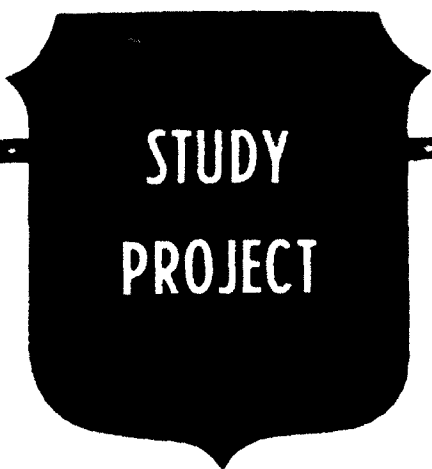


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**THE MAKING OF
GENERAL JOHN B. HOOD:
A STUDY OF COMMAND**

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL HARRY W. HOUCHENS
United States Army National Guard

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THE MAKING OF GENERAL JOHN B. HOOD: A STUDY OF COMMAND AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Lieutenant Colonel Harry W. Houchens
United States Army National Guard

Colonel Vardell Nesmith
Project Adviser

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ABSTRACT

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Students of the Civil War are well versed in the operational campaign successes and the generalship of Lee, Grant, and Sherman. A lesser known campaign, General John B. Hood's invasion of Tennessee during the winter of 1864, may have been the most important one of the war. Hood's record as a tactician was brilliant. For this he received command of the Army of Tennessee as it grappled with Sherman at the gates of Atlanta. After the fall of the city, the Confederacy's options for prolonging the war to exhaust Northern resolve were limited. Although shaken and reduced, Hood's army was the only substantial force available for offensive operations. A threat to Sherman's lines of communications in Tennessee and subsequent victory there might have negated the Union threat to the South's heartland and recovered all that had been lost at Atlanta. This was not to be; Hood all but destroyed his army in the try.

This paper is an analysis of the relative fitness of one military leader's character at escalating levels of command. From early life, Hood possessed the traits of personality that were destined to make him a brilliant success at the tactical level, secure his elevation above it, and cause him dismal failure once there. This paper is a journey into the enigma of successful generalship.

INTRODUCTION

The military career of General John B. Hood epitomizes the tragedy of ill-fated generalship. From relative obscurity at the outbreak of the Civil War, he rose from a lieutenant of cavalry to one of only eight full generals of the Confederacy. Hood's elevation to army command was based upon his earlier achievements as a tactical commander under the watchful eyes of General Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant Generals Thomas Jackson and James Longstreet. As a regimental, brigade, and division commander, Hood's performance had been outstanding. In July 1864, at the age of only thirty-three, he received command of the Army of Tennessee. Five months later the army entrusted to Hood was decisively defeated in Tennessee—"its rout was the only such experience a Confederate army ever suffered; its commander more thoroughly defeated than any other Confederate general had ever been."¹

The tragedy of Hood's generalship is that his successes as a heroic leader at the tactical level did not lead to success at the operational level. At the time of his appointment as army commander all the advantages of position, numbers, materiel, and morale were with his enemy; and further, the command structure he inherited from General Joseph Johnston was weak. These were difficult odds; but they serve to magnify the importance of competency in the disadvantaged general. Such magnification facilitates this study of Hood. Among other things, competency in command at higher levels resides in personality, knowledge, and a capacity for planning.² In turn, these characteristics are affected by cultural environment, role models, and prior experience and other influences. This paper will examine Hood's life and identify those influences that made Hood what he was, with a view towards understanding the strengths that elevated him and then the weaknesses that brought him down. To understand Hood, we must start at the beginning.

HOOD'S EARLY LIFE AND MILITARY CAREER

John B. Hood was born on 29 June 1831, the son of an affluent doctor. Although his family was not extremely wealthy, young Hood did not have to work to assist in supporting it. Unlike most of the young men growing up during this period, Hood had much freedom and time on his hands, which he did not spend constructively. During his teenage years, Hood's father was away from their home the majority of each year. This lack of a father's attention and discipline, along with his misuse of time, no doubt affected his behavior and contributed to his reputation as a wild and reckless young boy. According to an elderly aunt, he would lead other boys into trouble.³

The society in which Hood was reared was by some measure idyllic. Based upon his family's land holdings and slaves, he was a member of the aristocracy of Montgomery County, Kentucky. This Bluegrass region of Kentucky was a frontier model of the tidewater area of late eighteenth-century Virginia. Because of the rise of abolitionist sentiments and the Southern states' loss of political power, this area of Kentucky became, like its Virginia model, culturally and intellectually isolated with an growing sense of superiority. "In this intellectual isolation many southerners gradually became submerged in romanticism and emotionalism. They created . . . the myth of Southern chivalry . . . as such, they were characterized by the virtues associated with aristocrats."⁴ This philosophical elitism must have had great impact upon Hood's own self-perception and leadership style. Most noteworthy of the characteristic traits that evolved from this influence was Hood's unsurpassed courage and romantic nature.

In 1849 at the age of eighteen, Hood entered West Point through the efforts of his uncle, a United States Representative. When he left for the Academy, his father warned him, "if you can't behave, don't come home. Go to the nearest gatepost and butt your brains out."⁵ Hood did not have to comply with his

father's admonition; four years later he graduated forty-fourth from a class of fifty-two. His classmate John M. Schofield recalled that, "Hood was a young, carefree boy, a jolly good fellow, who was more wedded to boyish sports than to books."⁶ Overall, his disciplinary record was average, although it seems to have worsened with time—he accumulated more than half his total demerits during his senior year.

It was at West Point that Hood first met his future mentor, Robert E. Lee. Initially, their relationship was unpleasant. When Hood was caught absent from quarters, Superintendent Lee deprived him of his rank as lieutenant of cadets and publicly reprimanded him for dereliction of duty.⁷ However, Hood would later write in his memoirs that he had become very much attached to Lee while at West Point.⁸

The academy years had little effect upon the character and personality traits Hood had formed earlier. While at home on post-graduation furlough, Hood received his commissioning papers along with an oath of allegiance requiring his signature. When the document reached Washington, the authorities had to return it for his signature. Obviously, in his haste to act, Hood had carelessly neglected to pay attention to the details of his instructions. After four years of cadet discipline, Hood was still oblivious to established rules and procedures. Hood seemed to live for the moment with a need to be on center-stage.

Hood's first assignment was with the 4th Infantry in California. This period from 1853 to 1855 was professionally uneventful for him. It was so uneventful that Hood directed his energy, with another officer, to the raising of a crop of winter wheat, which sold for \$2000, no small amount then.

Through the efforts of his boyhood friend John C. Breckinridge, Hood was transferred in July 1855 to the newly formed 2nd Cavalry. Except for two furloughs, he spent the next five-and-a-half years in Texas. While with the 2nd Cavalry, Hood renewed his relationship with Lee.

Hood's admiration for Lee seems to have been especially intense. Lee, in fact, may have become something of a father figure for the young lieutenant. . . . Lee seems to have become the model for Hood. . . . He embodied the eighteenth-century Virginia tradition that had such a strong influence on the Bluegrass region of Kentucky⁹

Though Hood lacked Lee's cultural background, intelligence, and self-discipline, he in no way failed to live up to Lee's aggressiveness, personal courage, and willingness to take risks. These traits were apparent when he led his 24-man patrol in pursuit of one hundred Indians across 150 miles of wasteland in July 1857.¹⁰ In the ensuing battle, Hood the fighter appears for the first time. Before the battle, Hood could have sent a messenger to a nearby garrison requesting reinforcements either to help in the battle or to block the Indians' escape route. By his headlong aggressiveness Hood won the fight, but the Indians escaped.

For the later general of the Confederacy this minor Indian skirmish portended both victory and defeat. In the fight Hood displayed aggressiveness, resourcefulness, courage, and will to win. On the negative side, he showed a rashness that bypassed the details of cautionary preparation. Was this a circumstantial neglect or did it foretell an enduring predilection? There is no sure way to lay open the personality of a historical figure, but with a modern tool one might try to improve insight beyond the anecdotal level.

HOOD'S PROBABLE PERSONALITY TYPE

Such a tool is Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesen's Type Talk, which explains the application of psychological type theory as originally developed by the noted psychiatrist C.G. Jung and his student, Katharine Briggs. As noted in Type Talk, a person's personality preferences are something like a house's foundation; they determine how one relates to his environment and how he acts

upon what he senses.¹¹ The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is an analytical tool used primarily by psychologists to identify one's personality preferences.

The MBTI yields four indices of personality:
Extroversion (E) versus Introversion (I)—whether one prefers the external world of people and things or the internal world of ideas; Sensing (S) versus Intuition (N)—whether one pays more attention to realistic, practical data ("hard facts") or to one's imagination and the possibilities of a situation; Thinking (T) versus Feeling (F)—whether one values impersonal logic or personal values/emotions when processing information or making decisions; Judging (J) versus Perceiving (P)—whether one tends to analyze and categorize the external environment or to respond to it flexibly and spontaneously.¹²

Though Hood's personality preferences can not be established upon empirical evidence, they can be inferred from Hood's behavior and character traits. If Hood had completed the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator questionnaire, his personality preferences probably would have been: Extroversion (E)—as evident in Schofield's comments regarding Hood's behavior at West Point. Also, he had a fun loving attitude while growing up in Kentucky. Sensing (S)—he was grounded in the reality of the moment; Hood would rather do something than think about it. He saw only the prospect of defeating the Indians quickly, but he did not deliberately consider seeking proper assistance for completing the mission fully. Thinking (T)—Hood was cool in combat and had no problem in making decisions. He worked best when carrying out specific missions. Perceiving (P)—Hood was bold, dashing, and daring in style. He had little concern for long-range planning. A person with this personality trait would prefer not to plan a task; he would simply wait to see what the situation demanded and then act accordingly.

According to Type Talk, an individual with a ESTP personality is heavily action-oriented and lives for the moment. More specifically, an individual with a SP personality preference combination is adventurous. ESTP individuals are the ultimate realists, with a low tolerance for unrelated theory; they are often

oblivious to established norms and procedures. Finally, they love the limelight and always do the opposite of what is expected, usually at high risk.¹³

EARLY SUCCESSES AS A BRIGADE COMMANDER

After resigning from the U.S. Army in April 1861, Hood was commissioned as a lieutenant of cavalry in the Confederate Army. Initially assigned to Kentucky on recruiting duty, Hood was later ordered to Virginia in May 1861. There he was assigned to Major General John B. Magruder's command near Yorktown. Designated a major, he was placed in command of all the cavalry on the York River. Having demonstrated his skill as a trainer, motivator, and combat leader, Hood was appointed colonel in October 1861, and given the command of the 4th Texas Regiment. Hood worked hard at the basic tasks of caring for and disciplining his regiment. He impressed upon them that no other regiment should ever return from battle with more trophies of war than the 4th Texas.¹⁴ This is not an uncommon charge from a Civil War era commander. But from Hood it was not shallow bravado; it was consistent with his aggressiveness and desire for center-stage.

Relying heavily on fellow West Point graduates, President Jefferson Davis in February 1862 promoted Hood to brigadier general over two senior colonels. He was then given command of the Texas Brigade. This promotion set the stage for Hood's emergence as a major figure. "Within six months of assuming command, Hood would fight his way into the attention of almost everyone concerned with the success or failure of the southern arms."¹⁵

The Battle of Gaines Mill fought on 27 June 1862, near Richmond, Virginia, provided the newly appointed brigade commander the opportunity to demonstrate his skills as a combat leader. Lee was desperate. All day long his assaulting

brigades under Longstreet and Brigadier General A.P. Hill had failed to dislodge the Union Army located behind partial breastworks along Turkey Hill and Boatswain Creek. The golden opportunity to decisively defeat the right wing of Major General George McClellan's army was slowly slipping away. If the Union line was not broken soon, McClellan would surely become aware of the fact that Lee's army was concentrated north of the Chickahominy River and that the gates to Richmond were virtually undefended.

With the arrival of Jackson's lead division under the command of Major General William Whiting, Lee had one more opportunity to break the enemy line. Hood's Texas Brigade of four regiments, consisting of approximately 2,000 soldiers, led the division into attack positions. While his brigade deployed, Hood reconnoitered. What he observed was not favorable. Hindering his 800 yard advance was a creek at the foot of Turkey Hill and a tree line, which blocked his line of sight but not that of the enemy. In direct support of the Union line were eighteen pieces of artillery, and just across the river were long-range cannon that could enfilade Hood's advancing ranks. The only advantage noted by Hood was a better avenue of approach located to the right of the position of his sister brigade. Also, Hood realized that the earlier attacks had failed because Southern soldiers had halted to return volley before crossing the creek. This hiatus broke the momentum of the attack. Returning to his command, Hood ordered his men not to fire until commanded and to advance at the double-quick-time. Leading his reserve regiment, 4th Texas, on foot, Hood saw a gap develop between his sister brigade and the unit to its right. Quickly he moved 4th Texas to fill this gap and continue the attack. Maintaining momentum by not stopping to fire until within 100 yards of the enemy, the 4th Texas broke the first Union line. All along the their front, the Union line began collapsing. After halting to re-form, Hood's brigade then seized the opportunity to capture the enemy's direct support artillery.

The charge of Hood's brigade decided the outcome of the battle. Hood's personal leadership cannot be overemphasized. Through tactical initiative and combat audacity, Hood's actions yielded victory for the final Confederate assault. One can not overvalue this victory's influence upon Hood's understanding of how to wage war. The 29 percent casualties that his brigade experienced was likely judged by Hood to be the necessary cost of victory. His decisive, action-oriented personality blinded him to the catastrophic weakness of the tactical offense. Yet it would be unfair to criticize Hood too severely; four days later Lee would again launch his infantry in a costly attempt to dislodge the enemy from Malvern Hill. Hood's brilliant performance at Gaines Mill propelled him to higher command. Upon Whiting's departure in July 1862, Hood was entrusted with the division and soon joined Longstreet's corps.

HOOD'S TACTICAL PARADIGM

Hood's personality and the influences of his earlier career established the foundation for his leadership style. The framework for his future generalship was constructed as well by the influence of early nineteenth-century warfare. Hood's future decision-making, forecasting, creativity, intuition, and campaign planning were all greatly influenced by the dominant paradigm of the tactical offense.

The most influential tactical theoretician of the period, Jomini, the premier interpreter of the Napoleonic style, argued strongly for the tactical offense: "a general who waits for the enemy like an automaton without taking any other part than that of fighting valiantly, will always succumb when he shall be attacked."¹⁶ Jomini's teachings were advocated in America by the theorist Dennis H. Mahan, who taught at West Point from 1824 to 1860. A whole generation of America's

Civil War leaders learned from him that success on the battlefield was based upon the aggressiveness of the troops and the bayonet shock of mass formations upon the enemy's works. Indeed Napoleonic close-ordered assaults were effective as long as the primary weapon of the infantry remained the ball musket.¹⁷

However, the face of battle changed with the new technologies of the rifle, minie ball, and percussion cap. The combat-effective range from musket to rifle increased from approximately one hundred yards to at least four hundred yards.¹⁸ To compensate for this extended range and the advantage it gave to defenders, the infantry manuals during the 1850's were revised to increase the attacking soldiers' rate of advance. Theoreticians proclaimed that a properly aligned, rapidly advancing infantry front would still overcome the enemy.

Regardless of what theoreticians proposed, experience on the battlefield had the greater impact on tactics. The effects of the rifle and the minie ball resulted in stretched battle lines, reduced the density of men in the combat zone, obliged armies to form for combat farther apart, and subordinated shock action in battles to violent firefights.¹⁹ Most importantly, these new technologies made the tactical defense a great deal stronger than the tactical offense. These tactical changes resulted in battles becoming less decisive in outcome—there would be no more Waterloos.²⁰ But these changes evolved over time by practical necessity. At the start of the Civil War, none were seen clearly; and the Napoleonic model for the tactical offense dominated what men did.

Hood was not alone in being trapped in the Napoleonic paradigm of the tactical offense. His tactical dilemma is clarified best by J.F.C Fuller's remarks regarding Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's paradigm trap.

. . . . no general could base his operations on really known, that is fully tested out, quantities. Throughout the war Grant was surrounded by a tactical doubt, not the normal fog of war, but an uncertainty generated by the tactics he had been taught and the tactics the rifle bullet was compelling him to adopt. This tactical doubt we must always bear in mind when we criticize the generalship of the war.

In the Napoleonic wars the tactics of the musket were known; in this the Civil War the tactics of the rifle had to be discovered.²¹

Both Hood's ESTP personality preferences—with limited intuitive and judgmental abilities—and the outmoded theoretical preference for the tactical offense, in a sense, "set him up" for future failure as an army commander.

SUCSESSES AS DIVISION COMMANDER

Having successfully defeated McClellan south of Richmond, Lee moved his army to northern Virginia to face Major General John Pope's Union forces. At the Battle of Second Manassas on 29-30 August 1862, Hood's division initiated Longstreet's counterattack against Major General John Pope's flank. It was the first to rout the enemy. Although Hood's two brigades experienced close to nine hundred casualties, they were "true to their teaching, capturing five guns along with fourteen stands of colors . . . proof of the noble work they had accomplished."²² Just as he had shown at the Battle of Gaines Mill, Hood was at the forefront of the attack during the Battle of Second Manassas, not only directing his own forces but also inspiring other units as the attack progressed.

Hood would next find his forces engaged at the Battle of Antietam on 17 September 1862. With the consecutive defeats of Union forces under McClellan and then Pope, Lee decided to take the initiative and move his army north into Maryland. Although the Battle of Antietam was considered a tactical draw, it was Hood's decisive counterattack through the corn field that stopped the advance of Major General Joseph Hooker's division and stabilized Lee's left flank, thereby, avoiding a costly defeat of Lee's army. Again, the cost to Hood's forces was high. Casualties for his division totaled nearly 50 percent.

The battles of Gaines Mill, Second Manassas, and Antietam completed Hood's tactical military education. Lee's operational and tactical successes had a lasting

effect upon Hood's future action as an army commander. He was impressed by Lee's willingness to take bold risks, which seemed to guarantee victory. An aggressive and decisive Lee had gained victory against the superior forces of both McClellan and Pope. Also, Hood was influenced by Lee's command style. As an army commander, Lee felt it was his duty to bring his corps operationally to a decisive point and then allow his subordinates to fight the tactical battle. Supported ably by Longstreet and Jackson, Lee's command style had brought victory. For Hood, Lee was the embodiment of Southern chivalry. He worshipped Lee and presumably never forgot what he had learned during the summer and fall of 1862. His experiences at the battles of Gaines Mill, Second Manassas, and Antietam had proven that aggressiveness, boldness, and élan could bring victory over a superior foe.

Usually reserved in giving praise, Jackson strongly endorsed Hood "as one of the most promising officers of the army" when he recommended Hood's promotion to major general.²³ Favorably endorsed by Lee, Hood was promoted with the date of rank of 10 October 1862.²⁴ At thirty-one, Hood was the youngest of Lee's nine major generals.²⁵ In all likelihood, this rapid promotion reinforced Hood's faith in the tactical offense and in his own self worth.

With a command of four brigades, each consisting of approximately 2000 soldiers, Hood's division was again assigned to Longstreet's corps during Lee's reorganization of the army after Antietam. During the late fall of 1862, Hood devoted his efforts to the reconstitution of his command. While in camp in the lower Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Hood's division received an Inspector General inspection, the unfavorable results of which were reported to Lee. In a sharp endorsement of the report, Lee reprimanded Hood for his carelessness.²⁶ Among the deficiencies noted was the lack of basic soldier necessities and camp discipline. However, the most glaring deficiency was the lack of standardization of the division's arms. In total, this inspection indicated that Hood seemed not to

have made the transition from personal leadership to thinking in the broader supervisory terms appropriate for a major general whose work involved administrative and housekeeping chores rather than personal combat leadership.²⁷ This incident further illustrates how an individual with an ESTP personality preference, like Hood, could have a short attention span and could have become bored with routine-oriented activities.²⁸

Other than supporting Jackson with two regiments, Hood's division was not engaged in the Battle of Fredericksburg, which occurred on 12 December 1862. After the battle, Hood's division was stationed near Richmond. During the winter of 1863, Hood became infatuated with Sally Preston. While in pursuit of Miss Preston's favors, Hood was introduced to the inner circle of Richmond's social life. Miss Preston was the house guest of Colonel James Chestnut, military aide of President Davis, and his wife, Mary Boykin, who has earned considerable fame for her Civil War diary. Thus Hood came to know Davis on a personal basis. The seed of political influence had been planted; but it would mature later after the 1863 campaigns.

To his chagrin Hood missed Lee's first campaign of the 1863 season. Because Longstreet's corps—comprising only of Hood's and MG George Pickett's divisions—was stationed in the Southeast corner of Virginia to collect forage and provisions, it was unable to link-up with Lee in time for the Battle of Chancellorsville, which took place in Virginia on 2-3 May 1863. However, during the middle of June, Hood's division, along with the rest of the Army of Northern Virginia, moved toward Maryland.

With a better disciplined army of 75,000, Lee again hoped to achieve an operational victory in the North, which would either win the war or at least gain European recognition of the Southern cause. Primarily because of the absence of Major General Jeb Stuart's cavalry, Lee was maneuvered into fighting an offensive battle at Gettysburg. On 2 July 1863 he ordered Longstreet's corps to

attack the left flank of the Union army, thought to be positioned along the Emmitsburg Pike.²⁹

As his soldiers were moving into position, Hood's scouts reported that the enemy's left flank was unprotected to the rear in the vicinity of Big Round Top, which was just to the right rear of Little Round Top. Hoping to take advantage of this opportunity to move against the Union army's flank and rear, Hood asked permission three times from Longstreet to change his axis of attack. But Longstreet, under pressure from Lee to begin the attack, refused Hood's requests. This effort by Hood again show his tactical good sense. The only force protecting the Union's extreme left flank on Little Round Top was Colonel Joshua Chamberlain's Maine regiment of 386 soldiers.

If Brigadier General Henry Benning's brigade had supported Brigadier General E. M. Law's brigade as Hood had planned instead of moving to his left to fill a gap, his 1500 soldiers would have been in position to support the 15th Alabama of Law's brigade against Chamberlain.³⁰ However, while directing artillery during the initial phase of his attack, Hood sustained a wound in the arm, which removed him from the remainder of the Battle of Gettysburg. Perhaps if Hood had not been wounded, his personal involvement might have prevented Benning's mishap; and the outcome at Gettysburg might have been quite different.

Although not fully recovered from the wound in his arm, Hood rejoined his division in time for action in Georgia. Unlike the Battle of Gettysburg, where he was wounded early in the fight, at the Battle of Chickamauga, 19-20 September 1863, Hood's luck held longer. While, leading an attack column of five divisions under Longstreet's wing, he penetrated a gap in the Union line.³¹ Immediately, the whole Union position gave way under pressure on its flank and rear. While adjusting the alignment of his Texas Brigade, Hood, for the second time in less than three months, was wounded. This time the wound was life threatening. On

21 September, Hood was moved fifteen miles to the southwest, where he would remain for the next month. Four days after the battle, Longstreet forwarded a letter to Richmond recommending Hood's promotion to lieutenant general "for distinguished conduct and ability in battle...he handled his troops with coolness and ability that I have rarely known by any officer, on any field."³²

"The year from Antietam to Chickamauga marked the apogee of Hood's career."³³ Though his success at Chickamauga was assisted by an Union blunder in removing a brigade from the line as the Confederates struck, Hood again won the laurels of victory. With this victory he became the "Gallant Hood" with a reputation to uphold and an exaggerated sense of his own personal worth.³⁴

THE EFFECT OF HOOD'S WOUNDS

Today, wounds such as those sustained by Hood would have qualified him for an honorable discharge with at least 95% disability. The loss of his leg and the uselessness of his left arm severely handicapped Hood's mobility. These conditions prevented him from moving quickly about the battlefield. The effectiveness of Hood's generalship depended upon his presence at the critical point. As an ESTP, Hood would have perceived information more proficiently through his senses, rather than using his intuition.³⁵ Hood's inability to get around the battlefield during the Atlanta campaign prevented him from observing the execution of his orders and from being readily available when circumstances demanded the attention of the army commander. Furthermore, Hood's leg wound caused periodic pain that required prescribed doses of laudanum, an opium derivative.³⁶ The mental and physical stress caused by campaigning, no doubt, intensified the pain. Even so, his injuries seem to have had no adverse effect on his self-perception. "Hood lived in a time and place where one-armed and

one-legged men were not uncommon and in a society that regarded such mutilations as manifestations of physical courage."³⁷

Having sufficiently recovered to be moved, Hood returned to Richmond in late November 1863. Hailed as a "Martyr to the Confederacy," Hood was readily accepted back into the high circles of the Confederate capital.³⁸ According to Mary Chestnut, "this hero-worshipping community lionized the wounded Hood."³⁹ As an ESTP, Hood would have been very sensitive and responsive to what people thought of him; and attention such as he received in Richmond would likely have increased his romantic image of himself and his own self-worth.⁴⁰ The numerous social events Hood attended permitted him to become better acquainted with Davis. Often the President invited him along on his rides about the capital.⁴¹ Socially associated with the "Kentucky Bloc," exiled Kentucky politicians and its unemployed generals, Hood surely would have encouraged Davis to consider the possibility of another offensive into his home state.

SIX MONTHS AS CORPS COMMANDER

Thus far, Hood's performance as a brigade and division commander had been outstanding and his role crucial at the battles of Gaines Mill, Antietam, and Chickamauga. Therefore, Davis promoted Hood to lieutenant general in February 1864 and ordered him to Dalton, Georgia, for assignment as one of General Joseph E. Johnston's three corps commanders.⁴²

Whereas Major General William Sherman used flanking maneuvers during most of his campaign for Atlanta and Johnston countered with defensive tactics, most historians judge Hood's generalship throughout this period as satisfactory. However, after the war, Johnston negatively commented in his memoirs concerning Hood's failure to attack, as ordered at the Battle of Cassville on 18 May 1864.

But when one considers all the evidence, Hood acted correctly. If he had done as Johnson expected, his advance would have been flanked.⁴³

While Hood's generalship as a corps commander is not easily open to criticism, his conduct as a supposedly loyal subordinate may be. From the time Hood reached Dalton until the middle of June, he and Johnston enjoyed a close professional relationship. Because of Hood's reputation as a fighter, Johnston entrusted him with the most critical point of his line throughout the campaign.⁴⁴ However, Hood repaid this trust by carrying on an extensive and damaging correspondence with key government officials, to include the President. All of his letters after April were either directly or indirectly critical of Johnston's defensive strategy.⁴⁵ Historians differ over the reasons for Hood's actions. Was he hoping to gain command of the army? Maybe not. As an ESTP, Hood was likely motivated by praise; he needed to be the center of attention.⁴⁶ He was not the only general officer to voice opinions directly to Richmond; for example, Lieutenant General William Hardee and two other division commanders were also active personal communicators.⁴⁷

Hood's proclivity to correspond to those above his immediate superior was not new. In Advance and Retreat, Hood noted that it was his custom after a battle to visit with Lee. Although under Longstreet's command in southeast Virginia in the spring of 1863, Hood corresponded directly with Lee expressing his unhappiness with the uneventful mission of collecting supplies and a desire to return quickly to his command.

Even though such letters served to inform, they also ingratiated Hood with those he most admired. Regardless of his intentions, his actions indicated a serious character flaw of seeking favor at the expense of others—Johnston in this case. This need for praise and attention would later manifest itself in his blame of others for later defeats at Atlanta and in Tennessee.

Though Hood's letters may have added to discontent with Johnson, they did not of themselves cause his dismissal from command. Johnston failed to stop Sherman's advance; further, he was "reticent as to his plans and purpose, which led Davis and others to believe that Atlanta was to be given up without a struggle".⁴⁸ Through hindsight, historians may argue over the effectiveness and eventual outcome of Johnston's strategy. Nevertheless, the cold fact was that on 17 July 1864 his army, after retreating over one hundred miles, was only ten miles from Atlanta. Johnston failed because he was afraid of failure; "for an army commander, this meant avoiding battle, if he did not fight, he could not lose."⁴⁹ Aware of Johnston's failed defensive strategy, Hood would not make the same mistake. Hood, like Napoleon, realized that the friction of war meant that war is not an exact science but "essentially a calculation of probabilities."⁵⁰ He believed that victory comes only to those who are willing to take risks. Hood's personality preferences inclined him toward doing the opposite of what was expected, usually at high risk.⁵¹ For example, while stationed in Texas, Hood once borrowed \$600.00 and gambled it all on one card of faro.⁵² He won. Unlike Johnston, Hood was willing to roll the dice. Lee had by gamble won at Chancellorsville; so could he.

Troubled by events in Georgia, Davis initially turned to Lee for advice. In his response Lee advised against changing commanders; but, if change was politically necessary, Lee indirectly recommended Hardee. Lee penned his high regards for Hood's gallantry and zeal, but was unsure whether he possessed the other qualities necessary for army command.⁵³ However, influenced by Bragg's report from Atlanta that was favorable toward Hood and otherwise biased against Hardee, Davis on 17 July appointed Hood commander of the Army of Tennessee.⁵⁴ Hood was thirty-three years old.

ARMY COMMANDER

At the time Hood assumed his new duties, Sherman's army of three corps, with an effective strength of nearly 95,000 soldiers, was converging upon Atlanta on three axes of advance. Strategically, Atlanta was the South's center of gravity: it was the junction point for four rail lines with connections to the north, southwest, southeast, and east; also, it was a center of manufacturing and supply.⁵⁵ Its capture would seriously affect the Confederacy's ability to wage war—both materially and psychologically. For the North, its capture would regain political momentum for President Abraham Lincoln. The South's stalemate of Grant in front of Petersburg and the losses accrued by both Grant and Sherman had encouraged Lincoln's political opposition to push for a negotiated peace. Lincoln needed a decisive victory to insure his re-election in November 1864.

Because the South's entrenchments surrounding Atlanta were too extensive for frontal assault, Sherman's operational plan called for the destruction Atlanta's four supporting rail lines—thereby, "forcing the Rebels in the city either to come out and fight, or to stay in and starve".⁵⁶ By 18 July three-quarters of Sherman's objective to cut Atlanta's rail lines had been achieved. Of the four railroad systems that served Atlanta, only the Macon and Western Railroad that ran south to Macon and then on to Savannah, remained intact. Union cavalry from Northern Alabama had destroyed about 30 miles of the Atlanta-West Point Railroad, which ran to Selma, Alabama. Major General James B. McPherson's Union army had cut the Atlanta-Augusta line. Finally, the Western and Atlantic Railroad running north to Chattanooga was being used as Sherman's primary line of communications against Atlanta. To counter Sherman, Hood with an effective strength of approximately 56,000 had only one viable option: try to find an

isolated wing of Sherman's army to attack.⁵⁷ Hood would attempt another Chancellorsville.

Hood's first opportunity for such an offensive came on 19 July 1864. Major General George Thomas' Army of the Cumberland, with an effective strength of about 50,000, was crossing the scarcely fordable Peachtree Creek on an extended six-mile wide front.⁵⁸ Hoping to strike Thomas's split forces as they were crossing Peachtree Creek, Hood ordered two of his three corps under Hardee and Lieutenant General Alexander Stewart to attack that portion of Thomas' army south of the creek. The attack was to begin at 1:00 P.M. on 20 July. However, before the attack got under way, a demonstration by McPherson's army on Hood's right made it necessary for Hood to extend his third corps, under Major General Benjamin Cheatham, to create a division front to the right.⁵⁹ This movement caused a three-hour delay in the attack, which allowed Thomas' soldiers time to dig into some high ground in a defensive posture. Furthermore, improper alignment and lax coordination between Hardee and Cheatham to his right created some disastrous imbalances: Stewart's corps of 11,000 confronted 17,000 Federals, while Hardee's 14,000 confronted only one division of 2,700.⁶⁰ The piecemeal attacks launched by Stewart and Hardee's brigades were stopped cold. Thus, Hood's first attempt to stop Sherman had failed at a cost of nearly 2,500 casualties.⁶¹

Two days later, Hood mounted another attack. This one would be aimed at McPherson's army east of the city. Constricting his defenses enough to be held by only two corps, Hood ordered Hardee's corps, along with Major General Patrick Cleburne's division, to move around McPherson's front and strike his left flank and rear. Cheatham's corps, along with the Georgia militia, was on order to support Hardee's attack. At 11:00 A.M. the attack began. Unfortunately, "Hardee's flank attack struck the refused flank units of McPherson's command, rather than beyond the defensive line as intended."⁶² Positioned approximately

one and a half mile from the fighting, Hood watched and waited for Hardee's attack to roll up the Union extreme left. Not until 3:00 P.M. did he order Cheatham to launch his supporting attack.⁶³ But again the assaults of Cheatham and Hardee were not coordinated and the results were piecemeal attacks. At a cost of nearly 7,000 casualties, Hood gained only 14 cannon and a portion of McPherson's entrenchments, which he then had to give up the next day.⁶⁴

Learning on the 27 July that Sherman was re-deploying from the east to the southwest of Atlanta to threaten the rail junction at East Point, Hood planned his third attack. This plan called for one corps to move west on the Lick Skillet Road and establish a blocking position at a crossroads near Ezra Church on 28 July. By blocking this intersection, Hood would prevent further movement of Union troops toward the Macon and Western Railroad junction at East Point, a village located six miles southwest of Atlanta. The capture of East Point would cut the final rail line into Atlanta. A day later, a second corps would follow and move into position on the left to flank the Union attack against the blocking force. As before, this was a sound plan. Regrettably, the blocking force corps under Lieutenant General Stephen D. Lee, who had replaced Cheatham on 27 July, found the crossroads already occupied by the enemy. Without notifying Hood, who was three miles away at his headquarters in Atlanta, of this unexpected development and without waiting for support from Stewart's following corps, Lee launched piecemeal brigade attacks that were easily repulsed.⁶⁵ Now unclear about what he was supposed to do, Stewart moved toward the sound of S.D. Lee's guns, instead of toward the enemy's flank, and joined in with S. D. Lee's frontal attacks. The resulting Battle at Ezra Church cost Hood another 4,000 casualties. Nonetheless, for the time being, Sherman's drive toward East Point had been blunted.

Having failed in his attempts to defeat Sherman in detail, Hood was left with little choice but to withdraw into Atlanta's extensive fortifications and to

extend his works to East Point. However, not willing to entirely surrender the initiative, Hood decided to release his cavalry against Sherman's lines of communications in middle Tennessee and North Georgia. Taking the gamble that the Union cavalry was too weak to cause him much harm—they had been soundly defeated in their earlier raids against Hood's lines of communications—Hood ordered his cavalry commander, Major General Joseph Wheeler, to destroy Sherman's lines of communications south of Chattanooga and in North Alabama. Taking one half of his force, about 5,000 cavalryman, Wheeler departed on 10 August for North Georgia.⁶⁶ Though Hood did not realize it at the time due to Wheeler's inflated reports, the mission turned out to be a total failure. Because of the Union blockhouse defense system and his own ineptness, Wheeler failed to do much damage to the enemy's lines of communications; he did, however, wreck his cavalry corps. He returned two months later with an effective force of less than 2,500.⁶⁷ Left with only one division of cavalry to guard his flanks and protect his rear, Hood was poorly prepared to counter Sherman's next move.

Leaving only a token force to occupy his trenches facing Hood, Sherman on 26 August moved nearly his entire army to cut the two rail lines southwest and south of their junction at East Point. Jumping to the conclusion that Wheeler's cavalry raid had forced Sherman's retreat, Hood was late responding to Sherman's movement. By the time Hood had ascertained Sherman's purpose it was too late. On 29 August Union forces had cut the Atlanta and West Point line and by the morning of 30 August six Union corps were moving toward the Macon and Western line between Rough and Ready and Jonesboro. Hardee's and S. D. Lee's counterattacks on the afternoon of 31 August failed to dislodge the Union advance guard of three corps at Flint River, a mile west of Jonesboro. Advancing with a four-corps front, Sherman on 1 September decisively defeated Hood's two corps protecting the Macon and Western Railroad at Jonesboro. With the last remaining railroad gone and the Federals moving to block his retreat,

hastily ordered the evacuation of Atlanta. Barely escaping with his demoralized soldiers, Hood on 2 September concentrated his weakened army at Lovejoy's Station.

Why did Hood fail in his defense of Atlanta? Looking only at the outcome many historians have concluded that Hood was a rash and aggressive fighter who carelessly rammed his army against the enemy's fortifications. They conclude that he was thoroughly out-generaled by the wily Sherman at Jonesboro and was, therefore, forced to evacuate Atlanta. However, an analysis of the details of Hood's plans and the complications that foiled them reveals that Hood was not a "suicidal attacker".⁶⁸ Fully aware of the disadvantages of assaulting a fortified foe, Hood in all three of his attack plans attempted through tactical maneuver to strike an inferior force either out of their works or in their flank and rear. Therefore, the more revealing question is why did Hood's operational plans not yield the results he desired. In part, the logical answer lies in the greater strength of the opposing army and especially in the talents of its commander. Certain characteristics of Hood's generalship also influenced the outcome. First, in trying to imitate Lee's operational maneuver, Hood failed to appreciate that his subordinates were not of the same caliber as Jackson and Longstreet.⁶⁹ Generals S.D. Lee and Stewart, combined, had less than five weeks as corps commanders. The last time S.D. Lee saw the volume of action he experienced during the Atlanta campaign was at Antietam as one of Robert E. Lee's artillery battalion commanders. Hood's only experienced corps commander was Hardee, who throughout the campaign was sulking over the promotion of Hood, his junior.⁷⁰ These subordinates were incapable of operating wisely with the latitude Hood gave them.⁷¹ Hood and his corps commanders were unable to synchronize their effort; this resulted in uncoordinated and piecemeal attacks, which wasted the strength of the soldiers.

Hood's other failing was that he seemed never to be at the right place at the right time. He did not exercise close control over the execution of his complex plans, which required close coordination between corps. Earlier in his career, Hood always was observed at the front; but, perhaps, because of his increased span of control and his restricted mobility, he was never present near the main effort in his operations around Atlanta.

Hood's personality seems to have led him to jump to optimistic conclusions and to take high risks. Facing a superior force that had for the past three months out-flanked its opponent, Hood took an unreasonable risk in splitting his cavalry. This unwise gamble along with his optimism regarding the success of Wheeler's raid—based on embellished reports from Wheeler describing the destruction of Sherman's rail lines and Union prisoners' accounts denoting serious supply shortages—allowed:

*The enemy to do two things that an army commander should never permit. First, Sherman had swept down on Hood's rear and pounced on his communications and supply. Second, the Federals had interposed large forces between Hood's two wings at Jonesboro and Atlanta.*⁷²

Finally, it seems that Hood's luck had run out. Fearing an attack, McPherson on the morning of 22 July disregarded Sherman's order to send two divisions to destroy the railroad west of Decatur and ordered their positioning perpendicular to his left flank.⁷³ If these divisions had not been so placed, there would have been nothing to stop Hardee's assault. Until Atlanta Hood's star had shone brightly; but, with his defeat, his admirers began to wonder whether or not Hood had risen too far too fast.

HOOD'S TENNESSEE CAMPAIGN

Hood's invasion of Tennessee during the winter of 1864 could have been the most important campaign of the American Civil War. A victory would have "demonstrated to the Northern public their government's folly in maintaining an unwinnable and unpopular war, exacerbating its costliness and catering to the profound longing for the war to cease."⁷⁴ To draw a historical parallel, this campaign was the South's "Ardennes Offensive". As surely as the defeat of Hitler's last two operational panzer armies during the Battle of the Bulge quickened the defeat of the Third Reich, the destruction of the Confederate Army of Tennessee became possibly the real basis for a hastened military demise of the Confederacy. What had begun as a bold campaign to restore lost military balance became the ultimate disaster for the South.

After the fall of Atlanta, Hood positioned his army to the southwest of Sherman at Palmetto. There on 25 September 1864, he and Davis agreed upon a campaign to force Sherman from Georgia and to prevent his anticipated movement toward Montgomery and Mobile.⁷⁵ Their plan was simple. Rather than fight Sherman in a full-scale battle for which Hood was ill-prepared, he would seize the initiative by maneuvering against Sherman's line of communication along the Western and Atlantic Railroad toward Chattanooga.⁷⁶ By forcing Sherman to withdraw from Atlanta to protect his critical supply line, Hood would compel him to attack on favorable defensive terrain. However, if Sherman ignored this threat and moved south into Alabama or toward the Carolinas to link up with Grant, then Hood would follow.

On 29 September Hood crossed the Chattahoochee River with approximately 40,000 soldiers to begin his raid in force against Sherman's lines of communication.⁷⁷ For fourteen days Hood successfully operated against Sherman's rail line, destroying 24 miles of rail and capturing the Union garrisons

at Tilton, Dalton, and Mill Creek Gap, Georgia. Because Sherman kept his 65,000 pursuit force concentrated, Hood was unable to attack, as hoped, an isolated Union force. Nevertheless, with very slight cost in men, Hood's action up to this point had succeeded as planned in drawing Sherman back from Atlanta over one hundred miles. Also, he had wrestled the initiative from Sherman, improved the morale of his own troops, and finally created alarm in the North. But Atlanta still remained under Union control, and Sherman's army was still intact and threatening to move either into Alabama or to the coast. Worse, the Union lines of communications from Atlanta to Chattanooga would again be fully operational by 27 October.⁷⁸ For the most part, the opening phase of the Tennessee Campaign had failed to achieve the objectives set by Davis.

By 15 October Hood faced three operational choices: he could either entrench near LaFayette, approximately 14 miles southwest of Dalton to face Sherman; he could retreat into Alabama and await Sherman's next move and then counter; or he could retain the initiative by further maneuver. Hood, never one to yield the initiative, decided to cross the Tennessee River and continue northward against the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad toward Nashville. By quick movement he might defeat in detail the Union forces located in Tennessee and recapture Nashville. If Sherman followed, Hood would fight him in a decisive defensive battle on ground of his own choosing. However, if Sherman decided to move toward Savannah or the Carolinas, Hood would proceed into Kentucky, eventually to link-up with Lee in Virginia.

The simple plan, agreed to by Davis, had now evolved into a more complex one, requiring detailed planning. Hood met with General Pierre G. Beauregard, the new theater commander, on 20 October, 1864, at Gadsden, Alabama, to gain permission and to work out the difficult logistical requirements necessary for such campaign.⁷⁹ Because of logistical concerns and the lack of intelligence concerning Sherman's next move, Beauregard exhibited little

enthusiasm for the plan. However, well aware of Hood's influence with Davis, he authorized Hood to make preparations for the advance, impressing upon him the absolute necessity for speed. The only stipulation imposed by Beauregard was that Wheeler's cavalry, minus Brigadier General W.F. Jackson's two brigades, would remain near Sherman. In return, Major General Nathan B. Forrest's cavalry, presently operating in Western Tennessee, would be ordered to join Hood's army. On 22 October, Beauregard notified the War Department of the change and at the same time forwarded a copy of the message to Davis.⁸⁰ On 7 November Davis responded to Hood expressing in vague terms the hope that he would defeat the Federals in detail and "advance to the Ohio River".⁸¹

On 22 October, Hood's army started its movement northward, hoping to cross the Tennessee River near Guntersville, Alabama. Receiving unconfirmed information that the crossing was heavily guarded and a message that Forrest's cavalry was still west of the Tennessee River, Hood moved northwest toward Decatur, Alabama, and arrived there on 26 October. A reconnaissance revealed that Decatur's defenses were strong and its 4000 man garrison was alert. Finding no suitable crossing down river, Hood, without notifying Beauregard, moved his army another 43 miles west to Tuscumbia, Alabama, arriving there on 31 October. At Tuscumbia his army could cross the Tennessee River and receive subsistence from Cornith, Mississippi. Wanting to stockpile 20 days worth of rations and awaiting the arrival of Forrest, Hood remained at Tuscumbia for three weeks.

Finally on 21 November, with Forrest's combined cavalry force of nearly 6,000 in the vanguard, Hood's three corps, with about 34,000 infantry, moved north from Tuscumbia toward Columbia, Tennessee.⁸² Meanwhile, Major General Thomas, who had been given command by Sherman of all Union forces in Tennessee, was hastily concentrating his army toward Nashville. Major General Schofield, commander of one wing of Thomas' army at Pulaski, Tennessee, was

ordered to fall back with his 24,000 soldiers to Columbia, Tennessee, and to delay Hood as long as possible along the Duck River.⁸³ He arrived at Columbia on 25 November and immediately entrenched across the river, north of the town. On 26 November Hood's army arrived in force and deployed for battle.

Finding Schofield's position too strong to easily assault, Hood, taking a lesson from Sherman's campaign for Atlanta, decided to outflank the Union army. Early on 28 November, while S.D. Lee's corps along with all the army's artillery, except for two batteries, demonstrated in front of Schofield's position, the remainder of Hood's army, led by Hood in person, crossed the river east of Columbia.⁸⁴ Meanwhile Schofield was not idle; informed that Forrest had driven his cavalry screen from the Duck River, he ordered his army on the evening of 27 November to begin withdrawing toward Spring Hill, Tennessee. This village, located on the Columbia-Nashville Pike, was eleven miles north of Columbia and 25 miles south of Nashville. By 3:00 P.M. on 29 November, Hood had Cheatham's corps in position to block the pike.⁸⁵ But, for reasons still in question today, Cheatham did not advance his corps to occupy the pike. Finding their way unopposed, Schofield's force escaped during the night north toward Nashville. Hood missed a golden opportunity to block Schofield's movement and to defeat him in detail.

Having no means to cross the swollen Hapeth River with his trains, Schofield, on the morning of 30 November, ordered his army to halt at Franklin, Tennessee, a small town located 20 miles south of Nashville. Just as his engineers had prepared suitable bridging and his divisions had finished their hasty breastworks, Hood's army appeared.

Bitter after his lost opportunity at Spring Hill and spilling for a fight, Hood had vigorously pursued Schofield. Ignoring Forrest's recommendation to cross the river upstream and again flank the Union army, Hood rashly decided to attack with only two corps of approximately 23,000 infantry and 5,000 cavalry—a

roughly one to one ratio against the Union forces.⁸⁶ To insure that the enemy would not again escape, Hood did not await the arrival of S. D. Lee's corps and the army's main artillery. At 4:00 P.M., without artillery preparation, eighteen brigades of infantry moved forward across level open ground against veteran troops protected by fieldworks. The fight continued until 9:00 P.M. Then, at last, the exhausted Confederates withdrew. During the night Schofield withdrew his army, and by noon on 1 December he was within the defenses of Nashville.

The Battle of Franklin bled Hood's army dry. It withstood over 6,000 casualties, representing 25 percent of the total engaged.⁸⁷ More seriously, from the standpoint of command, Hood lost twelve general officers and fifty-three regimental commanders.⁸⁸ In a quandary and not wishing to admit defeat, Hood decided to continue on to Nashville. He arrived there during the evening of 2 December. On 3 and 4 December Hood established a strong line about five miles long, located four miles from the center of Nashville. The losses of the campaign had reduced Hood's army to about 26,000 infantry; this was too few men to defend a five mile front, especially when its flanks were unprotected by terrain. To make matters worse, on 8 December Hood, hoping to draw Thomas out of his Nashville defenses, ordered Forrest with 5,000 cavalry and 1,600 infantry to operate against Murfreesboro, a Union strong point on the Nashville-Chattanooga Railroad, located thirty miles to the southeast.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, Thomas had concentrated a 60,000 man army and was preparing to leave his trenches with an attack force, not to relieve Murfreesboro, but to destroy Hood's army. "Hood had entirely succeeded with his newly developed plan to maneuver the Union army into attacking—to their prohibitive advantage."⁹⁰

The "last hurrah" for the Confederacy and General John B. Hood ended as a blanket of fog hung over the Confederate trench line three miles south of Nashville. At 06:30 A.M., 15 December, 1864, with 20,000 of his soldiers left guarding Nashville, Thomas struck Hood's lines with a massive blue juggernaut of

40,000 troops.⁹¹ Though initially deceived by a demonstration in force on the right, Hood's 24,000 soldiers grimly hung on for most the day as troops were shifted from right to left of the line. As his left flank continued to disintegrate, Hood, under cover of the night, pulled his battered army back approximately three miles to a ridge line six miles south of Nashville. Failing to acknowledge the utter helplessness of his situation, Hood prepared for the next day's battle, rather than retreat back toward Franklin.

Thomas renewed his attack on the morning of 16 December, again striking Hood's left flank. As Thomas' attacking force overran Hood's left flank, the remnants of two Confederate corps started flying off in mad panic down Granny White Turnpike toward Franklin. Deploying one corps as a rearguard, Hood and other officers tried desperately to rally the retreating, disorganized troops. But the rout turned into a stampede as his men fled southward abandoning wagons, cannons, and muskets. This jumble of men and material was finally halted approximately five miles to the south.

On 17 December, having restored some measure of order, Hood retreated toward the Tennessee River and safety. "For the first time, a Confederate army was defeated and routed from the field of conflict and, at one blow, eliminated from future consideration."⁹² Hood's Tennessee Campaign thus became the most disastrous Confederate military offensive of the war. In less than a month, Hood suffered approximately 24,000 casualties, representing a little over 50 percent of his initial force.⁹³ On 17 January 1865, six months after assuming command of the Army of Tennessee from Johnston, Hood was relieved and ordered to Richmond.

Beneath the surface of this pervasive tactical defeat lingers the true reason for Hood's downfall—campaign planning and execution. Regardless of the outcome, was Hood's plan to operate against Sherman's lines of communications

initially in north Georgia and then in Middle Tennessee sound? If so, why did it fail?

In hindsight, Hood's plan, as it eventually evolved, was too optimistic. However, given the operational situation and disparity in manpower between the opposing armies, it is difficult to conceive a more viable alternative. Influenced by the time and space of nineteenth-century warfare, Hood's plan provided a broad concept of operations to achieve the strategic objective of regaining the initiative in the Western Theater by maneuvering against the Northern center of gravity at Nashville. The capture of this major Union base of operations could have prolonged the war and forced Lincoln to negotiate peace.

The execution of the plan failed to draw Sherman back into Tennessee. This was largely a matter of bad luck and timing. If Hood could have crossed the Tennessee River at Gunterville or Decatur, as originally planned on 25 October, 1864, and immediately started operations along the railroad toward Murfreesboro, Sherman would likely have been forced to follow him, because Thomas lacked the time to concentrate his scattered command.

Hood had surely identified the proper strategic objective. Successful occupation of Nashville would have nullified Sherman's gains and forced Grant to move troops from the east to counter Hood's movement into Kentucky. To accomplish this feat, Hood had to defeat Thomas' army first. Yet as the campaign evolved, Hood continually failed to address the intelligence portion of his plan. Not until his army crossed the Tennessee River did Hood's cavalry begin to make contact with Union forces and confirm the location of Thomas' still scattered army. Furthermore, Hood probably never confirmed Thomas' concentrated strength at Nashville; if he had, he surely would not have sent Forrest to Murfreesboro.

While Hood's concept of operations was basically sound, he failed to sustain the plan. Never one to pay sufficient attention to details, Hood failed to

appreciate the numerous logistical requirements of his campaign. At the last minute the army's entire ammunition reserve, 28 car loads, and large quantities of quartermaster supplies had to be destroyed because Hood failed to insure that his orders to withdraw the irreplaceable stockpile were carried out. To make matters worse, upon entering Atlanta, Union forces captured a large amount of irreplaceable rolling stock amounting to five locomotives and 81 rail cars.⁹⁴ Because of Hood's movement 85 miles west of the intended crossing at Guntersville, Beauregard had to realign Hood's supporting base from Jacksonville, Alabama, to Tuscumbia. Though closer to his base at Cornith, Mississippi, the longer Hood remained at Tuscumbia, the more it taxed the weakened supply bureaus to keep him equipped. In "General Hood as Logistician", Frank Vandiver comments that his "attenuated line of communications to sources of supplies could not support a prolonged effort."⁹⁵ Had Hood moved into Tennessee the 1st of November instead of the 21st, his logistical requirements would not have been so taxing, because he could have readily re-supplied his army in the rich farm land south of Nashville before severe winter weather set in.

Though the campaign plan displayed a vision of recovering lost territory, it lacked an orderly schedule of military decisions. This was clearly demonstrated by Hood's indecisiveness in crossing the Tennessee River. Initially, he planned to cross at Guntersville. But lack of supplies and fear of Sherman persuaded Hood to move to Decatur. Then, because of Union strength guarding the crossing, he moved further west to Tuscumbia. There he waited 21 days to initiate his campaign. Why did the usual dashing, bold, energetic, and even impetuous Hood delay? Hood asserts in, Advance and Retreat, that the wait for Forrest's cavalry to arrive, the need to obtain twenty days of rations, and the bad conditions of the roads caused by continuous rain were the reasons for the costly delay.

Historian Thomas Hay sees Hood's inactivity another way: "he had no mature plan and that, in reality, a large amount of his delay at Tuscumbia was not due to lack of supplies, the absence of Forrest or bad weather, but anxiety over what Sherman would do."⁹⁶ Hood's focus at this point of the campaign should have been on Thomas, not on Sherman. As of 4 November Thomas' forces were still seriously scattered, and reinforcements from Sherman, consisting of Schofield's and Major General David Stanley's corps, had just arrived in the state. Forrest could just as easily have linked up with Hood at Columbia. And, though the season was late, sufficient subsistence could have been obtained from the surrounding country and from captured Federal depots.

This delay caused friction between Hood, the operational commander, and Beauregard, the theater commander. Very early in November Beauregard requested a brief summary of future operations from Hood.⁹⁷ Hood's reply reveals his lack of detailed planning: "it is not possible for me to furnish any plan of my operations for the future, as too much must depend upon the movement of the enemy."⁹⁸ This statement by Hood may indicate that, although Hood had established intent and vision, his plan for actual execution lacked maturity and detailed thought.

Hood's campaign agreed with Davis' general plan for the defense of the Confederacy, which required that its armies would deploy for the strategic defense but exploit every chance to concentrate for the operational offensive against an enemy center of gravity.⁹⁹ However, Davis' military policy based on the principle of departmentalism and the dispersion of force to defend territory worked against the plan's efficacy.¹⁰⁰ Concentration of troops was made difficult because of the eight semi-independent geographical departments set up by Davis. These departments were basically separate nations for military purposes, primarily concerned with self-defense without much regard for the needs of the other departments.¹⁰¹ An example of this decentralized policy was the

Administration's refusal in early June to support Johnston's request for a concentrated cavalry raid against Sherman's vulnerable lines of communication in Tennessee.¹⁰² This mission could have been executed by Forrest with a combined cavalry force of nearly 15,000, which was presently located in S.D. Lee's Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana.¹⁰³ In a letter to his brother, Sherman confessed that "my long and single line of railroad to my rear, of limited capacity, is the delicate part of my game."¹⁰⁴ But the Administration's failure to direct S. D. Lee's cavalry against this railroad resulted in a lost opportunity throughout the Atlanta Campaign to interrupt the resupply of Sherman's army.

This policy of dispersal of forces and acting mostly independently, without concert, also prevented the unity of effort in support of Hood's campaign in Tennessee. Because S. D. Lee had wasted his cavalry force to counter Sherman's cavalry raids into his department, when it came time to support Hood's Tennessee Campaign, Forrest could muster only about 6,000 troops. Another example was Hood's failure to receive reinforcements from General Kirby Smith's Trans-Mississippi department to support his invasion and then to replace losses accrued at Franklin.¹⁰⁵ His requests to the Administration in August, 1864, and then again in December also came to naught. Without reinforcements Hood was unable to maneuver against Thomas at Nashville, but had to await his attack. In short, Davis' strategic departmental system for the execution of the war established an environment that adversely affected Hood's operational actions.

Davis' departmental policy also caused ambiguous command relations. The vague command relationship Davis established between Beauregard and Hood violated a cardinal precept of military art—unity of command. Without command authority, Beauregard's function was only advisory.¹⁰⁶ Davis' failure to establish a clear and precise command relationship between the theater and operational commanders adversely affected the whole campaign.

Clausewitz defined the center of gravity as "the hub of all power and movement, on which everything depends".¹⁰⁷ Thomas' army, not Nashville, was the Union's western center of gravity. To win the campaign, Hood had to defeat Thomas' army decisively by defeating its separate corps before their concentration. Upon crossing into Tennessee, Hood correctly focused on the capture or rout of Schofield's corps. The decisive defeat of this 23,000 man force would have positioned a strong Confederate army of approximately 40,000 soldiers in the middle of Tennessee. From this position it could have caused a great deal of embarrassment for the Lincoln administration.

Once Thomas had concentrated his army behind the strong entrenchments at Nashville, it would have been very unlikely for Hood to defeat him. However, if Hood could have established a strong lodgment along the Nashville-Chattanooga Railroad, Thomas would have been forced to counter to prevent a potential march into Kentucky. Also, Hood's cavalry commander, Forrest, would have had a strong infantry base from which to anchor future raids.

Finally, Hood's decision to send the majority of his cavalry under Forrest to Murfreesboro was tactically unprofitable and operationally significant. It violated every rule of war. If Forrest's force had been at Nashville to guard Hood's flanks, a decisive Union victory might have been avoided.

Hood's Tennessee Campaign plan may be broken down into the following sequence of major operations: link up with Forrest's cavalry; cross the Tennessee River; maneuver to cutoff and defeat Thomas' forces in detail; occupy Nashville; move into Kentucky; and occupy Union line of communications.

Hood was successful only in completing the first two operations. Then, by failing to defeat Thomas' subordinate, Schofield, Hood, in effect, lost the campaign. He failed to realize that his success depended on his ability to prevent the concentration of Thomas' scattered forces. The proper course of action after his defeat at Franklin was to move his whole command against the

Nashville-Chattanooga Railroad toward Murfreesboro and then on to Stevenson, Alabama. This maneuver would have preserved his command and positioned it to either re-capture Atlanta, move to the Carolinas to counter Sherman, or link up with Lee.

Finally, the Confederates failed to synchronize their efforts within the theater, especially in the allocation of forces, logistical support, and reinforcements. When Hood presented his modified plan to Beauregard on 21 October, they agreed that Hood would receive Forrest's veteran cavalry in return for detaching Wheeler's horseman to observe Sherman. Forrest's cavalry was then currently based in the East Louisiana and Mississippi Theater under the command of Lieutenant General Richard Taylor. Yet when Hood began his campaign, a sizable infantry and cavalry force still remained in Taylor's department performing insignificant garrison duty.¹⁰⁸

Beauregard had to take immediate steps to formulate a cohesive logistical network to support the campaign. However, the time it took to repair railroads in Alabama and Mississippi, and to relocate ordnance and stores from Georgia was not considered in the campaign plan. Furthermore, to replace the losses at Franklin, Beauregard and Hood requested reinforcements from the Trans-Mississippi Theater; but Davis did not order Smith to transfer his forces to reinforce Hood.¹⁰⁹ Hay summed it up well in Hood's Tennessee Campaign: "the government's policy of attempting to hold all Confederate territory, instead of concentrating its forces for dealing a crushing blow against one of the principal Federal armies resulted, in the end, in the loss of everything."¹¹⁰

If Hood's campaign had succeeded, the Confederates would have re-occupied the fertile fields of Tennessee and Kentucky. What is more important, they would have voided the entire Federal plan. Clausewitz noted "a military genius is required to successfully execute a plan that any officer could devise."¹¹¹ Hood, brilliant in tactics, failed to demonstrate this measure of genius at the operational

level. The tragedy of Hood's Tennessee Campaign lies not with the plan but rather with the carelessness and confusion with which he executed it. Lack of attention to logistics, poor reconnaissance, and unnecessary delay doomed Hood to failure.

CONCLUSION

Though John B. Hood's generalship is judged a failure, he was assuredly not the simpleton that many historians have depicted. His Tennessee Campaign plan offered a rational solution to a rapidly deteriorating strategic situation. Hood's tragedy was that his generalship was the victim of his own personality.

Of all influences, none affected Hood's generalship more than his personality. Hood's ESTP personality established the foundation upon which Hood observed and acted within his environment. Hood's susceptibilities to the influences of his romantic culture and the example of Lee were embedded in his personality. Though the military and political circumstances that confronted Hood during 1864 were inauspicious, opportunities to advance his nation's cause did present themselves. The Battle of Atlanta on 22 July, the failure to block Schofield at Spring Hill, and the Battle of Franklin were three such opportunities. But because Hood lacked the ability to comprehend the specifics of an operation that took place beyond his own senses, these opportunities were lost. At the Battle of Atlanta he failed to closely supervise his subordinates; at Spring Hill Hood's issuance of ambiguous orders and poor reconnaissance allowed the enemy to escape. The irritation caused by his lost opportunity at Spring Hill and his impatient nature blinded Hood from envisioning a more prudent and a less costly alternative than the frontal assault at Franklin. Hood's personality prevented

him from making the transition from battlefield hero to deliberate strategic planner.

As an actively involved combat leader Hood had no equal. However, the very personality traits that made him a successful heroic leader made him unfit to command an army. Lacking introspective capabilities, Hood was unable to acknowledge his own errors and to correct them. With his ESTP personality, Hood had limited intuitive and judgmental abilities. Therefore, he was possibly unable to look at the data, judge the observed anomalies within the paradigm of the tactical offense, and then make necessary adjustments. Other generals were faced with the contradictions of the tactical offense. For example, Longstreet recognized the strength of the tactical defense and made adjustments. Hood, on the other hand, tried to resolve his tactical dilemma by doing more of the same. In the end, Hood's gallantry and the élan of his soldiers could not overcome bad decisions.

Furthermore, Hood's romantic and emotional nature only intensified his entrapment in the Napoleonic paradigm of the tactical offense. Earlier experiences at Gaines Mill, Antietam, and Chickamauga had convinced Hood that aggressiveness, boldness, and élan would overcome any obstacle the enemy could construct. Trapped in the paradigm, Hood in less than five hours squandered the offensive capability of his army at Franklin—in fact, wasted its military effectiveness.

Too often the study of military history focuses only upon successful generals. However, there is as much to be learned from studying less successful ones. John B. Hood provides such an opportunity. He was a great combat leader. Like any other leader, he was a product of his time and of his own personality orientation. The study of his life and campaigns provides an excellent example of the effects of personality upon one's ability to command. As a brigade and division commander Hood had no equal. However, the restrictions

imposed by his personality led to his failure as an army commander. A understanding of the cause is the purpose of this paper.

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