and moved up the chain of command. He learned how to lead and inspire troops. By his last tour in Germany, Mahler was a colonel with a career's worth of stories to tell.

Those stories are well told in this new memoir, which is a selection of the Association of the U.S. Army. The author's memories will be familiar to those who served during the Cold War. Readers who have served in the military will recognize many of the anecdotes. The narrative is engaging, and the memoir is the type of book that readers will not want to put down.



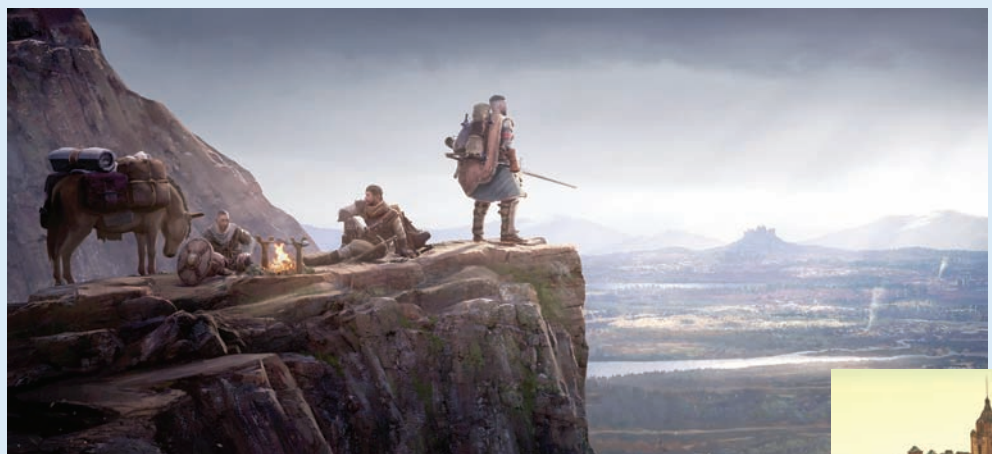
Pirate Killers: The Royal Navy and the African Pirates (Graham A. Thomas, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire UK, 2022, 200 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $29.95, softcover)

During the mid-19th century, the English Royal Navy waged a successful campaign against African piracy. On the West African coast, they killed Bartholomew Roberts, known as 'The King of the Pirates," captured his fleet, and sent many of his men to the gallows. On the North African coast, the Barbary Pirates terrorized the region for centuries preying upon shipping and coastal towns. Where many great powers had failed to end their threat, the Royal Navy; once it chose to do so, defeated them decisively and brought decades of predation to a halt.

This is one of most unfamiliar and neglected anti-piracy campaigns in history, but also one of the most remarkable. The author reveals the broad brushstrokes of the operation, as well as several of its most notable clashes, such as the rescue of the British merchant ship *The Three Sisters* by the torpedo ram HMS *Polyphemus* in 1848 and the clash between the sloop HMS *Prometheus* and the Rif pirates in 1854. The book is well documented and contains extensive and detailed appendices. ■

 By Joseph Luster

MEDIEVAL TACTICS GO OPEN-WORLD AND *ANNO 1800* MAKES THE LEAP TO CURRENT-GEN CONSOLES



Wartales

Genre: Strategy • Platform: PC • Publisher: Shiro Unlimited • Available: Now (Early Access)

Wartales is a medieval-themed open-world tactical RPG from Shiro Unlimited, and it's been doing pretty well for itself since its initial launch. To celebrate its success, the game recently introduced an impressive Capital City update that adds a huge fifth region into the mix via Steam Early Access, so anyone looking for a reason to keep playing now has quite the sizable incentive.

The Capital City of Gosenberg is a bustling area full of both opportunity and danger, from the atmospheric sounds of street performers to the Grand Tournament, which players can enter to test their mettle in unique ways. While unraveling the many secrets within the city itself, players can try out a slew of new combat abilities and strategies to which their warband will now have access. Whether you choose to deploy eagle-eyed archers or powerful brutes, you'll be able to swiftly exercise these skills in turn-based battles set atop the cobblestone streets, and you never know when a new challenge will pop up around the next corner.

The Grand Tournament is enough to keep most folks occupied for quite some time outside of the main campaign. In it, you can compete for riches and raise your status while taking on competitors in the national sport known as Rouste. Newly added features like this make the Capital City of Gosenberg update more than just a tacked-on extension of the main story; there are a lot of ways you can use this new area to improve your squad and tactics for all the other battles that await.

Shiro Unlimited first published *Wartales* in December 2021, and it remains in Early Access to allow players to get involved with its progress as it continues to be developed. Despite only planning to be in Early Access for around 12 months, the fact that the game continues to be updated—especially with substantial additions like the Capital City of Gosenberg—bodes well for the eventual final product. Hopefully it won't be too long before we're all diving into the full game, but for now it is very much worth your time to get your mitts on it while it's still in the oven

Anno 1800 Console Edition

Genre: Strategy • Platform: PS5, Xbox Series • Publisher: Ubisoft • Available: TBD

Whether you aim to oppress, liberate, innovate or exploit, there's a path just for you somewhere within the winding world of *Anno 1800*. The city-building real-time strategy game first launched in April 2019, marking the seventh entry in the series and a return to a classic historical setting. This one places us smack dab in the middle of the 19th century Industrial Revolution, introducing plenty of new gameplay aspects and, as of 2023, a new edition for consoles.

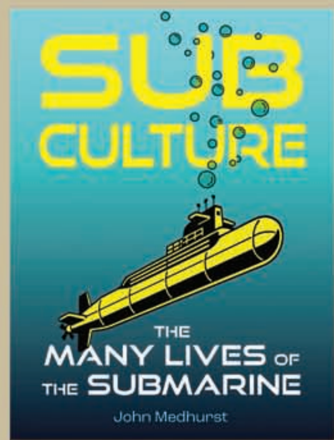
Following a technical test in November, Ubisoft plans to bring *Anno 1800 Console Edition* to PlayStation 5 and Xbox Series X|S, opening up some opportunities for those who don't primarily play games on PC to try their hand at blazing their own industrial trail. While *Anno 1800* does boast a historical setting overall, updates like the recent Empire of the Skies DLC have introduced more fantastical aspects like Airships, so there's a little something for everyone here.

This all comes as a number of *Anno* games are celebrating anniversaries, including *Anno 1503*, which is turning 20 years old. That may seem hard to believe, especially for folks who have been sticking with the series since the beginning, but it's officially one of the old guard at this point. Beyond *Anno 1800 Console Edition*, it looks like the future is bright for the most recent entry, as well. Following the April 2022 release of the Seeds of Change DLC and the summer 2022 release of the Empire of the Skies DLC, New World Rising should be out around the time this issue is in your hands. It's all part of DLC Season 4, which is available in a Season Pass sold separately along with other seasons that you can still dive into at any time.

As long as everything goes according to plan during the technical tests, we should be carrying these tactics over to consoles in the not-too-distant future, so we'll see you there! ■

Military History

From Reaktion



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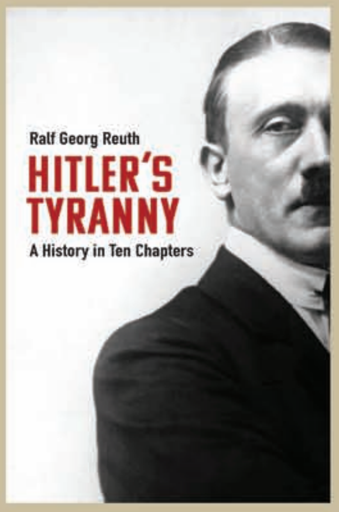

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Soldiers

Continued from page 19

ting his infantry, engineers, and laborers to work digging a continuous line of siege trenches around the fortress, Spinola followed the method used by his predecessors in Flanders, the dukes of Alva and Parma, and established a ring of small forts and redoubts around the city. He also broke dikes to flood low-lying ground beyond his ring of forts to make it difficult for a Dutch relief army to attack them.

The Genoan also had his troops construct raised batteries for his artillery so that he could get maximum results from his guns. He also had his men construct barricades near the gates so that only a modest number of Spanish infantrymen were needed to contain any counterattacks. This freed up Spinola's light infantry and cavalry to protect his rear and repulse attempts by the Dutch to relieve the garrison.

The siege formally began in August 1624. Mansfeld, who had 12,000 troops, attempted five times over the course of the 10-month siege to relieve Breda. Spinola's forces repulsed every attempt.

While the siege was in progress, Maurice of Nassau died on April 25. Frederick Henry, Maurice's younger brother, became stadtholder following his brother's death and took command of the Dutch army. The new Dutch commander made one last attempt to fight his way through Spinola's defenses in May, but it failed as well. Justin of Nassau, Breda's governor, surrendered with honors in June. Only 3,500 Dutch soldiers had survived the brutal siege. In capturing Breda, Spinola felt he had avenged his humiliation at Bergen op Zoom.

The successful capture of Breda served as the climax of Spinola's career. By that time, he was bankrupt and Philip IV and Olivares did not appreciate his achievements in Flanders. Facing criticism for allowing the Dutch to make minor gains, the 60-year-old veteran commander returned to Genoa in 1629 where he continued to command Spanish forces in a war over who would rule the Duchy of Mantua. His health deteriorated rapidly, however, and he died during the siege of Casale Monferrato in September 1630.

Spinola stands as one of the great commanders of the early 17th century. He possessed that special knack for being able to spot an opponent's weaknesses and move quickly to exploit them. He was brilliant, daring, and highly competent, although he did not introduce any innovative tactics. His grit and determination, coupled with his willingness to invest his own fortune on behalf of Catholic Spain, revived Spanish fortunes in the Eighty Years' War. ■

Colmar Pocket

Continued from page 31

German defenses before attacking. Civilians told him most of the Germans were gone, except for some troops ready to destroy the bridges east of town and a pair of tanks just east of the bridges at a north-south rail line. Ippolito's superior ordered another tank platoon to flank around, knock out the German tanks, and block the escape of any retreating Germans. He also summoned more infantry to help clear Rouffach, unsure whether there were more Germans hiding in the town.

More civilians reported a French force nearby, but this turned out to be a relatively weak scouting force. Ippolito ordered one of his tanks to ram the roadblock, but the tank wound up going over the roadblock and coming down intact on the other side. The Americans used a towing cable to tear it down. After cutting off other avenues of escape the Americans entered the town, warily probing forward. All this caution was for naught given that nearly all of the Germans had withdrawn. They soon stumbled upon a French reconnaissance unit from the French I Corps. The two corps had rendezvoused and blocked the Germans' last avenue of escape, leaving elements of four German divisions cut off.

All that remained was Neuf-Brisach, so XXI Corps moved toward it. German resistance by that time was negligible. By the morning of February 6, the 7th Infantry Regiment had sealed off the town. Patrols from the 30th Regiment probed around the town, which was surrounded by its high walls. Getting into the city could prove difficult if the Germans put up a fight, but few Germans were found outside the town. At 9:30 a.m. a platoon patrolling along the Rhine-Rhone Canal met a French civilian, who showed them a dry moat leading to a 60-foot tunnel leading right into the city. Within two hours the city was secure, with 65 more enemy troops captured.

The Allies had destroyed or captured all of the German units west of the Rhine by the morning of February 9. In 20 days of fighting, the French suffered 13,000 casualties, and the Americans suffered another 8,000 casualties. In contrast, the Germans lost 25,000 troops.

The offensive to destroy the Colmar Pocket succeeded, despite several setbacks, such as the slow progress of French I Corps and the hard fighting at Riedwihr. That a Franco-American force had won the victory made it an even brighter achievement. Nevertheless, de Lattre's force emerged from the operation weakened due to its inability to replenish its infantry. With the Colmar Pocket eliminated, the Allies could focus exclusively on crossing the Rhine and advancing deep into the heart of Germany. ■

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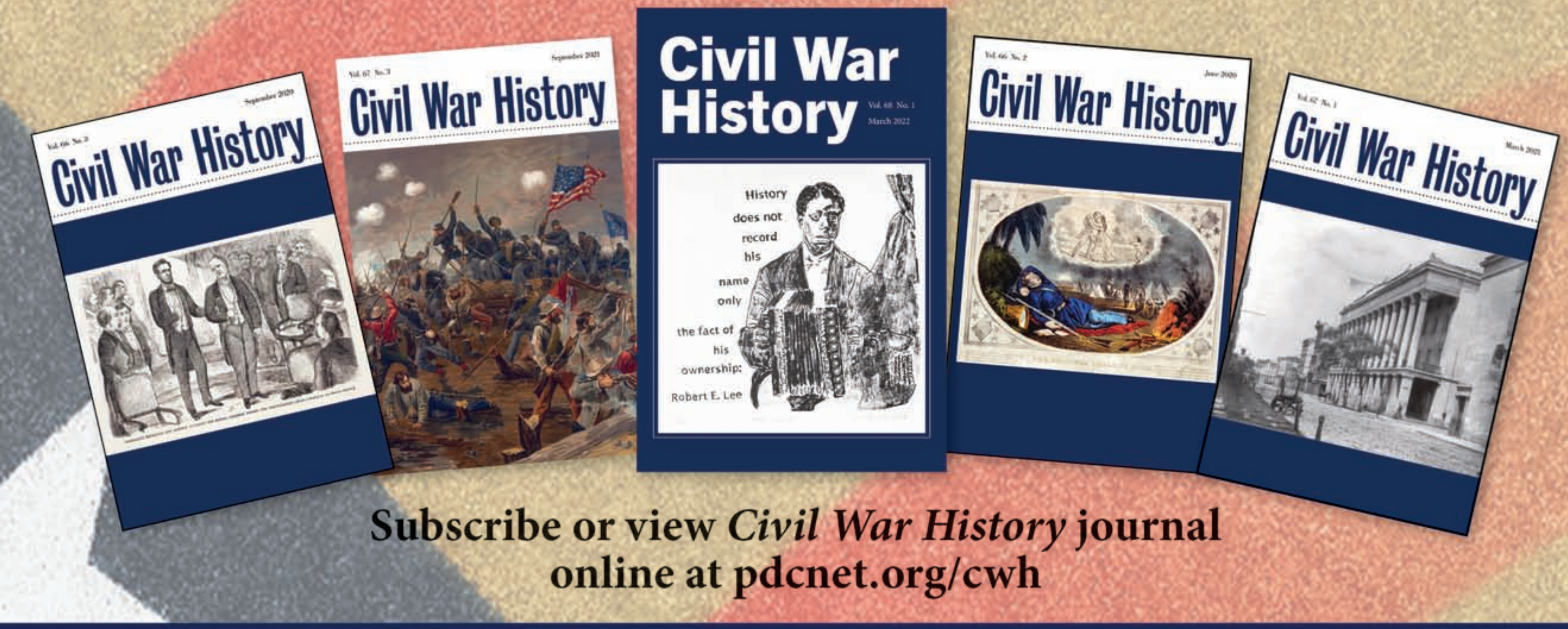

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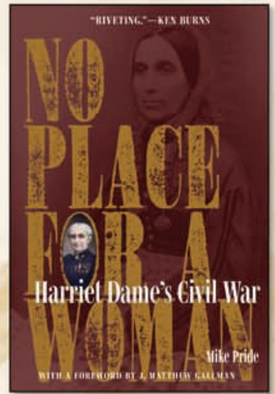

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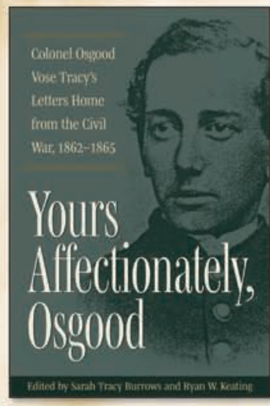

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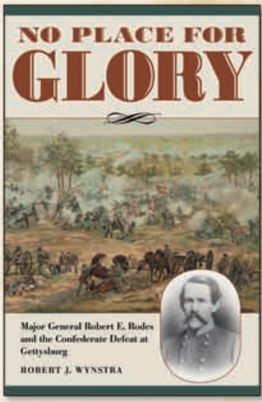

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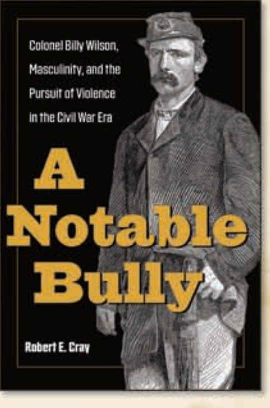

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