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DEEP BATTLE IN WORLD WAR ONE:
THE BRITISH 1918 OFFENSIVE IN PALESTINE

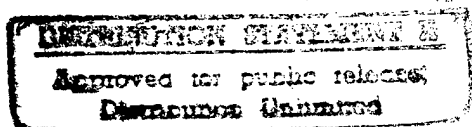
by

Paul A. Povlock

LCDR/USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The content of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.



Signature: Paul A. Povlock

13 June 1997

Paper directed by
Captain George Jackson,
Chairman, Department of Joint Military Operations

Dr. Michael I. Handel
Faculty Advisor

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Maneuver Warfare Theory achieved major acceptance during the 1980's, emphasizing the conduct of simultaneous offensive operations throughout the depth of the battlefield. With the victory of Coalition forces during Operation DESERT STORM, the "deep battle" theory gained instant credibility, and the emphasis on "joint" operations reached a fever pitch. Yet, too often analysts have only used the war in Kuwait to prove or refute these operational concepts. All theories require more than one case study to validate or nullify their precepts. Other historical examples need to be examined using the model of maneuver warfare to give greater support for this theory.

While the First World War is often characterized by the futile attrition of the Western Front in France, many exceptional operational offensives were also conducted. The British September 1918 offensive in Palestine is a superb example of the proper application of combat forces at the operational level. General Edmund Allenby's use of regular army units, armored cars, cavalry, airpower and irregulars led to a major victory that hastened the collapse of Turkey and the Central Powers. Long before mechanized forces and maneuver theory had been developed, British Imperial forces executed an operational design stressing many elements of deep battle theory.

By examining the British offensive using the paradigm of maneuver warfare, additional evidence can be generated to add credence to the theory. The importance of the synergistic effect of combat arms when applied jointly is also shown. Maneuver theory must be better understood if this paradigm is used to create doctrine for the employment of the Armed Forces of the United States.

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THESIS

The British 1918 offensive in Palestine during the First World War demonstrates many of the tenants of the Maneuver theory of warfare. The intelligent use of mobile forces allowed the British Imperial Forces under General Edmund Allenby to decisively defeat their Turkish adversaries. The British success supports deep battle operations as a method to defeat the opposing enemy forces. The British offensive is compared to current understandings of maneuver warfare to buttress the theoretical understanding of deep battle.

MANUEVER WARFARE AND DEEP BATTLE

“...Theory serves to pull up the weeds that error has sown everywhere...”

- Karl Von Clausewitz

At the beginning of the century the German author Hans Delbruk published what was to be the first book of his four volume treatise, *History of the Art of War in the Framework of Political History*.¹ In these volumes, Delbruk postulated that all theories of strategy could be divided into two types: the strategy of annihilation and the strategy of exhaustion or attrition. While both strategies could be effective, the two systems emphasized different factors. In the strategy of attrition the operational factors of mass and time were dominant. The subsequent evolution of attrition theory became primarily concerned with the destruction of enemy combat power or mass (M) over time (T).² Each side tries to wear down his adversary while preserving his own strength. A proponent of this theory attempts to maximize the rate of reduction of the enemy's mass while minimizing his own losses. Ground or terrain is merely seen as a means to modify the rate of exchange of forces. A hill or advance base may be taken in order to establish some tactical dominance and change the exchange rate in one's favor. The movement of

forces otherwise has no effect other than to position them for battle. Attrition of the enemy continues until he sees the light and offers terms, or a further advance is authorized to directly threaten a vital interest of the enemy. If the weaker state fails to respond rationally, the process continues until one side is totally eliminated.³ Attrition theory is essentially two dimensional and static as it only considers mass and time. The theory breaks down in failing to encompass the effects of combat power in motion upon the enemy.

Maneuver theory picks up where attrition theory breaks down by taking into account the effect of mass over time and distance. This theory now brings into play the third operational factor, distance (D), to create a dynamic system. The interaction of mass, time and distance yields the awareness of combat power not merely as mass, but also as momentum, or mass times velocity ($M \times D / T$). Operational momentum in conjunction with the mass of the enemy and the leverage one's own forces can exhibit forms the basis of maneuver theory.⁴

In Maneuver theory, the effect opposing forces have upon each other is a function of their relative positions. The side applying maneuver theory uses at least two different masses to affect the enemy, a holding force mass and a mobile force mass. These two masses along with the center of mass of the enemy comprise the three element system of maneuver theory. It is from the interaction of these three masses over time that the concept of leverage is derived.

Consider figure 1 (shown below). Here, the enemy center of mass (E) is acted upon by two other masses, the holding force mass (H) and the mobile force mass (M) over distance (D). In physical terms, leverage is produced when a force is applied to a rigid body anchored at a point to a fulcrum. The leverage is the force multiplied by the length of the lever. In military terms, the leverage is brought to bear by the mobile force (M) acting over a distance (D) with the holding force (H) acting as a fulcrum. The leverage is transmitted by the mobile force mass (M) multiplied over the distance (D).⁵

This leverage acts not to directly destroy the enemy, but to force him to move out of his position to avoid being encircled. This movement can lead to his destruction as the enemy force unravels under the strain of unexpected movement, or it may only force him to yield his post. In either case, the objective of the maneuver force is met by the enemy's retreat, and with lower costs than if this movement had been attained through direct attrition.

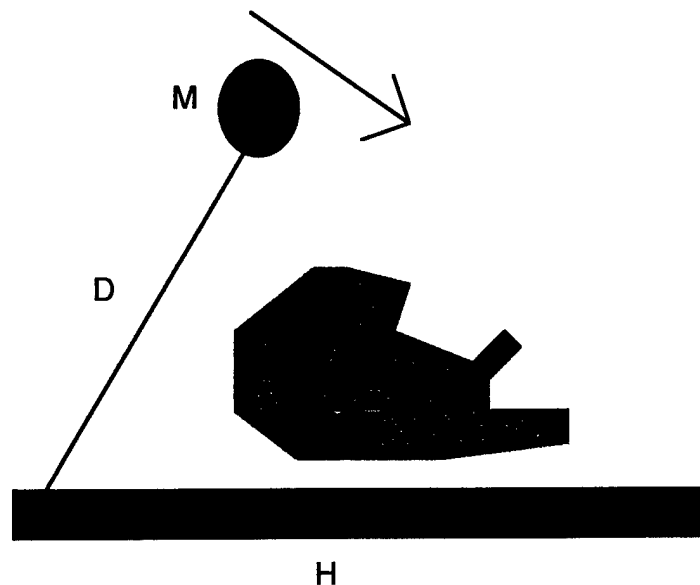


Figure 1 - Maneuver Theory Diagram

(In Figure 1, M represents the mass of the Mobile Force, H represents the Holding force, and E is the Enemy center of mass. The Mobile force provides a turning movement through the penetration into the enemy's operational depth of distance D.)

While conceptually simple, each of the three masses must meet important preconditions in order for the leverage to be effective. The enemy center of mass must be located within the triangle bounded by the holding force and the mobile force, or the leverage will be ineffective. The enemy will retain his freedom of motion, able to counteract the mobile forces' penetration.

The holding force has three main purposes. First, it must create a situation where the mobile force can penetrate into the enemy's rear areas. This can be accomplished by either opening a hole in the enemy's forward positions through which the mobile force may pass, or by distracting or deceiving the enemy to not pay attention to the mobile

force's movement. After this the holding force must act as the hinge for the mobile forces' leverage. Finally the holding force must have some effect that will hold the enemy in place. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. It can attack the enemy to fix him in his forward position. It can deceive the enemy to stay in his defensive posts through the use of some stratagem. Or, it can fall back before the enemy's assaults, in effect drawing him into the trap. This last case can be the most effective if the enemy is tempted to pursue the holding force. In all cases it is of the utmost importance that the holding force pin the enemy for the mobile force's leverage to be fully exerted.⁶

The mobile force has the greatest number of parameters for consideration if the turning movement is to be effective. Firstly, it must be able to move rapidly along the direction of the lever arm. This velocity is critical, for if the enemy mass can move rearward faster than the mobile force can advance, the enemy may escape the effect of the turning movement. At the same time, the mobile force must not move too fast or it will outstrip the support from the holding forces, finding itself open to defeat in detail by the enemy. The velocity of the mobile forces compared to the enemy is a relative one, not an absolute quantity. Historical evidence requires the mobile force must have a velocity greater than twice, but less than ten times the enemy's rate.⁷ The mass of the mobile force must be sufficient to pose a credible force in its own right. If the force is too small, the operational momentum generated will not be able to withstand any appreciable combat. Yet if the force is too large, much of the momentum generated comes from the forces' mass. The friction generated from the movement of a large force tends to slow it down, causing the mobile force to lose velocity and momentum.⁸ Here the penetration achieved is reduced and the proper leverage cannot be attained.

Lastly, for the mobile force to create an effective turning movement, the lever itself must be of sufficient length. If the lever arm is too long, it will tend to break, much like an over-extended lever in the physical world. If it is too short, it fails to exert the necessary force to dislodge the enemy. The length of the lever arm into the depth of the

enemy position, combined with the operational momentum of the mobile force and the fulcrum of the holding force provide the potential to make the enemy react. The leverage may not develop into an actual attack on the enemy; it may be a latent force preying upon the enemy commander's mind. Or, it may change into an attack on the enemy from the rear. In either case the leverage creates a reaction in the enemy that can be exploited.⁹

The penetration of the enemy's operational areas as the mobile force advances also permits the assault on the enemy's support elements. Communications facilities, supply dumps, command posts and airfields are all targets that the mobile force may overrun. The destruction of these targets throughout the operational depth of the defender can assist in the defeat of enemy by delaying, diverting or reducing enemy combat capabilities.¹⁰ As the enemy force's rear components are displaced or destroyed, the enemy command and control (C²) elements can lose cohesion. Direction of his own units is lost. Faced with the mobile force penetration as well as the loss of the ability to control his own forces, the enemy commander is placed between a rock and a hard place. If he tries to stay in place due to the loss of control of his units and weather the storm he risks being attacked in the rear by the mobile force. If he tries to move his uncoordinated units in reaction to the mobile force he risks destruction from the advancing holding force. The simultaneous disruption of the enemy's rear areas throughout his operational depth can paralyze enemy reactions, allowing the mobile forces to maintain the initiative and increase the operational tempo of the assault. With the central nervous system of the enemy forces disrupted, the mobile forces may be able to destroy the enemy at reduced cost to themselves. This is somewhat of a paradox, as the deeper the mobile forces penetrate, the more vulnerable they are to defeat, yet the greater the destruction they are able to inflict on the enemy C² functions, the safer they become.

All other things being equal, maneuver theory postulates a rationale for the dislocation and defeat of one's enemy. Of course, in war all other things are never held equal. The enemy is likely to react to an attack on his flank. The enemy may have expected the opening moves and set a trap for the attacker. The possibility for surprise, deception, undiscovered concentrations of enemy forces or the myriad of other unknowns can easily upset the best laid plans. The rigid adherence to this or any theory does not guarantee success in battle. Still, the strength of the theory is formidable enough to help postulate why some armies were successful when engaged in hostilities.

This possibility of "deep battle" is the next step in maneuver warfare theory. Deep Battle was an expansion of the concepts that B. H. Liddell Hart and J. F. C. Fuller had developed for the employment of armored formations. Stressing the simultaneous attack on the enemy throughout his operational depth, it requires the cooperative actions by all forces to achieve decisive results. Originally developed in the 1930's by Soviet armored theorists, deep battle operations stressed the combined use of infantry, artillery and tanks with aviation support to secure success. The use of tanks with infantry were foreseen as the exploitation or mobile forces after the initial break-in had been created. Today, the addition of helicopters, nuclear strikes, precision guided munitions and missiles make the simultaneous assault through the enemy's operational depth more than just a notional concept. Yet Maneuver theory does not require tanks, helicopters and computers to succeed. It does require the intelligent use of mobile forces to achieve decisive results. In 1918 the British Army in Palestine possessed both mobile forces and an intelligent commander to wield them, resulting in the destruction of Turkish forces in the Palestine theater of operations.

ALLENBY'S VICTORY: THE BATTLE OF MEGIDDO

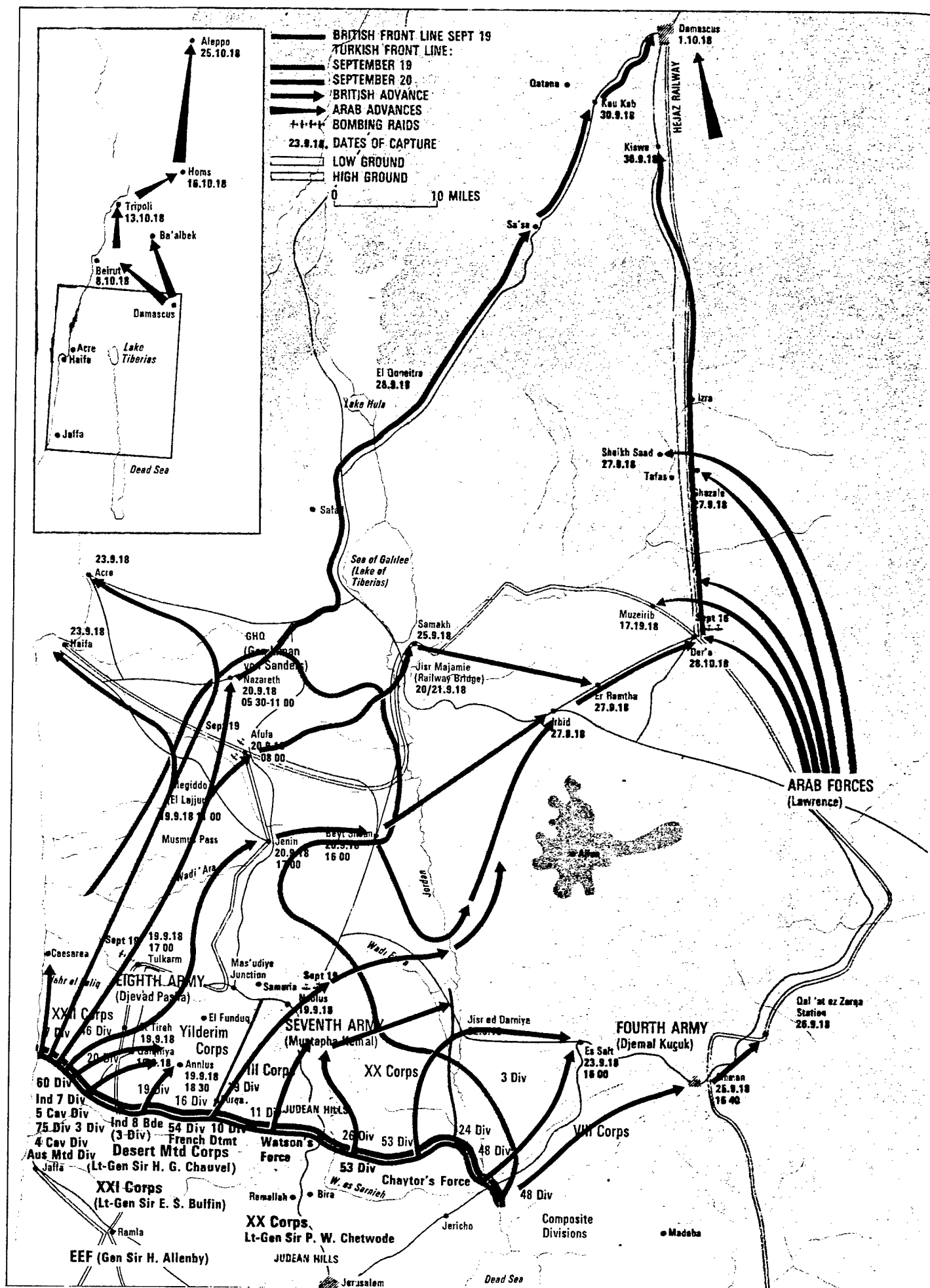
In the fifth year of the Great War, British forces found themselves battling the Turkish armies of the Central Powers in central Palestine. Originally deployed to guard

the Suez canal, the British Imperial forces comprising the Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) had seen their mission expand to the expulsion of Turkish forces from Palestine. It had taken the British almost of two years to accomplish this, culminating in the capture of Jerusalem in December 1917. The British offensive in 1917, under the able direction of General Edmund Allenby, had stalled just north of the Holy City due to the exhaustion of the troops and horses, and the extension of logistics lines. There, despite several unsuccessful thrusts into the Jordan Valley, the British would remain for the next nine months. During this time the British army was depleted by the transfer of several infantry divisions to France to assist in turning the German spring offensives, receiving two Imperial cavalry and two Indian infantry divisions in return. After the German offensive had been weathered, Allenby received permission to continue his advance though he did not receive any additional reinforcements.¹¹

In September 1918 the British front extended from the Mediterranean Sea just South of Caesaria across the Judean hills to the Jordan River Valley slightly north of Jericho. (See Figure 2). The Jordan valley was steep and desolate with few serviceable roads. The Judean hillside was equally poorly suited for mobile operations. The major towns in this area had easily defended approaches. Only the narrow coastal region offered the terrain necessary for a rapid breakout area. This area offered few obstacles to movement, though the narrowness of the region could allow the Turks to concentrate there. The open terrain widened to the north with few obstacles to maneuver to the major Turkish communications centers at Afula.¹²

The EEF was consisted of three corps comprising approximately eleven division equivalents of troops. The XXI Corps contained 4 infantry divisions, including the two Indian divisions that had just arrived in theater, and a small French contingent. The XX Corps possessed 2 Infantry divisions. The British Desert Mounted Corps (DMC) was the mobile striking force. It consisted of the Australian Mounted Division and the two Indian Cavalry divisions that had arrived from France. Each of the Cavalry divisions

Figure 2



contained armored car detachments, while the Australians were trained to fight as either mounted infantry or shock cavalry troops. Chaytor's Force, named after its Commanding General, filled out the British ranks. This force consisted of the ANZAC Mounted Division and an Indian Infantry Brigade plus supporting artillery units.¹³ At the sharp end of the stick, Allenby had 12,000 cavalymen, 57,000 riflemen and 540 guns, plus the normal combat support troops.¹⁴ His divisions were understrength for the nominal Table of Organization and Equipment values, but the time between offensives had been well used to train the troops. The British force possessed high morale and high initiative, especially among the Australian and New Zealand units. Additionally, elements of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) had establish air superiority over the front, severely limiting the Turkish reconnaissance of the British deployment. The British Army contained the necessary ammunition and supplies to carry out a major offensive. Transport in the form of trucks and horse drawn wagons was sufficient to keep the army outfitted. The momentum of the offensive would not be depleted due to the lack of supplies.

Mention must also be made of the Arab forces operating on the flanks and fringes of the British force in Palestine. Numbering only a few thousand on a good day, possessing meager training and few heavy weapons and with a distinct abhorrence for suffering casualties, they proved to be a positive force multiplier in Allenby's scheme of operations. The enigmatic leadership of Colonel T. E. Lawrence has tended to obscure the true effect of the Arab forces on the Palestine campaign. The actual damage they inflicted on the Turkish forces was slight, but they proved to be worth their weight in gold. The Arabs continuously forced the Turks to devote much of their slender resources to keep the railroads open. By keeping the Turkish commanders attention focused on their activities, the Arabs drew the Turkish attention away from more critical matters.

If the British forces possessed distinct advantages for the upcoming offensive, the Turkish forces under the German General Liman Von Sanders looked all the worse for wear. Not prepared for war in 1914, the ensuing attrition had only lowered the human and material resources available to the Turkish armies. In 1918 the Turks had three armies in Palestine comprising some thirteen division equivalents. The Turks and attached German units mustered some 2,000 cavalymen, 32,000 riflemen and 402 guns.¹⁵ All the divisions were seriously understrength, poorly equipped and supplied. Battalions could barely muster a company's worth of troops.¹⁶ Disease and poor sanitation further sapped their strength. The Turkish Eighth Army with five infantry divisions guarded the coastal region. The Seventh Army's five divisions defended the Judean hillside. The Fourth Army with three infantry divisions and a cavalry "division" (not much more than an understrength brigade) stretched eastward from the Jordan Valley to Amman. While the Turkish forces were outnumbered by the British by a two-to-one margin, they did possess great numbers of machine guns, the great equalizer in the First World War.¹⁷ They occupied good defensive terrain and had proved to be formidable opponents on the defense at other engagements in the war (Gallipoli, Gaza and Ctesphion). Von Sanders was a capable general and had been in command long enough to determine his command's strengths and weaknesses. The Turkish forces were expected to offer fierce resistance.

Allenby's plan for the offensive was both daring and creative, in stark contrast to the unimaginative attacks that characterized much of British operations on the Western Front. Noting the single railroad supplying the Turkish armies, Allenby correctly assessed that the seizure of Afula and Samakh would sever Turkish lines of communications. Threatened with encirclement, the Turkish Eighth and Seventh Armies would be reduced to a single line of retreat through the Jordan Valley, a region already noted for its paucity of roads. Under attack from all his forces, Allenby believed that the Turkish forces would not be able to handle the strain and could be destroyed.

To accomplish this task Allenby rearranged his army. The DMC and the XXI Corps were redeployed to the coastal region from the Jordan Valley. The XXI Corps' task was to affect the break-in into the Turkish lines, opening a path for the cavalry of the DMC. The XXI Corps would then pivot on its right and drive the enemy down the main railroad line to Afula, pushing the Turks toward the blocking position that the DMC would occupy. The Desert Mounted Corps' task was to push aggressively along the coast once the way had been cleared by the XXI Corps. Once free of the initial battle zone, the mounted troops were to take Afula and send a raiding force to seize the Turkish General Headquarters (GHQ) at Nazareth. XX Corps was to attack along the road to Nablus, while Chaytor's Force was to secure the right flank and demonstrate toward Amman. Finally, the Arab army under Lawrence and Emir Feisal were to cut Turkish communications north and west of the rail spur at Der'a.¹⁸ The sum of these operations would be the envelopment and destruction of the Turkish Armies. Allenby was seeking nothing less than the total destruction of the enemy forces in Palestine.

The operational deception performed by the British did much to shift the correlation of forces to their favor, both physically and in the mind of the enemy commander. The redeployment of XXI Corps and the DMC from the Jordan Valley to the coast had to be performed in an environment open to enemy spies due to a porous front line. Extensive illusions were created, from the building of fake straw horses and maintaining campsites with limited personnel to the creation of dust clouds to simulate cavalry on the move. From the distance, British deployments in the Jordan valley looked normal. Meanwhile six divisions had shifted to the west, allowing the British to create a crushing superiority along the coast. At the time of the attack, Turkish intelligence had identified the major British formations, but had lost track of their actual location. The air superiority attained by the RFC proved vital, preventing enemy aerial observation that could have confirmed or denied other intelligence reports. Arab activity along the railroad near Der'a and Amman continued to focus Turkish attention to the west. The

Turkish command had become accustomed to Allenby's penchant for feinting an assault along the coast, and then performing the main attack inland. Allenby's deception efforts were directed to reinforcing this perception. Thus when his initial assault hit the Turkish lines it would be judged as a feint, and not the main assault.¹⁹

The thorough British preparations paid off in spades. At the point of the main assault Allenby had attained a six-to-one advantage in men, and almost a four-to-one advantage in guns.²⁰ The attack was launched on 19 September 1918 and quickly attained its initial objectives. After a 20 minute bombardment including help from two destroyers along the coast²¹, XXI Corps ripped through the surprised Turkish defenders. The Turkish works proved to be poorly constructed with minimal barbed wire. The assault had commenced at 0430 and by midday the shattered Eighth Army was streaming back in confusion toward Mas'udiye Junction. The XXI Corps maintained the pressure on the Turks, with its advance elements pushing forward twelve miles by the end of the day.²²

With the Turkish line broken along the coast, the way was now clear for the Desert Mounted Corps. The Australian Mounted Division led the way with the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions following close behind. It took till noon for the three divisions to work themselves clear of the Turkish works and shake out their formations. Some small Turkish detachments were overrun, but it was not until 1800 that the main thrust could be mounted. The DMC began to pick up momentum and enemy resistance began to crumble. Elements of the Australian Mounted Division were in Nazareth by 0530 on the 20th, narrowly missing capturing Liman Von Sanders before being driven off by the GHQ units. Afula fell at 0800 and Beyt Shean was occupied by 1600.²³ Meanwhile the XX Corps had attacked on the afternoon of the 19th following word that XXI Corps' attacks had been successful. The Seventh Army had put up light resistance and Nablus had fallen on the 19th. Chaytor's Force's onslaught into the Jordan valley had been equally punishing to the Turkish Fourth Army. The Arab Army's attacks had

further hindered Turkish reaction by cutting the railroad and further confusing communications in the area.

Within 36 hours of the start of the offensive, the major British objectives had been attained (See Maps 2-5). The Turkish Eighth and Seventh Armies were threatened with envelopment and destruction by strong mobile forces to their rear. The Turkish reaction had been critically hampered by the surprise of the assault. The bombing raids by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) had hit headquarters and communications centers and disrupted Turkish C² functions. British airplanes had also bombed retreating Turkish forces, further fracturing enemy resolve. With few available reserves and his communication net crumbling, Von Sanders had little opportunity to influence the battle. He attempted to order his forces to retreat, but only the Fourth Army could even be contacted.²⁴ It was too late to save all but a corporal's guard of the Seventh and Eighth Armies, as these two formations disintegrated under the strain. Over the next five days the XXI and XX Corps advanced toward the Desert Mounted Corps, slowly mopping up Turkish resistance from northern Palestine, resulting in the destruction of the two armies. Meanwhile, the combination of Chaytor's Force and the Arab Army had severely damaged the Fourth Army.

The subsequent advance of the British to Damascus was due much in part to the weakness of the Turks and the relentless pursuit ordered by Allenby. Having been extensively briefed by their commanding general Allenby on his concept of operations, Allenby's subordinates used their initiative to fully implement the offensive plan. In the month following the start of the offensive, then British captured over 75,000 prisoners. Chaytor's Force alone took over 10,000 prisoners.²⁵ Total British losses in the operation totaled under 5,000 during the advance of over 350 miles.²⁶ With the major Turkish forces destroyed, the British army enjoyed a dramatic preponderance of force and continued the advance into Syria. The Turks had no force to oppose them. Only the Armistice stopped the British march short of Turkey.

THEORY TO PRACTICE

Looking at all the problems facing the Turkish forces in 1918 in Palestine, one could easily postulate that this force was like a lamb awaiting to British slaughter. Understrength, poorly led at lower levels, miserably supplied and fighting in a hostile environment, the Turkish Army was not the same quality armed force that the German Army was. Still, it would be incorrect to predict that the Turkish defeat was preordained. The British blow was not a simple bone crushing attack matching strength on strength, but a carefully crafted strike that used both force and maneuver to achieve the desired end state. Allenby's shattering victory was due to the boldness of the plan and the professionalism of its implementation.

The British plan and execution provide supporting data in the efficacy of maneuver warfare theory. In this battle, the Desert Mounted Corps performed the function of the mobile force for the British, while XX and XXI Corps (with Chaytor's Force) acted as the holding force. The DMC met all the requirements of an effective mobile force under the parameters of the maneuver theory. Firstly, the force was comprised of three veteran divisions (the Australian Mounted Division and the 4th and 5th Cavalry Divisions) numbering just under 20,000 men.²⁷ These divisions gave the force adequate mass to effect its mission. It had the inherent strength to overrun demoralized Turkish units along the line of advance and also to assault and take stronger defensive positions from the retreating armies' rearguards. Successive Turkish stands from Samakh to Damascus could not withstand the DMC's combat power. The force did not get slowed down by its own size. This was due in no small part by Allenby's use of the XXI Corps to open up the Turkish lines. The DMC was not committed until the break-in was completed, preventing any disruption of the mobile force. Finally, the mobile force contained sufficient combat power to pose an independent threat to the Turkish rear. Von Sanders had to react to this force or risk encirclement and destruction.

The DMC attained the necessary velocity to move deep into the enemy's operational depth and create the intended leverage. The DMC averaged approximately 24 miles per day during the first two days of the offensive. This placed the majority of the force in the vicinity of Afula and Nazareth, astride the Turkish lines of communications. This had been accomplished without the fragmentation of the Corp. Here, the DMC provided the leverage against Von Sanders by threatening his force with encirclement and destruction. Meanwhile the holding forces had advanced an average of 10 miles along the front. The mobile force's rate of advance was roughly 5 times that of the mass of the holding force, and hence the enemy mass. This rate meets maneuver theory's prediction for the rate required for the mobile force to be effective. This velocity was the result of the high initiative of the British commanders in accomplishing Allenby's plan, as well as to the strong will of Allenby himself. There were numerous episodes of Allenby at the front pushing his troops to keep up the momentum, both during the initial offensive and the subsequent pursuit.²⁸

The holding forces also acted in accordance with maneuver theory. The XXI Corps performed the break-in of the Turkish position along the coast, then turned inward to provide the hinge to the DMC's lever. The enemy force was pinned along the front of the holding forces, and could not escape. As noted above, the holding forces forward motion was sufficient to keep up with the mobile force and keep the forward enemy elements from escaping.

As the holding force, the XXI and XX Corps did punish the Turkish forces, but it was the turning movement by the DMC that resulted in the enemy disruption and disintegration. The mobile force's drive to Afula and Nazareth had placed the Turks in great danger, but the danger was still a potential one. The Turkish army lost cohesion and disintegrated only after the initial assault. This loss of cohesion occurred from the disruption and destruction of the army's command and control functions. Allenby's plan had stressed enemy C² site as primary targets. The RFC had bombed enemy

Sketch 30.



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Sketch 31. MEGIDDO, 1918. Situation at 12 m.n. 19th/20th Sept., 1918.

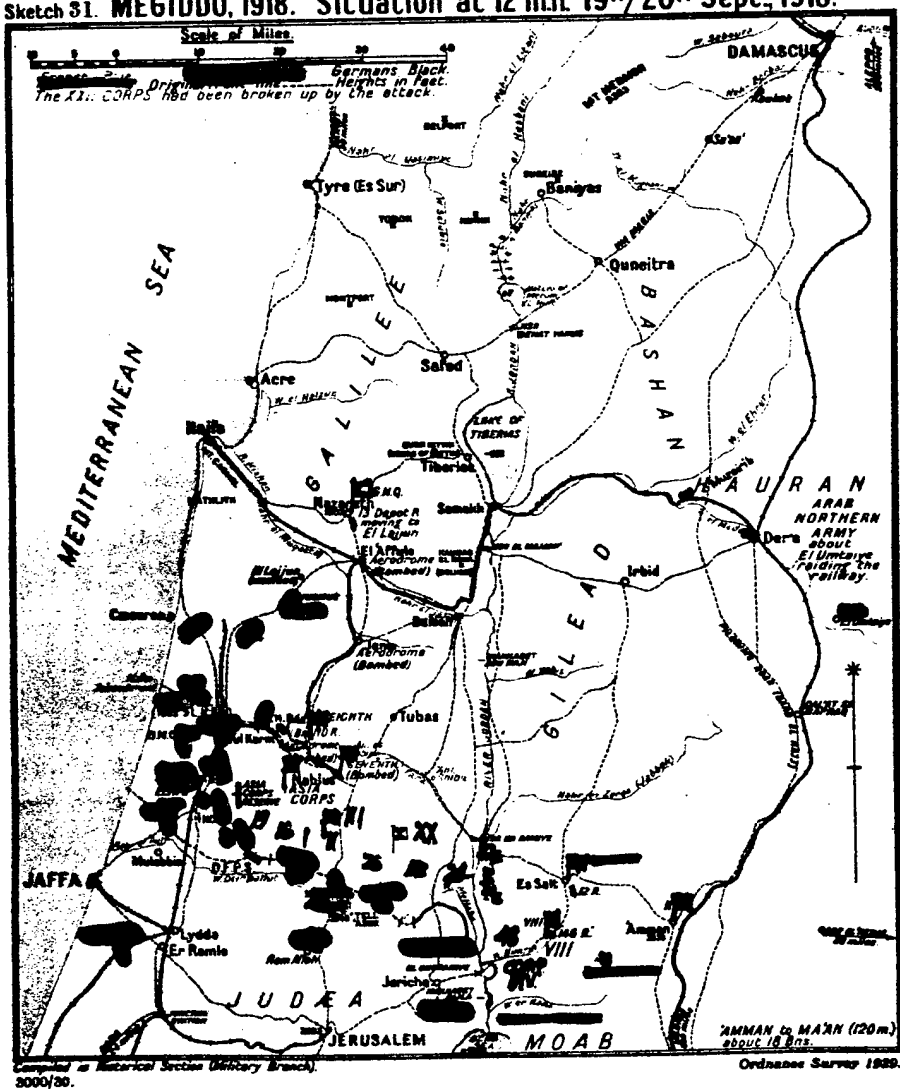


Figure 4

Sketch 32. **MEGIDDO, 1918. Situation at 9 p.m. 20th Sept., 1918.**

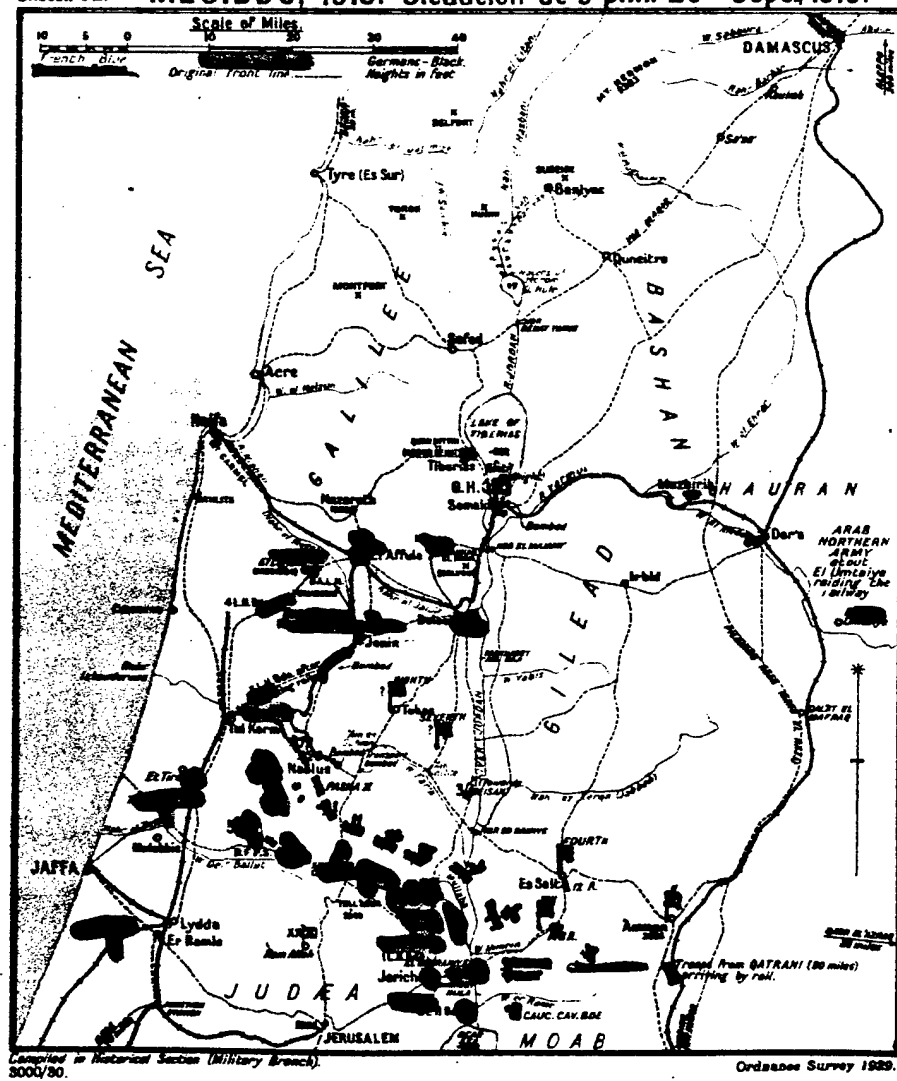


Figure 5

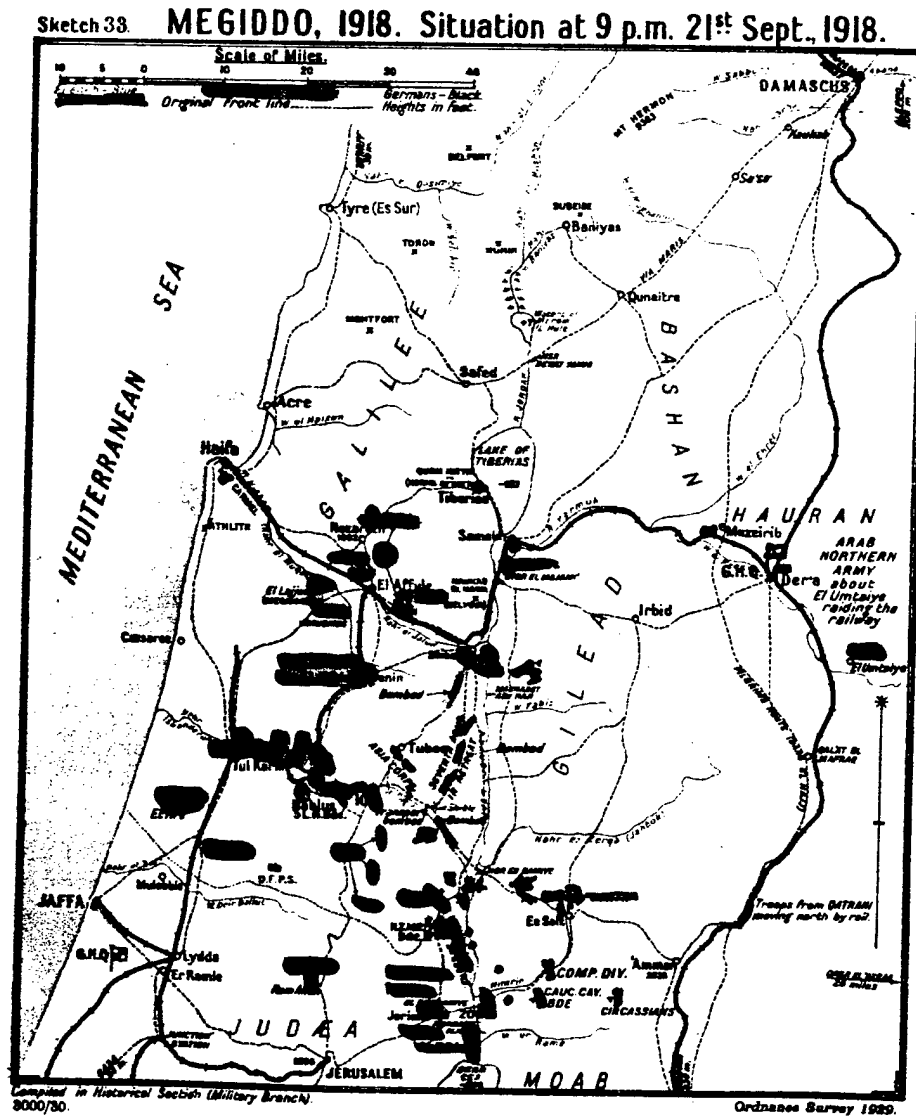


Figure 6

headquarters and telegraph stations throughout Palestine on the commencement of the offensive. The Desert Mounted Corps had narrowly missed capturing Liman Von Sanders in the Nazareth raid. The capture of Afula and Nazareth had additionally scrambled Turkish communications. The Arab raids on the eastern flank of the Turkish line had also fractured enemy lines of communication. By the morning of the second day of the British attack, Von Sanders did not have communications with the Eighth and Seventh armies. He could only order the Fourth to retreat, leaving the others to their fate. Finally, the harried Turkish and German soldiers came under unceasing attack from the air. In a scene antedating the famous "highway of death" during the Gulf War, British planes blasted one retreating Turkish column near Nablus, turning a road through a narrow gorge into a mass of burning vehicles and trucks. Ninety guns, 50 trucks and over 1,000 other vehicles (horse drawn) were found deserted in the "Valley of Death" the next day.²⁹ Other retreating Turkish units received similar treatment. This combination of stresses proved too much, and instead of bending under the British blow, the Turkish army fractured. All that was left was to collect the prisoners.

By hitting the enemy simultaneously throughout his operational depth with the use of ground, naval, air and special operations forces, Allenby had achieved the first true "deep battle" success of maneuver warfare. In modern parlance, the British had gotten inside the enemy's decision loop and ruthlessly exploited it. The Turks could not contend with the British attack that first threatened them with destruction from maneuver, and then prevented them from reacting to the threat. The British Army had achieved the necessary nervous breakdown of the enemy much as the Germans would inflict on the French twenty two years in the future. Allenby's innovative use of his mobile forces in conjunction with airpower and irregulars enabled him to score a decisive triumph.

CONCLUSION

Long before the American led coalition forces rolled up the Iraqi army during the Gulf War and proved the effectiveness of Maneuver Theory, General Allenby had demonstrated its proper application and execution. Effectively using mobile forces in conjunction with air, naval and special operations forces, Allenby completely destroyed the enemy army. Advancing over 350 miles in little over six weeks, British forces took 70,000 prisoners from a force initially estimated at 100,000 troops. No effective force stood before the British and Turkey proper. Allenby's offensive fits the basic tenants of maneuver theory and deep battle operations. As the United States Armed Services stress the use of maneuver to defeat the enemy, the theory on which doctrine is based requires greater understanding. More case studies need to be examined and rigorously dissected to glean the valuable lessons learned. While all wars are unique, the lessons of the past can help to improve the information base on which theory is based. The possible subjects available for further analysis are far from being exhausted. Operational logistics, deception, the integration of irregular forces and the decisive role of Allenby's leadership (among many others) demand skilled analysis to further our understanding of the operational art of war.

ENDNOTES:

- ¹ Earle, Edward Meade, ed. Makers of Modern Strategy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1971), 263.
- ² Simpkin, Richard E. Race to the Swift. (London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1985), 20.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ *Ibid*, 22.
- ⁵ *Ibid*, 96.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ *Ibid*, 101
- ⁸ *Ibid*, 98-104.
- ⁹ *Ibid* , 114.
- ¹⁰ Department of the Army, FM 100-5, *Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, June 1993), 6-14.
- ¹¹ Wavell, A. P. The Palestine Campaigns. (London: Constable and Co. Limited, 1928), 192-193.
- ¹² *Ibid*, 196-197.
- ¹³ Goodlet, Tim, and Hayes, Mark. The Last Crusade. (Cockeysville, MD: Poor Beggars in Red Games, 1991), 36-38.
- ¹⁴ Wavell, 195.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ Von Sanders, Liman. Five Years in Turkey. (Annapolis, The United States Naval Institute, 1927), 270.
- ¹⁷ Falls, Cyril. Military Operations in Egypt & Palestine (Part II). (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1930), 452-454.
- ¹⁸ Wavell, 197-199.
- ¹⁹ Handel, Michael I. War, Strategy and Intelligence. (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd; 1989), 370-374.
- ²⁰ Gardner, Brian. Allenby. (London: Cassell & Company, 1965), 182.
- ²¹ *Ibid*, 183.
- ²² Wavell, 203-210.
- ²³ Young, Peter. "The Battle of Megiddo." History of the First World War. Vol. 7, No. 12, 1971, 3004.
- ²⁴ Von Sanders, 285-288.
- ²⁵ Young, 3009.
- ²⁶ Wavell, 233.
- ²⁷ Falls, 593.
- ²⁸ Young, 3009.
- ²⁹ Wavell, 213.

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14. Simpkin, Richard E. Race to the Swift. London: Brassey's Defence Publishers, 1985.
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