

Running Header: WHY WE SHOULD STUDY MILITARY HISTORY

Argumentative Essay

Why we should Study Military History

MSG Gregory P. Hampton

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class #58, M04

Student # 680

SGM Malauulu

19 March 2007

Abstract

There are a lot of reasons why Military History should remain in schools, both civilian and military. Recently a professor at Harvard University was denied tenure due to her radical history lessons. This paper will point out some examples of why we should continue to study military history. Some reasons to continue to study military history are (a) it helps our congressional leaders understand what events will determine when to declare war, (b) past mistakes of our past leaders, (c) what could be an affect of a military drawdown, and (d) the study of mistakes by commanders will help train and prevent the unnecessary loss of American lives in future wars.

Outline

I. Introduction

A. Background Information: Military History is becoming a class that is not taught due to budget constraints on the public sector to focus on the “No Child Left Behind Law” signed by the president in 2001. Therefore, one must ask the question do we still need to study military history

B. Thesis: Military history prevents the United States of America from making the same mistakes that other countries made prior to declaring war. Military history teaches the Soldiers and Leaders, the outcomes of prior wars so that we do not make the same mistakes as those that fought before us.

II. Reason to Support the Study of Military History

A. Congressional leaders need to understand history so they will not declare war without understanding the culture and environment of the country that they will be sending the Armed Forces.

B. Prevent us from making the same mistakes other countries had made during their invasion

1. Phillipines-our mistakes

2. Afghanistan- a study of how the Russians, British, Germans, and Roman failed in their conquest. By looking at their mistakes we were able to gain support of their government.

3. Osama Bin Ladan-failed to look at our history and how we retaliated on countries that attacked the United States of America

C. What affect the Army Reorganization Act of 1950 had on Task Force Smith

D. Assists the development of knowledge for new commanders. It also ensures that training and resources are applied correctly to prevent the unnecessary loss of life (507th Maintenance Battalion)

III Counter Arguments for Studying Military History

A. No Child Left Behind Law hinders resources that American Institutions draw from the federal government if they fail to keep their students national test scores at a passing rate for all the children assigned to the educational institution

B. Anti-semitism towards a five-year-long war

C. Downs-sizing shows other countries that we are not provoking war, an act of good faith

D. Commanders are confident that their command will never suffer the fate of the 507th Maintenance Battalion; they will lead and train their Soldiers correctly

IV. Conclusion

Why Should We Study Military History

Background

It is said that academic institutions are forgoing military history in their classrooms. (Kagan, 2005) Recently, a professor in Harvard University was denied tenure due to her teaching military history. In Chicago, Illinois and other large metropolitan cities, military history has been placed under a microscope and curriculum taught has been watered –down. Instead of teaching about battles, the curriculum focuses on military recruitment and the affects of war on society, politics, reconstruction and economics. This information was identified by Edward Coffman at the University of Wisconsin after reviewing the faculties of the top 25 history departments as ranked by the U. S. News and World Report. (Hanson, 2007)

Arguments for the Study of Military History

The first reason to study military history is, it is a gateway to our government fundamental belief to bear arms and to carry hostile aggressions against enemies foreign and domestic of the United States. People have the right to know, learn, and more importantly vote on whether armed conflict is required and necessary. The public sector entrust elected officials, congressmen and representatives with the voice of the people to make an informed decisions concerning war. Their position and authority can support the request of the president to declare war on a hostile nation. An uninformed and uneducated official in terms of military history is an official that will either send us to a war where we do not have a chance of winning or fail to provide our Soldiers the resources that will allow us to defeat the enemy on the battlefield. Condeleezza Rice, the National Security Advisor argued that the United States should take Kabul, Afghanistan, during the planning phase of Operation Enduring Freedom, her reasoning

was, the Soviets had never done so. (Kagan, 2006) In the same cabinet meeting advisors argued against using American ground forces because of the nationalistic uprising that resulted after the British invasion in the 19th Century. Both of these examples of how military history made an impact on the decision for declaring war on Iraq and the Taliban.

The second reason to study military history is to prevent us from making the same mistakes that other countries made. An example of this is the war in the Philippines. History identified this nation's people as freedom fighters. They requested assistance from the United States to eliminate the occupation of Japanese forces from its borders; we did so. After the United States repelled the Japanese forces out of the Philippines, we began to change their government and enforced our policies on an unwilling people; we had become Japan, but in a democratic form. As a result of our lack of concerns about the "will" of the Philippino people, they revolted against the us. Conversely, this was not the case in Afghanistan.

History reflected that a number of nations attempted to conquer Afghanistan, such as the Russians, Romans, British and Germans, none of these countries could claim a successful occupation. Afghanistan's culture, people and leaders did not except the cultural changes that those countries wanted to implement. The Crusades left the knights of England decimated, tired, and its Army weak after they attempted to impose their faith, "Christianity" on a Muslim state. The Romans wanted the Arab people to submit themselves to the rule of the Roman Empire's culture; the Arab nation rejected their culture. After studying history, America did not impose its will in Afghanistan, but instead, let the people of Afghanistan decide the best courses of action to follow. By studying Afghanistan's history, the United States successfully integrated its policies with the Afghanistan government's policies.

Even Bin Laden, leader of the Taliban, failed to understand the complexity of the United States' culture, politics, and history when he attacked America on September 11, 2001. He determined that America was a weak nation due to the lack of action that it took when Islamic extremist attacked numerous American targets ten years prior to 9/11. By ignoring our history, he failed to realize that every attack on American soil had serious consequences. Concord, Pearl Harbor, Columbus, New Mexico, and the Alamo, after each of these attacks America retaliated with sever aggression against the hostile nation.

The third reason to study military history is the event that led to the demise of the 24th Infantry Division in Korea (Task Force Smith). After World War II, congress passed the Army Reorganization Act of 1950. (Army, 2005) The affects of the Act was a reduction of troops from 8 million men to 591,000. As the drawdown took effect, North Korea was building its Armed Forces and prepared to attacked South Korea. As a result of this Act, the South Korean theater took losses in human resources, training, finances, and more importantly, equipment. As a result of the depletion of resources, the 24th Infantry Division took a huge beating by the North Korean Army when it attacked South Korea. A historical analysis of the division's shortcoming identified the factors mentioned above were the primary reasons the force was ineffective during the fight. The lessons learned from the historical documents of the Korean conflict was (a) go to war with a sizeable force, (b) insure troops have the proper equipment, and (c) ensure that troops were properly trained prior to the battle. It was the second time (World War I being the first) in our history that after a reduction in forces, 10 to 15 years later we were back in another war. This historical event was a valuable tool, when planning future battles such as Desert Storm, Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedoms.

My last point on the importance of military history is it assists new commanders to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors. By learning from past mistakes, commanders can enforce the execution of the proper procedures to prepare their Soldiers for war. An example of “what not to do” is the failed ground assault convey (GAC) of the 507th Transportation Battalion, from Kuwait to Baghdad, Iraq on 17 December 2003. The historical analysis of this GAC will be preached and remember throughout the Armed Forces for years to come. It is the epitome of leaders failing to prepare their Soldiers for combat. It identified several flaws of the unit’s combat readiness, which were (a) failure of the command to equip the unit with enough radios, (b) failure of the unit to perform weapon maintenance, (c) failure to have a convoy brief, and (d) failure of the leadership to perform their duties. History will reflect 507th Transportation Battalion’s GAC of the as a textbook example of what not to do when entering a combat zone. By studying the actions of the 507th Transportation Battalion, leaders will prepare their Soldiers for war correctly.

Counter Arguments

One may argue that there are more important subjects to study, such as mathematics, science, and english. One might say that only 1% of the country is a member of the military and therefore the audience is too small to continue military history courses in the public school sectors. Therefore, with budget cuts, the “No Child Left Behind Laws”, educational institutions must employ their resources to teach the curriculum that President Bush signed into law in 2001. (Wikipedia, 2002) Failure for academic institutions to comply with the law will result in funding cuts for the institution. The impact of funding cuts will only place the American Educational Institutions further behind the educational institutions of foreign countries, which the law was suppose to improve, our education system. Our education system primary focus, at this time, is

to catch-up to the educational levels of our foreign counterparts, Netherlands, Japan, Korea, Finland, Belgium and Canada. (CBS News, 2005) We are currently rank 12th in the world standing. Time, money, and resources to teach military history in the civilian sector are not feasible, nor does it serve any purpose or improve the schools national educational scores. The No Child Left Behind Law, one of the president's biggest educational reform programs is to ensure all American children have a good education and that our nation is competitive with other nations. If the sacrifice of one subject will lead to the improvement of the nations national educational standings, then so be it.

The second counter argument is with the anti-semitism about the war, too much publicity of a five-year-long war maybe too much for the general public to accept. Since war is destructive and with the crime rate of the nation increasing, death and destruction between two warring Armies is not what the children should learn. Preventing citizens from studying history will prevent them from seeing a false sense of reality that war is glorified killing. Some say that military history is the appeasement for warmongers. (Hanson, 2007) In an article published by New York Times on 16 February 2008, entitled *By Making Holocaust Personal to Pupils, Sarkozy Stirs Anger*, President Nicolas Sarkozy said, "every fifth grader will have to learn the story of one of the 11,000 French children killed by the Nazis in the Holocaust. (Sciolino, 2008). The extreme ideal by Sarkozy has the public in an uproar. They believe that once the 10 year-old children begin doing the research, the child will become traumatized. Too much can be too much for some, especially children.

A counter argument of the third reason is if we decrease our forces we are showing an act of good faith that our nation will not attack another country. Fathers, wives, daughters and sons will return to their peaceful ways, back to the civilian sector. By decreasing the force we display

a non-aggressive posture, which incites a peaceful dialog between nations. Many say that we are involved in too many areas of the world and we are fighting a war for oil. (Wikipedia, 2003) Although this maybe a naive thought, it still justifies why we do not need to study military history.

Counter argument to the fourth supporting reason is, some commanders fill the mistakes of other commanders will not happen to their command if their Soldiers, officers, and NCOs are sufficiently trained in their combat skills. These commanders ensure that training is conducted to standard. They are seen surveying the training battlefield throughout the field exercises of their brigades, battalions or companies, looking for ways to improve the effectiveness of training. They also ensure that resources are provided to maximize the effectiveness of the training event unlike the 507th Transportation Battalion or Task Force Smith commanders.

Conclusion

There are many reasons to teach military history but none as important as to prepare the future leaders of the country how to prepare and exercise control over the military. Bipartisan or ideological is not the issue, the issue is establishing a preset conditions that will establish a healthy democratic society in the time of conflict. Without prior knowledge of the tactics and capabilities of the opposing force, all hell will break out should this country be attacked. It is best said that citizens of a democratic state must have a basic understanding of what the threat is before executing orders to go to war. By studying military history leaders can practice and prepare counter-measurements to prevent battle losses.

References

Army, U. S. (2005). *American Military History volume II*. Washington D. C.: Center of Military History.

CBS NEWS. (2005, September 13). Retrieved March 17, 2008, from CBS NEWS.COM:
<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/09/13/national/main838207.shtml>

Hanson, V. D. (2007, August 21). *Private Papers*. Retrieved March 03, 2008, from Private Papers: <http://www.victorhanson.com/articles/hanson082107.html>

Kagan, F. W. (2006, June 27). *AEI*. Retrieved March 3, 2008, from American Enterprise Institute: http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.24600/pub_detail.asp

unknown. (2003, February 5). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_popular_opinion_on_invasion_of_Iraq#February_2003

wikipedia. (2002, January 8). *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 17, 2008, from Wikipedia:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:No_Child_Left_Behind_Act.jpg