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Running Head: UNPREPARED MILITARY DURING THE OUTBREAK OF HOSTILITIES

Unprepared Military during the Outbreak of Hostilities

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Outline

Topic #5: A theme from *America's First Battles* is how—and why—the U.S. military has repeatedly been unprepared to execute its primary mission at the outbreak of hostilities.

1. Thesis Statement: The world views the U.S. Army as one of most technological armies on the earth; however, U.S. Army units have been historically unprepared to perform their primary fighting function during initial stages of combat.

2. Major Points:

a. The arrogance of U.S. Army forces, high levels of complacency, and a general sense of disrespect for the enemy can have a significant result during initial combat stages.

b. NCOs are the primary trainers in their units; therefore, they must take the initiative to prepare all Soldiers to conduct any task before, during, and after any conflict.

c. The world views the American Soldier as the most intuitive character in the world; consequently, history has shown that although U.S. forces may initially deploy unprepared for conflict, their resolve helped overcome fundamental obstacles prior to the commencement of combat operations.

3. Supporting Points of Evidence.

a. Task Force Smith and the 24th Division: Delay and Withdrawal, 5-19 July 1950. Members of 1st battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment received orders to deploy to South Korea to stop the North Korean attack as far north of Pusan as possible.

b. The 1st Cavalry and the Ia Drang Valley, 18 October-24 November 1965. The Battle of the Ia Drang Valley ushered in a new phase of the long and agonizing struggle for Vietnam. This marked the first battle of the Vietnam War in which the U.S. Army engaged.

Abstract

Historical accounts from the Korean War ^{document} reflect Army units that were not prepared to conduct combat operations during initial stages of the conflict; in large part, due to unit readiness preceding the deployment. This was the case with the 24th Infantry Division stationed in Japan after World War II. Conversely, historical accounts from the Viet Nam War show that despite the short time given to the 1st Cavalry Division to prepare its men for armed conflict the unit's actions during the Ia Drang Valley demonstrated the resolve of the American Soldier. Moreover, the policies of Washington apparently [?]crippled some of the options Army leaders had to execute their wartime mission.

*well written but essentially undocumented.
Incomplete citations in Resources
A comparison of Apples + oranges*

Unprepared Military during the Outbreak of Hostilities

The world views the U.S. Army as one of most technological armies on the earth; however, U.S. Army units have been historically unprepared to perform their primary fighting function during initial stages of combat. This was the prevailing case of Task Force Smith. Poor training and the lack of equipment contributed greatly to the failure of this operation. However, an arrogant Army unit, coupled with not regard for its enemy and high levels of complacency, combine for a sure disaster. This was the case for Task Force Smith.

Task Force Smith and the 24th Division: Delay and Withdrawal, 5-19 July 1950

Task Force Smith, led by LTC Smith, consisted of members of the 1st Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment and members of the 52nd Field Artillery. The unit was performing occupation duty in Japan following World War II. Its primary mission was to occupy the island of Kyushu, Japan. Its secondary mission was to train. Most of the battalions in the division were under strength and ill equipped. Task Force Smith was representative of the same scenario. The unit did little training. Whenever training took place; it resorted to individual and some team and or squad level training. Additionally, the unit was under strength. The 21st Infantry regiment had only one battalion and ~~a~~ headquarters companies from the other two battalions. Most of the NCOs were combat veterans of World War II and officers in the grade of Lieutenant and above were rich in combat service. This proved invaluable during the delay and withdrawal of July 5, 1950. Contrary to the combat service of NCOs and officers, ^{experience} junior Soldiers were a mixed bag, ^{the} mostly young Soldiers who had been lured into the Army by the G.I. Bill.

Another aspect of the failure of this operation was the lack of equipment. The unit had old worn equipment dating to World War II. The battalion lacked .30-caliber machine guns, spare machine-gun barrels, all of their 90-mm antitank guns, and many radios. When Task Force

Smith assembled for its move to Korea, other units of the 21st Infantry regiment gave up weapons and equipment to fill the 1st battalion. According to Roy K. Flint, “when company K arrived in Korea a week later, it carried two 81-mm mortar base-plates and two tubes but no bipods or sights” (Flint, p. 274). He further accounts that, “the company had no recoilless rifles either; the jeep taken to Korea by the weapons platoon of company K was privately owned by one of the privates in the platoon” (Flint, p. 274).

but it had recoilless rifles they were in a separate

Finally, and perhaps the most important factor that contributed to the failure of Task Force Smith were their complacency and arrogance. Most Soldiers, NCOs, and officers believed that going to war was impossible. They believe that the unit’s mission in the Island of Japan would not change and that garrison duty was in fact their primary mission. The unit suffered greatly as a result of this attitude. The other factor that affected the outcome of the first American battle in Korea was the unit’s arrogance. Again, NCOs and officers believed that North Korean Soldiers would retreat at the sight of American forces. They believed that their superiority was the key to win this fight. They thought that they would get it over with in as little time and would be back to life in Japan as normal. source?

On 1 July 1950, Task Force Smith arrived at Korea and at approximately 1100 it began moving north. Maj. Gen. Dean ordered LTC Smith to move his task force as far north of Osan as possible to stop the advancement of the North Korean Army. Once he arrived at the objective, LTC Smith ordered his unit to prepare for a defense. Task Force Smith position itself with B and C companies abreast and a platoon each covering the east and west flanks. LTC Smith placed ^{his} ~~its~~ artillery battalion approximately two kilometers south of the defensive positions. On 5 July at approximately 0745 LTC Smith spotted elements of the North Korean Army’s 4th Infantry Division. The 4th ID had over 30 tanks and roughly two battalions of infantry Soldiers. LTC

Smith called for indirect fire and begins the attack on the 4th ID. The 4th ID endured the attack and broke through the defensive positions of Task Force Smith.

The North Korean's response was so impressive that the American forces killed only four tanks and suffered minimal losses. Conversely, the U.S. casualties numbered some 20 killed or injured; more importantly ~~lost~~ Task Force Smith lost its will to fight. Task Force Smith Soldiers were shocked to see the North Korean's resolve and dedication. No longer were the Soldiers under the assumption that North Koreans would run at the sight of American Soldiers. A sense of urgency began to settle-in. Task Force Smith's leaders knew that the following actions would create history in America. At approximately 1145 hrs LTC Smith spotted the North Korean [?] main. With North Korean Soldiers advancing on both flanks, ammunition running low, and without communications to his higher HQ, LTC Smith orders a withdrawal.

^{By} On 6 July 1950, Task Force Smith had lost almost half of its Soldiers. In all, Task Force Smith had 148 Soldiers and 5 officers missing in action. Task Force Smith would ultimately withdraw all the way to Taejon where it would rearm, reorganize, and prepare to return to the fight.

The 1st Cavalry and the Ia Drang Valley, 18 October-24 November 1965

Perhaps the major weakness of the U.S. Army on the eve of its involvement in Vietnam was its lack of intensive preparation for the type of war in which it would become engaged. However, the leaders and Soldiers of the 1st Cavalry division showed the new breed of fighters the Army's latest doctrine would create. Their adaptation, tenacity, and resolve proved invaluable during the initial stages on the Vietnam Conflict.

After the Korean conflict, the U.S. government along with leaders from the U.S. Army decided to create an organization that its lethality would be the envy of the world. In doing so,

they created the 1st Cavalry Division also known as “First Team.” The division’s biggest asset was its mobility. First Team designed a concept with the intent of transporting infantry Soldiers anywhere in the battlefield by helicopters. It was an elite force in the U.S. Army; its leaders were among the best the service had to offer.

Although 1st Cavalry Division had little time to train for combat in Vietnam, the training conducted was of high quality. Officers and NCOs were for the most part veterans of the Korean War and knew the high price their comrades paid for a lack of combat preparedness.

Furthermore, the formation of this unit marked ^{source?} the first time the United States adopted a regimental frame for its units. The 1st Cavalry Division trained together, deployed into combat together, and would eventually redeploy together. This concept espoused the team development concept in which teams, squads, platoons, and companies all trained together; it built a strong team and enhanced spirit de corps among the organization.

Therefore, on 27 October 1965, General Westmoreland ordered the 1st Cavalry Division into combat. The division’s mission was to begin search-and-destroy operations in the area west of Plei Me. One of the division’s subordinate units, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry, led by LTC Harold Moore received the daunting mission to land on Landing Zone (LZ) X-Ray. This landing produced some of the most intense firefights of the Ia Drang campaign. The commander chose his battle ground wisely. Unknown to LTC Moore, the People’s Army of Vietnam (PAVN) had approximately 500 to 600 fighters awaiting the Americans. Soon after the landing on LZ X-ray the Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry received fire from the enemy. 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry’s response was heroic. The men reacted to enemy contact precisely how they had previously trained. George C. Herring accounts General Marshall’s comments; “The big yellow

patch does something to an individual that makes him a better Soldier, a better team member, and a better American than he otherwise would have been” (page 324).

Conclusion

In closing, the actions of the 1st Cavalry Division are indicative of an organization who took pride in its combat preparation. Leaders remained loyal to their subordinates and it showed in their combat actions. Even though First Team sustained significant casualties, their successful campaign paved the way for the rest of the U.S. Army. Conversely, the results of the actions of Task Force Smith on 5 and 6 July 1950 are indicative of an organization that remained complacent up until the point the ^{unit} use was to deploy. Although the leaders of Task Force Smith were combat veterans, the majority of the Soldiers were part of an Army that focused on garrison tasks associated with an Army of occupation. This, coupled with the arrogance of an Army who had just won World War II, left the organization ^{ready for} ~~a state~~ of disaster.

References

Roy K Flint, *Task Force Smith And The 24th Infantry Division* *incomplete citations*

George C Herring, *The 1st Cavalry and Ia Drang Valley, 18 Oct-24 November 1965*

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