

Running Head: STUDYING MILITARY HISTORY

The Importance to Military Professionals to Study Military History

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## ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY

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### UNITED STATES ARMY SERGEANTS MAJOR ACADEMY

Is it important for military professionals to take time out of the busy schedules to study military history? If so, why? If not, why not? In your analysis, be sure to provide at least three examples from issues discussed in H100 that support your position. In your conclusion, be sure to address how a better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for the challenges that lie ahead.

#### Thesis Statement

Military history provides lessons learned from past experiences, helps us understand military concepts, leadership issues that were dealt with in the past, the tactics and strategies used during that time, technology of the past, weapons and equipment used by Soldiers, military leaders of the past, and help us broaden our views on military subjects.

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***Abstract***

Studying military history is vital for our military professions. History tells us a lot about our nation's past battles and informs us how we fought them. It tells us what Soldiers went through in the different wars and conflicts our nation has fought in. From the Soldier's in the trenches of World War I to the foot patrol in the streets of Fallujah, Iraq. Military history helps form an understanding on how the military used a military strategy to fight battles from the past. Military history has a long tradition that should be studied by our military professions in our academies and military education systems because history is being made in the War on Terrorism.

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Studying military history is important for military leaders to learn. Does not matter how busy the training schedule may get, allocate time to study and learn military history. Military history provides lessons learned from past experiences, helps us understand military concepts, leadership issues that were dealt with in the past, the tactics and strategies used during that time, technology of the past, weapons and equipment used by Soldiers, military leaders of the past, and help us broaden our views on military subjects. "I am convinced that much more emphasis should be placed on history. The purpose of history is to learn how human beings react when exposed to the danger of wounds or death." General George S. Patton, Jr.

Military professions view different battles from the past and translate that information to assist leaders today, understand the tactics that were used during that time period. That past history assists military professions to understand how they may use that information to apply to current battles currently being fought overseas. The actions that key leaders took in dealing with different situations in combat and reporting to their civilian chain of command. History tells a different story on how wars were fought so by studying history we use pictures, articles, operations orders, Soldiers accounts, letters sent back home to loved ones to help find facts about different events. These facts help military historians tell the truth on what really happened so we as military professions may use that information to study the outcomes of those battles or wars.

Study of military history helps military professions learn of great men and women of history that were truly committed heroes who went above and beyond their duties. These Soldiers showed personal courage and honor during the stressful times of war. We learn from their battles on how they overcame fear and how they used their military training to defeat their enemies in war. By studying this information we may teach this to our younger Soldiers to help them receive an understanding of military history and show them that heroes come from the

different ranks of the military from a private all the way up to a four star general. The military lessons learned from history help emphasize some core military values such as loyalty, selfless service, duty, and honor in the actions these Soldiers took during battles in war.

I have researched three different incidents in our military history to show that studying our past history benefits our military profession in learning from these incidents from World War I, Korean Conflict, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The incidents involve assist us with learning from military history in overcoming one's beliefs with the units mission, knowing your unit's capabilities, Pre-Combat checks and inspections.

### ***World War I***

During World War I in a war against the Germans, on October 8<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was attacking westward in the Argonne Forest to outflank the German positions. Enemy fire had slowed the down the unit's progress so a patrol was sent out to suppress the machine-gun positions. These Soldiers in the patrol were fighting behind enemy lines and a brief fire fight occurred which resulted in the enemy battalion headquarters to surrender to this small patrol of Soldiers. When the German forces realized how small this force was they opened fire on the American Soldiers, so a young Corporal Alvin C. York was ordered to silence the German machine guns. Corporal York single-handedly silence the German fire, killing twenty German Soldiers in the process. The small patrol of nine men in the end of the battle captured over 132 prisoners of war and led them back to American lines. Corporal York's action during this battle earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor. This country boy from Tennessee over came being a conscientious objector before being drafted in the military and accepted the terms of war even though his religious beliefs told him something different. SGT York over came these situations and used his sharp shooting skills that he learned while hunting back when he was in

Tennessee, to provoke him to assist his fellow Soldiers during this fight with the Germans. He put the needs of his fellow Soldiers above his own personal beliefs to help silence the enemy from killing more of his men.

### ***Korean Conflict***

On July 5, 1950, during the Korean conflict in South Korea against the North Koreans, a 540 Soldier task force named, TF Smith, after its commander, LTC Charles B. Smith fought a North Korean division supported by a tank unit near Suwon, South Korea. The task force lacked any-tank mines and all they had to fight the enemy were recoilless rifles along with 2.36 inch rocket launchers. This equipment failed to stop or penetrate the T-34 tanks that the North Koreans were using against them. The artillery battery that was supporting the task force used all its six antitank rounds against the enemy. Task Force Smith caused some North Korean casualties but it was not enough because they were enveloped by the North Korean forces, so LTC Smith ordered a withdrawal from the battle. This caused discipline break down among the Soldiers and the unit fell back in disarray causing over 180 casualties within the task force and a loss of most of the unit's equipment. This battle spread quickly within the division and caused the American morale due to this defeat to the North Korean Army. This caused some delay actions within the American operations because the enemy tactics of using armor and infantry assaults against the American positions. Learning lessons from Task Force Smith that military professions may use to assist them with their current units are never underestimate your enemy's capabilities. Support your ground forces with the same capabilities as your enemy. The unit was ill equipped and not prepared to fight a large number of enemies. The Soldiers were support Soldiers that were placed in the unit last minute, they were poorly trained, and key leadership such as strong NCOs or officers did not hold the unit together. The U.S. took for granted that

they came out of a war five years earlier and the nation was a might super power nation. The North Korean Army would be amazed by the size of the U.S. forces it would withdraw but they assumption failed the American forces. This was a low time in our military history that we must learn from because we may never have another Task Force Smith occur.

### ***Operation Iraqi Freedom***

American military forces raced to Baghdad during Operation Iraqi Freedom. As most of these units came from the south from Kuwait entered Iraq and slowly started taking down cities and towns in the invasion of Iraq during the ground phase of this operation. While moving north near the city of An Nasiriyah, on March 23, 2003, the 507<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Company was part of a convoy moving near this city. Due to navigational error caused by different effects such as operational pace of the invasion of Iraq, fatigue of Soldiers, the unit breaking away from its convoy element, lack of strips maps, and environmental conditions. The 507<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Company turned into An Nasiriyah and drove through the city, which surprised the enemy because they were surprised to see American forces drive threw the city so they did not fire on the unit. The unit realized that it had made a wrong turn and turned around and headed right back through the enemy hands but this time they fired on the easy targets as they drove by. The unit split into two convoys with the Company commander taking one convoy through An Nasiriyah and the Company First Sergeant led the second convoy through the city but received most of the enemy fire the second time. Most of the Soldier's weapons jammed and repeatedly had to perform immediate action to fire off rounds against the enemy. The Soldiers continued to fight bravely, such as PFC Miller who moved beyond the crash-site and kept engaging the enemy until he was surrounded and captured. The exchange of fires between the 507<sup>th</sup> Maintenance Company with the Iraqi enemy resulted in 11 American Soldiers killed, seven became prisoners of war,

and nine were wounded during this battle that lasted approximately 60-90 minutes. This was one of the worst single combat incidents of Operation Iraqi Freedom during its initial ground phase. Lessons learned and studied from this incident are ensure your weapons are cleaned and maintained to the level of the operator. Rehearsals performed with the unit to understand which route they were going to take to their next location. The unit relied on commercial Global Position Systems, lacked communications between the vehicles, did not have a rest plan for their drivers and their batteries in their hand held radios were dead. Some of the Soldiers displayed the Warrior Ethos by never giving up such as PFC Miller solo attack on the enemy until he was captured.

### ***Conclusion***

These were just a few examples of different incidents in our military history. There so many more lessons to learn from but by continuing to study military history we acquire different views or perspectives from different battles in our history. Studying history can help develop basic skills in Soldiers as they learn and interpret some of these personal recollections that military personnel have endured. As military professions we should study military history to gain experience from prior military leaders conducted during past battles and experiences. When we study these situations we gain awareness and critical thinking from studying military history. This will help us as leaders develop some advanced skills in learning from military history. There should never be in any one's mind why we should never study military history. The proud history this nations will never be forgotten by those who gave the most precious thing their life for their country.

## References

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