Argumentative Essay

SGM Michael K. Whitaker

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Student # 676

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Faculty Advisor: SGM Greg Taylor

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Military history encompasses manpower, weapons, policies, and strategies of past battles and wars. While most people only think of the battles and the wars when recalling military history there is much more that is involved. It also includes the people, land, and future policies of the area. These aspects can pale in comparison to the spectacle of war, but are important nonetheless. It is through military history that we learn from our past errors, and victories. Such as how to help a people recover from devastation: planting crops, rebuilding, and providing supplies and health care. By helping the indigenous people we can, sometimes, win them over to our cause. So there is much more involved in military history than just the battles. Every component is of equal importance.

Will the knowledge of past military history help make our military members, and our military as a whole, more successful in present or future encounters? Should military professionals have to study this history to make themselves more rounded individuals? Will this knowledge help them make more informed military decisions?

As demonstrated history does repeat itself, and if you do not know this, then you are doomed to relive it. The same can be said for military history. Take for example in World War I, mid July 1917, when 12,000 United States soldiers were sent to the Western front without gas masks, even though the Germans were using chemical warfare (Zimmerman, 1992). At the time the United States (U.S.) was not prepared for chemical attacks (Zimmerman, 1992). Due to our lack of knowledge about chemical warfare we had to rely on the British and French expertise for chemical training, doctrine, and material (Zimmerman, 1992). The Army eventually established the Chemical Warfare Service to coordinate defensive, offensive, and supply problems involved during World War I (Zimmerman, 1992). Now the United States military has NBC (nuclear/ biological/

and chemical) training, protective gear, and antidotes for certain chemicals. As a result of what happened in World War I our soldiers are more prepared for chemical attacks. We are leading the way in training and equipment.

Military professionals can learn a great deal from past raids that did not go as planned. One such raid was the one to rescue the American hostages being held in Iran. Two of the helicopters carrying the soldiers to carry out this mission crashed in the desert, never making it to their destination. This was due to the pilot's lack of training using night vision goggles to fly at night. This mission could have been successful, if the pilots had had more training flying at night. Another raid that we can learn from was the one to capture Mohammed Aideed in Somalia. In 1992 the United States sent troops, along with 22 other nations, to help with humanitarian relief in Somalia (Bowden, 1999). These troops helped distribute food to the starving people. Within a few weeks the U.S. government thought the situation was stable enough, and yielded control to the United Nations (Hillen, 2000). However, Mohammed Aideed did not like the United Nations (U.N.) interference. On June 5th 1993 his men ambushed a U.N. force, and killed 24 men (Bowden, 1999). President Bill Clinton then sent in the U.S. Rangers and Delta Force to capture Aideed. Several high value targets were captured, but not Aideed (Bowden, 1999). The problem arose when trying to extract the prisoners, and two black hawks were shot down (Bowden, 1992). By knowing the military history of these raids we can learn that we need to know the lay of the land, have the support of our allies, and the equipment needed to achieve a mission.

Military history can help us help those individuals affected by conflicts. After Operation Desert Storm the U.S. helped the Kurds, who had fled the tyranny of Saddam

Hussein, to set up refugee camps (Rudd, 1991). We delivered food and water, and provided medical care (Rudd, 1991). While we were not the cause of the situation the Kurds found themselves in, we elected to help them anyway. This is reminiscent of our helping the South Vietnamese people, during and in the aftermath of the Vietnam conflict. Thus we have another example learned from military history. We learned that helping out those affected by conflict, and or war, helps the United States look better in the eyes of other nations. Not to mention it is the moral thing to do.

March 23, 2003 found a convoy of the 507th Maintenance Company in an ambush (Atkinson, 2004). They got lost, and came under fire. During the battle 11 soldiers were killed, seven captured, and 16 got away (Atkinson, 2004). After this attack V Corps Commander Lieutenant (Lt.) General William S. Wallace drew on lessons learned in Vietnam, and materials e-mailed from United States archives to reconfigure convoys into a more defensible posture (Atkinson, 2004). Thereby using information gained from military history, along with his expertise and experience, Lt. General Wallace helped save American lives in a current conflict.

These examples show that prior knowledge gained from military history can be of a benefit to us today. The information in our past is always there, and we just need to be aware of it and use it to our advantage. Therefore, all the questions posed at the beginning of this paper have to be answered in the affirmative. Military professionals should be required to take classes about military history. It is unreasonable to believe that anyone could possibly remember every aspect of such a vast base of information. However, it is important for military members to have, at the very least, a rudimentary knowledge of military history. This information will help military professionals make

more informed decisions in current or future encounters. Leading to more successful missions and, hopefully, as little loss of life as possible.

References

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