

MILITARY HERITAGE

Curtis 02313

VIETNAM WAR
FURIOUS
FIGHT for
Hamburger Hill

WORLD WAR II
ROMMEL'S
Victory at Gazala

CIVIL WAR
Cavalry Clash
at Kelly's Ford

Roman Revenge
at Aquae Sextiae



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JANUARY 2020

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MILITARY HERITAGE ■ JANUARY 2020 Volume 21, No. 4

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Newly manufactured full size, non-firing German WW2 Panzerschreck now available with an inert rocket!

Almost impossible to find actual inert rockets of this type, we have the next best thing which will be perfect to display or reenactments. Our steel launcher comes with wood furniture and leather sling and detachable shield. Our inert rockets are cast synthetic from the old Kamabee Keep iron rockets, long gone from the market. We can offer the ensemble or individual items as follows:

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 Panzerschreck Launcher KIT..... \$325.00 MISC504
 Panzerschreck Launcher KIT with Inert Rocket \$275.00 RL018

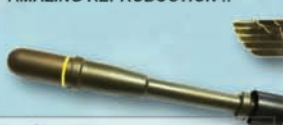



CLAYMORE MINE AND CARRY BAG WITH INSTRUCTIONS

Inert reproduction Claymore Mine with carrying bag with water proof instructions makes a great display or reenactor item! Comes with folding legs and screw on fuze holders. In use since Vietnam & still a favorite defensive measure! Limited availability.

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AMAZING REPRODUCTION !!



M6A3 High Explosive Rocket

M6A3 HIGH EXPLOSIVE ROCKETS FOR THE M1, M1A1 & M9 BAZOOKAS Completely inert, new made, and perfect for display or reenactments. \$39.95 MISC447 (Inert)



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 Large 27 inches \$50.00 MISC372

M24 German Stick Grenade

Standard Potato Masher grenade as used by German troops in WW2. Wood and metal construction with individual components.

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Rarely offered with tapered finger handle, used for identifying it in the dark by touch.

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Save \$4.00 on a fragmentation sleeve when you purchase the sleeve with the M24 German stick grenade! Sleeve with Grenade (inert) \$34.90 MISC791

JAPANESE WW2 TROPICAL ARMY HAT WW2

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M11A3 WWII DUMMY RIFLE GRENADE

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Please note: No dummy grenades to California - Some States may have restrictions on ownership of IN-ERT grenades. Check your local & State laws.



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Soft Pliable Cow Leather like the Originals! Finally, we were able to find a manufacturer to make this in soft rich 'Cow' with a much more supple feel and texture akin to the original bandolier. Costs a little more than the Water Buffalo version, but addresses two of the drawbacks of the original. This one is longer and softer. Fits 50 rounds of .303 officially, but all sorts of other similar sized ammo like .30 and 7.62 Nato too. Fits well for people of Medium to 2XL build! The originals were fit for a lean poorly fed 19th century recruit! Buy 3 and wear a set up like Pancho Villa! New. Limited quantity.

\$59.95 MISC786



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STEEL TYPE 99 PROTECTIVE SHIELD

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Size: 3x5 \$34.95 FLAG03



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37MM RUSSIAN SPADE MORTAR

(NON-FIRING)

When is a spade not just a spade? When it's a Mortar too! Sarco has the 'Kamabee Keep' rework of the coolest mortar design in the history of warfare. Innovative Russian designers took the concept of the standard 'Entrenching Tool' that every soldier wore on his belt, and elevated it to 'Heavy Weapon Status', by allowing it to dig trenches & also fire 37mm Mortar Rounds! Designed in the late 1930s and fielded against Finland in late 1939/40 in the Russo Finn War, and throughout WW2 along the Russian Front. Never been on the U.S. or World market! It can be attached to your belt using the canvas & leather carrier, be detached to operate as a small shovel, or used to lob rounds on the enemy. Transforms into a mortar in @15 seconds with practice. This is a new made replication of the original and is non-firing. Sarco Inc. carries this item exclusively and they are currently in stock. We also have the 'late war' style 15 round bandoleer used by troops to carry mortar ammunition including Mosin Nagant Rifle ammunition. To top it off, we have replica 37mm Mortar inert display rounds available too! The only place to see this item in the entire world is in a Russian military museum. Truly this is a piece of ordnance lost to history!

The design concept was amazing and its impact could still be amazing in this day & age! Imagine a platoon of infantry Riflemen also each carrying 15 mortar shells and working as a fire and maneuver machine. Stalinist purges and a failure to develop better ammunition put this idea to sleep before its time!



- 37mm Spade Mortar Assembly.....\$175.00 MISC458
- Belt Carrier for the Mortar.....\$19.95 MISC421
- Chest Bandolier w/ Mosin Pouch.....\$65.00 MISC429
- Mortar Round, inert for display.....\$19.95 MISC356
- Complete Set of each of the above.....\$279.90 MISC689

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\$11.50 ea, 3 for \$32.00 AM026

(Some States may have restrictions on ownership of INERT grenades. Check your local & State laws)

Japanese Rising Sun Flag

Cotton 3'x5' flag with loop on top and cord on bottom like the original WW2 flags. Originally adopted by the Army, but later dominated for use by the Japanese Navy. \$18.00 FLAG12



French General Officer's Kepi

Truly Museum Quality, metal gold thread embroidery meticulously applied over black and red wool 'form fit' Kepi with leather brim and braided gold chin cord. The peak of French military fashion in the early 20th century! These are of the highest quality and a rare find in the world market. Newly embroidered by a military contractor working with Kamabee Keep. Very limited quantity and only XL size is available. A gorgeous addition to any display or for art décor in your office! Eye catching quality and will get people talking for sure.

\$115.00 MISC722

REMEMBER THE MOVIES ZULU & ZULU DAWN? HERE IS THE REGIMENTAL FLAG OF THE BRITISH 24TH WARWICKSHIRE REGIMENT

2nd Battalion, 24th Foot Colors with their battle honors is a beautiful tribute to their sacrifices from clashing with Napoleon at Talavera, charnel conflagration at Chillianwallah, and the truly legendary stand of their unit at Rorkes Drift, South Africa where against all odds and with stellar leadership, a Company of the 24th defended against an attack by over 4,000 Zulu warriors. A beautiful wall hanger. Size 53" x 33". 2 grommets for use on pole. \$29.95 FLAG32



British Grenadier Guards Regimental Flag

Whether storming fortress Tangiers, repelling Napoleons Imperial Guard at Waterloo, Crimea, or the Gothic Line, this Regiment has famously made great 'in roads' in the history of warfare. 3'x5' flag with fringe is a beauty for wall display and perfect for any 'Anglophile!' \$25.00 FLAG30



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U.S. Marine Raider and Army Airborne units benefited from this lightweight mortar rushed into action in 1942 which saw use in Europe and Pacific theaters and from Korea through Vietnam. Our non-firing mortar uses the original baseplate and M15 sight assembly blended with our new made tube. Never offered before in the U.S.! Mortar only. \$325.00 MISC397



German M35 Helmet WWII

Model 1935 German helmet with rolled edge, metal banded liner with 8 tongue leather liner and leather chinstrap assembly mounted by 3 rivets on the 1.7-1.9mm thick steel shell in German 'Feldgrau' green color. Helmet fits 7-1/4" to 7-5/8" head size (large). New, well made and great for static displays or reenactments. We have purchased the remaining stores of these from 'Kamabee Keep' along with various German helmet decals which we are using to provide one set of helmet decals with each helmet at no charge as long as supplies last. M35 helmet with decal - Sorry, no choice on decals as they are quite limited.



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 3. CLASSIC STEEL MEDIEVAL FRENCH VISOR HELMET
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- SET OF 4 HELMETS.....\$195.00 HLM060



HLM050



HLM053



HLM057



HLM056

Pup Tent, USGI

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Pair of Medieval Bookends \$29.95 MISC825



German Balkenkreuz 'Vehicle Cross' Flag

Adopted emblem from WW1 that found greater prominence during the WW2 when it was painted on hulls and as a 'Flag' applied to the top of the engine compartment to allow visual recognition by the Luftwaffe pilots, primarily in the Eastern campaign. All cotton, size 3' by 5' with loop and bottom draw cord. \$52.00 FLAG21



features

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By David A. Norris

Union cavalry crossed the middle Rappahannock River in March 1863 to punish Confederate cavalry that had been harassing the Army of the Potomac. A fierce action ensued.

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By Robert L. Durham

In May 1969 the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division battled North Vietnamese regulars for control of Hill 937 in the A Shau Valley. The soldiers renamed it Hamburger Hill.

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Following a string of humiliating defeats at the hands of Celto-Germanic barbarians, the Roman army sought to reverse the trend at Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC.

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By Joshua Shepherd

Erwin Rommel squared off against Claude Auchinleck at Gazala in Libya in May 1942. At stake was control of the strategic port of Tobruk.

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By Eric Niderost

Swedish King Charles XII's army of invasion in Russia desperately needed resupply in the summer of 1709. A supply train trying to reach it came under sharp attack by Czar Peter I.

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Cover: A U.S. Army squad leader gives the order to move forward during a combat operation in Vietnam. See story page 32. Photo: AKG Images



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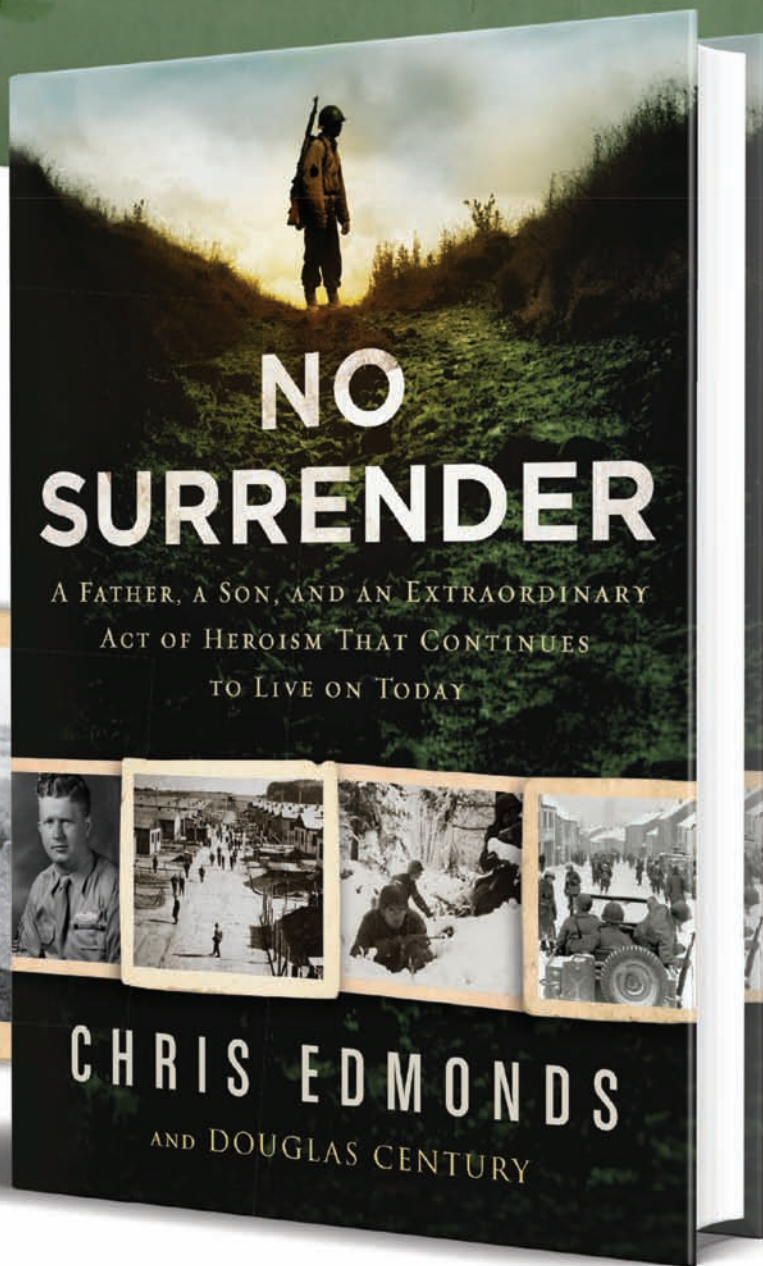
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“THERE’S PERHAPS NO GREATER
UNTOLD STORY TO COME OUT
OF WORLD WAR II.”

—*Newsweek*

“A quintessential American
story of bravery, compassion,
and righteousness.”

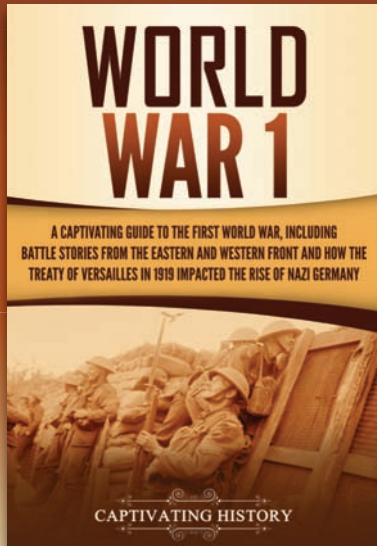
— JAMES BRADLEY,
New York Times bestselling author
of *Flags of Our Fathers*



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“Need reinforcements. Without them, kiss us goodbye.”

IN APRIL 1963 THE U.S. SPECIAL FORCES ESTABLISHED A triangular-shaped fortified outpost at the southern end of the remote A Shau Valley in what was then the northern part of South Vietnam. The purpose of the A Shau Special Forces Camp, manned by Green

Berets and South Vietnamese civilian irregulars, was to monitor NVA infiltration from Laos and report the enemy movement up the chain of command. The camp was protected by barbed wire and earthen walls and positioned next to a dirt airstrip.

Just across the Laotian border from the camp was the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Located on that portion of the trail was the North Vietnamese Army’s Base Camp 611 and its 325th Division. The division commander issued orders in March 1966 to the 95th Regiment to eliminate the Special Forces camp.

Green Beret Captain John D. Blair learned in early March 1966 from two NVA that a large-scale attack on the camp was imminent. On the eve of the attack, the camp’s garrison consisted of 17 Green Berets, six South Vietnamese Special Forces troops, and 210 South Vietnamese civilian irregulars. The irregulars were poorly trained. Blair was fortunate, though, to receive 143 ethnic Chinese Nung mercenaries as reinforcements on the eve of the attack. They were better quality soldiers than the irregulars.

The NVA attacked before daylight on the morning of March 9, 1966. Mortar shells landed inside the camp over a two-hour period. After the mortar barrage stopped, two companies of enemy troops streamed from the cover of the treeline and attacked the camp’s south wall.

Mixed among the pith-helmeted soldiers armed with AK-47s were loincloth-clad sappers with Bangalore torpedoes whose job it was to blow holes in the concertina wire. Many of the assault troops perished crossing the minefield that surrounded the camp.

As the battle progressed that morning, Blair appealed to the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force headquartered at Da Nang for help. “Need reinforcements,” he said. “Without them, kiss us goodbye.”

The cloud ceiling that was lower than the tops of the hills surrounding the camp made

attack by jet bombers impractical; however, other types of aircraft did respond. At noon a Douglas AC-47 “Spooky” gunship arrived and began pouring a steady stream of minigun fire at the enemy. It was downed by enemy anti-aircraft guns after an hour in action.

On the first day, Air Force Major Bernard Fisher rescued his wingman whose Skyraider had been shot down by the enemy. Fisher touched down on the airstrip, pulled Major Dafford W. Myers head first into the cockpit, and took off again while under enemy fire. For his valor, Fischer received the Silver Star.

On the second day, the NVA opened fire with 75mm recoilless rifles that they had dragged into place under cover of night. The NVA commander stepped up his attack by sending two full battalions, a total of 1,000 troops, to battle the beleaguered defenders. This time the North Vietnamese regulars fought their way deeper into the camp. Just 200 defenders were still alive at midday.

The 3rd Marines decided to extract the remaining troops at the camp. While Skyraiders bombed and strafed the enemy, Marine Lt. Col. Charles House led a rescue force composed of 16 UH-34s and a half dozen helicopter gunships. Enemy fire knocked out many of the helicopters. Only six transport helicopters were able to lift off. They were packed with wounded. The main battle had lasted 38 hours.

House led the 100 remaining troops on a fighting retreat through the jungle. The Americans and South Vietnamese had to fight a series of rearguard actions to keep the enemy at bay. After two days of marching and fighting, they were rescued by helicopter. Of the 100 who attempted the overland retreat, only 60 survived. Fighting the North Vietnamese in the A Shau Valley was a high-stakes gamble at best.

—William E. Welsh

MILITARY HERITAGE

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 4

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Williamsport, PA 17701

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

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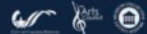
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HISTORIC GERMAN COINS



SCARCE NAZI GERMAN 14 COIN SET

This set includes the 14 regular issue coins of Nazi Germany, minted between 1934 and 1944. Included are all three of silver 5 Reichmarks, the silver 2 Reichsmark, the scarce nickel 1 Reichmark which was withdrawn from circulation due to the need for nickel in the war effort, the pre-war 1, 2, 5, 10 and 50 Reichspfennig and the wartime 1, 5, 10 and 50 Reichspfennig. It is an historic and difficult to find set.

NAZI GERMAN 14 COIN SET \$110 - 2 SETS FOR \$215

MINT STATE WORLD WAR I GERMAN EMPIRE SILVER COINS

These silver 1/2 and 1 Mark coins dating from 1914 to 1918 were the last silver coins ever issued by the German Empire. Because of the uncertainty of the war effort, Germans hoarded the silver coins as soon as they were released. Though they are over 100 years old, they are still in their original mint state. The 1/2 Mark is about the size of a nickel, the 1 Mark the size of a quarter. Both coins feature the crowned German Imperial Eagle on one side and the denomination and date on the other.

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By Mike Phifer

Robert the Bruce faced daunting odds in his quest for the Scottish throne.

ROBERT THE BRUCE, THE NEWLY CROWNED KING OF SCOTLAND, reined his horse in front of the gates of Perth on the bank of the Tay River in central Scotland on June 18, 1306. Behind the sturdy rock walls of the town were approximately 3,000 troops commanded by Aymer de Valence, Earl of Pembroke, who had been dispatched by King Edward I of England to crush the upstart Bruce. With an army of about 4,500 men, Bruce was not strong enough to invest the town. Instead he chal-

 Sir Henry de Bohun, riding
 with the English vanguard at
 Bannockburn, charged Scot-
 tish king, Robert the Bruce.
 Bruce swerved to avoid
 Bohun's lance and brought
 his battle axe crashing
 down on Bohun's helmet,
 killing him instantly.

lenged the Earl of Pembroke to come out and fight or surrender the town.

Pembroke did neither. Claiming it was too late in the day to fight, Pembroke stated he would come out the next morning. Bruce took him at his word and retired his army about six miles away near the village of Methven. Pembroke attacked before dawn the following day, catching Bruce's men completely by surprise.

In the swirl of battle Bruce killed Pembroke's horse but was soon unhorsed himself. As Bruce was mounting another horse, an enemy knight seized the horse's bridle.

"Help, Help," shouted the enemy knight. "I have the new-made king." Fortunately for Bruce, one of his men spurred to his aid and knocked the enemy knight to the ground. Bruce regained control of his mount but in the ensuing one-sided battle he would be unhorsed twice more.

With a small knot of knights, Bruce managed to cut his way through the enemy lines and escape. It was a crippling defeat for Bruce, who had lost most of his army. As he and his handful of men escaped into a mountainous region, events were about to take a sharp turn for the

worse for the new king.

Robert Bruce was born on July 11, 1274, likely at Turnberry Castle in southwest Scotland. Bruce's Anglo-Norman lineage on his father's side held estates in England, as well as considerable holdings in southwest Scotland. Through his Gaelic mother's side more land came under his father's control, which earned him the title of earl of Carrick in right of his wife. Growing up Bruce was trained with weapons and horses at which he became quite proficient. Knighted at an early age, Bruce's martial skills would serve him well as Scotland fell into an era of turmoil in 1286.

That year King Alexander III of Scotland was killed when his horse fell off a cliff. The only heir to the throne was his young granddaughter, Margaret, the Maid of Norway. A council of guardians was established to govern the kingdom while it was decided who would rule Scotland. The council sought the advice of Edward I, Alexander III's brother-in-law.

Edward, who was known as "Longshanks" because of his towering height, saw a chance to control Scotland, so he agreed to help the Scots. It was decided that his son, Edward of Caernarvon, would marry Margaret when they became of age. But the Scots insisted that despite the marriage Scotland would remain an independent kingdom. As it turned out, there would be no marriage because young Margaret died shortly after arriving in Orkney. This



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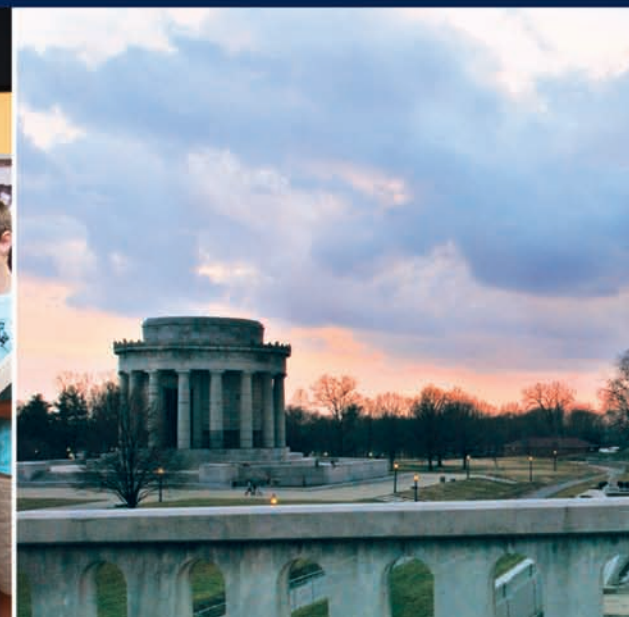
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ABOVE: English King Edward II (left) proved no match for Robert the Bruce (right), who was a master of both grand strategy and battlefield tactics. Bruce's digital image is based on a forensic study of his skull. **BELOW:** A poorly led English army was soundly defeated at Stirling Bridge in 1297 by William Wallace's Scottish army.



Wikimedia

once again raised the thorny question of who should rule the northern kingdom.

Two candidates from rival families, both of whom were descendants of King David I, who had reigned from 1124 to 1153, stood out among the 14 men who claimed the right to the throne. One of the men was Bruce, and the other was John Balliol.

In his capacity as Scotland's overlord, Edward I chose Balliol in November 1292 to be king. As far as Edward I was concerned, Balliol would be subordinate to him. Balliol soon found himself humiliated by Edward I, who made his authority known not only to the king of Scotland but also to its people. By 1295 the Scottish lords had lost their patience. They urged Balliol to reject his allegiance to Edward and seek a treaty with the French. Balliol's time on the throne was short as the formidable Longshanks marched into Scotland and

defeated the Scots, sending their king to the Tower of London.

Assuming the sovereignty of Scotland and leaving the Earl of Surrey to govern there, Edward I returned to England in the autumn of 1296. The following year William Wallace led an uprising. He inflicted a decisive defeat on English co-commanders John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey, and Hugh de Cressingham at Stirling Bridge on September 11, 1297. A number of Scottish nobles joined the uprising, one of whom was Bruce, despite the disapproval of his father, a supporter of King Edward.

In March 1298 Wallace was proclaimed guardian of the kingdom. He would not last long in this role because Longshanks was determined to bring the Scots to heel. Edward invaded Scotland and defeated Wallace on July 22, 1298, at Falkirk. Wallace, who initially succeeded in evading capture, resigned his title.

Bruce, along with his family's rival John Comyn III of Badenoch (known as the "Red" Comyn), became co-guardians of Scotland. This uneasy alliance soon ruptured. Balliol was released to France under papal custody. This compelled Comyn and his supporters to try again to take the Scottish throne. Refusing to support this, Bruce withdrew to southwestern Scotland to guard his family's properties.

Meanwhile, Edward continued his war against the Scots. Offered a pardon and generous terms from Edward I and still concerned over a restoration of Balliol, Bruce changed allegiances in 1302. He campaigned with the English in 1303 and 1304. By that time most of the Scots were looking for peace, having realized that neither French aid nor the restoration of Balliol was likely to occur. Longshanks once again controlled Scotland.

By 1306 Bruce ruled his family's vast estates following the death of his father two years earlier. It was that year that Bruce saw his opportunity to claim the throne as it was rumored that the 65-year-old King Edward was nearing death. The Scots chafed under English rule. Scottish unrest had been stirred by the brutal execution of Wallace in August 1305. Wallace had been captured and transported to London where he was tried for treason and condemned to death. He was then tortured, hanged, and drawn and quartered.

Bruce reached out to his rival "Red" Comyn to discuss the possibility of mutual assistance. The meeting was held on February 10 at Greyfriar's Church in Dumfries, and things took a turn for the worse.

It is unclear what happened in the meeting. Possibly Comyn threatened to reveal Bruce's plan to Edward I. As Balliol's nephew and his closest male relative, Comyn was in line for the throne and was a threat to Bruce's bid to become king. Whatever the cause, Bruce stabbed Comyn and left him bleeding on the church floor. Bruce went outside and told his two companions what had happened. They quickly went to finish off Comyn.

Bruce then made his way to Glasgow where he met with Bishop Robert Wishart, who absolved him of killing Comyn. The Scottish clergy were mostly supportive of Bruce's claim on the throne and would aid greatly in the coming war of independence. On March 25 at Scone Bruce was crowned Robert I of Scotland.

Bruce was far from ruling Scotland as the Comyns and their supporters strongly opposed him. Edward I was incensed over Bruce's actions and began raising a force to crush him. Sending his wife, daughter, and sisters to Kildrummy Castle where his brother Neil would protect them,

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Bruce pushed on with his growing army to Perth. Pembroke subsequently inflicted a devastating defeat on Bruce at Methven.

Escaping westward, Bruce was pursued and defeated by an enemy detachment. Bruce's little party escaped but soon found more trouble when they were attacked by the MacDougalls and Comyn's allies and relatives. Although he lost some horses, Bruce was able to safely extract his force. He then sent some horses to Kildrummy Castle to aid his family in their planned escape to Norway.

By this time Caernarvon had arrived in Scotland with reinforcements. As far as Caernarvon was concerned, Bruce and his men were outlaws and were to be shown no mercy. Kildrummy Castle fell to Caernarvon in September with many of Bruce's supporters being hanged. Neil Bruce was hanged and beheaded.

Wikimedia



The Earl of Ross, a Comyn supporter, transferred the Bruce women to England. Their plans to flee to Norway were dashed.

Bruce and his men made their way to the western coast and traveled by ship to Rathlin Island off the coast of Northern Ireland. Although things looked grim, Bruce looked to renew the fight. With the help of Angus MacDonald of the Isles and his fleet of galleys, Bruce began to recruit men. He sent two of his brothers to Ireland, while Bruce sought support throughout the western highlands of Scotland and its islands.

Bruce returned to his castle at Turnberry on the mainland in early 1307. His first move was to destroy a garrison of 200 English troops billeted in a village not far from the castle. Hiding in the forests, hills, and moors, Bruce waged a guerrilla war against his enemies. Unfortunately, his two brothers, Thomas and Alexander, had met with disaster attempting to come ashore in Ireland. They were captured by the MacDowells of Galloway and transferred to Carlisle,

Alamy



ABOVE: Bruce killed rival John III "Red" Comyn, Lord of Badenoch, at the altar of the Greyfriars church in Dumfries in 1306. King Edward I subsequently instructed Aymer de Valence, Comyn's brother-in-law, to destroy Bruce and his followers. **LEFT:** The meek Scottish King John Balliol, shown kneeling before English King Edward I, lost the respect of the Scots, who referred to him derisively as *Toom Tabard*, which translates to "empty coat."

where they were hanged and beheaded.

Bruce continued to attack small enemy parties and then fell back into the hills. Castles that fell into his hands were destroyed to deny them to his enemies. After a minor engagement with Pembroke at Glen Trool in April, Bruce changed tactics and prepared to meet him and his force of 3,000 men in battle. Positioned near Loudon Hill where the road led through marshy terrain, Bruce ordered his 600 men to dig three trenches to further narrow the battlefield. This would not only prevent Bruce's force from being flanked, but would prevent the enemy from bringing the full force of its numbers to bear. In the clash that unfolded on May 10, 1307, Bruce's spearmen soundly defeated Pembroke.

Longshanks died on July 7 en route with his army to Scotland to punish Bruce. His son rode north from London to take charge of the expedition. On July 20, Caernarvon was proclaimed Edward II. Bruce purposely avoided battle with Edward II. The new king returned to England to deal with domestic problems. These matters kept him away from Scotland for three years.

With Edward II back in England, Bruce took his vengeance against the MacDowells and their allies. Leaving his trusted lieutenant James Douglas to finish subduing Galloway, Bruce turned his attention toward dealing with the MacDougalls; William Ross, Earl of Ross; and John Comyn, Earl of Buchan. Bruce defeated Comyn at Inverurie in May 23, 1308. While Comyn fled to the safety of England, Bruce and his men ruthlessly devastated Buchan's lands.

Bruce then marched southwest to deal with

John of Argyll, also known as John MacDougall. Learning of Bruce's advance, Argyll laid an ambush on the mountain side overlooking the narrow Pass of Brander. A savvy guerrilla fighter, Bruce anticipated the trap and dispatched archers under Douglas, who had rejoined the king, to get behind Argyll's men.

As Bruce marched the rest of his army into the mouth of the pass, Argyll's men rolled boulders at them. Douglas's archers fired showers of arrows at Argyll's men, catching them completely by surprise. Caught between Bruce's charging men and Douglas's archers, the Argyll men beat a hasty retreat. They were closely chased by Bruce's men, who slaughtered many of them. Argyll eventually escaped to England. When Ross surrendered to Bruce on October 31, the campaign against Bruce's enemies came to an end.

After temporarily patching his internal problems in England, Edward II finally invaded Scotland in 1310. The campaign failed due in part to Bruce's Fabian strategy. He studiously avoided battle and conducted a scorched earth campaign. In mid-1311 Edward returned to London.

Bruce then carried the war to northern England. His troops ravaged towns and villages in the northern counties of England. To avoid the Scots' depredations, many communities made ransom payment to Bruce. The Scottish king used this money to finance sieges of English-held castles and fortified towns in lower Scotland.

One such fortified town was Perth, which boasted large stone walls and towers. It was further protected by a moat on three sides and the Tay River on the remaining side. After a

Our First President

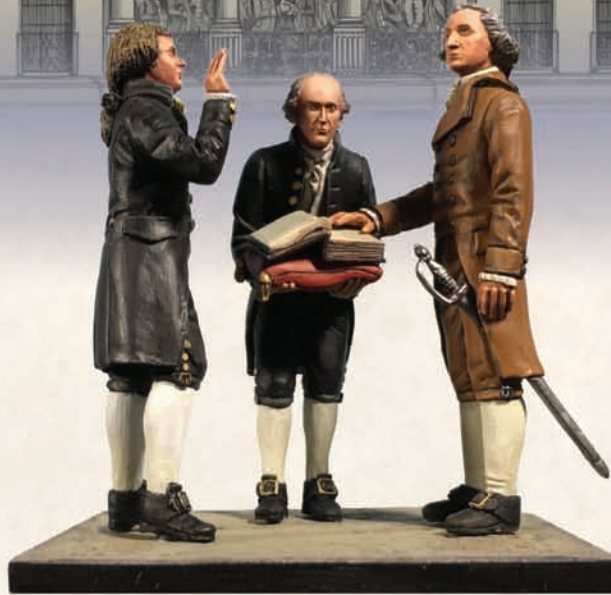
takes the oath of office, April 30, 1789



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Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States at Federal Hall in New York, then the nation's capitol.

Famously, Washington was reluctant to accept the presidency and had written that he had given up, "all expectations of private happiness in this world." But he also knew that this burden of duty was one he could not decline.

Washington was keenly aware that everything he did at the swearing-in would set precedent. Even though he had gained his reputation through military service, he chose not to be in uniform. Instead, he wore an American-made brown suit, fashioned from broadcloth, wishing to set a trend. "I hope...it will be

unfashionable for a gentleman to appear in any other dress," he told his friend, the Marquis de Lafayette. As a nod to his martial past, he wore a less ostentatious dress sword on his hip, sheathed in a simple steel scabbard.

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King Edward II's escort attempted to take him to temporary safety at Stirling Castle immediately following his disastrous defeat at Bannockburn. However, Castellan Philip Mowbray refused entry to the English king for fear he would soon fall into Bruce's hands when the Scots took possession of the castle.

failed six-week siege Bruce withdrew at the end of December. For eight days he waited before creeping back to Perth on the night of January 7. Previously Bruce had discovered a spot in the moat that could be waded. Now with the cold water up to his neck and spear in hand to test the depth, Bruce led a company of men across the moat. With ladders they stealthily climbed the stone walls and proceeded over the ramparts. Perth was soon in Bruce's hands.

More castles fell to Bruce and his lieutenants, including Rushen Castle on the Island of Man. This castle was held by Dungal MacDowell, the man who handed over Bruce's brothers to the English to be executed. The castle fell to Bruce on June 12, 1313; however, MacDowell apparently escaped to Ireland.

By early 1314 only a couple of key English strongholds remained, one of which was Stirling Castle. Bruce entrusted his brother Edward to take the castle, making an agreement with the Stirling's castellan, Sir Philip Mowbray, in mid-May that if the castle were not relieved by June 24, it would be surrendered.

As the situation in Scotland continued to worsen for Edward II, an English army composed of 11,000 foot soldiers and 2,250 cavalry assembled at Berwick. With word of the deadline for the surrender of Stirling Castle, Edward II hurried to get his army moving north.

Bruce had 6,000 foot soldiers and 350 cavalry to face Edward. On June 22 he took up position near a stream called Bannockburn a few miles south of Stirling Castle. The next day, as the vanguard of the English neared Bannockburn, a contingent of English knights forded the stream believing the Scots were falling back. They were soon surprised when they spotted Bruce leading a contingent of cavalry.

An English knight, Sir Henry de Bohun, lev-

eled his lance and charged toward Bruce. Accepting the challenge for single combat, Bruce galloped toward him, dodged Bohun's lance and standing in the stirrups drove his battle axe through the knight's helmet and into his skull. Bohun slid dead from his horse and the remaining English knights retreated.

Meanwhile, another contingent of English knights attempting to skirt around Bruce's left flank were eventually driven back in a brutal encounter with Scottish pikemen. Since it was getting late in the day, Edward II's tired cavalry and some of his exhausted foot soldiers encamped for the night across the Bannockburn. The rest of the foot soldiers camped on the south side of the stream.

That night at a council of war Bruce considered retreating; however, a Scottish knight in Edward's service deserted and informed Bruce that the English were demoralized. Bruce resolved to fight to the finish.

The next morning the Scots moved forward to attack. English archers opened up on them, but they soon were forced to quit as the Earl of Gloucester quickly formed up his cavalry and charged into the Scots. He was met with a wall of pikes and was slain. The Scots continued to press their assault against the disordered English, who were crammed into a small battlefield with marshes and woods on either side. Due to the narrow front, most of the English foot soldiers were unable to deploy. English archers, however, managed to position themselves on the flank and pour arrows into the Scots.

Bruce ordered his cavalry to scatter the enemy archers. As the English wavered and gave ground, Scottish archers fired into their ranks. The English then spotted what appeared to be fresh Scottish troops arriving on the battlefield. In reality, these were the camp follow-

ers and other noncombatants who had taken up various weapons and were charging toward the melee.

With casualties mounting, many of Edward's lieutenants believed the battle was lost. To protect him from death or capture, Edward was forcibly removed from the battlefield by a small group of knights. They tried to take him to Stirling Castle, but he was refused entry by Mowbray. Mowbray knew that Stirling Castle would have to surrender, and the castellan did not want Edward to fall into Bruce's hands if he were in the castle at the time. Edward eventually made his way back to England, having suffered a terrible defeat.

Yet, the struggle was far from over because Edward II still refused to recognize Bruce as king of Scotland. In the years that followed, Bruce and his lieutenants continued to take fire and sword to northern England. Berwick fell in 1318 to the Scots. Not all went well for Bruce, though, as the Scottish military adventure in Ireland failed and his brother Edward was killed there in 1318. Edward II mounted his last invasion of Scotland in 1322, which also ended in failure.

In 1327 Edward II was deposed as king and his 14-year-old son, Edward III, took the throne. Through the influence of his mother Isabella and her lover Roger Mortimer, which pervaded the government, Scotland's sovereignty was recognized in 1328 with the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton after it was feared Bruce would occupy parts of northern England. King Robert I did not get to enjoy Scottish independence for very long for he died on June 7, 1329.

Independence would prove fleeting for Scotland. The Second War of Scottish Independence began just three years after the Scottish king's death. □

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By William E. Welsh

The Raven forward air controllers played a pivotal role during the CIA's top-secret war in Laos.

The Cessna O-1 Bird Dog

armed with target-marking

rockets was the principal

observation aircraft for the

Raven forward air

controllers during the

Laotian Civil War.

RIGHT: CIA-armed Hmong

guerrillas fighting the com-

munist in Laos lacked field

artillery, so U.S. Air Force

and CIA close air support

was crucial to their success.

RAVEN FORWARD AIR CONTROLLER CHARLES EDWIN ENGLE usually took his Cessna O-1 “Bird Dog” up to an altitude of 12,000 feet over northern Laos to await the arrival of a flight of inbound A-1E Skyraiders from Thailand. A gifted pilot, Engle routinely pushed his aircraft beyond its capabilities. Engle liked to meet the Skyraiders at the altitude at which they arrived, which was

2,000 feet beyond the Cessna’s recommended ceiling of 10,000 feet.

The Skyraider pilots normally expected to see a Raven-flown aircraft below them when they arrived, but Engle would surprise the pilots by suddenly appearing out of the clouds. He would then put his aircraft into a stall and plummet toward the ground, pulling out of the spin at 1,500 feet to fire his target-marking rockets. Once the rockets were fired, the Skyraiders could begin their close air support mission for the Laotian troops on the ground fighting the North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao communists.

It took a special breed of forward air controllers to meet the demand

of the CIA’s top-secret war in Laos, and Engle’s talents and behaviors were characteristic of the elite Ravens. The Ravens were Air Force officers who joined the secret war in

Laos through the Steve Canyon Program established in 1966.

As the French were withdrawing from Southeast Asia in 1954 following their defeat in the First Indochina



U.S. Air Force

War, the Geneva Conference—held by a select group of nations involved in the recent Far East conflicts—established a coalition government for Laos. But a divisive civil war erupted in Laos that pitted the democratic Royal Lao government against the North Vietnamese-backed Pathet Lao. President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles introduced the domino theory, which set forth that the fall to communism of any country on the periphery of the Sino-Soviet bloc would likely result in the toppling of the remaining countries.

When President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, he directed the

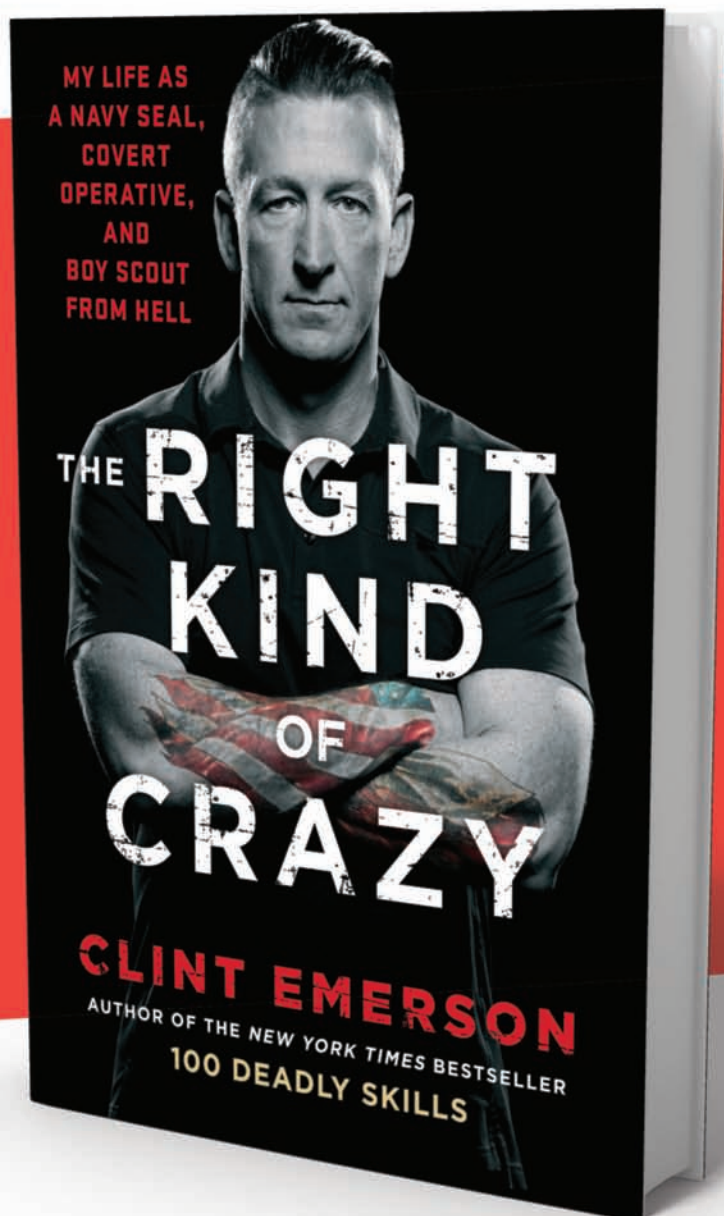
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The propeller-driven Douglas A-1 Skyraider, armed with four 20mm cannons and capable of carrying 8,000 pounds of external ordnance, could remain on station over a target much longer than a jet.

CIA to handle covert military operations that would counter the Pathet Lao. By that time, the North Vietnamese Politburo was already sending weapons and supplies to the Pathet Lao. Not long afterward, North Vietnamese Army (NVA) units crossed into Laos to support the Laotian communists and protect and maintain the 600-mile-long Truong Son Strategic Supply Route, which Americans referred to as the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The trail was a network of paths, trails, and dirt roads through Laos and Cambodia that enabled North Vietnam to funnel arms and supplies to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam. The NVA eventually began sending North Vietnamese regulars south along the trail into South Vietnam to fight the Americans. At the height of the war in the late 1960s, the NVA had 60,000 support troops and 40,000 security troops stationed along the trail.

A conference specifically on Laotian neutrality held in 1962 resulted in the International Agreement on the Neutrality of Laos. Among the signatories were China, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Russia, and the United States. But North Vietnam and the United States only paid lip service to the agreement. Both continued to deny direct involvement in the country as they ramped up support for their respective factions.

Meanwhile, an interservice fight occurred in the U.S. military over whether the Army or the Air Force should be responsible for directing aircraft to ground targets, regardless of whether it was done from the ground or air. The Air Force won the fight. Yet forward air control was only used during the Korean War to guide air strikes in close proximity to ground troops. In theory, this left pilots free to bomb and strafe outside the so-called bomb line in what were deemed free-fire zones.

The advent of the Vietnam War resulted in rules of engagement mandating forward air control for all close air support missions. In a war where there were no front lines, this was deemed necessary to prevent civilian casualties. All forward air controllers had to follow the rules of engagement. The lengthy set of rules was classified. American military personnel frequently commented that there were so many rules that it was impossible to memorize all of them.

The U.S. military established a hard and fast rule that all tactical strike aircraft, whether rotary or fixed-wing, would be under the control of a forward air controller who cleared requests for strafing and bombing either with an airborne command and control center or a ground-based air support center.

A briefing officer would tell forward air controllers arriving in South Vietnam that if they were interested in adventure, promotions, and medals, they could inquire about participating in the Steve Canyon Program after they had served six months as a forward air controller in South Vietnam. If they were interested, “certain people” could fill them in on the specifics; in other words, those involved with the CIA’s Raven forward air controller program in Laos could give them a wider picture, with more details on the risks and the rewards, of what the mission entailed.

Some forward air controllers serving tours of duty in South Vietnam flew only 15 days a month. While some found this acceptable, others had a burning desire to fly every day. The aggressive forward air controllers found the rules of engagement incredibly burdensome and frustrating. Those with the warrior spirit called themselves the “Shooters.” These aggressive Air Force captains and lieutenants longed for more

freedom in the performance of their mission.

The Steve Canyon Program came into existence in 1966 and marked a major improvement in the forward air control supporting both the guerrilla forces battling the communists in Laos. The program took its name from Milton Caniff’s comic strip introduced in 1947, which eventually was syndicated to 200 newspapers. Canyon was a patriotic flyboy who, upon his return from World War II, established a one-plane flight service known as Horizons Unlimited that served as cover for his covert activities. For a time the comic strip character operated a charter air service, but he eventually rejoined the military to fight communism.

Before the program was created, Air Force noncommissioned officers, known as “Butterflies,” who were not Air Force pilots, conducted forward air control flying in the right seat of an Air America-owned Pilatus PC-6 Porter utility aircraft. When the rated Air Force jet fighter pilots serving in the CIA’s covert war in Laos began conducting forward air control in Cessna O-1 aircraft in 1966, they replaced the anachronistic Butterflies.

Both the Butterfly NCOs and the Air Force officers who volunteered for the Steve Canyon Program operated under the call sign Raven; hence, they became known collectively as the Ravens. All of the forward air controllers in Laos belonged to Project 404, which was the code name for secret Air Force operations in Laos and Thailand.

Upon arriving in the Laotian capital of Vientiane aboard a CIA Air America plane, the new Ravens traded in their military uniforms for civilian clothing. The forward air controllers were “sheep-dipped.” The saying refers to the process of giving the fighter pilots false civilian identities to cover their role as intelligence agents.

Although more than 200 Air Force officers volunteered for the Steve Canyon Program between 1966 and 1973, the number operating in Laos at any given time was very small. Only four Butterflies furnished forward air control before 1966, and in the first few years of the Steve Canyon Program only a half dozen were providing forward air control at any one time.

This increased to 25 Ravens during the peak years between 1969 and 1973. The Ravens technically were under the command of the U.S. Air Force’s 56th Special Operations Wing at Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Air Force Base. Detachment One of the 56th Special Operations Wing administered their records and pay and was based at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in northern Thailand. The Seventh/Thirteenth Air Force, a hybrid Air Force combat unit headquartered at Udorn, also played an

administrative and combat support role for the Ravens. The CIA deputy chief of operations at Udorn coordinated the air war over Laos with two Air Force officers.

The Air Force gave all forward air controllers arriving in South Vietnam 80 hours of flight training in F-4 Phantoms (superseded by T-33 Shooting Stars, which were less expensive to use as trainers), which included instruction in weapons delivery. This first-hand experience in bombing with different munitions was crucial for future forward air controllers because it gave them a sense of what was involved in delivering ordnance to ground targets.

A forward air controller's job was to coordinate air support for ground troops, participate in air rescue operations, submit requests for strike aircraft, mark targets for strike aircraft with rockets, and make bomb damage assessments. The ubiquitous Cessna O-1 served as the principal aircraft for forward air controllers in South Vietnam and for the secret war in Laos; however, the forward air controllers in South Vietnam eventually received the state-of-the-art, fully armed North American Rockwell OV-10 Bronco.

The Cessna O-1, which was introduced in 1950 for use by the Army, Air Force, and Marines, was a two-seater, high-wing monoplane. It had a host of weaknesses, though, which made it imperative that aerospace contractors develop and produce better observation aircraft in the 1960s. First, it lacked self-sealing fuel tanks. Second, it carried too few rockets for target marking. Third, its range was slightly over 500 miles and its maximum speed was only 115 miles per hour.

As the secret air war in Laos progressed, the Air Force required the Ravens to return their reconnaissance aircraft to Udorn every 100 hours, which was roughly every 10 days, for routine maintenance. While on duty, the intrepid Ravens patched the bullet holes in their aircraft with a strong fabric adhesive material known as typhoon tape.

The CIA's strategy in Laos for fighting the communists involved training and arming Hmong tribesmen who would have substantial U.S. air support. This was done through a clandestine program known as Forward Momentum. The Hmong were a Sino-Tibetan people who migrated south from China into Laos in the mid-19th century. Unfortunately for the Hmong, they were looked down upon by the lowland Lao who considered themselves superior to the Hmong.

The Hmong guerrillas lacked artillery, and the U.S. Air Force and CIA airpower sought to make up for this by serving as mobile artillery

U.S. Air Force



ABOVE: Flown by both Thai and Laotian pilots during the Laotian Civil War, the North American T-28D Nomad counter-insurgency aircraft eventually became too vulnerable to survive communist antiaircraft defenses along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in southern Laos, but it continued to play a crucial role against communist forces in northern Laos. **BELOW:** A CIA crew member aboard an Air America helicopter fires on a North Vietnamese biplane attacking a U.S. Air Force radar installation atop Phou Pha Thi Mountain in northern Laos in January 1968. The CIO officer downed one of the biplanes with his automatic weapon. Painting by Keith Woodcock.



© Keith Woodcock

for the guerrillas in their attacks on the communists. The budget for Operation Forward Momentum began at \$5 million for the first year in 1961 and skyrocketed to \$500 million annually by the close of the decade. The Hmong commander, Van Po, commanded upward of 30,000 guerrilla fighters who were intimately familiar with the terrain of northern Laos. The Hmong tribesmen were armed only with World War II-era U.S. weapons because the U.S. Army wanted to save its modern weapons for the American troops fighting in South Vietnam.

Beginning in 1961 the CIA began establishing air strips throughout Vietnam. These were numbered and designated as either paved (Lima) or unpaved (Lima Site). For example,

General Vang Po's expansive Hmong guerrilla base at Long Tieng was designated Lima Site 20A, and Vientiane was Lima 08.

The CIA divided Laos into five military regions. The plum posting for a Raven was to MR II, which consisted of the Plain of Jars and the territory to the northeast of it where the Pathet Lao and some of the NVA forces were concentrated. MR I and MR5, which encompassed northwestern Laos and the area around Vientiane, respectively, had less activity. MR III and IV covered the Laotian panhandle and the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Specifically, MR III covered the part of the trail adjoining North Vietnam, and MR IV covered the part of the trail in Laos adjacent to South Vietnam.

Continued on page 70

By William F. Floyd Jr.

One of the best piston-engined fighter aircraft ever designed, the F-4U Corsair played critical roles in both World War II and the Korean War.

A Vought F4U Corsair fires rockets at North Korean tanks in support of United Nations' ground forces. The aircraft was used primarily for close-support missions in the Korean War in which it attacked with cannons, napalm tanks, iron bombs, and unguided rockets.

ON DECEMBER 4, 1950, JESSE BROWN, U.S. NAVY ENSIGN AND THE Navy's first African American aviator, was flying 1,000 feet above the icy Korean mountains in his Corsair when its engine cut out. Brown was strafing Chinese troops near the Chosin Reservoir when his plane was brought down

by enemy small arms fire that hit the aircraft in a vulnerable spot. The Vought F4U Corsair went down heavily and crashed into the rough terrain, folding up at the cockpit and streaming smoke from the wreckage. The rugged, propeller-driven, big-nosed design could normally sustain a lot of damage, but on that day, Brown had been tragically unlucky.

Lieutenant Junior Grade Thomas Hudner and the other Strike Fighter Squadron VF-32 pilots flying from the carrier USS *Leyte* viewed the situation on the ground as they circled above. Chinese Communist soldiers were bound to discover the wreck-

age given that the crash occurred so close to the Chosin Reservoir. The other Navy pilots initially thought Brown was dead, but they soon saw him waving his hand. However, the 24-year-old pilot's legs had become entangled in the damaged instrument panel. Flight leader Richard Creole radioed "Mayday" and called for a helicopter. A Sikorsky H-5 helicopter was dispatched but it would be at least 15 minutes before it arrived on station.

Hudner looked down at his friend and flying mate and quickly decided

to go down and attempt to pull Brown from the smoldering aircraft. If all went well, both pilots could escape in the helicopter. Hudner made a treetop pass and dumped his remaining fuel and ordnance before preparing to land alongside Brown's stricken plane. He landed his Corsair, hitting the ground a lot harder than expected. When on the ground Hudner began to wonder if this had been such a good idea. He quickly shook off the thought and surveyed the situation.

When the two-man Marine helicopter arrived with only its pilot, the two tried to free Brown from the cockpit, but their herculean efforts proved useless. Brown was slipping in and out of consciousness and losing blood. With daylight fading they discussed using a knife to cut off Brown's trapped leg, but neither could bring themselves to do it. It was obvious that Brown was likely to perish if he did not receive medical care. With darkness setting in and the temperature dropping, the two reached the grim decision to leave Brown behind.

Back on the *Leyte*, Hudner pleaded with his superiors to be allowed to return to the crash site to help extract Brown, but he was denied on the grounds that the enemy might ambush the rescue helicopters. If that happened, the Navy might suffer additional casualties. Brown inevitably succumbed to his injuries. For his heroic attempt to rescue



All images: Navy History and Heritage Command

Brown under extreme weather conditions and the threat of enemy attack, Hudner was awarded the Medal of Honor. His valor was a reflection of the pride felt by all Corsair pilots in both World War II and the Korean conflict.

In World War I the Vought O2U- and O3U-series observation airplanes were the first aircraft to bear the name Corsair. These sturdy aircraft were used by the airborne Navy in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The story of the World War II-era Corsair began in February 1938 when the U.S. Navy Bureau of Aeronautics published two requests for proposals for twin-engine and single-engine fighters. For the single-engine fighter, the Navy requested the maximum obtainable speed, and a stalling speed (the slowest speed a plane can fly to maintain level flight) of not higher than 70 miles per hour. The Navy also specified a range of 1,000 miles. The fighter must carry four guns, or three with increased ammunition, and be able to carry antiaircraft bombs on the wing.

In June 1938 the U.S. Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics contracted with Vought Aircraft for a prototype, the XF4U-1. After a mock-up inspection in February 1939, construction of the XF4U-1, powered by a Pratt & Whitney R-2800 18-cylinder radial engine rated at 1,805 horsepower, received approval. When the prototype was completed it had the biggest and most powerful engine, the largest propeller (13 feet in diameter) ever fitted to a single-engine aircraft, and the largest wing span of any naval fighter to date.

The first flight of the Corsair prototype took place on May 29, 1940. The flight proceeded normally until a hurried landing was made when the elevator trim tabs failed because of flutter. Engineers quickly corrected the problem.

Testing of the XF4U-1 would continue for some time. The Navy became so impressed with Vought's prototype that a formal request was issued to build a production model. This was followed by an order for 584 aircraft on June 30, 1941, to be designated F4U-1. The Navy's requirements would change from lessons learned in Europe. This led to additional armor protection, self-sealing fuel tanks, and heavier armament in the production model.

These new changes would make a dramatic difference in the appearance of the production model from its original prototype. The bomb compartments in each wing were taken out of the production model.

The main armament consisted of six .50-caliber machine guns, three in each wing. The change meant the fuel cells located in the wings



ABOVE: U.S. Navy Ensign Jesse L. Brown (left) and Lieutenant Thomas J. Hudner. Brown, who was the first African American aviator to serve in the U.S. Navy, lost his life on during the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir. Hudner received the Congressional Medal of Honor for the actions he took trying to save Brown's life. **BELOW:** Marine VMF-214 "Black Sheep" F4U-1 squadron pilots based in the New Hebrides archipelago scramble for a mission. The Navy delayed the use of the F4U Corsair on its carriers because of problems associated with takeoffs and landings; however, Navy and Marine Corps squadrons operating from island airstrips in the Pacific Theater began using it in 1943.



had to be relocated and redesigned. They were consolidated into one main fuel cell located in the forward fuselage between the engine and the cockpit. Putting the main fuel tank (257-gallon capacity) in the forward fuselage also meant that the Corsair's nose had to be extended 12 feet in front of the cockpit. The long nose pushed the cockpit back behind the aircraft's bent wing, known as a "gull wing." The air rushing into the aircraft's intakes at high speed produced a whistling sound that led to the aircraft being nicknamed "Whistling Death."

One drawback of the cockpit position was that it adversely affected the pilot's forward and downward view, making carrier landings more difficult. The first production F4U-1 Corsair was flown on June 25, 1942. Vought delivered the first production models to the Navy

the following month.

The F4U engine was the largest available at the time: a 2,000 horsepower, 18-cylinder Pratt and Whitney R-2800 Double Wasp radial engine. To obtain as much power as possible a relatively large Hamilton Standard Hydromatic three-blade propeller was used. The Corsair's aerodynamics would be more advanced than those of contemporary naval fighters. The XF4U-1 became the first single-engine U.S. fighter to fly faster than 400 miles per hour.

The Corsair's poor visibility during landing approaches, its adverse stall characteristics, and slow approach speed made it initially undesirable as a carrier aircraft. Perhaps worst of all, it had a tendency to bounce on hard landings. For these reasons, it failed carrier takeoff and landing tests conducted on September 25, 1942.



A Marine Corps Vought F4U-4B Corsair on a mission over Korea. The Navy-Marine Corps combat air support mission had very little red tape during the Korean War, which allowed their Corsair pilots to respond very quickly when called upon.

Navy pilots who were dissatisfied with its performance derisively referred to the Corsair as the “hog.” For these reasons, Navy officials preferred to stick with the Grumman F6F Hellcat as their principal carrier aircraft, even though it was not equal to the F4Us superb performance in combat. Of course, this was not a problem for the Marines given that their pilots typically flew from airfields. Initially, the Navy approved the Corsair only for the Marines and for Navy airfields. The Navy would eventually clear the Corsair for carrier operations in 1944.

Marine squadrons quickly took to the new fighter, which turned out to be more of a fighter for them than the Navy. The Corsair soon became associated with famous squadrons in the Pacific, such as the Marine Corps’ VMF-214, known as the “Black Sheep,” and land-based Navy Fighter Squadron VF-17 deployed in the Solomon Islands, nicknamed the “Jolly Rogers.”

The Corsair was in such heavy demand when cleared for combat in late 1942 that the Navy awarded some additional production contracts to Goodyear to meet the additional demand. From 1942 through 1953, the Corsair had the longest production run of any U.S. piston engine fighter. A total of 12,582 Corsairs (16 different models) were manufactured between 1942 and 1952.

The first operational squadron to use the F4U-1 in combat was VMF-124, led by Major William E. Gise. Corsair pilots of Marine fighter squadron VMF-124 took to the skies from Henderson Field on Guadalcanal on February 12, 1943, to escort a U.S. Navy PBX Catalina on a rescue mission. Two days later,

the Marine pilots engaged the Japanese in air-to-air combat for the first time. The Corsairs were attacked by approximately 50 Japanese Zeros. The pilots of VMF-124 were beginning to realize their aircraft’s advantages over the Zero in future engagements.

First Lieutenant Kenneth A. Walsh, a former enlisted pilot, was part of this first combat mission. “The F4U could outperform the Zero in every aspect except slow speed maneuverability and slow speed rate of climb,” wrote Walsh. “It took time, but eventually we developed tactics that overcame any shortcomings. When we were accustomed to the area and knew our capabilities, there were instances when the Zero was little more than a victim.”

In the Pacific Theater during World War II, Corsairs downed 2,149 Japanese aircraft while flying 64,051 missions. Only 189 Corsairs were lost in combat in the Pacific Theater. It would not be long, though, before the Corsair went back into action in a new conflict.

The division of Korea can be traced back to the close of World War II when the Soviet Union occupied the northern half of the peninsula and the United States occupied the southern half. United Nations-supervised elections led to the establishment of the Republic of Korea in the south, while Korean communists established the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in the north. With the onset of the Cold War, it was apparent that Korea was not going to be peacefully reunited.

Shortly after North Korea invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, the Corsair saw action. On July 3 the U.S. Navy launched Cor-

sairs from the USS *Valley Forge*. These aircraft included 16 F4U-4B Corsairs loaded with rockets. The rocket-armed Corsairs struck enemy airfields and rail yards at Pyongyang without losing a single aircraft.

The initial U.S. Navy close air support mission would be flown on July 22 in support of the Eighth Army. This was followed by an emergency combat air support mission three days later with only minimal success. There were issues with radio equipment, maps, and mission requirements. As a result of radio problems, the Corsairs and other aircraft hunted targets on their own.

The need for close air support saw dramatic changes with the entrance of the First Provisional Marine Brigade into the war. The Marines were well trained in the use of combined arms, which included using close air support to its greatest advantage. The Navy-Marine Corps combat air support mission had very little red tape, which allowed Corsair pilots to respond very quickly when called upon. Soldiers fighting with the Marines were surprised by the response times, accuracy, and proximity at which the missions took place.

In August alone, Navy and Marine Corsairs flew 6,575 combat hours. During the Battle of the Pusan Perimeter, Corsair units from Marine Aviation Training Support Group 33 flew 1,511 missions, with 995 of those being urgent air support missions. At the time, the United Nations’ defensive perimeter had shrunk to an area around the southernmost part of Pusan. It was critical that this area be protected. The port was a key link in the logistics chain supporting United Nations’ forces in their efforts to recover the Korean peninsula.

Marine aviation would carry out its mission, relying on its ability to operate afloat as well as from land. The basing of planes on escort carriers USS *Sicily* and *Badoeng Strait* proved the commonality between Naval and Marine aviation. Because the carriers were so close to the battle zone, the strikes could reach their targets in a matter of minutes at almost any point where support was needed. Most importantly, it was apparent that the Marine air-ground team concept used at the Pusan Perimeter could be used in similar operations on the Korean peninsula.

On September 18 United Nations ground forces captured Kimp'o Airfield. After the airfield was prepared, additional Corsair squadrons arrived from Japan. Marine Corsair squadrons moved north in support of the 1st Marine Division, operating from Wonsan and later from Yonpo Airfield in North Korea. The system of close air support faced its greatest test in November and December 1950 as Chinese

troops reinforced the North Koreans. Both Navy and Marine Corps squadrons played a crucial role in the 1st Marine Division's breakout from the Chosin Reservoir. United Nations forces at the Chosin Reservoir were up against hordes of Chinese troops. Initially they were encircled by the Chinese, but they were eventually able to break out. After they broke out, they withdrew to Hungnam where they inflicted substantial casualties on the attacking Chinese. VMF-312 with its F4U-4s accumulated nearly 2,000 hours, losing four aircraft and one pilot during the fighting withdrawal.

Corsairs flew continuous orbit over the 1st Marine Division during daylight hours, with night fighters operating after dark. The pilots used multi-channel radios to stay in contact with troops on the ground and phosphorous rockets to indicate potential targets.

The first victory for a Marine Corsair during the Korean War took place on April 1, 1951, when former World War II ace Captain Phillip DeLong led a division on an armed reconnaissance mission. The division took off from the USS *Bataan*. Each Corsair was armed with a 500-pound bomb, drop tank, six high-velocity aircraft rockets, and two 100-pound bombs. Two Corsairs were detached to escort a rescue helicopter to pick up a downed flyer. DeLong

and his wingman, Lieutenant Harold Daigh, continued with the mission. They soon came in contact with four enemy aircraft. Through a series of complicated and dangerous maneuvers, the two Marine pilots avoided being shot down. They were credited with three kills and one probable. They both were able to land safely on the *Bataan* even though both aircraft had sustained considerable damage.

In early September 1951, Marine pilots had their first encounter with Soviet MiG fighters. Captain Jesse Folmar and his wingman, Lieutenant William L. Daniels, spotted a pair of MiG 15s getting into position to make a pass at the Corsairs. More MiGs soon arrived. After a short initial dogfight, the two Marine pilots prepared to depart the area when Folmar radioed his wingman to resume combat. The two pilots executed a 35-degree diving turn to port. After an attack on his plane, Folmar was forced to bail out after transmitting a search and rescue distress signal. The MiGs soon headed for home, and Folmar was rescued after being in the water for only eight minutes. Lieutenant Daniels' Corsair was able to get back to the USS *Sicily* undamaged. The two pilots had taken on eight MiGs and came away with each side losing one aircraft.

The Navy's only ace piloting a Corsair in the

Korean War was Lieutenant Guy P. Bordelon Jr. While flying an F4U-SN, Bordelon was patrolling United Nations' front lines against nuisance raids by the North Korean Peoples Air Force. Bordelon would be credited with destroying three Soviet Lavochkin La-11 fighters during three separate missions. The last aerial victory for a Navy Corsair was when Bordelon shot down an La-11, which made him the only propeller aircraft ace of the war. For his achievements in the skies over Korea, Bordelon received the Navy Cross.

Aircraft of this era were typically judged on their performance, lethality, durability, technological advances, and the number produced. The F4U Corsair scored well in all of these categories, but when one takes into consideration categories such as longevity, mission, diversity, adaptability, and timeliness, the Corsair usually came out on top.

During the Korean War, the availability of the Corsair saved countless lives on the front in some of the most dangerous operating locations on the peninsula. It could stay on station longer and carry a heavier payload than the early Navy jets. The Corsair would continue to be used into the late 1960s by other nations, such as France, New Zealand, and several Latin American countries. □

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ACTION ENSUED.

Don Stivers' painting catches the fury of a cavalry battle. At Kelly's Ford "there were many personal encounters, single horsemen dashing at each other with full speed, and cutting and slashing with their sabres, until one or the other was disabled," wrote a *New York Times* correspondent.



CAVALRY CLASH

AT KELLY'S FORD

BY DAVID A. NORRIS

With freshly honed sabers, more than 2,000 Union cavalrymen rode toward the Confederate-held Rappahannock River crossing of Kelly's Ford in March 1863 with orders to attack and rout or destroy Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee's Rebel cavalry. With them, the bluecoats carried a day's forage, rations for four days, and a sack of coffee for a particular Confederate general.

One of the South's advantages offsetting the North's superiority in military and industrial resources was the Confederate cavalry. Led by bold and talented commanders, such as Maj. Gen. James Ewell Brown Stuart, the Rebel cavalry in Virginia completed one spectacular raid or expedition after another, while Union cavalry commanders blundered about with little success in stopping them.

Major General Fitzhugh Lee, a nephew of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, led a reconnaissance of the enemy lines from February 24 to February 26. His troopers struck a Union force at Hartwood Church in Stafford County, northwest of Fredericksburg, on February 25. Eluding pursuit, Lee's men crossed the Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford on February 26, bringing back more than 150 prisoners. Thirty-six Union soldiers were killed in the action. Lee's total casualties were just 14 killed, wounded, or missing.

Most of the Union casualties belonged to Union Brig. Gen. William W. Averell's 2nd Division of the Cavalry Corps of the Army of the Potomac. Lieutenant Charles Palmore, an antebellum physician who served during the war as a line officer in the 3rd Virginia Cavalry, had stayed behind at Hartwood Church with some wounded Confederates. Lee left Palmore a note to give to Averell. Lee and Averell were old friends from their days at West Point in the 1850s, but the war turned their friendship into rivalry. "I wish you would put up your sword, leave my state, and go home," Lee wrote. "You ride a good horse, I ride a better one. Yours can beat mine at running. If you won't go home, return my visit, and bring me a sack of coffee."

The Hartwood Church clash was only one, and by no means the least, of a long string of defeats suffered by the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac. The fairly minor raid infuriated Maj. Gen.

Joseph Hooker, who had replaced Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside as the commander of the Army of the Potomac on January 26, 1863, in the wake of the Union defeat at Fredericksburg.

Hooker sought to surprise the Rebels with a major raid of his own making. It was well known to the Union that Fitz Lee's Second Brigade was camped near Culpeper Courthouse. Hooker ordered a large-scale reconnaissance of the fords on the Rappahannock River where a Union force might cross to assail Lee.

Hooker planned to launch his attack on March 16. He assigned 3,000 men and six guns to Brig. Gen. William W. Averell. Twenty-nine year-old Averell, who hailed from upstate New York, had graduated in the bottom third of the West Point Class of 1855. After brief assignments in Missouri and Pennsylvania, 2nd Lt. Averell served in New Mexico from 1857 to 1859 where he fought in skirmishes against the Kiowa and Navajo. Having suffered a severe wound



ABOVE: The middle Rappahannock appears placid in a sketch made in 1864 by battlefield artist Edwin Forbes, but at the time of the battle in March 1863 it was running fast and deep as a result of heavy winter rains. **LEFT:** Union Brig. Gen. William Averell (left) and Confederate Maj. Gen. Fitzhugh Lee. Fitz Lee, a nephew of General Robert E. Lee, had performed admirably during the Antietam campaign the previous year. As for Averell, he achieved the first victory of Federal horse over Confederate cavalry at Kelly's Ford.

in 1859, he took an extended leave of absence to recover. He was commissioned as colonel of the 3rd Pennsylvania Cavalry on August 23, 1861, and received his promotion to brigadier general on September 26, 1862. On February 22, 1863, Averell was given command of the 2nd Cavalry Division.

Hooker instructed Averell to take every precaution necessary to ensure the operation's success. Averell was to attack and break up the enemy cavalry camp at Culpeper Courthouse. As a precaution, Averell wanted another cavalry regiment sent to Catlett's Station to cover the middle fords of the Rappahannock. From there pickets could watch for enemy forces approaching from Warrenton, Greenwich, and Brentsville. Averell's superiors deemed this request unnecessary, and no additional men were provided. Averell decided on his own to detach 900 sabers (1st Massachusetts Cavalry and part of the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry) to guard Catlett's Station, cutting his expeditionary force by almost one third.

Sending the troopers to Catlett's Station left Averell with 2,100 men. Colonel Alfred Duffie's 775-man brigade included the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry, the 4th New York Cavalry, and the 6th Ohio Cavalry. Colonel John B. McIntosh commanded a total of 565 men in the 3rd, 4th, and 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Two regular army regiments, the 1st U.S. Cavalry and the 5th U.S. Cavalry, rounded out the force with 760 men.

Following orders from Hooker, Averell left camp on March 16. Captain George Bliss of the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry noted that his men moved out about 8 AM, carrying four days' rations and one day's forage. They rode for 16 miles, halting at dusk at Morrisville. Their camp was about four miles east of Kelly's Ford.

Lieutenant George Browne commanded the 6th New York Battery, the artillery unit assigned to Averell. With its half-dozen rifled guns, the 6th New York Battery left its camp at Aquia Creek at dawn on March 16. But a guide took them down the wrong road, causing such a delay that they did not catch up with the cavalry at Morrisville until 11 PM. After their long day's travel, which would have been more than 20 miles even without a wrong turn, the horses were in poor condition, noted Averell.

About 5 AM on March 17, Averell's advance reached Kelly's Ford. Twenty-five miles upstream from Fredericksburg, Kelly's Ford was an often-used Rappahannock River crossing. The ford got its name from John Kelly, a Culpeper County businessman who owned a sprawling mill complex on the south bank of the river. Clustered around the mill were homes that made up the village of Kellysville.

Averell's advance met Captain William F. Hart of the 4th New York Cavalry with about 100 men of his regiment and the 5th U.S. Cavalry. Hart was ordered earlier to take a position near the ford and seize it at first light. But Hart's task was not to be as easy as that.

A telegram from the headquarters of the Army of Northern Virginia, warning of Averell's approach, had reached Fitzhugh Lee at 11 AM the previous day. That evening, Confederate scouts observed the Union cavalry had reached Morrisville and made camp. To slow down the enemy's crossing, the Rebels cut trees down to block the ford and constructed abatis on both banks of the river.

Lee considered that the Yankees had two choices for a Rappahannock crossing: Kelly's Ford and the Orange & Alexandria Railroad

Both: Library of Congress



Bridge, which was situated four miles above the ford. Lee sent 40 men to bolster a 20-man picket station at Kelly's Ford. Commanded by Captain James Breckinridge of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry, the pickets were deployed in rifle pits and a dry mill race that served as a ready-made trench.

When the rest of Averell's men reached Kelly's Ford, it was still in Rebel hands. The obstructions at the crossing were piled so high that, as a Rhode Island regimental historian put it, "but one horse could leap them at a time, and that at extreme difficulty." That morning, the ford was about 100 yards wide and as much as four feet five inches deep, which was about the maximum depth military manuals recommended for a successful crossing of cavalry. March 1863 had been raw and bitter in central Virginia, and the Rappahannock was icy cold. Hart's men had found good cover in an empty canal that paralleled the river. They exchanged fire with the Confederates but were unable to push across the river.

Breckinridge was down to only about 15 men. As was customary, he had sent one out of four of his men to the rear as horse holders. It was in this depleted condition that the Confederates received the first enemy charge. As for his 40 reinforcements, they had been deployed too far in the rear to reach the ford in time to repel the first enemy charges.

While Averell looked for a better crossing, his chief of staff, Major Samuel E. Chamberlain, gathered Hart's men and more of the 4th New York Cavalry. Covered by firing from the canal bed, Chamberlain led his men in column of fours to the ford. At the river's edge, the

abatis formed an impenetrable barrier in the face of the enemy. Chamberlain's attack withered away as the men retreated back from the river.

Union troops inspected another potential crossing a few hundred yards away but found that steep banks and deep water made fording impossible. Wheatley's Ford, a short distance upstream, was also impassible. Kelly's Ford was the only place within reach to get across the Rappahannock.

Twenty pioneers from McIntosh's brigade came to the front. Lieutenant Browne reported that his New York battery loaned three of its felling axes to the cavalry. Chamberlain led another charge of the 4th New York Cavalry. About 100 dismounted cavalymen peppered the Confederates with a heavy fire, hoping to force them to keep their heads down. The pioneers hacked at the abatis with their axes but made little headway through the tightly tangled brush. Slowed by the barrier, the riders came under heavy enough fire that this second charge was also thrown back.

The bluecoats unlimbered two guns and placed them where they could rake the Confederate position. But the guns remained silent at Averell's orders because the general worried that the noise of the cannons would carry farther than the popping musketry and might result in the arrival of enemy reinforcements.

Determined to make a more forceful attempt, Chamberlain handed his valuables to another officer before riding into the ford again. This next charge also stalled in the face of the fire from Breckinridge's sharpshooters, and the horsemen turned around and rode for safety. Chamberlain was knocked out of the saddle by a ball that tore into his left cheek and down into his neck. Some of the pioneers helped him out of the river. It was said that, sitting on the ground and nearly blinded with blood, Chamberlain fired all the rounds from his pistol. Because his vision was blurred, his firing endangered the fleeing New York troopers. By that point in the clash, a Rhode Island lieutenant had been killed at the ford, and a lieutenant of the 4th New York Cavalry was mortally wounded.

Chamberlain picked 20 men and assigned them to Lieutenant Simeon A. Brown of the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry. He ordered them to cross the river and not return. Right behind Brown's troopers were the Pennsylvania pioneers, now wielding their axes on horseback. The two detachments blended together, the Pennsylvanians wielding their pioneer axes high, reminding at least one chronicler of medieval warriors armed with battle axes.

The Rebels fired into the enemy riders as the pioneers chopped at the abatis, opening and widening passages through the barrier. Only three men made it across on unwounded horses. Brown's horse was hit twice, and three bullets cut through the lieutenant's coat; nevertheless, he made it across. As he waved his saber to signal the rest of the force to follow, the pioneers started cutting through the obstructions on the south bank.

Some final shots flew at the Yankees riding through the water. A bullet hit Colonel Alfred N. Duffie's horse, and the French-born officer fell into the river. The colonel, uninjured, was fished out of the cold water and brought onto the shore.

Breckinridge ordered his men to abandon the rifle pits. Some of them did not hear his order and were quickly rounded up as more Yankees rode up onto the bank. Trying to bescape on foot to their horses, which were hundreds of yards away, some of the men were ridden down and seized as captives. Averell reported that 25 prisoners were taken from the captured rifle pits; however, Captain Breckinridge managed to get away.

After just 90 minutes Kelly's Ford was in Union hands. It took two hours to widen the gaps in the abatis, water the horses, and squeeze the entire force across the narrow ford. Another cause of delay was that the water was deep enough to flood the artillery's limber chests. To keep them dry, about 300 rounds of artillery ammunition had to be carried one by one by cavalymen using their feed bags.

The sound of battle at Kelly's Ford did not carry the eight miles or so to Fitzhugh Lee's camp at Culpeper Court House. A dispatch sent to Lee early that morning went astray, so it was about 7:30 AM when he learned of the attack.

After sending away wagons and disabled horses, Lee's five regiments had approximately 800 men. Lee rode with them toward Kelly's Ford. Accompanying his force were the two guns from Captain James Breathed's battery of horse artillery. As they neared the Rappahannock, Averell's scouts spotted them, and the Yankee general deployed his men in line of battle about half a mile west of the ford.

Averell stationed McIntosh's 3rd and 16th Pennsylvania Cavalry to hold the right, anchored on the Rappahannock at Wheatley's Ford. To the left, he sent the 4th Pennsylvania Cavalry. Both flank regiments were armed with new Spencer breech-loading carbines. Behind McIntosh, Captain Marcus Reno held two regiments in reserve, the 1st and 5th U.S. Cavalry. In the Union center were two guns of the 6th New York Battery. Holding the rest of the Union left was Duffie's brigade, much of it behind a long stone fence and bolstered in the brigade's center with two guns.

Fitzhugh Lee's commanding officer, Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart, had been at Culpeper Courthouse at a court-martial. Also in town were two of Stuart's staff officers, Captain Harry Gilmor and Major John Pelham. Pelham's daring actions at the Battle of Fredericksburg, in which he delayed the Union attack against Prospect Hill on the Confederate right flank with just one cannon, earned glowing praise from General Robert E. Lee, who in admiration called him "the gallant Pelham." Pelham seems to have been in Orange County en route to his camp when he heard word of Averell's raid and made his way to join Stuart.

Gilmor recalled that while Stuart examined the enemy line through his field glasses, Lee halted and drew up his men on the left side of the road running from the Orange & Alexandria to Kelly's Ford. "General, I think there are only a few platoons in the woods yonder," Lee said to Stuart. "Hadn't we better 'take the bulge' on them at once?" This was one of Lee's

favorite expressions, and it meant that he wanted to gain the advantage over, in this case, the troops in the woods.

Stuart agreed that there was no time to waste. Lee first sent the sharpshooters of the 1st Virginia Cavalry against the enemy. As the sharpshooters went out on foot, their commander, Captain James Bailey, led them on horseback. Gilmor followed the sharpshooters



ABOVE: Officers and men of Company K, 1st U.S. Cavalry. The regular army unit helped repulse Confederate counterattacks at Kelly's Ford. **BELOW:** Union Colonel Alfred Duffie, left, commanded a 775-man brigade composed of three regiments in the battle. Captain Harry Gilmor, right, a member of Maj. Gen. J.E.B. Stuart's staff, took temporary command of the Confederate sharpshooters. **OPPOSITE:** The First Virginia Cavalry was mustered in by Stuart at Winchester in July 1861. The regiment was composed of horsemen from the Piedmont and Shenandoah Valley.



All: Library of Congress

and temporarily took command when Bailey's horse was shot.

Sending his men forward, Gilmor quickly found there were more than a just few platoons behind the stone fence. The fire from the Spencers and the four Union cannons halted the Confederate advance 200 yards from the fence. Gilmor's men wavered and then began to retreat under the heavy fire.

Stuart rode forward and stopped among Gilmor's and Bailey's men. "At every moment I expected to hear the dull [thud] of a bullet, and see him fall," recalled Gilmor. "Confound it, men, come back," [Stuart] said, and they did."

Desperate to get Stuart out of harm's way, Gilmor insisted the men would go anywhere they were ordered. Stuart sent them to take cover behind a sod fence about 50 yards closer to Averell. They had barely settled in behind the fence when a shell burst and struck 10 men, three of them fatally.

The 3rd Virginia Cavalry, supported by the 5th Virginia Cavalry, charged the enemy line. Sabers aloft, they galloped in column of fours toward the stone fence. Pelham was unable to stay out of the battle. Adjutant Major H.B. McClellan had orders to keep the 3rd Virginia Cavalry's column "well closed up," the major wrote after the war. "I saw Major John Pelham

rushing to its head with the shout of battle on his lips," recalled McClellan, who was riding in the middle of the column.

When the Virginians ran up against the stone fence, they found it too high to surmount. Behind the masonry wall, already outnumbering the Rebels, the Union soldiers were able to unleash a veritable storm of bullets with their new Spencer carbines. The Model 1860 carbine held seven rounds in a tubular magazine that could be quickly replaced when empty. Soldiers reached a rate of fire of about 18 rounds per minute, about six times the rate of a muzzle-loaded musket or carbine.

Looking for a gap in the enemy line, the Confederate horsemen noticed a cluster of farm buildings in the distance to their left. Hoping to find an opening, they rode along the fence and, some distance down, found a small gate. As the last of the regiment passed through the opening in the fence, McClellan stopped to help an officer who was "struggling to place the body of a comrade across the bow of a saddle," recalled McClellan.

McClellan recognized the stricken soldier as Pelham. A Union shell had exploded near the legendary officer, driving a small iron fragment into the back of his skull. Pelham was conveyed to the rear and died later that night.

The two Virginia regiments failed to turn the Union right. Colonel Thomas Rosser of the 5th Virginia Cavalry despaired as his men flowed away toward the rear. "Why in the name of God don't you assist me in rallying the men?" he shouted to Major John William Puller.

Puller was leaning forward, holding onto the neck of his horse. "Colonel, I'm killed," replied the major. Moments later he fell from his saddle. Some of his men dragged Puller to the rear, but he died a few minutes later. (Puller was the grandfather of World War II U.S. Marine General Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller.)

As the Virginians reeled back from the Union right, McIntosh's men and the reserve troops remained in place, following Averell's orders. Uncertain of the enemy's dispositions, the general did not want to risk a repulse of his own troops.

Colonel Duffie was not so patient. A former officer in the French Army, he had served in African colonial wars as well as the Crimea. He ordered his cavalry regiments, the 1st Rhode Island, 4th New York, and 6th Ohio, to charge.



“As I have often seen it before, at the first sound of a gun, larger than a musket, the reserve was suddenly changed to the advance,” wrote a 5th U.S. Cavalry trooper. Although Duffie was defying his orders, Averell supported the eager volunteer colonel with two squadrons of the 5th U.S. Cavalry.

Breathed’s guns dropped a few shells into the Union horsemen. Sergeant Truman Reeves of the 6th Ohio Cavalry was near Lieutenant George W. Wilson when a shell exploded 10 feet over their heads sending shrapnel flying in all directions. “The sulphur in the shell, bursting so close to our heads, took the power of speech from Wilson, and he did not speak a loud word for more than a week,” wrote Reeves. “The bridle reins were cut entirely from his hands.” Despite the closeness of the shell, neither man was seriously wounded.

Fitzhugh Lee, with his fresh regiments (the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Virginia Cavalry) rode to meet Duffie head on. Truman Reeves thought the charge was “like the coming together of two mighty railroad trains at full speed.” Hundreds of riders clashed, emptying revolvers and hacking with their sabers. Men were shot at such close range that the pistol flashes scorched their jackets.

“[Amid] the yelling of men, the clashing of sabers, [there were] a few empty saddles, a few wounded and dying,” wrote Reeves, who rode ahead into the thick of the fight. After Reeves thrust his saber into the neck of one enemy horseman, “another Johnny came up on my right and struck my saber with such force that it went spinning in the air,” recalled Reeves. “At the same instant one of my company, by the name of Enos Hake, came up and shot the Johnny. If he had not, I fear that I would not now be alive to tell the story. It would be hard to describe to you the feelings of one left as I was, without a saber ... with hundreds of the enemy around me. But I drew my revolver and sallied in again.”

While Duffie’s troopers clashed with the Virginians, “there were many personal encounters, single horsemen dashing at each other with full speed, and cutting and slashing with their sabres, until one or the other was disabled,” wrote a New York Times correspondent. “The wounds received, by both friend and foe in these single contests, were frightful; such as I trust never to see again.” Major Preston Farrington of the 1st Rhode Island was shot in the neck, but slowed the bleeding with his handkerchief and remained on the field.

One section of the battery discovered 18 of their shells were the wrong size and could not fit in their guns. Many of the shells had defective fuses. “Five-second fuses would explode in two seconds, and many would not explode at all,” wrote Averell.

Meanwhile, McIntosh’s troops pushed ahead on the Union right. The advancing Union line extended past both flanks of Lee’s smaller force, and Duffie’s regiments drove the Confederates across the field.

Major Cary Breckinridge of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry leapt his horse across a ditch, but his mount was shot and the major was taken prisoner. A brother of Captain James Breckinridge, who commanded the picket post at the ford, the two were cousins of John Cabell Breckinridge, Confederate major general and a former vice-president of the United States.

A squadron of the 1st Rhode Island rode far ahead after the retreating Confederates. With them was Duffie’s assistant adjutant general, Lieutenant Nathaniel Bowditch, an officer of the 1st Massachusetts Cavalry. Bowditch charged ahead and was seen unhorsing two Rebels as he swept into the melee. His attention fixed on a Confederate who was firing at him with his revolver, Bowditch was unaware of another Rebel who rode up close enough to strike him from behind. Until that moment, he had assumed he was with Duffie’s men; instead, he saw that he was alone and surrounded by Rebels. He turned his horse to flee, but his horse was shot down. As his horse fell, Bowditch was struck by a bullet and a saber blow.

Two officers and 18 men of the 1st Rhode Island were taken away as prisoners. Bowditch remained on the field for some time before he was carried back to the rear. He died later of his wounds in a field hospital.

The violent clash of sabers and pistols ebbed as the Rebels withdrew. “A charge of this kind is usually over in less than five minutes, with many men lying on the ground, and many horses riderless, tearing around as if mad. Sometimes the rider is being dragged with one foot in the stirrup, and if not killed outright by the enemy would surely be by his own horse,” wrote Reeves.

Averell might have been pleased with Duffie’s successful charge, but he regretted that his force did not achieve greater results. “Had it been possible to reach the enemy’s flank when Duffie charged with the 5th U.S. or the Third Pennsylvania, 300 to 500 prisoners might have been captured, but the distance was too great for the time ... and the charge was made three minutes too soon,” he wrote.

The Virginians passed through a thinly wooded tract into another clearing. There, behind a stream called Carter’s Run, they formed a second battle line about one mile west of the stone fence. The 3rd and 5th Virginia Cavalry remained on the Confederate right, the 1st Virginia held the center, and the 2nd and 4th Virginia awaited on the left.

Although Averell greatly outnumbered the Virginians, he did not attack. Instead, he settled in and waited, while his artillery bombarded the Rebels. Lee, who believed that Averell would be overly cautious, ordered another charge. His entire brigade moved forward, beginning with the regiments on his left. “From the very beginning of the charge, Lee’s regiments were subjected to the fire of the enemy’s carbines, and of shell, spherical case, and double-shotted canister,” recalled McClellan.

Sergeant W.J. Kimbrough of the 4th Virginia cavalry distinguished himself that afternoon. Kimbrough had been wounded earlier in the battle but refused to leave the field. During the charge, he dismounted and opened a fence for his comrades. Remounting, he rode at the head of the column until, “twice sabered over the head, his arm shattered by a bullet,” he was taken prisoner, wrote Lee. Kimbrough was not finished, though. That night, conveyed as a captive across the Rappahannock, he escaped and walked 12 miles to his camp.

Averell’s heavier numbers blunted the Confederate attack and began pushing the Virginians back again. Withdrawing across a stubble field, the Rebels set fire to the dry stalks, but Yankee troopers put out the fire by smothering the flames with their overcoats. Breathed’s guns kept up their fire on the Yankees with a precision Averell described as “exceedingly annoying,” striking down several troopers.

The 6th New York Battery was running low on ammunition. Even worse was the quality of



the Union shells. One section of the battery discovered 18 of their shells were the wrong size and could not fit in their guns. Many of the shells had defective fuses. "Five-second fuses would explode in two seconds, and many would not explode at all," wrote Averell.

Another Confederate charge surged at the Union right. McIntosh's troopers, together with some of the 5th U.S. Cavalry, repulsed the Virginians. The intrepid Union horsemen pursued them until they reached a line of Confederate rifle pits, which could not be easily turned.

After the day's fighting, Fitz Lee's brigade was so worn down that the Union cavalry seemed on the verge of winning a spectacular victory, hovering in front of a smaller and battered enemy force. Had Averell not detached nearly one third of his force to guard against unlikely Confederate attacks that never happened, his horsemen might already have overrun the Confederates and pushed on to their main camp.

The naturally cautious Averell had good reasons for hesitation. Lee was not beaten yet, and his skirmishers once again were moving up to harass the Union left. There was a report of enemy infantry moving in. From the Orange &

Although Kelly's Ford ended as a draw, the encounter gave the Union troopers a much needed boost of confidence that they would carry forward to the Battle of Brandy Station in June.

Alexandria tracks, only a couple of miles away came the sound of a train that might have been carrying Confederate reinforcements. It was about 5:30 PM and near the end of the day's light.

Averell was pleased enough with what his men had done. They had crossed sabers with some of the finest cavalry regiments of the Confederate Army and had more than held their own. The commander sent his reserve, the steady regulars of Reno's U.S. Cavalry regiments, to the front. Reno's men served to screen the withdrawal of the battery as the volunteer regiments withdrew one by one to Kelly's Ford. During this time, Captain Marcus Reno's horse was killed, and the captain was seriously injured when he was trapped under the horse when it collapsed. Reno was breveted to major for his role at Kelly's Ford. He is most famous today for having served as George A. Custer's second in command at the Battle of the Little Big Horn.

The bluecoats had withdrawn north of the Rappahannock by 7:30 PM. "Arriving at Morrisville, each man built himself a fire, rolled himself up in his blanket, and slept as soundly as if no rebels were to be found this side of South Carolina," wrote a 5th U.S. Cavalry trooper.

Just as at Hartwood Church, a doctor stayed behind to tend some wounded who were too badly hurt to be moved. This time it was a Union Army surgeon who bore a letter for an enemy general from an old friend. When Fitzhugh Lee visited the hospital, the surgeon presented the Rebel general with the gift of a bag of coffee from his old classmate Averell. With the coffee Averell added a note, which read, "Dear Fitz, here is your coffee. How is your horse? Averell."

From a strategic standpoint, Kelly's Ford ended as a draw. After a day of sharp fighting, both armies were back in camp on their own sides of the Rappahannock. Both sides could, and did, claim victory. Lee's troopers still held the south bank of the river after the enemy withdrawal, and they knew they had fended off a force more than twice their number. They had fought so well that Averell's men were convinced they faced a far larger enemy force than they did.

Continued on page 70

Lieutenant Frank Boccia could hear the platoon ahead moving forward, reconnoitering by fire, spraying the trail and the jungle alongside it with M16 and M60 fire. Then the screaming started. Yells for a medic and screams of agony rent the air. He could hear a massive volume of enemy small arms fire and rocket-propelled grenade explosions. This went on for several minutes as the first body was brought back on a poncho stretcher.

Soon more American troops came down the hill returning, from the front line. Some of the wounded staggered back on their own, some were supported by fellow soldiers, and some were carried back on poncho stretchers. The wounded were casualties from the first assault by the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division on Ap Bia Mountain in the remote and rugged A Shau Valley.

The A Shau Valley is situated next to the Laotian border less than 100 miles from the demilitarized zone that separated North Vietnam and South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. In March 1966 North Vietnamese forces had overrun the U.S. Special Forces camp at the south end of the valley in a savage 38-hour battle in which the wounded were whisked away in evacuation helicopters and the remaining survivors conducted a two-day fighting retreat through the jungle before they, too, were airlifted to safety.

Afterward, North Vietnamese Army (NVA) used the valley as a jump-off point to attack the imperial city of Hue during the bloody nationwide Tet Offensive in January 1968. Several major operations by the U.S. Army and Marine Corps, such as Delaware, Somerset Plain, and Dewey Canyon, conducted after the Tet Offensive sought to keep the North Vietnamese in the A Shau Valley off balance and on the defensive.

The search and destroy sweeps conducted during these large-scale operations uncovered weapons caches, sophisticated communications equipment, and supply trucks. But the NVA units in the valley avoided set-piece battles with the Americans during these operations, preferring instead to fight on their own terms. Therefore, the results of the three operations were limited.

Ap Bia Mountain stands alone in the A Shau Valley. It is not connected to nearby mountain ridges. The Americans called it Hill 937, naming it by its height in meters. The local Montagnard tribesmen had a more colorful name for it: the Mountain of the Crouching Beast.

U.S. Army General Creighton Abrams ordered an operation in June 1968 to clear out the A Shau. Abrams replaced General William Westmoreland as head of the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam, the commander of U.S. forces in South Vietnam, when Westmoreland was appointed chief of staff of the Army in July 1968.

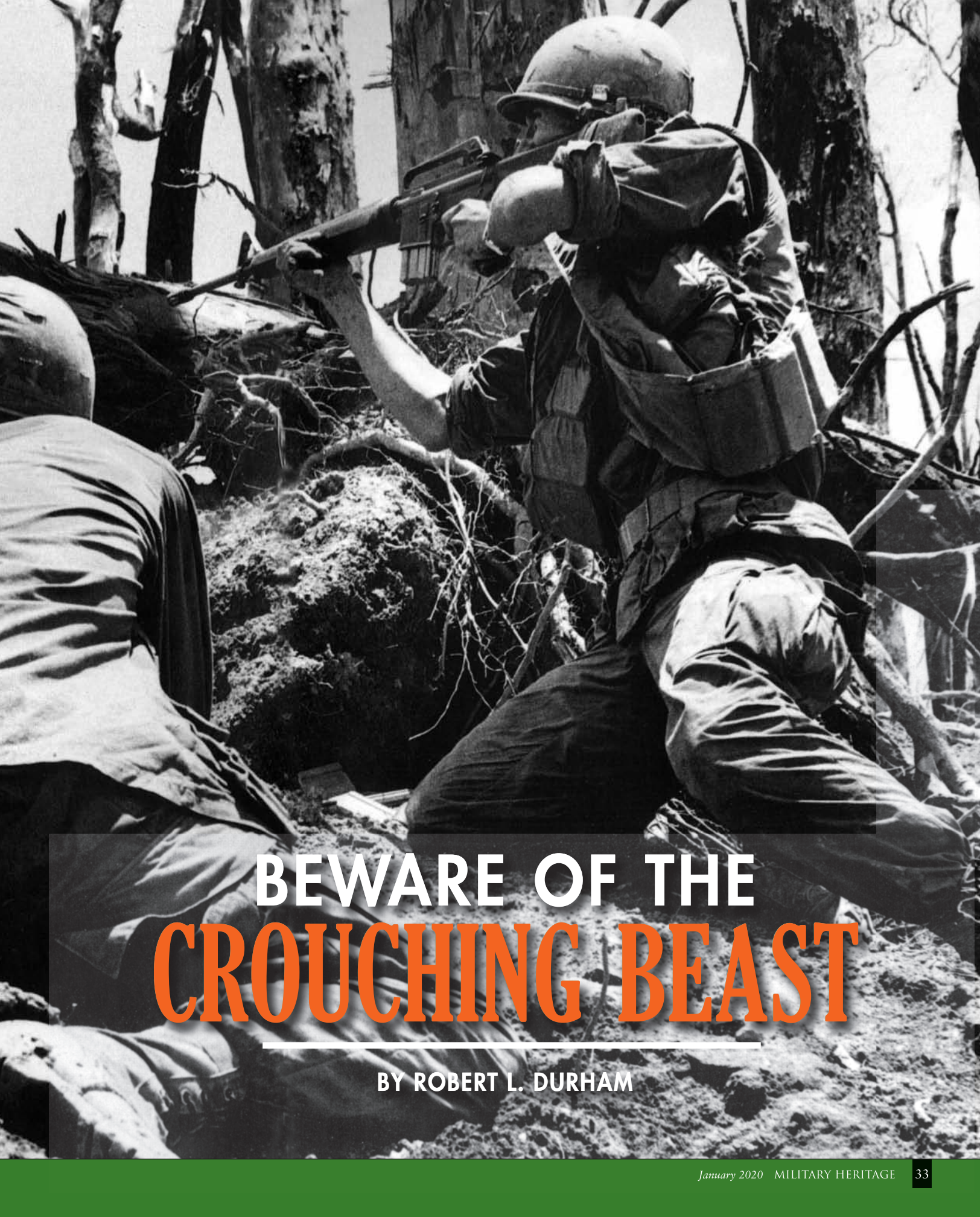
Abrams assigned the task to the crack troops of the 101st Airborne. The 1/502nd of the 101st Airborne dropped into landing zones in the southern A Shau on March 1, 1969, in Operation Massachusetts Striker, and fought several firefights, culminating in a three-day battle at Bloody Ridge. They suffered 35 killed and 100 wounded. The operation concluded on May 8.

As a result of this operation, the Americans planned a much larger operation named Apache Snow. It was scheduled to begin on May 10 with a helicopter assault by companies from 1st Bat-

Members of the 101st Airborne Division fire into a North Vietnamese bunker during the Battle of Hamburger Hill in the A Shau Valley. The battle was part of Operation Apache Snow, which aimed to keep enemy forces in the valley away from the coastal provinces.

In May 1969 the soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division battled North Vietnamese regulars for control of Hill 937 in the A Shau Valley. The soldiers renamed it Hamburger Hill.





BEWARE OF THE CROUCHING BEAST

BY ROBERT L. DURHAM



ABOVE: Troopers of the 101st Airborne Division advance uphill. The well-entrenched North Vietnamese regulars proved much harder to dislodge than the Americans had expected. **RIGHT:** Lt. Col. Weldon "Tiger" Honeycutt, a hard-bitten veteran of the Korean War, issues orders over a field radio to troops working their way up the mountainside.

talion, 506th (1/506th) Airborne and the 3rd Battalion, 187th (3/187th) Airborne, all part of the 101st Airborne Division. The 187th's nickname was the Rakkasans.

Before the American paratroopers were inserted on the first day of the operation, U.S. long-range artillery deployed at nearby firebases blasted the jungle to create 30 landing zones. The large number of prospective landing zones was meant to confuse the North Vietnamese so they would not know for sure where the men of the 101st Airborne would land. The division intended to use just five of the 30 landing zones.

Companies A, C, and D, 3/187th, landed unopposed at landing zones two near the Laotian border, using 65 UH-1 helicopters for transport. The helicopter flight looked "like a swarm of giant green dragonflies," recalled Boccia. Landing zone 2 was 1,800 meters northwest of Hill 937. At 8 AM Delta Company was the first down. The Rakkasans encountered only light resistance as they discovered a network of enemy bunkers within a few hundred yards of their landing zone.

The commander of the 3/187th was Lt. Col. Weldon "Tiger" Honeycutt. A hard-bitten officer, he was a veteran of the Korean War where he served under Westmoreland. Honeycutt's troops in Vietnam knew him as "Blackjack" from his radio call sign.

At 9:30 AM Honeycutt, his staff, and an 81mm mortar platoon landed and relieved Charlie Company of its duties on the landing zone, ordering them on a reconnaissance in force toward the Laotian border. Honeycutt received intelligence that the NVA had a logistics center on the top of Hill 937, so he ordered Delta Company to check this out and set up a perimeter for the battalion command post. He did not expect excessive enemy resistance because the NVA often retreated across the Laotian border, which was only 1,600 meters away, when confronted by American troops. Although the resistance was light, Honeycutt felt that, given the number of enemy bunkers found, there might be many enemy troops in the vicinity. Therefore, he ordered Bravo Company to be released from its reserve position on Firebase Blaze to join in the attack.

Honeycutt ordered Captain Charles Littnan, commanding officer of Bravo Company, to move out and get as close to Hill 937's peak as he could before nightfall. He planned to use the mountain as the battalion command post. Littnan ordered his platoons to move out. The first to step off was Lieutenant Marshall Eward's 2nd Platoon. It was followed by Boccia's 1st Platoon, which was followed by the company command post. The 3rd Platoon followed the command post, and Lieutenant Charles Denholm's 4th Platoon brought up the rear. They advanced through jungle terrain consisting of tall canopy, bamboo, and thick vines. Near dusk, the head of Bravo was hit by fire from RPGs, AK-47s, and machine guns. They called down air strikes and pulled back to a night defensive position.

On the morning of May 11 Bravo Company moved forward again, this time with Boccia's 1st

Platoon in the lead. They came to an area of the trail where the bamboo had been knocked down in such a way that the men had to crawl. They found four dead NVA soldiers, one of whom had documents in his possession, which were sent to the S2 battalion intelligence in the rear. The prisoner interrogation revealed that the American troops were facing the 29th NVA Regiment, an elite unit known as the Pride of Ho Chi Minh.

The dense bamboo underbrush gave way to towering teak trees and the visibility increased, in some places, to 100 meters. The path they were following along the ridge widened and they found several blood trails. Littnan ordered Boccia to continue moving forward. When Boccia's radio-telephone operator heard this, he jumped up to slip on his radio. When he did,



one of the straps broke. Littnan, impatient for the strap repair, ordered Denholm to take over the lead.

Denholm had Specialist Fourth Class Aaron Rosenstreich take the point, with SP4 John McCarrell in the slack position. They did not go far before Rosenstreich found a communications wire. It looked like it ran from Laos to the top of Hill 937. Denholm radioed Littnan, who came forward to look for himself. Littnan had Denholm send a squad down the draw to see where it led. They followed it a short way, then came back to the platoon.

When the platoon started back up the trail, a sniper fired on them. Rosenstreich fired into the treetops and then started to conduct a reconnaissance by fire. He shot at anything that looked like a likely sniper location as he slowly moved forward. An NVA soldier popped out of a spider hole in the center of the trail and shot Rosenstreich in the chest. Another NVA fired an RPG from a bunker and hit McCarrell in the chest. A claymore mine that McCarrell was carrying over his shoulder exploded, blowing him to pieces and peppering Lieutenant Denholm with shrapnel. Machine-gun fire and RPGs were

hitting everywhere.

Denholm crawled forward to Rosenstreich, who was lying off the trail, leaning against a tree. Denholm yelled down the trail for his machine gunner to bring up the M60. SP4 Terry Larson ran up the trail ahead of the machine gunner, and then pitched forward, shot in the head. SP4 Donald Mills, the machine gunner, ran up the trail right after Larson. The same enemy soldier who had shot Rosenstreich rose up out of his spider hole and shot Mills in the chest. Mills went down but then jumped up again and picked up his M60. He found that the machine gun had been broken by a bullet, so he picked up Larson's M16, ran forward, and emptied the magazine into the spider hole.

Denholm started throwing grenades out ahead, but he could not tell if they were doing any good. Unexpectedly, an enemy soldier popped out of a spider hole near him, fired off a few rounds with his AK-47, then ducked into the hole again. Realizing he had left his rifle behind somewhere, Denholm pulled his bowie knife. When the enemy soldier came out of his hole again, Denholm stabbed him in the throat. In shock and bleeding profusely from his shrapnel wounds, Denholm staggered back down the trail.

Sergeant Louis Garza took charge of the platoon and started sending men up the trail to bring back the three killed and seven men who had been wounded. With Denholm's platoon cleared from the trail, Littnan sent a forward observer up the trail to coordinate an artillery strike on the enemy position. The forward observer called in two Bell AH-1 Cobra gunships to hit the position with aerial rocket artillery.

It was obvious by that time that the Americans had located the enemy forces and they intended to fight. This suited Honeycutt; he ordered Charlie Company to end its reconnaissance in force up the Trung Pham River and attack up Hill 937, keeping parallel with Bravo Company. Delta would work its way up the northern end of the hill. Then, a tragic friendly fire incident occurred. Instead of firing on the NVA, the helicopter gunships bore down on the battalion command post. "Get down! Incoming!" Honeycutt screamed to the 50 men around the command post when he realized what was happening.

The rockets from the first Cobra hit the treetops and rained down shrapnel over a 30-meter area. Some men fell and others ran for cover toward the edge of the perimeter. Honeycutt himself was hit in the back by shrapnel. Black-jack at last got the gunships on the radio and ordered them to stop the attack or he would have the Cobras shot down. The command post

had ceased to function. Two men were dead, and 35 others were wounded. To make matters worse, NVA 120mm heavy mortars picked that time to shell them from across the border. Some of the wounded were hit again as a half dozen big shells slammed into the command post.

With his command post shot up, Honeycutt knew he could not properly support Bravo Company, so he ordered Littnan to pull back 100 meters and form a night defensive perimeter. He called Captain Dean Johnson, commanding officer of Charlie Company, and told him to start his company on a reconnaissance in force straight toward Hill 937. Honeycutt ordered Captain Gerald Harkins, commanding Alpha Company, to march his company to the battalion command post and relieve Delta Company. Delta would start a reconnaissance in force the next morning, up the north side of the mountain. Honeycutt had to get the battalion command post straightened out. After taking care of the casualties, he started to bring in replacements from rear-area detachments and staff. Although this did not make up for his losses, it at least got the manpower up again.

At 7 AM on May 12 two A-1 Skyraiders strafed and bombed the NVA positions above Bravo Company. After their 20-minute attack, two more Skyraiders began a fresh attack on the enemy positions. When they were done, Captain Littnan ordered Boccia to take his 1st Platoon up the trail. He was told to fall back if he started receiving heavy fire. It took Boccia's platoon 35 minutes to reach the clearing where Denholm's 4th Platoon had been hit. Littnan had the mortar platoon prepare the position as they approached. There was no way to bypass the clearing and the NVA

AP Photo



Men of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, make a combat assault from a Huey UH-1D during the battle. Two battalions of the North Vietnamese Army's 29th Regiment repulsed the initial assault by the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry.

had turned it into a killing zone, with bunkers lined up the mountain with clear fields of fire.

As Boccia's men advanced on the clearing, the men flattened themselves on the ground. The point man saw two NVA, but he had not been spotted yet. Then, the enemy saw him and set off a few claymore mines. As the shrapnel flew, the NVA also opened fire with their AK-47s and a machine gun. The Rakkasans responded with their M16s. Boccia spotted numerous enemy bunkers on the hillside behind the clearing and radioed this information back to Littnan.

The point man spotted a dead NVA soldier in the middle of the trail ahead and a bunker in front of the corpse. Boccia brought up Private First Class James Clifton and SP4 Philip Nelson with a recoilless rifle. They fired a couple of rounds at one of the bunkers, one of which went into the aperture of the bunker, collapsing it. The NVA countered with RPG fire. One of the RPGs hit right in front of them. The recoilless rifle flew into the air, and Clifton and Nelson both went rolling down the bank; surprisingly, neither was hurt.

This seemed to be the signal for the NVA to engage the 1st Platoon. RPG rounds slammed into the trees over their heads, raining shrapnel on them. The fire was so intense that for a time they could not even return fire; instead, they hugged the ground. Seven men were wounded, one of

whom was the medic. Boccia got his wounded out and returned to the location of their perimeter from the previous night. He put his wounded onto stretchers and sent them back to the battalion command post. Fighter bombers arrived a few minutes later and started hitting the clearing with 1,000-pound bombs and napalm. When the jets had finished, the five fire support bases supporting the airborne troops sent howitzer rounds crashing into the enemy positions.

Honeycutt ordered his engineers to open a landing zone for Bravo Company. Nearly 700 meters separated them from the battalion command post, and they needed a place closer to their own command post where they could evacuate any future wounded. A Bell UH-1 Iroquois helicopter, known as a "Huey," arrived over the Bravo Company command post and hovered overhead while the engineers started rappelling down. The first one made it to the ground, but then the NVA began firing on the Huey with their machine guns. When the helicopter was struck by enemy fire, the men on board cut the rope so they could get out. An engineer hanging on the rope fell to the ground, breaking both of his legs.

Honeycutt called in fighter bombers and they pounded the enemy position with 30 bombs. Another Huey came in to land the rest of the engineers. This time, it was not hit by machinegun fire but by an RPG round. The chopper made an emergency landing on its side. Men from Bravo Company rushed to aid the men on board the helicopter, pulling out 10 wounded before the Huey

AP Photo



TOP: A trooper of the 101st Airborne is severely wounded when a North Vietnamese rocket explodes behind him. **BOTTOM:** The crew of a 155mm-howitzer at one of the five firebases established in the A Shau Valley during Operation Apache Snow delivers crucial fire support to the maneuver battalions.

blew up. Honeycutt gave up on the Hueys and ordered the engineers to hump to Bravo.

Boccia's platoon was again designated to take the lead for Bravo Company on May 13. Before they initiated action, F-4 Phantom jets struck the enemy bunkers with 1,000-pound bombs. Boccia radioed to Littnan that the bombs were landing too close, shrapnel was falling all around his platoon. SP4 Nelson was hit in the side by shrapnel. Littnan radioed his forward air controller, who assured him the bombs were hitting on target. On the next run, SP4 Myles Westman, who did not have his helmet on, was killed by shrapnel that struck him in the back of his head. Due to the casualties it suffered, Boccia's platoon was taken off point.

Eward's platoon was assigned point instead. Snipers in the trees fired on the platoon before it reached the clearing. They sprayed the tops of the trees on both sides of the trail as they slowly advanced, and snipers fell from the trees as they were hit. Some of the snipers had tied themselves into the trees with ropes around their waists. The dead enemy snipers dangled grotesquely from their perches.

When the Rakkasans reached the clearing, the NVA started throwing grenades. Within a few minutes, five men were wounded. Eward moved two squads forward, spread out in a skirmish line. The line was quickly pinned down by an NVA machine gun in a bunker. Eward ordered his men to bring forward a recoilless rifle. They fired at point-blank range into the bunker, killing the two enemy soldiers inside. Eward's men advanced a little farther and all hell broke loose. As many as 30 enemy soldiers popped up and began firing RPGs, machine guns, and AK-47s. Three more men were wounded, and the rest retreated down the hillside, dragging the wounded behind them.

Meanwhile, Charlie Company was having troubles of its own. While the main body of the company moved up the ridge, Lieutenant Joel Trautman and the 1st Platoon were ordered to stay behind and build a small landing zone so wounded could be evacuated and supplies brought in. They were then ordered to send a squad to Bravo Company with ammunition. The NVA, seeing the weakness of the platoon, brought up reinforcements to strike 1st Platoon's perimeter. The NVA attempted to overrun the platoon, striking the right flank. When the North Vietnamese got into position, they rose up and attacked with everything they had, killing two men and wounding five. The NVA advanced slowly toward the Rakkasans' position, firing as they moved. The unwounded men in the 1st Platoon perimeter returned fire and the NVA skirmish line retired, but not before

wounding another American.

The leading platoons, running a gauntlet of sniper fire, bogged down completely after suffering five wounded. They established a night perimeter strung out on both sides of the ridge, 150 meters below the top of Hill 937. An enemy mortar battery in Laos shelled them with its 120mm Russian mortars. The NVA had their location zeroed in and walked the rounds across the night perimeters, wounding five men and destroying the equipment of an Army camera crew.

Delta Company was trying to get into position for its attack when it was hit by RPGs, and eight men were wounded. They called in a medevac helicopter, but it could not land, so a basket was lowered. The first man was loaded, and the helicopter started to winch him up, when the ship was hit by an RPG. It fell straight down, crushing the wounded man. The spinning blades hit another wounded soldier and a radioman who had been guiding the ship in. The men on the ground rushed to extract the four-man crew but only rescued the badly injured pilot before the helicopter exploded.

The Rakkasans had assaulted the hill for three straight days and nights with infantry, bombs, artillery, and napalm. The NVA was still dug in on the mountain and did not show any signs of leaving. Instead, it looked like they were receiving reinforcements from Laos. Lt. Col. John Bowers, the commanding officer of the 1/506th "Currahees," received orders from brigade headquarters to move north to Hill 937 to add weight to the attack. The 1/506th had two smaller hills, Hill 800 and Hill 900, which it needed to secure before it arrived on Hill 937. That objective would require several days.

On the morning of May 14, Honeycutt tried to get a coordinated attack moving. He ordered Bravo Company and Charlie Company to hit the west side of the mountain. He also ordered Delta Company, as soon as it had evacuated its wounded and dead, to attack Hill 937 from the north. U.S. howitzers had been firing all night long, and the artillery from all five supporting fire bases increased firing. When the artillery completed its fire mission, planes started coming in, dropping bombs and napalm.

At 8 AM Bravo and Charlie moved out simultaneously from their night perimeters. In Bravo Company, Eward's 2nd Platoon led, followed by Boccia's 1st Platoon. For Charlie Company, Lieutenant James Goff's 3rd Platoon led off, and Lieutenant Donald Sullivan's 2nd Platoon followed it. Trautman's platoon remained to guard the landing zone.

Eward's Bravo Company platoon moved up with three squads split, one moving up the cen-

AP Photo



A wounded paratrooper grimaces in pain as he awaits medical evacuation. The battle was viewed as a meat grinder in terms of the number of casualties produced, hence the name Hamburger Hill.

ter of the trail with two M60s and the other two on the ridge to each side of the trail. Their intent was for the middle squad to lay down covering fire while the two flanking squads moved up to try to rush the NVA bunkers from both sides. Unfortunately, things went awry. Four Americans were seriously wounded. The flanking squads pulled their wounded out and moved back. Eward regrouped the two squads and sent them forward again, only to have the NVA explode more claymores. Three men were killed, and Captain Littnan radioed back to Honeycutt that they could not advance.

In Charlie Company, Lieutenant Goff started off with two squads on point. They began receiving fire from three bunkers and, while most of the men poured rifle fire into them, recoilless rifle teams took all three out with flechette rounds. These special-purpose rounds contained winged two-inch steel darts. Goff moved his men into the saddle between Hill 937 and Hill 900, and then moved up the west face of 900 in a skirmish line. The enemy opened fire on them with claymore mines, AK-47s, and RPGs. Six men were wounded before they reached the bunker line on Hill 900. The Rakkasans again brought up 90mm recoilless rifles and opened fire on the bunkers with both high-explosive and flechette rounds.

After 30 minutes, the line of enemy bunkers had been destroyed; however, as soon as the Americans tried to move forward again, they began taking fire from snipers. An F-4 Phantom jet dropped napalm on top of Hill 900, halting much of the resistance.

Captain Johnson radioed Honeycutt that Charlie Company was 40 meters from the top of Hill 900. A few minutes later, the NVA counterattacked by charging down from the top of Hill 900 and others attacked from Hill 937 and hit Goff's 3rd Platoon's left flank. The enemy soldiers who were hidden in the draw started firing on them from the rear. They had two dead and 15 wounded and requested permission to withdraw. Honeycutt ordered Johnson not to pull his men back because that would open Bravo Company's right flank to attack. Johnson ordered Sullivan to move his platoon up on Goff's left flank.

In Bravo Company's sector, Littnan ordered the 4th Platoon, which was under the command of Sergeant Garza following Denholm's wounding, to move into position for the attack. Fighter bombers softened the site once more with 1,000-pound bomb airstrikes and an artillery preparation. Garza led three separate assaults on the clearing with no success. He then tried attacking up the left side of the ridge with a half dozen men. Garza took point for the assault. Snipers in the trees began firing at him. To locate the snipers, he ordered his troops to fire into the treetops. Three dead enemy snipers fell out of the trees. The American soldiers slapped fresh magazines into their rifles and continued firing into the trees as they moved forward. They managed to kill another sniper.

Garza realized that nearly all of the fire his men had been receiving came from the treetops. He had his entire platoon line up in a skirmish line and move forward shooting into the trees. More snipers fell dead out of the trees. As he surveyed the situation, Garza realized that the bombs and

artillery had been more effective than he knew. Most of the bunkers in the first line had been blown up with a large enemy body count. As Garza's 4th Platoon began to establish a position, they began taking fire from the second line of bunkers and had to withdraw.

Meanwhile, Charlie Company was being badly battered, the NVA hitting both lead platoons. Over half the men in Sullivan's platoon were killed or wounded. Charlie Company had ceased to exist as an effective fighting unit and was pinned to the side of Hill 900. The two platoons had two killed and 35 wounded so far, and the NVA was still assaulting. There was no place that was safe. A group of stretcher bearers was ambushed, adding seven more wounded. When a relief party went out from the company command post to aid them, they were also ambushed.

When Captain Johnson asked Colonel Honeycutt if he could withdraw, Honeycutt had no choice but to grant permission this time. With Charlie withdrawing, Honeycutt had to order Bravo to withdraw. They had taken 30 casualties and lost all gains they had made. When they saw Charlie Company retreating, the NVA attacked. Firing and throwing grenades, they advanced against the front and both flanks of the company. One of them fired an RPG into a team of stretcher bearers, killing the wounded man and three other men. Johnson radioed Lieutenant Trautman to bring his platoon up from the landing zone to help. Trautman was short a squad that he had sent to Bravo Company earlier, but he took his remaining men up the hill.

National Archives



A wounded paratrooper is loaded into a Dustoff helicopter. After receiving initial treatment from a field medic, wounded personnel were rapidly evacuated by Dustoff choppers.

What Trautman found stunned him. Captain Johnson was in shock and could not even answer Trautman when he asked the status. Trautman brought his platoon up behind the other platoons; shortly afterward, Boccia arrived with his Bravo Company platoon to reinforce Charlie. When he reached Charlie Company's landing zone, he was surprised to learn there was no security at all. Trautman had been ordered to leave the position. Boccia found a row of casualties and had his medic do what he could for the wounded. When he located Johnson, he was sitting on the ground, staring off into space. Johnson told Boccia he lost his company and did not even know what he did wrong. In two hours of fighting, Charlie Company had lost its commanding officer, two platoon leaders, its first sergeant, two platoon sergeants, six squad leaders, and 40 enlisted men.

The dead and wounded were airlifted to the battalion landing zone in a painstaking manner by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Eric Rairdon, who evacuated the wounded in his small OH-6 Cayuse observation helicopter. Rairdon was a legend to the troops for his willingness to pick up wounded in dangerous landing zones under heavy enemy fire. Every time he came to pick up a load, the enemy would try to down his helicopter with machine-gun or handheld rocket fire.

When the last of the casualties were finally removed, the Rakkasans piled up all the equipment they could not carry and set it on fire. Loading up with everything else, they started to hump their way to Bravo Company's night perimeters. Their bad luck was not to end quite yet for a pair of U.S. Cobra gunships carelessly raked the rear of the column. The friendly fire incident left four men seriously wounded.

On May 15 Honeycutt realized he would have to attack with only Alpha and Bravo Companies. Before he could consider an attack, though, he had to assure their rear was safe. There were NVA in the draw behind them, preparing to attack the two companies; Honeycutt called in two fighter bombers, which made three runs. On the first run they strafed with their 20mm cannons, on the second run they dropped napalm and 500-pound bombs, and on the last run they used their 20mm cannons again. The U.S. firebases then shelled the enemy with their 155mm, 105mm, and 8-inch howitzers. Then a pair of Cobra gunships made runs firing aerial rocket artillery. The enemy company was shattered. As a result, the rear of the two companies was secured.

When the artillery was finished with the NVA in the draw, they hit the mountain again. Alpha and Bravo Companies then moved out from their assault positions, Bravo's 4th Platoon had to retake the position they had abandoned the day before. The NVA had set up new claymores, reoccupied many of the abandoned bunkers, and dug new spider holes. Garza had two squads move forward on opposite sides of the ridge. They had not gone far before the NVA set off some of the claymore mines, wounding both point men. Garza radioed Littnan and asked him to send something in to take out the claymores. Littnan ordered him to mark the spot and he would have fighter bombers strike. Garza, with his radioman and three riflemen, crawled up the ridge and Garza threw smoke grenades to mark the spot. The fighter bombers dropped a dozen 250-pound bombs and then strafed the area.

When the planes were done, Bravo struck out again, reconnoitering by fire and spraying the treetops for snipers. They lost more Rakkasans wounded and Garza radioed Littnan for reinforcements. A squad from 1st Platoon was sent forward, and Bravo continued its advance. The top of the mountain had been denuded of trees and resembled a moonscape, with countless craters. When the men passed the tree line, they began receiving heavy fire and were driven to cover. Garza stood up and started throwing hand grenades. "Come on everybody, get up!" he screamed. In response to Garza's exhortations,

the men started crawling up the mountain.

The Rakkasans fought their way past the first bunker line but were stopped cold by the second. They were within 150 meters of the summit. They pulled back a few meters to allow room for a gunship to hit the bunkers. They popped green smoke to show the location and ordered two Cobra gunships overhead to strike 100 meters southwest of the smoke. Incredibly, the first gunship fired an entire salvo into the platoon command post. Two men were killed and 15 wounded, including Captain Littnan. He turned the platoon over to Lieutenant Boccia with orders to continue the assault.

The enemy picked this moment to launch a counterattack. They charged down from the top of the mountain, firing RPGs and AK-47s. The NVA worked their way around Bravo's right flank and attacked it. Enemy squads hit Bravo's right flank and its rear in an effort to overrun the company's landing zone where the wounded were situated. The American troops on the perimeter drove the enemy back with M60 fire. Boccia could not continue the attack. The 4th Platoon was falling back, and he was concerned they might be overrun.

Captain Butch Chappel arrived by helicopter to replace Littnan. Chappel ordered Bravo Company to make another assault. The men, who were fought out, refused. After five days, the attacks on Hill 937 were becoming repetitious. Fighter bombers, helicopter gunships, and howitzers shelled the mountain, but they had little effect on the enemy's sturdy bunkers. When the American platoons attacked, sometimes they made discernible progress, and other times they made hardly any progress at all. Each time the enemy counterattacked with everything they had. The Rakkasans' casualties were piling up.

Alpha Company advanced at the same time as Bravo, moving up the path that Charlie had followed. They did not make it as far as Charlie had, receiving fire from bunkers spread out across the ridge. The enemy fired barrages of rockets at Alpha Company, which left one killed and several others wounded. Lieutenant Frank McGreevy ordered his platoon to make an assault with its machine guns spearheading the attack, but the enemy held its ground. He then ordered a withdrawal, covering it himself. The retreating stretcher bearers were attacked by enemy soldiers on both flanks as they made their way back down the ridge.

Alpha and Bravo had lost 17 and 19 men, respectively. Both showed 67 men on their rosters, half of what a normal rifle platoon should have. Replacements were sent in from Camp Evans, but most were not infantrymen, but rear-echelon men. The men had given Hill 937



AP Photo

Paratroopers rest on the bomb-blasted crest of Hamburger Hill on May 21, 1969. When the Americans reinforced the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry, with three fresh battalions on May 20, the North Vietnamese troops withdrew to their sanctuary areas in Laos.

another name: Hamburger Hill.

Beginning on May 16, the men of 3/187 spent 48 hours awaiting the arrival of the Currahees, the 1/506th, who were fighting their way up the hills south of Hill 937 to join them. There was talk from headquarters of relieving the 3/187th and continuing the attack with the 1/506th, but Honeycutt argued against it. Honeycutt believed that his company would be demoralized if they were not in on the final attack.

On May 18 a two-battalion attack was ordered, the Rakkasans from the north and the Currahees from the south. Charlie and Delta Companies, 3/187th, were stopped just short of the summit. A heavy rainstorm that dropped visibility to zero and left mud knee deep stopped them cold and they dug in where they stood. By this time, Alpha and Bravo Companies of the 3/187 had suffered 50 percent casualties and Charlie and Delta companies 80 percent. The next day, they were ordered to withdraw.

Ten artillery batteries pounded the top of Hill 937 on May 20 with 20,000 rounds and 272 airstrikes, dropping one million pounds of bombs and 152,000 pounds of napalm. The 3/187th, 2/3 Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) and a company from 2/506th attacked together and were able to secure the hilltop by 5 PM. They found that most of the enemy had fled, leaving only a few soldiers behind to make a last stand. The U.S. troops had suffered 72 killed, 400 wounded, and seven missing. The number of NVA casualties would never be known, but the official body count placed their dead at 630.

U.S. newspapers carried Sharbutt's account of the battle, which he called a meat grinder. On the floor of the U.S. Senate, Senator Edward Kennedy excoriated the Army for its attack on Hamburger Hill, calling it "senseless and irresponsible." The Army was sending "our men to their deaths to capture hills and positions that have no relation to ending this conflict," he said. Criticism of the war, although present since the start, increased significantly.

The battle drew to a close after 10 days of savage fighting. The Americans withdrew on June 5, leaving the mountain and the A Shau Valley to the enemy for the remainder of the war. Hamburger Hill was the last major battle between American and North Vietnamese forces in the Vietnam War.

On January 27, 1973, representatives of the United States, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, and the Vietcong signed a peace accord in Paris that established a cease-fire. On March 29, 1973, the last of the American combat troops departed South Vietnam. The North Vietnamese soon violated the cease-fire. On April 30, 1975, North Vietnamese forces captured Saigon. □



Roman legions failed to check the southward migration of the Cimbric and Teutonic in the opening clash of the Cimbrian War at Noreia in 112 BC.



REVENGE

ROMAN

In the evening hours on a midsummer day in 102 BC, Roman Consul Gaius Marius decided that tomorrow was to be the day to confront the barbarians. Marius and his army had been trailing a pair of Celto-Germanic tribes, the Teutones and Ambrones, for the past few weeks. Starting from where the Isere River flows into the Rhone, the enemy's route had led him to Aquae Sextiae, now known as Aix-en-Provence. Although the two sides had clashed previously, that engagement involved only a small portion of both the Roman and barbarian forces. Marius, in an unprecedented third consecutive term as consul, would learn if the past two years of training and conditioning his army had been worth the time, effort, and resources. More important, if Marius lost, the Teutones would have an open road to Rome.

The road to this crucial battle in southeast Gaul began years before with the rise of the Cimbri, who hailed from the Jutland peninsula. Looking for sufficient lands to settle, the Cimbri arrived in Noricum, the land of Roman allies known as the Tau-

Following a string of humiliating defeats at the hands of Celto-Germanic barbarians, the Roman army sought to reverse the trend at Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC.

BY JOHN E. SPINDLER

risci in 113 BC. A miscommunication led to a local Roman commander's attempt of a surprise assault on the Cimbri. The clash ended with a heavy Roman defeat the following year at Noreia. At that point, the Cimbri were joined by the Teutones, Ambrones, and Tigurini in their migration across Europe.

Another significant loss occurred on October 6, 105 BC, at Arausio on the Rhone River. Consul Gnaeus Mallius Maximus led a consular army north from Rome to join forces with Proconsul Quintus Servilius Caepio, whose army was already in the region dealing with border violations. Because Maximus lacked military experience and was a *novus homo*, the first of his family to serve in the Roman Senate, Caepio refused to serve under or even cooperate with him. Bad relations and jealousy led to separate plans and camps. Instead of having one of the largest Roman armies ever put into the field, the forces were divided with Caepio having erected his base in front of Maximus's camp.

Without informing Maximus of his intentions, the proconsul hastily attacked the barbarians. His army was not only stopped, but the Cimbri and Teutones counterattacked and destroyed it. The barbarians quickly overran Caepio's base and then annihilated Maximus's army and camp. The resulting defeat was the worst Rome had suffered since the catastrophe at Cannae more than a century earlier. Approximately 80,000 legionnaires and 40,000 noncombatants lost their lives, leaving Rome open to being conquered.

For reasons unknown, the barbarian masses altered their path and veered away from Italy. With the Roman Republic spared for the near future, the Comitia Centuriata, which was the one of the

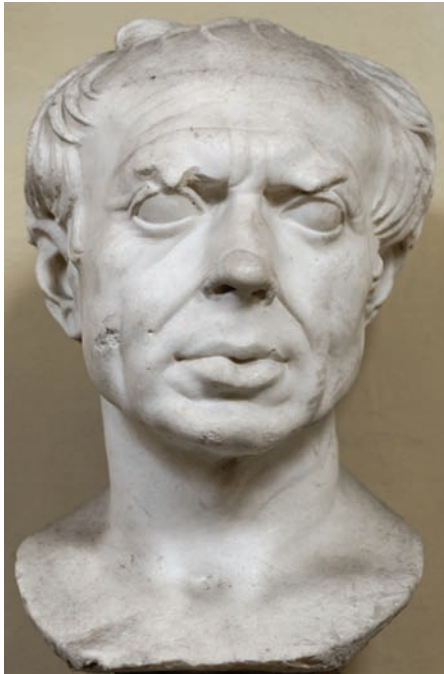
three Roman voting assemblies that could declare war as well as elect the consuls, decided that drastic measures were needed. For that reason, they voted Marius to a second one-year term as consul. Having already been elected to the role in 107 BC, Marius normally would not have been eligible to serve as consul again until a 10-year period had elapsed. The Comitia suspended the rule as it had done previously in times of crisis to the Republic. Given the existing threat, the Republic needed an experienced commander with a successful military record to guarantee Rome's safety.

Born in 157 BC into a plebeian family of the equestrian rank 60 miles southeast of Rome in the Latium town of Arpinum, Marius opted to escape rural life and enlisted in the army. He rose through the ranks and proved to be a capable soldier. He was accused of political bribery in 116 BC, but survived an unsuccessful prosecution. In 115 BC he was posted as quaestor of Hispania Ulterior (Further Spain) and the following year became governor of the province.

In 109 BC Marius served on the staff of Quintus Caecilius Metellus Numidicus in the conflict against King Jugurtha of Numidia. He returned to Rome the following year, though, and publicly excoriated Metellus for his conduct of the war in order to build political support for himself. Marius was elected consul in 107 BC and returned to Numidia where he campaigned for the next two years against the Jugurthine king. However, he was deeply resentful of Lucius Cornelius Sulla's capture of Jugurtha. He returned to Rome and celebrated a triumph on January 1, 104 BC. Through these experiences, Marius became both an astute politician and an able tactician.

Marius arrived in Rome to begin the task of rebuilding the army. The reforms began during his first term as consul. The army previously had only been open to male citizens who owned prop-

Vatican



Glyptothek, Munich



ABOVE: Roman Consul Gaius Marius (left) substantially expanded the Roman army by including all of its male citizens and made key improvements to soldiers' clothing, weapons, and gear. First-century BC Roman soldiers are depicted on the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus frieze. OPPOSITE: The Celto-Germanic tribes departed Jutland because of overcrowding, seeking new lands to the south. They wandered back and forth through Europe pillaging and fighting as they went.

erty that allowed them to equip themselves for war. The small landowners generally constituted the core of the Rome's heavy infantry, while the wealthiest of citizens possessed enough money to serve as cavalry; however, land-owning citizens were increasingly unable to fulfil the required numbers of an expanding army. Marius opened the army to all male citizens by actively recruiting volunteers from the poorer members. When elected again, Marius continued his policy of accepting recruits from the lower classes. He combined these new soldiers with the army raised by Publius Rutilius Rufus, a consul whose army had been training to fight the Celto-Germanic tribes.

With this opening of the army to all citizens, regardless of owning property or not, the option to make soldiering a career became available to the lower classes. Previously serving in the army was seen as a duty to be undertaken before returning to civilian life. Legions now became permanent formations. This new system replaced one that hindered the preservation of knowledge

from past military campaigns and wars. Previously, when men were called back to perform their military service, a majority of the time they were assigned to a different legion. A lack of continuity fostered poor unit cohesion, especially early on in campaigning. As another of his reforms, Marius installed the silver eagle as the standard for every legion. This replaced the eagle, bear, wolf, boar, and horse, which were the five standards previously used.

With an ever-increasing percentage of enlisted men from poorer classes came the challenge of furnishing them with arms since most lacked weapons. One of the Marian reforms mandated that the Republic furnish each soldier with the required clothing, armor, weapons, and gear. Outfitting a soldier became standardized and easier with the decision that almost all would serve as heavy infantry. Armed with two pila and a gladius, the legionnaire was protected in battle by his helmet, cuirass, and scutum.

Marius made a small but significant modification to the pilum. He replaced one of the two iron rivets that attached the tang to the shaft with a wooden dowel. Upon impact the wooden dowel would break and the pilum bend. A pilum could penetrate armor or lodge into an enemy shield. If the enemy soldier was charging and a pilum lodged into his shield, the end of the heavy shaft would often hit the ground and hold the shield in place, disrupting the enemy soldier's forward momentum.

The Roman army's central focus, from that point on, became its heavy infantry. As a result, the Romans relied on their allies to furnish cavalry. What is more, the Roman army relied on mercenaries for specialized roles. For example, they hired archers from Crete and slingers from the Balearic Islands.

In addition, Marius changed the Roman battle formation. For more than two centuries, the maniple was the standard tactical formation for Rome. With lines divided by age and experience, maniples of 60 or 120 men were arranged in a checkerboard formation to allow for rotation of fresh soldiers as a battle progressed. Although there were several reasons for this change, the most important one was to enable the Romans to adapt to different tactics employed by their enemies. No longer fighting the Macedonian phalanx with its lengthy sarissa, the maniple was at a disadvantage when it fought the Cimbri and their allies. These warriors from the north employed brute force to overwhelm the enemy. Therefore, the maniple formation was changed into the cohorts. A cohort consisted of three maniples and it increased unit strength to 480 men with 10 cohorts forming a legion. An advantage of



Alamy

the cohort over the maniple was that it was capable of acting independently. Thus, the Roman commander could employ his legion for multiple situations during combat instead of being only able focus on one task at a time.

With all legionnaires equipped the same, tactical flexibility was increased. In addition to changing the tactical formation, Marius amended the recent trend of a reduced baggage train by ordering all legionnaires to carry their own kits. This earned his troops the dubious nickname of “Marius’s mules” by elder statesmen who were used to the employment of slaves to carry everything when marching across the countryside. The consul initiated a strict training regimen to increase the stamina of his men and instilled a renewed sense of discipline. Combined with the reduced baggage train, the new training routine resulted in improved unit cohesion and speed. More than likely an important part of the training instituted by Marius was that his men learned to face the wild charges of the enemy and not be affected by them, either physically or psychologically. Unlike a majority of recent Roman commanders, Marius was a soldier’s general. He ate the same rations as his men and lived in the same conditions.

While waiting for the return of the barbarians, Marius had his men build a 16-mile canal from the Gulf of Stomalinne to his base of operations at Arelate, on the Rhone River, to keep the men busy as well as to improve the flow of his supplies. Bearing his name, the Fossa

Mariana, Plutarch places its construction in 103 BC. Marius took advantage of the enemy’s hiatus by improving his intelligence network in the region as well as familiarizing himself with the terrain from the Rhone back to the Gallic-Italian border. The combination would allow the Romans to fight the Teutones on terms advantageous to them.

Marius learned the barbarians were on their way back eastward. Although the sources are conflicted on the location Marius chose for his base in the summer of 103 BC, he likely shifted it to Valentia. With six legions and a pair of cavalry formations, known as *alae*, supported by various auxiliary forces, Marius awaited the enemy in his fortified camp.

The barbarian army that was on its way back to invade Italy was once again a coalition of various tribes. For a number of years before the routing of the two Roman armies at Arausio, a few Celto-Germanic tribes had joined in the southward migrations and subsequent war with Rome. Named the Cimbrian War after one of the major migrating tribes, the Cimbri, the conflict lasted from 113 BC until 101 BC.

The Cimbri had migrated south from Jutland because of overcrowding. Along their journey, the Teutones, another tribe from the Jutland region, joined them. Perhaps an unspoken alliance between Cimbrian King Boiorix and Teutone King Teutobod was the cause of the two tribes joining together in their migration south through Europe, although the exact reason has been lost to history. Not surprisingly, the Ambrones, another Jutland tribe closely affiliated with the Teutones, participated in the large-scale migration.

The fourth tribe mentioned by ancient scholars that participated in what has been referred to as an anti-Rome alliance among the barbarian tribes was the Tigurini. They had already defeated the Romans twice. The Celto-Germanic tribes swept the Tigurini into their migrations along the borders of Italy. Estimates of the size of this barbarian army have never been accurately determined—the figures set forth by contemporary historians are almost certainly exaggerated. Contrary to popular belief, the Teutones and other warriors were organized with years of combat experience, including major victories over Roman armies. Indeed, the tribes exhibited a certain degree of discipline in battle.

Like the Romans, the Celto-Germanic warriors were armed with a javelin. They also fought using a seven- to 10-foot spear tipped with a soft iron head. Similar to the earlier Roman armies, the nobles and best warriors of the tribes were better armed. They wore armor, carried wooden shields, and wielded long swords. The standard Teutone warrior wore little or no armor with additional protection in the form of a wicker shield. Almost certainly a significant number of the barbarians would go into battle at *Aquae Sextiae* using Roman weapons and armor taken from dead or captured legionnaires. The barbarians’ typical battle tactic consisted of a ferocious onslaught



ABOVE: Marius meets with emissaries of the Celto-German tribes in the Rhone Valley. The wily Roman general urged his soldiers to observe their tactics and methods as part of their preparation for battle. **OPPOSITE:** The night before the battle, Marius posted 3,000 legionnaires in a nearby wood with orders to attack the tribesmen while they were assailing the Roman fort. The plan worked perfectly, and Marius sallied out to finish off the disorganized enemy troops.

at the start of a battle with lots of yelling and noise to intimidate their foes. Employed as a wedge, the charge worked exceedingly well against the standard Roman maniple formation, but would prove less successful in attacking the larger cohort.

After the rout of the Romans at Arausio, the Cimbri and their allies wandered westward. The tribes divided with the Cimbri and the Tigurini opting to plunder the Iberian Peninsula. The Teutones and the Ambrones marched farther north into Gaul. Unable to replicate their victories against the Romans, the Cimbri were defeated several times in Spain and marched back into Gaul and again enjoyed little success. At some point, the tribes linked up and agreed on invading Italy to defeat the Roman Republic. They hatched a two-pronged invasion plan. The Cimbri and the Tigurini marched into the Alps with the goal of invading Italy via the Brenner Pass. The Teutones and Ambrones took the route closer to the coast, invading through Liguria. In the early summer of 102 BC the Teutones and the Ambrones, under the command of Teutone King Teutobad, arrived outside Marius's fortified base along the Rhone River.

Marius felt secure inside the fortified camp. The Romans had several weeks to prepare their base for an assault. Through his intelligence network, Marius knew of the split in the enemy's forces. His camp blocked the coastal route to Italy while fellow Consul Quintus Lutatus Catu-

lus guarded the Alpine passes with a smaller army. After arriving in front of the Roman base, Teutobad had his army set up camp.

For several days the Teutones invited the Romans to leave their camp and engage in battle. The barbarians' constant taunting agitated the Roman soldiers, who had to listen to the verbal abuse. Although the Roman rank and file desperately wanted to put an end to the haranguing through combat, Marius refused to begin the fighting. Instead, he kept his troops inside their base, much to the legionnaires' displeasure.

Marius used the opportunity to allow the soldiers to patiently observe the enemy and study their tactics and methods. After many days spent waiting, the Teutones sent Marius an invitation for one-on-one combat with their champion. In response, Marius sent out a small, aged gladiator to mock his foes. Offended, the barbarians ravaged the nearby countryside.

When Marius still did not offer battle, the Teutones and Ambrones attempted to storm the Roman camp. "[The enemy] fought continuously for three days in the neighborhood of the Roman camp, trying every means to dislodge the Romans from their ramparts and drive them out on level ground," wrote the Graeco-Roman historian Orosius. After multiple failed attempts that cost the lives of many warriors, Teutobad broke camp and marched his forces toward Italy with the belief that the Roman army would not be a hindrance to the plan. As the Teutones passed, they called out insults to the Romans and asked if they had any messages for their wives. Plutarch mentioned that the barbarian forces were so large that it took six days to march their entire army past the Roman camp. Perhaps it did take that long, but instead of a continuous line it was probably several large groups that passed by the Romans.

After the last of the Teutones and Ambrones had marched past, Marius broke camp. The Romans shadowed the barbarians. The past two years of intense training and carrying their own baggage allowed the Romans to easily keep up with Germanic tribes. Each night the Romans set up a fortified camp near their enemy, keeping difficult terrain in between the two forces. Marius knew he had only a short period of time to find the perfect place and right time to confront the Teutones. After trailing the barbarians for a few weeks over a distance of 120 miles, Marius realized the enemy was getting closer to Italy. He needed to confront them. As a result of living the majority of the past two years in the region, Marius knew the terrain very well. Upon reaching the vicinity of Aquae Sextiae, a village 19 miles north-northeast of

the port city of Massilia, the Roman commander was finally ready to engage the Teutones.

In keeping with the tactic of securing the high ground, Marius elected to set up camp atop a hill at the end of a valley. Sloping down toward a river, the flanks of the valley plain were heavily wooded, which would negate the numerical advantage of the enemy. Teutobad would be forced to attack across a much narrower front. The Roman army was composed of 35,000 men in six legions augmented by 5,000 cavalry and auxiliaries. As for the barbarian army, it is estimated to have numbered upward of 110,000 warriors. The barbarians encamped along a river, the only local source of water. The Teutones took the best areas with the Ambrones on the periphery. Because of their large numbers, the Ambrones bivouacked on both sides the river.

The reason that Marius, who always used the terrain to his advantage, set up camp in an area without a water source is unknown. It might be that the hill he chose for the Roman encampment was the best site available. When the men started to complain about their thirst, Marius replied that water was at the base of the hill but they would have to fight for it. The priority was to set up their fortified camp, and this commenced soon after reaching the hilltop.

At one point, the Roman camp servants armed themselves and went to gather water for the men and animals. Upon reaching the river, they surprised some Ambrones celebrating at the river. A fight broke out between the two sides with the camp servants able to hold their own because the Ambrone warriors had recently feasted and were drunk. The din of fighting reached the Roman's Ligurian auxiliaries, most likely posted as guards as the camp was built, who went to their comrades' aid. More Ambrones joined the battle, as their camp was bisected by the river it would take time for all of them to ford the barrier of water. Soon afterward a detachment of legionnaires entered the fray and turned the tide in favor of the Romans. The legionnaires and the Ligurian auxiliaries routed the Ambrones, leaving the river choked with dead bodies. The Romans did not halt the fight at the river's edge, but pushed their way into the enemy camp, massacring all. At this point the women took up arms and fought both their men, whom they viewed as cowards, and the Romans. Despite these new fighters the Ambrones were completely wiped out.

With so many men joining the battle, the Roman camp was without palisades and walls. The Romans remained on edge throughout the long night awaiting a barbarian reprisal that never came. The positive outcome was that Rome had finally had a victory over the northern tribes, which drastically boosted morale. Marius could tell his men that the enemy was not invincible. Teutobad did not retaliate that night nor the next.

A few days after the defeat of the Ambrones, both sides drew up for battle. By that time Marius had devised a clever plan. The night before the battle, he sent a detachment of 3,000 legionnaires into the woods bordering the valley field. Under the command of tribune Claudius Marcellus, the soldiers moved out after dark. If detected, the Teutones thought such a small force was of no consequence to the inevitable confrontation and took no actions to deal it. Marcellus's orders from Marius were to withhold from engaging the enemy until the battle was well underway and then launch a surprise attack into the rear of the preoccupied barbarian army. It was up to Marcellus to determine the exact moment for the assault.

With Marcellus's dispatch there was no going back for Marius; the coming day would see bloodshed. On this midsummer's morning, both sides drew up their respective armies. Marius marched the Romans outside of the fortified camp and formed ranks. The legionnaires fighting this day would be witness to one of the rare occasions in which a Roman general decided to



involve himself in the battle from its onset and the only battle in which Marius was known to have been an active participant. With his willingness to place himself in danger, Marius's presence served to have a calming effect on his men as well as being an inspiration to them. Outnumbered at least two to one, the Roman commander had already achieved a tactical victory by having his enemy attack uphill across a battlefield that negated their numerical superiority.

At the base of the slope, Teutobad celebrated, having drawn the Roman army out of its virtually impregnable base. The Teutones were an experienced army with major victories over the Romans and probably knew that charging uphill against an awaiting enemy would be very difficult; however, the warriors were wrapped in an aura of overconfidence and Marius suspected their anxiousness. He knew it would not take much to break their discipline and sent his cavalry down into the field. Soon the plan worked and the barbarians charged up the slope after the cavalry. The Germanic tribes normally would charge in the wedge formation that had proved extremely effective against the Roman maniples. At Aquae Sextiae, the Teutones and the remaining Ambrones launched themselves uphill over difficult terrain that prevented the wedge formation from coalescing.

At the top of the slope Marius and his men watched the barbarians rush toward them. The Ambrones chanted their tribe's name and those with shields struck them with their weapons. The Roman commander had his legionnaires wait until Teutobad's warriors were within 15 yards, the effective range of the pila. After their use, the legionnaires would draw their gladii and charge the disrupted barbarian army. When their foes reached the proscribed range, Marius's heavy infantry let loose their pila upon the enemy. Some of the elite Teutones were protected by captured Roman scutum and armor. Although these may have withstood the rain of pila upon the ranks, most of the Germanic warriors were not as fortunate as they wore little or no armor and were lucky to wield a wicker shield. With a number of warriors either dead or wounded, the barbarian charge fractured.

With the Teutones severely disrupted by the pila assault, the legionnaires drew their gladii and looked toward their commander. Marius led the attack down the slope into the disorganized barbarians. The past two years spent training in the cohort formation proved to be worth it. The well-disciplined Romans slammed their shield wall into the Germanic warriors, knocking them off balance. The legionnaires then thrust their gladii into the barbarians. The short swords easily penetrated the barbarians' wicker shields.

The Roman heavy infantry steadily drove the barbarians down the field, inflicting heavy casualties on them in the process. Isolated islands of stiffer resistance, comprised of those Teutones worthy to have captured Roman weapons and gear, held out longer than their brethren. In the end, their courageous stands proved futile. Despite the carnage and severe losses being inflicted upon them by the Romans, the will of the Germanic warriors refused to break.

After the exertion from a sustained push, the battle reached level ground where the momentum of the Roman charge began to falter. At this point, the Teutones started to form a shield wall of their own. This tactic was a defensive one and elicits the theory that their morale was definitely waning. Though their spears had proved less than successful against Roman armor, they had a range advantage over the gladius. A slight hesitation by Marius and his soldiers may have occurred as they sought to change tactics with the barbarians' decision to form a shield wall.

At that pivotal moment, the 3,000 legionnaires under Marcellus rushed out from their hidden location in the woods and struck the rear of Germanic army. Totally surprised by the effectiveness of this bold move, the barbarians' formation and morale was irreparably shattered. Teutobad and the remaining Teutones and Ambrones fled back toward their camp as casualties rose exponentially. Within moments, the Battle of Aquae Sextiae descended into a rout and a Roman victory. Marius did not halt the surge, and his advance continued into the barbarian's camp. The slaughter continued as noncombatants were now killed as the legionnaires sacked and burned the camp.

It is highly likely that the Teutone women tried to fight the Romans like the Ambrone women did a few days before. The two formations of Roman cavalry probably participated in the pursuit and destruction of the enemy at their camp. Though Teutobad managed to escape the Roman net, the Teutones joined the Ambrones as tribes on the path to becoming extinct.

After sacking the barbarian camp, the Roman troops decided to give the majority of the loot to Marius. As a tribute to the gods for this victory, Marius piled his spoils into a great pyre and set it ablaze. The Battle at Aquae Sextiae was a costly one for the Germanic tribes. The Romans suffered 1,000 casualties, while the Ambrones suffered 40,000 killed and wounded and 20,000 captured.

In the early 5th century a Christian priest and historian named Saint Jerome gained access

Alamy



to some fresh material on the battle and its aftermath. Based on his material, he described how 300 captured Teutone women killed their children and committed suicide after their appeals to become temple priestesses to the goddesses Ceres and Venus were denied by Roman officials.

Teutobad managed to escape only to be captured shortly afterward by a Roman-allied tribe who turned him and those with him over to Marius. Almost certainly the Teutone king and any surviving nobles were sent back to Rome for the traditional procession to celebrate their defeat and capture. Afterward, the Romans would have executed them.

Marius returned to Rome as a hero and was elected consul again for 101 BC. Although Marius had defeated the Teutones and the Ambrones, fellow consul Catulus had not prepared his men as well for engaging the Cimbri. His men could not hold back the Cimbri in Rhaetia, and his panicked troops fled south through the Alps to Italy.

Cimbrian King Boiorix, who had played a



pivotal role in the defeat of the Romans at Arausio, marched his troops through the 4,500-foot Brenner Pass in the Alps into northern Italy and defeated Catulus on the Adige River. Fortunately for the Romans, the Cimbri did not immediately push deeper into Italy. Despite his defeat, Catulus had somehow managed to keep his army intact.

Having annihilated the Teutones at Aquae Sextiae, Marius marched east to rendezvous with Catulus. In the summer of 101 BC the Cimbri began advancing west along the Po River. In the meantime, Marius and Catulus joined forces at Piacenza. Elected to his fifth consulship, Marius had overall command of the resurgent Roman army. He initiated talks with the Cimbri. They demanded land on which to settle, which Marius flatly refused. He paraded captured Teutone nobles in front of the Cimbri to infuriate them.

Believing they were the superior force, the Cimbri were eager for battle. Although they the Cimbri had 120,000 troops to Marius's 54,000 men, Roman morale was equal or greater to

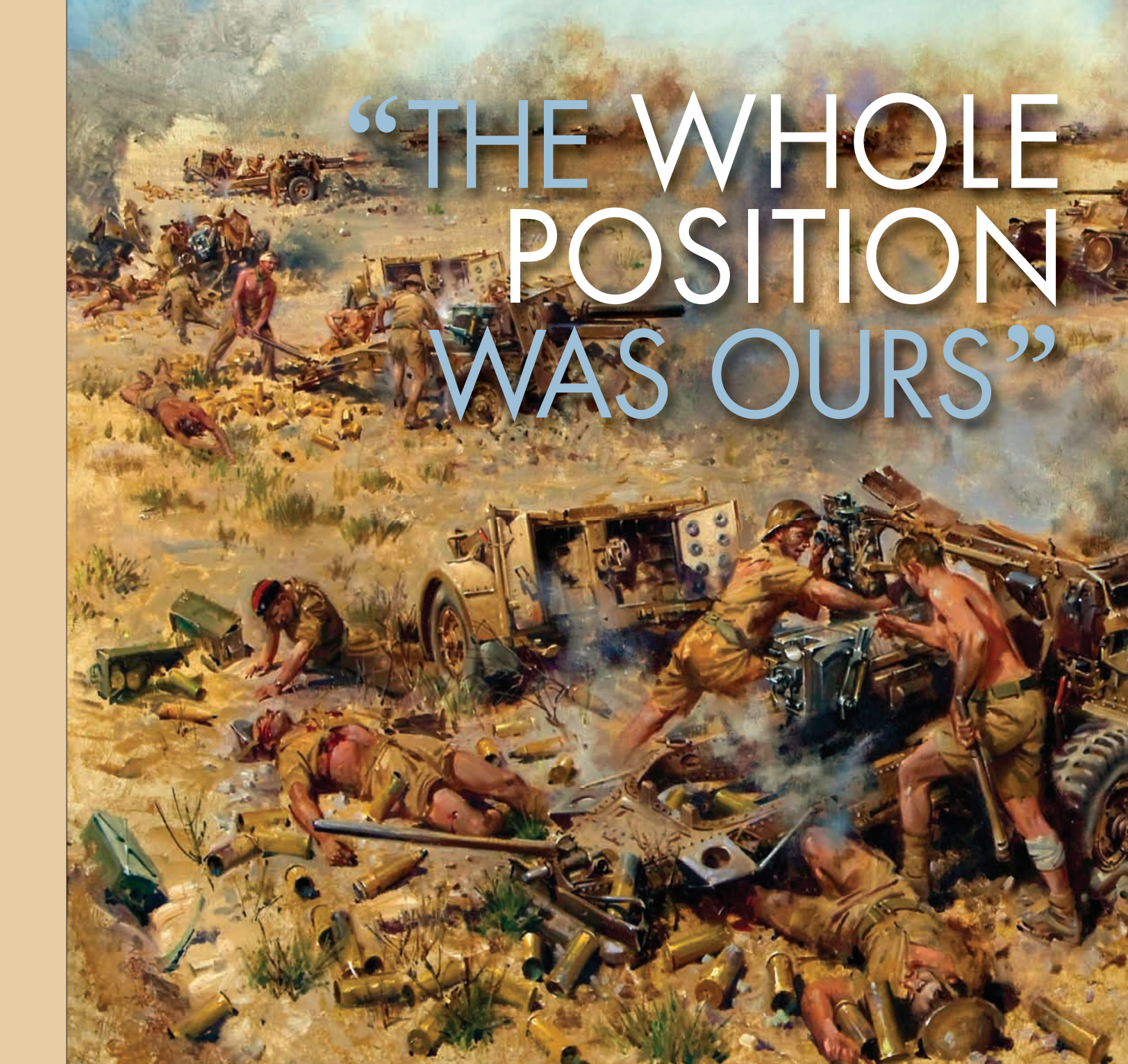
Marius's victory over the Cimbri the following year at Vercellae in Provence sealed the fate of the Celto-Germanic tribes, thereby ending their threat to Rome.

that of the proud Cimbri. The two sides maneuvered for several days. When his troops marched onto the Raudine Plain near Vercellae, Marius felt comfortable offering battle in that location. In the sanguine battle that followed, the Romans emerged victorious. King Boiorix fell in the slaughter. The victorious Romans massacred the captured Cimbri prisoners and enslaved the Cimbri woman and children. Vercellae thus marked the end of the Cimbri tribe.

Marius's victories at Aquae Sextiae and Vercellae solidified his reputation as a great Roman general. He used his sterling military reputation to further his political ambitions; however, his controversial political policies ultimately met defeat. He left Italy in 99 BC and traveled through Asia for the next five years.

He returned to Rome on or about 93 BC where his controversial political helped bring about the Social War in 91 BC. At the outset of the conflict, he successfully commanded an army against Marsi. Following Publius Sulpicius Rufus's failure to obtain for him command of the Roman expeditionary army to be sent into Asia Minor in 89 BC against Mithridates of Pontus, Marius sailed to North Africa the following year to escape Sulla's vengeance. But Marius returned to Italy in 87 BC and joined forces with his ally, Lucius Cornelius Cinna. The two generals captured Rome and massacred their political opponents. Marius was then elected in 86 BC to an unprecedented seventh term as consul. He died 13 days later.

Marius is perhaps best remembered today for having transformed the Roman army from a citizen militia to a professional army loyal to its leaders rather than to Rome. His stunning victory at Aquae Sextiae was tangible proof of his tactical genius. Through his defeat of the Cimbri and Teutones, he restored Rome's military supremacy in Western Europe. □




“THE WHOLE POSITION WAS OURS”

During the early morning hours of May 27, 1942, the men of the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade braced themselves for another mundane assignment in the broiling heat of the Libyan Desert. Positioned to the south of the Gazala Line, the British Eighth Army's defensive stronghold, the Indians were tasked with providing a measure of flank security against a potential Axis attack. Although German forces were known to be on the move farther to the north, the Indians had enjoyed a quiet night in their sector.

Bedlam erupted shortly after 6 AM. To the west, the telltale dust cloud of an enemy column blurred the horizon, and as the troops squinted for a better look, they were greeted with an unwelcome sight. Storming out of the dust were scores of panzers deployed in assault formations. They were heading straight for the Indian position. The superior numbers of panzers overwhelmed the men of the Motor Brigade within a matter of minutes.

The Motor Brigade's headquarters sent out a desperate plea for reinforcements. The plea noted the arrival of an entire division of enemy panzers. The hapless troops of the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade faced the spearhead of Generaloberst Erwin Rommel's Panzerarmee Afrika, which was opening what was destined to be one of the most storied armored clashes of World War II.

Ironically, Germany initially had no interest in the contest for North Africa. Following the stun-



The Axis armored assault against the strategic British defensive position at Knightsbridge touched off fierce fighting as the British sought to inflict heavy losses on the enemy's panzer forces.

BY JOSHUA SHEPHERD

Erwin Rommel squared off against Claude Auchinleck at Gazala in Libya in May 1942. At stake was control of the strategic port of Tobruk.

ning German victories in France during the spring of 1940, Italian dictator Benito Mussolini abruptly joined the global conflict, declaring war on both France and England. The bellicose Mussolini not only hoped to grasp the strategic coattails of his German allies, but also to expand Italy's holdings in North Africa.

On September 13, 1940, Mussolini unleashed an 80,000-man invasion force. After regrouping, the British counterattacked in December. The entire affair degenerated into an embar-

rassing fiasco for Mussolini. The British brushed aside ill-trained and poorly equipped Italian troops. After dispersing the Italians, the British pierced the Libyan border and drove deep into the province of Cyrenaica. By the close of January 1941, the British had plunged more than 300 miles into Libya. In the process, they overran the Italian Army, capturing 130,000 prisoners, 1,000 pieces of artillery, and 400 tanks. Most important, the British had seized the strategic port of Tobruk.

With Libya on the verge of collapse, German Führer Adolf Hitler, although annoyed by what he considered Italian incompetence, felt obliged to intervene on behalf of his Axis partner. Although he continued to regard North Africa as a sideshow to the conflict on the European mainland, Hitler nonetheless was eager to maintain pressure on the British Empire. On February 9, Hitler informed Mussolini that help was on the way. The German leader had decided to reinforce the flagging Italian Army with two German divisions.



German General Erwin Rommel examines a map with a staff officer during the siege of Tobruk in April 1941. An expert tactician, his achievements directing Panzerarmee Afrika drew the admiration of friend and foe alike.

Although two divisions may not have seemed like sufficient reinforcements for the task at hand, the two divisions were composed of veteran armored troops. The Italians would be reinforced with the 5th Light Division, a mechanized outfit that included armored elements, followed by the hard-hitting panzers of the 15th Panzer Division.

Although he would eventually attain near mythic status in military history, in 1941 Rommel was merely a successful divisional commander whose capacity for higher leadership was as yet unproven. But in an army whose officer corps was traditionally dominated by the Prussian aristocracy, Rommel had risen to the highest echelon through a remarkable combination of personal bravery, out-right hard work, and an innate strategic horse sense.

Briefed on developments in North Africa by Wehrmacht Commander in Chief Field Marshall Walter von Brauchitsch, Rommel was given command of the newly christened Afrika Korps. Von Brauchitsch made it clear that Rommel's assignment was purely defensive in nature and largely confined to simply bolstering the Italian defenses. The indefatigable Rommel arrived in Tripoli on February 12, 1941, and immediately set out for a personal reconnaissance of the front.

He found the existing tactical dispositions alarming and the British poised for a renewed strike farther into Libya. As an officer who had seen a good bit of fighting against the Italians during World War I, Rommel had little faith in the reliability of his Italian allies. Although he ostensibly served under Italian command, he held little regard for their fighting abilities. The Italians "were no good at war," he tersely observed.

Rather than passively await a renewed British offensive, Rommel quickly decided to establish defensive positions closer to the enemy, planting a forward operating base at Sirte, 250 miles east of Tripoli. Despite protests from hesitant Italian commanders, within a week Rommel had occupied Sirte with three Italian divisions and two battalions of newly arrived German troops. With little regard for the ungainly Axis chain of command, Rommel began shaping the war in North Africa according to his own strategic vision.

But the British were in no condition to renew an attack. In March 1941 Great Britain had launched a counterattack against Axis forces in Greece. The British had stripped the Western Desert Force of much of its fighting strength for the counterattack. By the time Rommel arrived in the theater, the British Army in Libya was reduced to a skeletal force. Worse yet, field command had devolved to Lt. Gen. Philip Neame, an engineering officer with little combat experience.

Sensing an opportunity, Rommel returned to Berlin on March 19 to plead for authorization to attack the weakened British forces. An inherently aggressive field commander, Rommel was determined to seize the initiative while the odds were favorable. Field Marshall von Brauchitsch, who

had no desire to widen the conflict in North Africa, flatly denied the proposal, ordering Rommel to maintain a defensive posture.

As soon as he returned to Libya, Rommel began waging war on his own terms. On the pretext of defending one of his outposts, he threw forward the 5th Panzer Regiment on March 24. Despite Italian insistence that he halt the advance, Rommel ignored the orders and by the first week of April, the Germans had seized the port of Benghazi, captured Lt. Gen. Neame, and were driving toward the Egyptian frontier.

The British were outmatched but far from panicked. General Archibald Wavell, overall commander in Egypt, ordered a stern defense of the strategic port at Tobruk in northeastern Cyrenaica. Although the town was rapidly bypassed by Rommel's columns, its continued occupation by British troops would gravely threaten Axis lines of communication. Alarmed at the danger to his supply lines, Rommel ordered an assault on the city.

On April 14, he attacked with the 5th Light Division, which was badly chewed up by the 9th Australian Division. Two days later a desperate Rommel tried again, attacking with two Italian divisions that fared no better. The stubborn British garrison at Tobruk endured a protracted trial of siege and bombardment, but it refused to capitulate. After drawing up the bulk of his reserves, Rommel assaulted the city once again on April 30 but was handily repulsed. Bloodied by the stubborn garrison of Tobruk, Rommel was at last halted by Berlin. Alarmed that Axis forces in Cyrenaica were dangerously overextended, von Brauchitsch flatly ordered Rommel to call off any further advance and consolidate his gains.

Far from surrendering the strategic initiative, Wavell regrouped his forces and launched an initial counterattack on May 15. Although the British initially made good progress, Rommel eventually pushed them back to the Egyptian border and succeeded in securing the strategic Halfaya Pass. One month later, Wavell launched a major offensive into Cyrenaica. Codenamed Operation Battleaxe, the entire assault went poorly for the British. A stiff German defense denied the British possession of Halfaya Pass, and Rommel succeeded in once again throwing Wavell's forces back in confusion. Repeated success brought further honors. Rommel was promoted to the rank of General der Panzertruppe in June. As for the Afrika Korps, which received reinforcements, it was elevated to Panzergruppe Afrika.

For his part, Churchill had had enough of the strategic quagmire in North Africa and abruptly ordered Wavell reassigned to India. His replace-

ment, who assumed the job with heavy expectations, was General Claude Auchinleck. Auchinleck was a highly respected career officer. A graduate of the Royal Military College at Sandhurst, the professionally trained Auchinleck had spent the bulk of his career on the Indian subcontinent, ultimately serving as commander in chief in India. After Wavell's ouster, Auchinleck became commander in chief of British forces in the Middle East and proved popular with his subordinates. He seemed to be the ideal supreme commander for the difficult Allied campaign in North Africa. He was highly intelligent, even tempered, and cool under pressure.

Auchinleck tackled the daunting task of relieving Tobruk and driving Axis forces back into Libya. The British high command heavily reinforced the Western Desert Force. Reinforced to nearly three times its original strength, it was redesignated as the Eighth Army. Auchinleck in turn appointed Lt. Gen. Sir Alan Cunningham to carry the fight to Rommel. For the work at hand, Cunningham had 700 tanks, 600 artillery pieces, and 118,000 Commonwealth soldiers determined to restore British honor.

Appropriately codenamed Operation Crusader, Cunningham launched the grand operation on November 18, 1941. Striking for the wayside village of Gabr Saleh, Cunningham had armored elements of his XXX Corps skirt the Axis flank and secure one of the enemy's major supply routes. The two sides sparred and jockeyed for position for four days. Believing he was facing little more than a minor British raid, Rommel struck back on November 23.

The 21st Panzer Division slammed into the complacent tankers of the British 7th Armored Brigade at Sidi Rezegh. Both sides funneled reinforcements into the fight, but Rommel gained the upper hand by consolidating his forces. In two days of fierce fighting, British columns, thrown piecemeal into the battle, suffered heavy casualties.

Cunningham was rattled by the losses. Apprehensive that the entire operation was a disaster, he brought Auchinleck to the front for a personal consultation and then suggested a retreat. The iron-nerved Auchinleck, who was convinced that Rommel's lines of communication were stretched to the breaking point, ordered Operation Crusader to proceed.

The gamble paid off. Rommel's forces were indeed left battered after the fighting, and the New Zealand Division succeeded in breaking through to the besieged garrison of Tobruk. In the midst of the success, Auchinleck removed Cunningham from field command in large part because the general had been exhibiting signs of increasing stress. To head the Eighth Army,

Auchinleck selected 44-year-old Maj. Gen. Neil Ritchie, the British Army's youngest general; however, Auchinleck began wielding more direct power at the front, and thus became the de facto British field commander in North Africa.

Despite the potentially uncomfortable chain of command, Auchinleck and Ritchie achieved stunning success. In a whirlwind campaign that December, the Eighth Army executed a skillful flanking maneuver that pried Rommel's troops away from defensive positions in the vicinity of Gazala. British troops mounted an unrelenting pursuit over the succeeding month, and Axis forces were driven out of Cyrenaica. To his credit, Rommel had succeeded in executing a skillful withdrawal and rallied his forces at El Agheila.

Despite the embarrassing defeat, the indefatigable Rommel had reason for optimism. Due to the global nature of the war, the delicate balance of power in North Africa had suddenly tilted in favor of the Axis. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, Japan launched a wide-ranging offensive that threatened British possessions in the Far East. Reinforcements that had been slated for the Eighth Army were abruptly transferred instead to Southeast Asia.

Rommel found himself at the command of a well-supplied veteran fighting force with an expanded command structure. His forces were redesignated Panzer Armee Afrika in January 1942.

Panzer Armee Afrika had two main components: the Afrika Korps and the Italian XX Corps. Rommel directed these forces himself. The Afrika Korps was a fearsome war machine composed of hardened veterans. Consisting of the 15th Panzer Division, the 21st Panzer Division, and the 90th Light Division, the corps contained a potent mix of armor, artillery, and mechanized infantry,

ullstein bild/The Granger Collection, New York



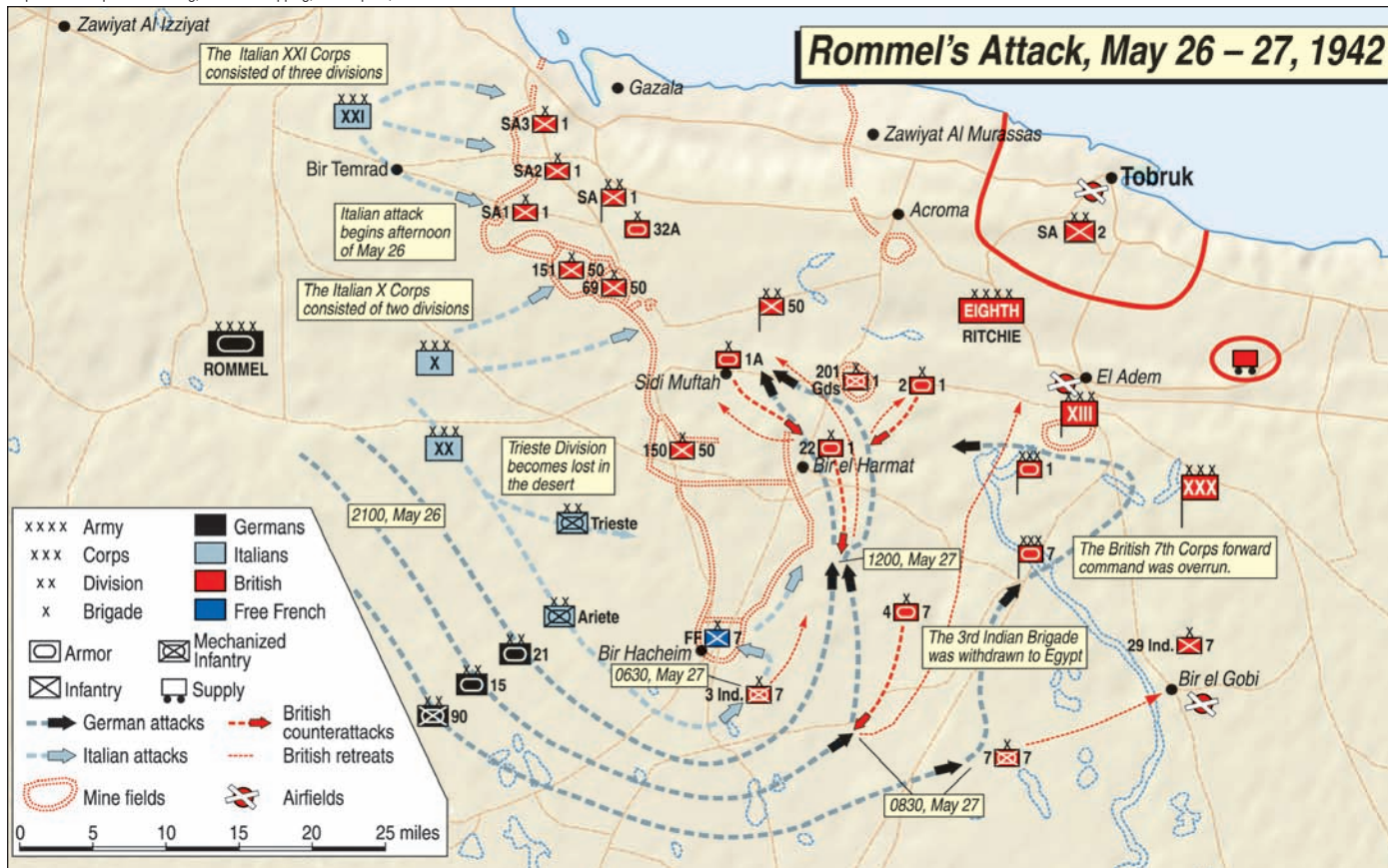
Axis pioneers construct a passage across an Allied antitank ditch during the 1941 Axis offensive against Tobruk.

all trained to operate in the combined arms approach favored by German military doctrine. The Italian XX Motorized Corps was composed of the armored 132nd Division Ariete and the 101st Division Trieste, a mechanized infantry unit.

The other component was Infantry Gruppe Cruwell, which was commanded by General der Panzertruppe Ludwig Cruwell. It consisted of the Italian X and XXI Corps with a combined total of three infantry divisions and one motorized division.

The Afrika Korps was a seasoned force equipped with some of the best armor Germany produced. With such a tool at his disposal, Rommel had no intention of sitting idle. On January 21, 1942, Rommel was on the move for the forward British operating base at El Agheila. Unprepared British defenders fled in short order and once again abandoned Cyrenaica to the enemy. Speeding through eastern Libya, the Germans pushed on to Benghazi, seizing a healthy stockpile of supplies.

British forces continued to fall back in confusion, and much of the blame was laid at Ritchie's feet. Increasingly considered paranoid and overly sensitive by a number of subordinates, the general was widely thought to be in over his head. Auchinleck came to agree with the assessment, but



ABOVE: Following a well-executed feint at the northern end of the Gazala Line shielding Tobruk, Rommel's troops turned the British southern flank at Bir Hacheim and drove into the Allied rear. **OPPOSITE:** Mortar shells explode among the Natal Mounted Rifles' outpost, one of the colonial units defending the Gazala Line.

realized that the continued sacking of Eighth Army commanders would be devastating to morale. Ritchie remained in command.

Having escaped Rommel's steamroller, the British succeeded in feverishly constructing a strong defensive position that extended south from the coastal village of Gazala. The line controlled access to eastern Cyrenaica and shielded the vital port at Tobruk. The defenses ran south from Gazala for 40 miles to Bir Hacheim. To protect the British left flank, the line angled sharply another 20 miles to the northeast. The position was shielded by wide belts of mine fields, but the defenses centered on a half-dozen fixed positions known as boxes. Roughly a mile square, the boxes were laced with barbed wire, bunkers, and pillboxes and were designed to break up enemy tank columns until British armor could arrive to finish the job.

Confronted with such a formidable obstacle, Rommel consolidated his gains and waited for a better opportunity. Yet his British opponents were far from lulled into complacency. Rommel's native genius for desert warfare was quickly earning him a fearsome reputation and his legendary nom de guerre, Desert Fox. Lionized in the German press and feared by his British opponents, his presence on the battlefield exuded an aura of assured victory.

Rommel would soon prove that the British had just cause for entertaining such sentiments. On May 26, 1942, Panzerarmee Afrika was on the move, stirring up immense clouds of dust and drawing the attention of British observers. German artillery likewise opened up while flights of Stuka dive bombers pounded British positions. At the outset, it appeared that Axis forces had targeted the northern half of the Gazala line, centering much of their attention on the vital crossroads of the desert routes known as the Trig Capuzzo and Trig el Abd. As dusk fell, British troops braced for an all-out attack the following morning.

But Rommel had other plans. The perceived attack on the northern reaches of the Gazala Line was little more than a cleverly executed feint. Armored units began pulling out of line after dark. They sped south to link up with the primary armored strike force, the Afrika Korps, which Rommel intended to personally lead in a wide sweep around the British left flank.

While Rommel led the Afrika Korps in a dash for the British rear, the Italian Ariete Division was assigned the task of assaulting Bir Hacheim, the linchpin of Allied defenses. When the Italian armor rolled toward its objective, it unexpectedly blundered into the 3rd Indian Motor Brigade. Outnumbered and taken entirely by surprise, a fierce Italian assault wrecked the brigade. In just 30 minutes the Italians had cleared their front and were once again driving for Bir Hacheim.

The Italians ran into a harder fight in short order. Approaching Bir Hacheim, they were taken under a murderous fire from Allied troops manning a stout defensive box surrounded by minefields. The position was manned by a Free French brigade under the command of Brig. Gen. Pierre Koenig, a tough career officer who possessed a remarkable rapport with his men. Koenig, affectionately known as "Old Rabbit" to his devoted soldiers, succeeded in driving off the Italian assault. But aware of the value of Bir Hacheim to British defenses, he realized that further attacks were inevitable. Koenig ordered his men to dig in and prepare for a fight.

With the Italians bogged down at Bir Hacheim, the Afrika Korps thundered toward the vital supply routes behind the Gazala Line. At the Retma Box east of Bir Hacheim, the German 90th Light Division struck the British 7th

Motor Brigade, which was shattered by the attack and retreated to the northeast. With the Retma Box in Axis hands, a British collapse along the southern end of the Gazala Line seemed within reach.

But the fight would be far from an easy victory. As the 15th Panzer Division rolled north, it abruptly ran into the 4th Armored Brigade in a surprise encounter that neither side expected. At the outset of the fight, the Germans took the worst of it, then pressed on, only to run into the stout wall of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment. The regiment was equipped with American M3 Lee tanks that, using British pattern turrets, were known as the Grant. The Grant's 75mm main gun made it a formidable adversary for Rommel's panzers.

British tankers methodically destroyed vehicle after vehicle, sending the Germans reeling in confusion. Even Rommel was shocked by the ferocity of the British defense. "The advent of the new American tank tore great gaps in our ranks," he confessed. The men of the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment had succeeded in stopping an entire Panzer division cold.

But the weight of numbers, and quick maneuvering, turned the tide. With the British fixed in position, elements of the 21st Panzer Division executed a wide turning movement, falling on the enemy's exposed left flank. With their flank caved in, the men of the 3rd Regiment retreated, German tanks close on their heels.

The momentum of the fight had turned in favor of the Germans. As the Afrika Korps pushed north, it wrecked the rest of the 4th Brigade, consisting of the 8th Hussars and the 5th Royal Tank Regiment. On their far right, the Germans experienced even greater success, where the 90th Light Division smashed startled British columns, in the process capturing Maj. Gen. Frank Messervy, the commander of the 7th Armored Division.

With his 7th Armored Division shattered, XXX Corps commander Lt. Gen. Charles Norrie ordered reinforcements south in a desperate bid to blunt Rommel's attack. The 22nd Armored Brigade made a bold delaying attack into the teeth of the Afrika Korps but paid a heavy price in the process, losing 30 tanks in as many minutes.

As the day progressed, British commanders were able to begin coordinating their efforts against the unexpected onslaught and by that afternoon launched a counterattack. The 22nd Armored Brigade, after regrouping, pushed back against the head of the German columns. Simultaneously, the 2nd Armored Brigade attacked from the east in the hope of striking Rommel's right flank.

What ensued was a quintessential armored battle in the desert wastes of North Africa, and the British, organized after a day of confusing defeats, began gaining ground on the Afrika Korps. Some of the British armor succeeded in working their way into the German rear echelons, wreaking havoc among vulnerable supply trucks.

By little more than grit and outright determination, British forces had at last brought the fast-moving Afrika Korps to a screeching halt. Although the Axis attack had gone remarkably well, British soldiers had given a good accounting of themselves, forcing the Afrika Korps to pay dearly for every inch of ground.

The Germans had driven deep into the British rear areas and secured the vital supply roads of the Trig Capuzzo and Trig el Abd, but the Ariete Division had failed to reduce the French garrison of Bir Hacheim. Moreover, British forces stationed in the northern reaches of the Gazala Line remained largely untouched. The Afrika Korps was trapped to the east of the British minefields, and the long Axis supply line followed a circuitous course far to the south and east of Bir Hacheim.

Despite the stunning tactical victories in the drive around the British flank, Rommel had lost a third of his tanks during the ferocious fighting. Rommel later confessed that he was seriously worried that evening. "Our plan to overrun the Gazala Line had misfired," he wrote, noting that the opposition was stronger than he had expected.

On May 28, Rommel ordered further attacks to the north in the hope of reaching the coast and cutting off British troops occupying the Gazala Line. His forces, though, were badly hamstrung by

Imperial War Museum



a woeful lack of fuel and supplies. Yet by the end of the day his Italian allies had achieved a small miracle. The Trieste Division, threading its way north of Bir Hacheim, succeeded in opening a secure path through the minefields that when widened facilitated the rapid resupply of the Afrika Korps.

Rommel reorganized his forces the next day, placing the Afrika Korps, 90th Light Division, and the Ariete Division between the Trig Capuzzo and Trig el Abd. The position not only cut off resupply to the beleaguered garrison of Bir Hacheim but also served as an ideal jump-off point for a renewed attack against the Eighth Army. Rommel shielded his position with an impressive array of artillery and antitank guns, and planned to regroup for a further push once he was ready. He also entertained hope that the British would suffer heavy losses attacking the Axis defenses.

Ritchie, aware that Rommel's forces were pinned against the minefields of the Gazala Line, was quick to pounce for the kill. As Rommel edged back to a stronger position, Ritchie ordered a series of attacks against Axis forces, but the attacks were largely uncoordinated and beaten off with heavy losses on both sides.

The British dealt Rommel another surprise on May 30. During the swift fighting of the previous four days, an isolated British position at the Sidi Muftah Box, manned by the 150th Brigade, had been bypassed by Axis forces. The position, though, threatened Rommel's new supply lines through the minefields. Swinging his troops to the west, Rommel increased pressure on the isolated British



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TOP: American-made M3 Grant tanks held their own against Rommel's panzers at Gazala. BOTTOM: Italian-made M13/40 tanks were outgunned by the British Army's Grant and Crusader tanks.

troops. Fierce fighting ensued and initial German attacks against the position were repulsed.

British diversionary attacks were launched the next day to relieve pressure on the Sidi Muftah Box, but were once again uncoordinated affairs that were handily brushed aside by the Germans. Rommel, growing frustrated with the stubborn resistance offered by a single British brigade, threw the 15th Panzer Division and 90th Light Division against the box and succeeded in seizing part of the position.

"On the afternoon of May 30 I personally reconnoitered the possibilities for an attack on the [Sidi Muftah Box] and detailed units of the Afrika Korps, 90th Light Division, and the Italian Trieste Division for an assault on the British positions next morning," Rommel wrote afterward. "The attack was launched on the morning of May 31. German-Italian units fought their way forward yard by yard against the toughest British resistance imaginable."

"On the following day the defenders were to receive their quietus," he continued. "After heavy Stuka attacks, the infantry again surged forward against the British field positions. Piece by piece the elaborate British defences were won until by early afternoon the whole position was ours."

Rommel renewed his attack on June 1. After a combined aerial and artillery bombardment, the Desert Fox ordered an all-out attack on the Sidi Muftah Box. Rommel's units overran the box, which was the scene of desperate hand-to-hand fighting. The surrender netted Rommel 3,000 prisoners. Rommel then turned his attention to the French at Bir Hacheim, dispatching the 90th Light and Trieste Divisions to reduce the stronghold once and for all. However, the French troops repulsed both divisions and maintained their stubborn grip on Bir Hacheim.

Ritchie persisted in the belief that Rommel had placed his army in an untenable position. Rejecting Auchinleck's advice to attempt a flanking maneuver to the south, Ritchie once again planned to throw his troops directly into the face of the Afrika Korps, which he was certain was on the verge of collapsing. Ritchie initiated Operation Aberdeen on June 5 by launching a major attack on the Axis position between the Trig Capuzzo and Trig el Abd. The enemy stronghold, which was the scene of some of the bloodiest fighting in North Africa up to that point, came to be known as the Cauldron.

Following on the heels of a massive artillery bombardment, the 22nd Armored Brigade pushed westward into the Cauldron with 150 tanks. The attack initially went well, plunging nearly two miles past outer German positions. But with little warning, the situation turned disastrous. Far too late, it was realized that Rommel had moved his main line back to avoid the initial bombardment. The 22nd Brigade had inadvertently advanced into a trap.

The Germans opened up on the exposed tankers with a deadly combination of artillery and antitank fire that left the battlefield littered with burning British armor. The British tankers frantically wheeled to the rear and abandoned the fight. To the north, the 32nd Tank Brigade fared even worse. It ran headlong into a line of blazing antitank guns fielded by the 21st Panzer Division. The brigade lost 50 of its 70 tanks in a matter of minutes. A number of other British regiments were left stranded inside the Cauldron.

Rommel immediately ordered a counterattack. He hurled the combined armor of the Afrika Korps and the Ariete Division at the withdrawing British forces. The sudden appearance of Axis armor threw the British units into great confusion. They withdrew into the defensive boxes at Knightsbridge and El Adem. The Axis troops had once again repulsed a poorly coordinated British attack with heavy losses. The Germans focused their attention on isolated British units that had been cut off during the hasty retreat. The Germans destroyed half a dozen Commonwealth units while mopping up the following day.

With the Eighth Army again on his heels, Rommel set his sights on the French garrison at Bir Hacheim, which had been a nettlesome tactical distraction for more than a week. On June 7, Rommel reinforced his infantry around Bir Hacheim, bolstering the assault force with tanks from the 15th Panzers. True to form, Koenig's troops stoically defended the position, once again beating off Rommel's forces.

For three more days, the heroic Free French defenders of Bir Hacheim waged a desperate

battle against vastly superior forces. To Rommel's frustration, Koenig repeatedly refused offers of an honorable surrender. But a succession of fierce German attacks increasingly seized portions of the position, tightening the noose around Koenig's exhausted troops. British attempts to relieve the bastion proved tardy and ineffective.

Ritchie authorized an evacuation on June 10. Koenig's soldiers, exhausted, hungry, and low on ammunition, slipped out of Bir Hacheim under cover of darkness. To their consternation, the Germans found the box empty the following day. Of Koenig's 3,600 men, approximately 2,600 reached British lines.

The northern Gazala Line was still in British possession, but then bent back sharply to the east roughly along the Trig Capuzzo. The majority of Eighth Army's armor, which still outnumbered Rommel's panzer force, was largely concentrated between Knightsbridge and El Adem. Ritchie had also been reinforced by two fresh brigades of Indian troops. Although his forces still held an overall numerical advantage, the army's top brass was gripped by a palpable lack of aggressive initiative. On the front lines, repeated battlefield drubbings had left Commonwealth troops badly demoralized.

Rommel had every intention of exploiting the weaknesses. On June 12 Axis forces opened a drive against the British stronghold east of Knightsbridge. The attack was spearheaded by the 15th Panzers supported by the Trieste Division. On the German right, flank security was offered by the 90th Light Division. The 21st Panzers remained in the Cauldron as a reserve.

When the 15th Panzers opened the fight with the British 2nd and 4th Armored Brigades, the attack faltered until Rommel personally arrived on the scene to spur on his tankers. A furious fight developed in which both sides suffered a severe mauling. Rommel, though, was disinclined to engage in a slugging match. Unknown to the British, he brought up the 21st Panzer Division, which unexpectedly appeared to the west and drove into the British right flank.

Allied defenses crumbled and British tank crews executed a desperate fighting retreat to the north. All told, the British lost a staggering 138 tanks in a few hours of heavy fighting. They were also left in a tight spot. Elements of the 21st Panzer had moved just west of Knightsbridge, and units of the 15th Panzer were just outside of El Adem. Rommel had the cream of the Afrika Korps in position by nightfall to deliver a deadly blow to the Eighth Army.

In the morning, the German juggernaut pressed forward. Rather than confront the

Both: National Archives



TOP: An injured crewman crawls away from the burning hulk of his Crusader tank. BOTTOM: German Panzers advance through the desert toward Tobruk. Rommel's decisive victory at Gazala compelled the British to withdraw to the relative safety of Egypt.

Knightsbridge Box head on and risk a lengthy reprise of the Bir Hacheim siege, Rommel sent the 15th and 21st Panzer Divisions in a mad dash that bypassed the flanks of the British position, pressed north toward the coast, and threatened to cut off all escape routes for British troops manning the northern Gazala Line. The crucial Knightsbridge Box was abandoned. But in large measure due to stubborn resistance offered by the 201st Guards Brigade, the Afrika Korps was unable to press through to the coast by nightfall.

The two days of fighting had decimated Eighth Army's armored brigades and left much of the army in grave danger of being cut off and surrounded by the Germans. Ritchie came to the conclusion that a major retreat was necessary to save the battered remnants of the army, and ordered the 1st South African Division and the British 50th Division to evacuate the Gazala Line and head east along the Via Balbia, the main coastal thoroughfare.

Ritchie rallied what was left of his forces in a line running from Tobruk southeast to Belhamed, which was home to a vast supply dump. The skeletal remnants of the Eighth Army were no match for the Afrika Korps, which continued its unrelenting assault on June 15. In just two days, Rommel's panzers pried loose the last British defenders southeast of Tobruk, and Ritchie's army was in flight toward the Egyptian border.

The vital port of Tobruk, the greatest prize in North Africa, was at that point completely cut off.

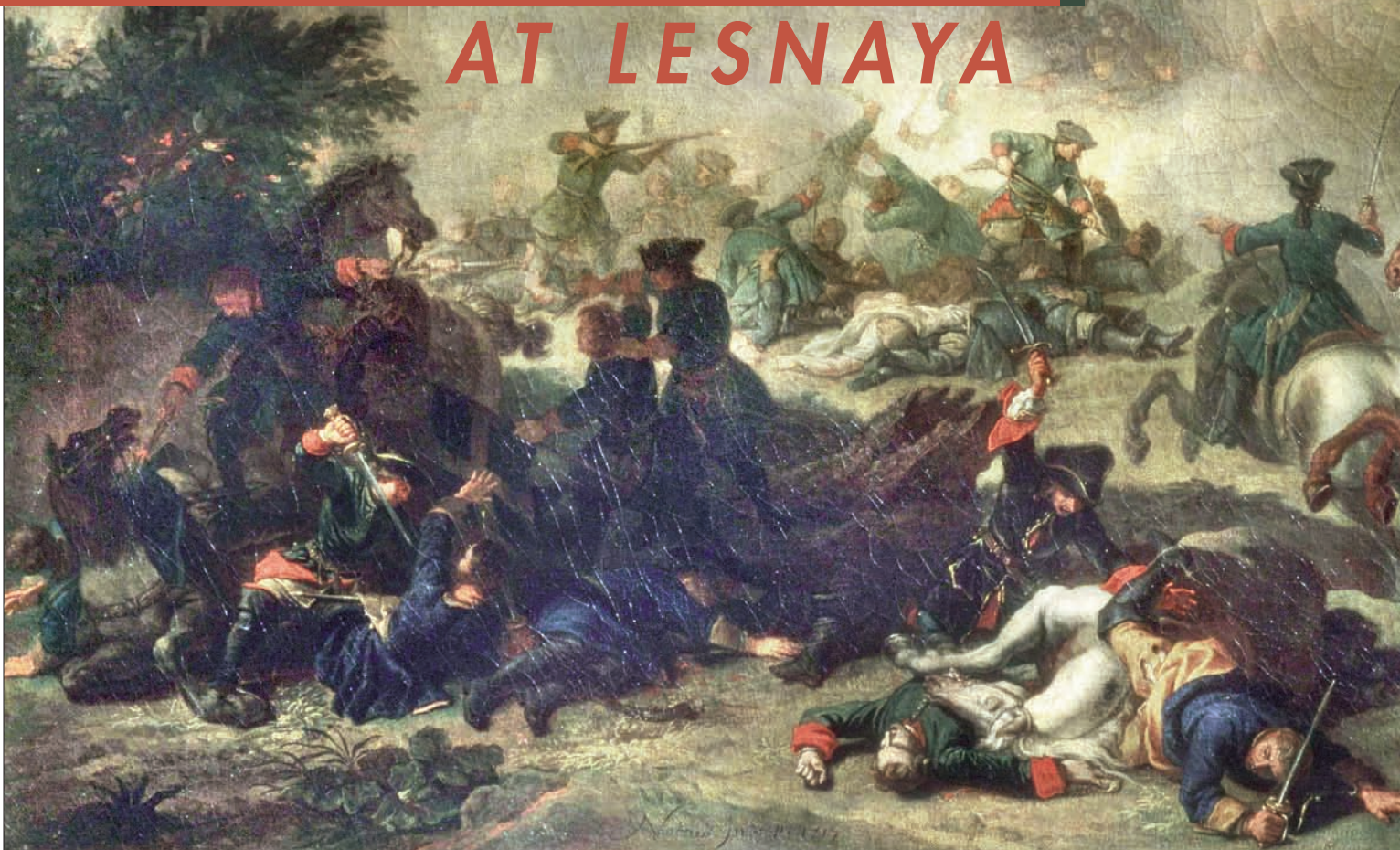
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Swedish King Charles XII's army of invasion in Russia desperately needed resupply in the summer of 1709. A supply train trying to reach it came under sharp attack by Czar Peter I.

DESPERATE STAND

AT LESNAYA





A Russian flying column of mounted infantry, dragoons, and horse artillery attacked the Swedish convoy in a forested region in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. INSET: Swedish King Charles XII pursued his enemies with the righteous anger of an Old Testament prophet.



BY ERIC
NIDEROST

COLONEL AXEL GYLLENKROK had had a lot on his mind in recent weeks. It was the autumn of 1708, and as the Swedish Army's general quartermaster he was not only responsible for supplying its needs on campaign, but he also functioned as an operational manager. In the latter role he poured over maps and traced out what he thought were the best routes to travel to achieve the king's goals. Once a route had been determined, he would present his findings to commanding general King Charles XII for final approval.

Gyllenkrok was with the main Swedish Army at Tartarsk, which at the time was on the border with Russia. For the last few months King Charles had been playing a kind of cat-and-mouse game with Russian forces under the command of Czar Peter I, later known as "Peter the Great." Charles' objective was nothing less than the total defeat of the czar and the irrevocable destruction of Russia's growing power and influence in Europe.

The general quartermaster was in his tent when suddenly the door flap was drawn open and a tall man in a blue uniform entered. It was the king himself, and despite the surprise appearance no one could mistake Charles XII for anyone else. The 26-year-old monarch had an oval face, lightly pockmarked with smallpox scars, and though young in years his face was weathered and tanned from years of campaigning. He wore his close-cropped hair naturally instead of the customary full-bottomed curly wig.

Charles came straight to the point. "In what direction do you think the army should march now?" he asked, his blue eyes boring into his quartermaster. This was a loaded question, and Gyllenkrok knew it. The original objective was Moscow, old capital of ancient Muscovy, as Russia was sometimes still called. But the Swedish offensive was stalled, in part because a vital supply train under Maj. Gen. Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt was inexplicably delayed.

Winter was approaching and with it the end of good campaigning weather. Options were few, though fairly obvious and clear cut. The Swedish Army could try to find and ultimately link up with the supply train. It could also move south, into the Ukraine, where the countryside was rich and untouched by war. Then, too, allies might be found in the south, including some elements of the Cossacks, those hard-riding horsemen of the steppes.

Hedging his bets, Gyllenkrok said it was impossible to counsel Charles unless he knew what the king himself had in mind. "I have no plan!" the king replied, dropping a bombshell. Charles XII usually had a clear vision of his objectives, and once he decided on a course of action, nothing could persuade him to do otherwise. He had known what to do since this Great Northern War had commenced in 1700, eight long years earlier. And so far, militarily at least, Charles had been proven right more times than wrong.



But now Charles was at a crossroads. For the first time, perhaps in his whole life, he was truly uncertain about what to do. The whole campaign, perhaps even the destiny of the Swedish empire itself, rested on the decision he was about to make. Gyllenkrok, not knowing what to say on the spur of the moment, improvised and said it would be best if two other people were consulted about the matter. Charles approved, so Field Marshal Carl Gustav Rehnskold and Count Carl Piper were brought into the discussion.

Should the Swedish Army make a concerted effort to link up with the apparently struggling baggage train, or should it press on, going south into the literally greener pastures of the Ukraine? That would mean abandoning the drive on Moscow, whose capture was considered to be one of the key elements in a Swedish victory. Charles and his advisers reviewed each option carefully.

In the early 18th century Sweden was one of the great powers of Europe and, as such, was a splendid anomaly. It was an aberration because the nation only had approximately two million people. In contrast, the France of Louis XIV had 20 million souls. But a series of strong 17th-century monarchs catapulted Sweden into the front rank of Europe's great nations. Gustav II Adolf, generally known as Gustavus Adolphus, laid the foundations in the Thirty Years War, in which he earned everlasting fame as one of the great military commanders of his age. King Charles X Gustav and Charles XI also made noteworthy contributions to the growing Swedish empire centered on the Baltic Sea.

The Swedish Army was also the cornerstone of the country's rise to empire and political greatness. Charles XI established a fighting force that featured such innovations as the socket bayonet for the infantry. Swedish soldiers had iron discipline and were superbly trained and equipped. Their basic courage was reinforced by a firm Lutheran protestant faith that made fatalism a positive attribute. Most soldiers devoutly believed that God, not random chance or luck, was the prime factor in determining one's fate. If it was not your time to die, you would emerge from battle unscathed.

Strong monarchs and a well-disciplined army ensured that the Baltic Sea remained a "Swedish lake." In 1700 Sweden encompassed not only the country proper but Finland, Karelia, Estonia, Ingria, and Livonia. It also had footholds in Germany, including western Pomerania and the seaports of Stettin, Stralsund, and Wismar on the northern German coast. Most of the islands of the Baltic Sea were under Swedish control, as were as the bishoprics of Bremen and Verden.

But power politics has no morality, only self-interest. Sweden's neighbors were envious and were waiting for a chance to seize plum portions of her empire. The opportunity presented itself when King Charles XI died of cancer in 1697 and was succeeded by his 15-year-old son, Charles XII. Charles was not only an adolescent but a seemingly irresponsible one, more interested in hunting,

ABOVE: In a lightning campaign against Denmark in the summer of 1700, Charles landed his troops in Jutland and threatened Copenhagen, forcing King Frederick IV of Denmark to make peace. **OPPOSITE:** Charles XII crushed the Russians in November 1700 at Narva in Estonia; afterward, he marched against the Poles and Saxons.

wildly galloping horses through the streets of Stockholm, and at least in one celebrated incident, getting dead drunk.

But these youthful indiscretions masked a keen intelligence and an iron will. Embarrassed by his behavior, he swore to his grandmother he would never get drunk again. He kept his word and for the rest of his life he would drink only weak beer, a little wine to make a toast, or *svagdricka*, which had very low alcohol content. He also loved *olsupa*, a soup that did contain a little wine or beer, but also had flour and eggs and was spiced with ginger and nutmeg.

Charles never wed. "I'm married to the army," he declared. His self-discipline, ascetic lifestyle, and love of the military arts made him the perfect "husband" to his armed forces. Yet Charles was no barbarian. He read French, loved the plays of Moliere, and was fluent in Latin and German. But above all he was a soldier and would soon prove to be a gifted general with touches of real genius.

Hearing only of the king's youth and inexperience, Sweden's enemies were encouraged. In 1699 Frederick IV of Denmark, Peter I of Russia, and Augustus, elector of Saxony and king of Poland, entered into a secret alliance to dis-

member the Swedish empire. Frederick would attack Swedish possessions in the west, and the Poles and Russians in the east. The war opened with an attack by the Danes, but Charles took the news with scarcely a flicker of emotion, save for a steely resolve to defeat his enemies.

Charles first dealt with Denmark, surprising everyone by quickly moving into Jutland and threatening Copenhagen. King Frederick was soon forced to sue for peace. Having defeated Denmark in six weeks, the Swedish king now turned his attention to Czar Peter, who at that time was investing the town of Narva. Charles, landing with only 8,000 men, was faced with an entrenched Russian Army of 40,000. Using a blinding snowstorm as cover, Charles personally attacked the Russian Army and routed it. It was a brilliant victory that planted the seeds of the king's legend as "Alexander of the North."

Charles's easy victory made him contemptuous of Russian fighting abilities and scornful of Russian generalship. Peter was vulnerable in the weeks immediately after Narva, but Charles turned aside and focused his attention on Augustus. For the next eight years Charles won victory after victory, often greatly outnumbered by his foes. Along with John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, and Prince Eugene of Savoy, King Charles XII gained immortality as one of the great captains of the age of Louis XIV.

Charles pursued his enemies with the righteous anger of an Old Testament prophet. He

never would have started a war, but, if attacked in an unjust war, he resolved never to stop until his foes were utterly vanquished. To Charles this war was unjust; it was a sudden and deliberate attack on a peaceful Sweden. Denmark, Poland-Saxony, and Russia started the war, and he resolved to finish it on Sweden's terms.

The Swedish king eventually deposed Augustus and placed an ally, Stanislaus Lecycznski, on the Polish throne. At that point, Czar Peter remained the only enemy still active in the field. While Charles campaigned in Poland, Peter was far from inactive. He took Ingria along the Gulf of Finland, and in 1703 laid the foundations of St. Petersburg, soon to be Russia's new capital and its so-called window to the West.

Charles's Old Testament sense of moral righteousness, of being the wronged party, had served him well thus far, but then it led him to extremes. In 1707 the impetuous young monarch was at the height of his power, admired, feared, and courted by seemingly all of Europe. When Peter in effect sued for peace, offering to return all of the Russian-occupied territories of Livonia, Estonia, and Ingria except the St. Petersburg region and the Neva River, the king spurned this almost abject surrender, feeling the offer was insincere. Besides, Charles's sense of righteous indignation demanded that Peter be humiliated and possibly even dethroned.

The Swedish invasion of Russia officially began in August 1707 when Charles moved out of his bases in Saxony. All Europe watched with breathless anticipation. Charles was now a legend in his own time, but Russia was still vast and largely unknown. The Swedish king led 44,000 men, the largest army he ever commanded; it was a veteran force brimming with confidence in its young monarch and in its own abilities. Even German civilians were impressed. "I cannot express how fine a show the Swedes make: broad, plump, sturdy fellows in their blue-and yellow uniforms," a Saxon admitted as he watched the long columns head east.

Czar Peter's troops were in Poland, which meant the defense would begin well forward of the actual Russian border. More importantly, the geography favored the Russians. There were vast tracts of dense forests, and roads were few and primitive at best. And many of Eastern Europe's great rivers are north-south in position, which made them effective barriers against any invader advancing from the west.

But in the early weeks these advantages were neutralized by Charles's brilliant maneuvering. The king was a tactical genius whose almost instinctual feeling for topography served him well. Time and again he would outflank Russian troops, forcing them to withdraw. At the Vistula River in Poland the Swedes crossed over the newly formed ice, at the same time outflanking



Unknown

the Russians under Prince Alexander Menshikov in Warsaw and forcing them to abandon the Polish capital.

The Russians withdrew and formed another defensive barrier on the Narew River at Pultusk. Charles was unfazed. He led his army northeast, in effect sidestepping and getting around the Russian fortifications. The country was thickly forested and covered in marshes and viscous, quicksand-like bogs, which is probably why the Russians did not expect Charles to go that way. The march was indeed a nightmare, but the Swedes got through and crossed the Narew where the Russian defenses were virtually nonexistent. Charles and his long-suffering but hardy and confident soldiers had triumphed again.

Charles decided to cross the Neman River, the third river barrier, by means of a coup de main that reflected the king's own personality: bold, innovative, and in some respects foolhardy. The key to the Neman River line was the Lithuanian town of Grodno, where a major bridge spanned the waterway. Charles galloped ahead with 600 troopers of his Guards cavalry.

Faced with his enemy's inexorable advance, Peter fell back on a tactic that would be copied as late as World War II: scorched earth. The czar gave orders that all food and fodder for animals would be removed, burned, or hidden from the invaders. Towns and villages were put to the torch, and livestock were moved and hidden deep in the forest. Use of this tactic began in Poland and Lithuania, but even when Charles reached Russia proper, the harsh and unrelenting policy continued.

The Swedish Army finally went into winter quarters in February 1708 at Radoshkovich, 25 miles northeast of Minsk. The Swedes were used to northern climes, but suffered from a lack of proper food, cramped conditions, and plunging temperatures. Dysentery swept through the camp; even affecting Charles for a time. Foraging parties found little to eat in the snowy forest wastes, and Lithuanian peasants were sometimes coerced by torture to reveal hidden caches of food.

As spring approached Charles had a look at the overall strategic situation. One day the king watched Quartermaster Gyllenkrock working on maps with a growing interest and excitement. "We are on the great road to Moscow!" Charles exclaimed, but Gyllenkrock said no, that was not quite the case, at least not yet. But it was plain that that was his ultimate goal: to vanquish Peter, capture Moscow, and dictate terms of peace at the Kremlin.

It was a heady dream, but a dream the supremely confident Charles felt was well within his grasp. "When we begin to march again, we shall get there, never fear," the king replied. Taking his cue from Charles, Gyllenkrock prepared a line of march that would take the Swedish Army to Mogilev on the Dnieper. Once across the Dnieper River, the main road would lead to Smolensk and then to Moscow, the ultimate prize.

Moscow was to be the strategic objective, but the Swedish king was not going to let his enthusiasm get the better of him. There were practical considerations as well. The Russians were continuing their scorched earth policy, and it was still a long way to Moscow. How could he maintain his offensive under those conditions?

Charles summoned Lewenhaupt to his winter quarters to discuss the situation in March 1708, just before spring was due to arrive. Lewenhaupt was governor of Swedish Courland and was based in the fortress city of Riga. He had 12,000 men under his command, a force known as the Army of Courland.

Once again, Charles, not mincing words, issued orders that were straight and to the point: Lewenhaupt was to collect as much food and supplies as he could, form a huge wagon train, and transport the vital goods to the main army. Ideally, the general was to gather enough food and ammunition for his own men for three months and the entire army for six weeks. The wagon route chosen from Riga to Mogilev was 400 miles, and if he left Riga in early June, he would link up with Charles in two months.

BELOW: Swedish General Adam Ludwig Lewenhaupt (left) and Russian Czar Peter I, later known as "Peter the Great." Charles XII found Lewenhaupt's slow progress maddening. **OPPOSITE:** Charles XII reviews his well-trained infantry, which relied heavily on the cold steel of the bayonet in battle.



Nationalmuseum, Stockholm



The Heritage, St. Petersburg

heavy loads to the point of exhaustion and beyond. Carpets of branches were laid on the mud, and wooden boards covered the worst spots, but progress was still slow.

In the meantime, Charles had begun his spring 1708 campaign with renewed vigor. The next obstacle was the Berezina River, which would figure so prominently in Napoleon's ill-fated campaign of 1812. The Russians were determined to stop Charles dead in his tracks, and this river line seemed to be ideally suited to the purpose. However, the czar did not know exactly where the Swedes would attempt a crossing.

The Russian Army was stretched thin over a 40-mile front. Approximately 8,000 Russians were stationed at the Borisov crossing, the most obvious crossing point. Charles had no intention of doing the obvious. On June 16, after nine days of marching, the Swedish Army once again outflanked the Russians and threw up two bridges at Berezina-Sapezhinskaya. The move was detected by Russian dragoons and Cossacks, but there was no attempt to impede their crossing.

Charles marched on, but then received reports that the main Russian army had taken up position behind the Vabitch River, an area of swamps and marshes. Once again they were spread thin, but seemingly much better prepared. Green-coated Russian troops had literally dug in on the bank, and though some Swedish officers were still scornful of their Muscovite foes, Charles understood that the czar's army had improved to a considerable extent. Once again Charles's brilliance saved the day. His noticed that there was a marsh between two Russian divisions, and since it was undefended it was obvious the enemy felt it was impassible. The king led his men across the river at this point. Once across, there was still a lot of hard fighting to be done, but in the end this clash, which history records as the Battle of Holowczyn, was a Swedish victory.

The Swedish Army followed up its hard-fought win by moving on to Mogilev on the Dnieper River. It was July 9, and the peak of the campaigning season. Charles sent reconnaissance cavalry to scout the eastern bank, and the horsemen returned reporting that no opposition could be found. The way seemed clear, and once across the river, it was only 100 miles to Smolensk and from there 200 miles to Moscow.

Although the rank and file did not know it, Charles was waiting for Lewenhaupt's supply train to join the main army. Day after day, week after week, Charles fretted and paced like a



Unknown

FROM THE BEGINNING IT WAS CLEAR THAT THERE WOULD BE FEW DISPLAYS OF TACTICAL BRILLIANCE ON THE FIELD. NO ONE—NOT THE CZAR, MENSHIKOV, OR LEWENHAUPT—SHOWED ANY SIGNS OF SUPERIOR GENERALSHIP. THIS WAS A SOLDIER'S BATTLE, WITH MASSES OF INFANTRY SLUGGING IT OUT ... IN A SEEMING TEST OF WILL.

caged tiger. Where was Lewenhaupt? Every night the eastern skies were illuminated with an ominous orange smear that gave the horizon an almost surreal glow. It was the combined fires from burning villages that the Swedish Army might well have to depend upon for sustenance during its drive to Moscow.

It was plain that the march to Moscow would be dogged by starvation, because the czar's scorched earth policy remained in full force. That made Lewenhaupt's struggling column all the more important. The supplies he brought would enable the Swedish Army to cross what was becoming a picked-clean, barren wasteland with relative impunity.

But Charles was concerned that the long delay was taking the edge off the army's offensive spirit. To that end, he launched a series of probing marches around the Dnieper region, first heading north, then abruptly turning south. If he was lucky, the Russians might be lured into a pitched battle, something that Charles was sure he could win handily.

Eventually the Swedish Army found itself in Tatarsk, where Charles began his series of consultations with Gyllenkrok, Count Piper, and Field Marshal Rehnskold. Common sense said that Charles should retrace his steps and go back to the Dnieper River, where he would be sure to meet Lewenhaupt's supply column.

Once the union took place, Charles could resume his march on Moscow. There would be ample food and, as an extra bonus, Lewenhaupt's additional 12,000 men would reinforce the main army. Yet Charles scorned this option. A retrograde march would be interpreted as a retreat, something the king found repugnant. Europe was watching, and the Swedes might lose face by retreating back to the great river. Moreover, Russian morale might rise even as his men's morale plummeted.

But there was another option. He could turn south into the Ukraine. The region was rich, fertile, and untouched by war. And then, there was the matter of Ivan Stepanovich Mazeppa, Hetman of the Ukrainian Cossacks. These famed horsemen of the steppes were legendary fighters, and Mazeppa had been secretly negotiating with Charles to switch sides from Russia to Sweden.

Mazeppa might bring as many as 30,000 Cossacks to aid Charles, thus enabling the Swedish king to change course and renew his drive to Moscow. It was a heady scenario, and it helped Charles decide in favor of going south and temporarily abandoning his Moscow offensive. Couriers were sent to Lewenhaupt informing him of this change of direction and ordering him to a new rendezvous point farther south.

The Swedish Army began its march south on September 15, 1708. At that time Lewenhaupt was about 30 miles west of the Dnieper, and Charles was 60 miles east of the river. As soon as he received this information, Peter recognized that a golden opportunity was in the offing. There was a 90-mile gap between the two Swedish formations, and Charles was rapidly marching even farther south. The cumbersome wagon train, laden with desperately needed ammunition and supplies, would be vulnerable to Russian attack.

Acting with great swiftness, Peter ordered Field Marshal Boris Sheremetev to take the main army and continue to shadow the Swedish king as he went south. The czar had other plans for himself. Peter took personal command of the flying column, which consisted of 10 battalions of his best infantry mounted on horses as well as 10 regiments of dragoons and four batteries of horse artillery. The 11,625-man force included the elite Semenovsky and Preobrazhensky Guard Regiments.

After three long, grueling weeks on the road Lewenhaupt's column finally reached the Dnieper on September 18. It took three days for the wagon train to cross the river. The Russians did not interfere, but red-coated Russian cavalry lurked in the woods. Lewenhaupt was acutely aware that his every move was being closely scrutinized. King Charles's latest messages had reached him, ordering the general to turn south and head for Starodub, the new rendezvous point for the wagon train and the king's army.

Lewenhaupt's immediate goal was to get to Propoisk on the Sozh River. If he could cross the Sozh, he stood a fair chance of catching up with Charles. On the morning of September 27, Russian cavalry caught up and started skirmishing with the wagon train rear guard. A major engagement seemed imminent, and Lewenhaupt was faced with two choices. He could detach the rear guard to fight a holding action to delay the Russian pursuit, or he could halt and deploy his entire force for a set-piece battle.

Lewenhaupt chose to stand and fight, which in hindsight was a fatal error. He sent the supply wagons on ahead and formed his 12,500 infantry and cavalry into battle formations. They waited for an agonizingly long time, but still no Russian attack materialized. The morning and much of afternoon were utterly wasted.

When he finally realized that no attack was forthcoming, Lewenhaupt fell back farther down the road and reformed his battle lines. Still, though, the Russians did not cooperate. The Swedes stayed in battle formation all night. When there was still no attack by the morning of September 27, Lewenhaupt resumed his march, halting at the village of Lesnaya. But that time it was too late to escape the Russian clutches. The appearance of Russian dragoons meant that the Swedes would have to stand and fight.

Lewenhaupt had earlier dispatched 3,000 cavalry to secure the river crossing at Propoisk, but now it made little difference. Many Swedes in Lewenhaupt's doomed command must have realized the terrible truth that if it were not for the previous wasted day and night, the convoy might have crossed the Sozh and eluded its pursuers. In war circumstances change rapidly, and one wrong decision, no matter how seemingly valid at the time, can lead to disaster.

Lewenhaupt formed his defensive lines just north of Lesnaya village. The region was thickly forested, but the ground just in front of the village was an open field, so some maneuver was possible. The Russian dispositions were simple. Generalissimo Prince Alexander Menshikov took over the Russian left flank with three battalions of infantry and seven dragoon regiments. Czar Peter commanded the right, with two Guard regiments and one battalion of infantry. He also controlled the Russian reserve cavalry.

The battle commenced at 1 P.M. From the beginning it was clear that there would be few displays of tactical brilliance on the field. No one—not the czar, Menshikov, or Lewenhaupt—showed any signs of superior generalship. This was a soldier's battle, with masses of infantry slugging out volley after volley, charge after charge, in a seeming test of will.

At one point Menshikov ordered an advance to exploit a gap he perceived in the Swedish line, a hole created by the heavily wooded terrain. The green-coated peasant soldiers surged forward, only to be sent packing by a spirited charge of Swedish cavalry. The Russian foot soldiers sought refuge in the nearby forest, where the thick branches and sun-dappled leafy ground made it a perfect place to hide.



But their retreat weakened the Russian line and it looked like the Swedes were at the point of breaking through. But Czar Peter propped up the Russian line by sending in the Semenovsky Guard Regiment to put an end to the crisis. And so the battle seesawed back and forth, with no clearcut winner. "All day it was impossible to see where the victory would lie," noted the czar.

At 4 P.M. Russian cavalry under Lt. Gen. Adolf Bauer arrived on the scene and launched an attack on the Swedish right flank. Hard pressed, the bluecoated Swedes were forced to give ground, though they were far from routed and certainly not defeated. They did retreat behind a series of protective earthworks that had been thrown up around Lesnaya. The fighting sputtered out and effectively ended by around 8 P.M. A freak snowstorm, unusual for this early in autumn, also helped the combatants to call it quits.

The Swedes had thus far held their own, and at best the battle might be called an inconclusive draw, but Lewenhaupt's pessimism soon



Army

spread throughout his command. He decided to abandon the wagons and their precious cargoes, making sure that everything was destroyed so it would not fall into the hands of the enemy. Cannons were removed from their carriages and buried. Given their massive weight, this was no easy task.

As evening fell the wagons were put to the torch. Collectively, the burning wagons seemed to be the funeral pyre of Swedish hopes and Charles's aspirations. Though perhaps the common soldiers could not articulate it, they probably felt the same. The despairing hopelessness became manifest in a breakdown of Swedish discipline.

Some wagons were not destroyed because they carried officers' possessions. Common soldiers lost no time in looting the contents, freely imbibing the brandy and other spirits they found there. Many became dead drunk and later died of exposure or from Cossack and Kalmuck swords and lances. Lewenhaupt ordered a retreat to Propoisk, but the iron bonds of discipline, one of

Always the optimist, Swedish King Charles XII did not blame Lewenhaupt for the catastrophe that occurred at Lesnaya. Rather than retreat to replenish his army, the Swedish king attacked at Poltava with disastrous results.

the Swedish Army's greatest strengths, broke down completely. Some regiments still retained some cohesion, but others melted away into small bands and roamed the woods.

When some of the surviving Swedish regiments reached Propoisk they found the bridges had been burned. Many still managed to cross, but 500 were caught on the river banks and slaughtered by Cossacks. Incredibly, a rag-tag group of 1,000 men actually marched back to Riga, a distance of 800 miles. Approximately 3,000 others were taken prisoner by the Russians.

General Lewenhaupt actually managed to reach Charles and the main army, but with no supplies and 6,000 starving survivors, half of his original force. The king took the news with his customary stoicism, and though this was a heavy blow, he still might have emerged victorious in the coming months. But it was not to be.

Unfortunately for the Swedes, the Russian campaign would ultimately end in disaster, and in retrospect Lesnaya was the beginning of the end of Charles XII's extraordinary career. King Charles's alliance with Mazeppa ultimately proved disappointing. What is more, the winter of 1708-1709 was one of the harshest ever recorded, so cold it was said birds fell frozen from the trees. Peter's Russians and Charles's Swedes clashed at Poltava. The battle was a decisive victory for Russia and a catastrophic defeat for Sweden. Peter's victory heralded the arrival of Russia as a European power.

The Battle of Lesnaya is important not just because it denied Charles of Sweden vital supplies and doomed his drive on Moscow. Its psychological significance is just as great, perhaps even greater, than its strategic importance. "This victory may be called our first, for we have never had one like it," Peter observed. "It put heart into our men, and was the mother of Poltava." □

By Christopher Miskimon

The final battle of the Latin Crusades was a bloody siege that resulted in the downfall of the last crusader-held territories.

DURING THE SPRING 1291 AN ENORMOUS MUSLIM HOST MOVED against Acre along the Mediterranean coast. At the time it was Christendom's last foothold in the Holy Land, a region fought over for centuries during the religious wars known as the Crusades. The Muslim army aimed to finish the crusader presence once and for all.

It was the largest army Islam had ever assembled against the Crusaders. Its components were drawn from across the region. They came from Egypt, Syria, and Mesopotamia. Enslaved Turkish-speaking troops from across the Black Sea stood

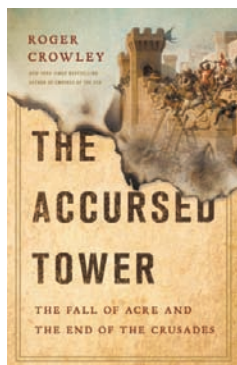
alongside emirs, mullahs, and dervishes. Many possessed a desire to wage holy war, but some served merely for the plunder.

As the army approached the city its power was evident. Camel-mounted musicians playing drums

and horns rode beneath yellow banners, spurring forward cavalry with short bows in hand, their horses adorned in bright colors. Alongside came the infantry wearing armor made of mail or scaled leather with conical helmets atop their sweating brows. The foot soldiers carried a wide variety of weapons, including swords, spears, maces, javelins, and crossbows.

Worse yet for Acre were the carts and wagons, pulled by straining oxen and laden with lumber. This wood came from trees in the nearby Lebanese mountains, fashioned by craftsmen in Damascus into prefabricated components for the most fearsome artillery of the age. The Muslim army called them *manjaniq*, but the Europeans knew them as trebuchets. These large catapults were capable of hurling enormous stones against the walls of the city. All the pieces were in place for the final, bloody battle for the Holy Land.

The siege of Acre was the Alamo of the Crusades. It began on April 4 and lasted six weeks. When the city fell to the Mameluke army on May 18, 1291, it marked the end of two centuries of conflict. Christians and Muslims struggled through those centuries for control of the region, in particular Jerusalem. With the fall of Acre, Christendom saw its hopes dashed. Calls for a renewed crusade continued until the 17th century, but for all intents and purposes, it was



Crusaders defend the walls of Acre in 1291. After a siege of six weeks, Mamluks under Al-Ashraf Khalil captured the city, ending further crusades in the Holy Land.



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over. The story of this final great battle is told in blow-by-blow fashion in *The Accursed Tower: The Fall of Acre and the End of the Crusades* (Roger Crowley, Basic Books, New York, 2019, 272 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$28.00, hardcover). The battle was significant in the larger history of both the Crusades and the medieval period.

This new history of the famous siege is told in vivid prose, with an engaging and diverse narrative. The author draws directly on all the existing Arabic sources along with untranslated Latin documents. He effectively explains the conflict within the context of the period, as the European crusaders were gradually pushed back by a determined Islamic jihad.

The author also demonstrates how the siege of Acre reveals advances in military planning and siege warfare, including mining techniques and the use of weapons such as the trebuchet. Descriptions of these technical methods are accompanied by accounts of both the personal heroism of the participants and the savagery they inflicted upon each other. Major personalities and the politics of the era are also given detailed attention. The book successfully provides a stirring account of the Latin Crusades' bitter end at Acre.



Eyewitness Korea: The Experience of British and American Soldiers in the Korean War 1950-1953 (James Goulty, Pen and Sword Books, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, 240 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$39.95, hardcover)

The Korean War was the first major conflict of the Cold War, but today it is often overshadowed by later actions. More than one million United Nations troops and many more Chinese and North Koreans fought in the conflict despite its relatively smaller scale. The combat they saw proved just as horrible and difficult as any other war and left its mark on the participants. Four million Koreans on both sides were killed, about 10 percent of the prewar population. When it ended in a tentative armistice in 1953, the country was smashed and ruined, requiring decades to rebuild and recover.

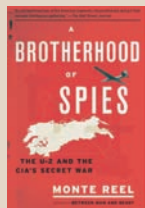
As an eyewitness history, this new work takes the reader to the battlefield level, revealing the experiences, thoughts, and viewpoints of soldiers on the front lines and elsewhere. The author takes their memoirs, letters, and diaries and mixes them with official histories and documents to provide a clear picture of what American and British soldiers went through. Also covered are men who were wounded in

SHORT BURSTS

Vietnam Bao Chi: Warriors of Word and Film (Marc Phillip Yablonka, Casemate Publishing, 2018, \$32.95, hardcover) This is the first book to focus on the experiences of military combat cameramen and correspondents in Vietnam. It includes the accounts of dozens of different service members.



Malayan Emergency: Triumph of the Running Dogs 1948-1960 (Gerry Van Tonder, Pen and Sword Books, 2019, \$22.95, softcover) This was one of the first insurgencies of the Cold War and one of a handful to be successfully defeated. A wide range of forces and techniques were used to defeat it.



For God and Glory: Lord Nelson and His Way of War (Joel Hayward, Naval Institute Press, 2019, \$24.95, softcover) Nelson was a naval genius who spread his ethos throughout the British Royal Navy. This book assesses how he made that possible.



Brotherhood of Spies: The U-2 and the CIA's Secret War (Monte Reel, Anchor Books, 2019, \$17.00, softcover) The U-2 spy plane program was a technological success that mixed clandestine achievements with a very public failure. It was instrumental in intelligence gathering during the Cold War.

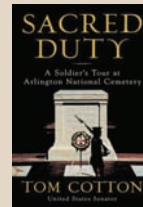
Great Battles: Ypres (Mark Connelly and Stefan Goebel, Oxford University Press, 2019, \$27.95, hardcover) Ypres was the site of several battles during World War I. This detailed and informative book summarizes the town's place in the conflict.



Fighting for Atlanta: Tactics, Terrain and Trenches in the Civil War (Earl J. Hess, University of North Carolina Press, 2019, \$45.00, hardcover) Fortifications were a major factor in the fighting for Atlanta in 1864. The author examines how they influenced the campaign and how commanders adapted to them.



Sacred Duty: A Soldier's Tour at Arlington National Cemetery (Tom Cotton, William Morrow, 2019, \$28.99, hardcover) The author is a U.S. Senator who served in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is his story of the famed 3rd Infantry Regiment, in which he served for 16 months.



The Khazars: A Judeo-Turkish Empire on the Steppes, 7th-11th Centuries AD (Mikhail Zhironov and David Nicholle, Osprey Publishing, 2019, \$19.00, softcover) The Khazars were expert in the use of armor and the tactics of the horse army. Over the centuries their armies fought Russians, Byzantines, and the Muslim Caliphates.

battle or captured and spent time in North Korean prisoner of war camps. It is an insightful book that captures the horror of the fighting, the bonds formed by the troops and the secrets of their morale and motivation.



Women Heroes of the U.S. Army: Remarkable Soldiers from the American Revolution to Today (Ann McCalum Staats, Chicago Review Press, Chicago, IL, 2019, 240 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$19.99, softcover)

Margaret Corbin's husband was an artillery-

man in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. As she accompanied him during the army's travels, she watched him and his fellow cannoners practice using their field gun until she knew how to do it herself. On November 6, 1776, during the British attack on Fort Washington on the Hudson River, she watched her husband die, cut down alongside his cannon by a bullet. Margaret, employed bringing the men water up to that point, had no time to grieve. She stepped up to the gun she had spent hours observing and took over her husband's duties. She fired round after round at the attacking British and Hessian troops until a blast of grapeshot struck her in the shoulder, chest, and jaw.

The fort surrendered and Corbin was taken prisoner, but later paroled. Afterward she took the nickname Captain Molly and was later awarded a soldier's pension by the new American government. This made her the first woman to receive a military pension and, by extension, the first recognized female soldier of the United States Army. She would not be the last.

Captain Molly's tale is one of 14 in this new work highlighting the service of women in the U.S. Army. The book is aimed at young adult readers and uses clear prose to convey the service of these women. It is well illustrated and contains extensive background information to place each woman's story into the context of her time of service.



Shadow Commander: The Epic Story of Donald D. Blackburn—Guerrilla Leader and Special Forces Hero (Mike Guardia, Casemate Publishers, Havertown, PA, 2019, 240 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, \$19.95, softcover)

Donald Blackburn's service to the United States spanned decades. It began in the Philippines in 1942. As U.S. forces were surrendering to the Imperial Japanese Army, he made his escape into the jungle-covered mountains of Northern Luzon. He raised a guerrilla army of 22,000 that fought the Japanese 14th Army and destroyed the naval base at Aparri. Blackburn stayed on active duty after World War II and spearheaded Special Forces operations in Laos in 1958. In Vietnam he initiated the cross-border reconnaissance missions into Cambodia and North Vietnam that discovered the Ho Chi Minh Trail. His operations against it caused great difficulties for the communist forces. He also was appointed to command of the famed Studies and Observations Group. Afterward, Blackburn led the design of the Son Tay prisoner of war rescue mission.

The subject of this biography is little known outside Special Forces circles, but he is an important figure in the development of American Special Forces. It is an award-winning book that received the Bronze Medal Book Award from the Military Writers Society of America. The author expertly reveals Blackburn's maturation from a young, aggressive combat leader to a high-ranking commander who influenced an entire branch of the U.S. Army. The book is well researched and very readable.

Armies of the Late Roman Empire AD 284 to 476: History, Organization and Equipment

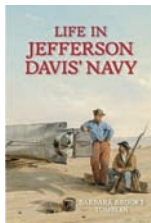


(Gabrielle Esposito, Pen and Sword Military, South Yorkshire, UK, 2019, 208 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, bibliography, index, \$34.95, hardcover)

Rome was a great power for centuries, undergoing gradual but definitive changes in its military due to technological progress, political developments, and the reality of decline. The period from AD 284 to 476 saw dramatic changes as the Western Empire slowly declined and then ended. While the Roman Army remained formidable, reliable, and efficient almost until the very end, it struggled to adapt to the changing circumstance of the nation. There were more types of troops in service, including field armies, frontier units, allied troops, and mercenaries and different groups of bodyguards. Together these disparate units defended Rome until it was no more.

This new volume is one in a series on the Roman military, with this book covering the end in the West. The author discusses the origins and causes of the military fall and provides extensive details on weapons, equipment, tactics, organization, and combat history.

The book is extensively illustrated, mostly in full color with many photographs using Roman Army reenactors to illustrate what the troops looked like based on available evidence. There is also a detailed study of Roman shield designs exhibiting the wide variety of symbols and decorations used by the troops to distinguish themselves on a battlefield. This book's information is largely drawn from the *Notitia Dignitatum*, a vital surviving source.



Life in Jefferson Davis' Navy (Barbara Brooks Tomblin, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2019, 336 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$54.00, hardcover)

On July 1, 1862, two Union naval forces combined on the Mississippi River just above Vicksburg. This compelled the Confederate officer commanding the city's defenses, Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn, to reassess his plans. He ordered the fast completion of the nearby CSS *Arkansas*, an ironclad ram also armed with eight guns of various types.

Despite the long odds, he felt it was better to die in action. On July 15, *Arkansas* went into action, first encountering the Union warships *Carondelet*, *Tyler*, and *Queen of the West*. A chase ensued with *Arkansas* attempt-

ing to ram *Carondelet*, instead forcing her aground and continuing toward the main Union fleet. There *Arkansas* ran a gauntlet of shot and shell, receiving horrible damage but sailing through the entire Union force to shelter at Vicksburg. It was a boost to the city's morale and an embarrassment to the Union Navy. One commentary noted the feat was more impressive than that of the CSS *Virginia* at Hampton Roads.

The naval actions of the American Civil War are often overlooked in favor of the land campaigns, but sailors fought just as hard and made similar sacrifices. This new work concentrates on the experiences of Confederate sailors, who fought with distinct disadvantages in numbers and firepower, but nonetheless carved out a legacy of courage and endurance second to none. The author uses diaries, letters, and newspaper accounts to flesh out the narrative, resulting in lively storytelling that accurately relays the sailors' accomplishments and experiences.



Russia in Flames: War, Revolution, Civil War 1914-1921 (Laura Engelstein, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2019, 823 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, \$24.95, softcover)

By 1913 the Romanov dynasty had ruled Russia for three centuries. A year later Russia went to war with Germany and Austria-Hungary as World War I spread through Europe and beyond. By February 1917 the Romanovs were no longer in power, their long rule ended. The war was a disaster. Czar Nicholas II was unable to control and Russian society rose up against the regime.

In October 1917 the Bolsheviks engaged their coup against the fledgling government, starting four years of civil war. The conflict is estimated to have killed nine percent of the Russian population, the bulk of those losses due to starvation and famine. Foreign powers tried to bolster the White forces opposing the Bolsheviks, who quickly became known as the Reds. After a bitter struggle the communists emerged victorious, beginning the seven-decade rule of the Soviet Union.

The Russian Revolution was a critical event in world history that defined the 20th century and has lingering effects today. The author covers the monumental events of the period in extensive detail using clear prose. The scope of this work is as broad as the Russian steppes and as deep as the torrents of bloodshed to cause the death of one empire and the rise of a new one. □

THE TOTAL WAR SERIES ENTERS ANOTHER ERA WHILE TWO VERY DIFFERENT GAMES TAKE TO THE UNFRIENDLY SKIES.

PUBLISHER
SEGA

GENRE
STRATEGY

PLATFORM
PC, MAC, LINUX

AVAILABLE
2020

Total War Saga: TROY

Inspired by Homer's *Iliad*, *Total War Saga: TROY* was recently revealed as the latest entry in the long-running series. This one focuses on the Trojan War, complete with new features inspired by the period and this unique historical flashpoint. Sega has it set to launch on Windows, MacOS, and Linux sometime in 2020, so now is the perfect time to look ahead

work, but when it did it was an interesting, smaller scale spin on the series that went in a few bold directions that paid off more robustly than others.

At the time of this writing, it's unclear just how bold *TROY* will be, but anyone interested in the setting will want to keep their eyes on this one. *TROY* explores the conflict from the perspectives of both the Greek and Trojan forces, with eight iconic heroes taking center stage throughout the campaign. Characters are once again at the forefront as the narrative unravels the truth behind the Trojan War, and players can use the opportunity to build their empire, exercise diplomacy, or simply enter full-scale war when all else fails.

By the time *Total War Saga: TROY* launches in 2020, the series will have exactly 20 years of history behind it. There have undoubtedly been some ups and downs over the course of that two-decade run, but developer Creative Assembly knows how to craft a compelling strategy outing. We'll see if they hit the right notes when *TROY* brings the Trojan War to our screens next year.



PUBLISHER
THQ NORDIC

GENRE
AIR COMBAT

PLATFORM
PS4, XBOX ONE,
PC

AVAILABLE
NOW

Comanche

For those who want a more multiplayer-centric take on their aerial combat, publisher THQ Interactive and developer Nukklear are coming through with *Comanche*, a helicopter shooter that's cooking up team-

based combat with its sights on an early 2020 launch on PC. In a complete 180 from the aforementioned *Red Wings: Aces of the Sky*, *Comanche* goes the realistic route, with action that's set in the not-too-distant future.

Comanche gives you two vantage points from which to take on your enemies. On one hand, you have the classic Comanche helicopter for normal dogfights. When it's time to get a little closer to your foes, however, you can take control of its accompanying drone. Coming up with the ideal combination of Comanche and Drone seems to play a major role in the tactics at your disposal, so it might take a little experimentation before you figure out what works best for you.

The multiplayer opts for an asymmetrical style, giving players the option of playing on either the attacking or defending side of battle. As for the story that fuels all the action, it takes place after the Iran-U.S. RQ170 incident that had a UAV being hacked and captured. This prompted the U.S. Army to revive the development of special operations through the secret RAH-66 helicopter program in an effort to develop an advanced stealth war machine that can deploy "unhackable" low-range drones in risky environments.

Unfortunately, while the operation was a rousing success, those plans eventually leaked through a whistleblower website, granting access to the Comanche plans to every world power who could afford to put them to use. That succinctly paves the way for the helicopter warfare on which *Comanche* hinges, and hopefully the final product delivers on what sounds like an exciting take on traditional multiplayer air combat. □

PUBLISHER
ALL IN! GAMES

GENRE
AIR COMBAT

PLATFORM
PS4, XBOX ONE,
SWITCH, PC

AVAILABLE
2020

Red Wings: Aces of the Sky

From hyper-realistic sims to arcade breezes, there are countless air combat games available, such that one must really stand out to catch

anyone's attention. Publisher and developer All In! Games is letting its visuals do most of the talking with *Red Wings: Aces of the Sky*, a World War I dogfighter that marries arcade-style gameplay with a colorful comic book aesthetic that helps it fly a little higher than some of the competition.

We'll have to wait until 2020 to find out exactly how high *Red Wings* will end up flying, but for now the debut trailer and screenshots provide a pretty convincing argument. True to its subtitle, *Aces*

of the Sky has you joining up with the Red Baron, Manfred von Richthofen, and attempting to keep up with his daring maneuvers as a member of his squadron. Can you match the 80 air combat victories to which Richthofen was credited, or will you go down in a blaze of glory before your time to shine?

Players will be able to choose from over 10 his-

to what the future of the series has to offer.

Like *Total War Saga* entry *Thrones of Britannia* before it, *TROY* looks to stay true to the overall formula of the franchise while introducing elements that highlight what makes its subject matter so special. *Britannia* did this to mixed success, trying some new tricks out on an old engine without completely upending what came before it. It didn't always

Far from inclined to squander time on yet another lengthy siege of the city, Rommel planned to launch a devastating attack on the town's garrison; then he planned to focus anew on the Eighth Army.

In the predawn hours of June 20, German infantry operating under a massive artillery and air bombardment opened avenues of attack through the outer British defenses. The tanks of the 21st and 15th Panzer Divisions then poured through the gaps, pressing for the city center and its strategic harbor. Despite a desperate fight mounted by the city's outmatched defenders, serious resistance was all but over by nightfall. Early the next morning, Maj. Gen. Hendrik Klopper, the South African commander at Tobruk, ordered his troops to surrender.

The fall of Tobruk was a catastrophe of the first order, as well as a crowning disgrace to the British Army's devastating defeats of the previous three weeks. With the capture of the city, the front lines shifted east into Egypt itself, and Rommel's seemingly invincible Afrika Korps was poised to strike directly for the Suez Canal. There was little in its path except the wrecked shell of the Eighth Army.

Although awarded a field marshal's baton for his capture of Tobruk, Rommel's ultimate goal of a stunning invasion of eastern Egypt would never materialize. On June 25, Auchinleck relieved Ritchie and took direct command of the Eighth Army. For the succeeding three days, he fought a costly delaying action at Matruh before falling back to a newly constructed defensive line across the Egyptian desert that centered on the inconspicuous village of El Alamein. Owing to a crippling supply shortage, Rommel was forced to settle in for a lengthy waiting game. In the autumn of 1942 the Afrika Korps was destined to once again fight a reinforced and rejuvenated Eighth Army that possessed a keen thirst for vengeance.

The bitterly fought North Africa campaign would end in crushing defeat for Axis forces; however, the epic fight in the desert expanses of Cyrenaica and Rommel's masterful destruction of the Gazala Line had earned the resolute German general a place in the pantheon of World War II's most legendary field commanders. Even British Prime Minister Churchill offered grudging admiration for the Desert Fox. "We have a very daring and skillful opponent against us, and, may I say across the havoc of war, a great general," Churchill had told the House of Commons in early 1942. It was a spot-on assessment. □

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1. Publication Title: Military Heritage Magazine. 2. Publication Number 1524-8666. 3. Filing Date 10/19/19. 4. Issue Frequency: Bi-Monthly. 5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$24.95. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Fairfax County, Virginia 22101-4554. Contact Person: Mark Hirtz. Telephone (including area code) 703-964-0361 x.101. 8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. 9. Full Name and complete mailing address: Mark Hirtz 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. Editor: William E. Walsh 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. Managing Editor: Carl Gram 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. Owner: Full Name: Sovereign Media Company, 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. Mark Hirtz: 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. Carl Gram: 6731 Whittier Avenue, suite C-100, Moleen, Virginia 22101-4554. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages or Other Securities. None. 12. Tax Status: N/A. 13. Publication Title: Military Heritage Magazine. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: September 2018. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation. Average No Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: A. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run) 24,613. (1) Mailed Copies (County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 10,353. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541-0. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails including Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution outside USPS 5,208. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First Class mail) 0. C. Total Paid Distribution-16,182. D. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County copies included on PS Form 3541-0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541 (2) 0. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First Class mail) 0. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means) 0. E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution 0. F. Total Distribution 16,182. G. Copies Not Distributed 18,451. H. Total 24,613. I. Percent Paid 100%. Number Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date: A. Total Number of Copies (Net Press Run) 32,065. (1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 9,861. (2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541-0. (3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mails including Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution outside USPS 8,292. (4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First Class mail) 0. (5) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) (1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County copies included on PS Form 3541-0. (2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541 (2) 0. (3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First Class mail) 0. (4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means) 0. E. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution 0. F. Total Distribution 17,353. G. Copies Not Distributed 14,112. H. Total 32,065. Percent Paid 100%. 16. Electronic Copy Circulation. Average No Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months: A. Total 32,065. Percent Paid 100%. B. Total Paid Print copies + Paid Electronic Copies 18,182. C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies 16,182. D. Percent Paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) 100%. No Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date. A. Paid Electronic Copies 189. B. Total Paid Print copies + Paid Electronic Copies 18,122. C. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies 18,122. D. Percent paid (Both Print & Electronic Copies) 100%. 17. Publication of Statement of Ownership if the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the January 2020 issue of this publication. 17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager or Owner Mark Hirtz, Date 10/19/19

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The CIA had positioned a sophisticated tactical air navigation system atop the 5,600-foot Phou Pha Thi Mountain in MR 1 north of the Plain of Jars to direct U.S. fighter-bombers flying from Udorn in Thailand to targets in North Vietnam. The site was established on the high mountain in 1966, and it was upgraded the following year to enable U.S. aircraft to bomb at night and in all weather conditions. A top-secret Air Force helicopter delivered 150 tons of equipment from Udorn.

Several North Vietnamese Soviet-made Antonov An-2 biplanes attacked the installation on January 12, 1968, and CIA forces took to the air in helicopters to engage them. The North Vietnamese aircraft strafed the site with machine guns and dropped mortar shells by hand. A CIA-owned Air America helicopter engaged the biplanes as they made passes over the site. Firing an automatic weapon, a CIA member of the Air America crew brought down one the biplanes. The helicopter then chased away the others.

The North Vietnamese returned two months later with ground troops to capture the site. Three battalions of the NVA 766th Regiment arrived with artillery and began their assault. The site was defended by Thai mercenaries and Hmong tribesmen that belonged to the CIA's proxy army battling the Pathet Lao. The combatants grappled on the steep, rocky slopes of the mountain. The NVA pressed their frontal attack in the belief that they could easily overwhelm the defenders. Enemy commandos scaled the mountain and overwhelmed the small number of defenders. The Air Force, CIA, and Hmong survivors lowered themselves down the mountain by rope and hid in grottoes until they could reach the valley floor.

The Ravens assembled the following morning at Lima Site 20 miles to the southeast and began directing Laotian T-28 aircraft and U.S. fighter-bombers against the NVA on the mountain. The Ravens flew for at least 12 hours that day, directing air strikes and helicopter rescues. Air America helicopters rescued the personnel who operated the tactical air installation, as well as the guerrilla forces whose job it was to help defend the installation. Of the 16 Air Force personnel on the mountain, only four were rescued. The CIA never disclosed how many of its personnel were lost in the battle. Laotian and American aircraft bombed the installation for an entire week trying to destroy the equipment so it could not be used by the enemy. The Air Force and CIA subsequently established a new

air navigation system on another mountain.

By the end of 1969 the North Vietnamese were building roads in MR II. At the beginning of 1969, the NVA committed the entire 11,000-strong 316th Division to the region. These troops were supported by 175mm howitzers and 122mm rockets.

The pilots in the Royal Lao Air Force flew T-28 fighter-bombers provided by the United States. It was the principal attack aircraft for the Laotians during the secret war. In addition to Laotian pilots, Thai pilots volunteered to fly the T-28 in combat in Laos. Although the Ravens were forbidden to fly the bombers, on occasion they broke the rule if a Laotian pilot refused to bomb a particular target. The North American T-28 was designed both as a trainer and as an armed counterintelligence aircraft. The two-seat aircraft was armed with two .50-caliber machine guns and could carry 1,800 pounds of bombs and rockets.

The T-28s were highly vulnerable to the powerful anti-aircraft guns the enemy had deployed to protect the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Laotian panhandle. Laotian pilots flying T-28s participated in strike operations Steel Tiger and Tiger Hound, which bombed targets on the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the eastern half of the panhandle.

But Laotian airpower alone was not enough to get the job done in Laos. The Ravens could call up propeller and jet fighter-bombers piloted by clandestine U.S. Air Commando pilots based at Nakhon Phanom in Thailand. Early in the secret war Ambassador to Laos William H. Sullivan had successfully persuaded U.S. Defense Secretary Robert McNamara to furnish A-1 Skyraiders, Douglas A-26 Invaders, and North American T-28 Nomads.

The propeller-driven Douglas A-1 Skyraider, which was armed with four 20mm cannons and could carry 8,000 pounds of external ordnance, was particularly suited for ground-support missions in Vietnam and Laos. These propeller-driven fighter-bombers were better for close-air support than jet fighter-bombers because they could linger over targets longer than the jets.

At the end of the Laotian civil war in 1975, it was estimated that 200,000 Laotians had died in the conflict. Additionally, 750,000 had been wounded by the heavy bombing in northern and eastern Laos.

Air Force Captain Engle was declared missing in action from his last mission on February 22, 1971. He was the recipient of the Air Force Cross for a courageous rescue he performed in June 1970. He and his fellow Ravens did their utmost to support the Laotians throughout the long conflict. □

The note that Fitz Lee left for Averell at Hartwood Church back in February, which in a way touched off the whole action at Kelly's Ford, seems to have been lost. Averell later claimed he gave the note to U.S. President Abraham Lincoln, and he was told that the president "carried the note in his pocket for a long time and would frequently show it."

Kelly's Ford was a small-scale action compared with the two major battles, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, that bracketed it in the war's chronology. Union casualties included one officer and five enlisted men dead, 12 officers and 38 men wounded, and two officers and 29 men captured or missing. The 42 casualties of the 1st Rhode Island Cavalry, which took the brunt of the fighting when forcing the crossing of the Rappahannock, accounted for more than half of the total of 78.

Confederate losses were much heavier: three officers (including the irreplaceable Pelham) and eight men dead, 11 officers and 77 men wounded, and Breckinridge and 39 men taken prisoner. The total of 133 casualties was more than 15 percent of the men Fitzhugh Lee had present on the field. Upward of 170 of Lee's horses were killed, wounded, or taken. This was a sharp loss when good horses were becoming scarce in the Confederacy.

The month after the cavalry clash at Kelly's Ford, Hooker established a unified cavalry command. Up to that point, the Army of the Potomac's cavalry had operated in three unrelated divisions. Hooker consolidated these divisions into a 12,000-man cavalry corps under the command of Maj. Gen. George Stoneman. He then sent Stoneman on a raid to sever the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia's line of supply in the hope that it would force General Robert E. Lee to withdraw his army from its strong position at Fredericksburg.

As the largest all-cavalry battle yet fought in the Eastern theater, the Battle of Kelly's Ford would have a symbolism far greater than its immediate results. It marked the beginning of a permanent change in the conduct of the war in Virginia. The days of Stuart's easy rides around or through much larger Union forces were over. Lincoln's cavalry was no longer cowed by the legendary Stuart and his cavalry.

The Army of the Potomac's cavalry would surprise the Confederates with its bold confidence in June 1863 at Brandy's Station in Culpeper County, Virginia. The battle marked the end of the Confederate cavalry's dominance in the East. □

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