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The Tactical Implications of Combat Inexperience
in the United States Army

by

Major Michael W. McKeeman
Field Artillery

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ABSTRACT

THE TACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF COMBAT INEXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY by MAJ Michael W. McKeeman, USA, 51 pages.

As war veterans retire from the military, the U.S. Army transitions to a generation of soldiers with no combat experience. This monograph examines this phenomenon of combat inexperience and assesses the tactical implications for the Army. To consider the impact of combat inexperience on the outcome of battle, this monograph weighs the significance of combat inexperience against other factors which also affect a battle's final result.

This monograph first reviews literature and research which address various factors influencing the outcome of battle. In each case - S.L.A. Marshall's Men Against Fire, Samuel A. Stouffer's The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath, and Richard Holmes' Arts of War - the monograph examines some of the characteristics of combat inexperience and how the soldier's consequent behavior affects a battle. The monograph discusses a number of common themes surrounding a soldier's conduct in war.

Next, this monograph tests the literature and research by surveying three battles which occur at the outset of World War I, World War II, and the Korean War. The intent is to consider each battle in its historical context, to examine specific significant events in each battle, and to analyze the battles conduct and outcome in light of the literature and research previously reviewed.

Finally, a series of conclusions and implications for the Army's future highlight the requirement to train the Army realistically for its combat mission. Although research suggests that combat inexperience is a factor in the outcome of battle, its significance must be considered in the context of several factors - doctrine, tactics, training, and leadership, among others. This monograph adds impetus to the importance of battle drills, standardization, and stressful leader development.

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INTRODUCTION

"One time we begged our lieutenants to give orders..."

- Wounded Soldier of North African Campaign, WWII/1

The United States Army lost direct contact with the experience of combat on a large scale when it left South Vietnam in 1973. With each passing year, the number of experienced combat soldiers in the U.S. Army decreases. As senior officers and non-commissioned officers who served in Korea and/or Vietnam retire, the pool of combat experienced soldiers becomes more shallow. Grenada and other minor military actions notwithstanding, the U.S. Army is transitioning to a generation of soldiers with no combat experience. This monograph intends to examine the phenomenon of combat inexperience and to consider its tactical implications for the military.

Individual combat experience is only relevant to the Army if it affects the outcome of battle. As a possible determinant in the outcome of battle, combat experience joins a variety of factors -- training, doctrine, organization, leadership, and equipment -- to name a few. Recognizing, however, that combat experience, as a single factor, is being irretrievably depleted by time, the fundamental questions remain: How important is combat

experience in the outcome of battle? How should the U.S. Army react to the fact that as time passes fewer soldiers have combat experience?

To answer these questions, this monograph will first review literature and research which address various factors influencing the outcome of battle and the characteristics of combat inexperience. Second, it will consider these determinants of battle outcome, with particular emphasis on combat inexperience, through the examination of three historical examples of American units in their first combat engagement where their combat inexperience would appear to be the greatest. Third, this paper will draw a number of conclusions surrounding combat experience as a factor in the outcome of battle. Finally, the implications for the contemporary and future Army will be addressed.

CURRENT LITERATURE

In Men Against Fire, S. L. A. Marshall argues that the fundamental key to success on the battlefield is "more² and better fire." While this observation may be obvious, Marshall further suggests that volume and accuracy of fire are not related to combat experience. Those soldiers who fire their weapons in their first exposure to combat are likely to be the ones who fire in subsequent

battles. Conversely, the soldiers who do not fire their weapons in their first battle are usually the same men who fail to fire in later battles.³ Marshall concludes that three primary factors affect whether or not a soldier will fire in combat. First, if a soldier has confidence in his weapon, then he is more likely to use it.⁴ Second, if a soldier's leader has identified him as a "nonfirer" and the leader has focused training energy on that individual, then the training improves the probability of the soldier's firing.⁵ Third, to engage the enemy effectively, the soldier must overcome his fear.⁶ To help the soldier act in spite of the natural terror of battle, Marshall contends, the leader must communicate with the soldier and direct him to act so that the soldier defeats the inertia which fear causes.⁷ In addition, Marshall suggests that knowing that a comrade is nearby helps the soldier overcome his fear and thus fight.⁸ Thus, Marshall's basic contention is that success on the battlefield results from the individual soldier's actions with his weapon. Whether or not the soldier fires his weapon is unrelated to the soldier's level of combat experience. Confidence, training, and leadership are the ingredients of a successful combat soldier.

In 1949, Samuel A. Stouffer offered an extensive study in the social psychology of the American soldier in

World War II. More scientifically-based than Marshall's study, Stouffer argues that combat experience is a factor in battle, but its impact is both positive and negative. As a positive factor, the combat experienced soldier feels accepted and integrated into his unit after about one week.⁹ Between then and three months of relatively continuous combat, the soldier's efficiency peaks. At that point, the soldier becomes a combat "veteran" and for several months his performance is likely to be perceived as integral to the unit. Beyond six to eight months, however, the soldier's efficiency drops dramatically and he may be perceived as a liability.¹⁰ Consistent with Marshall's observations, Stouffer noted that combat inexperienced soldiers tend to bunch up and talk loudly at night thereby reinforcing each other's need to feel near a fellow soldier.¹¹ In addition, Stouffer found that combat inexperienced soldiers tend to be more compliant toward their leaders -- especially if they perceive their leaders as more experienced.¹² Unfortunately, in some situations, when a new soldier joined a unit with predominantly veterans who were beyond their peak efficiency then the new soldier tended to become tainted in attitude and performance.¹³ Like Marshall, Stouffer discovered that a soldier's confidence positively affects his conduct in battle. When asked what type of training

would have better prepared them for battle, the soldiers responded that "training under fire, under realistic battle conditions" would have bolstered their confidence and subsequent performance.¹⁴ In addition, the soldiers indicated that precombat training should stress specific reactions to specific combat dangers; for example, the reaction to a gas attack or artillery fire.¹⁵ Stouffar carried the emphasis on specific battle drills one step further. He suggested that the Army's reliance on formal rules and procedures minimize the adverse impact of battle confusion and stress. "Thus, the individual in combat was simultaneously guided, supported, and covered by a framework of organization."¹⁶

Richard Holmes, in Acts of War, recently proposed that -- once in battle -- men fought because of "inspiring leadership, thorough training and tight group cohesion...."¹⁷ Even the novice combatant will rise to the occasion when the officer sets an example of courage. Holmes quotes a young Irish soldier standing behind an ensign at the Battle of Edgehill, "I'll stand as long as the officer stands."¹⁸ Thorough training suggests, according to Holmes, "battle drills" which train soldiers to react to a variety of situations. Admitting that drills may restrict initiative and flexibility, Holmes argues that they enhance individual and unit confidence when the unit

"falls unconsciously into the appropriate well-rehearsed

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battle drill." Importantly, Holmes agrees with both

Marshall and Stouffer when he concludes:

"Part of the stress of battle stems from its puzzling and capricious nature: battle drills help to minimise the randomness of battle, and give the soldier familiar points of contact in an uncertain environment, like lighthouses in a stormy sea."/20

Finally, in his analysis of group cohesion, Holmes relies heavily on the British regimental system. Aside from the regimental system per se, however, Holmes concludes that the group provides the individual soldier a source of

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strength, fellowship, and fraternity. Those aspects of group cohesion are of particular value to the combat inexperienced soldier. Again, Holmes' observations are entirely consistent with both Marshall's and Stouffer's.

A review of literature yields five conclusions.

First, combat experience affects the outcome of battle.

The novice soldier requires about a week to feel well-grounded and accepted in his unit. He then peaks and sustains about three months later and finally becomes less efficient after six to eight months. The combat inexperienced soldier relies heavily on his leaders -- especially in the confusion and stress of combat.

Second, training intends to prepare the soldier for his first exposure to combat. The best training stresses combat realism and builds a soldier's confidence in

himself, his weapon, and his leaders. Battle drills provide the soldier with a sense of stability when the confusion and terror of combat prevail.

Third, specific instructions and procedures for the leader to follow in combat situations tend to minimize the impact of stress in battle and to provide the leader with guidance in an extraordinarily confusing situation. Just as combat inexperienced soldiers rely on their leaders in combat, combat inexperienced leaders tend to rely on established procedures and instructions in similar stressful circumstances.

Fourth, unit cohesion tends to embrace the combat novice so that he feels both protected and needed. When that sensation of belonging develops, the soldier's efficiency gradually improves and his contribution to the unit grows. Unit cohesion demands personnel stability and unit training.

Fifth, regardless of his level of experience, the combat leader must manifest bravery and stability in the face of the enemy if the unit is to win the battle. In the heat of combat, all eyes turn toward the leader. If the officer or NCO fails, then all eyes will turn toward another leader and the officer or NCO will in fact relinquish control.

In sum, combat experience joins other factors in influencing victory or defeat on the battlefield; training,

cohesion, and leadership blend together to decide the battle's outcome. To isolate combat experience as a singular cause for battlefield success or failure is difficult. To consider the impact of combat inexperience in a series of battles, however, is both possible and valuable. A survey of three battles -- Cantigny, Kasserine Pass, and Taejon -- in American wars forms the substance of this monograph.

WORLD WAR I - THE AEF AT CANTIGNY

Blunting the Cantigny salient in 1918 offered the American Expeditionary Forces more of a psychological than²² operational opportunity for success. When General John J. Pershing, Commander of the AEF, landed in France a year earlier, Allied commanders clamored for American reinforcements to battle-weary British and French units.²³ In the face of War Department and Allied pressure, Pershing stalwartly demanded a separate American sector and an independent Army. Despite persuasive arguments in favor of amalgamating American soldiers into Allied units -- such as, combat experienced Allied leaders, established lines of communications, and the desperate Allied situation -- Pershing persevered. His strength of character embittered Allied commanders toward him and the American Army; when Americans would fight, their toughest

critics would prove to be their Allies. Consequently, Cantigny demanded American success in battle.

Cantigny also appeared to assure success. The Lorraine sector, of which Cantigny was a part, allowed the AEF to establish its own logistical base and training camp virtually isolated from the ravages of the French and British sectors.²⁴ Anticipating a major Allied offensive in a southern sector, Germany repositioned forces. The highly-rated 30th Division shifted south and was replaced by the 82d Reserve Division -- a division composed of "healed veterans, young recruits, dismounted cavalry, overage landwehr men, and railway guards."²⁵ The division had been inactive for almost two years, had never fought in the West, and had not performed well in its training exercises prior to its deployment to Cantigny.²⁶ The impending battle appeared to be weighted heavily in the AEF's favor.

The AEF's First Division, however, faced a number of serious problems which would affect its combat performance. First, the division's front-line leaders and soldiers were inexperienced. In fact:

"Two-thirds of its enlisted men were wartime volunteers, and only 40 percent of its NCOs had had prewar service. Only half the company commanders were prewar officers, and all the platoon commanders were either brand new officers from officer candidate schools or newly commissioned NCOs." /27

Personnel turbulence contributed significantly to the leaders' inexperience. As the AEF expanded, the First Division lost more and more officers and NCOs to staff assignments, logistical support requirements, and school training.²⁸

Both leader inexperience and personnel turbulence were indicative of the AEF in World War I. As a result, the AEF suffered from inconsistent junior leadership. The reservoir of officers from the National Guard and Reserve Officer Corps provided 6000 more officers, some of whom had some military experience. Of those with military experience, a minority had combat experience in the Spanish-American War or the Philippines Insurrection. By 1918, those officers with combat experience had become too old for service as company grade officers in war. Even of the general officers in the AEF, only Pershing had a previous wartime command.²⁹ Thus, the soldiers who led the AEF in Europe and Cantigny were combat novices.

The First Division's second problem as it faced the Germans at Cantigny centered on its training preparation. Pershing's recent experience in Mexico and his fierce intent to preserve American autonomy convinced him that open warfare should replace trench warfare on the battlefield. Trench warfare would simply never be decisive and consequently would never bring victory. French

advisers and trainers, however, trained trench warfare. Clearly, the commander's intent and the training process were disconnected. Additionally, artillery-infantry coordination left much to be desired. Finally, tactical orders were too complex for the experience level of the leaders -- a problem which personnel turbulence would only exacerbate. The division's training status foretold the shortcomings which Caigny would bring to light.³⁰

When the Germans mounted the Somme offensive in March 1918, the AEF and the First Division marched to battle as an independent American force for the first time. The First Division's Operations Officer, LTC George C. Marshall, planned a detailed, deliberate attack. He integrated artillery, reconnaissance, engineer support, and direct fire weapons. To accommodate logistical requirements, the division postponed its attack for a week. On 28 May, the First Division attacked toward Cantigny which marked the extent of the German offensive. The attack achieved its objectives with remarkable ease, but holding Cantigny and its environs in the face of three counterattacks tested the division. Three counterattacks failed, and, on 31 May, the First Division and the AEF³¹ justifiably celebrated its first battlefield victory.

Both Pershing and MG Robert L. Bullard, the division commander, could not speak highly enough of their soldiers

and staff officers. Despite the relative shallowness of the offensive effort, despite the critical use of French artillery which weighted the firepower balance in favor of the Americans, despite the questionable quality of the German opposition in sector, and despite the luxury of planning time and resources, the AEF argued that the Americans clearly manifested the skill, courage, and planning capability which Allies had frequently called into question.³²

Despite the AEF's victory, Cantigny and subsequent battles brought to light a series of significant tactical shortcomings. First, small unit leaders did not effectively integrate direct fire systems to exploit fire and maneuver. Machine gun, 37-mm cannon, and mortars were positioned poorly. Second, attack formations were predictable and failed to use terrain to their advantage for cover and concealment. Third, attack plans lacked flexibility. Staffs spent so much time planning that subordinate staffs and commanders could not thoroughly prepare themselves and their units for the operation. Fourth, during attacks, units wasted time and lives reducing strong points instead of bypassing and leaving the mopping up to reserve units.³³

Finally, the artillery and infantry were poorly linked. Artillery elements by and large could not

communicate with the supported infantry units. Consequently, artillery displacements were unresponsive, enemy positions were targeted but not engaged quickly enough, and scheduled fires lacked flexibility to shift as the infantry maneuvered. When the infantry moved beyond the artillery's range, the ground forces denied themselves indirect fire support and the artillery batteries were stripped of any infantry protection. Both forces suffered; infantry casualties rose and artillery batteries were attacked. That lack of mutual support continued until the end of the war.

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To draw a causal relation between the tactical inadequacies of Cantigny and the American effort in World War I on one hand and the combat inexperience of the AEF's tactical leaders on the other is difficult. Clearly, a myriad of factors affected the unit's tactics. Communications with artillery, for example, was more a lack of technology than inexperience. Just as clearly, however, combat leader inexperience did impact much of the tactical battle. The fact that staffs overplanned operations and allowed subordinates insufficient reaction time was attributable to insufficient training and inexperience; staffs operated slowly and they detailed plans excessively, expecting the combat units simply to execute the plan.

because their inexperience would preclude changes to the plan. Compounding the problem, unit commanders received orders too late to prepare, so they adhered rigidly to the plan and failed to exploit successes or opportunities. In addition, commanders did not effectively mass fires or use terrain. They lacked knowledge of weapons' capabilities and they were wholly unfamiliar with the battlefield. Finally, although Pershing was a strong advocate of open warfare, that tactic demanded a level of experience and expertise beyond the AEF's initial capability. The rigid, structured trench battle was more controllable and required no initiative or imagination.

In summary, while there is no doubt that the American forces in WWI fought well and contributed decisively, there is equally no question that the tactical leaders lacked combat experience. Although many factors influenced the resultant tactical problems, there exists a clear correlation between the small unit leader's combat inexperience and his uncertain performance on the battlefield. Within the AEF, personnel turbulence contributed to combat inexperience. Staff expansion and training demands at the outset of the AEF's participation in the war depleted units of experienced leaders. Thus personnel replacement policies and staff requirements institutionalized combat inexperience which influenced combat performance on the battlefield.

BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS

In 1939, the United States Army was as ill-prepared to wage war as it had been in 1917. In every category of readiness -- personnel, equipment, weaponry, and training -- the Army suffered shortages or total voids. Specifically, the Army lacked airplanes, tanks, combat cars, scout cars, antiaircraft guns, searchlights, fire control equipment, .50 caliber machine guns, pontoon equipment, gas masks, radio and telephone equipment, and medical equipment.³⁶ Funds for equipment and weapons development dried up shortly after World War I. The United States had dedicated resources to domestic considerations and the nation's ability to wage war suffered dramatically.

Of particular concern to this analysis is the Army's tactical development between the world wars. Tactics between the wars were based on the World War I experience. Precisely timed, rolling artillery barrages led infantry assaults; tanks cleared passages through barbed wire and across trenches. Technology notwithstanding, tanks, aircraft, and machine guns were all relegated strictly to supporting roles which had succeeded in World War I. Thus, after almost twenty years, American doctrine and tactics had changed little -- set-piece attacks with infantry forces.³⁷

While the AEF had been celebrating victory in 1919, one introspective figure seemed to understand the Army's

battlefield deficiencies. At a lecture to the Army War College in 1922, Pershing's aide de camp, George C. Marshall summarized the AEF's staff operation:

"...General Staff officers exhibited that lack of intimate personal knowledge of the marching, billeting and fighting of the troops which makes it impossible to prepare orders and instructions without causing complications, unnecessary hardships, and unfavorable battle conditions for the combat organizations. Failure to recognize the time element required for the study and preparation of orders and their transmission through the successive echelons down to the corporal's squad, was the most serious failing of many of our hastily trained General Staff officers. They frequently themselves absorbed all the available time in the preparation of orders, which could not and would not reach the troops in time for execution...Poorly coordinated and partially understood operations would result."/38

Despite Cantigny, St. Michiel, and Meuse-Argonne successes, Marshall argued, the AEF staff officers lacked adequate training and experience.

Eleven years later, as Commandant of the Infantry School, Marshall found much evidence of the same problems. The Army had assigned World War I veteran officers as instructors at Fort Benning. With high expectations the Army anticipated that these officers' combat experiences would significantly contribute to the Army's doctrinal and tactical developments.

In fact, the combat experienced instructors adversely affected the development and training of tactical doctrine for several reasons. First, the instructors skewed the lessons they imparted based on their personal experiences.

Instructors were openly critical of the Army's doctrine; but instead of contributing to solve the serious deficiencies, the instructors chose to offer their own
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myopic, tactical tips instead.

A second problem developed. Instructors tended to forget failures and focused on successful operations. Thus, they discounted many staff and planning problems of the mobilization and training efforts in France. With all good intentions, the instructors eliminated academic debate and presented their limited experiences as the approved, doctrinal solution. Marshall found that problem to be "the most difficult and embarrassing obstacle to my
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efforts."

Marshall's reaction to the low quality of instruction had a serious effect. To supervise instructors and control the substance of instruction, service schools began to rely more and more on charts, blackboards, models, and visual aids. While the use of these resources facilitated both standardization of instruction and teaching large numbers of students, the instructor's message at times became lost in the charts or models. When shown a word chart, for example, the student tended to memorize the catchwords and ignore the concept or process
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they symbolized. Ironically, standardizing instruction seemed to stultify instruction.

As Marshall moved to address these problems, another came to light. In an effort to clarify planning and execution in maneuver warfare, the instructors -- now Leavenworth and Army War College graduates -- detailed the process so completely that "the individual sank in a sea of paper, maps, tables, and elaborate technique."⁴² Plans and contingencies became so extraordinarily complex that Marshall, in a letter to the Commandant of the Command and General Staff College, insisted:

"...we must get down to the essentials, make clear the real difficulties, and expunge the bunk, complications, and ponderosities; we must concentrate on registering in men's minds certain vital considerations, instead of a mass of less important details. We must develop a technique and methods so simple and so brief that the citizen officer of good common sense can readily grasp the idea."/43

At the dawn of World War II, the American Army's tactical doctrine reflected the World War I experiences of many combat veterans. Disjointed, narrow, and yet overly detailed, the staff training did little to compensate for the inexperience of future combat leaders.

Between 1940 and 1943, the Army undertook a massive mobilization program. In July 1940, BG Lesley J. McNair assumed the position of Chief of Staff, General Headquarters (GHQ), an echelon subordinate to Marshall, who became Chief of Staff in 1939, at the War Department. McNair's responsibility was to prepare the Army for war including all related functions - training, mobilization, organization, and

equipping. With no mobilization plan readily available, McNair leaned into the formidable task at hand.

Starting in January 1940, the Army began a series of maneuvers designed to identify training, doctrinal, and equipment shortcomings. These exercises moved from the northwest in January to Georgia and Louisiana in April and May. In 1941, the exercises continued in Louisiana and then in the Carolinas in the fall. Although participating units lacked substantial equipment and personnel, the exercises' results reinforced the problems which had come to light after

World War I.

Two of the most serious deficiencies which the exercises highlighted centered on combined arms and air-ground coordination. In the combined arms arena, antitank guns and then tank destroyer units arrived on the battlefield to counter the known German tank strength. Integrating that new asset into the infantry-tank team posed something of a doctrinal problem surrounding the question of offensive action versus defensive action. "Antitank" connoted defense and GHQ recognized that more than defense would be required to defeat German advantage; thus, tank

destroyers joined the Army's structure.

All exercises noted the glaring deficiency of air-ground operations. Ground forces simply did not know how to use the air dimension. Consequently, development of the

relationship was halting and disjointed. Command and control of air assets was unclear; the use of planes as artillery spotters or artillery droppers was undecided; and even communications with aircraft was spotty. Generally, the use of the air promised to be the result of trial and error.⁴⁷ Although air support improved substantially

during World War II, "American troops in North Africa enjoyed very little direct support from aircraft and suffered many attacks at the hands of friendly fliers, all because no solutions had been developed for the problems identified in Louisiana and the Carolinas."⁴⁸

Finally, the Louisiana maneuvers reinforced General Marshall's concern about excessively detailed orders and delayed instructions. In his observations of the maneuvers, BG McNair noted in September 1941 that "field orders in many units still are too long and involved, and yet lack clarity." Maps, overlays, and standard procedures should allow orders to be "reduced to a few lines. In small units oral orders should be the rule." McNair also noted as "one of the most common and most serious faults in our staff work," the problem of passing orders to subordinate units with so little time before execution that there was no opportunity for subordinate headquarters to issue their own instructions. In fact, McNair states, "Sometimes they arrived after the hour set for their execution."⁴⁹

Thus, as the United States moved toward World War II, the Army was ill-prepared. Besides personnel and equipment shortages, the Army's doctrine and tactics were World War I vintage. Largely thanks to Marshall and McNair, however, the Army had reacted to many problems identified in the Great War. The impending battles of World War II would show, nevertheless, that the American Army still had much to learn

WORLD WAR II - II CORPS AT KASSERINE

The Battle of Kasserine Pass in Tunisia in January and February 1943 marked the disastrous initiation of American troops into World War II. Kasserine's genesis was OPERATION TORCH - the Allied invasion of North Africa by MG Lloyd R. Fredendall's II Corps and elements of 5 British Corps on 8 November 1942. Quickly disposing of token French resistance which subsequently joined the Allied effort, the American and British forces moved eastward from Algiers to face General Juergen von Arnim whose task force had landed in northern Tunisia to protect General Erwin Rommel's withdrawal from Libya to southern Tunisia while preventing Allied access to Italy from the northeastern Tunisian coast. To deny that coastline, Axis forces had to control a number of passes through the Eastern Dorsale

mountain range. The battle for the Kasserine Pass brought
all the forces together.⁵⁰

A tragic series of debacles marked the engagements of the Battle of Kasserine Pass. First, MG Fredendall's inability or disinclination to state clearly his orders and intentions caused confusion and tragedy. The XII Air Support Command collocated with the II Corps headquarters. While an apparently ideal situation, Fredendall abdicated his critical responsibility to spell out his expectations for air support of ground forces. His instructions to the Air Support Command were, "Don't wait for us to order air missions, you know what the situation is, just keep
pounding them."⁵¹ Unfortunately, that amount of vague latitude contributed to an American air strike on friendly
troops who responded by shooting down the attacker.⁵²

On the other end of the spectrum, Fredendall issued an excruciatingly detailed order to MG Ward, Commander of 1st Armored Division. In that order Fredendall directs Ward's internal task organization, directs where to position listening posts (with a reminder to man them 24 hours a day), directs the use of patrols, and most significantly, directs Ward to "inform me when the instructions enumerated in this directive have been
complied with."⁵³ Fredendall offers all those details

and orders compliance without ever stepping foot in Ward's sector of operations.

After the air tragedy, a second Allied mistake unfolded. The commander of British forces, Lieutenant General Sir Kenneth A.M. Anderson, and Fredendall were unable to agree on a common point to mass offensive efforts. Consequently, attacks were piecemeal and wholly ineffective against the strong German defenses. After the Allied attacks, von Arnim retained control of all mountain passes. Comically, Eisenhower blamed Fredendall who questioned the division commander's competence who pointed at an ineffective combat command commander who finally
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castigated a subordinate tank force commander.

Unfortunately, the preceding examples typify Fredendall's command style. Loose, undisciplined, and out of touch, Fredendall held all accountable but himself. Although he projected himself as an aggressive combat leader, he "fought" the battle via telephone and radio from an elaborate command post sixty miles from the front line. Fredendall seldom left his command post; he saw neither a requirement nor an advantage to visiting II Corps soldiers. That attitude and behavior permeated the staff. Recommendations or opinions which differed from those of Fredendall -- regardless of the fact that they may be based on actual information from observing the front line -- were
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disdainfully rejected.

Early on 14 February, a third American mishap took place. During a blinding sandstorm, American security waned and 200 German tanks, half-tracks, and guns bypassed American outposts unnoticed. The German forces surrounded two battalions which were totally paralyzed by the weather and confusion of the situation. When the weather cleared, American counterattacks failed to repel the enemy; American efforts to block the enemy while withdrawing also failed. German air strikes further isolated the encircled forces from a rescuing task force. Unable to attack or organize an orderly withdrawal, the American forces abandoned their positions and equipment (artillery, trucks, tank destroyers, and even ambulances) and fled. The lapse in security and inability to orchestrate a meaningful combat response cost the Americans 6 killed, 32 wounded, 134 missing, 44 tanks, 59 half-tracks, 26 artillery pieces, and 56 more than 24 trucks.

The evening of 16 February brought a fourth American disaster. MG Orlando Ward, Commander of the 1st Armored Division, positioned his two combat commands to defend the southernmost passes of the Eastern Dorsale. As Headquarters, Combat Command A assumed a defensive posture in Sbeitla, German forces mounted a counterattack. German artillery peppered Sbeitla which prompted BG Raymond B. McQuillin, Commander of CCA, to reposition his headquarters

west of the town. Weary, dispirited, and confused soldiers witnessed the command element's withdrawal and misinterpreted the action as a retreat. Withdrawing engineers destroyed an ammunition dump whose blaze and explosion convinced fearful American soldiers that the Germans were nearby. During his displacement, McQuillin lost communications with Ward and rumors began that the CCA⁵⁷ had been overrun. Lacking decisive leadership, the CCA crumbled and confused American soldiers panicked and fled.

The last few days of the battle were marked by a series of violent engagements. Although American performance was spotty, it weakened the Axis resolve sufficiently to dissuade the enemy from exploiting their successes on 21 and 22 February. Disagreement within the Axis camp caused the exhausted Germans to withdraw to the Eastern Dorsale and the east coast. Unfortunately, the Allied forces were not organized to pursue the withdrawing enemy, and the Battle of Kasserine Pass ended with a whimper. The Americans were in such disarray they did not even notice that Rommel's troops had been withdrawn for two⁵⁸ days.

The Battle of Kasserine Pass was a disaster for the U.S. Army. Casualties, losses of equipment, and the poor performance of the mission all substantiate that conclusion. This cursory recap of events has focused on

mistakes and has completely ignored the brighter moments of American performance. Many small unit leaders excelled; after initial unsteadiness, American troops improved and fought bravely enough to convince the Axis forces to withdraw; American equipment -- most notably the bazooka, the Sherman tank, and the .50 caliber machine gun -- proved effective; but on balance, the first American appearance in
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combat in World War II was a failure.

The American forces lost the Battle of Kasserine Pass for a number of reasons. At the highest level, General Eisenhower blamed himself for not compelling the French forces to subordinate themselves to British command. According to Eisenhower's analysis, British and American efforts to protect the French caused weaknesses in
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the Allies' lines which Rommel exploited. Poor Allied cooperation characterized virtually every engagement. Key leaders avoided the front line and did not aggressively command when control was most essential. Replacement soldiers joined the fray with virtually no idea of what to expect. Air-ground cooperation was disastrously deficient. Commanders' instructions were sometimes vague, sometimes restrictive. And the American soldier lacked
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combat experience.

In the above litany of reasons for the Kasserine Pass failure, combat inexperience is listed last. There is

no doubt that combat inexperience influenced the conduct of the soldiers in the engagements of Kasserine. In comparison to other factors, however, the effect of inexperience pales. Allied friction and bickering characterized virtually every battle regardless of the leaders' combat experience. Fredendall's tainted leadership style and arrogance appeared to be the outgrowth of a personality defect rather than the result of combat inexperience. As a matter of fact, Fredendall lacked combat experience, but he had served along the Mexican border prior to World War I and had trained soldiers in France during that war. ⁶² Of critical importance is the role that leadership played in the engagements of Kasserine. When the inexperienced troops fled, there was no leader present to rally them, to stabilize them, and to lead them. In the absence of inspired, decisive leadership, inexperience and fear won out. The fact that bazookas were to prove themselves effective antitank weapons did little for the untrained soldiers and replacements who had never seen, let alone fired, the weapon. A lack of training, not combat inexperience, affected the outcome. Air support again proved deficient; the lessons of Cantigny and the Louisiana maneuvers remained unlearned. Finally, commanders continued to meddle in their subordinates' operations. Overly detailed

and restrictive orders which were intended to provide clear guidance to less experienced leaders in fact restricted freedom of action and initiative. Marshall's observations about World War I, his concern about training at Benning and Leavenworth between the wars, and McNair's conclusions about the Louisiana maneuvers were all validated at the Battle of Kasserine Pass.

FROM WORLD WAR II TO KOREA

Reflecting on the American Army's involvement in the Korean War, one may be tempted to conclude that the Korean conflict provided a nearly ideal laboratory to isolate and evaluate the tactical implications of combat experience. After all, between 1945 and 1950, tactics and weaponry had changed little. Tactical reorganization bolstered the division's firepower and mobility with the addition of a tank battalion and an antiaircraft battalion; artillery batteries were authorized six instead of four howitzers; and regimental cannon and antitank companies were dropped in favor of a new tank company, a mortar company, and more recoilless rifles.⁶³ In addition, the Army of 1950 was rich with combat experienced junior officers and NCOs.⁶⁴ Thus, blending proven tactics with improved tactical organizations and adding combat experienced

leadership should have resulted in a powerful, deadly fighting force. Thus, it would appear that assessing the impact of combat experience during the early days of the Korean War would offer decisive and positive results.

The postwar Army's high level of combat experience, however, had little positive impact on the outcome of the first days of the Korean War. Several political and strategic issues had greater influence on the Army's tactical prowess. First, the American government concluded that future wars would probably be general in nature. Nuclear weapons, the most critical component of a general war, raised issues of morality because they threatened far more than soldiers on the battlefield. Nuclear weapons had greater psychological, political, and economic ramifications than any other weapon in the history of warfare. Consequently, the nation's leadership recognized that any future war must be carefully considered because
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the results may be irreparable. That sobering realization caused decision makers to look away from the tactical level of war.

A second major factor of the postwar Army was demobilization. The Army had expanded from a force of less than 200,000 in 1939 to a wartime peak of 8.3 million in
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May 1945 and then to less than 600,000 in 1950. That strength figure translated to undermanned combat units in spite of new, added organizations described earlier. In

1950, a typical infantry regiment could field two, not three, battalions and organic artillery battalions had two rather than three batteries. Tactically, for a regimental commander to maintain a battalion-sized reserve, he would have to fight the main battle with a single battalion or he could choose not to field a reserve thereby fighting both battalions on line. In addition, active infantry battalions were short one company. No division had all of its weapons; ammunition reserves were scarce; divisions in Japan had forty-five days of supplies; and supporting units were even weaker than that.⁶⁷

The 1948 Selective Service Act, the revised Uniform Code of Military Justice of May 1950, and the near adoption of Universal Military Training comprise the third factor impacting the post World War II Army. The Selective Service Act intended to attract young men into the service by relaxing the standards and rigors of military life. The belief that the next war would be nuclear seemed to minimize the risk of actual ground combat and the Act itself sought to highlight the positive aspects of military service in a victorious nation. The disappointing result was only 100,000 more enlistees. Consistent with the theme of making the military more appealing, the new Uniform Code of Military Justice eased punishment for virtually all offenses. Many officers believed that the new Code

undermined discipline, obedience, and military respect⁶⁸ thereby blunting the Army's "combat edge." Finally, Universal Military Training intended to capitalize on the patriotic spirit by mandating a specified period of military service for all youths. Although never legislated, the concept of UMT took on a different perspective as Congress felt the pressure of nonmilitary influences. Just before UMT was tabled, its focus had changed to emphasize training skills transferable to civilian life, to improve physical fitness, to enhance literacy, to develop citizenship, and to foster⁶⁹ morality. Thus, the political environment had clearly shifted the military's attention away from the combat⁷⁰ skills essential to success on the battlefield.

The final factor external to, but impacting on, tactical preparation for war was the United Nations. The United Nations formalized coalition warfare and alliances which tended to foster the already present view that other nations would join the American expenditure of lives and materiel in the next war. Aside from coalition warfare, the United Nations was considered a deterrent to war because any aggressor would be foolish to attack another nation thereby incurring the military wrath of UN members. Consequently, many viewed the UN as a buffer to war which consequently focused resources away from military⁷¹ preparations.

Between World War II and the Korean War, tactical doctrine remained virtually unchanged, tactical combat developments progressed little, and combat experienced soldiers were abundant. That apparent stability of change would tend to argue in favor of tactical success. Unfortunately, while these factors were stable, other more significant, external factors changed dramatically. The advent of nuclear arms, the domestic political environment, the speed of demobilization, and the international political situation all drove the Chief of Military History in his review of demobilization to conclude:

"that the Korean War caught the Army with no plans for such a limited conflict; post-war preparations were dominated by the concept of the need for general mobilization for general war and looked backward on the World War II experience as the main planning guide." /72

KOREAN WAR - THE 24TH DIVISION AT TAEJON

In light of these circumstances, the fact that the Eighth Army in Japan was unprepared for war in June 1950 should come as no surprise. Prior to LTG Walter H. Walker's assumption of command in 1949, Eighth Army's priorities were occupation first and military training second. After Walker's arrival, priorities changed and training improved, but the soldiers considered themselves more of a colonial Army and were not ready to be committed

to battle. Families joined the soldiers in Japan which reinforced the casualness and frivolity of the Occupation Army. Battle-experienced leaders shared World War II stories and the social life blossomed. Personnel shortages, geographical constraints, and a dearth of ammunition confined training to individual, squad, and section exercises.⁷³ Walker's enthusiasm to develop an effective fighting force could not overcome the lack of training areas. Tanks, which could not maneuver and train with their infantry units, were dropped from Tables of Organization and Equipment. The absence of a third infantry battalion in each regiment would preclude the commitment of a strong reserve in the Korean conflict ahead. Despite the fact that many key junior officers and NCOs had World War II experience, they could not compensate for personnel shortages, organizational mistakes, and training weaknesses. The Eighth Army units were clearly⁷⁴ not prepared for battle.

On 25 June 1950, North Korea launched an eight division attack across the 38th parallel into South Korea to seize Seoul and eventually Pusan. The North Koreans⁷⁵ achieved both surprise and success. In response to the North Korean invasion, General of the Army Douglas MacArthur, Commander in Chief of the U.S. Far East Command, directed General Walker to send an infantry-artillery task

force to Korea immediately. Walker selected the 24th Division, commanded by MG William F. Dean, for the mission. Walker transferred 2108 men from other units to fill the 24th to authorized strength just days before its departure from Japan. Thus, as the 24th prepared to deploy for Korea, over thirteen percent of its strength was new to the division.⁷⁶

Just as at Kasserine Pass in World War II, a series of salient events marked America's early participation in the Korean War. First, LTC Charles B. Smith and half of his namesake task force arrived in Pusan on 1 July. Smith and his task force boarded trains and moved north to Taejon. Up to now, Smith's instructions were remarkable by virtue of their vagueness and optimism. BG John H. Church, MacArthur's representative, exuded confidence as he explained to Smith, "All we need is some men up there who won't run when they see tanks. We're going to move you up to support the ROKs and give them moral support."⁷⁷

Smith's understandable impression of his mission was to support the South Koreans against an apparently weak North Korean force.

Second, two days later, as Task Force Smith deployed north to occupy defensive positions LTC Smith had selected the previous day, Smith and his men witnessed an Allied air attack on a friendly ammunition train which had pulled into

a South Korean train station. The air strike destroyed the train and the station and killed many civilians in the nearby town. Later that day, an American pilot strafed a South Korean convoy destroying 30 tanks and killing 200 ROK soldiers.⁷⁸ The tragic problems of air-ground cooperation and coordination remained unsolved.

The following morning, 5 July, Task Force Smith discovered that BG Church had underestimated the North Korean's fortitude. After the two companies had established defensive positions and after LTC Miller O. Perry positioned six 105mm howitzers from his artillery battalion, the North Koreans advanced with 33 Russian-built T-34 tanks. Task Force Smith could not stop the tanks with indirect artillery, 75mm recoilless rifles, or 2.36-inch bazookas. Direct-fire artillery destroyed two tanks and apparently damaged two others; but the remaining tanks moved through the positions quickly spraying machine gun fire against the infantry. Clearly, the presence of American forces did not deter the North Koreans.⁷⁹

As the tanks continued south a third significant event developed. The tanks approached the artillery positions from which the earlier ineffective indirect fire missions had been generated. The tanks cut land line communications with the forward infantry. The howitzers then engaged the tanks with high explosive rounds which

bounced harmlessly off the armor. The artillerymen then manned bazookas which also bounced off the tanks. Finally, one howitzer hit a tank's tread and stopped it while the other tanks continued. Later that morning, radio communications failed, thereby isolating both Task Force Smith and its supporting artillery. ⁸⁰ Suddenly, a second wave of tanks appeared at the artillery position. Totally isolated from any infantry support and armed with completely ineffective weapons, the cannoneers panicked and fled. Colonel Perry and 1LT Darin L. Scott rallied the officers and NCOs who carried ammunition forward and manned the howitzers. Witnessing these acts of leadership and courage, the young artillerymen returned to their howitzers and joined the futile fray. Inexplicably, many tanks did not fire at the artillery pieces; the artillerymen, however, did engage the tanks. North Korean infantrymen riding on some tanks sustained significant casualties as the high explosive artillery rounds impacted the armor. The tanks, however, succeeded in passing through the position and destroyed an improvised ammunition dump. Nevertheless, the leaders turned panic into ⁸¹ confrontation.

In the next few hours, Task Force Smith withdrew under pressure from the North Korean main tank column. A sister regiment from the 24th Division, the 34th Infantry,

commanded by COL Jay B. Lovless, had deployed north to relieve Task Force Smith. As the men of the 34th Infantry moved forward, they shared Task Force Smith's initial confidence that their presence would intimidate the North Koreans and assure a quick victory. Their early combat engagements add to the lessons of Task Force Smith.

As Company A, 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry, moved north to its blocking position, a fourth significant event transpired. Rumors spread suggesting that Task Force Smith had been beaten back by a strong tank force. In response to those rumors, one of Company A's platoon leaders assembled his soldiers to reassure them, "You've been told repeatedly that this is a police action and that is exactly what it is going to be." He further discounted claims of a significant enemy force, told his men that they would be home within a few weeks, and directed that the platoon post only a normal guard that night.

Early the next morning, SFC Roy E. Collins, a World War II veteran who had joined the unit only the day before, noticed a group of tanks assembling beyond the company's perimeter. After some debate, the battalion commander concluded that the tanks and supporting infantry were North Korean; he called for mortar fire. The enemy infantry dispersed and the lead tank buttoned up and aimed at Collins and his position. The brief ensuing battle was

significant because SFC Collins had to literally prod his soldiers to return fire. The soldiers had believed their leaders -- the North Koreans would not confront American forces. Consequently, SFC Collins' young soldiers were unwilling to believe that enemy soldiers were firing at them.⁸³ Unfortunately, in the fifteen minutes that SFC Collins spent rallying return fire, the North Koreans massed an overwhelming force of infantry and tanks. SFC Collins saw the enemy force grow, but knew that he had no ammunition for his platoon's recoilless rifle and that the mortar forward observer had become a casualty.⁸⁴ After the platoon fell back and assembled with the rest of Company A, SFC Collins surveyed his platoon to determine why they had not returned fire. Of the 31 members of the platoon, 12 claimed that their rifles would not fire. Collins inspected his platoon's weapons and discovered that the rifles were either broken, dirty, or incorrectly assembled.⁸⁵ Despite his experience and leadership, SFC Collins lacked the combat power to engage the enemy effectively.

Task Force Smith's and Company A's initiation to the Korean War puts the effect of battle experience in perspective. Combat experience is assuredly a factor in the outcome of battle; but it can easily be overshadowed by a myriad of other factors. In the case of both Task Force

Smith and Company A, the soldiers were overconfident and leaders up to and including MacArthur reinforced that arrogance. The units poorly executed fundamental tasks -- security and patrolling, weapon maintenance, and target identification. ⁸⁶ Small unit leadership was spotty. There were many instances of brave and dedicated leaders; but there were likewise cases of misoriented leaders and leaders who allowed soldiers to neglect weapons and discard clothing and equipment. Ineffective weapons systems undermined soldiers' confidence. Personnel replacements filled depleted rolls but exacerbated inexperience. Air-ground operations killed friendly soldiers and destroyed Allied storage facilities. Soldiers insufficiently trained and prepared for battle looked to their leaders for guidance. Even combat experienced leaders in the context of the American Army between World War II and the Korean War, could offer only paltry answers.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Intuitively, combat experience would appear to play a major role in battle. Blooded veterans would seem to have a distinct advantage over the combat newcomer and would positively influence the outcome of an engagement or battle. One would expect that a combat-hardened soldier is

more familiar with the sounds and sights of war and the appropriate reactions necessary for survival. Surprisingly, research does not fully substantiate intuition.

This monograph leads inexorably to a number of significant conclusions which have substantial future implications. First, combat inexperience is assuredly a factor in battle, but it is not the single determinant of battle outcome. The elements of combat which deliver victory or defeat are interdependent; their individual influence may vary from battle to battle, but on balance, all the factors play a part in the final analysis.

Second, a myriad of circumstances, external to the tactical situation, affect the conduct of battle. Political decisions -- both domestic and international -- as well as fiscal generosity determine where and when our forces will fight and with what weapons and at what manning level. All of the historical examples in this monograph clearly substantiate that tactics are a function of the political environment. That environment and its decisions lead the soldier to battle.

Third, the vast majority of soldiers who find themselves in combat for the first time are afraid. While that conclusion is obvious, it leads to a number of considerations for controlling or reducing the influence of

fear. Training must prepare soldiers and leaders for their first battle. Ideally, training should simulate battle to such an extent that the soldier's period of adaptation to combat in his first encounter with the enemy is minimal. That consideration is of particular importance in light of the fact that the first hours and first days of our next war promise to be decisive. Training must emphasize fundamental skills and battle drills. The ability to perform basic skills and drills effectively in the chaotic and frightening environment of battle provides stability and confidence for the soldier. Thus, training must bring the soldier and his weapon system to bear on the enemy. S.L.A. Marshall concluded that that end result is the decisive factor in battle.

Fourth, wartime replacement systems have historically undermined unit cohesion, another key ingredient to battlefield success. To a notable degree, soldiers fight better when they are fighting with and for another soldier. In addition, soldiers fight better when they have confidence in their leaders. In the historical examples presented here, significant personnel turbulence precluded tight cohesion. Leaders joining units one day before combat could hardly be expected to engender confidence among subordinates. Peacetime personnel systems which replace entire units may have utility; but as long

as individual soldiers replace individual casualties and as long as soldiers are rotated from position to position on an individual basis, then turbulence will continue and the untold battlefield consequences will remain.

Fifth, combat inexperience appears to lend itself to overly detailed operations plans and orders. Both experienced and inexperienced staffs seem to try to compensate for perceived subordinate inexperience by issuing orders with excruciating detail and of exorbitant volume. The intent has been to make the subordinate's task easier by limiting the number of decisions to be made; all the subordinate must do is execute. Additionally, complex plans or orders intend to compensate for the stress and confusion of battle by providing contingencies for many possible scenarios. Again, when a situation arises, the subordinate must only execute, not think of solutions or actions. In fact, complex orders complicate and confuse operations. Current trends to reduce the length of orders and plans may succeed in encouraging subordinate initiative and in decentralizing command and control. The historical trend, however, points toward centralization and complexity.

Sixth, combat inexperienced soldiers are compliant to leaders and receptive to veterans. Their compliance means that they are generally better disciplined and

quicker to react. Their receptivity to veterans implies that they adopt the veterans' attitudes. If the veterans have not passed their level of peak or sustained efficiency, the combat novice may be positively influenced. If, on the other hand, the veteran is combat exhausted, the negative impact on the novice may be disastrous. Consequently, the Army's replacement system and the unit leadership must be sensitive to the actions and attitudes of the combat veteran and to the reception a new soldier receives in his unit.

Finally, history clearly and consistently shows that when all the political and fiscal decisions are made and forces are committed to combat, the battlefield leader becomes the focal point. He feels the same stress and confusion that his soldiers experience, but he must lead in spite of his fears. All the leader's training must prepare him for that essential role. To accomplish that end, three prerequisites must be achieved. First, the leader must know his job -- he must exude confidence based on unwavering competence. Training standards for the leader must be demanding and stringent so that when the leader completes a training program -- either a school or a unit program -- he will be confident in his ability to act. Second, the leader must be exposed to combat-experience. Through readings, lectures, and biographies the leader must

learn from those who have faced the deadly challenge of battle. Certainly, he must be prepared to challenge lessons learned from combat experiences, but he must also be receptive to the wisdom which combat imparts. Finally, the leader must learn to make decisions in stressful situations which realistically portray battlefield conditions. Accordingly, the leader will embrace change and uncertainty and recognize them as peacetime and wartime realities which can either intimidate or enlighten a leader. He must strive to manage change and to deal with uncertainty. Field Marshall Lord Carver, former Chief of the Defence Staff of Britain and a commander of a tank regiment and later an armored brigade in World War II eloquently summarizes the leader's prerequisites:

"He must have courage; be cool, calm and collected at all times, particularly at moments of crisis. He must rapidly assess the situation, see which is the right course to adopt, make his decision, convey it to his subordinates clearly and forcefully inspire them to execute it with vigour, and encourage them in good times and bad."/87

With those qualities in mind, the Army's training system must prepare the combat inexperienced leader to stand at the front of his combat inexperienced soldiers. Carver continues:

"If a major war comes, he will have no more experience of that sort of battle than his latest joined recruit: all will be flung into the deep end together, and his superiors will be there too, the awful threat of nuclear weapons hanging over the heads of all. He will face a tremendous test.

The only way to prepare him for it is to put him and his soldiers through the toughest and most demanding training, as close as possible to the conditions he will meet in war. If he fails in that, he must be replaced, however nice a man he may be."/88

Thus, when all are "flung into the deep end together," the soldier -- much like the wounded soldier whose quotation opened this monograph -- who turns to his lieutenant will not beg for orders, but will get the orders he needs to survive and to win.

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