

Running head: STUDY MILITARY HISTORY

Loma Lewis, MSG,

Why Should Military Personnel Study Military History

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Class 58

The United States Army began as the Colonial Army and has evolved into a powerful military force. The study of military history indicates that the Army engaged in multiple wars or battles from the American Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terrorism. Each battle has helped our military personnel to realize their mistakes and provide an opportunity to possibly learn from those mistakes.

Even though, we might not learn from all of our mistakes, military personnel should study military history to have a better understanding of the past. It can prepare Soldiers for challenges ahead and save lives on the battlefield.

Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm

Operation Desert Shield was the United States code name for the defense of Saudi Arabia and Desert Storm for the defense of Kuwait from Iraq. In the early morning hours of August 2, 1990, three armored divisions of Saddam Hussein's elite Iraqi *Republican Guard* crossed the Kuwaiti border and sped toward the city of Kuwait. The several brigades and potpourri of military equipment of the hapless Kuwaiti Army, already disorganized by special operations attacks, proved no match for this assault. Within days most Kuwaitis had surrendered or fled to Saudi Arabia, the *Republican Guard* divisions had closed to the Saudi border, and Iraqi follow-on forces had fanned out to secure the oil fields and commercial wealth of the small, yet prosperous country. Iraq had long coveted oil-rich Kuwait, characterizing it as a nineteenth province the British had purloined during the colonial era. This ambition became aggravated during the prolonged, desultory Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). Saddam Hussein had accrued enormous debts fighting the Iranians, leaving him with a large and battle-hardened army but an economy in

disarray. The wealth of Kuwait could fix this problem.

Saddam Hussein's army had grown tenfold during the war with Iran. When fully mobilized, it numbered over a million soldiers. Perhaps more important, it was well equipped by huge purchases from international arms markets. Although most of this equipment was of Soviet design and a generation behind its American counterparts, the sheer numbers of tanks, armored fighting vehicles, artillery pieces, and small arms of all types made it seem formidable indeed. In the years before, the Soviets had parlayed their role as arms supplier to the Iraqis into a species of proxy control; but that discipline of course had broken down as the Soviet Union collapsed. Russian and Ukrainian arms suppliers became desperate to turn inventories into cash, and the oil-rich Iraqis diversified their sources of supply in a buyers' market. Despite the brazen aggression, Hussein could count on support among the most disaffected in the Arab world. Many viewed Kuwait as an American dependent and its seizure as a righteous act of defiance against America.

For the American government and President George H. W. Bush, the first priority quickly became the defense of Saudi Arabia. Disruption of Kuwaiti oil supplies was damaging enough to the global economy; disruption of Saudi oil supplies could be disastrous. The Saudis shared Bush's view, and their national leadership overcame a traditional antipathy to foreign troops in a land sacred to Mohammed. On August 6 Saudi King Fahd bin Abdul Azziz approved American intervention to assist in the defense of his kingdom, and on August 8 a brigade of the 82d Airborne Division hit the ground in Saudi Arabia. (pg 412)

The arrival of the 82d Airborne Division began an anxious several weeks for American defense planners. The staff of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), commanded by Army General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Jr., knew the level of risk as it carefully balanced the right proportion of support and combat troops coming into theater. Recognizing the enormous

armored wherewithal of the Iraqis, the lightly armed paratroopers called themselves speed bumps, intended at best to delay an Iraqi advance and to signal the determination of the United States to expend American lives to buy time for the buildup of forces. This perception may have been a bit of an exaggeration, given the air and attack helicopter assets that arrived with them in theater.

Compared to historical precedent, the American buildup in Saudi Arabia progressed quickly and efficiently. In a little over two months the powerful XVIII Airborne Corps, consisting of an airborne division, an air-assault division, two heavy divisions, an armored cavalry regiment (ACR), and the requisite array of combat support and combat service support assets, had deployed. The inventory included over 120,000 troops, 700 tanks, 1,400 armored fighting vehicles, and 600 artillery pieces, not to mention the 32,000 troops and 400 tanks local Arab allies provided. Hundreds of planes were operating out of Saudi, Turkish, and Qatari airfields, with more operating off American aircraft carriers and long-range bombers able to range the theater from Diego Garcia and even from the United States. The Navy was on hand and active in the Persian Gulf and its approaches, having already imposed an effective blockade on Iraq.

(pg 413)

The XVIII Airborne Corp was prepared to defend Saudi Arabia by battling with the Iraqis, but their mission changed. Defending Kuwait was the new priority. The United States and its coalition partners defended Kuwait with minimal casualties, a total of over 200 personnel compared to over 15,000 Iraqis.

The United States and its coalition won this war because of their technologically advanced weaponry, executing a decisive plan and having well trained Soldiers who understood their roles.

General Schwarzkopf, the coalition forces commander had over thirty years of experience in the military and understood how to use the lessons learned from previous wars to benefit this war. He had learned a few lessons over the years and now was his opportunity to let the American people and his leadership know that he was the right man for the job. His military knowledge from Vietnam, West Point, Grenada and Commander of Central Command proved to be the key for a successful outcome of Operation Desert Shield\ Desert Storm.

Predicting behavior is also important in battle. Either your opponents will guess your actions or you will guess their actions. Planning a defense to defeat their offense is vital for success.

Demonstrations and feints work best if the deception is plausible and one the enemy is inclined to believe. The Iraqis had reason for anxiety concerning their 200-plus kilometer coastline, particularly since important supply routes ran along it. They also fully expected an attack up the Wadi al Batin, recognizing that the prominent terrain feature would facilitate land navigation deep into the heart of their theater. Indeed, when the VII Corps did conduct its attack from the west, it came across mile after mile of vehicle defensive positions aligned precisely along the azimuth described by 240 degrees magnetic—facing the direction of an attack up the Wadi al Batin. Without much effort the theater deception plan had taken 20 percent of the Iraqi in-theater force structure out of the fight. By the time the Iraqis realized their mistake and attempted to redeploy, it was too late. The 5th MEB and 1st Cavalry Division, on the other hand, were readily available for operations elsewhere. (417)

As in any battle or war, it is imperative to have enough forces and equipment to support the fight. To be successful it is important that you have enough motivated trained individuals to complete the mission.

The American buildup in Saudi Arabia progressed quickly and efficiently. In a little over two months the powerful XVIII Airborne Corps, consisting of an airborne division, an air-assault division, two heavy divisions, an armored cavalry regiment (ACR), and the requisite array of combat support and combat service support assets, had deployed. The inventory included over 120,000 troops, 700 tanks, 1,400 armored fighting vehicles, and 600 artillery pieces, not to mention the 32,000 troops and 400 tanks local Arab allies provided. Hundreds of planes were operating out of Saudi, Turkish, and Qatari airfields, with more operating off American aircraft carriers and long-range bombers able to range the theater from Diego Garcia and even from the United States. The Navy was on hand and active in the Persian Gulf and its approaches, having already imposed an effective blockade on Iraq. (413) The United States and the coalition partners had enough troops and equipment in theater to accomplish their mission.

The coalition commander and staff were prepared for this mission. They had learned from the past and used those lessons to improve the future. Their attention to past details saved lives or minimized the number of casualties for Desert Shield\Desert Storm. So you can see, military personnel should study military history for two main reasons. First, better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for challenges ahead. But most importantly, it can save lives on the battlefield

Form of reference to electronic media:

Unknown Author, (last updated 10 Jul 06) Army Military History, GoodSearch [on-line].

Available

<http://www.history.army.mil/books/AMH-V2/AMH%20V2/chapter13.htm>

Augumentative Essay Outline

9 Jan 08

MSG Loma Lewis

R03

Thesis:

Even though we might not learn from all of our mistakes, military personnel should study military history because a better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for challenges ahead and save lives on the battlefield.

- I. Introduction
- II. lessons learned
 - A. predicting behavior
 - B. correct number of forces or troops and equipment
- III. better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for challenges ahead and can saves lives on the battlefield
 - A. not underestimating our opponents
 - B. better equipment
- IV. Conclusion: So you can see, military personnel should study military history for two main reasons. First, better understanding of the past can prepare Soldiers for challenges ahead. But most importantly, it can save lives on the battlefield.