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Success Can Only Be Found By Studying Military History

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Abstract

One may debate on whether or not the time taken to study military history is worth it. There are numerous reasons why the leaders in the armed forces need to study military history. Previous military conflicts teach leaders how to improve a unit's tactical and logistical capabilities. The current Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) presents new challenges. The need to upgrade medical care, improve training, and employ the armed forces tactically is the only way to find success. The current success of the armed forces in GWOT is due to upgrades in technology, medical care, tactics, and new training techniques. Leaders in the armed forces today realize that the study of previous military conflicts and events make us successful on the asymmetric battlefield today.

Argumentative Essay Outline

Thesis Statement: Although a percentage of people believe taking time to study military history is not important, but the facts dictate it is clearly worth the time. Studying military history has led the armed forces to develop joint doctrine policies, improve logistical support, advances in medical support, and improved guerrilla warfare tactics. Applying lessons learned through studying history is relevant today as the armed forces continue to improve conditions around the world in the fight against the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

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Introduction

Why is it important to study military history? Both scholars and common people within the United States will always debate this topic. The study of military history seems to focus on successful outcomes within history versus looking at our failures. No one likes to visit past military failures, as unpleasant memories may resurface. The goal of the armed forces is to consistently move forward, win decisively, capture new technology, and conduct successful peacetime and wartime operations. One must capture lessons learned throughout past military conflicts and demonstrate how we apply those lessons in our current conflicts today. Although a percentage of people believe taking time to study military history is not important, other people realize the possible benefits of it. Studying military history has led the armed forces to develop joint doctrine policies, improve logistical support, advances in medical support, and improved guerrilla warfare tactics. Applying lessons learned through studying history is relevant today as conditions continue to improve in the fight against global terrorism worldwide.

Joint Doctrine

Lessons Learned in History

A clear lack of joint doctrine during Operation Restore Hope in Somalia taught us many lessons. This lesson was learned during the most intense battle in Somalia in which the U.S. Army lost 18 Soldiers and over 80 were wounded (Hoffman, 2004). The operation involved rangers, conventional infantry Soldiers and delta force Soldiers. Each element had their own leader, but no one knew exactly who was providing the main command and control. The armed forces decided that current doctrine must put one person in charge, when multiple units are working together. The armed forces saw the problems with different services not being able to communicate during the early stages of the Iraq war. Civilian relief agencies in Somalia were not

included in any military planning operations in Somalia, which caused confusion within the battle space. These lessons learned in history apply to the way the armed forces fight today.

Joint Doctrine in Action Today

The armed forces have brought all the services together in Iraq due to previous lessons learned. The Army has units that fight under the command and control of Marine commanders and marines fight under Army commanders. The Air Force integrates in every brigade combat team to provide a crucial link to the air support structure. The Navy provides electronic warfare specialists to Army units in order to provide support for spectrum management issues and general electronic warfare issues. The armed forces are now seeing how successful joint doctrine can be and how the results and advantages clearly outweigh old military conventional doctrine.

Advantages for Everyone

The Army is taking advantage of Marine equipment and the Marines are taking advantage of the Army's equipment. History shows us to use the best piece of equipment for the mission, regardless of what service component it comes from. Joint doctrine has also led to Army Soldiers learning Marine urban tactics and Marines learning Army route clearing tactics. The armed forces have clearly taken advantage of each service capabilities by combining all of the knowledge that each service has to offer. Army units can now support Marine units and conventional infantry units are working with special operations forces on a daily basis. Joint doctrine clearly sets the standards for future operations. In addition to joint doctrine development, military history teaches us how to improve our logistics during combat operations.

Logistical Improvements

Advanced Medical Care

Studying military history leads us to create and take advantage of modern technology and equipment. Previous military conflicts lead us to upgrade training and medical care. Armed forces have learned that Soldiers will fight harder when they know that advanced medical care is readily available. The military determined that simply stopping bleeding on the ground would keep Soldiers alive until they arrived at a level two care facility. The days of the old tourniquet with a stick and cloth are gone and modern dressings and tourniquets are now used. Medical facilities, within the war zone, are using the most advanced equipment and saving more Soldiers lives than ever before in our history. In order to provide advanced medical care and better logistics, the Army realizes that civilian contractor support is critical.

Contractor Support

Previous conflicts in history have shown us that not always are the military Soldiers the subject matter experts in every area. Civilian contractors incorporate into military operations now due to the technical knowledge they provide. Civilian technicians upgrade and repair the armed forces equipment quickly due to their available resources and abundance of experience and knowledge. Civilian contractors have also provided field services to Soldiers such as laundry, supplies, and critical services, which improve the well being and morale of the Soldiers (Cox, 1999). Also, civilian contractors are an integral part of any unit's pre-deployment training program. Also, civilians also aid in helping establish procedures for standing up new governments. The knowledge civilians bring to the battlefield now is a combat multiplier. A majority of infrastructure rebuilding is credited to civilian contractors. Civilian contractors also

make improvements on how the armed forces get to an area of operation in relation to shipping equipment and vehicles.

Transportation

Most people only think of tactics when they study military history. However, history helps us transport needed equipment and Soldiers to combat areas in a short period. The enormous strain of transporting an Army can be overwhelming. History shows us how to transport units more effectively and efficiently. By re-aligning transportation supply channels, supplies and equipment are delivered on time, versus waiting on equipment for a long period. Studying history allows us to better organize equipment. Desert Storm packaged equipment was hard to recognize and rarely labeled at all, this led to units not having the needed equipment. Transportation is better organized and takes a large percentage of the equipment directly to the front due to lessons learned in logistics; the armed forces can now focus on changing tactics.

Changes in Tactics

Economic Development

History teaches us lessons on how to approach certain conflicts. The old doctrine of wheeling a heavy hand through firepower has changed dramatically. Everyone now understands that the armed forces simply cannot just control a country by using military power, but must help them economically rebuild. This was a lesson we learned back in the 1914 invasion of Vera Cruz Mexico (McAllister, 2005). We again learned this lesson in Somalia during Operation Restore Hope. The military now works with governments to stabilize and re-build them so they improve their economy to provide needed resources to all citizens. Not having a plan to help stabilize and re-build a government is a critical learning lesson from which we had to change strategy in.

Understanding Culture and the Environment

One of the biggest history lessons learned is the importance of culture in any conflict. History leads us to develop specific culture awareness programs, which help reduce conflict. Not understanding the culture in previous conflicts such as Somalia and Vera Cruz led to the loss of Soldiers. Understanding the culture and the use of civilian affairs teams are leading to a more peaceful resolve versus using just force. Understanding how the civilian population will react and which tribes control influence is a key in any operating environment. Previous conflicts did not factor in the psychological and civilian affairs impacts, but we now realize how critical and important their role is. Along with understanding culture, we also learned the importance of decentralized operations.

Decentralize Operations

Previous history teaches us strict command and control at the command levels only. History is now proving that junior leaders can accomplish important missions and make critical decisions. The ability to decentralize operations is successful in Iraq. Strict command and control from an operations center led to a military convoy in Somalia paying the ultimate price with their lives. The mindset of empowering junior leaders is a lesson, which has saved many lives. Studying history leads to many changes within our armed forces, which is helping secure success in Iraq.

History Helps Secure Iraq

Lessons in Tall Afar

The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) history teaches us the importance of studying history. Most units in Iraq were trying to figure out the key to success in Iraq. The military went back to 2004 and studied the success of the 3rd ACR in Tall Afar Iraq (Ricks, 2006). The same

tactics used in 2004 are now being adopted Army wide and paving the way for success in Iraq. The combat outpost technique, coupled with cultural training, is helping the armed forces see the biggest improvements in Iraq yet. If the armed forces did not take the time to study the 3rd ACR's history, we would not have found the success we are having now in Iraq. Current combat outposts in Iraq greatly improve security conditions through daily interaction with the local population.

Noncommissioned Officer Development (NCO) in Iraq

With the increasing operations tempo in Iraq, many NCOs do not have the opportunity to attend formal schooling. Studying history and lessons learned are taking the place of formal schools and leaders are performing well. Studying history is clearly an informal and valuable tool to use, especially when formal schooling is not available. Prior to formal schooling in the military, many successes which leaders found were simply through studying the successes and failures of previous battles and conflicts. We are clearly finding success in our current conflicts by analyzing and studying military history.

Conclusion

Studying military history clearly leads our armed forces to adopt a new thought pattern and change tactics. Battlefield tactics is not the sole reason only to study military history. The advances in medical care and logistical operations are saving Soldiers lives, at a rate never before seen in any previous conflict. The civilian contractor support now provides unmatched support and technical assistance to Soldiers on the battlefield, which was never before used in the Army's history. Combining all the different military branches under one joint doctrine concept proves how powerful and successful the armed forces can be as a combined force. Implementing cultural training and using civilian affairs teams appropriately reduces conflict and leads to

success. Implementing lessons learned from history to junior leaders is proving to be as valuable as formal institutionalized training. The benefits of studying military history are clear and the leading cause to the armed forces success in Iraq.

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