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Abstract

The American Military is an adaptive fighting force. As such, they are able to take the experience obtained from past conflicts and actions and apply these to current operations. History provides a backdrop for military tactics, missions, and lessons learned to assist in the growth and advancement in present military actions. These actions, whether they are successes or failures, result in a blueprint to provide current and future generations of leaders with the insight to limit unnecessary losses and to assist in the preservation of the force. The study and understanding of how soldiers and leaders performed in the past allows the United States Army to provide realistic training and assists in creating a talented, professional force to deal with any contingency. The comparison of various battles and actions discussed in this report provides the soldier with the ability to see why history is so important for a leader of today.

The old adage stating history repeats itself is an accurate statement. Military history is no different. The battle may be from a different era or the situation may be somewhat different. The climate can be similar or the environment may be vastly different from what another fighting force experienced in the past. There is one commonality with all battles that can be compared through time and space. This common thread is the leadership displayed by the commanders of the forces involved. The commander on the ground may be a four star general leading the entire Army or a squad leader moving his squad from one point to another in a much larger battle action. All leaders need to understand the tactics used in the past and how the actions of their predecessors determined the outcome of the engagement. This will assist the current leader in making well-informed, timely decisions that will assist in their success as a leader. The size or complexity of the mission does not matter, but the ability, knowledge, and capability of the leader will greatly influence the outcome of the encounter.

On 15 April 1861, a day after the capture of Fort Sumter by Confederate soldiers President Abraham Lincoln issued a proclamation declaring an insurrection of the laws of the United States of America and a call to arms was initiated (US Army Center of Military History, 2006). The proclamation placed 75, 000 soldiers on ninety day orders to assist in the suppression of the rebellion and restore order. The men called up for this duty were not given adequate training and the commanders placed in positions of authority had not been given clear guidance on what the mission was. The Units were provided instruction on maneuver of regiments, but very little was provided on brigade and division movement (US Army Center of Military History, 2006). The Union forces

planned to attack the Confederacy at Manassas Junction on 9 July 1861, but the logistics trains were not in position to support the main attack, which caused a delay of one week. The Union Commander, General McDowell started moving his troops southward on 16 July 1861, but because the Army was not accustomed to forced marches there was disorganization within the movement column. General Beauregard commanded the Confederate Army and upon learning of the Union movement; he started plans that would place his smaller force in a better position to defend. The Confederacy employed trains to move their troops to the front allowing the soldiers a little more rest and control of movement.

Units of the Union started to arrive on 18 July 1861 and were given strict orders not to engage enemy forces until the rest of the Army could move into position. Forward units disobeyed orders and engaged Confederate General Longstreet at Blackburn's Ford. This allowed the Confederacy to anticipate a flanking movement and cause General McDowell to change his course of action. Also during this time, the Confederacy was successful in screening their movements of General Johnson's Army located to the west by General Stuart's Cavalry. This placed more Confederate soldiers on the battlefield, effectively stealing the advantage of numerical superiority from the North. Another concern that would cause the Union Army maneuverability issues is the pending discharge of troops due to a 90-day enlistment.

The battle officially took place on 21 July 1861, and resulted in a Confederate victory. Both sides had large numbers of untrained forces with inexperienced commanders. Either side was unable to effectively deploy all soldiers or the

commanders controlled the battle at the regimental level only. This caused confusion and allowed for indecisive action. The initiative of the Confederacy resulted in victory.

Over time, the Union Army realized that the Confederacy would continue to shift its forces and extend the war indefinitely. The reason is that much of the battle was being fought on Southern soil and this provided a logistical advantage for the Confederate forces. The South could provide for itself from the countryside, but the North needed a very long logistics trail. In March of 1864, President Lincoln placed General Grant as the General in Chief of the Armies of the United States (Owens, 2009). Grant believed the armies of the Union had placed themselves in a poor tactical position by splitting the Union forces and placing them in several theaters (Owens, 2009). Grant's plan was to combine armies and continuously attack placing the Confederate forces on the defensive and never allowing them to provide support to the other elements.

This action is vastly different from when the war first started at the First Bull Run. At that time, both sides were used to fighting where they engaged and disengaged in a methodical manner. There was no initiative on the battlefield and many of the forces fought in the Napoleonic Method. As time went by and forces were destroyed, the commander's of both armies' devised new ways of fighting, thus increasing their combat power. The Union Army realized a war of attrition would take a very long time and cause too many casualties on both sides. This new way of fighting allowed the Union commanders to force the field of battle and allowed them to seize the advantage.

Another military comparison regarding how the US military has learned from history can be drawn from the pursuit of Pancho Villa in 1916-1917 and the current pursuit of al-Qaeda, specifically bin Laden and Al-Zarqawi. Although the US military has still not captured or killed Osama bin Laden, they have applied techniques learned during the hunt for Pancho Villa in the beginning of the 20th Century. These skills have led to the apprehension of many al-Qaeda members and the continued strong relations with various host countries.

After Pancho Villa launched raids across the Mexico-US border, he would return to his homeland hoping to influence the citizens of both countries to bolster his power base in Mexico (Griffith, 2005). He used guerilla tactics and manipulated the citizens of Mexico to mislead the US forces on his location and influence the battle space. He also pitted both countries against each other, which allowed him to continue his raids and harassment of the US forces. The logistical train the US forces had to assemble and maneuver caused many frustrations for General Pershing in the field. Another concern was the indigenous personnel that assisted Pancho Villa in his guerrilla like activities. Because of this, many times the US forces did not know who was a friend and who was a supporter of Pancho Villa.

In contrast, although the US forces were only partly successful in the hunt for Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the way they conducted the movement and diplomacy while in a foreign country was vastly different. They did not alienate the host country and during the hunt for these two terrorists, they actually made the lives of the Pakistani people better (Graham, 2004). The US learned from the expedition in Mexico in the early 1900s and realized that to win the host country and ultimately

succeed in the capture and destruction of the al-Qaeda network; it would need the help of the indigenous people in the Afghanistan/Pakistan region. They accomplished this by providing humanitarian aid and security assets to the people of these war torn nations (Graham, 2004). Although Osama bin Laden has not been captured to date, the US forces engaged in the Middle East have continued to win over the people of this region and have made great strides in providing this region with more stability. These actions did finally result in the death of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on 8 June 2006.

The Korean War started disastrously for the US Forces. The first forces sent to defend southern Korea from the advancing North Korean Army were drawn from men on occupation duty in Japan with little or no battle experience (Eger, 2009). This force was ill-equipped, under-strength, and lead by many junior officers. The force had 400 men and their mission was to stop the advance of the North Korean Army. The North Korean Army in contrast had 1100 infantrymen and T-34 Russian Tanks. Task Force Smith had mortars, recoilless rifles and bazookas for the defense (Eger, 2009). One bazooka team took up a position behind the advancing T-34 tanks only to watch their rounds bounce harmlessly off the armor. This task force was put in an untenable position and many of the top military minds assumed the thought of the US military might would stop the onslaught. In the end, 150 men were killed and the task force was combat ineffective. Today, a common catch phrase still references this tragic battle, "No More Task Force Smiths."

The battle in the Ia Drang Valley, Vietnam made famous by the book and movie, "We Were Soldier's Once...and Young", is a great testament to leaders learning from history and training their men to survive in combat. The battle started at LZ Xray with

LTC Hal Moore in charge of the 1st Battalion, 7th Cavalry which air assaulted into the landing (LTG (Ret.) Moore & Galloway, 1992). The mission was three fold, get the rest of his men to the landing zone, hold the clearing so the helicopters could land, and carry the fight to the numerically superior force. The 1/7th Cavalry numbered 450 and faced an enemy of over 2000 Vietnamese soldiers (LTG (Ret.) Moore & Galloway, 1992). The difference for this Battalion was they controlled the battle space by placing defensive positions, using artillery and air strikes, and well trained soldiers. Throughout the next three days, the soldiers and leaders of this Battalion used their training, experience and ingenuity to repel assault after assault. The leaders, even down to the squad level had learned the lessons of not providing their soldiers with the ability to fight and survive. The leaders were the true reason the small, under-strength battalion was able to win over a superior enemy. When the 1/7th Cavalry was finally relieved, they had 79 KIA and 121 WIA.

Critics of using history as a learning device for our present day military would say that history should not affect how we train, deploy and conduct military operations. They would say that our military leaders are intelligent enough to identify the enemy's weaknesses and capitalize on these chinks in their armor. They would argue that because of the ever-changing operational environment that one battle from a specific time could not provide insight to the leaders in another time and place.

My discussion of different battles in different times proves that the study of history by our current and future leaders is not only a necessity; it will save the lives of our fighting force. The American Civil War showed how an army transitions from a Napoleonic type of war to a modern force on force that used flanking movements and

superior firepower to carry the day in battle. The comparison of the hunt for Pancho Villa and almost a century later the hunt for al-Qaeda shows how the military has realized how to ensure the support of the host country by empowering them to assist in the military operation. Finally, comparing Task Force Smith and LZ Xray in the Ia Drang Valley, the military learned that the American fighting man would succeed only when properly supported. The leaders realized to increase the survivability of a unit you must provide battlefield modifiers that will increase their chances. The other thing taken from these battles is the training of your force can never be shortchanged. By removing the History component of a soldier's training, you are doing just that, limiting the power of the American Soldier's mind in relating previous actions and employing these thoughts to a similar event.

Over the last several pages, I have discussed why history is so important to today's military. History provides the leaders of our army the ability to study both successes and failures and apply these lessons learned to the current operating environment. Without history to teach us how to wage war many young leaders would be left to fend for themselves with nothing to go on. The history these young leaders access may be from their leaders and can be shared as past experiences, or result from time honored events from around the world. The great Chinese General Sun Tzu is still studied today and his insights still influence today's strategists. The history of warfare should be studied and used in the decision making process for all leaders of today.

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