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U.S. Army Combined Arms Center

# ENDURING SUCCESS

**Consolidation of Gains  
in Large-Scale Combat Operations**

Edited by Eric M. Burke and Donald P. Wright

ENDURING SUCCESS: CONSOLIDATION OF GAINS IN LARGE-SCALE COMBAT OPERATIONS



**LARGE-SCALE COMBAT  
OPERATIONS SERIES**  
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in Large-Scale Combat Operations*





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## Foreword

Since the Soviet Union's fall in 1989, the specter of large-scale ground combat against a peer adversary was remote. During the years following, the US Army found itself increasingly called upon to lead multinational operations in the lower to middle tiers of the range of military operations and conflict continuum. The events of 11 September 2001 led to more than fifteen years of intense focus on counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. An entire generation of Army leaders and soldiers was culturally imprinted by this experience. We emerged as an Army more capable in limited contingency operations than at any time in our nation's history, but the geopolitical landscape continues to shift and the risk of great power conflict is no longer a remote possibility.

While our Army focused on limited contingency operations in the Middle East and Southwest Asia, other regional and peer adversaries scrutinized US military processes and methods and adapted their own accordingly. As technology has proliferated and become accessible in even the most remote corners of the world, the US military's competitive advantage is being challenged across all of the warfighting domains. In the last decade, we have witnessed an emergent China, a revanchist and aggressive Russia, a menacing North Korea, and a cavalier Iranian regime. Each of these adversaries seeks to change the world order in their favor and contest US strategic interests abroad. The chance for war against a peer or regional near-peer adversary has increased exponentially, and we must rapidly shift our focus to successfully compete in all domains and across the full range of military operations.

Over the last two years, the US Army has rapidly shifted the focus of its doctrine, training, education, and leader development to increase readiness and capabilities to prevail in large-scale ground combat operations against peer and near-peer threats. Our new doctrine, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, dictates that the Army provide the joint force four unique strategic roles: shaping the security environment, preventing conflict, prevailing in large-scale combat operations, and consolidating gains to make temporary success permanent.

To enable this shift of focus, the Army is now attempting to change its culture shaped by more than fifteen years of persistent limited-contingency operations. Leaders must recognize that the hard-won wisdom of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is important to retain but does not fully square

with the exponential lethality, hyperactive chaos, and accelerated tempo of the multi-domain battlefield when facing a peer or near-peer adversary.

To emphasize the importance of the Army's continued preparation for large-scale combat operations, the US Army Combined Arms Center has published these volumes of *The US Army Large-Scale Combat Operations Series* book set. The intent is to expand the knowledge and understanding of the contemporary issues the US Army faces by tapping our organizational memory to illuminate the future. The reader should reflect on these case studies to analyze each situation, identify the doctrines at play, evaluate leaders' actions, and determine what differentiated success from failure. Use them as a mechanism for discussion, debate, and intellectual examination of lessons of the past and their application to today's doctrine, organization, and training to best prepare the Army for large-scale combat. Relevant answers and tangible reminders of what makes us the world's greatest land power await in the stories of these volumes.

Prepared for War!

Michael D. Lundy  
Lieutenant General, US Army  
Commanding General  
US Army Combined Arms Center  
October 2018

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## Introduction

Eric M. Burke and Donald P. Wright

The publication of the US Army's Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, in 2017 generated a great deal of attention within the Army as well as among outside observers. Most of that attention focused on the manual's renewed emphasis on large-scale combat operations after the Army's prolonged involvement in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT). Aggressive actions by emerging adversaries like Russia and China convinced senior leaders to reorient the Army from recent experiences characterized by counterinsurgency and small unit combat actions toward a new doctrine that emphasized large-scale combat. Soldiers and observers who continue to debate the wisdom of this reorientation largely overlook FM 3-0's attention to Consolidation of Gains. This concept incorporates hard-won lessons learned in the GWOT about the need to solidify strategic gains immediately after large-scale combat operations. While the Army briefly introduced Consolidation of Gains in its 2016 Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 3-0, the 2017 FM 3-0 includes an entire chapter on the concept, effectively elevating its importance in the Army's doctrinal framework. That chapter defines Consolidation of Gains as actions that "make enduring any temporary operational success and set the conditions for a stable environment."<sup>1</sup> Further, it states that Consolidation of Gains actions "are about exploiting tactical success by establishing security and stability in a manner decisive enough to achieve national strategic aims."<sup>2</sup> Put differently, Consolidation of Gains represents any and all actions necessary to ensure that military success at the tactical and operational levels supports the durable attainment of overall political objectives at the strategic level.<sup>3</sup>

Sensitivity to the needs of Army forces to study, train, plan, and prepare for such broadly defined missions has a much deeper past. Since the advent of the Kennedy "Flexible Response" era in 1962, the Army has grounded its doctrine on preparing troops for a spectrum of missions ranging from peacetime support of both domestic and foreign governments to major theater wars. While the Army's doctrinal emphasis on responsibilities other than large-scale combat operations against Soviet forces in Europe waned during the latter decades of the Cold War, the 1993 FM 100-5, *Operations*, renewed the requirement to prepare for the full range of military operations. Additionally, whereas previous doctrine suggested the Army would operate in conflicts involving a single threat ranging from

guerrilla insurgency to nuclear war, the 1993 manual warned that soldiers would often confront simultaneous threats from across the conflict spectrum. In 2001, this concept was embodied within the Army's full spectrum operations doctrine, which it used during the early years of the GWOT. The 2017 FM 3-0 retained this full spectrum foundation, which the Army called Unified Land Operations.

Much in the spirit of predecessor full spectrum operations doctrine, the most recent FM 3-0 generally characterizes Consolidation of Gains as "a broad array of tasks combined in variable ways over time in a specific operational context" and makes it clear that the term is "not a synonym for stability, counterinsurgency, or nation-building."<sup>4</sup> Due to the diverse range of strategic and political objectives it may be directed to achieve, the Army cannot establish a finite list of tasks for Consolidation of Gains actions. Instead, they are defined spatially as those operations taking place where large-scale combat operations are not underway, though they may be ongoing within immediately adjacent areas. The manual includes examples such as neutralizing bypassed enemy units, handling enemy prisoners of war and displaced persons, seizing weapons storage sites, securing lines of communication, establishing public order, and conducting humanitarian assistance—as well as more complex activities such as restoring key infrastructure and services and establishing governance. Such missions and tasks must be calibrated to the larger political context of a particular military campaign in order to ensure that battlefield successes are durable and strategically relevant. Importantly, FM 3-0 mandates that commanders plan for Consolidation of Gains and instructs them to establish a consolidation area where these activities will take place, assigning responsibility for operations in that area to a subordinate commander. While civil affairs, engineers, military police, and other special units are often required, maneuver forces remain critical to Consolidation of Gains, especially for establishing security within the consolidation area.

This volume in the *US Army Large-Scale Combat Operations Series* looks to the past to sharpen current understanding of this concept. The volume's contributors faced significant challenges in researching relevant historical cases to illustrate Consolidation of Gains. First, primary documentation of Consolidation of Gains actions is rare in comparison to first-hand accounts of combat operations. Our authors used innovative means to recover accounts of what were often considered minor operations conducted in rear areas. Second, there is no established body of scholarly works on Consolidation of Gains; most published operational military history tends to focus on combat operations at the tip of the spear, paying little attention



to what occurred behind the front lines. Moreover, a very limited number of published works substantively address the concept of Consolidation of Gains as a doctrinal concept. A significant number of those works conflate the concept of Consolidation of Gains with the more narrowly defined long-term effort called “nation-building” and are usually holistic examinations of the reconstruction of economic, social, and political institutions in countries where established governments were removed by military force, leaving a vacuum of political authority. As Nadia Schadlow and other security studies scholars have observed, the US military has historically avoided planning for sustained nation-building operations, even though they are the only US government organizations with the resources and self-defense capabilities to take on this monumental task in highly destabilized environments.<sup>5</sup> This pattern of avoiding preliminary planning for nation-building has proven all the more damaging when nation-building itself was a primary political objective of a campaign, as in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Rather than address the broad subject of nation-building, this volume focuses on a wide range of military actions that take place in the spatial—and often temporal—wake of large-scale combat operations. Each of the chapters recount how commanders leading forces approached (or attempted to avoid) the problem of securing tactical and operational successes behind the front lines and link those successes to higher-level political objectives of a campaign as established by civilian leadership. In some of these cases, military staffs planned for specific Consolidation of Gains actions only to find that they often overlooked tasks that ultimately proved critical to achieving strategic and political goals. In others, lack of strategic guidance at the outset of conflicts and shifting strategic goals during campaigns undermined the commander’s ability to plan for and conduct Consolidation of Gains. Many of the chapters reveal how important a military institution’s culture and norms are to the successful conduct of Consolidation of Gains. For many armies, victory in battle was considered the sole measure of success. What occurred in the wake of combat was either not the concern of the commander or actions relegated to Civil Affairs or other noncombat specialty units. These assumptions often led to hurried improvisations, including the unplanned commitment of maneuver forces to tasks far from the front lines. In some cases, poor assumptions and improvisations led to Consolidation of Gains actions that succeeded at the tactical level but ultimately undermined the attainment of overall political goals.

The chapter that opens the volume examines the American experience with Consolidating Gains in the Philippines between 1898 and 1902. Geoff Babb traces the conflict’s evolution from large-scale combat opera-

tions against Spanish military forces to the eventual emergence of a Filipino insurgency. Throughout this period, US military commanders in the Philippines were hamstrung by reticent and ambiguous political guidance from Washington, DC. This ambiguity contributed to an environment in which tactical-level commanders felt compelled to use coercive and abusive means to achieve a benevolent outcome at the strategic level. That contradiction has stained the conflict's legacy through the present day.

The next two chapters address Consolidation of Gains in the First World War. Lt. Col. Casey Baker recounts how the Imperial German Army planned to secure and stabilize Belgian territory in the war's opening western offensive in 1914. Due to faulty assumptions about how the Belgians would defend their territory and the types of forces required to consolidate gains, the Germans faced a complex campaign behind the front lines. Christopher Davis's chapter on the Meuse-Argonne Offensive looks closely at the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) tactical-level actions to protect lines of communication, eliminate bypassed enemy forces, and complete other Consolidation of Gains actions. These operations were critical to the AEF maintaining the decisive tempo of the offensive, especially as a pandemic began to erode the combat power available to Allied commanders.

The next three chapters on the Mediterranean Theater in the Second World War address how the US Army's understanding and conduct of Consolidation of Gains improved between 1942 and 1945. Tom Hanson's chapter on Allied operations in North Africa describes how faulty assumptions about French governing capacity and political will created an unstable environment behind the front lines. Greg Hospodor follows with an account of the Allied campaign in Sicily, describing how senior US commanders who learned from failures in North Africa first deployed civil affairs teams and other units to quickly secure and stabilize areas seized from Axis forces. Lt. Col. Steven Hampson's chapter shifts the focus to Consolidation of Gains actions on the Italian peninsula, examining the mature and sophisticated effort to address complex political, social, and economic challenges that threatened to destabilize Italian communities liberated by Allied combat operations.

Three chapters on the Second World War in other theaters provide different perspectives on Consolidation of Gains. Matthew Margis's discussion of the 82nd Airborne Division in Operation Market-Garden addresses forcible entry operations that often require a unit to conduct close combat and Consolidation of Gains actions simultaneously. Gary Linhart's analysis of the Central Pacific campaign between 1942 and 1945 illus-

trates how a joint headquarters planned to secure lines of communication as its forces moved toward the Japanese Home Islands. Timothy Heck and Walker Mills examine the Soviet Offensive in Manchuria at the very end of the war. Consolidation of Gains in that operation consisted of actions that exploited the local economy and population to achieve strategic goals that were quite different from those set by the Allies in Asia and elsewhere.

The next two chapters on the Korean War reveal the breadth of Consolidation of Gains activities conducted during that conflict. Eric Burke focuses on the August 1950 United Nations (UN) counteroffensive. In that offensive, the US Army's 25th Infantry Division suddenly transitioned from large-scale combat operations to Consolidation of Gains actions such as eliminating bypassed enemy forces and reestablishing South Korean political authority in areas reclaimed from North Korean forces. Eric Setzekorn's chapter then follows the offensive as it swept north all the way to the Chinese border, forcing the UN to plan for the occupation of North Korea. The December 1950 Chinese intervention ended the UN occupation, but prior to that, the US Army and its allies conducted Consolidation of Gains activities to establish stability and new governance in North Korea, albeit in a vacuum of political guidance.

In the final chapter, Don Wright examines Consolidation of Gains in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Between November 2001 and February 2003. Coalition forces enjoyed ample time to prepare for the invasion of Iraq and planned for Consolidation of Gains actions that secured lines of communication and key infrastructure. Senior commanders failed to prepare their forces to conduct broad-based security and stability operations once large-scale combat had ceased, however. This lack of preparedness for the most basic Consolidation of Gains actions led to civil disorder, political confusion, and ultimately the Coalition's loss of legitimacy.

The historical cases in this collection offer examples of how operations that US Army doctrine now calls Consolidation of Gains actions have shaped past conflicts. These cases can serve as points of departure for further discussion on how the US Army can integrate the concept of consolidating gains into its training and education so that future operations consistently support joint strategic objectives and national political goals and ultimately achieve enduring success. Although history cannot predict the future, carefully reconstructing and analyzing the past can illuminate what the future might hold. Providing historical insight is especially important when a new concept enters US Army doctrine.

In creating this volume, we had ample assistance from numerous organizations and people. First and foremost, we would like to thank our contributors, who volunteered their time and expertise. They not only took on a complex and overlooked historical subject but also patiently worked with us through chapter reviews and correspondence to address the small yet important details that make a project like this possible. Special thanks to Col. Rich Creed, who authored the conclusion and—as director of the Combined Arms Doctrine Directorate (CADD)—helped us frame the volume and choose historical cases that might prove most relevant and useful.

Finally, thank you to the Army University Press Research and Books Team. Kate Dahlstrand and her editors took this project and did the hard work of reviewing, editing, and designing. This book greatly benefitted from their expertise.

## Notes

1. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: 2017), 8-1.

2. FM 3-0, 8-2.

3. “Consolidating Gains” and “Consolidation” are two different doctrinal concepts. The latter is the process conducted by tactical units after occupation of a newly seized position.

4. Department of the Army, FM 3-0, 8-1.

5. Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017). See also Cathal Nolan’s *The Allure of Battle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), which documents the Western warfare focus on winning war through decisive battle victories rather than prevailing through long-term campaigns that feature attrition.





## Chapter 1

### **Benevolently Consolidating Ill-Gotten Gains: The US Army in the Philippines, 1898–1902**

Lt. Col. (Retired) Joseph G. D. Babb and Lt. Col. Nathaniel H. Babb

In 1899, British author Rudyard Kipling followed events in the Philippines and published the jingoistic poem “White Man’s Burden” to welcome the United States to the daunting task of administering colonial territories gained in a war of imperial conquest. The poem was an exhortation to send America’s best and brightest to “civilize” the barbaric people of the newly conquered territories:

Take up the White Man’s Burden—  
Send forth the best ye breed—  
Go bind your sons in exile  
To serve your captives need;  
To wait in heavy harness  
On fluttered folk and wild—  
Your new caught sullen peoples,  
Half devil and half child.<sup>1</sup>

A newcomer to the game of building an overseas empire, the United States would accept Kipling’s racially informed commission and largely interact with the Filipino population as a people incapable of governing themselves, an approach taken by “White Men” in European colonies across North America, Asia, and Africa. The task of stabilizing and governing the Philippines fell mostly to the US Army. As this chapter will show, American soldiers—often operating without clear strategic guidance—struggled to consolidate gains won in the evolving Philippines conflict. And, in that process, they often came to view their Filipino adversaries as uncivilized, an attitude which in turn justified brutal practices. In some cases, these techniques helped consolidate gains at the tactical level, but they ultimately undermined the US government’s ability to claim any moral high ground and likely contributed to the ferocity and popularity of the insurgency.

Several significant events in the latter half of 1898 fundamentally changed the way the United States employed military forces to secure its interests in newly acquired possessions. A westward expansion beyond the continental boundary was a further spasm of the nation’s manifest destiny. In “The Significance of the Frontier in American History 1893,” historian Frederick Jackson Turner commented that expansion was a vital compo-

ment of the US experience: “The Americans soon realized that the new form of war they were fighting was actually deeply familiar, resembling nothing so much as the experience of fighting Native Americans in the west of the United States.”<sup>2</sup> By the end of the decade, America’s expanded destiny included movement into and across the Pacific.

In July 1898, the US government annexed Hawaii, which quickly became a military outpost in the Pacific. Later that year, in December 1898, Guam and Puerto Rico became American territories with the Treaty of Paris signing that ended the Spanish-American War; Cuba remained an independent commonwealth in name only. In addition, the United States agreed to purchase the Philippines from Spain to administer the archipelago essentially as a colony. By acquiring Hawaii, Guam, and the Philippines, the United States created a pathway across the Pacific to access an area of increasing importance to its emerging strategic and economic imperatives. This push to expand America’s imperialistic tendencies was controversial and pulled the US military into an expansion in size and missions—not the least of which was to consolidate the gains of territories won by war or purchased.

The US Senate ratified the divisive agreement to purchase the Philippines from Spain by only one vote. As was argued at the time, this acquisition committed the nation at worst to imperialism, and at best to the future defense of a distant strategic outpost. America’s military relationship with its far Pacific colony began with four years of complex and difficult operations that tested the leadership of the nation and the US Army. This chapter examines the first major US military deployment in Asia to illuminate two key aspects of the current US Army Operations to Consolidate Gains doctrine: (1) deliberate planning and preparation activities to capitalize on operational success, and (2) reorganization of forces and missions to execute area security and stability tasks.<sup>3</sup>

In the Philippines during this period, the Army had to continuously plan, reorganize forces, and conduct follow-on combat operations during three distinct phases over the four-year course of the conflict. Simultaneously, these forces also prepared for and undertook stability tasks necessary to achieve the mission’s strategic goals. From 1898 to 1902, four Army leaders commanded American forces in the Philippines: Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt (July 1898–August 1898), Maj. Gen. Elwell S. Otis (August 1898–May 1900), Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur (May 1900–July 1901), and Maj. Gen. Adna R. Chaffee (July 1901–October 1902). All four had distinguished themselves previously, earning brevet promotions during the



Figure 1.1. Map of the Philippines, 1899. Created by Army University Press.

American Civil War and its aftermath. These key leaders had also served on the western frontier during the pacification of Native Americans.<sup>4</sup>

As a part of this volume, which is designed to inform the current Army doctrine on Consolidation of Gains, this chapter looks at the leaders, key activities, and important precedents at all levels from national strategic to tactical. The secretary of war from 1899 to 1904, Elihu Root,

and other Army officers discussed in this chapter—Wesley Merritt, Elwell Otis, Frederick Funston, and J. Franklin Bell—were formative figures in a critical period of Army history. This was the first major conflict after the American Civil War and only a decade and a half before the Army deployed more than a million soldiers to France to fight in the “Great War.” The Philippines experience in corps and division operations with modern weapons was a significant underpinning to a time of great change for the Army. The names of key leaders from the conflict in the Philippines are memorialized on the Army University’s Fort Leavenworth campus.<sup>5</sup> The conflict with Spain in the Pacific (and the Caribbean), which began in 1898, was a critical turning point for the nation and the Army.<sup>6</sup>

The US Army that fought the war in the Philippines—after many decades of domestic operations against Native Americans—was reoriented, re-equipped, and reorganized for its increasingly international role. The 1898 deployment to the Asiatic-Pacific Theater to seize and control new territory set the stage for other contingency operations in the region. Army actions in the Philippines offer a historical case to help understand Operations to Consolidate Gains and provide background for America’s acquisition and “benevolent assimilation” of this strategically located territory.<sup>7</sup> While this chapter generally uses a chronological narrative approach, this conflict was part of a larger war with simultaneous military actions half a world away and concurrent political and diplomatic actions in Washington and European capitals. A reference chronology of key events is provided at the end of the chapter.

## **Context and Overview of the Conflict**

The military’s tasks in the Philippines, and the kind of war it was going to fight, were not clarified for its leaders until months after the conflict broke out. Initially, President William McKinley was indecisive in the face of significant domestic and indigenous political opposition. Ultimately, the spectrum of the May 1898 to July 1902 conflict in the Philippines included conventional large-scale combat, hybrid warfare, and guerrilla war—interspersed with what current Army doctrine calls stability operations.<sup>8</sup> The outcome of the conflict’s large-scale combat, against both Spanish and indigenous forces, was arguably never in doubt. The operational and tactical demands of the deployment, costs and manpower required, and operating doctrine needed to achieve success, however, were never completely clear or accepted—in Washington, or by Army leaders in the islands. The murkiness of the strategic goals further complicated the tactical task of consolidating gains in an alien land and culture for the commanders on the ground.



The treatment of the Philippine population and the applicability of the burgeoning laws of war, including The Hague Convention of 1899, became key issues in this conflict. After the United States defeated the Spanish in 1898, a large swath of the Filipino society overwhelmingly pushed for independence—widely supported by arguably the two most important groups: the Philippine armed forces and political elite.<sup>9</sup> However, Filipino independence forces were significantly disadvantaged in a conventional fight against better armed and trained Americans. They eventually turned to guerrilla war to keep their dreams of independence alive. The Filipino guerrilla campaign was bloody and often gruesome, carried out by non-uniformed fighters who blended in with the civilian population. While Filipino leaders acknowledged the severity of their tactics, US leaders questioned whether the rules, privileges, and protections outlined in the Lieber Code—the precursor to the modern Laws of Land Warfare—should be applied in this conflict.

On 24 April 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued General Orders No. 100, the Lieber Code, governing the conduct of soldiers and affording certain protections to enemy soldiers and civilians alike.<sup>10</sup> In the Philippines, the debate surrounding the code’s application focused primarily on the legality of torture, namely the “water cure,” a practice similar to waterboarding. In December 1900, Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur resurrected a version of General Orders No. 100, omitting certain restraints imposed on Union forces during the US Civil War while retaining sections that authorized retaliatory violence. General J. Franklin Bell cited MacArthur’s General Orders No. 100 to justify harsh measures such as the water cure to extract information from insurgents under the pretense that “short, severe wars” were “the most humane in the end.”<sup>11</sup> This misguided (though, at the time commonly held) belief was founded on the premise that such treatment was justified if the information extracted helped bring the conflict to a swift conclusion.<sup>12</sup>



Figure 1.2. Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur.  
Courtesy of WikiMedia Commons.

When the American public learned about these practices, an uproar ensued, leading to US Senate hearings concerning possible war crimes by US military personnel. Army leaders began to selectively court-martial soldiers accused of violations, which included Maj. Edwin F. Glenn, a judge advocate on the island of Panay who was charged with ordering administration of the water cure.<sup>13</sup> The consolidation of military victory to secure the gains of success on the battlefield and in cities and towns across the Philippines was a long, complex, difficult, and controversial undertaking.

## **The Beginning of the Conflict**

The Spanish-American War started on 18 February 1898 when the USS *Maine* exploded and sank in the harbor of Havana, Cuba; more than 200 American lives were lost. Over the next several weeks, Americans heatedly debated what to do about this outrage blamed on Spanish forces. Finally, on 20 April 1898, President William McKinley announced a state of war with Spain. The primary *casus belli* and initial focus of the conflict was in the Caribbean. The nation's patriotic fervor targeted Spanish forces in Cuba and Puerto Rico not far from US bases. That American campaign was generally supported by the Cuban people. Spain's ability to provide reinforcements and support from Europe was made increasingly difficult by the American Navy's growing capabilities.

In contrast, the conflict in the far-distant Philippines was domestically more controversial because of its apparent "imperialist" goals. However, the Philippines, a strategic Spanish holding in the Pacific, provided the United States an opportunity. Control of these key islands would improve its posture in this area of growing importance as the United States expanded across the Pacific in support of economic and military imperatives. Previously alerted by then-Assistant Secretary of the Navy Theodore Roosevelt, the Asiatic Squadron was prepared for war in the Philippines and quickly sailed from Hong Kong, cleared and ready for action.<sup>14</sup>

On 1 May 1898, less than two weeks after the declaration of hostilities, US Navy forces under the command of Commodore George Dewey destroyed the Spanish fleet in a matter of hours in the Battle of Manila Bay. Subsequently, a small force of US Marines landed at Cavite south of Manila, initially supported by a disparate coalition of anti-Spanish Philippine revolutionaries under a very charismatic and capable leader. The exiled head of this nationalist movement, Emilio Aguinaldo, had met earlier in the spring with American diplomatic officials in Singapore and Hong Kong. Aguinaldo previously led a revolutionary movement against the Spanish. When that effort faltered, he made a deal with the Spanish authorities and reluctantly

accepted exile from the Philippines. Sensing an opportunity, he followed Commodore Dewey's fleet back to Luzon—prepared to again organize Filipino forces to support the Americans in the conflict with the Spanish.

Aguinaldo's goal was to take advantage of the American military opening and lead his forces against the Spanish holding the fortress in Manila and other key outlying positions. He believed the US government would support Philippine independence under his leadership.<sup>15</sup> Aguinaldo's poorly armed and equipped indigenous force was comparable in size, if not in arms, to the Spanish troops holding Manila. It was unclear, however, if they could take Manila and effectively end Spanish rule without significant American military assistance, especially ground forces that would rival Spanish regular formations and weaponry.

At the time of Commodore Dewey's triumph over the Spanish Fleet, the US Army forces required to consolidate the American victory on land were not yet available. Back stateside in California, the War Department began forming, organizing, training, and equipping regular and state militia units. A corps-sized element encamped and prepared for the follow-on campaign against the Spanish Army, which included slightly less than 13,000 soldiers. Near Manila, anti-Spanish indigenous forces—estimated between 10,000 to 20,000—were already deployed and loosely organized under experienced native political and military leadership. They were eager to complete the task at hand and gain independence from Spain. A major complicating factor for US military commanders was that they lacked clear guidance from senior civilian leadership regarding the ultimate political disposition of the Philippines once Spanish land forces had been defeated. Would the archipelago become an independent state, a colony of the United States, or something else?

Given the lack of guidance, Commodore Dewey maintained control of Manila Bay and withheld any naval support to Aguinaldo, urging him to wait for American ground forces to arrive. By July 1898, approximately 8,500 troops in three echelons of the newly established US Army's Eighth Corps arrived from San Francisco under the command of Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt. In an indication of what was to come, Wesley's instructions from Washington were that he should not allow Aguinaldo's forces to participate in the assault on Manila.<sup>16</sup> The defeat of the Spanish was planned as an exclusively US operation.

The question of who would govern the Philippines was still ambiguous as Merritt and his staff prepared to assault the Spanish defenses already surrounded by Aguinaldo's troops. This set the stage for the Army's



Figure 1.3. Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt. Courtesy of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

controversial four-year period of 1) conventional conflict against two different enemies; 2) military occupation and pacification; and, 3) an extended period of counterinsurgency operations. Military tasks included both establishing a military government and conducting follow-on combat and stability operations. The region's difficult geography and terrain—with more than 7,000 islands—was a major complicating factor. The area of operations would barely fit into a geographic box stretching from New Brunswick, Canada, to Florida and from the Atlantic coast to the Mississippi Valley. The significant social, cultural, and language differences among the almost eight million residents, half of whom lived on the island of Luzon, proved even more daunting.<sup>17</sup> This complex and difficult mission, while predominantly conducted by ground forces, was truly joint and included elements from across the military services.

Throughout the conflict, the US Navy patrolled the islands, preventing weapons and munitions from reaching enemy forces, and provided extensive fire support to Army forces for both defensive and offensive operations. In addition, the Navy supported numerous amphibious operations throughout the archipelago. As the war progressed, US Marine Corps forces increasingly participated in the conflict in areas outside of Luzon although in relatively small numbers. Over the four years, however, the preponderance of the fighting occurred on Luzon—conducted by regular Army and state militia units. From August 1898 until President Theodore Roosevelt declared victory in July 1902, American forces fought three distinct conflicts.

The initial ground operation was a brief conflict against the Spanish colonial forces, considered at the time a near-peer foe (July–August 1898).<sup>18</sup> In terms of size and capabilities, the Spanish Navy was thought to be at least the equivalent of the US Navy, but had ships deployed worldwide. The Spanish Regular Army was approximately five times as large as the US Army and well-equipped at the beginning of the war. Although also deployed at the end of a long sea line of communication from Europe, Spanish ground forces initially outnumbered American forces in both the Caribbean and the Philippines. At least on paper, the Spanish appeared to be a potentially difficult opponent with a long colonial history of expeditionary sea and land power.<sup>19</sup>

The fight against the Spanish was followed by a second war, against Aguinaldo's Philippine Revolutionary Army (PRA). This large, conventionally organized Filipino force operated primarily on the main island of Luzon (September 1898–May 1900). The third conflict, following the defeat of the PRA and Aguinaldo's capture by US forces, evolved into a widespread guerrilla and terrorist struggle throughout the vast archipelago (June 1900–July 1902). Each of these conflict periods required the US Army to consolidate gains—to achieve goals first directed by President McKinley and then, following McKinley's assassination, to be carried on by his successor, President Roosevelt. Those goals included establishing civil government with significant indigenous participation and conducting military operations to defeat any opposing forces.<sup>20</sup>

The US Eighth Corps' leadership challenges, organization of its forces, and type and conduct of operations performed evolved significantly over time. When the US Army began its invasion and occupation of the Philippines at the turn of the century, the country was the secondary theater of a two-front global war against a declining, but still well-armed and equipped European power. In 1898, with war against Spain looming, the Army had less than 30,000 regulars; many were still deployed throughout

much of the American West in geographic departments consisting of numerous small posts. In October 1898, two months after the fall of Manila in which the 13th Minnesota Infantry regiment participated, elements of the 3rd US Infantry and 14th Minnesota (State Militia) regiments engaged in a minor action against Native Americans at Leech Lake, Minnesota.<sup>21</sup> In 1898, following decades of small unit pacification efforts in the West, the US Army was initially undermanned and unprepared for the large-scale conflict it was about to conduct in the Caribbean and the Pacific.

At its height, the 1899–1902 Philippine-American War, also known as the Philippine Insurrection or Philippine War, involved a major portion of the Army's senior leadership and required more than twice the number of forces that existed in the entire prewar regular Army.<sup>22</sup> As the US campaign shifted from fighting Spanish colonial forces to war against indigenous troops, the native population became increasingly hostile and provided significant support to anti-American forces. In addition to dealing with the growing problem in the Philippines, the Army still had to maintain significant forces in the Caribbean to consolidate its victory there.

Military historian Andrew J. Birtle noted, "Cuba was in shambles when Maj. Gen. John R. Brooke officially took control of the island from departing Spanish officials in January 1899."<sup>23</sup> Brooke inherited a country beset by problems caused by years of fighting and by the inefficient and ineffective Spanish government. He moved quickly to divide the island into geographic departments for civil-military administration, demobilize native revolutionary forces, and involve Cubans in a rebuilding program. During his year as military governor, with a troop strength of about 11,000, he methodically instituted law and order and began key aspects of nation-building, including roads, sewers, and schools. He was replaced by Maj. Gen. Leonard Wood, who over the next two years unsuccessfully tried to accelerate the effort to improve the lot of the Cuban people—handicapped by the fact that funding and troops were being redirected to the war in the Philippines. The US Army's role diminished in May 1902 when Wood was relieved and the independent Republic of Cuba was established.<sup>24</sup>

The US Army also faced competing demands to man the nation's newly expanded missions across the Pacific. Army forces were now stationed in Hawaii and became more involved in Asia, including operations to support Secretary of State John Hay's Open-Door Policy in China. The United States committed forces and provided a presence to underscore his call for "equal trading rights" for all the nations doing business in China.<sup>25</sup> In July 1898, before the US defeated the Spanish in the Philippines, Hay

dubbed the two-front Spanish-American conflict “a splendid little war.”<sup>26</sup> US forces that deployed to the Philippines as part of this wider splendid little war, however, were fully taxed by the conflict and America’s expanded role in the Pacific.

## **Conventional War Against Spain (May–August 1898)**

### *Eighth Corps and the Operational Environment in the Philippines*

In April 1898, as war against Spain appeared more likely, the Army mobilized poorly prepared, trained, and equipped state militia units from across the nation to supplement the less than thirty thousand regular Army troops. These units were formed into eight corps, each commanded by a major general. Seven of the corps with their subordinate regiments prepared for the conflict in the Caribbean at newly established southern bases, and advanced parties moved to Florida for embarkation.<sup>27</sup> The Eighth Corps was an anomaly with a distinctly different mission—organized specifically for the war against the Spanish in the Pacific Theater, with a mix of regular forces and militia regiments from several Western states. In May, the Eighth Corps gathered near San Francisco to organize, train, equip, and prepare for deployment to the Philippines to consolidate Commodore Dewey’s triumph.<sup>28</sup>

During this period, the nation’s attention was focused on land battles in Cuba and Puerto Rico, including the 1 July attack on San Juan Hill led by now-Col. Theodore Roosevelt and his “Rough Riders.” Meanwhile, the Eighth Corps commander, Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt, methodically prepared his forces to deploy across the Pacific to take Manila from the defending Spanish ground forces. Because of political infighting in Washington and war demands in the Caribbean, Major General Merritt did not receive clear instructions regarding the ultimate disposition of Manila, adjacent ports and facilities, and the rest of the Philippines once the Spanish were defeated.<sup>29</sup>

There were significant political differences between William McKinley’s Republican Party and rival Democrats led by William Jennings Bryan regarding imperialism and American overseas expansion. In addition to debating continued support of the war against Spain, politically influential leaders argued about the size, make-up, and missions of regular units, especially state militia forces. Secretary of War Russell A. Alger, Secretary of the Navy John D. Long, and other senior military leaders in Washington could not avoid the push and pull of domestic politics. Major General

Merritt, as well as Aguinaldo and his senior subordinates, kept a watchful on the American Capitol.<sup>30</sup>

Significant national strategic decisions were unclear: whether the military would remain in the Philippines, how the territory would be administered, how the war would be fought, and the size of US forces. Answers hinged on the vagaries of American domestic politics. Press coverage of the war was also a major issue. The American public closely followed the Army's successes, failures, and casualties on the ground. The Eighth Corps' initial orders to proceed to the Philippines and take Manila from the Spanish defenders were straightforward and clear. Merritt met with President McKinley on 12 May and was told to "complete the reduction of Spanish power" and provide order and security to the islands while in the possession of the United States."<sup>31</sup> Follow-on tasks—as well as details about the number, quality, and training of American troops—remained in constant flux. Dealing with Aguinaldo and his forces on the ground in the Philippines promised to be vexing given this lack of clear guidance.

The task of addressing the Aguinaldo-led indigenous forces fell to Commodore Dewey until the Eighth Corps advanced party arrived in late June 1898. Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Anderson was the first to arrive; like Dewey, he made no political or military promises to Aguinaldo.<sup>32</sup> Ultimately the land force commander, Major General Merritt, arrived with the rest of the corps units by 25 July. He ignored Aguinaldo and concentrated on planning the upcoming battle against the Spanish to take the fortress of Intramuros in Manila and its immediate surroundings.

### *Merritt and the Defeat of the Spanish (July 1898–August 1898)*

Major General Merritt's corps of about 8,500 soldiers—supported by Dewey's naval squadron in the harbor—was postured to attack positions held by 9,000 Spanish and 4,000 loyal native Philippine troops. Aguinaldo's army of 10,000 to 20,000 soldiers, spread thin in a wide perimeter around the city, was pushed away from a narrow strip of coastline by American forces immediately prior to the attack. This provided Major General Merritt the avenue of approach his forces needed along the bay to the south of the Spanish-defended walled fortress of Intramuros. The city's geography made the American attack easier as the northern and eastern approaches to the Spanish position available to Aguinaldo's forces were protected by the Pasig River (Rio Pasing).

This attack was a complicated and delicate diplomatic and military three-way contest from the outset. As negotiations with the Spanish began, Merritt's most difficult problem was to keep Aguinaldo's Philippine Re-



public and its army out of the fight and the follow-on negotiation of terms. In numbers alone, Aguinaldo's forces were estimated at least equal to the Spanish forces combined with their native Philippine auxiliary troops whose willingness to fight was suspect. How Aguinaldo and his forces would react once the battle joined was not known.

American negotiations with the Spanish military leadership resulted in a plan for a desultory, but honorable, show of defense. The agreement called for the fortress defenders to surrender to the Americans, who would protect the Spanish forces from retaliation by Aguinaldo's surrounding and hostile Philippine forces. The result of the battle with the Spanish forces, which began and ended on 13 August, was a foregone conclusion despite the similar sizes of the Spanish and American forces. The short fight was not completely bloodless due to a failure to pass along details of the preplanned surrender to all subordinate US troops involved in the attack. The single-day battle resulted in about 100 US casualties. However, Spanish forces, as previously agreed to, capitulated after the initial confusion, and American forces successfully took the Spanish base and surrounding area.<sup>33</sup>

The US 2nd Division commanded by Brig. Gen. Thomas M. Anderson—with two brigades led by Brig. Gen. Arthur MacArthur and Brig. Gen. Francis V. Greene—completed the attack without interference from Aguinaldo's forces. Historian Graham A. Cosmas described the outcome of the battle: "By the end of the day, Merritt's troops controlled the citadel and most of the suburbs. They faced outward in a semi-circle, their backs to the bay and surrounded by angry and confused Filipinos."<sup>34</sup> The fighting ended quickly, and Major General Merritt now faced the challenge of consolidating this victory over the Spanish and dealing with Aguinaldo.

On 14 August, President McKinley directed Major General Merritt to assume the duties of military governor, a position the senior US military officer in the islands would hold until 1902. The president's instructions, however, did not provide clarity on the ultimate disposition of Manila or the Philippines.<sup>35</sup> Major General Merritt was confronted with the dual tasks of consolidating gains following the victory over the Spanish and preparing for potential follow-on operations against Aguinaldo's forces. In a 12 May predeployment meeting, President McKinley had instructed Merritt to provide "order and security."<sup>36</sup> Now that the Spanish forces were militarily defeated, Merritt would immediately begin four nearly concurrent tasks to meet McKinley's charge to "protect the properties and persons of all people within the limits of Manila, and its environs."<sup>37</sup>

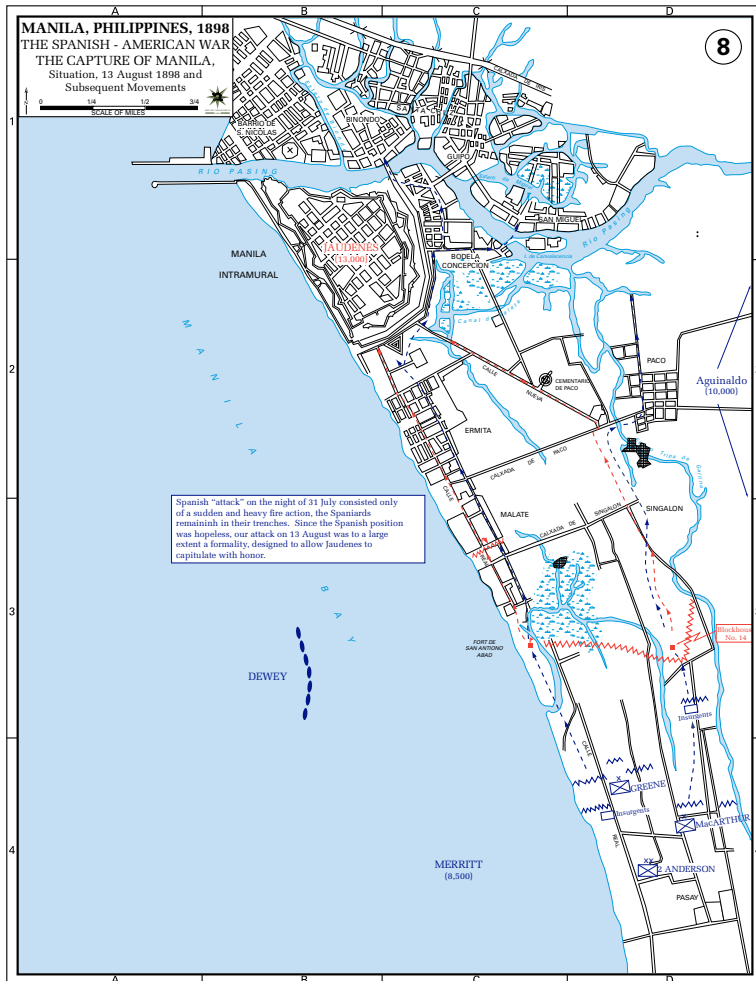


Figure 1.4. Map of the Capture of Manila, 1898. Courtesy of the US Military Academy at West Point Department of History.

The first task was to protect the defeated Spanish forces and their families. The second was to establish a defensive perimeter that would maintain separation from Aguinaldo's Philippine troops. The third was to care for, feed, and protect the people of Manila within the perimeter held by US forces. Finally, Merritt's forces had to be reorganized into combat formations and a provost guard with appropriate command and control elements that would support the first three tasks. The conflict now entered a new and prolonged ambiguous phase of operations. A war against Aguinaldo's forces surrounding Manila could not be dismissed; additional forces would be necessary to prosecute that conflict.

## Hybrid Warfare Against Indigenous Forces in the Philippines

### *Merritt: Transition to Consolidate Gains Following Spanish Defeat*

With the end of the fighting against the Spanish, the terms of service for state militia regiments were set to expire unless renegotiated. The size, composition, and arrival dates for follow-on forces had to be worked out between the War Department and the various state governments. These requirements required foreknowledge of the emerging political and military situation in the Philippines. The task of assessing the capability and will of the Philippine resistance fell in part to Maj. J. Franklin Bell, the intelligence officer on Merritt's staff. Bell established himself as a keen observer and daring officer in the early days of the occupation.<sup>38</sup> Merritt needed to determine Aguinaldo's intentions, but also those of President McKinley, then negotiate the very political process of procuring follow-on forces.

To consolidate the victory over the Spanish and prepare for potential future conflict, Merritt focused on Aguinaldo and his forces. Of immediate concern was the American military leadership's need to know if they could trust and use the Spanish governmental bureaucracy that was staffed by Filipinos. That said, knowing how Aguinaldo and his forces and the American Military Government would be supported or opposed by the people was crucial to future operations and the success of the mission. Merritt needed to know how the Philippine people would react to the American occupation and replacement of Spanish control. Complicating matters further, events in the Caribbean Theater had led to an armistice with the Spanish on 12 August, the day before the successful American attack on Manila. With both sides agreeing to negotiate a treaty to end the war, Major General Merritt was relieved of duties at the end of August and sent to Paris to participate in the deliberations. The consolidation of the victory in the Philippines now fell to a new commander.

### *Otis: A Period of Tense Peace (August 1898–February 1899)*

On 28 August, Maj. Gen. Ewell S. Otis, another American Civil War veteran who fought at Gettysburg and was breveted to brigadier general by the end of the war, replaced Major General Merritt as the senior American officer in the Philippines and the military governor.<sup>39</sup> A Harvard-trained attorney, he had commanded two departments in the American West after the Civil War. His background and record certainly indicated he was the right person to establish a functioning military government and rule of law. However, his civilian administration task was quickly complicated by Aguinaldo and his followers, who established a parallel revolutionary government near Bacoor in the Cavite area south of Manila. The problem

of fully consolidating the victory over the Spanish and preparing for Aguinaldo's reaction to the peace talks fell to Major General Otis.<sup>40</sup>

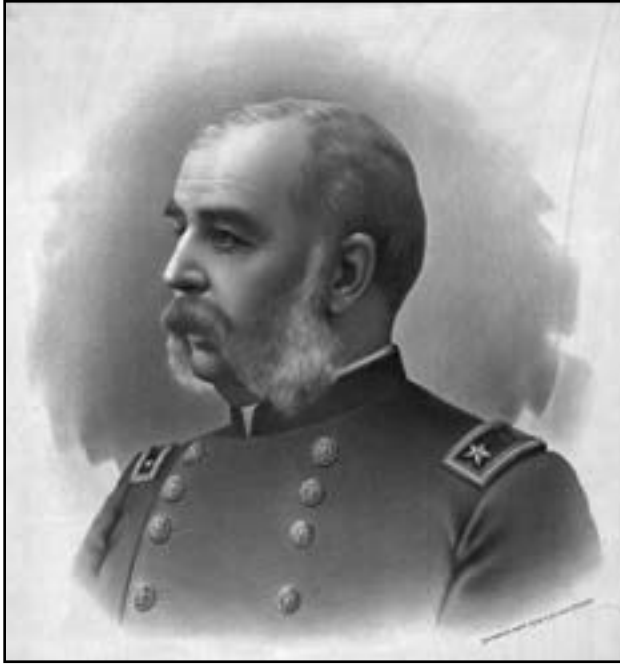


Figure 1.5. Maj. Gen. Ewell S. Otis. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

The complex situation called for patience, diplomacy, farsighted leadership, and disciplined soldiering. The deployed forces had to prepare to conduct follow-on combat operations as well as build and run a military government that would be an exemplar for good governance and administration. Otis was determined to avoid open conflict; he continued to negotiate with Aguinaldo while also overseeing the removal of Spanish forces, some of whom were not in Manila or on the island of Luzon.<sup>41</sup> On 13 September 1898, Otis sent an official letter to Aguinaldo asking him to remove his forces from Manila; further negotiations followed to resolve outstanding issues. Subsequently, Aguinaldo moved his headquarters and seat of government from Bacoar to Malolos.<sup>42</sup> This area twenty miles north of Manila was more defensible and a better location for recruiting, controlling, and supporting his revolutionary forces.

Major General Otis also had to strengthen Manila's defenses while not appearing belligerent or foreshadowing a permanent American presence.

With a relatively small force of about 10,000, and the impending loss of state militia regiments, he nevertheless had to prepare for follow-on combat operations. Full-scale war with the indigenous Philippine army could break out at any time. The Filipinos had determined leadership honed by years of conflict against Spanish occupiers. The treaty terms being deliberated in Paris or a unilateral decision in Washington could quickly provide the spark. From August 1898 through February 1899, US and Philippine forces surrounding Manila maintained an unsteady peace. Aguinaldo, who anticipated that independence was likely, continued to build a government and improve the manning, training, and equipping of his growing military forces near Manila and to the north at Malolos. In December 1898, Spain and the United States signed a treaty that ended the Spanish American War. More importantly, the treaty provided for the American acquisition of Spain's Pacific colony.

The United States agreed to purchase the Philippines for \$20 million. Before the end of the month, President McKinley proclaimed "benevolent assimilation" as the watchword for America's annexation of the Philippines—to be administered essentially as a colonial territory. He directed that US forces would assimilate the vast archipelago "within the absolute domain of military authority, which necessarily is and must remain supreme in the ceded territories."<sup>43</sup> The die appeared to be cast for an American-Filipino conflict. The cautious and conservative Major General Otis had no alternative but to prepare and reorient his forces for combat operations. However, the contentious debate in the US Senate cast doubt on treaty ratification, providing some hope for Otis and Aguinaldo that war could be avoided and a path to Philippine independence might emerge. This changed when the Senate ultimately ratified the treaty on 5 February, the day after a minor incident sparked a major battle with Philippine forces. The treaty was not scheduled to go into effect until 11 April 1899, at which time state militia unit service could be ended.<sup>44</sup> In anticipation, newly formed US Volunteer units began to deploy as Washington politicians became more aware of the outbreak of hostilities and scope of the looming problem in the Philippines.

### *Otis: The American-Filipino War (February 1899–May 1900)*

On the night of 4 February 1899, a minor incident at a forward guard post escalated into the long-anticipated battle for control of Manila. Major General Otis, who had been careful and diplomatic in dealing with Aguinaldo, could no longer avoid war. Otis's total strength, including supporting elements, was now more than 21,000. The force was divided into a

provost guard of about 3,000 to police the city and a combat force of about 11,000 organized into two divisions (1st Division under Brigadier General Anderson and 2nd Division under Brigadier General MacArthur), with separate brigades and regiments organized and deployed as required. Additional forces remained in Cavite and others were deployed to Iloilo City, Panay. The forces available in Manila now began a hard-fought six-week campaign against the Philippine Revolutionary Army.

In addition to preparing for a conventional fight against American forces, Aguinaldo also planned for supporting guerrilla operations within the American perimeter. During the Second Battle of Manila, the provost guard forces that had been organized to control the city dealt successfully with this irregular threat. The Manila campaign lasted from 4 February to 17 March 1899 and was quickly followed by aggressive action to pursue Aguinaldo's forces to his new capital twenty miles to the north. Military historian Brian M. Linn noted that on 17 March, "Otis reorganized the 8th Corps, breaking it into a defensive force for Manila and an offensive force to go after the Army of Liberation at Malolos."<sup>45</sup> While continuing to maintain peace and stability in and around Manila, the preponderance of US forces returned to conventional offensive combat operations.

US forces were challenged by the terrain, weather, disease, and an indigenous force that knew and used the geography and the population to their advantage. The effort to move into and control Luzon north of Manila was a long, difficult fight.<sup>46</sup> The Philippine Army, directed by Aguinaldo and commanded by Antonio Luna, included independently operating military leaders who controlled regional forces able to put conventionally armed and trained troops in the field to oppose the American effort. While still committed to conventional combat, this decentralization also provided the potential for widespread guerrilla operations.

Over the next nine months, Major General Otis directed and continuously prepared for and ordered separate brigade and division offensive operations from his headquarters in Manila. Despite successes on the battlefield on Luzon, US forces could not always maintain control of captured territory. Troops available and logistics were always limiting factors in maintaining critical lines of communication back to Manila and with garrisoned captured towns and villages. Although he did not have sufficient forces to simultaneously continue the offensive and quickly consolidate those gains on Luzon, Otis understood the need to deploy forces to Philippine Army strongholds on the islands to the south; this requirement further depleted his manpower and resources. Linn comment-

ed, "In the north, he [Otis] would seek a battle of annihilation, a campaign that would encircle Aguinaldo and his military forces and smash them decisively."<sup>47</sup> Otis was forced to simultaneously control occupied territory, continue the fight on Luzon, and plan and expand operations to the other islands.

This offensive included a multi-pronged attack to take and clear the area immediately north of Manila where Aguinaldo's forces were concentrated. Brigadier General MacArthur's division served as the main effort and included the 20th Kansas Volunteers led by Col. Frederick Funston. The offensive took nearly six months to capture the revolutionary capital at Malolos. The push then continued to the north to capture Aguinaldo and destroy formations that escaped American pressure or occupied more defensible terrain. The US forces conducted nine formally recognized campaigns in the archipelago between February and November 1899, including operations outside of Luzon.<sup>48</sup>

On 24 November 1899, with these campaigns largely complete, Otis offered the following appraisal of the situation to the War Department in Washington: "The Philippine Republic had collapsed, many of its officials were prisoners, and its army was broken."<sup>49</sup> The conventional fight was over and though Aguinaldo's conventional forces had been defeated, scattered forces capable of guerrilla warfare remained on Luzon and the islands to the south. Otis moved to again reorganize the forces in the Philippines, this time into departments and districts, as had been done in the American West. This change prepared American forces to deal with guerrilla war more effectively and further consolidate control throughout the archipelago.

Remnants of Aguinaldo's forces were hanging on but were no longer manned and equipped well enough to stand conventionally against US Army forces. More ominous for Aguinaldo, a new type of American Army formation was joining the fight as some state militia units returned to the United States to muster out. In late spring and early summer 1899, large numbers of new US Volunteer regiments formed, equipped, trained, and deployed to the Philippines as replacement units.<sup>50</sup> Although sufficient manpower to continue offensive operations and conduct stability operations was still a problem, American units were now better able to replace disease and battle losses. With what appeared to be an improving military situation emerging, Maj. Gen. Arthur MacArthur relieved Otis as the force commander and military governor of the Philippines.

## US Forces Campaigns 4 February 1899–9 February 1900

Manila	4 February–17 March 1899
Iloilo (Panay)	8–12 February 1899
Malolos	24 March–16 August 1899
Laguna de Bay (south of Manila)	8–17 April 1899
San Isidro 1	21 April–30 May 1899
Zapote River	13 June 1899
Cavite 1 (south of Manila)	7–13 October 1899
San Isidro 2	15 October–19 November 1899
Tarlac	5–20 November 1899
San Fabian	6–19 November 1899
Cavite 2 (south of Manila)	4 January–9 February 1900

Figure 1.6. List of US Campaigns in the Philippines, 1899 and 1900. Created by Army University Press.

## Guerrilla War in the Philippines

### *MacArthur: Transition to Guerrilla War (May 1900–July 1901)*

Back in Washington, the growing popular support for the war convinced Congress to provide more troops to the fight in the Philippines. MacArthur used the summer to build up and prepare for operations against the weakened remnants of Aguinaldo's conventional force and emerging guerrilla formations. He inherited the task of consolidating military and governmental administrative gains achieved under Otis. Manila and the surrounding area were secure, a functioning Filipino bureaucracy was in-



creasingly effective and spreading, and outlying cities were now the focus. Additionally, US troops were mopping up forces remaining in the field.<sup>51</sup> There were multiple reasons for the defeat of Aguinaldo's conventional forces, not the least of which was the US Army's better equipment and ability to adapt and improvise. That ability was about to be further tested. As Linn noted, "On 13 November 1899, Aguinaldo decreed that guerrilla war would now be the strategy."<sup>52</sup> His forces had slowly moved to this form of warfare as they continued to lose the conventional fight. By summer 1900, MacArthur faced new Philippine Army tactics and was forced to move to manpower-intensive counter-guerrilla warfare just as he was being ordered to provide forces for another contingency. The decision decreased the available combat power in the Philippines and allowed the guerilla forces to grow in size nearly unabated.

As the instability in the Philippines intensified in summer 1900, US forces deployed from the West Coast as well as the Philippines to support the international China Relief Expedition against the Boxer Rebellion and the Imperial forces of the Qing Dynasty. Under the leadership of Brig. Gen. Adna Chaffee, who would replace MacArthur as the Philippines force commander and military governor, elements of the 9th, 14th, and 15th Infantry regiments—with accompanying cavalry, artillery, and support formations—took part in the joint and multinational force rescue of the foreign legations in Beijing. The post-Boxer Rebellion settlement tasked US Army forces with occupying Tianjin to help maintain a safe passage corridor to the sea and protect American citizens in China, a task that lasted for decades.<sup>53</sup>

Further intermittent instability in China required reinforcements to be sent from the Philippines as the security situation dictated. Eventually in 1912 following the Chinese



Figure 1.7. Brig. Gen. Adna Chaffee. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

Revolution of 1911, the 15th Infantry Regiment that had served in the Philippines off and on from 1900 through 1907 was permanently stationed in Tianjin.<sup>54</sup> Strategically, the US Army was increasingly focused on expanding national security objectives across the Pacific Theater. This increased forward military presence had inexorably gained momentum with America's 1867 purchase of Alaska after the end of the Civil War and reached a peak at the end of the nineteenth century with operations in China and the Philippines. In summer 1900, the character of the war in the Philippines had changed, but the conflict was far from over.

Guerrilla militias that formed during the pivot to China could operate independently or be combined for larger operations. They were adept at hiding in towns and villages and conducting widely dispersed operations in smaller elements at night. They could disappear in villages or live in the hinterland, collect intelligence directly or indirectly through villagers, and conduct hit-and-run attacks, especially on small patrols or isolated supply elements along lines of communication. The idea was to harass and frustrate US soldiers to cause them to overreact. The guerrillas also wanted to threaten or assassinate townsfolk or leaders who worked with or supported the Americans. Getting traditional weapons was a major problem for the guerrillas; instead, they used unconventional weapons such as "traps and snares" to injure and maim. The bolo—a long, curved knife—became a trademark of their surprise, close-in ambushes.

To be successful against these tactics, US forces improvised and significantly changed their organization and deployment patterns. After completing major campaigns in late 1899, American units began to deploy in small battalion- and company-sized garrisons to protect towns and cities. As areas became secure, smaller detachments undertook nation-building projects such as teaching school, assisting in local governance, and supporting businesses. Over the next sixteen months, these small outposts increased in number from about 50 to more than 600.<sup>55</sup> This put pressure on the US Navy to provide logistical support, using rapid deployment of reinforcements and mobile fires capabilities when possible.

While the US Navy provided fires support assets throughout the archipelago, the US Army acquired and manned riverine gunboats. Both Army and Navy vessels were used to support amphibious operations and coastal area land offensives, as well as deployed small occupation elements. In addition, the US Navy patrolled sea lanes and blockaded ports to minimize foreign arms acquisition. Sailors also monitored and regulated commerce to reduce guerrilla opportunities to fund military and purchase stores. This severely limited Aguinaldo's ability to maintain his conventional forces

and allowed MacArthur to isolate guerrilla bands, not only from arms but also from income sources. Protecting economic assets and supporting local businesses assisted in consolidating political gains in the counterinsurgency fight across the countryside. Both the US Navy and Army proved very adaptable and able to improvise, critical Consolidation of Gains skills that helped separate the guerrilla forces from their popular support base.<sup>56</sup>

One adaptation that grew over time was the use of friendly native forces. While initially reticent to arm indigenous forces, the US Army identified the value of this approach over time. The Macabebe Scouts, Philippine Scouts, and Philippine Constabulary all grew from limited beginnings to make significant contributions during the MacArthur period. Assisted by American advisors or leadership, these units provided tactical intelligence, worked with native populations, and provided local guides for combat patrols and operations. In addition to innovative uses of native troops, US units improvised with mounted infantry and expanded their use of engineer and signal units to support operations over a wide area.

Because of the lack of roads and expanding requirement to support multiple locations in the field over extended periods, the US Army adopted tailored logistical solutions such as using existing railroads; employing engineers to improve roads, trails, and river crossings; and procuring and extensively using of native animals including carabao, mules, and horses for transport and reconnaissance. While the Army's two years of fighting in the Philippines provided valuable lessons, the situation on the ground was again changing. A more difficult war against guerrillas—supported by the native population—required new tactics and methods.

As MacArthur took command, the destruction of Aguinaldo's conventional army was close at hand. Defeating the Philippine guerilla forces, however, would require removing popular support for intelligence, recruitment, and sustainment. MacArthur issued several General Orders to facilitate civilian control and clarify policies regarding treatment of the indigenous population. MacArthur's General Orders No. 100 were viewed as a more aggressive strategy that authorized harsher measures against both the guerrillas and population portions that supported them. What reportedly followed was widespread use of the "water cure," summary executions, destruction of private property, and population control measures. This supported General Bell's view that "a short and severe war" was better than "a benevolent war indefinitely prolonged."<sup>57</sup> The policy of "attraction" (carrots) engendered by President McKinley's call for benevolent assimilation was now paired with "chastisement" (sticks) for the campaign against the guerrillas.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, a new and more powerful civilian body supported US Army operations. In June 1900, future US President William Howard Taft took charge of a group of civilian administrators and established the 2nd Philippine Commission. Still the senior American representative in the Philippines, MacArthur now had a powerful, politically connected, civilian counterpart—Taft, with whom he often “buted heads.”<sup>59</sup> While the situation was more conducive to building civil government, the conflict was not over. MacArthur transitioned the Army to smaller-scale offensives and counter-guerilla operations not only on Luzon—which maintained about 80 percent of the forces—but throughout the archipelago.

An officer deployed to one of the outlying islands remarked that MacArthur’s strategy remained to crush the rebellion on Luzon and “then it would cease of itself on the others.”<sup>60</sup> Ongoing operations included the continued pursuit of Aguinaldo, who was still at large on Luzon. On 23 March 1901, Colonel Funston with a small team of Americans and Macabebe Scouts used a ruse to get into Aguinaldo’s camp. The US soldiers captured Aguinaldo near the coast in east-central Luzon and quickly transported him on the USS *Vicksburg* back to Manila. The capture of the charismatic and competent liberation movement leader did not end the guerrilla war but did remove its driving force.<sup>61</sup> In terms of Consolidation of Gains, there was no longer a viable alternative to American governance



Figure 1.8. Emilio Aguinaldo boarding the USS *Vicksburg*. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

in the Philippines. In April, Aguinaldo issued a statement accepting American sovereignty and urged his followers to comply.<sup>62</sup> Within two months, MacArthur was relieved and replaced by another veteran of the Civil War and the Native American pacification.<sup>63</sup>

*Chaffee: Guerrilla War, Victory Declaration (July 1901–July 1902)*

The task of the final Consolidation of Gains in the Philippines fell to Maj. Gen. Adna Chaffee. A year earlier, Chaffee had led American forces in the China Relief Expedition during the Boxer Rebellion. In July 1901, he took command of the nearly 70,000-man force conducting operations against small guerrilla bands throughout the Philippine archipelago. The Army was now organized into departments and districts and under the overall control of American civilian authorities. At this point, more than 500 company- and platoon-sized units were deployed to continue counter-guerrilla operations and secure small cities and towns throughout the area of operations.<sup>64</sup> The war in the Philippines had entered a new phase, with only three areas where significant fighting remained: southern Luzon, Cebu, and the island of Samar.

September 1901 events in Washington and on the island of Samar influenced Chaffee's command and the US Army's anti-guerrilla efforts in the Philippines. On 6 September 1901, President McKinley was assassinated and succeeded by Vice President Theodore Roosevelt. Three weeks later, bolo-wielding *insurrectos* attacked the C Company, 9th Infantry outpost in the town of Balangiga on the island of Samar, killing forty-eight of the approximately seventy US soldiers. One scholar described the defeat as the "worst setback for US forces in the entire war."<sup>65</sup> American forces reacted swiftly and with a vengeance, razing the town. The 6th Separate Brigade was sent to the island and successfully crushed the guerrillas. Military historian Linn noted that between 10 October and 31 December 1901, 6th Separate Brigade soldiers and sailors commanded by Brig. Gen. Jacob H. Smith "killed or captured 759 *insurrectos* and 587 *carabao* [a domestic water buffalo], and destroyed tons of rice, 1,662 houses, and 226 boats."<sup>66</sup> However, these successes came at a significant cost to how the effort was viewed at the time, and later.

Unfortunately, the Samar situation became a metaphor for the entire war in the Philippines. Brigade Commander Smith infamously discussed his plans to turn the island into a "howling wilderness" and kill all males over ten years of age.<sup>67</sup> While Smith did not follow through on his threats, "Samar in late 1901 and early 1902 was marked by vicious brutality in too many instances."<sup>68</sup> The now-civilian governor general, William Howard

Taft, ordered Chaffee to deal with the problem; Chaffee personally visited Samar to talk with Smith. By summer, Samar's local insurgent leader had surrendered, and guerrilla activity on the island ceased. While not always benevolent, US Army forces in the Philippines adapted, innovated, and successfully brought the newly acquired colony under control as Washington had directed.<sup>69</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The challenges of Consolidation of Gains operations are complex, inherently political, and often enduring; they call for commanders and forces to be highly adaptable. Over the four years of the Philippine conflict, the military's missions ranged from large-scale combat against a near-peer opponent to hybrid conflict with a committed native force backed by the population and then, finally, to guerrilla war that required extensive pacification efforts. The four senior Army leaders during this period dealt with vagaries of political direction, changes in enemy strategies and modes of operation, and wide variations in resources and manpower availability. Planning for, organizing, and conducting operations to consolidate gains were central to successfully furthering America's interests in the Pacific Theater.

In the Philippines from 1898 to 1902, the US Army successfully fought three different conflicts that all demanded different organizations, tactics, and activities to consolidate battlefield gains. Factors such as the enemies encountered; cultural, social, and operational environments; and small-unit nature of much of the war proved a major test for the "army of empire," as Graham described the US Army emerging at the dawn of the twentieth century.<sup>70</sup> To accomplish the assigned tasks, the soldiers moved through difficult urban and jungle terrain to attack a fierce and well-dug-in enemy that could also melt away. They faced unexpected attacks by fanatics with bolos, often clandestinely supported by the local population. These actions occurred after soldiers had conducted months of uneventful community service, dangerous and monotonous patrols, and activities to protect and gain the confidence of people known to be in league with the enemy.

Many of the senior commanders serving in the Philippines had fought in the American Civil War, assisted with post-war reconstruction, and helped with the pursuit of manifest destiny as the nation expanded west. They incorporated hard-learned lessons, good and bad, in operations in the Philippines. Military historian Andrew J. Birtle wrote, "Virtually every officer in the Army served in either Cuba, Puerto Rico, or the Philippines between 1898 and 1902, and the experience they gained in nation-building, pacification, and, in the case of the Philippines, counterguerrilla war-

fare, became the models on which the Army would base its approach to these issues for the next forty years.”<sup>71</sup> The soldiers who participated were regular Army, state militias, and newly formed national volunteer units. Under the leadership of Elihu Root as Secretary of the Army from 1899 to 1905, lessons on training, organizing, and fighting in the Philippines led to significant reforms in how America’s future forces would be formed.<sup>72</sup>

These leaders and soldiers persevered over four long years to consolidate gains against both Spanish and Filipino foes and on 4 July 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt declared victory. The US Army had brought the war in the Philippines to a successful and acceptable conclusion using a “carrots and sticks” approach of pacification and combat operations. This approach replaced benevolent assimilation, which did not work. Over the next several years, low-level military operations continued throughout the archipelago, but the main and most populous island of Luzon was pacified and generally stable.

The nearly fifty years of American occupation and colonization of the Philippines (1898 to 1946) remain a controversial chapter in US Army history. In his 1912 book, Col. James H. Blount—a lawyer who served in both Cuba and the Philippines, first as an officer in a US Volunteer regiment and then as district judge from 1899 to 1905—pointed out the moral failings of the US effort in the Philippines. Blount, using the paternalistic idiom of this period, warned his fellow Americans as well as future officers and soldiers who might attempt to consolidate gains in a similar environment:

The task here undertaken is to make audible to a great free nation the voice of a weaker subject people who passionately and rightly long to be free, but whose longings have been systematically denied for the last fourteen years, sometimes ignorantly, sometimes viciously, and always cruelly, on the wholly erroneous idea that where the end is benevolent, it justifies the means, regardless of the means necessary to that end.<sup>73</sup>

This chapter serves not only as a historical case to better understand Operations to Consolidate Gains, but also provides the background on America’s acquisition and “benevolent assimilation” of this strategically located territory. The US effort to consolidate gains in this critical territorial outpost began with the defeat of the Spanish colonial occupiers and ended with the successful pacification of its indigenous defenders. Nearly fifty years after its acquisition as a colony, the Commonwealth of the Philippines was granted independence in 1946.<sup>74</sup> The Republic of the Philippines remains a significant US treaty ally in the US Indo-Pacific command—

dubbed America’s “priority theater” by the 1 June 2019 *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report*.<sup>75</sup> Today, US forces continue to frequently deploy to the Philippines and train with the host nation’s armed forces in furtherance of US national interests.

**Chronology of Major Events**

31 December 1897	Emilio Aguinaldo exiled to Hong Kong.
15 February 1898	The USS <i>Maine</i> sinks in the harbor in Havana, Cuba.
20 April 1898	President William McKinley signs the Joint Resolution for war with Spain.
1 May 1898	The Battle of Manila Bay (Spanish fleet destroyed).
1 July 1898	Col. Teddy Roosevelt and the Roughriders attack San Juan Hill, Cuba.
25 July 1898	The Eighth Corps under Maj. Gen. Wesley Merritt deploys to the Philippines.
12 August 1898	Armistice signed ending the fighting between Spain and America.
13 August 1898	1st Battle of Manila (Spanish forces surrender).
10 December 1898	Treaty signed ending the war and purchase of the Philippines from Spain.
4 February 1899	2nd Battle of Manila (Americans defeat Philippine forces).
23 March 1901	Aguinaldo captured.
20 May 1902	Republic of Cuba granted independence.
4 July 1902	President Theodore Roosevelt declares victory in the Philippines.
4 July 1946	Republic of the Philippines granted independence.

Figure 1.9. Chronology of Major Events. Created by Army University Press.



## Notes

1. Irving Howe, ed., *The Portable Kipling* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 602.
2. Wayne E. Lee et al., *The Other Face of Battle: America's Forgotten Wars and the Experience of Combat* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 126.
3. Operations to Consolidate Gains doctrine is outlined in both Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: 2017) and Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: 2019).
4. Lee et al., *The Other Face of Battle*, 77.
5. Quentin W. Schillare, *Fort Leavenworth: The People Behind the Names* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2015), chap. 2.
6. James Yarrison, "The U.S. Army in the Root Reform Era, 1899–1917" (information paper, US Army Center of Military History), accessed 15 October 2020, <https://history.army.mil/documents/1901/Root-Ovr.htm>.
7. Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899–1902* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 39.
8. The Stability Operations Doctrine is outlined in Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-07, *Stability* (Washington, DC: 2019). The "Goals" and "Fundamentals" of Stability Operations are discussed in Chapter 1.
9. James H. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines, 1898–1912* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1912), 40. Colonel Blount served in the Philippines from 1899 to 1905 as an officer in a volunteer regiment and as a district judge. His book strongly denounced the American role in the Philippines. He argued the people of the country not only wanted independence but were more than capable of self-rule.
10. "General Orders No. 100: The Lieber Code," Yale Law School, accessed 28 February 2021, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th\\_century/lieber.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/lieber.asp).
11. John F. Witt, *Lincoln's Code: The Laws of War in American History* (New York: First Free Press, 2013), 358.
12. Witt, 358.
13. Witt, 359.
14. David J. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire: The Philippine-American War, 1899–1902* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 34–37.
15. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*. The first chapter of this contemporary account of the American occupation described Aguinaldo's meetings with American diplomats in Singapore and Hong Kong.
16. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 23.
17. Linn, 17 and Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, 73. In Chapter IV, Blount described the operational situation and the relationship between Major General Merritt and Aguinaldo and the establishment of control by the US Army.
18. Graham A. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1971), 1.

19. Cosmas, 72–82; and “The Spanish-American War of 1898,” *Navy Encyclopedia*, accessed 12 September 2021, <https://naval-encyclopedia.com/industrial-era/the-war-of-1898.php>.

20. Department of the Army, ADP 3-0, 3-21. Extract: The Army strategic role of consolidate gains sets conditions for enduring political and strategic outcomes to military operations. Army forces provide most of the capabilities the Joint Forces Command (JFC) requires to consolidate gains at scale during a campaign. Army and unified action partner forces exploit tactical and operational success for the JFC as they consolidate gains to set security conditions for the desired political end state. Activities to consolidate gains are an integral part of winning across the competition continuum and range of military operations, and they require consideration through all phases of an operation.

21. Andrew J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1860–1941* (New York: St. John’s Press, 2016), 99.

22. Linn, *The Philippine War*, x.

23. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, 104.

24. Birtle, 105–6.

25. Richard O’Connor, *The Spirit Soldiers: An Historical Analysis of the Boxer Rebellion* (New York: Putnam & Sons, 1973), 27.

26. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 245.

27. Cosmas, 131–38.

28. Cosmas, 118–21.

29. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 5.

30. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, 26–27.

31. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 5.

32. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, 46–66. Chapter 3 of this book outlines how Dewey and Anderson dealt with Aguinaldo prior to Major General Merritt’s arrival.

33. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 23–25.

34. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 242.

35. Cosmas, 120–21.

36. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 26. This was part of the mission statement Major General Merritt received from the War Department on 17 August 1898.

37. Linn.

38. Linn, 23, and Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, 5.

39. Maj. Gen. Elwell Stephen Otis biography, Arlington National Cemetery, last accessed 22 October 2020, <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/esotis.htm>.

40. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, 95.

41. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 37–41. Spanish General Diego de los Rios maintained forces in Iloilo City on the island of Panay. Since only the forces in Manila had surrendered and a peace treaty had not been signed, US forces were sent to Panay to resolve the problem.

42. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, 94–99.

43. Blount, 147–50.

44. Blount, 224.
45. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 95.
46. Linn, 58. Chapter 3 “The Battle of Manila” provides details of this campaign.
47. Linn, 88.
48. “Philippine Insurrection Campaigns,” US Army Center of Military History, last accessed 24 October 2020, [https://history.army.mil/html/reference/army\\_flag/pi.html](https://history.army.mil/html/reference/army_flag/pi.html).
49. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 159.
50. Linn, 90.
51. Linn, 160–61.
52. Linn, 187.
53. Alfred E. Cornebise, *The United States Army in China, 1900–1938* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2015), 35. In addition to the Cornebise history, Brig. Gen. A. S. Daggett published a detailed account of the US Army’s role in 1903, which was reprinted by Battery Press in Nashville in 1997.
54. Cornebise, 71.
55. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 199. A discussion of guerrilla organization and tactics begins on page 189: “The number of garrisons expanded rapidly from 53 on 1 November 1899 to 413 on 1 October 1900 then to 502 in March 1901 to 639 by the end of that year.”
56. Linn, 130–32.
57. Witt, *Lincoln’s Code*, 358.
58. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 211–17.
59. Max Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 114. Chapter 5 is titled “Attraction” and “Chastisement” The Philippine War, 1899–1902. On pages 114–16, Boot outlined MacArthur’s approach as well as his relationship with Taft.
60. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 255.
61. Linn, 274–75.
62. Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace*, 119.
63. “Lieutenant General Adna Romanza Chaffee,” The Army Historical Foundation, last accessed 26 March 2020, <https://armyhistory.org/lieutenant-general-adna-romanza-chaffee/>.
64. Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). 39.
65. Boot, *Savage Wars of Peace*, 119.
66. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 312–13.
67. Silbey, *A War of Frontier and Empire*, 193–95.
68. Silbey, 196.
69. Silbey, 196.
70. Cosmas, *An Army for Empire*, 314. The book title is *An Army for Empire*, which is also the title of chapter 9.
71. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine*, 100.

72. Yarrison, "The U.S. Army in the Root Reform Era."
73. Blount, *The American Occupation of the Philippines*, i.
74. Linn, *The Philippine War*, 39.
75. Department of Defense, *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2019), i.

## Chapter 2

### Securing the *Aufmarsch*: German Consolidation of Gains during the August 1914 Belgium Invasion

Lt. Col. William C. Baker

In a rapidly evolving operational situation, the necessary allocation of resources can change dramatically. Enemy formations may withdraw into fortified positions or evacuate indefensible positions. These decisions can lead to a widening problem in rear areas after enemy forces are isolated or bypassed.<sup>1</sup> The Imperial German Army's invasion and occupation of Belgium in August 1914 highlights the complex challenges of simultaneously waging large-scale warfare and minimizing its impact on logistical imperatives. Over the course of the month, German commanders struggled with maintaining tempo while minimizing the risk from isolated Belgian forces. They faced increasing demands from enemy and environmental factors as they consolidated initial gains in Belgium.

Conditions in Belgium forced the German army to balance the need to maintain momentum with the requirement to consolidate control of captured territory. This chapter will assess German actions as the armies transitioned from combat to stability operations. The army's rapid advance across Belgium and into France constituted the decisive operation. As the invasion progressed, however, tasks in the rear increased, requiring commanders to balance momentum and consolidation. Activities in Belgium during the initial weeks included siege operations, isolation of the Belgian army, and support for military governance. These varied operations required Helmut von Moltke "the Younger" and his subordinate German army commanders to reassess priorities throughout the month.

To analyze German decisions, it is necessary to understand the operational history without minimizing the criminality of the invasion. One hundred years after the events in Belgium, the German army's conduct remains highly controversial. Dubbed the "Rape of Belgium" by British politicians and the international press, the German occupation included the widespread killing of non-combatants, destruction of property, and annexation of the kingdom. An estimated 6,500 Belgian civilians died in the first month, many in extra-judicial executions. German officials systematically dismantled the Belgian economy in the months following the occupation.<sup>2</sup> The invasion also escalated the war, bringing the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to the continent and upsetting the rigid calculations required for a quick victory against France.<sup>3</sup> Consolidation of Gains in

Belgium, despite claims of military necessity, also helped turn the international community against the German Empire.

### **Planning For Belgium**

Strategic imperatives informed the German plan to invade Belgium. During the twenty years after Germany's 1871 unification, the German General Staff expected to fight future wars on the defensive, protecting the new empire and its growing economic power. Unification through successive wars caused considerable tensions with Russia, France, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After Wilhelm II rejected Otto von Bismarck's diplomatic bulwark in the 1890s, France and Russia entertained various ways to curb German aggrandizements. Through diplomatic dialogue and economic exchange, the powers on either side of Germany began to drift toward a formal agreement. The kaiser further eroded Germany's international standing with his grandiose vision for a global empire. Wilhelm's designs for colonial expansion through naval power prompted Great Britain to consider cooperating with France and Russia.<sup>4</sup> Through ham-fisted diplomacy and bellicose rhetoric, German leaders manifested their geopolitical encirclement.

In response, German planners began to entertain military force as a solution to their diplomatic failures. Starting in 1897, Chief of the General Staff Count Alfred von Schlieffen contemplated an offensive war in the west to break up a growing Franco-Russian partnership and created an operational framework to mount that type of operation. Since 1914, there has been considerable debate among historians on how much of a "Schlieffen Plan" truly existed. In early iterations, Schlieffen preferred to fight a defensive war, counterattacking French armies as they crossed the frontier as opposed to violating Belgium and Luxembourg neutrality. Because of international guarantees of Belgian sovereignty, a German offensive threatened to widen any conflict. Schlieffen's wariness of Belgium did not last long. Terence Zuber convincingly argued that in consecutive iterations of German war plans between 1897 and 1905, significant changes increasingly considered Belgium as a corridor for advancing German armies.<sup>5</sup>

When Moltke assumed duties as chief of the General Staff in 1906, he adjusted Schlieffen's vision into a new concept titled *Aufmarsch II West*. This maneuver plan hinged on sending forces through Belgium to invade France in the first six weeks of war. The overall objective was to destroy the French army, and by extension, any allied forces supporting the French.<sup>6</sup> As Moltke and other senior German officials recognized, mobilization of French and Russian armies represented an existential threat to the survival

of the German Empire.<sup>7</sup> To combat the threat of Allied mobilization on two fronts, Germany planned to rapidly defeat the French army in order to break the encirclement. Accordingly, Moltke considered a sequential war plan to strike the French and shift forces rapidly to defeat the Russians. Because of distance and the perceived backwardness of Russian military preparation, the *Generalstab* viewed a sequential war plan and invasion through Belgium as an acceptable risk.<sup>8</sup>

The new plan required speed, aggression, and ruthlessness to redeploy forces across Europe via railway. Any unanticipated delay in the operational timeline could jeopardize the survival of the German Empire. Schlieffen remarked that if Germany respected Luxembourg's and Belgium's neutrality, "France will not show the same consideration, but will immediately attack."<sup>9</sup> Over the decade prior to 1914, German planners had recognized the violation of Belgian neutrality as a military necessity.<sup>10</sup> Devoid of broader political and diplomatic consequences, Belgium offered the most logical invasion route to rapidly defeat France in a two-front war.

While German army planners became committed to an offensive war, strategic objectives beyond military success remained nebulous. Kaiser Wilhelm II's inner circle had no overarching German "grand strategy" other than the operational defeat of the French and Russian armies. German leaders intended to use their army to break the encirclement in a lightning campaign, but Moltke and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg lacked a comprehensive plan to do anything beyond destroying enemy forces. For example, Bethmann-Hollweg drafted his "*Septemberprogramm*" for the economic reorganization of Europe five weeks after the invasion of Belgium; the plan was to create a political outcome that would justify military action. As a result, the German army entered Belgium on 4 August with an operational plan, but lacking any overarching political and economic goals to drive organization and tasks.<sup>11</sup> An invasion force with no defined end state other than to destroy enemy armies placed the Belgian population and infrastructure at grave risk.

Fully fixated on the maneuver plan, Moltke recognized the need to leverage lower-tier troops to solve operational problems as the campaign progressed, including the consolidation of Belgian territory. Like most European powers, the German government acknowledged the need for a deep pool of trained military-age personnel to meet enemy mobilization estimates. Honed in the days following the Prussian-era *Krümpfer* System of the Napoleonic wars, German Empire reserve forces used a complex, tiered system based on age, training, and several other factors. The

state selected able-bodied men to serve two years in the active army, then five years in the reserves. After the reserves, soldiers transitioned to the *Landwehr* (a term most closely translated as home guard) for eleven years. *Landsturm* units consisted of underage boys between the ages of 17 and 20 and trained men between the ages of 39 and 45. Finally, the German government established the *Ersatz* (Substitute) system to organize men who did not qualify for military service due to family obligations or health concerns.<sup>12</sup> Once war broke out, the state employed the system to generate the maximum number of troops to match the much-greater French and Russian resources. Of the 3.8 million German soldiers mobilized in July 1914, 82 percent marched to war with the status of “reservist.”<sup>13</sup> German planners relied on these four echelons of forces to provide replacements and conduct consolidation tasks.

To maintain momentum, consecutive offensive war plans from the 1880s through the 1910s hinged on maximizing combat power in active units. German organizational planners incorporated reserve and *Landwehr* divisions into the active armies to support the occupation of fortifications and security of communications lines, as well as policing duties.<sup>14</sup> This was not simply a product of mobilizing as many German troops as possible to maximize strategic depth. Twentieth-century European armies required reserve units at the tactical and operational level. Schlieffen himself wrote in 1909 that German army planners needed to incorporate second- and third-echelon formations into comprehensive planning. Success in modern warfare required strong forces oriented in every direction. Schlieffen contended that “the stronger forces that can be brought up with that objective [securing the army’s front, flank, and rear], the more decisive the attack will be.”<sup>15</sup> The German army clearly expected to maximize its active units at the front while relying on reserve echelons to control captured territory.

While they possessed the resources to overwhelm the Belgian army, German planners hoped that combat might not be necessary. One major German planning assumption before the war was that the Belgian government would not resist a German invasion; however, there was very little evidence to support such hubris. Caught between France and the newly formed German Empire, the Belgian government fiercely defended its independence throughout the nineteenth century. In 1830, the Belgian population staged a revolution then broke away from the Netherlands the following year. Europe’s major powers confirmed the status of an independent Belgium, making the new kingdom a buffer between Prussia and France. Although both respected Belgian neutrality during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 to 1871, Belgium mobilized its army to defend



its borders. Auguste Beernaert, the Belgian premier at the close of the nineteenth century, commented that in any European war, his country was destined to become “a barrier or a battlefield.”<sup>16</sup> Belgian acquiescence to an invasion proved to be one of many inaccurate assumptions that plagued German war planning in the summer of 1914.

**Belgian Military Geography**

If Belgium did resist, the country’s geography would present a complex problem for Moltke and his commanders. Kaiser Wilhelm deemed Dutch neutrality sacred, desiring to retain access to overseas trade if the Royal Navy intervened in the conflict. Additionally, Wilhelm’s respect for Dutch borders eliminated an opportunity to widen the advance through Maastricht.<sup>17</sup> As a result, the maneuver corridor for invading Belgium remained precariously small—between the Dutch frontier and the northern edge of the Ardennes Forest. To complicate the plan, fortress complexes around Liège and Namur covered the most direct route between German and French frontiers. While rail networks covered much of Western Europe by 1914, the region between Aachen and Luxembourg lacked significant rail junctions, further limiting options to concentrate troops and logistics. Control of the rail network connecting Aachen-Liège-Namur allowed rapid movement of troops and supplies to continue the attack into French territory. With Liège in German hands, two German armies could maneuver on opposite sides of the Meuse River. Northern forces could sweep through the center of the country on flat terrain and wide roads. Southern forces could then focus on reducing defenses along the Meuse

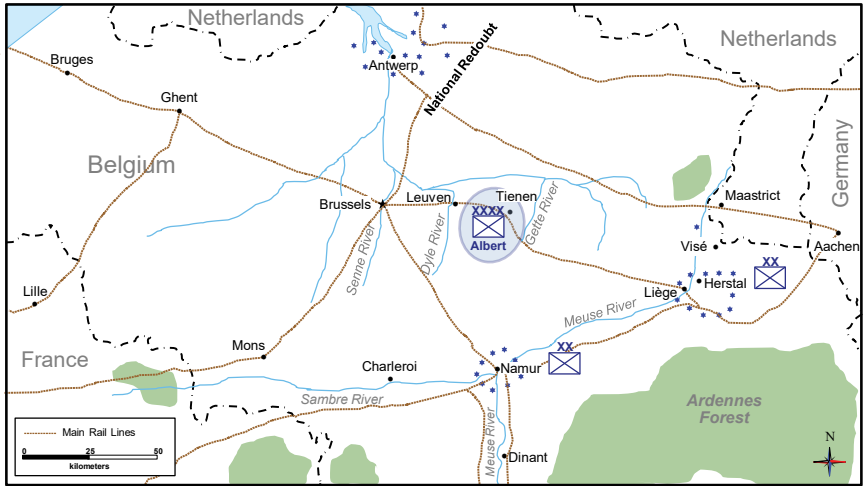


Figure 2.1. Belgium Defenses Map, 4 August 1914. Created by the author.

between Huy, Namur, and Dinant. These forts required the German army to conduct sequential operations, first against Liège and then Namur, before reaching the French border.<sup>18</sup>

North of this southern fortification belt, the National Redoubt around Antwerp offered another difficult operation for the German army. Since 1878, German planners had acknowledged Antwerp as a possible location for the BEF to link up with the Belgian army. Antwerp also offered sanctuary for the Belgian army if it escaped the initial phases of the invasion, a situation that could create more problems as the German armies wheeled south. If the Belgian army retained Antwerp and the British intervened, army commanders might find themselves fighting on two fronts in the country's tight confines, a deathblow to the compact operational timeline.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to the military geography, the Belgian army's disposition also caused concern. Under Belgian law, the army consisted of 350,000 troops. Anticipating future conflict, the Belgian government increased army expenditures by 30 percent in 1913 to support these troops. Half of Belgian forces constituted the field army, designed to strike at an invader between the clusters of fortifications in the north and center of the country. The remainder of the army occupied fortification systems in Antwerp, Liège, and Namur. While this army did not possess the ability to stop the German army completely, an active defense by the Belgian maneuver forces combined with the fortresses threatened to bog down the advance.<sup>20</sup> With a complex military problem, German hopes hinged on passivity or rapid destruction of the Belgian army. Both proved ephemeral.

## **Invasion**

In the carefully rehearsed mobilization effort that began in late July 1914, German reserves and other forces played a critical role early in the campaign. With forces concentrating at marshalling locations along the border, security of the railheads around Aachen, Eisenborn, and Malmedy became paramount. Upon issuing mobilization orders, Supreme Army Command (*Oberste Heeresleitung*, or OHL) halted cross-border freight traffic, telephone calls, and nongovernment messages. Frontier corps and *Landsturm* units arrayed from the Aachen to the Swiss border were augmented by *gendarmes*, customs officers, forestry officials, and uniformed police who would provide early warning about attacks. Security measures allowed nearly 250,000 men, the first echelon of three German armies, to assemble near the Belgian border in less than ninety-six hours.<sup>21</sup> Mobilization of follow-on forces to support these armies continued until mid-August, a full two weeks after the initial invasion.

If the German government anticipated Belgian submission, the conduct of its officials only encouraged resistance. On the eve of the invasion, German diplomats conducted a thinly veiled ruse to convince the Belgian government to allow the Kaiser's armies to pass through the country unimpeded. Moltke drafted a note for the Belgian government detailing that the French army was preparing to violate Belgian neutrality, an outright lie. The note, delivered by the German legation in Brussels, offered two choices: a peaceful transit of German troops to the French frontier or a declaration of war on Belgium.<sup>22</sup> Delivered in the middle of the night, the ultimatum limited opportunities for the Belgian government to consult with the French; Albert I, the Belgian monarch, decided to defend his kingdom and joined his army in the field. This decision to resist played a critical role in the nature of rear area activities during the invasion.

Despite Albert's resolute gesture, Belgium's mobilization fell woefully short of expectations. Unlike the Germans, Belgium lacked a clearly articulated reserve system to augment its active forces. Instead, the government relied on the *Garde Civique*, a program in which most men mustered with little semblance of uniforms and carried their own personal weapons.<sup>23</sup> The Belgian government had put the army on a peace footing in December 1913 after resolving a conflict in the Balkans earlier that year. As a result, the requirement to mobilize rapidly to resist a German invasion left the Belgian field army with only 110,000 troops—65,000 troops short of its war plan. The Belgian army also lacked equipment for all its troops; Belgian leaders asked the French government for Lebel rifles and ammunition to outfit the Antwerp garrison after German forces crossed the border.<sup>24</sup> These shortcomings significantly weakened Belgian resistance efforts and forced the country to avoid a decisive battle until the British or French could intervene.<sup>25</sup> However, Belgium's defensive posture also made it difficult for the German armies to create conditions for a decisive battle.

Committed to an invasion regardless of Belgian activities, the OHL organized portions of the German First and Second Armies for an attack on Liège. On 4 August, two cavalry divisions of the newly constituted Second Cavalry Corps departed Aachen, crossed the Belgian border, and advanced to Visé, northeast of Liège. At Visé, German cavalymen faced the first resistance of the campaign, forcing them to bypass destroyed bridges in the town to the north in order to envelop the Belgian defenders on the west side of the Meuse. The corps seized the Meuse crossings at Visé then conducted reconnaissance toward Brussels and Antwerp. German cavalry units began screening Liège to prevent Belgian army efforts to reinforce the critical fortification complex.<sup>26</sup> Meanwhile, *General der Infanterie*

Albert Otto von Emmich, the commander of the German Tenth Corps, assumed command of the “Army of the Meuse,” an ad hoc organization tasked by the OHL with capturing Liège.<sup>27</sup> Because of military geography and the need to widen the corridor into Belgium, the OHL prioritized the siege over engaging the Belgian army. With Liège besieged, the German army could begin consolidating its foothold in Belgium territory.

Over the next nine days, Emmich methodically captured the forts around Liège. While the “Army of the Meuse” focused operations against the fortified city, cavalry divisions continued to probe Belgian resistance along the Gette River and south toward Namur.<sup>28</sup> The city’s military governor lacked the troops to defend everywhere, so he settled on a mobile defense inside the forts. Belgian troops conducted forced marches between threatened areas to counterattack or cut off any German units that breached the outer perimeter. Emmich’s plan was for infantry brigades to attack gaps in the outlying fortifications, bypassing them to take Liège from the inside out. Brigades attacking in a semicircle around the city would overwhelm the defenders, forcing the garrison to defend the entire perimeter. The desperation of the plan reflected the speed required of the German army to quickly get through the Belgian defenses. While initial German attacks on 6 August failed, the Belgian commander recognized that he could not afford to lose infantry regiments conducting the mobile defense. On the morning of 7 August, he ordered a withdrawal to the west, slowly giving ground to the Germans. Between 7 August and 16 August, Emmich methodically captured the remaining forts around the city.<sup>29</sup>

In an effort to consolidate gains, German troops—fueled by fear and an unforgiving timeline—committed atrocities along the invasion route. As the “Army of the Meuse” reduced the fortifications around Liège, the Second Germany Army occupied villages around Visé to prepare for continuing its advance. German units claimed to face resistance from *franc-tireurs*, or partisan snipers, as well as isolated incidents of sabotage. In the district of Verviers between the German border and Liège, soldiers committed widespread violence, including murder and theft, as the army occupied villages along the line of communications.<sup>30</sup> Relentless pressure to meet operational schedules, combined with institutionalized fear of a guerrilla war, allowed German commanders to rationalize these ruthless measures.

As the fortresses around Liège fell, the three German armies advanced abreast across Belgium. Under a new plan ordered by the OHL, the First Army under the command of *Generaloberst* Alexander Heinrich von Kluck would sweep through the center of Belgium, capturing Brussels then swinging southwest toward the French border. The Second Army, un-

der the command of *Generaloberst* Karl von Bülow, would act as a hinge. Bülow's army, already in control of Liège, would capture Namur at the confluence of the Sambre and Meuse rivers, then turn south with Kluck's army on its right. The Third Army, commanded by *Generaloberst* Max von Hausen, would cross the Meuse around Dinant. This turning movement of three armies through Belgium would direct the weight of the German army toward Paris. The army could then bypass the difficult terrain in the Ardennes to the south.<sup>31</sup> This plan carried German forces through the heart of the Belgian defenses. This scheme of maneuver required the German commanders to retain more troops to guard lines of communication through the center of the country.

The plan to advance from Liège to the French frontier appeared logical but failed to account for the enemy. While the German army gained ground on its advance toward the French frontier, the advance did not bring the Belgian army to a decisive battle. After the war, Kluck argued that the original plan relied on sequential destruction of armies—Belgian, BEF, and then the left wing of the French army—to achieve strategic success.<sup>32</sup> Despite facing overwhelming numbers, Albert's forces concentrated to the northwest of the German armies on the Gette River. This position covered the capital of Brussels. While the Belgian army could not hope to stop the more than 600,000 troops of the three German armies, the position offered an opportunity for the British and French to intervene. From this position, the Belgian army could strike at the German flank as it wheeled toward France or continue its withdrawal toward the National Redoubt around Antwerp.

On the same day that the last fort fell around Liège, the left wing of Kluck's army, consisting of three corps, threatened the northern flank of the Belgian army around Tienen. This movement threatened to cut the Belgians off from their supply line at Antwerp. In the south, three corps from Bülow's army, marching for Namur, threatened the southern flank. Pressure from two armies forced the Belgians to withdraw to the west. The French army, holding the bridges around Namur and Charleroi, engaged the lead elements of Hausen's Third Army, but remained on the defensive. With no Allied armies in position to intervene, Albert had no choice but to withdraw toward Antwerp until the French or British armies arrived in force.<sup>33</sup>

The changing and confused situation forced the OHL to reorganize their attack as the German armies advanced. With Albert's army escaping toward Antwerp, the OHL could not afford to leave a large Belgian force in the rear of the three German armies as they turned south toward the Meuse. German intelligence officials knew the BEF had arrived in France on 14 August, but did not know the location or composition of their forces.<sup>34</sup>

Without a clear understanding of enemy dispositions, senior German commanders clashed over the next step. Bülow wanted to concentrate forces on the left flank of the French army while leaving German units to screen Antwerp and retain control of captured Belgian territory. Kluck strongly disagreed, wanting to keep his army intact and continue the attack across the Sambre River. On 18 August, Moltke conceded to Bülow's demands, directing the Third Reserve Corps detachment from Kluck's command to screen the Belgian army across the Dyle River. As part of these orders, two Fourth Reserve Corps infantry regiments occupied Brussels while the rest of the corps moved north with the Third Reserve Corps.<sup>35</sup> Moltke also directed the Fourth Reserve Corps, still located in Schleswig with the "North Army" guarding the German coast, to move forward to Antwerp to assist with the expected siege. Moltke recognized the risk to First Army if the Belgian and British armies united in its rear near Antwerp.<sup>36</sup> Dennis Showalter, a preeminent German military historian, later argued that this reduction of forces to screen Antwerp disrupted Moltke's war plan as much as the aggressive advances of the Russian First and Second Armies into Prussian territory on the Eastern Front.<sup>37</sup> Strategic consumption—the commitment of troops to protect lines of communication—eroded the German army's striking power in the 150 kilometers between Malmedy and the Mons-Charleroi corridor on the French frontier.<sup>38</sup> With the need to turn south, Consolidation of Gains in Belgium now required a serious commitment from Kluck and Bülow to protect the rear area.

Driven by a desire to cross Belgian territory quickly, Consolidation of Gains assumed a brutal and arbitrary nature. Military tribunals were convened along the route of all three German armies, often resulting in civilian executions based on the flimsiest evidence. These show trials sought to intimidate the Belgian population and keep supply lines free of saboteurs. Soldiers assigned to police the occupied territories leveraged broad authority to search, seize, and destroy any material that could benefit an organized Belgian insurgency. This led to a clash between formal orders and personal conscience, as when a first lieutenant refused to obey 53rd *Landwehr* Regiment orders to burn down Keizersberg Abbey on 29 August.<sup>39</sup> While some commanders disagreed, many complied with these directives. Mass execution of more than 600 civilians occurred in Dinant on 22–23 August. Between 19 and 24 August, German troops killed hundreds of civilians in Leuven and burned a library containing thousands of priceless medieval manuscripts.<sup>40</sup> During the last days of August, Consolidation of Gains in the urban centers ranged from minimal disruption to extrajudicial murder, depending on the heavy-handedness of the German commanders.

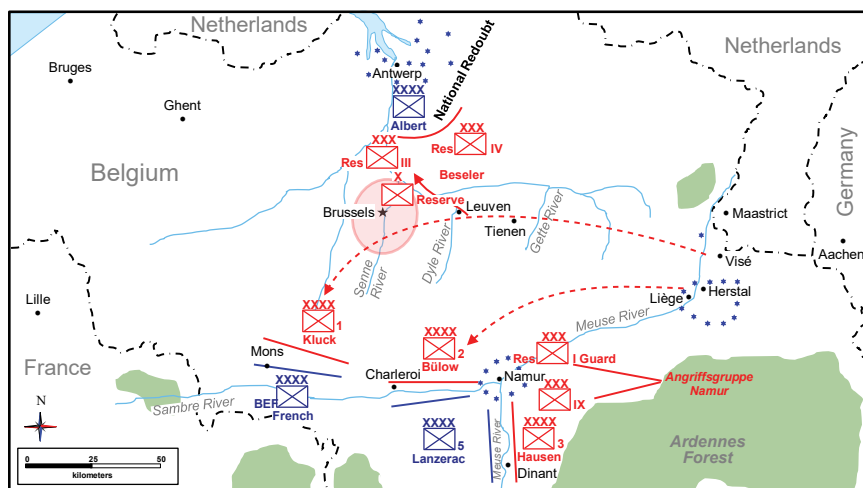


Figure 2.2. Consolidating Gains in Belgium: Detached Reserve Forces, 20 August 1914. Created by the author.

By 21 August, the right wing of the German army was moving in two different directions. Significantly weakened, the First and Second Armies continued south while the detached forces of the Third and Fourth Reserve Corps, roughly 20 percent of Kluck's army, moved north to lay siege to Antwerp. On 23 August, Kluck's army began forcing its way across the Mons-Condé Canal to engage the BEF, finally identified on the left flank of French forces. To the east, Bülow pivoted south to cross the Sambre River between Charleroi and Namur. South of the Sambre, *Général de Division* Charles Lanrezac's Fifth French Army awaited the German attack into France.<sup>41</sup> Enabling this envelopment, Bülow created a new command of reserve forces to assume control of the hinge of the operation. This *Angriffsgruppe Namur* force, commanded by Max von Gallwitz, consisted of the First Guard Reserve Corps from First Army and the Eleventh Corps from Third Army. Bülow tasked Gallwitz to capture Namur and protect the flanks of the two armies as they maneuvered around the fortification complex. Between 20 and 25 August, Gallwitz reduced and assaulted the fortifications around Namur.<sup>42</sup> Consolidation of gains now included two separate siege operations in addition to the maneuvering of three armies against Allied forces on the south side of the Meuse.

North of the main German attack, an ad hoc military organization under the command of *Generaloberst* Hans von Beseler approached the defenses of the National Redoubt. Conceived out of necessity, this "army" included *Ersatz* divisions and marine units. Despite possessing the con-

glomeration of forces, Beseler began the methodical siege of Antwerp in earnest. On 24 August, the Belgian army sortied out of Antwerp to attack the German besiegers, attempting to support the French army and BEF in the Mons-Charleroi area. However, Albert chose to avoid battle when he learned that the French and British had withdrawn into France. By 26 August, Beseler's "army" settled into the siege of the city. As German armies moved south into France, Beseler's army remained entrenched around Antwerp until the city fell on 10 October. Avoiding destruction, the Belgian army continued to withdraw to the west into a small portion of Belgium that remained under Allied control.

Even as fighting continued in Belgium, German authorities began transitioning rear areas to military control. On 23 August, the same day as the battle at Mons, Kaiser Wilhelm recalled Field Marshal Colmar von der Goltz from retirement to serve as governor-general of Belgium. Goltz established a regimented system to manage civilians and resources—a military governorship to provide supervision to the Belgian government officials and police forces. The German officials restricted civilian movement and supervised Belgian labor at the village level. Only military trains traversed the country. The Germans also severed all communication lines with Belgium and the outside world. Goltz and his replacements levied heavy fines on the local Belgian authorities, a string of indemnities designed to extract as much wealth as possible.<sup>43</sup> This led to the systematic dismantling of the Belgian economy, with much of the industry moved across the border. By the end of the war, the OHL had deported more than 120,000 Belgians to work camps in Germany. Despite the rapacious behavior, Consolidation of Gains provided a long-term, strategic benefit for the German war effort.<sup>44</sup> To force compliance, Goltz relied on 80,000 reserve soldiers who served as the occupying force. These troops provided critical support to the armies entrenched on the Western Front, protecting transportation hubs. This corps of reserves also suppressed the limited instances of Belgian resistance.<sup>45</sup> These efforts sought to assume maximum control of the area, enforcing military necessity over individual freedom of the populace.

Consolidation of Belgium also required the political reorganization of the territory by function. By the end of October, German troops occupied 95 percent of all Belgian territory. The German Fourth Army established its *Etappengebiet*, or staging area, in the western provinces by October 1914. This area, including the cities of Ghent and Antwerp, provided the OHL with a place to marshal supplies and reinforcements for units fighting in Flanders. German reserve troops guarded these marshalling areas in Belgian territory. The Imperial Navy assumed control of the Belgian



coastline to prevent naval bombardment or amphibious attack by Allied forces. The rest of the country fell under the control of the General Government of Belgium. Administered by Goltz and his successors, this region retained the Belgian civil administration under the control of German military leadership. Even with a return to civilian control supervised by German leadership, consolidation of Belgian territory required a long-term commitment of reserve formations.<sup>46</sup>

Despite the heavy-handedness of the German occupation, the weight of the invasion forced most Belgians into passivity. Factories in German-controlled territory produced at lower rates than before the war. Protests and strikes in urban population centers across the country occurred throughout the war. Belgian intelligence networks formed to provide British and French leadership with information on German troop movements in the occupied area. Agents smuggled Belgian men through Dutch territory and by sea to swell the ranks of Albert's army. Most efforts at active resistance, however, remained small and localized—with little impact on German military operations on the Western Front.<sup>47</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In the context of large-scale combat operations, the German invasion of Belgium highlights important considerations for military planners. Political objectives played a significant role in determining how the German army consolidated gains in captured territory. In the case of Belgium, a lack of a plan and general ruthlessness led to a brutal approach. Geography and enemy decisions played critical roles in determining the strength and distribution of forces to consolidate gains. Its inability to bring the Belgian army to battle forced the OHL to distribute troops to cover the flanks and rear, an unexpected development. The Germans diverted roughly 20 percent of First Army troops in the first three weeks of the war to block the Belgian army and occupy cities, which significantly depleted the striking power of the German right wing. Sequential sieges of Liège, Namur, and Antwerp by active and reserve German forces emphasized the need for additional German headquarters to assume control of emerging operational tasks. Finally, the diversity of missions for its reserve forces required planning of tasks and comprehensive training for those tasks. In 1914, Imperial German army reserve troops experienced the full spectrum of tasks, from policing Belgian communities to securing lines of communications to deliberate siege operations. Without extensive preparation across the full spectrum of conflict, risk in the consolidation area could undermine the tempo and mass of decisive operations.

## Notes

1. Department of the Army, Army Doctrinal Publication (ADP) 3-0, *Operations* (Washington, DC: 2019), 3-5–3-6.

2. Thomas J. Weiler and Spencer C. Tucker, “German Occupation of Belgium,” in *World War I Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, ed. Spencer C. Tucker (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), 192–93. Because of the centennial anniversary of the conflict, there has been significant recent scholarship to hold the German government accountable for the “Rape of Belgium.” For a short list of recent publications, see Jeff Lipkes, *Rehearsals: The German Army in Belgium, August 1914* (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2007). Lipkes’s work highlights the personal experiences of Belgian citizens caught in the atrocities of the German army. See also Larry Zuckerman, *The Rape of Belgium: The Untold Story of World War I* (New York: New York University Press, 2004); and John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001). For the “Rape of Belgium” in the context of German colonialism and military actions, see Isabel Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006).

3. The origins of the First World War and the calculations in 1914 is a historiography encompassing hundreds of works across the mosaic of European scholarship. For the most comprehensive one-volume study of the origins, see James Joll and Gordon Martell, *The Origins of the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2007); for the most accessible, see David Fromkin, *Europe’s Last Summer: Who Started the Great War in 1914?* (New York: Vintage, 2005); and for a recent reassessment of German causation, specifically with regard to Belgium and British intervention, see Troy Paddock, *Contesting the Origins of the First World War: A Historiographical Argument* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

4. Joll and Martel, *Origins of the First World War*, 50. For a concise discussion about the changing geopolitical landscape in Europe in the late nineteenth century, see Geoffrey Wawro, *Warfare and Society in Europe, 1792–1914* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 176–87.

5. Terence Zuber provided the most recent corrective to the historiography of the Schlieffen Plan. See his *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan: German War Planning, 1871–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

6. Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper Collins, 2013), 547–48.

7. Adding to the complexity of the international situation, the *Entente* did not coalesce into a wartime multinational alliance until the outbreak of the war. France and Russian signed agreements consistently since 1892. Designed to improve relations between the United Kingdom and France, both parties signed the *Entente Cordiale* in 1904, but each had different opinions about whether the agreement included military support.

8. Joll and Martel, *Origins of the First World War*, 124–26.

9. Gerhard Ritter, *Schlieffen Plan: Critique of a Myth* (New York: Praeger, 1958), 136, 146. This chapter will avoid discussions of the controversy surrounding the Schlieffen Plan. In the mid-twentieth century, historians led by A. J. P. Taylor accepted the Schlieffen Plan as fact and identified it as the cause of the war. See A. J. P. Taylor, *Illustrated History of the First World War* (New York: Putnam, 1964), 15. Modern military historians led by Terrence Zuber regard a codified prewar Schlieffen Plan as a myth, echoing some of the arguments made by Gerhard Ritter in the 1950s.

10. Isabel Hull pointed to the ruthless nature of German military activities that set conditions for atrocities. This chapter does not advocate that military necessity dictates disregarding the Laws of War, but attempts to place German decisions at the tactical and operational level within the framework of German prewar assumptions. During the war, the German government published the “White Book,” *Das Deutsche Weißbook über den Ausbruch des deutsch-russisch-französischen Krieges* (Leipzig: Northern Publishing Firm, 1914) to refute claims made by the Belgian, French, and British governments.

11. After the Second World War, German historian Fritz Fischer argued in *Griff nach der Weltmacht: Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914–1918* (Droste Verlag, 1961) that Imperial Germany started World War I and German decisions were premeditated. Fischer and his disciples used Bethmann-Hollweg’s “Septemberprogramm” as evidence of German political and economic objectives. Niall Ferguson convincingly argued that Wilhelmine Germany lacked any goals other than military victory at the outset of the war. Before the war, Wilhelm and Bethmann-Hollweg contemplated guaranteeing French and Belgium sovereignty in exchange for British neutrality. See Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 169–172; Annika Mombauer, “The Fischer Controversy: 50 Years On,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, vol. 2 (2013): 231–40; and Wilhelm Deist, “German Strategy and Unlimited Warfare in Germany: Moltke, Falkenhayn, and Ludendorff,” in *Great War, Total War*, ed. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 266–71. Kluck, as an army commander, echoed this lack of political and economic objectives in his memoirs. His understanding of the war was to destroy the Belgian, British, and French armies in order, with the expectation that these decisive battles alone would lead to a political outcome.

12. Committee of Imperial Defense, *History of the Great War, Military Operations: France and Belgium, 1914*, vol. 1, comp. J. E. Edmonds (London: Macmillan, 1922), 21–22. Below the army level, the delineation between “regular” and “reserve” is less clear. When war broke out in 1914, reserve corps like the III Reserves and IV Reserves each contained an active-duty brigade. Reservists also filled out the ranks in regular army divisions.

13. This system of efficient mobilization was a critical aspect of German war planning. The peacetime strength of regular German army troops in 1914 was 761,000. Despite the size of the German Empire, Russia and France out-

numbered all components of the German army by almost three million troops. See Ferguson, *Pity of War*, 92–93.

14. Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan*, 86–87; and Marc Trachtenberg, “The Meaning of Mobilization in 1914,” *International Security* 15, no. 3 (Winter 1990–1991): 124–25.

15. Alfred von Schlieffen, “War Today, 1909,” in *Alfred von Schlieffen's Military Writings*, trans. Robert T. Foley (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 201.

16. Maurice Albert Emile Tasnier and Raoul Francois Casimir van Overstraeten, *L'armée Belge dans la guerre mondiale* (Brussels: H. Bertels, 1923), 7.

17. German calculations hinged on the Netherlands maintaining their neutrality and expected them not to side with the *Entente*; Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan*, 258. For the broader economic and political relationship between the Netherlands and Germany that precluded violations of neutrality, see Maartje M. Abbenhuis, *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914–1918* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 26–38.

18. For a concise discussion of operational decisions between Liège and Namur, see Robert Citino, *The German Way of War* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2005), 208–14.

19. Zuber, *Inventing the Schlieffen Plan*, 78, 244–45.

20. Belgian historiography emphasizes the premeditated nature of the German invasion. For a wartime treatment of the situation before the invasion, see Léon van der Essen, *The Invasion and the War in Belgium: From Liège to the Yser* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1917), 43; and Army of the Kingdom of Belgium, *The War of 1914: Military Operations of Belgium* (London: W. H. & L. Collingridge, 1915), 1–2.

21. Mark Osborne Humphries and John Maker, trans., *Germany's Western Front: Translations from the German Official History of the Great War*, vol. 1 (Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2013), 91–92.

22. For a transcript of the note sent to the Belgian government on 2 August 1914, see Annika Mombauer, *The Origins of the First World War: Diplomatic and Military Documents* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 532–34. As Luigi Albertini noted, the note was sent in the middle of the night and written in German to require translation, evidence that Moltke intended to launch the armies into Belgium regardless of the answer from Brussels; *The Origins of the War of 1914*, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 455.

23. John Horne and Alan Kramer, “War Between Soldiers and Enemy Civilians, 1914–1915,” in *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914–1918*, ed. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 155. In the aftermath of the invasion, the German army tried to use the *Guarde Civique* to justify their claims of Belgian sabotage. However, the Belgian government recognized the risk of employing poorly uniformed reservists and demobilized them early in the conflict.

24. Essen, *Invasion and the War in Belgium*, 45.

25. Army of the Kingdom of Belgium, *The War of 1914*, 1–2.

26. Humphries and Maker, *Germany's Western Front*, vol. 1, 96–97.
27. Essen, *Invasion and the War in Belgium*, 50. This “Army of the Meuse” consisted of 130,000 troops.
28. Edmonds, *Military Operations*, 33–34.
29. Humphries and Maker, *Germany's Western Front*, vol. 1, 105–7.
30. For an overview of consolidation in Verviers, see Lipkes, *Rehearsals*, 39–47. *Franc-Tireur* in French means “free-shooter,” a partisan sniper. There remains considerable debate about German claims of Belgian civilian resistance, an excuse the German government used to justify brutality in consolidating control of Belgium. Bart Mokveld, a Dutch journalist traveling in Belgium in August 1914, strongly refuted any idea of Belgian resistance in the opening phase of the invasion; L. Mokveld, *The German Fury in Belgium: Experiences of a Netherland Journalist during Four Months with the German Army in Belgium* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), 87–88.
31. On 17 August, Bülow assumed command of the German right wing moving through Belgium. His orders included driving the Belgian army away from Antwerp while protecting against the fortress of Namur. Moltke directed Bülow to protect his right flank from Antwerp as the two armies turned south toward Charleroi and Mons. Humphries and Maker, *Germany's Western Front*, vol. 1, 136–37.
32. Alexander von Kluck, *The March on Paris and the Battle of the Marne* (London: Edward Arnold, 1920), 4.
33. Essen, *Invasion and the War in Belgium*, 123–24. The British Expeditionary Force began arriving in France on 9 August but did not go into combat until 23 August at Mons.
34. Eric Dorn Brose, *The Kaiser's Army: The Politics of Military Technology in Germany during the Machine Age, 1870–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 191–92.
35. American Expeditionary Forces, Intelligence Section, *Histories of Two Hundred and Fifty-One Divisions of the German Army which Participated in the War (1914–1918)* (Chaumont, France, 1919), 328. The 71st and 94th Reserve Infantry Regiments remained in Brussels until being recalled to their parent corps for the invasion of France at the end of the month.
36. American Expeditionary Forces, *Histories of Two Hundred and Fifty-One Divisions*, 280.
37. Dennis Showalter et al., *The German Failure in Belgium, 1914: How Faulty Reconnaissance Exposed the Weaknesses of the Schlieffen Plan* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2019), 163–65.
38. Strategic consumption is the concept of expending men and material as an army advances and extends its lines of communication. Even without engaging in battle, armies must leave garrisons, patrol to protect supply lines, and defend against enemy units operating in the flank and rear. The German First Army relied on reserve forces and militia to manage these tasks. In the span of a month, some of Kluck's units marched more than 500 kilometers on the extreme

right wing of the German army; David Stevenson, *Cataclysm: The First World War as Political Tragedy* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 45.

39. Lipkes, *Rehearsals*, 529–31.

40. Michael Neiberg, *Fighting the Great War: A Global History* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2005), 15; and John Terraine, *The Smoke and the Fire: Myths and Anti-Myths of War, 1861–1945* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1992), 25–27.

41. Citino, *The German Way of War*, 211–13.

42. Philip Neame, *German Strategy in the Great War* (London: Arnold, 1923), 21.

43. For a comprehensive study of the economic collapse of Belgium under the weight of German occupation demands in the fall and winter of 1914, see Zuckerman, *Rape of Belgium*, 78–102. This transition from consolidating gains to stabilization in rear areas closely resembled German actions in the territories captured from the Russians in Eastern Europe during World War I. For an understanding of the policies of *Ober Ost*, see Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *War Land on the Eastern Front: Culture, National Identity, and German Occupation in World War I* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

44. Bernard Cook, *Belgium: A History* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 102–7; and Sophie De Schaepdrijver, “Violence and Legitimacy: Occupied Belgium, 1914–1918,” *The Low Countries: Arts and Society in Flanders and the Netherlands*, vol. 22, 46–56.

45. Hermann von Kuhl and Walter von Bergmann, *Movements and Supply of the German First Army during August and September, 1914* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: US Army Command and General Staff School Press, 1929), 208–9. Kuhl served as Kluck’s chief of staff and Bergmann was First Army quartermaster-general during the invasion.

46. Hull, *Absolute Destruction*, 231–32.

47. Zuckerman, *Rape of Belgium*, 100. Despite their claims, Belgian active resistance never matched the charges leveled by the German government in August 1914. Horne and Kramer, “War Between Soldiers and Enemy Civilians,” in *Great War, Total War*, ed. Roger Chickering and Stig Förster (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 154–55. The dialogue on the approach in the consolidation area and transition to stability operations continues to rage among military theorists, historians, and political scientists. US Army doctrine since the mid-2000s has embraced what some consider a “Hearts and Minds” mentality. Scholars of more recent conflicts, including Ahmed Hashim and Jacqueline Hazelton, argue that brutal repression is regularly successful in suppressing resistance. See Ahmed S. Hashim, *When Counterinsurgency Wins: Sri Lanka’s Defeat of the Tamil Tigers* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013); and Jacqueline L. Hazelton, *Bullets Not Ballots: Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2021).

### **Chapter 3**

## **The AEF and Consolidation of Gains during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, 1918**

Christopher W. Davis

America's entry into the First World War marked a pivotal shift in that conflict, turning the tide in the Allies' favor. During the year after the United States formally declared war on Germany, nearly four million American soldiers arrived in Europe to stunt Germany's last major offensive and help the Allies overwhelm heavily defended German positions along the Western Front. In the fall of 1918, the Americans began their own offensive to break one of the strongest enemy defensive positions on the Western Front and end the war. This chapter examines the Meuse-Argonne Offensive between 26 September and 11 November 1918 and how effectively the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) consolidated its gains. As AEF troops pushed against the heavily entrenched German defenses, they also provided essential Consolidation of Gains operations such as establishing and maintaining lines of transportation and communication, clearing bypassed enemy forces, handling and interrogating German prisoners, and providing medical services. AEF hospitals fought an additional enemy in the fall of 1918: an influenza pandemic that threatened to undermine all gains made in the offensive. These infrastructure improvements, mopping-up, enemy prisoner of war (EPW), and medical support successes and failures illustrate the AEF's stabilizing effect during the largest and final US offensive operation of the First World War.

US Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, indicates that Consolidation of Gains are "essential to any operation," removing the enemy's capability and will for further resistance.<sup>1</sup> It notes that commanders must "continuously consider activities necessary to consolidate gains and achieve the end state," because they are "integral to winning armed conflict and achieving enduring success" as well as "the final exploitation of tactical success."<sup>2</sup> In offensive operations, frontline maneuver elements initiate this process and then Consolidation of Gains operations fully capitalize on the gains made. By definition, such operations do not occur in areas of close and large-scale combat, but rather where large-scale combat has ceased and security and stabilization tasks are required to move the overall force forward and therefore closer to achieving strategic aims.<sup>3</sup> Actions to consolidate gains focus on maintaining territory obtained from

the enemy while simultaneously and, most importantly, ensuring offensive momentum.

## **The Offensive in Context**

The AEF under General John “Black Jack” Pershing followed the current understanding of Consolidation of Gains operations. The Meuse-Argonne Offensive followed the typical WWI objective of gaining as much terrain as possible by breaking through enemy defenses with overwhelming force. During the early years of the conflict before AEF troops arrived, the Allies achieved only marginal gains in nearly all cases. Pershing sought to capitalize on his fresher, enthusiastic, and massive AEF force against a seasoned but war-weary German defensive force. The operation’s ultimate goal was to overwhelm German positions within the Argonne Forest and the Meuse River valley, forcing the enemy to divert strategic reserves to defend the area while British and French forces farther north pressed their own offensives. The German strategy throughout the war had been to use the railway system along the Western Front to quickly move strategic reserves to counter Allied offensives. The Allied Command primarily tasked the AEF to launch a massive assault in the Meuse-Argonne and break through the German railway system, effectively cutting off their means to supply reinforcements along the Western Front. Additionally, the assault drew German reserves to the region and away from defending areas farther north where British and French offensives were being launched. Despite heavy losses during their spring offensive and their waning ability to maintain the war effort on multiple fronts, the Germans still maintained their most heavily defended and entrenched Western Front positions. The AEF troops were attacking a formidable foe in the Meuse-Argonne.

If that alone did not put pressure on Pershing and the AEF to succeed, the tenacity with which he had fought for a chance for the American Army to prove itself to its European allies made success in the Meuse-Argonne all the more essential. From the war’s beginning in 1914 to the dramatic changes of 1917 (most significantly Russia’s exit from the war and America’s entry into it), the Allied and Central Powers had been locked in a costly and largely stagnant war of attrition. Single battles such as Verdun and the Somme had produced casualties in the hundreds of thousands on both sides. After three years of a contest to see who would run out of manpower and resources first, the Allies understandably welcomed the US declaration of war against Germany. The large numbers of fresh American troops pouring into the Western Front between 1917 and 1918 extended the Allies’ ability to continue attrition. The timing was particularly significant because Russia’s withdrawal from the war freed German forces along the



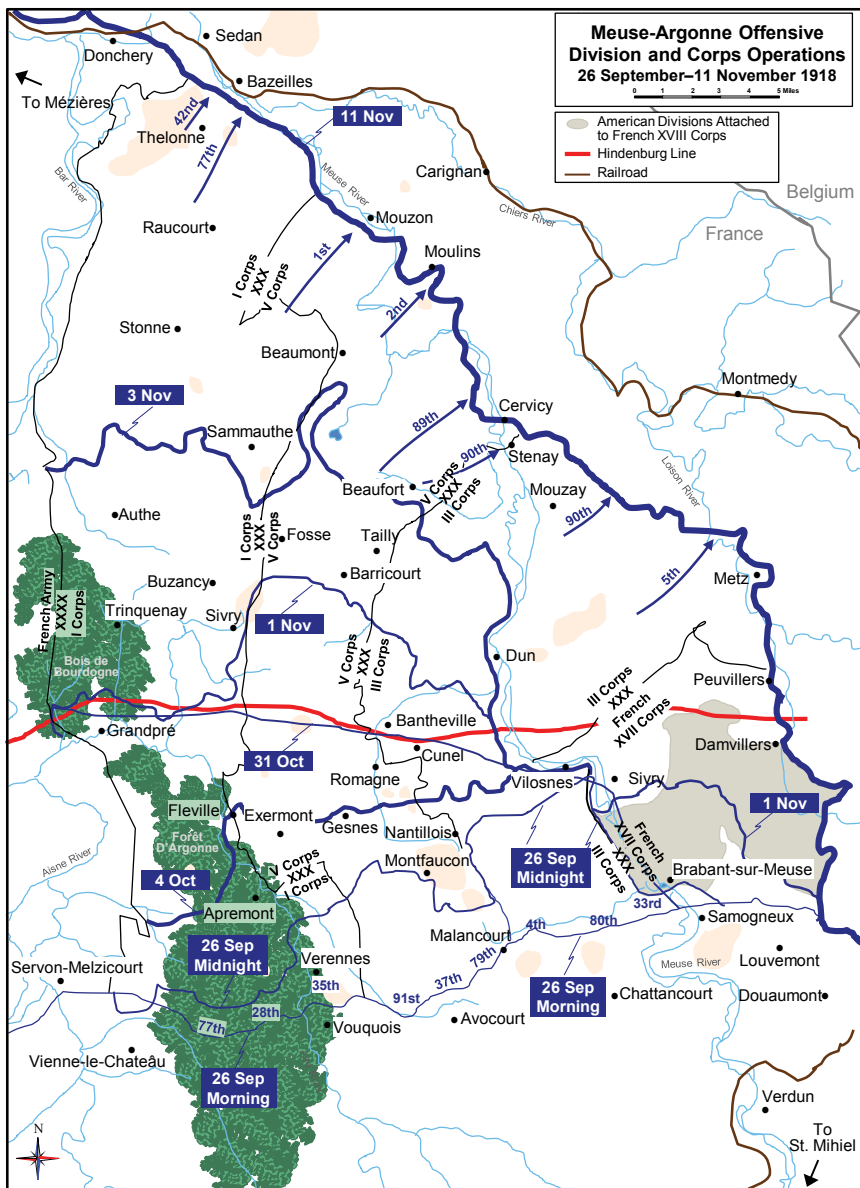


Figure 3.1. The Western Front-Meuse Argonne Offensive, Division and Corps Operations, 26 September–11 November 1918 (all phases). Created by Army University Press.

Eastern Front to reinforce their positions along the Western and Southern fronts. The new AEF was certainly a welcome and needed partner for the Allied forces, but the question remained if it would be an effective partner.

The AEF and their British and French counterparts had doubts about each other. From the first day the United States entered the war on the side of the Allies, President Woodrow Wilson and General Pershing had fought to maintain the AEF as an independent fighting force rather than merely having American troops be absorbed into French and British units. US political and military leaders observed that the Allied military strategy since 1914 had failed to produce a breakthrough and believed that turning American soldiers over to French and British commanders would sacrifice American lives in ongoing attrition. US soldiers entering Europe sometimes joked that AEF stood for “After England Failed,” conveying that American ingenuity and “can-do” attitude would tip the scales in a war that had drained the Allies of their enthusiasm and determination.<sup>4</sup> Confident in their own skills, AEF troops were not interested in learning from soldiers who had been waging a new kind of war for many years.

On the other side, British and French political and military leaders believed the newly arriving American forces had not been tested in battle and thus had not learned the harsh lessons of a large-scale war in the twentieth century. The United States had fought in several smaller-scale conflicts in the Caribbean, Mexico, and the Philippines since the turn of the century. The British and French, who had fought an expanding global war since 1914, felt the Americans would benefit from their command and experience. Key to this concern was the belief that Pershing and the AEF were unprepared for the realities of trench warfare, an opinion that was compounded by Pershing’s outright rejection of the approach. Unwilling to wage a war of attrition, Pershing was committed to pursuing a war of movement. During the previous year, the Germans had improved their application of the creeping barrage along the Eastern Front. After the Russians withdrew in the East, the increased manpower on the Western Front in the spring of 1918 made a war of movement possible for the first time since the fall of 1914. Likewise, the Allies improved their artillery and thus could support infantry advances more effectively. Still, Pershing’s conception of a war of movement differed from British and French views. He emphasized individual training on aggressiveness and marksmanship, supported by heavy artillery (such as the French 75-mm and 155-mm guns), rather than joint training between infantry and artillery units, using lighter howitzers that could keep pace with advancing infantry.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the Allies and their German opponents worked to hone artillery and infantry coordination to achieve greater mobility, Pershing relied on heavier firepower and the fighting spirit of his troops. Both had been part of Allied

strategy in the years before 1917—and part of bitter lessons learned; the British and French were uncertain if the AEF would learn quickly enough.

Disagreements about how to amalgamate the AEF with other Allied units tested the alliance's cohesion. French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau was particularly adamant about adding American troops to preexisting Allied units. As Clemenceau locked horns with Pershing, the decision came down to Supreme Allied Commander Ferdinand Foch. Siding with military practicality over his own prime minister, Foch ultimately decided the AEF should fight as an independent force and carry out the Meuse-Argonne Offensive with the support of the French Fourth Army. His rationale: "I knew perfectly well that soldiers of a national army never fight as well as under the orders of officers their country has given them—who speak the same tongue, fight for the same cause, have the same sort of ideas, and act in a manner familiar to the men under them."<sup>6</sup> The last major battle of the First World War was, therefore, a compromise between the Allies. The French would lend their support and experience, but the Americans would lead the offensive.

Prior to this decision, Pershing had agreed to allow some American units to serve under French command. However, his compromise did more to highlight divisions within the AEF (as well as American society as a whole) and with the French forces than to cement unity among the Allies. Pershing assigned elements from the 92nd and 93rd African-American Divisions to the French, thereby appeasing the Allies and countering criticism that he had failed to fulfill his promise that African American troops would serve as combat infantry.<sup>7</sup> The African American units fought at the Meuse-Argonne as part of the AEF but were integrated into the French Fourth Army. While AEF leaders kept operations shrouded in secrecy, African American soldiers benefited from the French approach where commanding officers provided regimental leaders with clear instructions and goals.<sup>8</sup> Integrating US African American regiments into the French Fourth Army provided the French with additional support and gave African American soldiers the opportunity to distinguish themselves in combat. The racial segregation that prompted these soldiers to be placed under French command, however, underscored that the AEF was a divided force—one of many challenges it faced.

With the war's fate and the American Army's reputation on the line, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive commenced on 26 September 1918. One of the first priorities was to take the heavily defended German position of

Montfaucon. When early successes forced the Germans to retreat, even Clemenceau was pleased with the offensive's initial progress. Hopeful that Montfaucon would return to its place as French territory, Clemenceau went to the battlefield to see these events unfold. His visit to the battlefield, much like the seizure of Montfaucon itself, proved easier said than done. When the Meuse-Argonne Offensive began on the morning of 26 September, Pershing's plan was for the 79th Division to seize Montfaucon on the first day.<sup>9</sup> Despite the division's efforts, the heavily defended Montfaucon did not fall into American hands until the following day. Pershing tried to dissuade Clemenceau from visiting the front on 29 September, arguing that the roads going toward the battle zone were in no shape for travel.<sup>10</sup> Pershing's effort to keep the French premier away from the battlefield was not merely another round of the two vying for control of the situation. Instead, it was an early indicator of a persistent problem during the offensive—one that was eventually mitigated. Pershing had been honest about the traffic issues; what Clemenceau saw instead of the coveted Montfaucon were roads jammed with trucks, 155-mm guns, men, and materiel trying to move forward across torn-up ground.<sup>11</sup>

The disorganization of the roads leading to the front lines at the onset of the offensive was certainly problematic, but also understandable under the circumstances. As assistant plans officer at the AEF First Army headquarters, Col. George Marshall had been given the unenviable task of quietly moving more than a million troops—along with artillery guns, horses, and ammunition—from the St. Mihiel Salient across inadequate roads and railways to the Argonne sector in just two weeks' time.<sup>12</sup> Given the size and scope of the operation, difficulties were to be expected. Marshall's efforts during the night of 15 September 1918 were hampered by insufficient details and poor execution of his movement orders. When movement between the St. Mihiel Salient and the Meuse-Argonne commenced, AEF logistical efforts in the Meuse-Argonne slowed to a crawl due to myriad traffic jams, changes in orders, miscommunication, and outright communication breakdown.<sup>13</sup> Issues persisted even after the battle had commenced. As the frontline AEF forces continued to advance later in the month, transportation lines to the front lengthened faster than their ability to manage it. Though Pershing was very much aware of the chaotic situation in his army's consolidation area, he had no intention of allowing this to slow or halt the offensive. Too much was at stake for the AEF, and it would be up to the Consolidation of Gains operations to overcome these initial and additional challenges in order to maintain the forward momentum of frontline units.

## Consolidation of Gains Transportation Operations

Gains obtained cannot become gains consolidated if the advancing forces are not able to effectively receive reinforcements, supplies, and/or orders. To maintain momentum, an offensive must continuously preserve and improve upon both its ability to continuously move troops and supplies as needed, and its ability to effectively communicate information between the front and consolidation areas. Failure to maintain lines of communication risks that frontline forces will become isolated. For forces that are cut off, the situation can become catastrophic if they cannot maintain the advance, evacuate the wounded, or withdraw. During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, the “Lost Battalion”—elements of the 77th Division that unknowingly advanced beyond their flanking units—became trapped behind enemy lines and isolated for six days; AEF commanders wanted to avoid similar scenarios. Army Engineer units would become the most important asset to overcome transportation and communications challenges that threatened the offensive’s success, a daunting task from the very beginning.

The only three main roads across No Man’s Land (the area between the Allied and German trench lines) had been obliterated by four years of fighting, leaving a landscape marked with artificial obstacles, artillery and mine craters, and contact mines.<sup>14</sup> Across this area littered with artifacts of the previous four years, the AEF engineers had to build new roads as the offensive advanced. This remained the case as AEF troops entered previously shelled German-held territory. As stated earlier, Montfaucon was a strategic point that the AEF leadership had prioritized to be seized on the first day of the offensive. Transportation and communication issues—along with strong German defenses at Montfaucon—hindered that objective. In his 26 and 27 September reports, I Corps commander General Liggett’s chief of staff, Brig. Gen. Malin Craig, commented that the initial 0530 thrust faced the difficulty of “making a steady and general advance due to poor communication in broken country” and noted that the Army Engineers were being called to work on roads and bridges in the area.<sup>15</sup> As the fighting continued into the afternoon and evening of the 26th, transportation issues kept the offensive’s day one key objective just out of reach. While Montfaucon remained in German hands at the end of the day, the 79th Division advanced and the 37th and 4th divisions seized salients on both sides—placing AEF forces within a mile of their objective.<sup>16</sup> Reports from noon on the 26th to noon on the 27th revealed that even though engineer units worked continuously to prepare the roads to

accommodate the necessarily heavy traffic, congestion caused by bad road conditions delayed the arrival of horse-drawn artillery that frontline forces needed to advance on the objective.<sup>17</sup> The 79th Division ultimately seized Montfaucon, but the capture was delayed until the following day because of road conditions.



Figure 3.2. Renault FT tanks and other military vehicles cross a stone bridge repaired by Companies A and E, 103rd Engineers, 28th Division, near Beureuilles, Meuse, 28 September 1918. Courtesy of the US Army Engineer School.

Although the AEF immediately recognized the problem, it would take time to overcome. With each successful advance, the amount of roadwork to be done advanced with it. Although Brigadier General Craig reported the next day that the offensive was on schedule despite road conditions, the movement of 105- and 155-mm guns were slowed by road conditions; infantry units could not advance farther ahead than their supporting artillery.<sup>18</sup> As the day of the 27th progressed, ammunition supplies—especially for the 79th Division—fell short due to heavy traffic on the few useable roads that engineer troops were working to improve; AEF leaders decided to move the 29th Division's 104th Engineer Regiment forward that night to help with road construction.<sup>19</sup> By 28 September, enhancing road construction and repair was viewed as essential to improving the offensive. In

his report for noon 27 September to noon 28 September, Col. T. H. Emerson, assistant chief of staff for the V Corps Operations Section, stated that road conditions—reduced by previous exchanges of artillery—remained an obstacle to timely delivery of frontline supplies.<sup>20</sup>

By noon the following day, Colonel Emerson noted the situation was stabilizing. According to his report, both road and traffic conditions were improving, allowing better movement of men and materiel back and forth from the front.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned earlier, however, the amount of roadwork Engineer units had to do to support the offensive expanded with every step forward. The nature of the Western Front terrain made road construction behind the advancing forward lines all the more challenging. Even during WWI when US forces benefited from preexisting European road systems, engineers still depended on man and animal power to fill holes caused by artillery and transport corduroys (tracks made from logs).<sup>22</sup> Brigadier General Craig reported on 29 September that supplies were sufficient in the forward areas, owing to improvements in the road conditions in the consolidation areas, but that transportation in the forward areas was hindered by a lack of passable roads and a large mine crater between Neuville and Boureuilles.<sup>23</sup> Reports for the remainder of the offensive consistently described road conditions as well as the corresponding supply situation as stable with occasional exceptions as the AEF advanced into areas that had been shelled earlier. Within three days after the offensive began, the challenge of establishing and maintaining the flow of troops and supplies between the forward and consolidation areas had been met and overcome.

Despite early transportation difficulties, AEF Consolidation of Gains operations were quickly prioritized and work began to organize and repair existing roads as well as construct new ones to support advancing forward units. The First Army Report of Operations for 26 to 30 September singled out the work of pioneer, road, railroad, and truck train troops who helped overcome the challenges:

The relief indicated above, involving the movement of approximately 150,000 men in and out of the battle line during the period when the communications across “No Man’s Land” were in process of being restored and already severely taxed by heavy movements of artillery and supplies to the front and the evacuation of wounded to the rear, constituted an achievement creditable to all concerned.

This praise was well-deserved considering how the engineers achieved such a daunting task in a relatively short period of time then continued to address the problem going forward. Furthermore, their accomplishment

was vital for the successful Consolidation of Gains during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. The early road construction and maintenance successes were critical for consolidating initial gains obtained and, more importantly, allowed the AEF to continue consolidating gains throughout the Offensive.

The AEF advance following Montfaucon remained stunted due to the initial delays with getting the road situation under control. Progress slowed as the AEF became something of a victim of its own success. Although the AEF had not advanced as far as Pershing hoped by early October, it had achieved the operation's critical objective of drawing German reinforcements to the Meuse-Argonne and thereby weakening German defenses against simultaneous British and French offensives farther north.<sup>24</sup> The price of this success was that the AEF was now addressing transportation issues at the same time German defenses were stiffening. Without the ability to traverse quickly from the consolidation area to the forward area and back, the offensive might have ground to a halt or worse. Though progress was slower than AEF and Allied leadership wanted, the Army engineers kept people and materiel moving. Of the thirty-three AEF Engineer regiments participating in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, twenty-four fulfilled sapper duties. There were exceptions: the 12th Engineers worked on railway gauge and general construction for the 1st and 2nd Divisions; the 16th Engineers focused on railway construction; the 20th Engineers took care of forestry and sawmills; the 21st and 22nd were engaged entirely in light railway construction and operations; and the 23rd Engineers handled highway construction.<sup>25</sup> Units involved in road construction and repair were essential for moving troops forth and back from the front lines; the railway construction accomplished by the 16th, 21st, and 22nd Engineers was critical for maintaining transportation in the deeper AEF consolidation areas. Because they evacuated wounded and sick troops to and beyond base hospitals, railway services were essential in another aspect of Consolidation of Gains during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive that will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>26</sup> This provided much greater allowances for other key Consolidation of Gains operations, such as mopping up captured areas, transferring captured prisoners from the front to the consolidation areas for interrogation, and moving sick and injured troops to medical facilities.

### **Consolidation of Gains Mopping-Up Operations**

Understandably, one crucial operation to consolidate gains during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive (or any large-scale offensive operation for that matter) was to remove remaining enemy elements from territory seized during the offensive. While enemy lines can be broken and driven back, newly acquired territory—the consolidation area—can only be considered



secure once remaining enemy troops have been captured or killed. The importance of this critical step was highlighted in a 27 September 1918 incident. Although reports from the first day of battle indicated mopping-up operations began shortly after the advance of the forward line, apparently they were not successfully completed.<sup>27</sup> Engineer troops “just in rear of the advance” found themselves under fire from enemy snipers and isolated machine gun crews still in the area after initial clearing operations.<sup>28</sup>

The area surrounding Montfaucon was within the V Corps operational area at the onset of the offensive. Three of its divisions—the 79th, 37th, and 91st—all confronted remnants of enemy forces as they advanced. When soldiers from the 304th Engineers—attached to the 79th Division—came under fire in the vicinity of Bois de Montfaucon, they took matters into their own hands, cleaning out a German machine-gun nest and taking prisoners.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, supporting artillery and tanks belonging to the 91st and 79th divisions cleared out other enemy units.<sup>30</sup> The 304th Engineers, as well as the 79th overall, were facing the deeply entrenched German 117th Division.<sup>31</sup> On the following day, the 79th—with flanking support from the 4th and 37th Divisions—seized Montfaucon from the German 117th Division and 7th Reserve Division.<sup>32</sup> In addition to hindering the AEF’s already precarious transportation situation in the consolidation area, the failure to thoroughly eliminate the enemy presence in the area put construction troops in greater danger than was necessary. Because enemy troops had not been cleared, the engineers were by no means safe when working in the consolidation area. The issue eventually was resolved; action reports from later in the offensive do not reveal that this error was repeated. The AEF learned from this experience, and mopping-up operations, when reported, were effective.

As the AEF continued to push back the German lines between 26 September and 11 November, the troops consolidated more than just the terrain they took from the enemy. Battle reports revealed that the advancing AEF took German prisoners by the hundreds (sometimes thousands) on a nearly daily basis.<sup>33</sup> Prisoner movement also demanded efficient transportation; clear roads were essential to move captured enemy troops from the front to consolidation areas where they were out of the way and could be processed for detention and interrogation.

Throughout the campaign, captured prisoners provided important details about the German Order of Battle—the location, strength, and general disposition of German units. For example, one captured German officer revealed the presence of determined resistance awaiting the AEF at Dunsur-Meuse—information that allowed the AEF to prepare accordingly.<sup>34</sup>

The AEF employed a new system and methodology for interrogating prisoners that was born out of that conflict. Maj. Dennis Nolan, who organized the AEF's Intelligence Section, recognized in the early months of American involvement that in-depth interrogations of captured enemy troops by the lower echelons were both impractical and inefficient due to lack of personnel and high operating tempo.<sup>35</sup> Nolan, therefore, instituted a more structured approach in which EPW interrogation and evacuation occurred in stages. Captured EPWs were first disarmed then sent to brigade headquarters to be searched for concealed weapons and documents that might have been missed initially.<sup>36</sup>

From there, EPWs were sent farther to the rear to division enclosures under the control of the provost marshal general (PMG); German prisoners were interrogated by AEF intelligence personnel before being moved under PMG-assigned guard even farther to a central EPW enclosure.<sup>37</sup> As AEF forces encountered the enemy in the WWI battles before and during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, guidelines to facilitate this process took shape. Until May 1918, divisions and corps retained their EPWs. After the 28 May Battle of Catigny, however, the high volume of EPWs taken necessitated transferring their custody to the PMG, who in turn organized escort companies, established locations for EPWs, and set up holding facilities for both officers and enlisted.<sup>38</sup> Major Nolan developed guidelines—printed later that year as the Army's first (provisional) Combat Intelligence Manual—that began with the regimental intelligence officer determining the name, rank and organization, and time and place of capture for each EPW.<sup>39</sup> Next, EPWs were moved farther to the rear for more thorough interrogation. Then a division G-2 lieutenant colonel or major, aided by Corps of Interpreters commissioned linguists, conducted limited questioning focused on tactical information about the division sector roughly two miles behind the enemy line—followed by transfer to corps collecting centers for further and more in-depth questioning.<sup>40</sup> Many AEF personnel who conducted these interrogations were lawyers prior to their service and knew how to coax information from recalcitrant subjects.<sup>41</sup>

Interrogation skills proved invaluable, such as when a prisoner from the 108th Labor Battalion revealed that the whole eastern edge of the woods lining the road from Montigny to Mont-Devant-Sassey had been mined.<sup>42</sup> Advance knowledge of enemy defensive positions and obstacles no doubt saved many lives, as did details about enemy offensive plans. Thanks to prisoner-gathered intelligence about a 15 October German counterattack, the AEF successfully repulsed all three counterattacks that day.<sup>43</sup> According to a limited report on the action, what remained of the strained

82nd Division forces repulsed a two-front German counterattack; no other details were provided about the locations of the attacks or units involved.<sup>44</sup>

These instances demonstrate how important the moving of prisoners from the front to consolidation areas for expert interrogation was to the successful outcome of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. With the newly developed process for transporting prisoners to the consolidation area for interrogation, the AEF adapted to the massive influx of EPWs and gained intelligence that helped minimize risks from a hardened, determined, and well-entrenched enemy. By the 11 November 1918 end of the offensive and of the war itself, the AEF had captured nearly 48,000 EPWs, the majority of these taken during the final months.<sup>45</sup> Prior to the armistice and until their repatriation, German prisoners captured by the AEF received the same type of quartering, clothing, and food provided to American troops, and were assigned labor based on their individual prewar occupational histories.<sup>46</sup> The sheer volume of prisoners that the AEF processed on a consistent basis during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive provided a boon of day-by-day information about enemy defenses and actions. The gains that the AEF consolidated during the battle went beyond the acquisition of enemy territory, including consistent updates to help maintain the offensive while minimizing casualties.

### **Medical Services and the Other Enemy**

Another important aspect of the AEF's secure and easy-to-traverse consolidation area was the ability to effectively and efficiently provide medical services to the sick and wounded. During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, 95,786 AEF soldiers were either wounded or incapacitated by poison gas, and consolidation area medical services worked to ensure that these men were treated and, when possible, returned to their units to maintain fighting strength.<sup>47</sup> These consolidating gains operations helped maintain a healthy, stable, and combat-ready fighting force. While this is true for any offensive, or any military campaign for that matter, medical services were especially critical during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive because of a unique complication: influenza. In addition to fighting the battle-hardened and deeply entrenched German Army, the AEF was also at war in late 1918 against a deadly variant of the flu.

The year 1918 saw the beginning of the influenza pandemic that would kill more people worldwide in a year than the Great War would in four. While its origin is unknown, this lethal strain of influenza first appeared as a nuisance in Europe and the United States in the spring of 1918. Because

of wartime censorship at the time, infection numbers were underreported everywhere except in neutral Spain (thereby giving it the name “Spanish Flu”). The number of infections dropped over the summer as is typically the case with influenza but surged in the fall after mutating into a far more virulent and deadly strain. Whether the flu was already present in Europe or came with the Americans is unclear, but AEF troops between September 26 and November 11 fought infection in addition to hostile enemy troops.

The disease did not reach outbreak proportions until the third week of September, with three and a half times as many cases in September as August, followed by three times as many cases in October as September.<sup>48</sup> This corresponded with the timeline of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, and had a significant bearing on AEF fighting strength during the campaign. By 1 November, more than 9 percent of AEF troops were on sick report, according to estimates. Historian W. Sanders Marble pointed out that this number only counted soldiers who were reported sick; that percentage did not include those who were told to remain on duty or who did not report symptoms.<sup>49</sup> While a disease is difficult to combat even in ideal circumstances (and the battlefield never presents ideal medical circumstances), previously discussed transportation challenges further hindered the AEF’s medical response to influenza. Marble noted that the rushed planning of the offensive—moving troops and materiel quickly from the St. Mihiel Salient to the Meuse-Argonne, secretly and on very short notice—also affected medical services and support.<sup>50</sup> This resulted in a shortage of resources and supplies to support such a large fighting force, a force that would soon face the viral flu outbreak.

Once again, constructing and maintaining the roads to and from the front were key Consolidation of Gains operations; disruptions in the flow of traffic slowed the time it took for troops wounded in battle or sick with influenza to receive medical treatment. For influenza, doctors had little understanding of the virus at the time. In many cases, AEF medical personnel only provided palliative care for flu and corresponding pneumonia cases; rest, warmth, food, and fluids.<sup>51</sup> Despite these limitations, AEF medical services did make adjustments to help improve the situation in the Meuse-Argonne—developing light ambulances that could travel from and to the front across most kinds of terrain and hospital centers, which were really large groups of base hospitals connected into a kind of hospital city.<sup>52</sup>

The medical evacuation system during the offensive included field hospitals where patients were separated into categories of lightly wounded, seriously wounded, gassed, psychiatric, and sick before being sent via ambulance to mobile or evacuation hospitals farther from the front lines.<sup>53</sup>



Figure 3.3. Crews from the 315th Engineers work on rock and mud road reconstruction in France, September 1918. Courtesy of the US Army Engineer School.

From that point, more serious patients were moved by the nearby railway system for transfer to base hospitals in the consolidation areas.<sup>54</sup> As the number of soldiers sick with influenza increased during October, poor medical support services planning the previous year combined with the unforeseen late 1918 pandemic created a perfect storm. Based on previous British and French experience, the surgeon general had estimated when the United States entered the war that the AEF would require 14 percent of its initial one million force to be medical personnel; complying with Allied requests to send more infantry and machine gun units at the expense of support units, the AEF was unprepared to deal with the highly virulent influenza.<sup>55</sup> The result was that the AEF throughout 1918 often suffered a 25- to 30-percent shortage of medical personnel to treat sick and wounded troops.<sup>56</sup> Exact numbers of infected soldiers is uncertain given battle conditions, but enough of these cases were flu-related to impact the system that was in place. During the course of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, an estimated 69,000 soldiers were listed as sick, and this additional strain on the evacuation system forced the First Army surgeon to move more experienced surgeons to the forward triage stations to identify soldiers who could return to their units within three days.<sup>57</sup> While medical services

are not directly involved in the Consolidation of Gains, they directly impacted the success of Consolidation of Gains operations. Effective treatment of wounded soldiers, and quarantine of the infected, ensured that the AEF could advance without essentially rotting from behind. Furthermore, transportation, mopping-up, and prisoner processing (as German prisoners also required medical attention) all affected how well AEF medical services could maintain the health of its army. An estimated 1,451 Americans died from influenza during just the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.<sup>58</sup> The loss of life from influenza and the AEF's failure to prepare for it are reminders that to maintain battlefield gains, a military force must be ready to fight both human opponents and equally lethal pathogens.

## **Conclusion**

American commanders at all levels faced significant problems in maintaining the operation's momentum. Paramount to these challenges was the area's shattered transportation system, which had to be repaired and organized in order for the offensive to advance on schedule. The successful maintenance of lines of communication made other Consolidation of Gains operations possible; freedom of movement between the evolving front line and the consolidation areas were critical for all operations. Troops, ammunition, and supplies could not move forward until road and railway systems in the consolidation areas were functional. Functional lines of communication also were needed to move the sick and wounded back to medical facilities and to support processing of enemy prisoners for vital intelligence. In turn, mopping-up and engineer operations depended on each other for mutual success. AEF Consolidation of Gains operations quickly adapted to the various challenges, especially at the operation's onset, and the AEF ultimately overcame the enemy. All of these consolidation operations fed into each other, allowing the forward operating units to continue their advance to break the German lines. In the end, the AEF and French broke through to the key German railway system just days before the Armistice went into effect. Had the German war machine not already collapsed due to multiple pressures—including its previous losses in the Meuse-Argonne—severing the German railway system certainly would have landed a crippling blow. One significant lesson learned from the Meuse-Argonne Offensive was that adaptability to ensure and secure freedom of movement in the consolidation areas is essential for a successful outcome.

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## Chapter 4

### Losing the “Race for Tunisia” in 1942

Thomas E. Hanson

The Allied campaign in North Africa formally ended with the surrender of the Italian First Army on 13 May 1943, one day after German forces capitulated.<sup>1</sup> On 20 May, the victorious allies staged a massive parade down Avenue Gambetta in Tunis to celebrate their first successful combined endeavor. From a custom-built dais, Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and his French counterpart, General Henri Giraud, as well as British generals Sir Harold Alexander and Kenneth Anderson, reviewed more than 28,000 “khaki-clad Americans, black-bereted Englishmen, red-fezzed colonial troops, and brown spahis on horseback.”<sup>2</sup> Basking in the glow of victory, the four leaders acknowledged the salutes of the marching soldiers and “the cheers of thousands of Tunisians [whom] they freed” during the seven-month campaign.<sup>3</sup> This orchestrated show of Allied unity concealed significant British frustration with the generally poor performance of American troops, especially regarding what US Army doctrine now calls Consolidation of Gains.<sup>4</sup> With little understanding of and even less experience with managing warfare at the theater level, the US War Department committed American ground forces to combat in North Africa with “no policy, no plan, no reserves, no training, and no building up for the future.”<sup>5</sup> Compounding this shortcoming, strategic and operational level



Figure 4.1. American soldiers pass the reviewing stand in the Allied victory parade along Avenue Gambetta, Tunis, 20 May 1943. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

planners failed to account for the political cleavages within the French military, a situation that invalidated US preinvasion civil affairs plans. Taken together, these factors unnecessarily increased the time required to defeat Axis forces in Africa.

US Army doctrine in the twenty-first century requires army forces to execute Consolidation of Gains operations before, during, and after engaging in combat operations. As explained by doctrine authors, “the commitment of combat power to consolidate gains should enable tempo” and must therefore not be seen as either a distraction or a diversion of resources.<sup>6</sup> To help commanders avoid doing so, the authors urge planners to “[account] for the required additional forces during operational planning and force flow development” before arriving in the theater.<sup>7</sup> In the run-up to Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa that began on 8 November 1942, American planners lacked the benefit of such guidance. As a result, they failed to properly balance combat and combat support formations with service units to establish and operate the theater. This oversight resulted from many factors, but the principal fault lay in the army’s own misreading of its experience in World War I. Despite mounting evidence in mid-1918 that the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) theater-level sustainment organization, the Services of Supply (SOS), lacked both the capability and capacity to support further combat operations, General John J. Pershing refused to allow any changes to its organization. During summer battles to contain the final German offensives of 1918, the SOS commander, Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord, pleaded with Pershing for permission to make critical organizational adjustments that would enhance SOS’s ability to function; on each occasion, Pershing responded that the immediate needs of the fighting forces took precedence over building a resilient theater-level sustainment enterprise.<sup>8</sup> Pershing rendered this decision unalterable in June 1918 by agreeing with an Allied request that the War Department prioritize infantry and artillery organizations over service troops for shipment to France.<sup>9</sup> The resulting imbalance in the AEF’s tooth-to-tail ratio permanently crippled the SOS’s ability to function as required.<sup>10</sup> Throughout the summer of 1918, US Army Chief of Staff General Peyton C. March sought to persuade Pershing to accept Harbord’s recommendations—interjections which Pershing did not welcome from a man who had only recently been his subordinate. The friction between Pershing and March quickly encompassed all aspects of their relationship, permanently souring all communications between the AEF and the War Department.<sup>11</sup> Because combat operations ended before a sustainment crisis actually occurred, the issue lay unresolved for two decades.<sup>12</sup>

Before the United States became an active belligerent in World War II, both the British and American militaries had agreed that the defeat of Germany—the “predominant member of the Axis”—must be the primary goal of any future alliance.<sup>13</sup> Once war came, however, it quickly became clear that each side interpreted this pledge differently. To US Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall, confronting and defeating the Germans in France offered the soundest military way to achieve Allied strategic goals. As a result, he advocated a reprise of 1918: decisive combat against German forces in France at the earliest opportunity. His British counterpart, Chief of the Imperial General Staff General Alan Brooke, argued just as forcefully that knocking Italy out of the war would be the key to undermining German domination of Europe.<sup>14</sup> British planners at the March 1941 “ABC [America-Britain-Canada] talks” had indeed agreed that Germany constituted the most dangerous threat. They saw a longer war fought in multiple locations and domains as an advantage, however, because it would minimize the chance of a repetition of the losses of the Great War. Such a course of action would also allow Britain to improve its imperial position around the world.<sup>15</sup> After the United States entered the war, British planners at the December 1941 to January 1942 Arcadia conference reinforced this strategy by urging “limited offensives on the Continent as the next stage, conceivably in 1942 but more probably in 1943, ‘either across the Mediterranean or from Turkey into the Balkans, or by simultaneous landings in several of the occupied countries of North-Western Europe.’”<sup>16</sup> In Marshall’s view, however, action anywhere other than northwestern Europe would waste precious resources.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, he believed peripheral activities such as ground operations in North Africa or Italy would inevitably prolong the war, something American planners felt the United States need not endure owing to its tremendous material superiority.<sup>18</sup>

Given the strategic challenges and resource limitations facing the United States and Britain in early 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill agreed to table further discussions of an invasion of North Africa, now known by the code name Operation Gymnast. Further events that spring validated this decision. First, the strategic situation in the Pacific continued to deteriorate, forcing the United States to allocate forces to defend US and Allied interests in Australia and the Dutch East Indies. Second, a string of defeats by Axis forces beginning with Gazala, Libya, in January 1942 and ending at Tobruk the following June reduced to near zero the possibility of a rapid linkup of American and British forces in North Africa.<sup>19</sup> However, the US Navy’s decisive June victory at Midway and planned August landings on Guadalcanal con-

vinced President Roosevelt that Gymnast could now proceed. Accordingly, on 30 July 1942, he directed General Marshall to get American soldiers into combat against the Germans “at the earliest possible date.”<sup>20</sup> Marshall had already reluctantly concluded that North Africa offered the only possible option.<sup>21</sup> The decision meant that for the first time since 1898, the US Army would have to “set the theater” for expeditionary operations.

Three documents comprised the US Army’s capstone doctrine in 1942: Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Field Service Regulations-Operations*, covered tactical methods at the division level and lower; FM 100-15, *Field Service Regulations-Larger Units*, covered operations from field army to theater level; and FM 100-10, *Quartermaster Service in Theater Operations*, discussed sustainment operations at echelon from division to theater.<sup>22</sup> All three manuals emphasized the preservation of flexibility for tactical commanders at the corps and below to focus on defeating enemy forces. As an example, FM 100-15 declared that “a theater commander should be relieved of the administration of any area or activity not important to his mission and for which there is another agency [i.e., a theater-level SOS command] equally capable of performing this duty without conflicting with or jeopardizing theater interests.”<sup>23</sup> Although responsible for all operations conducted within the communications zone (“COMZ” in contemporary slang, equivalent to a combination of the “joint security area” and “consolidation area” in today’s doctrine), few officers in 1942 possessed any direct experience of such responsibilities.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, most FM 100-15 chapters contained little practical guidance. In addressing potential Consolidation of Gains operations, FM 100-15 recommended a laissez-faire approach by a theater headquarters, assigning local commanders to develop detailed estimates for the establishment, operation, and security of the rear area: “The study and determination of these [requirements] may, and ordinarily should, be delegated to commanders of the next lower combat echelons who are in close touch with the enemy and actual conditions of terrain.”<sup>25</sup>

Doctrine writers assumed that the division and corps staffs assigned to Operation Gymnast/Torch would have sufficient time to collect, analyze, and disseminate detailed intelligence while in contact with the enemy. This assumption rested on the AEF’s experience in a very mature theater in 1918, however, and did not reflect requirements in North Africa in 1942. By taking little account of observed warfare since 1939, the War Department also demonstrated a surprising dearth of imagination. As codified by then-chief of staff Pershing back in the 1920s, the Army’s concept for “modern” warfare did not in 1942 seem to appreciate the importance of movement and maneuver while not in contact with an enemy,

or the potential degrading effects on operational tempo of time, terrain, and logistics. Moreover, US Army doctrine minimized any consideration of civil affairs in the rear areas of a theater command. This approach may have resulted from the US Army's institutional distaste for exercising civil authority and for involvement or humanitarian assistance—attitudes acquired during Reconstruction, the long pacification campaign in the Philippines, and the experiences of the Army of Occupation in Coblenz, Germany, after World War I. Regardless of origin, this mindset resulted in an inadequate force structure for effective civil affairs or military government operations in 1942.<sup>26</sup>

Under General Eisenhower's leadership, the Anglo-American Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) planned to build combat power in North Africa deliberately, postponing major combat until the Allies possessed a significant material and numerical edge over their enemies.<sup>27</sup> Reflecting this, Eisenhower consistently prioritized the seizure of a "firm base" in Northwest Africa over a rapid seizure of Tunisia:

In late planning whenever scarcity of resources brought into conflict the necessity for obtaining the Northwestern ports surely and quickly, and the great desirability of carrying along troops and equipment suited to long, overland fighting [i.e., sufficient transportation, engineer, ordnance, and quartermaster units to make sustained maneuver warfare possible], the latter invariably had to give way.<sup>28</sup>

American planners knew so little of expeditionary warfare, however, that they only achieved even this modest goal thanks to an absence of coordinated resistance. According to US Army Ground Forces (AGF) observers:

It did not seem important to the personnel loading the ships [in Virginia or Northern Ireland] to load TAT (To Accompany Troops) equipment on the same ship with the troops. If this equipment is on the same convoy, they appear satisfied. With the convoy scheduled to land at ports separated by several hundred miles, some TAT equipment went to the wrong port. . . . Officers who realized the situation upon debarking were not permitted to make suggestions which would correct faulty loading. They were told to mind their own business and not interfere.<sup>29</sup>

Col. William H. Hendrickson, chief of staff for the 34th Infantry Division (comprising the bulk of the "Eastern Task Force" that seized Algiers), related to the AGF team that poor load plans might have led to disaster

had the French used their assets to greater effect in opposing the Anglo-American landings:

After an amphibious landing was made at a certain location, it was learned that there was imminent danger of a tank counterattack. Artillery was not available at the moment. Antitank weapons had been ordered loaded on the ship to be available on a moment's notice. When they were hurriedly called for, it was found that passenger cars for staff work had to be unloaded first before they could get to the antitank weapons.<sup>30</sup>

This would not be the last time that peacetime habits of efficiency and unexamined assumptions about French intentions would hamper attempts to rapidly build combat power.

The United States was not at war with France in 1942. When France surrendered to Germany in June 1940, the Roosevelt Administration retained diplomatic representation to France's new fascist government, led by Marshal Phillipe Petain from the city of Vichy, capital of "Unoccupied France." Although relations between the two countries were strained, Roosevelt allowed limited grain and petroleum exports to France as a form of humanitarian aid to the French civil population.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, when planning the North African campaign, "the Allies had no political course in mind other than to win campaigns in the field while allowing the French to work out their own internal problems, unhampered and unaided."<sup>32</sup> President Roosevelt's directive to Robert Murphy, his representative in North Africa, reflected this general desire to focus on destroying Axis forces without becoming mired in internecine French quarrels. While Civil Affairs officers' strategic estimates reflected the possibility of either armed resistance to or active collaboration with the Allies by French North African authorities, the

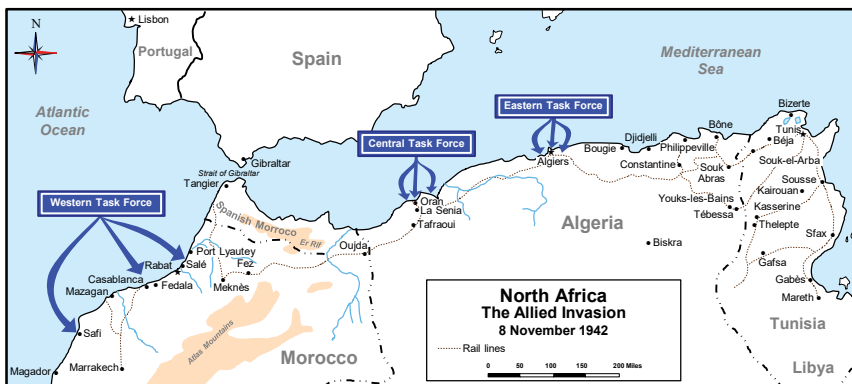


Figure 4.2. Operation Torch Map, 8 November 1942. Created by Army University Press.



Americans intended to minimize their interactions with French officials. To that end, the pre-Torch political affiliations of incumbent officeholders (i.e., pro-Vichy functionaries) would not matter if those persons agreed to perform the technical duties of their respective positions in support of Allied needs. In other words, “Allied leaders intended to leave the non-co-operating French there to the mercies of the friendly French, while preventing acts of private vengeance.”<sup>33</sup> The political violence and civic disorder that resulted, culminating in the assassination of French Commander-in-Chief Admiral François Darlan by a member of the anti-Vichy resistance, should have been anticipated in preinvasion planning.<sup>34</sup>



Figure 4.3. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and French General Henri Honoré Giraud at Casablanca, 19 January 1943. Courtesy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

Lacking any concrete experience with expeditionary warfare, General Eisenhower “repeatedly prioritized reducing the risk to the initial landings, even if this increased the chance that it would be more difficult to conduct follow-on operations.”<sup>35</sup> Front-loading of combat troops in initial waves was sound practice for the seizure and defense of a beachhead in the face of determined opposition.

When the enemy was presumed to be an ally-in-waiting, however, such decisions constituted destructive risk-aversion. By late October 1942, negotiations between the United States and Britain on one hand and General Giraud on the other indicated that French forces in North Africa might offer only token resistance to an Allied invasion.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, this knowledge did not cause anyone to address the woeful shortage of service troops allocated to Operation Torch and the subsequent campaign against the Germans and Italians. Some Allied planners apparently believed the French would make up any shortfalls. Within AFHQ, a belief bordering on religious dogma arose that “the spirit of Lafayette would descend and induce the French to coalesce as one in support of the Allied cause.”<sup>37</sup> To set the conditions for French cooperation, AFHQ’s General Order Number

4, issued 11 October 1942, stipulated that “regardless of resistance, the French are [to be considered] friendly and are to be maintained in their government.”<sup>38</sup> With this order, many Civil Affairs officers found themselves sidelined, or tasked with non-Civil Affairs duties.<sup>39</sup> Worse, with this one decision Eisenhower and his principal advisors—civilian as well as military—removed as a planning factor all of the internal problems that a newly liberated area might pose to operational success. Sporadic but determined French resistance to the initial landings across North Africa as well as the subsequent settling of political scores by anti-Vichy French activists exposed the flaws in such thinking.<sup>40</sup> As Eisenhower ruefully admitted later, planning for Operation Torch did not accurately assess the inclination of local French military and civilian authorities to acquiesce to an Allied invasion.<sup>41</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the German high command took advantage of Allied reticence to antagonize the French. Within two weeks of the invasion, the Germans used air- and sea-lift to reinforce Tunisia with more than 11,000 soldiers plus tanks, half-tracks, and trucks—a “worst-case” scenario in the view of the AFHQ staff, whose plans assumed a much weaker German force.<sup>42</sup> By the end of November, German General Walther Nehring commanded five newly arrived divisions—including an armored division—under his XC Corps.<sup>43</sup> A subsequent British intelligence report sardonically termed the new, less-favorable force ratios “unfortunate.”<sup>44</sup> French forces in Tunisia were under the direction of the Vichy resident-general, Vice Admiral Jean-Pierre Estéva, in whom Allied planners had invested unrealistically high hopes; Estéva remained immobile, neither opposing the Germans nor aiding the Allies.<sup>45</sup> Worse, the American joint chiefs queried Eisenhower on 10 December regarding “independent and reliable” reports about resurgent Vichy feeling in North Africa.<sup>46</sup> Specifically, they wondered why it appeared that no decisive action had been taken to contain political violence, retribution, and an incipient anti-Allied insurgency.<sup>47</sup>

After-action reports included sections on how better to prepare for “rear area” control in the future. In his own report on lessons to be learned from the initial phases of the North Africa campaign, Col. Benjamin M. Sawbridge, the AFHQ’s G-1, lamented the inadequacies of pre-Torch planning for military personnel to exercise civilian authorities.<sup>48</sup> Eisenhower’s deputy, Maj. Gen. Mark W. Clark, complained to his aide, “What a mess. Why do soldiers have to get mixed up in things like this?”<sup>49</sup> As Eisenhower ruefully admitted to Marshall in early January 1943, “It will be many weeks yet before we can perform the military tasks in front of us and still be strong enough to impose our will arbitrarily upon the local

French.”<sup>50</sup> He did not acknowledge that the original Torch plan dedicated far too few infantry or military police units to rear area control or that the endemic political violence inevitably delayed Allied plans for defeating their German and Italian enemies. To make up for this shortfall, some US division commanders ordered their organic artillery battalions to serve as military policemen after hostilities ceased.<sup>51</sup>

Eisenhower soon recognized that he needed to move Maj. Gen. George S. Patton’s idle Western Task Force from Casablanca to the front in Tunisia ninety days earlier than planned, but lacked the resources to do so.<sup>52</sup> Some of the challenges resulted from Tunisian topography. Mountains, rivers, salt marshes, dry or shallow lakes, and deserts restricted large-scale mounted maneuver to a handful of roads and rail lines within the coastal corridor.<sup>53</sup> A disagreeably cold winter—with temperatures at or below freezing and the onset of winter rains and blowing snow—added to the general misery and difficulty of ground movement as well as air operations.<sup>54</sup>

By far the most significant factor, however, was the shortage of transportation assets—both road and rail—caused by the deliberate overemphasis on shipping combat troops, just like in 1918. Although British forces established working rail service from Algiers well into Tunisia and just over 100 miles from their front-line troops by 20 November, the Americans faced larger challenges.<sup>55</sup> Having landed much farther west than the British, US units would need to cover hundreds of miles just to reach the Tunisian border, but lacked the means to do so efficiently. The decrepit colonial railway system, never robust, had no potential for expansion; French authorities had shelved a planned electrification of the Algerian rail system when war broke out in 1939. The obsolescent steam locomotives in colonial service by late 1942 burned excessive amounts of coal, meaning much of their pulling power had to be used to bring along sufficient fuel for the trip. The colonial railway also lacked cargo carriers strong enough to handle an M-4 Sherman tank. Moreover, because service units remained a low priority in planning for Torch, basic supplies like railway repair stocks were woefully inadequate. A US Army Service Forces (ASF) observer diplomatically attributed such failures to a “lack of balance in original requisitions.”<sup>56</sup> Indeed, despite the early arrival of the 727th Railway Operations Battalion and a maintenance battalion from the US Army Transportation Corps, the Mediterranean Base Section railway service devoted its initial weeks of operation to establishing itself, not supporting combat operations.<sup>57</sup>

The eventual establishment of the Office of the Director General for Military Railways did not immediately solve all problems. Until almost



Figure 4.4. Captured colonial railway train at Saint-Leu, November 1942. Coal-powered steam engines like this one proved unable to support Allied transportation needs. US Army photo.

the day of the final Axis surrender in North Africa, confusion reigned over who, exactly, owned the responsibility for railroad repair and construction. A 17 November 1942 War Department directive tasked the US Army Transportation Corps with operation, maintenance, and rehabilitation of railways, but assigned new railway construction to the Corps of Engineers. ASF observers noted, “Replacement of a destroyed railroad bridge might be either [rehabilitation or new construction], and supplies [would] be ordered by both Engineers and railway personnel,” unnecessarily burdening an already unwieldy sustainment enterprise.<sup>58</sup>

Combat Command B (CCB) of the US 1st Armored Division shipped its less-weighty M3 Stuart tanks by rail from Oran to Le Kef before they were unloaded for further movement by road. Having ascertained that the railway system as it existed could handle no additional traffic, CCB’s commander, Brig. Gen. Lunsford E. Oliver, requested permission from AFHQ to road-march his wheeled vehicles and half-tracks the several hundred miles to the front line. The response he received highlights the difficulty of shifting from a peacetime to a combat mindset. The officer to whom Lunsford communicated his request denied it on the grounds that such a lengthy ground movement would use up much of the half-tracks’ usable between-rebuild life. As Eisenhower himself later observed, “The young staff officer was not to blame. . . . He had been trained assiduously, through years of peace, in the eternal need for economy, for avoiding waste.”<sup>59</sup> The



Figure 4.5. Supplies unloaded at the docks in Algiers were stored outdoors, sometimes for weeks, due to the lack of transportation to move them to units at the front. US Army photo.

transformation of the US Army from peacetime to a war footing had only just begun at D+14 in North Africa.

Attempts to solve the transportation problem took many forms. A Royal Navy project to establish a coastal ferry system foundered owing to a distinct lack of French enthusiasm for supporting their once-and-future ally.<sup>60</sup> A British decision to send a large percentage of the needed assault forces to the port of Bône by coastal shipping temporarily paralyzed the limited facilities at that location. Unfortunately, a subsequent decision to motorize the British 78th Division required stripping Bône of all its cargo-carrying vehicles, further degrading its potential as a solution to Allied sustainment problems.<sup>61</sup> For the Americans, their inability to centrally control their transportation assets across the theater was a significant challenge. When V Corps arrived at the end of November, its first task was to “establish a communications network that could link together the logistics and transportation nodes scattered throughout the rear area.”<sup>62</sup> The shortage of vehicles and inability to control movement forced AFHQ to choose from maintaining forces already in Tunisia, building up supplies for a

major future offensive, or moving the Western and Central Task Forces from Morocco and Oran into Tunisia. Had American planners possessed a greater appreciation for the sustainment efforts required to support offensive maneuver operations, the Allies could well have won the race for Tunis in November 1942. With Tunis, Bizerte, and the Tunisian coast under Allied control, Axis forces in North Africa—cut off from their European lifeline—would have succumbed much earlier and at a much lower cost in lives. Because they underestimated the importance of proper consolidation of the gains following the successful assault landings at Oran and Algiers, American planners failed to conclude the North African campaign as early as they might have.

With few resources at his disposal, Eisenhower's only recourse in December 1942 was to submit an emergency requisition for 5,400 additional trucks directly from the United States.<sup>63</sup> The British at least possessed the ability to dynamically re-task their trucking assets. The Americans had no such option. As campaign planning evolved from July to October, maritime load planners had eliminated more than 10,000 wheeled vehicles intended for North Africa in order to meet Eisenhower's priority for putting infantrymen in precious shipping space. As noted above, cargo loading conducted according to peacetime efficiencies further reduced the number of vehicles immediately available in the weeks following the landings. At the last minute, port officials at Norfolk substituted amphibious vehicles for standard cargo trucks, "each of which required four additional feet of cargo space for which no account had been taken in loading calculations."<sup>64</sup> In an attempt to find a local solution to the transportation problem, US Army purchasing agents wandered the streets of Oran and other cities, armed with silver ingots to barter for vehicles of any kind to make up the shortfall.<sup>65</sup> All units suffered equally; a US Army Air Forces observer sullenly reported that newly-arrived aircrews were forced to live like infantrymen:

The individual's first necessity . . . after having parked their airplane in a dispersed position, is to dig a slit trench nearby to flop into when the inevitable Ju-88s [*Junkers* Ju-88 German twin-engine multi-role bombers] arrive. Then he **walks** half a mile or so away from the plane and the other visible targets, carrying personal equipment and food (there was **no** transportation available other than that vitally necessary to haul bombs) and he digs in for the night.<sup>66</sup>

In hindsight, American indifference to theater sustainment seems shockingly naïve. Senior US Army logisticians did not foresee the prob-



Figure 4.6. US Army Air Force crewmen at breakfast in the North African Desert, January 1943. US Army photo.

lem, or could not make their concerns heard. Under General Marshall's deliberate expansion plan for the US Army, service troops would comprise just 11.8 percent of the total force by the end of 1942, despite the precedent set in 1918 when the AEF's SOS—the deployed portion of the total US Army—comprised 34 percent of the total American contingent in France.<sup>67</sup>

Part of the blame belongs to Churchill, who on 26 August 1942 urged Eisenhower to throw caution to the winds: "Careful planning in every detail . . . will ruin the enterprise in fact."<sup>68</sup> Disagreement among the Combined Chiefs of Staff over the scale of the invasion further inhibited detailed sustenance planning; as late as 31 August, the US Army Service Forces war diary complained that "no decisions reference assembly of [service] units can be made pending final decision as to mission of the [invasion] force."<sup>69</sup> Even worse, many service unit personnel (but not their equipment) had

been “bumped” from transports to the United Kingdom owing to Marshall’s fixation on front-loading combat elements for the now-abandoned Operation Sledgehammer. The War Department had reassigned those service units to Torch, forcing an emergency effort to reequip them before shipping out for Africa.<sup>70</sup> Finally, planning for a Mediterranean Base Section (MBS) of the European Theater SOS began only in September 1942, under the direction of then-Col. Thomas B. Larkin, chief of staff to Maj. Gen. J. C. H. Lee of the European Theater SOS. Larkin, an experienced engineer officer, set to work immediately to create an organization that could facilitate the anticipated ground campaign. Shipping priorities, however, prevented MBS from becoming fully operational until 8 December, a full month after the landings. As late as mid-January 1943, however, MBS remained unable to fulfill the minimum supply requirements of tactical units in Tunisia.<sup>71</sup> By then, the Germans had recovered the initiative.

In his report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on Operation Torch, Eisenhower identified two principal factors for the Allied failure to capture Tunisia in 1942. The first was the weather, which “appeared to be our worst enemy, crippling both our offense and defense.”<sup>72</sup> The second factor was the French: “We only just failed to win the race. What finally tipped the scales decisively against us was . . . that almost morbid sense of honor which had led the French initially to resist us, their deliverers, while they were leaving their back door open to the enemy.”<sup>73</sup> Eisenhower did not downplay the role of logistical shortages in losing the “Race for Tunisia,” but he glossed over the inadequate sustainment planning, exposing a gap in his own understanding of the linkage between intelligence, logistics, and operations. The desire to slough off all administrative and logistical concerns to subordinate echelons constituted a persistent theme of AFHQ culture.<sup>74</sup> In addition to highlighting the Americans’ lack of operational proficiency, Eisenhower also failed to acknowledge the inherent challenges faced by two allies with no relevant mutual experience attempting to conduct a combined campaign against an equally powerful enemy coalition. Additionally, the Allied logistical plan for Operation Torch rested on unfounded assumptions and inaccurate estimates. Above the battalion or brigade group level, the Allies simply could not capitalize on the success of the initial landings in November: “The British 1st Army [sic] culminated just short of overrunning northern Tunisia because it could not mass enough combat units to penetrate or overwhelm the Axis defensive line.”<sup>75</sup> A full accounting of the Axis retention of Tunisia after December, however, must credit German and Italian battlefield performance as the primary reason.



The immature civil affairs plan approved for the North Africa campaign also offered multiple lessons for planners focused on follow-on operations. Certainly, Eisenhower and the AFHQ staff should have gone to much greater lengths to understand the capabilities and limitations of French military forces in North Africa. Preinvasion estimates of a relatively robust French North African army proved wildly inaccurate; Lucien Truscott recalled in his memoirs that those forces possessed no antitank weapons to speak of and no stocks of modern small arms or ammunition, uniforms, boots, communications equipment of any kind other than signal flags, rations, artillery, or modern vehicles.<sup>76</sup> *New Yorker* journalist-turned-war-correspondent A. J. Liebling recounted that General Giraud complained to him that French forces in Tunisia were being short-changed by their putative allies, who were “so rich in modern materials.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, Liebling described General Alphonse Juin’s defense of the Eastern Dorsale in January 1943 as “goats set out to lure a tiger.”<sup>78</sup> Eisenhower admitted that he could do little to equip the French; an abortive attempt to provide some antitank and antiaircraft guns to a single French regiment failed owing to “the pressing urgency of our own [needs].”<sup>79</sup> The Allies, and especially the Americans, would need to become much better at what the US Army now calls “security force assistance” if they expected liberated peoples to become allies in the fight against totalitarianism.

The Allies learned a number of lessons from fighting the Germans and Italians in North Africa, and gained invaluable experience at all levels of war. Most importantly, the campaign served as Eisenhower’s baptism of fire as a theater commander; by early 1944 he fully understood the global linkages between industrial output, sealift capacity, and operational momentum. In doing so, he came much closer to acknowledging that “any campaign that does not account for the requirement to consolidate gains is . . . likely to result in a protracted war. . . . Planning should also determine, based upon the available resources, where and when to accept risk in terms of balancing the need to consolidate gains against maintaining the desired tempo of an operation.”<sup>80</sup> Luckily for the Allied cause, Eisenhower proved to be humble, flexible, and willing to learn from experience.<sup>81</sup>

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## **Chapter 5**

### **Consolidating Gains in Sicily, 1943**

Gregory S. Hospodor

When Allied preparations for the invasion of Axis-held Sicily, Operation Husky, began soon after the Casablanca Conference ended in January 1943, planning for combat operations against Axis forces and securing expected gains occurred side-by-side. This was no happy accident. Establishing an effective military government was a central consideration for the US Army when conducting operations in enemy territory—a lesson from its occupation of the Rhineland after World War I.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the War Department established training programs for Military Government and Civil Affairs almost immediately after the United States entered World War II. Experiences in North Africa's Operation Torch and Tunisian campaign tempered prewar doctrine but also affirmed the soundness of planning for security and stability operations.<sup>2</sup>

The guiding principle of these efforts was that securing and stabilizing liberated areas—vital aspects of consolidating gains in today's doctrinal terminology—was a military necessity. This would secure logistical support areas, further national policy, and meet the obligations of international law. In addition and perhaps most importantly, it would mitigate strategic attrition, allowing the maximum amount of combat power to be deployed against enemy forces.<sup>3</sup>

Given the link between combat and security/stability operations, the US Army insisted upon unified command of both efforts under a military commander despite resistance from President Roosevelt, who believed that civilian agencies should lead the latter. By the time of the invasion of Sicily and because of the experience with civilian agencies' involvement in North Africa, unified military command became a reality with Eisenhower's deputy, Field Marshal Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, tapped to serve as both ground commander and military governor. Although the establishment of military governance was fundamentally a coalition enterprise, this chapter focuses primarily upon the American experience in Sicily, specifically in the Seventh Army area of operations during the campaign and with the planning and preparation for the invasion. Efforts to consolidate gains were generally successful, but they revealed friction points. Experience here informed future British and American planning and action. Thus, Sicily was part of an evolutionary learning chain extending in time and space from North Africa into Germany.

## Plans and Preparations

Whereas North Africa saw friendly French and Allied civilians playing a large role in the stabilization process, the invasion and occupation of Sicily marked a distinctly different problem. For the first time, Allied forces would conduct combat operations and consolidate gains in the territory of a major adversary. No longer could a commander at any level assume a relatively benign security environment or an intact and cooperative civil administration and infrastructure. Although Sicily was more developed than North Africa, stabilizing a population of approximately four million residents would make greater demands upon coalition forces. Consequently, planners addressed seemingly every aspect of Sicilian political and economic life, including but not limited to governance, courts, police, prisons, the fire, postal, water, transportation, power generation, telecommunication, and medical services, civil defense, education, monuments and fine arts, government records and archives, rationing, civilian supply and relief, agriculture, fisheries, the press, wages, banks, insurance, private and state-owned businesses, and acquisitions.<sup>4</sup> All this led to a distinct shift in the approach to consolidating gains from that practiced in North Africa.

At the Casablanca Conference, the Western Allies committed to the policy of accepting only the unconditional surrender of Axis belligerents. The question, of course, was what would come after this end was achieved. In May 1943, and with regard to Italy specifically, President Franklin D. Roosevelt defined the relationship between unconditional surrender and what would come after:

Most certainly we cannot tell the Italians that if they cease hostilities they will have peace with honor. We cannot get away from unconditional surrender. All we can tell them is that they will be treated with the intention that the Italian people be reconstituted into a nation in accordance with the principles of self-determination. This latter would, of course, not include any form of fascism or dictatorship.<sup>5</sup>

The Allies would dictate the peace but with an informal, yet firm, commitment to stewarding Italy toward eventual representative self-government free of fascism or authoritarianism. Clearly, the near-term approach to Consolidation of Gains had to support achievement of this long-term end. How the Allies initially established civil control and administration would set the stage for what came after.

In North Africa, the US Army had not wanted to assume full responsibility for civil affairs. Experience there as well as the close relationship



between purely military operations and those within newly occupied territory, however, drove home the need for military governance during the period of so-called “military necessity.”<sup>6</sup> Having assumed governance from civilian control, Allied Force Headquarters, which commanded all Allied operational forces in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, created a new Anglo-American organization, Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT), on 1 May 1943.<sup>7</sup> AMGOT planned for and supervised military government efforts in Sicily. It also recruited Civil Affairs officers (CAOs), trained them, and tasked them for the upcoming invasion.<sup>8</sup> In theory at least, unity of effort would be achieved by making the military commander of the combat forces assigned to Husky (15th Army Group), Field Marshal Alexander, military governor as well. Day-to-day supervision of AMGOT, however, fell to Maj. Gen. Francis James Rennell Rodd, 2nd Baron Rennell, as chief Civil Affairs officer (CCAO). In keeping with the fundamental coalition nature of the military governance work,

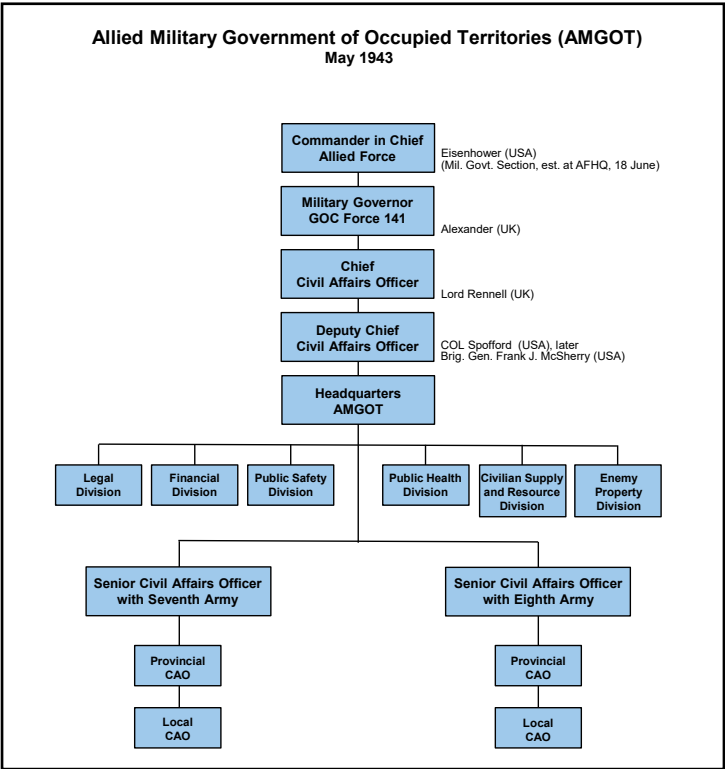


Figure 5.1. Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT) Organizational Chart. Created by Army University Press.

Rennell (UK), who had an American deputy, reported to Alexander (UK), who then reported to Eisenhower (US) through Brig. Gen. Julius Holmes (US), the head of the military government section at Allied Force Headquarters. This complex arrangement left the majority of authority with the US military, but helped unify endeavors regarding military governance at the highest level. Efforts in the field would also reflect a coalition character. Although Sicily was divided initially into American (Seventh Army) and Commonwealth (Eighth Army) zones of operation, AMGOT teams in both areas were multinational, with a CAO ratio of two-thirds of the dominant nationality to one-third alternate in each army zone.

At the outset, AMGOT consisted of small executive, planning, and education divisions that moved quickly to resource its efforts in the coming invasion. The major problem was that few soldiers were qualified to serve in Civil Affairs in Sicily. To meet the anticipated requirement for 390 officers and 469 enlisted men, AMGOT set up a school in North Africa and recruited graduates of preexisting Civil Affairs and military government schools in the United Kingdom and the United States. It also directly commissioned civilians with desired skills. If military experience was not a priority in selecting individuals to execute the AMGOT plan, expertise was. Consequently, AMGOT teams at all levels were diverse, possessing law, finance, public safety, public health, logistics, property management, and other competencies.<sup>9</sup>

The AMGOT plan was primarily the brainchild of Col. Charles M. Spofford (US), AMGOT deputy and deputy chief of Civil Affairs in Sicily.<sup>10</sup> The guiding vision for Spofford's planning team was that indirect control—military governance using Italian personnel under Allied military supervision—was the best method; following the economy of force principle, AMGOT allocated minimum essential resources to the important, but secondary, effort of regulating enemy civilians. Although AMGOT became the new *de jure* sovereign authority (replacing fascist control), this arrangement legitimized existing institutions that delivered the necessities of everyday life albeit during extraordinary wartime circumstances. In short, the practice encouraged Sicilians to address problems themselves, thereby accelerating the transition to “normal” civil control under AMGOT guidance. Accordingly, those involved with securing and stabilizing Sicily practiced a pull rather than push approach to the problems they confronted—forcing or, more kindly, enabling Italian civilians to solve issues themselves. As one Civil Affairs officer serving in Palermo told a *Saturday Evening Post* reporter in August 1943: “You understand that we encourage these people to do things for themselves whenever pos-

sible. There are only a few hundred of us, and millions of them. Sooner or later, they must reconstruct their own communities without the benefit of fascism or any other kind of dictatorship. The sooner they get started, the better.”<sup>11</sup> At the tactical level, CAOs oversaw the local administration; civil police officers teamed with them were to do the same for the local Carabinieri, Italy’s national police. Direct support was to be provided only when necessary. AMGOT did not intend to oversee every Sicilian village, focusing instead on communities with more than 12,000 residents and relying on Sicily’s government and civil institutions to request aid. AMGOT soldiers on the ground would be responsible for sorting out what indirect control meant in practice.

The principle of indirect control conflicted with the Anglo-American commitment to remove all vestiges of fascist influence. Most Sicilians viewed fascist governance as outside rule imposed by a party dominated by northern Italians—a practice woven into the fabric of Sicilian political life by decades of fascist control. For example, anyone who desired to advance to civil administration leadership was required to profess support for Mussolini’s regime. In 1943 Sicily, the vast majority of those responsible for the effective functioning of public institutions and infrastructure professed loyalty to the fascist cause even if they harbored other feelings privately. This caused problems with completing essential stability tasks such as establishing civil security, restoring essential services, and supporting civil control and governance—as well as economic and infrastructure development. Confronted with the choice between expunging fascism immediately and administrative efficiency, AMGOT chose the latter. It suspended all political activity and disestablished purely fascist organizations, but recognized that tolerating fascists with special skills was necessary, at least in the short term, to reestablish and maintain order. Effective military government, as the Seventh Army AMGOT plan articulated, “[relied] combat troops of the necessity of providing for civil administration.”<sup>12</sup> The first priority was always to defeat Axis military forces.

AMGOT’s staff had a well-developed understanding of the need for transitions or phases in military plans. As a November 1943 article on military government explained:

The first and controlling responsibility of an occupying force is to ensure the safety of combat troops by stabilizing the area; the second is to guarantee the safety, health, and well-being of the civilian people. The United States Army divides military occupation into three separate phases. The first occurs from the mo-

ment of invasion, during which the principal functions of military government are hasty provision of relief and restoration of order. The second phase occurs after combat troops have advanced to other areas and the region under military government has become a “communications area.” The final phase occurs after the fighting has ceased; it continues until the governor decides that a civil government may be established with safety.<sup>13</sup>

Although clear and logical in concept, transitions would prove messy on the ground in Sicily.

Phase one operations characterized the campaign in Sicily. The primary agent at the outset was a division’s security section, comprised mainly of soldiers with judge advocate general, military police, counterintelligence, and Civil Affairs specialties (attached from AMGOT). Ideally, a division security section would hand over to a corps security section and so on across echelons until AMGOT assumed control. In theory, AMGOT officers attached to a division or corps would “peel off” to assume control of areas assigned by AMGOT; presumably, this would provide continuity to the civil control effort. In practice, many CAOs remained with “their” division and focused on maintaining relationships and procedures with combat units over AMGOT priorities. Transitions were dynamic; timing of handovers was based on the pace of combat operations rather than the need to complete essential security and stability tasks or the availability of appropriate resources—and regardless of the level of destruction left in combat’s wake.

Finally, AMGOT planners knew combat operations would disrupt the island’s economy and distribution network. Although they assumed that Sicily was largely self-sufficient regarding food, they requested 13,552 short tons of foodstuffs to meet a basic-scale ration for the estimated 500,000 residents who would be left in Sicily’s cities. Furthermore, they stockpiled wheat (because the harvest might be interrupted), essential medical and sanitary supplies (including soap, drugs, and vaccines), and coal, charcoal, and petroleum products. Significantly, AMGOT possessed no organic transport for distribution, relying instead on tactical units.<sup>14</sup>

### **Execution: Improvisation Was the Rule**

When the invasion commenced on 10 July 1943, Seventh Army possessed a robust plan and specialized personnel for consolidating gains. This being said, improvisation characterized operations in the field—largely due to the relative paucity of resources and personnel committed to the



As soldiers of the US Army's 1st, 3rd, and 45th Infantry Divisions and 2nd Armored Division struggled ashore on D and D+1, seventeen Civil Affairs officers landed with them.<sup>16</sup> Most were assigned to division security sections, working alongside counterintelligence and military police soldiers. As the fighting progressed, division security sections began consolidating gains. Although many maneuver units informally addressed the issues confronting the civilians they found in the backwash of combat operations, their focus was necessarily forward toward the enemy on the next line of hills. Thus, most efforts to consolidate gains fell to those who followed behind. The second batch of sixty-two CAOs attached to Seventh Army arrived on 28 July; by that point, the capital city of Palermo had fallen and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's forces had swung east along the north coast toward the vital port city of Messina. By the end of the campaign, there were just over 250 CAOs on the island.<sup>17</sup>

There was no "typical" experience with consolidating gains in Sicily, nor was the process solely a Civil Affairs concern. Still, the 1st Division's security section may serve as an example of the whole. After landing at Gela, the division engaged in a month-long nearly continuous war of movement, covering roughly 150 miles and punctuated by sharp actions at places such as Barrafranca, Nicosia, and, especially, Troina. Consolidating gains in the division's zone largely fell to Lt. Col. Robert H. Kilroe's security section, which successively occupied thirteen cities over the course of the campaign.<sup>18</sup> On average, the security section worked in a city for no more than four days before handing it off to AMGOT soldiers. There was no doctrinal standard for the size of a security section during World War II; when it came ashore at Gela on 10 July, Kilroe's section consisted of five officers, including himself, and five enlisted men for clerical and language support. During the campaign, the number of personnel assigned or attached to the security section grew, but no record exists of its exact composition on each day of the campaign. In any case, it would be of little importance because the security section cooperated closely with other division, corps, army, and AMGOT elements as necessary to accomplish its mission in an extremely dynamic operational environment.

The range of activities was astounding, conformed to a common pattern (with exceptions), and blended security and stabilization tasks. For example, a security section team composed of Lieutenant Colonel Kilroe, two captains (one a CAO), three interpreters (including a native Sicilian), two enlisted men, and a gaggle of military policemen arrived in Nicosia, a city of 17,104 in central Sicily, at 1430 on 28 July after passing through heavy mortar fire. They met with the mayor at City Hall, and Kilroe and

his team peppered the mayor with questions, learning there were no dead to bury, grain needed to be milled, and Nicosia's electricity and water supply were down. The bread on hand was enough to feed the city for one day. The assessment completed, Kilroe scheduled a meeting with the mayor and all remaining city officials at 0630 the following day. He ordered the mayor to assemble a crew of workers immediately to begin battle damage repairs and told him to announce a city-wide curfew starting at 2000.

At 0630 on 29 July, Kilroe set about instituting local Italian civil control. He met with the mayor and his secretary, the police chief, water engineer, electrical engineer, sanitation engineer, and head priest. Kilroe explained the purpose of the occupation—"to keep the people safe"—and indicated that no trouble would arise if the leaders and people cooperated. He advised that his team would post proclamations and ordinances defining the terms of military governance, which would be strictly enforced, but that the Army intended to maintain ordinary civil administration functions under its current leadership.<sup>19</sup> He then solicited questions, allaying their fears of disorder.

Establishing civil control quickly was the highest priority. Kilroe's team worked with local officials to collect firearms, register medically furloughed Italian soldiers, put together a list of expert workers, clean city streets and buildings, open shops, close and guard the city's house of prostitution, prohibit the sale of wine or liquor to American soldiers, and repair water mains and the electrical grid. Local priests were told to get the word out that the Army would follow the intent of President Roosevelt and the American people to protect the church and respect private property. Nicosia's twenty-two Carabinieri officers were issued bolt-action Carcano carbines but not pistols (presumably because carbines were less easily concealed); the Carabinieri, along with the city's twelve firemen, were given armbands and resumed their work under supervision. Kilroe's team solicited help from 1st Infantry Division engineers to repair Nicosia's water mains. The most dramatic event of the day was a food riot at the provincial prison—a problem that Kilroe creatively solved. He arranged to release provincial funds to Nicosia's mayor so he could pay thirty-one prison guards. The riot had resulted because the guards had been given a portion of prisoner rations in lieu of pay, a disruption caused by combat operations. To help relieve tension at the prison, Kilroe also secured 200 kilograms of meat from a local butcher with the same provincial funds.

On 30 July, the establishment of civil control continued. Military police conducted a cordon search of the town for people who did not have

proper identification. Those detained were sent to the counterintelligence section. Military police also conducted several raids to search for firearms, part of efforts to induce the population to turn in firearms more quickly. Finally, the military police found four small ammunition dumps, which an ordnance officer made safe. The other highlights of the day were a visit by AMGOT's Major Franklin—doubtless to prepare for handing over responsibility for the city—as well as restoration of electric power and actions to dissuade black-marketeering.

On 31 July, Kilroe briefed Franklin on the current situation in Nicosia and gave the AMGOT leader the keys to the bank, telephone and telegraph exchange, house of prostitution, school, post office, and other government buildings. Kilroe visited the local prison and found the conditions deplorable. As noted previously, he took actions to remedy the situation. He also arranged for rations to be delivered to the hospital, “paroled” a detained Italian general, received the good news that the water supply had been repaired, and advised the division quartermaster that 146 mules were available for use.

By 1 August, Nicosia was functioning, if not perfectly, under civil control. Kilroe's team briefed two more AMGOT officers about preparations to hand over the city and requisitioned a warehouse for the storage of supplies. On 5 August, 1st Division ceded responsibility of the town to AMGOT.<sup>20</sup>

Kilroe commanded fewer than fifty soldiers and later reflected that much more could have been achieved on both the stability and security fronts. However, his security section set the conditions for military governance through indirect control. Most significantly, Nicosia—which rested astride the 1st Division's main line of communications—did not drain resources from the major combat at Troina. Here, as all over Sicily, perfect was not allowed to intrude on good enough. Perhaps this is the greatest compliment to the soldiers charged with consolidating gains, what they achieved did indeed prove good enough.

### **Assessment: Indirect Control Affirmed and Lessons Learned**

The experiment with military governance was a success. At the macro-level, the principle of indirect control had been affirmed. Experience proved that where more reliance was placed on local officials, a new and stable normal returned more quickly. This achieved the goal of economy of force, allowing precious manpower and resources to be directed toward the enemy rather than focused on problems in rear areas. To be sure, some units such as the 2nd Armored Division conducted area security and stability tasks behind the lines.<sup>21</sup> But once Palermo fell and Seventh Army



turned east into highly restrictive terrain, 2nd Armored found itself largely without a job; some of its organic assets, namely artillery, were attached to infantry divisions. The fact remains that no useful combat power was distracted from defeating the island's Axis forces in order to deal with unrest.

Despite this overall success, problems remained. Cooperation and coordination between AMGOT and combat commanders needed improvement. Both Seventh and Eighth Armies initially limited CAO numbers, failing adequately to appreciate what they brought to the table. After the campaign commenced, combat commanders demanded more CAOs, as many as they could get. The problem here was capacity, and it was one that Civil Affairs never solved. Combat units were often unaware of military governance aims and purposes and acted at cross-purposes, such as when they disarmed the Carabinieri. A major issue was the lack of organic transportation for stabilization and military governance efforts. Given the low density of CAOs, transportation in all forms was a force multiplier. Lacking adequate transportation limited both the scope and effectiveness of Civil Affairs soldiers. These are but a few of the issues recognized at the time.<sup>22</sup>

At the division level, US Army efforts to secure and stabilize also worked, that is, they allowed combat power to remain focused on the en-



Figure 5.3. The SS *Robert Rowan* explodes off Gela, Sicily, on 11 July 1943. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

emy. Still, there was much room for improvement. Here, the 1st Infantry Division's assessment again serves as a guide. Lieutenant Colonel Kilroe pointed to many problems, primarily due to the rapid pace of advance and lack of manpower, resources, and coordination. Regarding security, he noted that counterintelligence, military police, and ordnance soldiers often had to move on before the process of vetting—"shaking down"—the civilian population and administration was completed. The net result was that weapons remained unsecured and "focal points of opposition have been left in our rear which might become troublesome if our forces met with reverses." Regarding stabilization, Kilroe praised the AMGOT Civil Affairs officers attached to his section as "conscientious, well-trained, and competent to supervise the government of a conquered territory." But here, too, there were issues. CAOs with limited military experience failed "to understand the full meaning of security" and demonstrated a tendency "to disregard command channels." Furthermore, they sometimes played fast and loose with private property, especially cars, which "caused considerable confusion and has not been conducive to the maintenance of good relations with the civilian population." Lack of telephone communications with the division command post inhibited synchronizing actions to consolidate gains with combat operations; communications only functioned properly in two of thirteen cities occupied. Combat also left dead and wounded civilians and damaged infrastructure in its wake. Kilroe lamented the lack of a clear process for securing immediate medical and engineering assistance. Medical care, in particular, was "the most important factor upon entering a new town." Too often, the security section procured medical assistance informally—"begging"—from the nearest 1st Division facility. One consequence of inadequate engineering support was that easily damaged drinking water systems failed.<sup>23</sup>

Time was a harsh master; perhaps predictably, Kilroe's solutions to these problems focused on resources and coordination. He recommended that more soldiers with the required specialties be assigned to the security section. This would enable some to stay behind to complete the job before surrendering responsibility to follow-on AMGOT teams. This approach would improve continuity, efficiency, and the area's long-term security and stability. His remedy was for the security section chief closely to supervise AMGOT officers; despite being attached to the division, it was unclear which master these men ultimately served, AMGOT or the division. Furthermore, Kilroe called for more CAOs and enlisted men to support them. The property issue could be solved by providing ample organic transportation or more effective and speedy procurement. To deal with damaged

infrastructure, Kilroe suggested that a “well-qualified engineering officer should be permanently attached to the security staff to supervise the repair of the municipal water systems and other utilities.” Adding a signals detachment would alleviate the communications challenge. Finally, Kilroe advised that captured enemy medical supplies should be stockpiled for immediate use and close *formal* liaison established with division- and particularly corps-level medical units.

## **Conclusion**

The Allied effort to consolidate gains in Sicily succeeded, but also presented opportunities for improvement. The Sicily experience proved the soundness of planning and preparing to secure and stabilize occupied territories. It also affirmed the principles of military governance and indirect control in addition to the fundamental approaches laid out in planning and doctrine. The Allies were indeed lucky that the security environment was permissive and that Sicilians generally complied with military governance, but this should not diminish the achievements of the hard-pressed and overworked soldiers engaged in the effort. Consolidating gains, like combat, takes place in a dynamic, fundamentally human environment. That mistakes were made and improvisation was the rule should not be surprising. One simply cannot plan and prepare for every eventuality. In the end, it remained for those involved with consolidating gains to reflect on the lessons learned in Sicily, institute solutions, and move on to the Italian mainland. Operation Husky, then, was an indispensable classroom for both combat troops and those who followed in their wake. As such, it marked a critical waypoint on the path that eventually led into the heart of Germany.

## Notes

1. The literature dealing with Consolidation of Gains in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations focuses primarily on military government and civil affairs. These studies informed the author's thinking for this chapter: Robert W. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1950); Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors, United States Army in World War II* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1986); Raymond A. Millen, "Bury the Dead, Feed the Living:" *The History of Civil Affairs/Military Government in the Mediterranean and European Theaters of Operation during World War II* (Carlisle, PA: US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, 2019); Robert A. Pough, "Consolidating Gains in Large-Scale Combat Operations: Operation Husky" (MMAS thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2019). See also C. R. S. Harris, *Allied Administration of Italy, 1943–1945* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957); Isobel Williams, *Allies and Italians under Occupation: Sicily and Southern Italy, 1943–45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013); Philip Boobbyer, "Lord Rennell, Chief of AMGOT: A Study in His Approach to Politics and Military Government," *War in History* 25, no. 3 (2018): 304–27; Matthew J. Inglis, "Civil Affairs and Military Government Operations in Post-Fascist Italy" (MMAS thesis, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2014); Earl F. Ziemke, "Civil Affairs Reaches Thirty," *Military Affairs* (December 1972): 130–33. The best surveys of the Sicilian Campaign generally are Carlo D'Este, *Bitter Victory: The Battle for Sicily, 1943* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2008); and Albert N. Garland and Howard McGaw Smyth, *Sicily and the Surrender of Italy*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1965).

2. Following World War I, the US Army occupied a portion of the Rhineland from 1918 until 1923. The Army's experience informed interwar thinking about the conduct of civil affairs. Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa, occurred in November 1942. British and American forces landed in Morocco and Algeria with the aim of quickly occupying Tunisia. However, rapid success in Tunisia was not forthcoming, leading to the Tunisia Campaign, which took place between November 1942 and the final surrender of Axis forces in May 1943. Meanwhile, the western Allies decided what would follow victory in Tunisia. At the Casablanca Conference in Morocco (14–24 January 1943), President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed that they would only accept the "unconditional surrender" of Axis powers and that the next major British and American military operation would take place in the Mediterranean. The result was Operation Husky, the amphibious invasion of the Italian island of Sicily, which began on the night of 9–10 July, 1943.

3. War Department, Field Manual (FM) 27-5, *United States Army and Navy Manual of Military Government and Civil Affairs* (Washington, DC: 1943), 3.

4. Headquarters, Army Service Forces, *Army Service Forces Manual, M353-2 Supplement, Civil Affairs Handbook: Italy. Section 2: Supplement Allied Military Government Manual of Proclamations and Instructions Used in Sicily* (Washington, DC: Army Service Forces, 1943), i-iii, 1–24. This 278-page document reflected the comprehensive quality of AMGOT planning for Sicily.

5. Roosevelt quoted in Combined Chiefs of Staff communication 185/4, 22 May 1943, *Records of the War Department's Operations Division, 1942–1945* (Microfilm), National Archives and Records Administration, frame 5C283.

6. The period of so-called “military necessity” was ill-defined. Indeed, although Allied military leaders were committed to creating conditions for civilian agencies to take over, Italy did not achieve these conditions until 1945.

7. On 21 July, AMGOT became AMG, usually termed Allied Military Government. In this chapter, the author used AMGOT throughout to avoid confusion. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, chap. II-36–chap. II-37.

8. Millen, “*Bury the Dead, Feed the Living*,” 55. For an overview, see especially Millen, “Chapter 3: Civil Affairs during the Sicily Campaign (Operation Husky),” 55–72, and Komer, “Chapter II: Allied Military Government in Sicily,” chap. II-1–chap. II-45.

9. Komer, chap. II-28–chap. II-30.

10. Prior to World War II, Charles Merville Spofford was a successful New York lawyer. He received a direct commission and rose to the rank of brigadier general on 12 September 1944. Spofford was Yale- and Harvard-educated and thrived in various military government assignments. President Truman named him deputy US representative to NATO in 1950.

11. Quoted in Demaree Bess, “How We’re Ruling Sicily,” *Saturday Evening Post* (25 September 1943): 94.

12. Force 141 [Seventh Army], “AMGOT Plan for Military Government of HORRIFIED [Sicily]: Part 1,” *Records of the War Department's Operations Division, 1942–1945* (Microfilm), National Archives and Records Administration, frame 5C492. See also, Headquarters, Army Service Forces, *Army Service Forces Manual, M353-2 Supplement, Civil Affairs Handbook: Italy*.

13. Quoted in Millen, “*Bury the Dead, Feed the Living*,” 12.

14. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, chap. II-19–chap. II-21; chap. II-38–chap. II-39.

15. Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, 189.

16. D indicates the date that an operation commenced; D+1 is one day after the operation commenced.

17. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, chap. II-33–chap. II-34, chap II-37.

18. Kilroe was a direct-commission judge advocate general (JAG) officer and a successful New York City lawyer in civilian life. JAG officers were often pressed into service as *de facto* CAOs during the campaign. This section draws upon: 1st Infantry Division Security Diary, Dwight David Eisenhower Presiden-

tial Library, US Army: Unit Records, 1917–1950, Box 756, folder “1st Infantry Division Security Diary and Misc. Records, Sicily, July–August.” The thirteen cities, listed consecutively, were Gela, Niscemi, Mazzarino, Barrafranca, Enna, Calascibetta, Alimena, Petralia Sotana, Petralia Soprana, Gangi, Polizzi, Nicosia, and Cerami.

19. AMGOT preprinted thirteen proclamations and ordinances in Italian. These may be found in *Civil Affairs Handbook: Italy, Section 2: Supplement Allied Military Government Manual of Proclamations and Instructions used in Sicily*.

20. Excepting Gela where the Seventh Army Provost Marshal assumed formally control, 1st Division’s security section handed over responsibility for the cities it occupied to AMGOT. One receipt specified the controlling headquarters as “Headquarters AMGOT, 15th Army Section.” This perhaps reflected AMGOT’s ill-defined relationship with combat headquarters such as Seventh Army and II Corps more than facts on the ground. Certainly, army- and corps-level elements were involved in consolidating gains in the wake of division operations and had AMGOT soldiers attached to them.

21. See Historical Record, National Records Administration Archive II, RG 404 Records of the Adjutant General’s Office, 1917–, World War II Operations Reports, 2nd Armored Division, Box 12164, folder “Historical Record-Opns-2nd Armd Div-Sicily.”

22. Komer, *Civil Affairs and Military Government in the Mediterranean Theater*, chap. II-41–chap. II-45.

23. This and the following paragraph draw upon: 1st Infantry Division, “Recommendations Based on Current Operations in the Sicilian Campaign,” in *Historical Records of the First Infantry Division and Its Organic Elements: World War II, 1940–1945 (Including Some Items of Earlier and Later Dates) From the Collection of World War II Organization and Operational Records Assembled by the Army Adjutant General’s Office, NA Records Group 219, MP 62-8* [Microfilm] (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Service, 1962), Reel #2.34, frames 531–32.

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Struggle against Chaos: Consolidating Gains during the Allied Invasion of Mainland Italy**

Lt. Col. Steven T. Hampson

Rehabilitating war-torn economies and societies is one of the most difficult tasks the Army can undertake. In examining what large-scale combat operations might look like in the future, the Army should anticipate it will be called on, based on its size and resources, to provide governance in foreign territory. In fact, occupying and providing governance in occupied territory is as certain as any large-scale combat operations task and not something the Army can simply muddle through. The Allied experience with providing transitional governance in Italy during the Second World War serves as an excellent example of how complex and critical these tasks are to consolidating success on the battlefield.

In early September 1943, British and US forces crossed the Strait of Messina separating the island of Sicily from the Italian mainland and landed on the beaches of southern Italy. The Allied invasion of mainland Italy had begun. On those beaches, US soldiers engaged in the type of brutal combat that characterized the Italian campaign. Over the next eighteen months, British and American forces fought their way up the Italian Peninsula to defeat Nazi forces and their Italian fascist partners. Military historian Hal Pattison described the campaign as “a grueling struggle for Allied and German soldier alike, a war of small units and individuals dictated in large measure by inhospitable terrain and wet and cold that soon immersed the battlefield.”<sup>1</sup> The Allies won this struggle, but every tactical-level victory in combat required the exploitation of gains—an ever-more-pressing and complex matter for commanders as the campaign progressed and territory under Allied control expanded. Providing governance to the Italian people was a military necessity; as the Allies grappled with this immense task, they increasingly encountered challenges of a social rather than military nature.

The Allied invasion of Italy presented numerous military and political challenges, all made more complex by Italy’s sudden internal political and social turmoil in 1943. Examining how US Army and British Civil Affairs soldiers sought to stabilize Italian politics from the ground up and suppress a typhoid epidemic in Naples, however, can help a contemporary audience visualize the tasks and capabilities required to consolidate gains in large-scale combat operations. The Italian campaign underscores the

lesson that consolidating gains, as Field Manual (FM 3-0), *Operations*, asserts, is not synonymous with counterinsurgency or stability operations, but rather involves a broad array of tasks adapted to a specific strategic context.<sup>2</sup> Tasks to consolidate gains often center around physical seizure of key terrain or infrastructure, rapid physical control of population centers, and rapid use of information operations.<sup>3</sup> These tasks are not confined to a specific phase, and require careful planning and war-gaming.

While unable to capture all the complex social, economic, and political challenges Allied Civil Affairs personnel confronted in Italy, this chapter will explore the main tactical and strategic challenges faced by Civil Affairs officers (CAOs) operating to consolidate gains during the invasion of Italy. For forward CAOs, this meant organizing the initial chaos in the midst of large-scale combat operations and continually adapting to evolving challenges as the front advanced. Throughout all phases of the campaign, CAOs were called upon to understand, engage, and mobilize civil networks to make tactical successes enduring and achieve desired strategic aims. The strategic aims of Allied policy in Italy were to elicit maximum Italian contribution from the war effort, and develop Italy into a nation friendly to the Allies after the war.<sup>4</sup> Historians Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg framed the challenges Civil Affairs Officers encountered in achieving these aims as a “struggle against chaos.”

## **Strategic Context**

It is first necessary, however, to frame the evolution of Civil Affairs employment leading up to the invasion of the Italian Peninsula and the strategic context in which the Allies operated in 1943. By mid-1943, the preponderance of Allied resources and planning, previously focused on the Mediterranean Theater of Operations, shifted to preparation for Operation Overlord, the invasion of France. The Germans were cleared from North Africa, and the Allies had gained the upper hand in the Atlantic Theater. As a result, the Mediterranean Theater waned in relative importance and faced both material and policy limitations. The Mediterranean Theater morphed into a shaping operation, tying down German forces and enabling a decisive drive across the English Channel that ultimately concluded in Berlin. The British desired an unconditional Italian surrender, an objective which President Franklin D. Roosevelt agreed to support. However, garrisoning large numbers of troops in Italy following an unconditional surrender would detract from the resources required to support a cross-channel invasion. Thus, General Dwight D. Eisenhower’s difficult objective was to quickly eliminate Italy from the war, and to do so with limited means.<sup>5</sup> Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) Civil Affairs planners identified that



achieving this end would “lie in effecting the surrender of Italy under conditions which would still leave a cooperative central government.”<sup>6</sup>

Fortunately, luck was on the side of the Allies in July 1943. By this point in the war, dictator Benito Mussolini, who had served as Italian prime minister since 1922, was beset by political problems.<sup>7</sup> The Italian citizenry was frustrated with Mussolini’s military failures in Africa, adventurism with the Nazis in Russia, and racial policies targeting Jews—viewed as a means to curry favor with Adolf Hitler.<sup>8</sup> By summer 1943, the invasion of Sicily had commenced and bombs began to fall on Italian cities. On 25 July 1943, Mussolini was deposed and arrested; King Victor Emmanuel III appointed Marshal Pietro Badoglio in Mussolini’s place.<sup>9</sup> Although Badoglio had initially supported Mussolini’s policies, including the brutal pacification of Libya that involved ethnic cleansing, he later became disillusioned with fascism and by 1943 sought to expunge the toxic ideology from the government and restore Italian honor and dignity.<sup>10</sup> Badoglio’s actions were a mix of patriotism and opportunism; his government signed an armistice with the Allies on 3 September 1943 following secret negotiations, and would later declare war on Nazi Germany to become a “cobelligerent” in the Allied war effort. These events, combined with a German operation that rescued Mussolini following his arrest, resulted in two Italian governments—the nascent post-fascist government under Marshal Badoglio supported by the Allies in the southern portions of Italy, and the Nazi puppet regime nominally led by Mussolini but propped up and stubbornly defended by German armies in the north.<sup>11</sup> Of note, the armistice triggered some Italian Army members to join the ranks of patriot movements in Italy that would influence military and political decisions later in the campaign.

Badoglio’s fledgling government based in Brindisi, Italy, with status as a cobelligerent, required significant Allied assistance. Mussolini’s authoritarian reign had degraded governmental functions of what had once been a constitutional monarchy, and most state-level offices remained in Rome awaiting liberation. The term cobelligerent at the time essentially meant an enemy of the enemy. Though not a member of the United Nations, Italy was a friendly entity with whom the Allies had signed an armistice.<sup>12</sup> The condition for Italy to achieve this status was a declaration of war against its former ally, Nazi Germany. As such, at the direction of President Roosevelt and General George Marshall, General Eisenhower placed immense pressure on the Badoglio government to declare war. His intent was to maximize Italian resources against Germany and preserve Allied resources for larger operations to come, namely Operation

Overlord. Marshal Badoglio, who made the formal declaration of war on 13 October 1943, announced to Italian citizens: “His Majesty the King has charged me this day the 13th of October to announce the Declaration of War on Germany.”<sup>13</sup> Badoglio’s war declaration was an immense strategic communication opportunity for the Allies and permitted Italy to be formally considered a cobelligerent. Italy could now receive supplies and economic aid designed to reorient the country toward the western Allies. This reorientation was encouraged by reestablishing liberal institutions and removing fascist officials, systems, and ideology from all echelons of the government.<sup>14</sup>

Unfortunately, the reemerging post-fascist Italian government proved incapable of reacting to crises or providing daily governance functions due to its very limited capacity. In reality, the Badoglio government was only a small contingent based in Brindisi, about 350 miles from Rome on the Adriatic Coast.<sup>15</sup> The burden of transitional governance and supporting civil administration would thus become a military necessity and fall largely to Civil Affairs. As the campaign progressed, the Allied Military Government (AMG) headquarters organization would change to meet the conditions at hand.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of the HQ name and structure, the military government was vested with the authority to provide governance to the population—with authority derived from the theater commander. However, AFHQ ultimately established the Allied Control Commission (ACC), which was designed and staffed to advise, assist, and monitor the Badoglio government following the armistice. Separate from the AMG, the ACC served as the task force that set longer-term conditions for Italy to be an ally after the war.<sup>17</sup> Populations within the AMG jurisdiction were under direct control; unlike the ACC, the AMG *was* the government. The ACC functioned as an advisory body, indirectly controlling territory through its Italian counterparts. Eventually, AMG and ACC combined to ensure unity of effort. This meant exercising a varying degree of control over the Italian population and Italy’s resources to support strategic aims. As the campaign progressed, military government organizations gradually ceded control in a conditions-based manner to Italy’s post-fascist government institutions. The process was painstaking and broad in scope as the various social, political, and military challenges will demonstrate in this chapter—with three phases to this transition: spearheading work with the armies along combat zones, consolidation and collaboration with the Italian administration behind the lines, and support to civil administration in “King’s Italy,” referring to areas liberated from fascist control and nominally under the control of the king.<sup>18</sup>



Figure 6.1. Map showing return of territory to the Italian government. Created by Army University Press.

## Lessons Learned in North Africa and Sicily

During their North Africa and Sicily campaigns, Allied forces employed civil affairs, evolving and adapting to the nuances of the situation. In Operation Torch, the US Army's Civil Affairs capability was in its infancy, and President Roosevelt held the strong conviction that civilian agencies should coordinate civil affairs in war zones.<sup>19</sup> The president's belief led to a multitude of civilian agencies attempting to direct activities from

Washington, DC, causing General Eisenhower to lament: “I am having as much trouble with civilian forces behind [us] . . . than [*sic*] I am with the enemy in front of us.”<sup>20</sup> As Allied forces advanced from Morocco eastward into Tunisia, the security of lines of communication depended heavily on the local Vichy French administration and the civilian population.<sup>21</sup> At times, the Vichy administration proved wanting, leading to Allied concerns about communications, logistics, and the distribution of civil supply (humanitarian aid) to prevent unrest. Gradually, it became clear that in war zones, civil affairs and combat operations could not be separated; the Army required full control over a force designed to consolidate gains and enable transitional governance.<sup>22</sup> Experience in North Africa led the joint chiefs to advocate for military primacy over the civil affairs mission, a position formalized with the formation of the Combined Civil Affairs Committee in July 1943.<sup>23</sup> The committee served as the lead agency to coordinate American and British Civil Affairs activities in subsequent campaigns.

Adjustments to Civil Affairs employment, which occurred concurrently at a policy level as well as an operational level, resulted in better planning, coordination, and utilization during the invasion of Sicily (Operation Husky). Allied Force Headquarters tasked Civil Affairs with clearer objectives, such as preventing unrest and controlling the spread of disease to help protect lines of communication and ensure a healthy fighting force during the operation.<sup>24</sup> Division and corps commanders had forward Civil Affairs officers (CAOs) task-organized to their formations. These officers operated in close proximity to maneuver forces and helped the commander organize the initial chaos as the front moved forward and a rear area began to emerge. Forward CAOs focused on preventing disorder by informing the population of the implementation of the Allied Military Government. A key task for a forward CAO was to post and communicate General Eisenhower’s proclamation explaining how military government would be implemented and what was expected of Italian citizens. At the outset of Operation Husky, Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT) established an advance headquarters in Sicily and, as the operation progressed, staffed each of the nine Sicilian provinces with a senior Civil Affairs officer, normally a colonel, to oversee junior CAOs and military government implementation.<sup>25</sup> Senior (or regional) Civil Affairs officers often possessed impressive credentials. The regional CAO for Sicily following Operation Husky for example, was Lt. Col. Charles Poletti. Prior to the war, Poletti served as lieutenant governor then governor of New York.<sup>26</sup> Poletti was chosen as regional CAO in part because he previously served as special assistant to War



Figure 6.2. Citizens of Salerno gather in front of “Proclamation No. 1,” posted by the Allied Military Government, 10 September 1943. Courtesy of the Naval History and Heritage Command.

Secretary Henry Stimson and was of Sicilian descent. Poletti possessed strategic acumen and a cultural and linguistic understanding that made him an ideal choice for a regional Civil Affairs officer responsible for overseeing the reimplementation of governance.<sup>27</sup>

Although Operation Husky was a step forward in terms of Civil Affairs employment, after-action reports noted that Allied planners failed to appreciate the disruption and disorder that followed large-scale combat operations and did not recognize that CAOs were in short supply. The degree and speed at which civil governance was reestablished after combat operations depended on how well combat formations understood the importance of civil government to the overall objective. An after-action report written by AFHQ Military Government Section Chief Brig. Gen. Julius Holmes for the Combined Chiefs of Staff succinctly summarized the issue:

We found in the planning stage that it was somewhat difficult to convince the combat commanders of the necessity of an adequate number of military government officers in the assault and follow-up stages and that it was essential for them to have transportation. Both the commanders of the Seventh and Eighth armies, as well as the commanding general, 15th Army Group, have expressed them-

selves as now being fully convinced that adequate numbers of officers and vehicles in the earlier stages were essential.<sup>28</sup>

Holmes added a comment that underscored the growing realization of the utility of Civil Affairs: “As a matter of fact, the only criticism received from either Army commander has been that there were not enough Civil Affairs officers.”<sup>29</sup> The rapid transition from combat operations, to transitional governance operations is difficult to visualize. It is a skill set that is part soldier and part diplomat, and is employed in the midst of large-scale combat operations. Civil Affairs could rapidly inform the population concerning the authority of military government and prevent unrest that would sap combat power. When the Army established the School of Military Government prior to US involvement in the war, the original intent was for graduates to provide overarching administration and governance expertise for occupied territory. However, the war’s campaigns quickly revealed Civil Affairs required tactical employment to set conditions for transitioning to military government and preserving combat power.

The CAO shortfall stemmed from early planning assumptions that proved incorrect. After WWI, US forces occupied the German Rhineland and devoted 213 officers of a force that numbered around 250,000 personnel toward administering the Rhineland. In a 1942 memo, Brig. Gen. Cornelius Wickersham, the School of Military Government commandant, noted this figure was “1/10 of 1 percent of the armed forces [in the Rhineland].”<sup>30</sup> He presciently noted that by only contemplating military government in occupied territory, the Allies would underestimate the scope of the challenge. In the same 1942 memo, Brigadier General Wickersham wrote: “American forces, may, however, find themselves in the occupation of the territories of neutrals, quasi-neutrals, puppets, or even allies.”<sup>31</sup> Demand for Civil Affairs far outstripped the availability of personnel as campaigns unfolded. Assumptions drawn from the Rhineland occupation and an over-estimation of what civilian agencies could deliver during wartime were the root of the CAO shortfall.

### **“We Now Know We Must Count on Finding Chaos”<sup>32</sup>**

The Allied advance up the Italian Peninsula proved to be a somewhat unexpected grind. The British Eighth and US Seventh armies had advanced through Sicily relatively rapidly, which led to an expectation that the campaign on the Italian Peninsula would yield similar results. However, Allied planners failed to appreciate the degree to which Hitler’s sheer stubbornness rather than logic would drive German defensive operations in Italy.<sup>33</sup> The landings near Salerno commenced on 9 September 1943,

but Rome—approximately 170 miles to the north—would not be liberated until June the following year. The campaign in its entirety lasted until German forces surrendered in May 1945. Both the terrain and German tactics hindered the northward advance of the Allies. Italy's rugged, hilly terrain dotted with towns and cities favored the defender. The Germans employed a retrograde defense and traded space for time to maximize damage done to invading Allied forces and delay their advance.<sup>34</sup> To complement this defensive strategy, the Germans employed a scorched earth policy. German units systematically damaged or destroyed infrastructure of economic or military importance. They drove large numbers of displaced, starving Italian citizens into Allied lines and triggered humanitarian crises that required significant resources to address. The level of civil disruption to be mitigated out of sheer necessity was a staggering endeavor.

Forward Civil Affairs officers (CAOs) were responsible for organizing the initial chaos in midst of large-scale combat operations and continually adapting to evolving challenges as the front advanced. Throughout all phases of the campaign, Civil Affairs officers were called upon to understand, engage, and mobilize civil networks to make tactical successes enduring and achieve desired strategic aims. Allied strategic aims in Italy were to elicit maximum Italian contribution from the war effort, and develop Italy into a nation friendly to the Allies after the war.<sup>35</sup> The systemic shock of large-scale combat operations—coupled with the simultaneous collapse of Italy's fascist government—devastated local and provincial level governance functions on the Italian mainland. Conditions were rife for civil unrest and chaos that would inhibit offensive operations. The following succinct, yet descriptive passage richly illustrates the conditions under which Civil Affairs operated. Part of an after-action report on Sicily written by Brigadier General Holmes, the passage conveyed why Civil Affairs operations were so challenging and augured similar problems to come as the Allies advanced from town to town on the Italian mainland:

In many towns there had been so much destruction by bombardment and shell fire and the people [were] so frightened and paralyzed that no local administration existed. In fact, in many cases all of the machinery of modern life had ceased to exist: there was no government, no police, no food supply, no water, no electric light, no transportation, and no organized medical service. All of these things had to be reorganized from the ground up.<sup>36</sup>

Addressing this immense problem required the shattered machinery of local provincial governance to function again, but on Allied terms. Mil-

itary necessity remained the overarching principle guiding civil affairs in newly liberated territory. But these challenges often required grappling with the ambiguity of an unfamiliar country and modulating the degree to which de-fascification policies were implemented. Lieutenant General Holmes observed that “with the departure of the Fascist Party which has made the thing tick for twenty years, we shall find a dilapidated and creaking machine. . . . We shall probably have to give a substantial amount of direct assistance for some time to come.”<sup>37</sup> Guidance concerning de-fascification crafted in May 1943 prior to Operations Husky and Avalanche instructed Civil Affairs officers that “strong Fascists will be removed but subordinate officials will carry on under supervision.”<sup>38</sup> AMGOT stipulated that pro-fascist officials could remain in positions of authority if they proved cooperative and were crucial to the functioning of local governance. Fascist militias were to be disbanded.

Some Italian officials who adhered to fascist principles simply had to be removed, but others were necessary to make the governance apparatus function again. Guidance from the Allied Military Government stipulated: “It should be made clear to all administrative officials that their continuation is solely on the basis of their satisfactory cooperation, performance, and behavior.”<sup>39</sup> Not surprisingly, Civil Affairs personnel leveraged the support of the Army Counter Intelligence Corps as they evaluated how critical remaining officials would be to Allied objectives. To implement adequate local governance, forward Civil Affairs officers facilitated the establishment of communal councils in some instances. Lieutenant Colonel Mortan, an American forward CAO working in the town of Sessa, established a transitional governance body using an iterative approach to develop and mobilize a civil network. Mortan’s experience was captured by Capt. C. G. R. Williams, a staff officer on the ACC Interior Subcommittee:

He [Lieutenant Colonel Mortan] first got the *sindaco* (mayor) and the *segretario comunale* (county commissioner) to suggest some names. He then got these men to suggest others. He also got the opinion of each man upon the others who had been proposed. He took the ten who were most highly thought of and constituted them his advisory committee. This process took him a week.<sup>40</sup>

The communal council members were subsequently vetted by the Field Security Service (British counterintelligence unit) and the *Carabinieri Raeli* (royal police, a pre-fascist institution).<sup>41</sup> This local approach was part of a larger effort to leverage indirect control, and minimize the resources required to occupy recently liberated territory. Developing and mobilizing civil networks to enable governance was a key feature of what



Civil Affairs provided to combat commanders in Italy.<sup>42</sup> Mortan's actions in Sessa demonstrated that piecing together shattered social and administrative systems is no easy task, and implementing transitional governance requires rapid civil network development and mobilization. The Italian campaign also demonstrated that legitimate authorities, non-military partners, and civilian agencies cannot necessarily be relied upon for immediate action. Lieutenant Colonel Mortan intended to set conditions for CAOs assigned to the Allied Control Commission, who would advise and assist Italian officials in a longer-term capacity.

## **Enabling Transitional Governance through Civil Networks**

Consolidating gains in large-scale combat operations requires exercising a varying degree of control and influence over civil networks. The Patriot Movement, also referred to as patriot bands, partisan bands, or simply Italian Partisans, was a nebulous grouping that operated on both sides of the front during the Italian campaign. Italian patriot groups conducted a mix of sabotage operations against the Germans and shadow governance. Patriots were galvanized by their desire to liberate Italy and their opposition to fascism. Combat commanders wanted to obtain maximum military advantage from patriot resistance, while the Allied Control Commission sought to minimize political and social disorder that patriots might generate once behind Allied lines. Thus, CAOs needed to guide patriot groups to maximize tactical utility in the short-term while minimizing social and political disruption in areas under the control of the Allied commission. While useful for fighting as proxies against the Germans, patriot groups potentially posed challenges to implementing military government. They were tactically expedient but politically risky.

Some patriot bands coalesced into the Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy (CLNAI). The organization was an umbrella for a multitude of political parties, most prominently the Communist, Socialist, Christian Democratic, and Liberal parties.<sup>43</sup> The patriot bands that gave rise to the CLNAI had deep roots, and the Patriot Branch of the Allied Control Commission—a staff section established in 1944 to deal with patriot issues—considered the committee to be the latest manifestation of anti-fascist underground organizations that had existed for decades.<sup>44</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the armistice between the Allies and the Badoglio government precipitated the deactivation of Italian Army units; many former officers and soldiers were absorbed into the patriot ranks. These individuals refused to ally themselves with the fascist regime established in the portion of Italy controlled by the Germans.<sup>45</sup>

In July 1944, Capt. R. W. Buckley, a Civil Affairs officer, met with patriots at the ACC Advance Headquarters. After the interview, he described the patriots as a conglomerate of foreign guerillas, Italian patriots, and opportunists who claimed to be organized for fighting rather than politics. Captain Buckley's main interlocutor, a patriot named Lieutenant Monti, described how he coordinated resistance activities on both sides of the front. During the meeting, two individuals under Lieutenant Monti's direction arrived and reported the location of a German artillery battery; the unit was neutralized several hours later. Perhaps this was a coincidence, or maybe it was an attempt to demonstrate the effectiveness of the patriot network to the CAOs present. Lieutenant Monti had assembled CAOs from the ACC, patriots from both sides of the line, and wealthy locals. "He [Lieutenant Monti] wanted from the first [CAOs] their goodwill and patience, from the second [local patriot factions] their devotion, and from the third [locals with wealth/influence] money."<sup>46</sup> The precise manner in which Lieutenant Monti organized the meeting demonstrated a high degree of political acumen. Patriot networks were not simply built for fighting; the Patriot networks also maneuvered politically as they imagined a post-war Italy. But how could such dynamics within a civilian population be shaped to deliver the best results for the Allies? A multi-faceted approach was necessary.

From some corners of the Italian government and the ACC, the idea emerged that patriots should be recognized as agents of the Italian government. This action was viewed as a necessary step toward mobilizing patriot networks for good purpose and maintaining adequate influence over their activities. The ACC Patriots Branch director came to see great potential in the Patriot Movement:

After speaking to a large number of patriots in various corners of the country, I personally feel that in the great majority of cases these men have been fighting first to defeat the Germans, second to destroy fascism, and third, in the case of some of them, to build up a new Italy. Most of them have at this stage of the war very little idea of the aims and ambitions of the six political parties of the CLNAI in Italy, but they are keenly alive to the fact that something drastic must be done about politics in the very near future and, being mostly young and active men, they are keenly susceptible to influence and require a lead from the Italian government.<sup>47</sup>

The ACC position conflicted with that of Allied Armies Italy (AAI), the senior Allied headquarters for the peninsula, which wanted to retain oper-

ational control of patriot bands for combat purposes. The conflict resulted because employing the patriots as guerilla fighters made it more difficult for the ACC, and thus the Italian government, to demobilize and incorporate them into Italian government institutions such as the Army or the police. The ACC devised a practical solution and established a patriot branch as one of its sections in July 1944 to manage these challenges.

While tactically useful against the Germans, patriots could be problematic politically given their potential to undermine post-fascist Italian governance. The real value in the patriot groups was from demobilizing their military capability while simultaneously incorporating them in a productive way within the new Italian government. The ACC charged the Patriots Branch with “directing the rehabilitation of all patriots in liberated territory and to coordinate the policy of AAI and ACC with regard to future operations in enemy territory.” In June 1944, the Eighth Army’s senior Civil Affairs officer (SCAO) implored his higher headquarters to develop a clear position toward patriots. The SCAO wanted to ensure that disruption did not occur once combat elements had passed an area, and that longer-term political troubles were obviated.<sup>48</sup> As the Allied advance continued northward, there were simply not enough CAOs to ensure control of population centers and maintain order through local governance institutions. Italian provinces did and still do contain hundreds of municipalities, or communes. Current rules stipulate that a Civil Affairs team should be allocated for each 100,000 residents or 1,125 square miles of territory. The population density in the more than ninety Italian provinces, the scale of the destruction, and the political turmoil left the Allies short thousands of CAOs. Guiding patriot networks became a military necessity that had to be achieved for enduring tactical gains, and thus contributed to the strategic aim of a post-war Italy that was a stable ally. Group Captain Bensen, SCAO for the British Eighth Army, noted:

It must be borne in mind that with the rapid rate of advance it is impossible for AMG Eighth Army officers to be kept in these towns and with the small number of officers available to the provinces there is a very serious risk of trouble breaking out when the AMG Eighth Army CAOs leave, owing to the inability of the provinces [Italian administrative subdivision] to put CAOs in themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Patriot organizations were found to be armed and disinclined to accept AMG authority—something patriots had not been informed of and did not understand as the chaos and confusion of conflict unfolded. Authority vested within AMG included the ability to direct Italian officials to

continue performing governance functions, prohibit political activity, and forbid acts that disrupted public order. AMG authority was communicated to the population through proclamations and engagement by military government officers. Because of the volatile situation, individual CAOs often were challenged to convince patriots to put down their arms and accept military government authority. More troubling for the long term, patriots were found to be running local administrations which they claimed were legitimate. The patriots often based their legitimacy claims on Badoglio government broadcasts that asked all existing administrations to continue functioning while a new government was formed. However, this was problematic because patriot groups implemented governance functions like rule of law, at times using a vigilante approach toward fascists and those perceived as collaborators.

The formation of the Patriots Branch to coordinate patriot policy within ACC moved the potentially volatile situation in a positive direction. For example, the AFHQ's Psychological Warfare Branch (PWB), which controlled public information and thus supported ACC initiatives, modulated its approach to "put the patriot activities into the proper perspective vis-à-vis the Allied armies in Italy and the Italian Regular Army."<sup>50</sup> The PWB gradually tapered its messaging in support of patriot activities to avoid giving the patriots too much political clout and thus undermine the nascent Italian government. Patriot activities were "played up" and encouraged on the enemy's side of the line, and "played down" on the Allied side to influence patriots to get in line with AMG and the fledgling Italian government.

By late 1944, US military headquarters found several tangible solutions to manage and demobilize patriot networks. The Fifth Army, for example, established reception centers for homeless patriots in Florence and Lucca. These Fifth Army personnel organized patriots from these reception centers into a civil labor force to repair roads. The patriots were placed under their own leaders, supervised by British engineers, and equipped with salvaged materials.<sup>51</sup> Rather than making trouble in rear areas, these men worked to provide a tangible result to the community (road rehabilitation) that also benefitted Allied military forces. Several months later, reports indicated patriots were incorporated into the Italian Army as 500-man strong reconnaissance companies. To the greatest extent possible, the ACC preserved unit integrity and patriot band leadership as they were pulled under Italian *Gruppi* (an Italian brigade-sized military formation). This approach permitted patriot bands to maintain esprit de corps, but fall under the purview of burgeoning Italian institutions. The ultimate decision to recognize CLNAI patriots was calculated and tied to the strategic aims: extracting

maximum benefit from Italy in support of the war effort, and setting conditions for a postwar Italy friendly to the Allies. Recognizing patriots, and incorporating them into the government, reduced the likelihood of future internal conflict that would undermine Italy's value as a post-war ally.

### **Growing Burden of Control and the Importance of Civil-Military Integration**

Ideally, effective development and mobilization of civil networks preserves military resources and maximizes indirect control. However, the winter 1943–44 typhus epidemic that raged in Naples demonstrated how humanitarian crises—precipitated by weakened civil governance and conflict—threatened tactical gains and thus required intervention. This is not surprising since large-scale combat operations, like any natural or man-made disaster, weaken the resilience of populations and increase susceptibility to crises such as an epidemic. The Allies had numerous major population centers like Naples in the rear area to contend with, and the number grew as the advance continued. Any major population center presents the potential for unrest, disruption, or other situations not favorable from a public affairs, information, humanitarian, or logistical standpoint. Additionally, population centers often contain critical infrastructure important to military objectives. Thus, population center management and the governance of people cannot be wished away. Initially slow to react, Allied Military Government officials in Naples integrated the US Typhus Commission, led by US Army Brig. Gen. Leon A. Fox, to tamp down the outbreak.<sup>52</sup> Essentially, the US Typhus Commission established a narrowly scoped task force with medical expertise to manage and eliminate the typhus epidemic. The integration of the commission was essential to care for a suffering population, but also to maintain stability of Allied operations and at Naples' critical port.

The importance of the city of Naples to the Allied war effort in Italy cannot be overstated. The city's port and geographic location made it key terrain. By December 1943, the port of Naples was handling more supply tonnage than New York harbor.<sup>53</sup> The Germans sabotaged water and sewage systems, destroyed pumps, and hauled away machinery, creating unsanitary conditions rife for disease. Retaining effective Allied control of Naples, and its valuable port, required humanitarian intervention to prevent civil unrest and maintain a healthy fighting force. German soldiers and prisoners, many of whom arrived from the Eastern Front and North Africa, reintroduced typhus to Naples in early 1943; by late 1943, the disease had spread through the city and to other towns in southern Italy. The

US Typhus Commission later categorized the city's population as lacking immunity—and thus highly vulnerable to infection—because the disease had not struck in Naples in several generations.<sup>54</sup> Typhus posed a threat to civilian and Allied soldier alike. In the lead-up to the liberation of Naples, Allied bombers repeatedly struck the industrial area around the Poggioreale Prison—where soldiers from other areas under German occupation reintroduced typhus to Naples. As a result of the air raids, inmates huddled in even tighter spaces; lice hopped from prisoner to prisoner, spreading the virus. The chaos precipitated by the Allied advance on the city resulted in prisoner releases and escapes. During Allied air raids, these individuals sought protection in shelters, where they mixed with the civilian population and spread the virus further. After Naples was liberated, the outbreak accelerated alarmingly during the winter months. In a December 1943 report to Armed Forces Headquarters (AFHQ), the US Typhus Commission contended that Allied Military Government officials in Italy should have acted approximately sixty days sooner to smother the epidemic.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 6.3. Sign on Naples Road warns soldiers against lice, the vector for typhus. Courtesy of the National Library of Medicine.

The public health crisis made retaining Allied control of the city, and its key port, more tenuous and necessitated direct intervention by the US Typhus Commission. Brigadier General Fox, the commission director, concisely justified the intervention: “No civil agency . . . can possibly function in an active military zone such as Southern Italy without insur-

mountable administrative and supply difficulties.”<sup>56</sup> However, the US Typhus Commission was supported by the private Rockefeller Foundation, which deployed its typhus team to help the Typhus Commission get the outbreak under control. To defeat the epidemic and assure the stability of Naples, the US Typhus Commission developed a four-pronged campaign to support the AMG. As the anti-typhus campaign began, AMG had governance responsibilities for 800,000 inhabitants of Naples and its environs. The campaign included mass delousing of the city’s population, organization of a complete case-finding service incorporating local priests and physicians, disinfection contacts to find and isolate infected persons, and biological immunization of key personnel (health providers, police, and priests).<sup>57</sup> The approach brought the outbreak under control by February 1944. On 19 February 1944, AFHQ transferred control of the anti-typhus campaign back to the ACC, and the Typhus Commission assumed an advisory role.<sup>58</sup>

The Naples anti-typhus campaign demonstrated that the “burdens of control become greater rather than less” as the rear area expands.<sup>59</sup> Operational variables combine to create unforeseen problems that threaten military objectives. The systemic shock of large-scale combat operations weakens the fabric of society and makes people vulnerable. In this example, there was both a moral and operational imperative to consolidate gains. Preserving gains, and thus control of the Naples port, required smothering an epidemic that arose due to a complex chain of events. To overcome this challenge, AFHQ integrated both military (US Typhus Commission) and non-military partners such as the Rockefeller Foundation to maintain stability in a critical port city. The successful effort also included networks of Italian civil leaders such as priests, doctors, and tracing teams, mobilized to stem a public health crisis that constituted a “direct threat to military operations.”<sup>60</sup> The integration of civil and military agencies for specific tasks is a core competency that Civil Affairs provided to consolidate gains.

## **Conclusion**

Civil Affairs is indispensable to both large-scale combat operations and the Consolidation of Gains. The largely forgotten lessons of the Italian campaign underscore this fact and can provide a roadmap for the future. During the Italian campaign, Allied Civil Affairs personnel demonstrated the ability to mobilize civil networks to consolidate gains and support transitional governance. However, Civil Affairs capabilities developed incrementally under pressure during campaigns in North Africa, Sicily, and subsequently the Italian mainland. The development of Civil Affairs was

reactive rather than anticipatory. Should US forces again fight large-scale combat operations, American soldiers are likely to find large urban centers with shattered social, economic, and governance systems, as well as regions where political authority is fractured among “neutrals, quasi-neutrals, puppets, or even allies.” Civil Affairs units will require tactical prowess, mobility, and command and control mechanisms to operate in close proximity to maneuver forces. Although much focus is rightly placed on technology and defeating near-peer capabilities, not all military objectives can be achieved with sophisticated technology. The Army will inevitably confront challenges that “even though conditioned by war, concern chiefly generic social problems which involve human nature rather than technological factors.”<sup>61</sup> For these challenges, the Army will require Civil Affairs to bring order from chaos, just as it did during the Italian Peninsula invasion in WWII.



## Notes

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5. Coles and Weinberg, 217.
6. Coles and Weinberg, 218.
7. Emilio F. Iodice, "Lessons from History: The Startling Rise to Power of Benito Mussolini," *The Journal of Values Based Leadership* 11, no. 2 (2018): 6.
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9. Iodice, 19–20.
10. John Gooch, "Neither Defeat nor Surrender: Italy's Change of Alliances in 1943," in *How Fighting Ends: A History of Surrender*, ed. Holger Afflerback and Hew Strachan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 351–60; and Alexander de Grand "Mussolini's Follies: Fascism and Its Imperial Racist Phase, 1935–1940," *Contemporary European History* 13 (May 2004): 127–47.
11. Iodice, "Lessons from History," 22–24.
12. The United Nations referenced here is the Allied powers of World War II and not the contemporary intergovernmental organization.
13. Iodice, "Lessons from History," 244.
14. Iodice, 217.
15. Iodice, 237–39.
16. Allied Military Government of Occupied Territory (AMGOT) was initially used during the invasion of Sicily. The term was later shortened to Allied Military Government (AMG) and its usage continued throughout the campaign.
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21. Millen, 51.
22. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-57, *Civil Affairs Operations* (Washington, DC: 2021), 1-17.
23. Millen, "Bury the Dead, Feed the Living," 54.
24. Millen, 57.
25. Coles and Weinberg, *Civil Affairs*, 188–89.

26. "Charles Poletti," National Governors Association, accessed 28 June 2020, <https://www.nga.org/governor/charles-poletti/>.
27. "Charles Poletti Dies at 99; Aided War-Ravaged Italy, *New York Times*, 10 August 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/08/10/nyregion/charles-poletti-dies-at-99-aided-war-ravaged-italy.html>.
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31. Coles and Weinberg, 12.
32. Coles and Weinberg, 197.
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36. Coles and Weinberg, 198.
37. Coles and Weinberg, 238.
38. Coles and Weinberg, 382.
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## **Chapter 7**

### **Consolidating Gains during Operation Market-Garden: The 101st Airborne Division**

Matthew J. Margis

Consolidating gains consists of stability activities and security tasks that involve operations against bypassed enemy forces and the remnants of defeated units. From a doctrinal standpoint, these actions take place in rear consolidation areas near sectors where large-scale combat operations are ongoing. Units conduct security operations to protect supply lines and prevent the enemy from regaining any initiative until local, legitimate governments reestablish control. The doctrinal approach, however, does not specifically address the unique aspects of airborne operations that often take place deep in enemy territory. Current Army doctrine states that units in close combat, like airborne units defending airheads, do not conduct Consolidation of Gains activities.<sup>1</sup> In practice, though, this demarcation between consolidation areas and forward combat zones is sometimes not as clear as defined in doctrine. Such was the case for the 101st Airborne Division during Operation Market-Garden in September 1944 when the division found itself conducting security operations, cooperating with the local populace, and protecting supply lines while in a forward operating sector.

In the spring of 1944, Allied forces invaded Nazi-occupied Western Europe. Having established a secure foothold in France by the end of the summer, they were now poised for the next step in offensive operations against Nazi Germany. Operation Market-Garden called for three airborne divisions to secure road junctions and water crossings to clear a corridor for a ground column to speed ninety miles through the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. If successful, the operation would isolate the remaining Germans in Western Holland, allow the Allies to establish a bridgehead over the Rhine, outflank the main enemy force, reestablish Dutch governance, and position British ground forces for a drive into mainland Germany. The paratroopers needed to organize and expand lodgments around landing zones, clear enemy troops from the area, and establish contact with civilian entities to gather intelligence in enemy territory.<sup>2</sup>

During the operation, the ground force constituted the main combat effort. Planners hoped the airborne divisions would redeploy shortly after the ground column passed through their zones, then smaller security forces could consolidate their gains. Unfortunately, preoperational intelligence underestimated the enemy presence, and the paratroopers found them-

selves fighting for their survival against repeated enemy counterattacks. They did this while the ground column continued its advance, which in effect converted their active combat zones into consolidation zones. This reflected the unique nature of airborne operations, highlighting how future airborne actions in large-scale combat operations might not neatly align with current doctrine. Such actions can also carry strategic implications, as was the case during Market-Garden when tactical success was critical to the wider Allied effort to end the war quickly.

## **Choosing the Right Approach**

The long-anticipated cross-channel invasion took place in June, followed by a months' long slog through Normandy that stretched supply lines and left combat divisions in dire need of replacement troops. Nonetheless, the Allies had pushed through France and Belgium to Germany's border. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, commander, Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), wanted to keep the pressure on. A quick thrust across the Rhine River into Germany would prevent the enemy from mounting a robust defense and speed the German surrender. General Eisenhower also understood that a general offensive was not possible until reinforcements arrived and the Allies could stabilize their supply lines. Allied planners devised eighteen proposals to use the airborne reserve to cross the Rhine, but Eisenhower rejected them all because failure could set the Allies back months.<sup>3</sup> One of the plans, however, showed potential.

Operation Comet took advantage of Allied aerial superiority and called for one and a half airborne divisions to jump into the Nazi-occupied Netherlands. Provided the Allies neutralized enemy air defense positions prior to any jump, such a plan might keep the enemy off balance. SHAEF planners rejected Comet because its small troop allocation seemed insufficient for operational success. In early September, Field Marshal General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery reexamined the plan and brought an updated version to General Eisenhower. Montgomery's new proposal was, in reality, a combination of two operations, one ground and one airborne, named Operations Market and Garden respectively.<sup>4</sup>

During Market, the American 101st and 82nd Airborne Divisions and the British 1st Airborne Division were to secure river and canal crossings, open a fifty-mile corridor between Eindhoven and Arnhem, and establish airheads in the forward combat sector while elements of the British Second Army would commence Garden and drive northward from the Dutch-Belgian border to the IJsselmeer (Lake IJssel) in the Netherlands. The British 30 Corps was to lead the effort and travel up the central highway with the

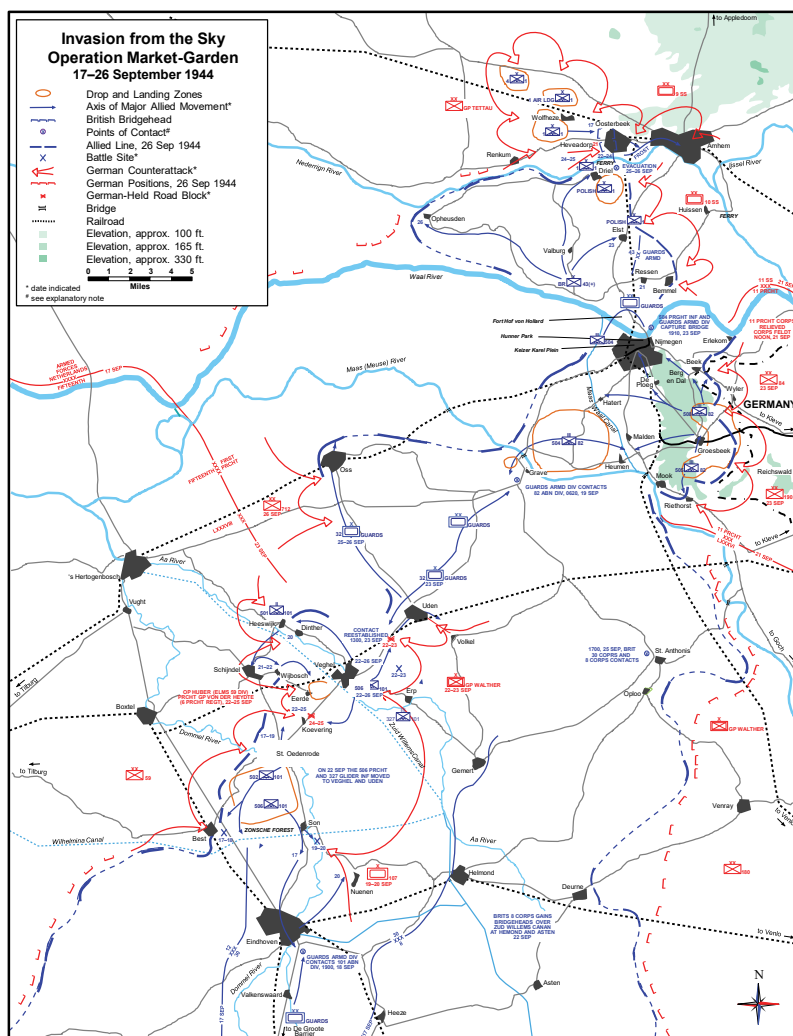


Figure 7.1. Invasion from the Sky Map. Courtesy of the US Army Center of Military History. Recreated by Army University Press.

British 8 and 12 Corps moving up adjacent paths to protect its flanks. The task of securing the main roadway between Eindhoven and Grave fell to the 101st Airborne Division.<sup>5</sup> In addition to clearing the area of enemy troops, the paratroopers needed to work with the local populace in the region's towns and villages. This included using local human intelligence sources to prepare for potential counterattacks.

The airborne phase began just after 1300 hours on 17 September 1944. Allied commanders could not have asked for better results. Preoperation

bombardments cleared enemy anti-aircraft positions, and disorganized German defenses were unable to deny successful insertion. The 101st Airborne dropped north of Eindhoven near the towns of St. Oedenrode, Son, and Veghel, and the 82nd Airborne Division jumped farther north near Grave and Nijmegen. The British 1st Airborne Division landed farthest north near Arnhem. All three divisions reached their drop zones with unprecedented accuracy. Unfortunately, a soldier on one of the few American gliders shot down was carrying a copy of the Allied operational order. Within hours, enemy forces learned the Allied disposition and *Generalfeldmarschall* Walter Model prepared for coordinated counterattacks.<sup>6</sup>

Making matters worse, Allied preoperational intelligence underestimated the enemy presence in the area. Adolf Hitler had dispatched *Generaloberst* Kurt Student and the First Parachute Army headquarters to the Dutch-Belgian border in early September. General Student collected retreating units from France and organized them into ad hoc divisions, or *Kampfgruppen*, that he deployed in defensive positions in the weeks leading to Market-Garden. Field Marshal Model had also made a seemingly innocuous decision in early September that played against the Allies: he detached the 9th and 10th SS *Panzer* divisions from the Fifth *Panzer* Army to refit just outside Arnhem.<sup>7</sup>

The larger-than-expected enemy presence added to the daunting task each 101st Airborne Division regiment faced and effectively transformed the consolidation zones into active combat areas. The 501st Parachute Infantry under Col. Howard R. Johnson dropped near Veghel to seize bridges over the Wilhelms Canal and the Aa River. To the south, Col. John M. Michaelis's 502nd Parachute Infantry divided, with its 1st Battalion moving to capture a road bridge over the Dommel River at St. Oedenrode. Its 2nd and 3rd battalions moved southwest to secure bridges over the Wilhelmina Canal near Best. Col. Robert F. Sink's 506th Parachute Infantry dropped farthest south. The unit was to capture a highway bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal just south of Son before moving to Eindhoven where it would meet the British ground force advancing from the south.<sup>8</sup> Accomplishing these tactical and operational objectives was vital for Market-Garden to have strategic success. If the operation failed, the Allies would be unable to establish a base of operations in the Netherlands as a start-point for a thrust into Germany. Unfortunately, Maj. Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor's lightly manned and lightly armed division was widely dispersed in enemy territory.

The 501st Parachute Infantry achieved quick success even though its 1st Battalion landed three miles northwest of its designated drop zone. The

battalion's commander, Lt. Col. Harry W. O. Kinnard Jr., who had a sound sense of the operating environment, assembled his battalion and moved to seize bridges over the Aa River at Veghel. Meanwhile, the rest of the regiment cleared the village of Eerde of enemy troops, made contact with human intelligence sources, and established a roadblock between Veghel and St. Oedenrode. Another small force captured the railroad bridge over the Willems Canal then linked up with the rest of the regiment in Eerde. In approximately three hours, the 501st Parachute Infantry achieved all of its first-day tactical objectives.<sup>9</sup> Holding on to this success proved to be the true challenge in the coming days.

The 502nd Parachute Infantry also faced a series of obstacles. The 1st Battalion landed outside its drop zone, but managed to consolidate and secure two bridges over the Dommel River against limited resistance. By nightfall, the battalion had captured the two bridges and moved some elements northeast toward Veghel. The 2nd Battalion established a proposed glider landing zone for anticipated reinforcements. Most of the 3rd Battalion moved to an assembly area near Son to assist—if needed—in capturing Eindhoven. General Taylor recognized the risk of losing the bridges at Son, so he ordered the capture of a bridge over the Wilhelmina Canal in Best as a backup. Preoperation intelligence indicated that capturing the bridge at Best would require little more than a company of soldiers, so Company H, 3rd Battalion under Capt. Robert Jones set out toward Best with an additional platoon of engineers. When en route, it came under heavy fire and halted. Colonel Michaelis sent the rest of the battalion to assist the beleaguered company.<sup>10</sup> The next day, the 3rd Battalion became bogged down in the Sonsche Forest, and Colonel Michaelis ordered his reserve 2nd Battalion to assist.

As the battle near the Wilhelmina Canal unfolded, the 506th Parachute Infantry assembled near Son. Faced with minimal opposition, the regiment attempted to capture a second bridge over the canal on its way to Eindhoven. As the men advanced, they met deadly fire from two enemy 88-mm guns. A civilian guided an American company to the gun positions, and they silenced the incoming fire. This cooperation with the local populace was an important element in the operation. The regular army tendency to distrust civilians and guerrilla forces prompted British commanders to downplay the Dutch Resistance's ability to provide any significant assistance.<sup>11</sup> The Resistance, nonetheless, provided translators, human intelligence, and medical care. That said, local Resistance organizations were far from centralized and often acted independently.

By the middle of 1944, there were four major Resistance organizations in Holland: the *Landelijke Organisatie Voor Hulp Aan Onderduikers* (Central Government Organizations for Help to People in Hiding); the *Landelijke Knok Ploeg* (Central Government Fighting Group); the *Raad Van Verzet* (Council of Resistance); and the *Orde Dienst* (Order of Service). A fifth group, the Partisan Action Nederlands (PAN), had no formal links to the other groups but operated in Eindhoven and Best.<sup>12</sup> When the Americans arrived in Son on 17 and 18 September, Resistance members wearing distinctive armbands took to the streets to provide assistance.<sup>13</sup> Throughout the rest of the operation, paratroopers worked with Dutch civilians to provide medical care and humanitarian aid, and the soldiers relied on civilian reports to defend against counterattacks.

After Colonel Sink's troops silenced the enemy 88-mm gun, the rest of the battalion cleared Son of enemy troops and crossed the Wilhelmina Canal. German troops had managed to destroy a portion of the bridge at Son as they retreated, which placed added emphasis on securing the bridges at Best.<sup>14</sup> The 506th moved into Eindhoven the next day and found the town lightly guarded. The paratroopers cleared the town and met a scouting force from the British Guard's Armored Division, but the majority of the British ground force was thirty-three hours behind schedule. General Maxwell's soldiers expected to begin standard consolidation once the ground column moved on. This was not how the operation panned out.

### **Working to Maintain Lines of Communication and Security**

The ground column delays had a cascading effect. In the 101st Division's sector, a brutal fight for a fifteen-mile stretch of road nicknamed Hell's Highway ensued. Ultimate operational success hinged on the division's ability to keep this roadway open. If the highway fell, troops and supplies would not be able to move up the corridor to secure Western Holland and thus set the Allies on the desired strategic path. Due to a variety of factors, though, the 101st Airborne Division found itself carrying out two mission sets. It needed to conduct Consolidation of Gains activities in line with the operational plan but also faced repeated counterattacks from a determined foe.

Unbeknownst to the Americans, Field Marshal Model ordered General Student and the First Parachute Army to contain the British ground offensive and counter the 101st Airborne Division near Eindhoven. Student sent a *Kampfgruppe* under *Generalleutnant* Kurt Chill to oppose the British, while the 59th *Infanterie* Division and 107th *Panzer* Brigade moved to engage the Americans.<sup>15</sup> On 18 September, the 59th Division set off



to recapture the bridges near Best. Colonel Michaelis had sent a second battalion to Best after the loss of the bridge at Son. These two battalions faced a fierce fight against the German division and eventually fell back to the edge of the Zonsche Forest. British tanks from the Guard's Armored Division arrived to assist the Americans the next day. By then, the situation was deteriorating. The 30 Corps found the road too narrow and the surrounding terrain too rough to spread out and make contact with the 8 and 12 Corps on its flanks. This left the 30 Corps vulnerable to enemy counterattacks from the east and west, and isolated the paratroopers in their areas of operation.

When consolidating gains at the strategic level, establishing and maintaining security is a unit's first priority. All other tasks become untenable if security breaks down. General Taylor understood that operational success rested on his division's ability to maintain security. With that in mind, he opted to take an aggressive posture. Rather than awaiting enemy attacks, the spread-out division made limited strikes to keep the Germans off balance and prevent them from concentrating at any one position. The Americans relied on human intelligence sources to determine where the enemy was concentrating then attack before the Germans could concentrate their forces. This tactic kept the road open, but the ground column faced further delays when it reached the 82nd Airborne Division at Nijmegen. Meanwhile, the British 1st Airborne Division's ability to hold at Arnhem waned.

The British paratroopers had unknowingly jumped into the sector with the largest enemy concentration. This did not impede a successful insertion, but the division's situation deteriorated quickly. Vicious enemy attacks forced the British from their landing zones, and after a series of failed attempts to capture bridges in Arnhem, the British held a perimeter less than a half-mile wide and a mile and a half deep. Because of poor communications, the British commander, Maj. Gen. Robert E. Urquhart, was unable to convey the desperation of his unit's situation and was unaware of the ground column's delays. Any hope of success rested on the 30 Corps breaking through to the isolated force. If the ground column could not reach the beleaguered paratroopers, the Allies would not be able to achieve their strategic goals. Doctrine states that the window of opportunity for setting a geographic area on the path to consolidate gains is small.<sup>16</sup> Time was running out.

Making matters worse, neither the 8th nor 12th Corps had reached the 101st's position by 20 September when the 107th *Panzer* Brigade made a second attempt to capture the division's command post and Bailey bridge

over the Wilhelmina Canal at Son. The first attempt had been a day earlier.<sup>17</sup> During the 20 September attack, the 107th Brigade almost broke the Allied hold, but British tanks from the 30 Corps that responded to a request for assistance arrived in time to force the Germans back. In light of these attacks, General Taylor realized he did not have the strength to defend the entire fifteen-mile roadway between Son and Veghel.

Over the next few days, the division's efforts to hold its gains resembled a chess match where General Taylor made moves and countermoves to ensure his troops did not lose their hold on the highway. In one instance on 20 September, the enemy infiltrated the division's position near the Willems Canal between Heeswijk and Veghel. The 1st Battalion, 501st Parachute Infantry moved to intercept. The bulk of the battalion traveled northwest along the canal while a lone company took up a position in Heeswijk, four and a half miles northwest of Veghel. The battalion swept the Germans from the canal into the village where the company was waiting. By the end of the day, the Americans had captured 418 Germans and killed or wounded another 80.<sup>18</sup>

The next day, a 502nd Parachute Infantry company encountered stiff resistance near the village of Schinjdél northwest of St. Oedenrode and west of Veghel. This confirmed Dutch civilian reports that enemy forces were concentrating for an attack. Commanders fostered this partnership with the local populace while the operation was ongoing and—because of the unit's thin dispersal—relied on these reports to respond to local threats. This partnership allowed the division to conduct stability operations and defend its position.

Inspired by the previous day's actions, Colonel Michaelis and Colonel Johnson initiated a pincer movement with two battalions from each of their respective regiments. First, 501st Parachute Infantry elements would take Schinjdél from the north. Then two 502nd Parachute Infantry battalions would sweep in from the south and trap the Germans. Men from the 501st Parachute Infantry took the village shortly after midnight on 22 September, and the 502nd began its movement after dawn. Success seemed imminent, but General Taylor forced a halt after he received an urgent message from Dutch Resistance sources that morning.<sup>19</sup>

According to the report, the enemy was concentrating for a major blow to sever Hell's Highway in the vicinity of either Veghel or Uden. This contradicted an earlier report that the Germans were focusing on St. Oedenrode. Developments shortly after dawn confirmed the report. Field Marshal Model had ordered three battalions of the 59th Division, with support from

tanks and artillery to consolidate into *Kampfgruppe Huber* to attack Veghel from the west. Meanwhile, another ad hoc division, *Kampfgruppe Walther*, and the 107th *Panzer* Brigade would advance from the east. Model called for two additional infantry divisions to provide support.<sup>20</sup> General Taylor's dispersed force was in no position to face a concentrated attack since there was only one battalion in Veghel and none in Uden.

General Taylor dispatched the 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry to Uden. About 150 men and three supporting tanks moved immediately into the village while the rest of the battalion loaded onto transports. The enemy appeared within minutes of their arrival. As a show of force, men from Company E struck the lead German element immediately. The troops spread their fire from house to house to give the impression that they held the town in force. This quick strike was enough to delay the enemy from launching a full attack into the town.<sup>21</sup> For the next twenty-four hours, the troops engaged in a series of limited attacks and counterattacks in the village. This, though, was a diversion from the enemy's main effort.

While the fight in Uden unfolded, *Kampfgruppe Walther* advanced through the village of Erp toward Veghel, where a 501st Parachute Infantry battalion waited in houses and foxholes. The Germans struck shortly after noon on 22 September, and a fierce fight ensued. American troops were outnumbered and outgunned, and could not prevent German tanks from swinging northwest and cutting Hell's Highway between Veghel and Uden. Reinforcements, fortunately, were on the way. General Taylor had sent a battalion from the 327th Glider Infantry to Veghel, and the majority of the 2nd Battalion, 506th Parachute Infantry diverted from its approach to Uden and went instead to Veghel. This battalion met with a squadron of British tanks and drove toward the town, and other infantry elements moved to Veghel in the coming days. The 101st Airborne Division's artillery commander, Brig. Gen. Anthony C. McAuliffe, was also at hand to coordinate the defensive.<sup>22</sup>

By early afternoon on 22 September, *Kampfgruppe Huber's* commander realized that cutting into the town from the northwest was becoming an impossibility. German troops readjusted and moved to cut the highway south of the town. Colonel Johnson released his halted battalions in Schinjdal to assist. They fought their way to the villages of Wijbosch and Eerde just west of Veghel. By this time, General McAuliffe had established a strong defense in Veghel with roughly eight infantry battalions. So when Colonel Johnson's battalions arrived, they established defensive positions instead of proceeding into Veghel. Johnson's troops effectively

isolated the Germans, who were attempting to swing to the south. As 22 September came to a close, Veghel was mostly secure, and General McAuliffe turned his attention to reopening the highway.<sup>23</sup>

Fighting continued the next day. The 32nd Guards Brigade turned back from its position to assist in reopening the highway after receiving a report that the Germans had broken through. This was the second time that commanders redirected armored units to assist in keeping the highway open. An action normally associated with stability operations (keeping supply lanes open) became essential for tactical, operational, and ultimately, strategic success. The British 1st Airborne Division was still bogged down at Arnhem, which was the forward sector of the operation. If the ground force could not reach it and break enemy resistance, chances of success were slim. Consolidation in the rear area (Hell's Highway) was critical if Market-Garden stood any chance of fulfilling Allied intentions.

### **Market-Garden's Closing Days**

As the fighting intensified, the enemy renewed its attack against Veghel. The 6th *Fallschirmjager* Regiment attempted to strike along the same western route that *Kampfgruppe Huber* had taken the day before. In a repeat of the earlier attempt, the enemy ran into Colonel Johnson's waiting battalions. With the area west of Veghel secure, General McAuliffe sent two battalions to break *Kampfgruppe Walther's* hold on Hell's Highway. The Americans advanced and made contact with British armor elements moving south from Uden. The combined American and British effort reopened the highway.<sup>24</sup>

As the battle continued around Veghel, the weather cleared enough for additional reinforcements to arrive. In response, Field Marshal Model reorganized his forces and launched new attacks on 24 September. The 6th Parachute Regiment, now under the Fifteenth Army, attacked toward Eerde in the hopes of breaking the defenses west of Veghel. After a brutal hand-to-hand fight, the Germans were on the verge of a breakthrough when British tanks arrived. Reinforced, the Allies launched a counterattack and drove away the enemy.<sup>25</sup> That evening, though, newly arrived German troops advanced to Koevering, a small hamlet between St. Oedenrode and Veghel, where they cut Hell's Highway again. The next day, the 506th Parachute Infantry launched an attack from the northeast while British troops moved in from the opposite direction. This coordinated attack forced the enemy to retreat during the night, and Allied engineers reopened the highway on 26 September. By this time, Market-Garden was coming to an end.

Failed attempts to reach the British 1st Airborne Division on 24 and 25 September prompted Allied commanders to agree that Market-Garden's potential for success had run out. On the evening of 25 September, the British began their withdrawal. In all, only 2,398 of the 9,000 troopers who landed around Arnhem escaped. The others were either killed, wounded, or captured in the long days of fighting.<sup>26</sup> Contemporary and historical accounts generally paint Market-Garden as a failure since the Allies were unable to accomplish all of the operation's far-reaching goals. For the operation's shortcomings, however, the Allies secured bridgeheads over five major water obstacles, established a salient sixty-five miles into enemy territory, liberated thousands of Dutch civilians from Nazi oppression, and gained valuable airfields. Unfortunately, the 1st Airborne Division's heavy losses placed further strain on an already stretched front. General Eisenhower hoped the American airborne divisions would be released once the ground column cleared their zones. This was not to be. With no reinforcements or tactical reserve available, the units in the field established a defensive perimeter. The 101st Airborne Division moved away from its position near Veghel to reinforce the British 30 Corps north of the Waal River.<sup>27</sup> For the next two months, the division patrolled the area, supported civilian authorities, and prevented the enemy from regaining any initiative. In a doctrinal sense, the division took on activities normally associated with consolidating gains. Yet, as noted, in practice the division had been conducting such activities since the operation began.

Though the offensive phase of Market-Garden had ended, the fighting had not. Hitler ordered heavy reinforcements to the region north of Veghel as soon as the Allied airborne divisions kicked off the operation. On 1 October, the enemy launched a general counteroffensive. Four days later, the 101st Airborne Division arrived in its new location north of the Waal River, nicknamed the Island. Casualties mounted over the next few days as the Americans clashed with the attacking 363rd *Volksgrenadier* Division, but the troops held firm. By 9 October, the 101st Airborne Division had broken the enemy to pieces. Command of the Island transferred to the British 12 Corps. Still, no release came for the Americans.<sup>28</sup>

As October drew to a close, the 101st Airborne Division, along with some 82nd Airborne Division elements, remained dug in on the Island. Over the next two weeks, the Americans launched a series of probing patrols in an effort to deceive the enemy and convince the Germans that the Allies were preparing for a general thrust northward. Meanwhile, the British 21 Army Group shifted its efforts toward liberating Antwerp, Belgium. General Eisenhower reluctantly accepted the necessity of keeping

two American airborne divisions in the Market-Garden salient until the Second Army could clear the approaches to Antwerp. The 82nd Airborne finally withdrew on 11 November, but the 101st Airborne Division did not begin withdrawing until 25 November. The last American paratroopers pulled out two days later—seventy-one days after jumping in near Son.<sup>29</sup>

### **Lessons Learned from a Costly Battle**

Events during Operation Market-Garden unfolded mostly according to plan in the early phase of the operation, but soon turned against the Allies. Unforeseen circumstances doomed the overall operation. The difficult task of keeping the ground column's route of advance and supply lines open fell to the 101st Airborne Division. When the ground column was delayed, the thinly stretched division faced vicious enemy counterattacks. Using Dutch intelligence sources, the paratroopers made a series of surgical attacks to keep the enemy off balance and hold key bridges and road junctions, but did not have adequate manpower to secure its sector. While this was a tactical issue, it reflected the necessity of dedicating proper resources to unconventional operations where traditional support avenues might be unavailable. In the end, the 101st Airborne Division fulfilled its mission, but at a high cost. The division incurred more than 2,100 casualties, with 315 killed in action.<sup>30</sup>

The 101st Airborne Division's actions during Market-Garden reflect the unique nature of airborne operations. Unlike more conventional combat units, the division was able to establish credibility with civilian entities, set up defensive positions to prevent counterattacks, respond to localized threats, and eliminate enemy pockets of resistance. Such activities are normally associated with Consolidation of Gains after large-scale combat operations have ceased. But due to the nature of airborne operations, the division conducted these activities in a forward position while engaged in close combat. This created an environment where the 101st was stabilizing a perimeter while fighting for its survival. Once the operation ended, the division remained in a defensive position and continued working with local authorities to establish legitimate governance.

Recent events, such as the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, suggest that future combat might entail a similar extension of close areas amidst a diminishment of relatively pacific rear areas. Additionally, modern technology, such as ground radar, armed unmanned aircraft systems, and multiple launch rocket systems reduce the separation between frontline units and supporting assets. As a result, getting combined arms formations within striking distance of enemy forces without incurring

heavy losses will become more challenging. Using deep infiltration to take out enemy radar and rocket sites might become necessary to allow ground combat units to advance into enemy territory.<sup>31</sup> The 101st Airborne Division's Consolidation of Gains activities during Operation Market-Garden provide future leaders with a case study in conducting such activities within a forward zone during the tactical phase of an operation.

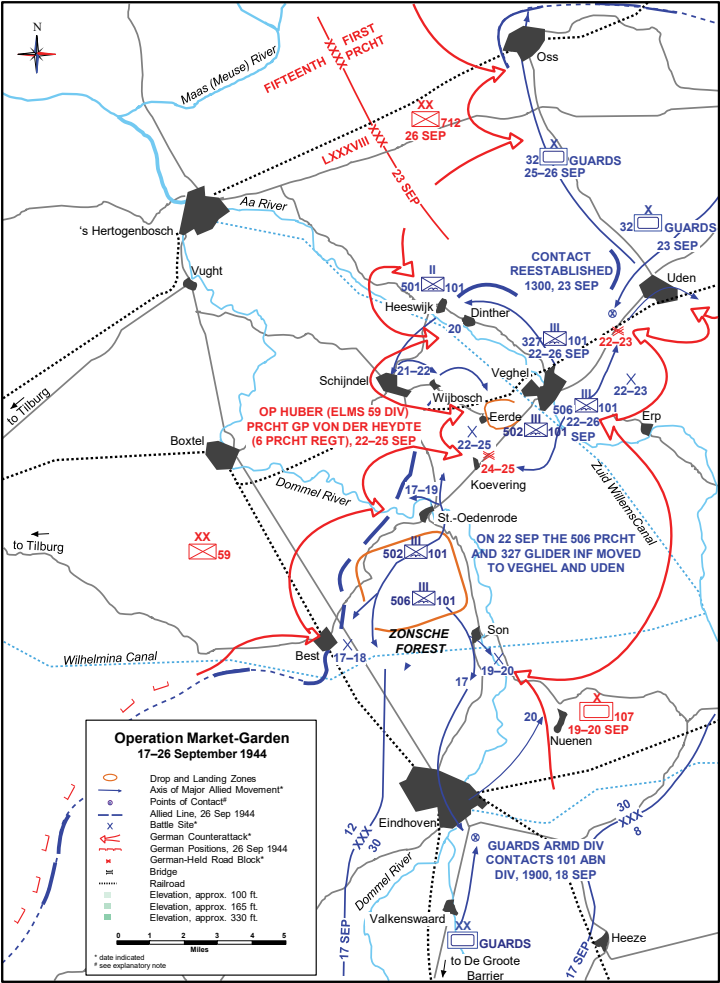


Figure 7.2. Map of Operation Market-Garden, 17–26 September 1944. Courtesy of the US Army Center of Military History. Recreated by Army University Press.

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## **Chapter 8**

### **Connecting the Dots: US Efforts to Consolidate Gains in the Central Pacific during World War II**

Gary W. Linhart

On 20 November 1943, the United States invaded the Gilbert Islands, a small Central Pacific archipelago roughly 2,500 miles southwest of Hawaii. These were the opening battles of what would become known as the Central Drive in the Pacific Theater during World War II. The ultimate goal of this drive was to capture airfields on the Chinese coast. Once these airfields were secured by ground forces, air and naval forces would isolate the Japanese home islands from the resources that Japan had captured prior to and during the war. US planners understood that long lines of communication (LOC) would need to be established to support the drive, which would be very time-consuming and resource-intensive. What the planners did not realize was that the consolidating gains process developed by US forces not only allowed for the drive to move more rapidly than envisioned, but also isolated the Japanese from their resources.

This chapter examines consolidating gains at an operational and strategic level; due to the nature of warfare conducted in the Pacific Theater, US planners constantly considered and prepared for consolidating gains activities. Using the technique of “island hopping,” US Joint forces made rapid leaps across the Pacific Ocean—assaulting and occupying small islands and atolls that ground forces could then develop into ports and airfields. Simultaneously, air and sea forces bypassed and neutralized areas that had long been identified as obstacles and would require immense effort to capture and consolidate. Some were even neutralized prior to beginning the next operation, essentially securing the LOC prior to its creation. Perfecting this process during the drive through the Central Pacific, US planners eventually identified that their forces were not able to rapidly consolidate the final objectives of the drive, Hong Kong and Formosa, and bypassed them. Instead, the LOC that had been properly and securely consolidated acted as almost a cordon to isolate the Japanese home islands. The secured US LOC fed the Central Drive, and also “connected the dots” of small islands throughout the Pacific and cut Japan off from much-needed resources to the south of that line.

## The Origins of the Central Drive

The foundation of American strategy in the Pacific Theater evolved in the decades before its execution. In the 1920s and 1930s, US planners worked on a war plan called “Orange,” which assumed Japan and the United States would come into armed conflict in the Pacific. While this plan was constantly revised in the prewar period, one persistent theme was that the US fleet needed to attack through the Central Pacific.<sup>1</sup> Orange envisioned that the Japanese would attempt to attack and occupy the Philippine archipelago, a US territory during that period. The US fleet would then attack westward across the Pacific to either reinforce or recapture the Philippines and most likely engage in a decisive battle with the Japanese fleet. It was envisioned, however, that forward bases in the Pacific would be needed to resupply and refuel the US fleet ships as they moved across the vast distances. Since immense amounts of materiel would be required, a key concern was how to protect the ever-increasing length of the lines of communication. US planners believed that limiting the number of islands captured and developed would be a critical factor to minimize the forces needed for rear protection. The Marshall and Caroline island groups were on the most direct, and shortest route, to the Philippines and thus were identified as defensible routes that would allow the bulk of the force to remain forward. On the eve of World War II, Plan Orange evolved further and was merged into the Rainbow Plans, a series of plans to support a multiple-front war. The fifth version of these plans (Rainbow 5) contained the general strategy the United States went to war with, which included a concept for a Central Drive.<sup>2</sup>

Once the United States entered World War II, two obstacles delayed the Pacific Fleet’s move toward the Philippines. First, the Allies agreed to concentrate in Europe to defeat Germany, while initially only defending in the Pacific against the Japanese. Second, the Japanese had damaged or destroyed a majority of the Pacific Fleet battleships during their raid on Pearl Harbor. As a result, US forces initially assumed a defensive posture in order to rebuild the fleet. The Navy accomplished this task by the end of 1943 and urged that its new fleet be used to begin the Central Drive it had spent decades planning and rehearsing. Admiral Ernest J. King, chief of naval operations and the greatest advocate of the Central Drive, however, faced complications and dissenting opinions on how or even if this drive should be conducted.

On 30 March 1942, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) agreed the Pacific Theater would be divided into two major commands.<sup>3</sup> Admiral Chester W. Nimitz directed the Pacific Ocean Area (further subdivided into the North,

Central, and South). General Douglas MacArthur commanded the Southwest Pacific Area. The reasons for this division are beyond the scope of this chapter, but the decision to create two areas resulted in a competitive rivalry between the two areas for the rest of the war. More importantly, there was no unified commander in the Pacific (unlike Europe, where General Dwight D. Eisenhower ultimately served as the supreme commander). The two commands answered to their respective chiefs of staff; Nimitz took direction from King while MacArthur took commands from General George Marshall. This division in command meant that cooperation, and often JCS compromise in Washington, was required to successfully direct each of the Pacific campaigns.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, theater commanders and the JCS regularly debated the best course of action as the war progressed.

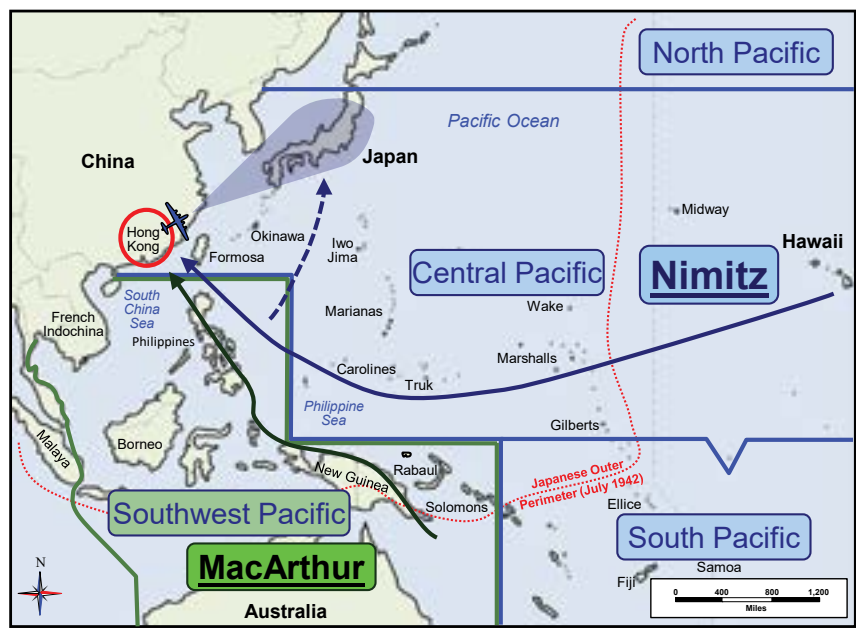


Figure 8.1. The Dual Drive: US Division of Command and Offensive Plan for the Pacific Theater. Created by Army University Press.

The Allies discussed and concluded these debates at a series of conferences held at different locations throughout the war. At the May 1943 Trident Conference, the US Joint Chiefs presented “The Strategic Plan for the Defeat of Japan” to the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), the supreme Allied planning staff; the CCS approved it.<sup>5</sup> The plan lacked detail but identified two critical objectives to establish conditions for a successful AI-

lied invasion of the Japanese home islands: a strategic bombing campaign against military and economic targets in Japan and an effort to prevent the Japanese from utilizing petroleum and other resources they had seized in the Dutch East Indies. To achieve these objectives, the JCS authorized the two primary commands, which had been developed in March, to conduct two major, separate offensives. This strategic plan would eventually be called "The Dual Drive." MacArthur would attack west along the coast of New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the Philippines; Nimitz would simultaneously follow the long-planned avenue of approach west through the Central Pacific island chains. Nimitz, who controlled all of the new aircraft carriers, would destroy the Japanese Combined Fleet and seize a series of islands to develop them into forward bases. To concentrate power forward, the United States would consolidate the newer "fast" carriers into a group that would eventually become known as either Task Force 58 or Task Force 38, depending on who the Central Drive commander was at the time. Both attacks would culminate in the seizure of a port (most likely Hong Kong) and airfields on the China coast which would, in turn, support a strategic bombing campaign.<sup>6</sup>

This dual approach resulted in great success for the Allies, because the United States was able to provide adequate resources to satisfy both campaigns while simultaneously eroding Japan's ability to counter either drive. Prior to and during the advance west, however, many high-ranking officers argued that two drives violated the principle of unity of effort and only one consolidated drive would be needed. MacArthur, a very strong-willed commander who was determined to return to the Philippines after he was forced to evacuate the archipelago in early 1942, believed he should command this united campaign. He argued that his sector had much more land and could thus better support land-based aircraft; the opposite would be true for the Central Drive, an approach thus fraught with risk:

A movement through the mandated islands [Mariana, Caroline, and Marshall groups] will be a series of amphibious attacks with the support of carrier-based aircraft against objectives defended by Naval units and ground troops supported by land-based aviation. Midway stands as an example of such operations.<sup>7</sup>

MacArthur correctly identified that, in opposing an Allied drive through the central Pacific, the Japanese would use all of the Mandate Islands as "unsinkable aircraft carriers" in support of their Combined Fleet.<sup>8</sup> Since the US had no bases in this area, the Central Drive would rely solely on carrier-based aircraft. Admiral King, who was the main advocate of the Central Drive, had a much better appreciation for the military power that the rebuilt

Pacific Fleet was about to unleash on the Japanese. While the Central Drive would have limited land-based aircraft in direct support of the main attacks, the mobility of the fast carriers would allow Nimitz to focus that power on islands that could be transformed into forward bases to further advance the fleet. Japanese airbases on the small Mandate Islands were limited in capacity, which reduced the amount of aircraft available to oppose US forces. If American commanders chose wisely, they could isolate the targeted islands, preventing support from nearby islands.<sup>9</sup>

### **Establishing the First Dot: The Marshalls**

US plans had long identified the Marshall Islands as the first area the US Navy should seize to establish forward bases to service the fleet. Because these islands were so far from Hawaii, however, the JCS ordered Nimitz to first attack the Gilbert Islands, which were only 600 miles from the US-held Ellice Islands. US forces could then use the Gilberts to provide air bases for long-range bombing and reconnaissance of the Marshalls.<sup>10</sup> A joint task force of Naval, Marine, and Army forces accomplished this task in November 1943 and allowed the United States to test tactics and procedures for assaulting small islands and atolls in the vast Pacific Ocean. One procedure that proved crucial to the US Navy's ability to conduct the Central Drive was a formation of supply ships called Service Squadron 4 (later designated as Service Squadron 10 as it grew in size). This group allowed Nimitz to keep his combat ships in forward positions for longer periods, rather than make the 4,000-mile round trip back to Pearl Harbor for refit and resupply.<sup>11</sup>

This concept of forward-positioned logistics was a primary concern for Nimitz and his planners as they formulated their plan to seize and develop the Marshall Islands. Nimitz proposed that his senior commanders bypass the most fortified Japanese islands in the eastern portion of the Marshalls. He suggested instead that they attack the center of the island group and capture the Kwajalein Atoll. This island chain was the largest atoll in the Pacific and served as the Japanese logistical and command hub of the Marshalls.<sup>12</sup> Admiral Raymond Spruance, who became one of Nimitz's most successful leaders, was the 5th Fleet commander in charge of the Marshalls operation; he disagreed with Nimitz's proposal. Spruance insisted that his force capture the western islands first. Supported by Admiral Turner, the Amphibious Force commander, he argued that bypassing these Japanese strongholds would interfere with his lines of communication, including the vulnerable target of Service Squadron 4/10. Also, Spruance wanted his fast carrier force (which had increased to twelve, con-

sisting of two old fleet, four new fleet, and six new light carriers) to move forward to the next target, which might include a battle with the Japanese fleet, rather than returning east to deal with enemy forces in the US rear area.<sup>13</sup> After listening to the arguments of all his senior officers, Nimitz disregarded their concerns and decided to seize Kwajalein first. This atoll, along with the undefended Majuro atoll and eventually the westernmost Marshall island of Eniwetok, became the first forward home of the 5th Fleet and its massive logistical support.

On 31 January to February 1944, Army and Marine units rapidly seized Kwajalein and Majuro and the fleet immediately moved in. The 4th Marine and US Army 7th Infantry divisions suffered few casualties; the joint assault is often identified by scholars as a nearly perfect operation.<sup>14</sup> Since the seizure went so smoothly and rapidly, Nimitz and the JCS began looking at shortening their timelines and moving immediately to the next westerly objectives.<sup>15</sup> To accomplish this, the 5th Fleet needed to consolidate enough combat power to simultaneously seize that objective, possibly engage the Japanese Combined Fleet, and secure rapidly developing forward bases. Spruance needed to find a way to free his fast carrier force from having to engage the previously bypassed islands he was worried about. Thus, the Americans conducted the unique form of consolidating gains that would allow the 5th Fleet to continuously leapfrog forward. The threats to developing Kwajalein and Majuro as a forward base were not land-based; very few Japanese soldiers survived the initial assault on the atolls, and the small indigent population was friendly to American forces. Instead, the threats came from bypassed areas and other Japanese bases in range of the Marshalls.

As soon as the Americans completed the major assault on Kwajalein and Majuro, they transitioned to two main tasks: developing the atolls as a supply anchorage/air base and simultaneously protecting them. When the 5th Fleet first entered the Marshalls area of operations, 65 percent of the Japanese airpower in the area was located on Maloelap, Wotje, and Kwajalein; the other 35 percent was located on Jaluit and Mille. In the initial attack, the US fast carrier group overpowered the airfields on these Japanese islands and obtained air superiority for its amphibious assaults on Kwajalein.<sup>16</sup> After seizing the islands following these assaults, US forces immediately moved in equipment and construction units to build airfields on Kwajalein and Majuro. Army and Marine forces simultaneously seized the rest of the unoccupied atoll islands to prevent Japanese forces from observing or otherwise affecting the fleet. Service Squadron 10 moved into the atoll to protect itself from submarine attack. The 5th Fleet assigned escort carriers



to the squadron to protect it from air attack.<sup>17</sup> The procedure that would secure this new forward base for the rest of the war was then emplaced. Heavy bombers—and later medium and light bombers—stationed on the Gilbert Islands continuously bombed the bypassed Japanese stronghold islands, which cratered their airfields and terminated any hope they would be reinforced by air. In what would become known as “milk runs” (air attacks with little or no opposition), US bombers flew from the Gilberts, bombed the bypassed islands, refueled and rearmed at the Majuro airfield secured by ground forces, conducted a second bomb run, then returned to the Gilberts. In the words of naval historian Samuel Morison: “These atolls were like tough characters who have been knocked down but who have to be kicked every so often so that they will stay down. . . . And an airfield from which planes cannot operate is as harmless as a tennis court.”<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the protective fighters stationed on the US-occupied islands meant no single enemy fighter attacked Service Squadron 10 while it was based at Majuro.<sup>19</sup>

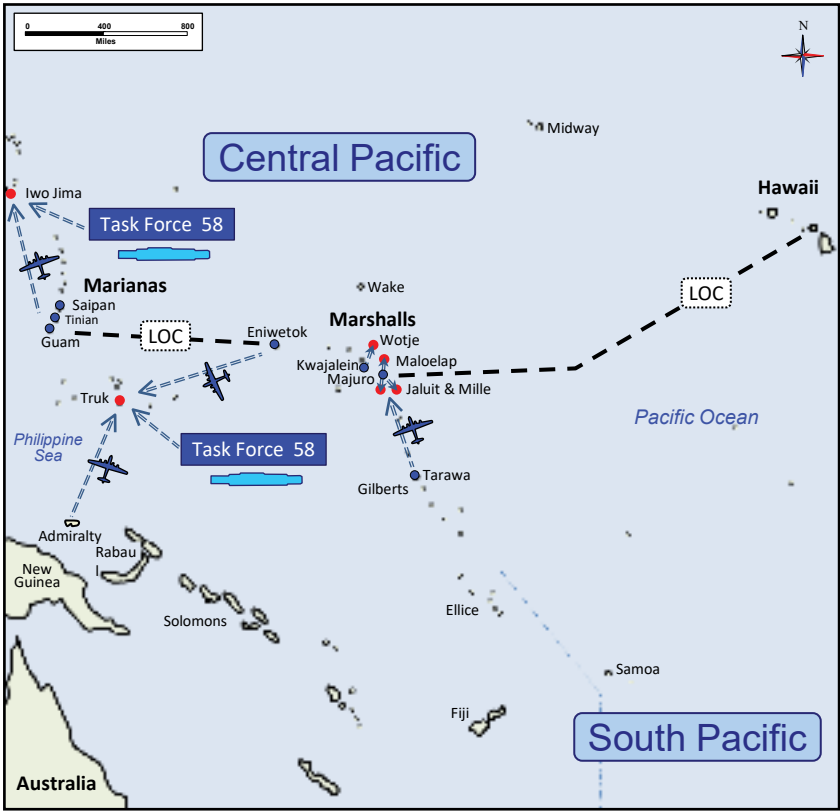


Figure 8.2. Neutralizing the Threat: US forces protect their lines of communication from bypassed threats. Created by Army University Press.

## Connecting the Next Dot: The Marianas

Since Kwajalein had been taken so swiftly, Nimitz decided to seize Eniwetok, the westernmost island in the Marshalls, two months ahead of schedule. A Marine regiment and an Army regiment attacked Eniwetok on 17 February and secured it three days later, again with relatively low casualties. The Navy had yet another good forward anchorage, this one only 1,000 miles from the Marianas.<sup>20</sup> Concurrent with this attack, Nimitz sent the carrier task force, now known as Task Force 58, to conduct a massive raid on Truk.

Prior to the Gilberts operation, many high-ranking officers identified Truk as a logical objective for the 5th Fleet to capture. Often identified as a prime Plan Orange target, it was the Japanese Navy fleet's main forward base. Located in the center of their Mandate possessions, the cluster of islands could easily accommodate a large amount of supply depots, a headquarters, and several airfields. These islands were also surrounded by an atoll, forming a near-perfect harbor. US planners often referred to it as the "Gibraltar of the Pacific" and felt it could be an excellent forward base for the 5th Fleet.<sup>21</sup> These advantages, however, were also the reason that other US Navy commanders and planners wanted to avoid Truk. They wrongly assumed the Japanese would heavily defend the islands/atoll and that an attack would be costly and time-consuming. Many advocated bypassing Truk for the Marianas or the Paulus Islands.<sup>22</sup> Task Force 58's February 1944 raid ended the debate. The raid on Truk destroyed almost every airplane stationed there and sunk nearly every ship anchored in the lagoon. While the Japanese Combined Fleet sailed west prior to this raid and escaped destruction, the raid's ease and success resulted in the JCS ordering Nimitz to bypass Truk. A second raid in April completely knocked Truk out of the war as a possible base for the Japanese fleet. US forces began a continuous bombing campaign against Truk from Eniwetok and the Admiralty Islands (secured by MacArthur's southern drive), resulting in the same isolation that the bypassed western Marshall Islands suffered. By neutralizing the Gibraltar of the Pacific, Nimitz secured a future western LOC before he even attacked in that direction.<sup>23</sup>

That LOC became critical for the next objective: the Southern Marianas (Saipan, Tinian, and Guam). On 15 June 1944, the JCS ordered Nimitz to attack the Marianas; once again, many senior officers did not agree with this course of action. Unlike the numerous Marshall and Caroline atolls, the Marianas lacked a developed harbor and were not on the most direct route to the South China Sea, the original culminating point of the Dual Drive. MacArthur identified several flaws with the Marianas operation. In a

January 1944 conference at Pearl Harbor, MacArthur's top representatives described the entire operation as a waste of resources. MacArthur's chief of staff, General Richard Sutherland, stated that the 5th Fleet's amphibious assets were desperately needed in the Southwest Pacific. Additionally, since the Marianas were out of range of all land-based aircraft, the vulnerable amphibious and supply ships would rely on naval aviation alone. MacArthur's 7th Fleet commander, Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid, argued the Marianas had limited port facilities and was of little use to future operations. He said that "any talk of the Marianas as a base leaves me entirely cold."<sup>24</sup>

Admiral King, however, won the support of the rest of the JCS to seize the Marianas. Many naval officers identified these islands as the perfect location to support a submarine and surface ship effort to attack the Japanese inner ring of defenses. Admiral King saw them as the means to cut off much of the Carolinas from Japan: "The Marianas are the key of the situation because of their location on the Japanese line of communications."<sup>25</sup> King's greatest ally was General Hap Arnold, Army Air Forces commander and a full member of the JCS. Arnold desperately wanted to build several airfields on the Marianas, similar to the secure fields the 5th Fleet had already built and secured in its wake. A new Air Force bomber, the B-29, was about to make an appearance in the Pacific theater in effective numbers. The B-29 had a one-way operational range of 1,500 miles, and the southern Marianas were 1,270 miles from Tokyo and Japanese industrial regions. Although General George Kenney, MacArthur's air chief, called this possible bombing route "just a stunt" since it would be done without fighter support, Arnold was convinced that the high-flying bomber would be successful.<sup>26</sup> More importantly, it had become painfully obvious at this point in the war that the Japanese had effectively defeated Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese National Army. Japanese operations in 1944 prevented the Chinese from securing airfields in their own country.<sup>27</sup> With bases on the Chinese mainland no longer viable as platforms for the US to start a strategic bombing campaign against the Japanese Home Islands, Arnold sought islands close to Japan that had airfields and a line of communication that could be secured.

Three Marine and two Army divisions took two months—from June to August 1944—to seize Saipan, Tinian, and Guam and provide Arnold with his bases. Ground forces began constructing the airfields as the islands were still being secured. Luckily for the Seabee construction units, the Army XXIV Corps Artillery arrived on Saipan in time to suppress enemy fire on that island and Tinian during the construction.<sup>28</sup> At sea, Task Force 58, along with two US submarines, damaged the Japanese Carrier

Fleet in the Battle of Philippines Sea to the point that the fleet was not an effective force for the remainder of the war. Task Force 58 then conducted follow-on raids at the Bonin and Volcano island groups to the north of the Marianas. Task Group 58.1, commanded by Rear Admiral Joseph “Jocko” Clark, attacked Iwo Jima five times between 15 June and 5 August. The group’s aviators became so accustomed to neutralizing the island group that they nicknamed the islands the “Jocko Jimas” and created a fictional real estate company called “Jocko Jima Development Corporation.”<sup>29</sup> The combination of artillery to suppress enemy resistance on the islands, constant bombing of Truk to their rear, and the “tough characters” surrounding the Marianas getting “kicked every so often” neutralized any threats to the Marianas airfields. The Marianas became another well-supplied and effective forward base. Journalist Ernie Pyle reported that the supply depots at Guam were so large “you’d find enough there to feed a city, build one, or blow it up.”<sup>30</sup> And possibly most important for the US war effort in November 1944, Arnold and the 20th Air Force began a nearly uninterrupted and devastating bombing campaign from these secure bases. This effort destroyed Japanese cities and industry, mined shipping lanes, and ultimately dropped two atomic bombs, all of which contributed to Japan’s surrender without a costly invasion of the Japanese home islands.<sup>31</sup>

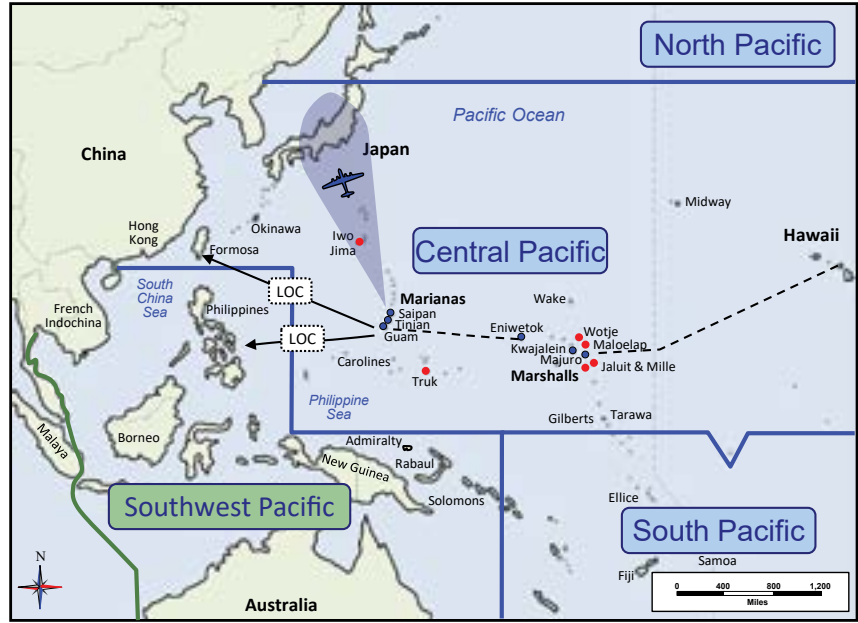


Figure 8.3. Formosa or Luzon, the two options to cut the Japanese off from the southern portion of their empire. Created by Army University Press.

## Choosing the Last Dot: Formosa vs. Luzon

With the Central Drive LOC safely connecting dots from the United States to Pearl Harbor to the Marshalls and now the Marianas, the JCS planned and debated establishing the final link that would cut off the Japanese lifeline to the Dutch East Indies: the China Coast. The members debated this final link prior to January 1944; even though it was evident that Chinese Nationalist forces would not be able to secure Hong Kong, seizing that port and the surrounding Chinese airfields was still a goal for the JCS.<sup>32</sup> Admiral King and the planners in Washington greatly favored bypassing the Philippines and attacking Formosa. It seemed obvious that US forces could not take Hong Kong if they did not possess that island. Additionally, taking Formosa would make the return to the Philippines easier; Japanese forces there would be cut off from the home islands and wither on the vine, much like the bypassed islands in the Marshalls.<sup>33</sup> The majority of officers in theater, however, disagreed with the planners in Washington. MacArthur was again the leading voice against any course of action that prevented his immediate return to the Philippines and its largest island, Luzon. He commented in an 18 June 1944 message to the JCS:

It is my opinion that purely military considerations demand the reoccupation of the Philippines in order to cut the enemy's communication to the south and to secure a base for our further advance. Even if this were not the case. . . . it would in my opinion be necessary to reoccupy the Philippines.

The Philippines is American Territory where our unsupported forces were destroyed by the enemy. Practically all of the 17,000,000 Filipinos remain loyal to the United States and are undergoing the greatest privation. . . . We have a great national obligation to discharge.<sup>34</sup>

Clearly, MacArthur had more than purely military considerations for recapturing the Philippines. Marshall warned MacArthur to “be careful not to let personal feelings and Philippine politics” influence his recommendations.<sup>35</sup> However, MacArthur identified a key difference between what the Central Drive experienced previously and what it was about to encounter in late 1944. Even in the Marianas, which were much larger than the Marshall and Gilbert atolls, any land-based resistance that remained after an island had been secured could be left to “die on the vine” from malnutrition and disease.<sup>36</sup> The next targets—the much larger islands of Luzon or Formosa—would have large civilian populations and possibly

numerous insurgents to deal with during and after the major attacks. This issue helped turn the choice of the next objective in MacArthur's favor.

Nimitz created a plan to attack Formosa and mainland China. His planners, however, identified fundamental problems with the plan as it evolved and consolidating gains issues were evaluated. Given current manpower and logistic availability, planners estimated US forces could only establish footholds on Formosa. Taking the entire island would need to wait for a victory in the European Theater, which would create more available manpower.<sup>37</sup> MacArthur pointed out that Luzon's loyal population could possibly be relied on to secure the island after US forces seized it. Formosa, on the other hand, had been a Japanese colony since the nineteenth century, and planners assumed that the population was hostile.<sup>38</sup> While it was likely that US forces would be able to seize portions of Formosa, it was uncertain that it could be secured in the same manner that had been successful thus far in the Central Drive. Spruance proposed an alternate plan for the 5th Fleet to seize Iwo Jima and Okinawa. If the US followed this course of action, Iwo Jima would provide a secure fighter base for B-29 escorts and Okinawa could be a forward base for a possible invasion of the Japanese home islands. This approach would also allow MacArthur to seize Luzon via the island of Leyte.<sup>39</sup> Arguments about how difficult it would be to secure both Formosa and a line of communication extremely close to Japan, along with increasingly dire estimates of manpower and logistical needs, were too hard to ignore. One by one, with the last holdout being Admiral King, the JCS members changed their opinion and adopted Luzon over Formosa as the final objective to cut off the Japanese from their southern resources.<sup>40</sup> The forecasted inability to properly consolidate gains was a critical consideration in the overall direction of the final campaigns in the Pacific.

While the campaign through the Central Pacific is a unique example of Joint operations, it also illustrates how to apply Consolidating Gains fundamentals in the overall planning process. US Joint forces applied operational and strategic considerations to the movement toward Japan, choosing objectives that could be quickly developed and protected with ground forces while air and naval forces simultaneously neutralized threats outside of these objectives. Since the planners considered the difficulty of consolidating gains prior to executing the operation, the result was often a rear area secured with minimal assets and primary combat forces that were free to conduct follow-on operations rapidly. Finally, the Japanese were never able to operationally disrupt US secured lines

of communication or penetrate them strategically; this failure ultimately isolated them from their southern resources. As US forces connected the dots across the Pacific, they simultaneously disconnected the Japanese from their own lifelines. These historical insights may become critical to any future campaign the United States and its allies might be compelled to conduct in the Pacific area.

## Notes

1. Philip A. Crowl and Edmund G. Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1954), 3.
2. Philip A. Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1960), 2–3.
3. The primary members of the JCS were Admiral Leahy, the de facto chairman; Admiral King for the Navy; General George C. Marshal for the Army; and General Henry “Hap” Arnold for the Army Air Forces. These men were supported by many investigative committees and planners.
4. Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 4.
5. CCS were the joint chiefs of staff from both the United States and the United Kingdom.
6. Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 7–8; M. Hamlin Cannon, *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1954), 2; and Michael R. Matheny, *Carrying the War to the Enemy* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011), 215.
7. Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 10.
8. Ian W. Toll, *The Conquering Tide* (New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2015), 402.
9. Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 14.
10. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Two Ocean War* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1963), 296; and Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 316.
11. Toll, 106.
12. Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 212.
13. Crowl and Love, 168; and Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 384–85.
14. Toll, 400–1; and William Murray and Allen R. Millett, *A War to Be Won* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 346–47.
15. Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 14–15.
16. Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 168.
17. Samuel Eliot Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1951), 108, 228–29; and Crowl and Love, 366–69.
18. Morison, 307–8.
19. Morison, 229.
20. Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 398–400; and Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 14–15.
21. Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls*, 316–17.
22. Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 318–19.
23. Morison, *Aleutians, Gilberts, and Marshalls*, 319–21, 331; and Samuel Eliot Morison, *New Guinea and the Marianas* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1953), 39–40.
24. Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 440; and Crowl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 14.
25. Morison, *New Guinea and the Marianas*, 5–6.



26. Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 436–37; and Crawl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 14.
27. Toll, 438; and Crawl, 12.
28. James E. Hornfischer, *The Fleet at Flood Tide* (New York: Bantam Books, 2017), 207–8.
29. Ian W. Toll, *Twilight of the Gods* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), 118–19.
30. Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 519.
31. Crawl, *Campaign in the Marianas*, 443.
32. John Costello, *The Pacific War, 1941–1945* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2009), 459.
33. Robert Ross Smith, “Luzon Versus Formosa,” in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Roberts Greenfield (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 1960), 463.
34. Cannon, *Leyte: The Return to the Philippines*, 4.
35. Cannon, 4.
36. Toll, *The Conquering Tide*, 521.
37. Smith, “Luzon Versus Formosa,” 470–71.
38. Smith, 471; and Toll, *Twilight of the Gods*, 72.
39. Toll, 55.
40. Toll, 91–94.



## Chapter 9

### **A Whirlwind of Violence: Soviet Consolidation of Gains in Manchuria, 1945–46**

Walker D. Mills and Timothy G. Heck

Compared to the war against the Germans, the Soviet campaign against the Japanese in August 1945 was relatively short. Described by one Soviet source as a “short purifying storm,” the month-long campaign not only assisted the Western Allies to defeat Japanese forces in northeast Asia but also had a significant strategic impact on the Cold War and the Asian continent.<sup>1</sup> Despite its importance, the campaign is often left out of the Western historiography of the final effort to destroy the Japanese Empire, which focuses on the concurrent Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and subsequent Japanese surrender. In only a few weeks, Soviet forces of the Far Eastern Command penetrated hundreds of miles into Manchuria, while also executing multiple amphibious and airborne operations on the Korean Peninsula, Sakhalin Island, and the Kurile Islands. The rapid collapse of the Japanese military and subsequent surrender required Soviet forces to consolidate gains, something for which they were relatively unprepared as they advanced. In the second half of August, Soviet forces raced to seize as much territory as possible in the face of sporadic and scattered Japanese resistance. The Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation offers an ideal case study of how rapid strategic and operational thrusts require planning and forethought to successfully consolidate gains.

As long as the Soviet Union was engaged against Germany in the West, Soviet leader Joseph Stalin—the People’s Commissar of Defense of the USSR—had little interest in opening a front against the Japanese.<sup>2</sup> American planners had mused about the value of a Soviet land front against the Japanese in Manchuria since the beginning of the war, but the Soviets did not express any interest.<sup>3</sup> This changed after the February 1945 Yalta Conference, where the three principal Allied leaders met to coordinate strategy and broadly discuss the fate of postwar Europe. President Franklin D. Roosevelt convinced Stalin to open a new front in Manchuria after the conclusion of the war in the West. In exchange for Soviet participation, Roosevelt agreed to a Soviet sphere of influence in Northeast Asia similar to what the tsar had before Russia was defeated in the 1904–5 Russo-Japanese War: Manchuria, Sakhalin Island, a lease at Port Arthur (now Lüshunkou), and the Kurile Islands.<sup>4</sup> British Prime Minister Winston Churchill opposed this proposition, and Chinese leader Chiang-Kai Shek

was never consulted.<sup>5</sup> Despite Churchill's objections and Chinese exclusion, the agreement was one of the major accomplishments at Yalta.

The Soviet, American, and British heads of state met again at the July 1945 Potsdam Conference to jointly decide the details of postwar European governance. By that time, the situation had changed in both Washington and Moscow. Americans were no longer as interested in Soviet support in Manchuria, believing that the situation in the Pacific was well in hand; President Harry Truman was prepared to take a harder line against Stalin and what he saw as Soviet land grabs. American diplomats were no longer interested in a jointly administered postwar Japan, as was happening in occupied Germany and Austria. So, the Americans "none too delicately" rebuffed proposals by Molotov and Stalin to divide Japan.<sup>6</sup> At the strategic level, the Soviets were consolidating their gains in Europe, but their armies had advanced as far as they could go. Opening a last-minute front in the East—a move that one historian called "an undignified scramble"—would be an opportunity for the Soviets to increase their territory and influence, and generally improve their postwar position in Asia.<sup>7</sup>

The short war with Japan "presented Moscow with a series of opportunities to achieve one of the main foreign goals of the Soviet state: the security of the socialist system."<sup>8</sup> Expanding the Soviet Union's borders outward, or installing client states on the border, was a clear way to better secure the state. The Manchurian campaign was deemed essential for Soviet "defense of its Far Eastern frontiers."<sup>9</sup> In sheer size of territory to be captured, the Manchurian campaign was the Soviet Union's most "ambitious" of the war and, in many ways, the first post-WWII campaign.<sup>10</sup> In the first ten days, the Red Army captured territory equal to the area of France and Germany combined.<sup>11</sup>

In the weeks and months that followed the Japanese surrender, Red Army forces continued to consolidate their gains as Soviet political control was slowly implemented in recently occupied territories like Sakhalin Island and the Kurile Islands. In other areas, however, the Red Army was obligated to turn over control to local Chinese forces, a process that echoes American policies today. The 1945 invasion and subsequent Soviet occupation of Manchuria, Sakhalin Island, northern Korea, and the Kuriles provided an excellent case study of the consolidate gains phase of an operation, both successful and unsuccessful. In the political context of the time, the entire invasion is better viewed as a Soviet effort to consolidate its sphere of influence and restore an important region of Soviet Asia rather than an attempt to bring the Pacific War to a speedy conclusion.<sup>12</sup> The rapid Soviet military success was the result of experience gained during

four years of operations against the Germans and their allies in Europe. The maturation of Soviet operational art and the development of competent senior leaders helped push the Red Army to victory in Berlin.<sup>13</sup> Elements of deception, surprise, logistics, and deep battle were all present in Manchuria and have been extensively studied elsewhere.<sup>14</sup> In the Far East, the Red Army attempted to turn successful combat operations into lasting strategic gains through their work with local forces and application of combat and noncombat power to control civilian population centers and enemy forces, as well as humanitarian and economic considerations and treatment of prisoners of war. Contemporary commanders can draw important lessons in all these areas.



Figure 9.1. Soviet troops from the 39th Army entering Wangyemiao on 15 August 1945. From David M. Glantz, *The Soviet Tactical and Operational Combat in Manchuria, 1945: "August Storm"* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1983).

## Campaign Overview

In 1905, the Imperial Japanese Army occupied an internationally recognized foothold in Manchuria, which they renamed Manchukuo.<sup>15</sup> In 1931, the Kwantung Army, a group within the Imperial Japanese Army, seized the rest of Manchuria and, in 1937, pressed its military forces far-

ther into Chinese territory. Manchuria was both a massive source of raw materials for resource-poor Japan and a market for Japanese manufactured goods. Additionally, the Japanese colonized Manchukuo with hundreds of thousands of Japanese citizens.

By 1945, after almost a decade of war, the Kwantung Army under General Otozo Yamada was a shell of its former self. On paper it still boasted more than a million men, but “its combat effectiveness languished at nadir”—having been stripped of equipment and men to reinforce Japanese-held territory in the South and Central Pacific and eventually the Home Islands.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the Kwantung Army lacked any updated anti-tank weapons effective against Soviet armor and fielded less than sixty modern combat aircraft. Japanese staff estimated the whole formation was only 25 percent of its 1937 prewar strength, and the aircraft left were mostly older models.<sup>17</sup> What had once been the premier formation in the Imperial Japanese Army was no longer capable of major combat operations.

The rest of the Imperial Japanese Army in northeast Asia was unable to support the Kwantung Army because it fought elsewhere in China to eliminate US air bases and secure the overland route from Manchuria to Japanese-held Indochina.<sup>18</sup> Despite some success, these operations “contributed nothing to the defense of the Home Islands” and, if anything, were a distraction that pulled valuable resources away from Manchuria and other, more relevant theaters.<sup>19</sup>

In contrast to the state of Japanese forces, the Soviet Union employed its most experienced commanders, best units, most modern weaponry, and newest doctrine in Manchuria. The Soviets had begun shipping troops east along the 7,500-mile Trans-Siberian Railway as early as February 1945, but the bulk of the Soviet forces arrived in May and June after Germany’s defeat.<sup>20</sup> The Soviets eventually assembled more than 1.5 million soldiers and 5,500 tanks and self-propelled guns under the command of Marshal Aleksandr Mikhailovich Vasilevskii. During the buildup, Soviet planners deliberately assigned units and commanders with experience in the West, often paying special attention to where they had served. For instance, the Supreme High Command (*Stavka*) headquarters sent a commander who had fought in heavily fortified Königsberg (now Kaliningrad, Russian Federation) to areas thick with Japanese defenses and units with experience in the Carpathian Mountains to fight in mountainous western Manchuria.<sup>21</sup> As General of the Army Semyon Pavlovich Ivanov, who served as chief of staff of the High Command of the Soviet Forces in the Far East, remarked, “The main line of advance included the armies with a rich

combat experience that they had accumulated when fighting the Nazis in conditions similar to the Far East.”<sup>22</sup>

In terms of troops and equipment, the Soviets more than doubled their previous deployment of forces to Manchuria. The operational plan was simple—a massive double-envelopment of the Kwantung Army with attacks from three Soviet fronts, each of which was roughly equivalent to a Western army group. After destroying the Kwantung Army, the Soviets would mount a fourth attack into the Kurile Islands and down the Korean peninsula, and eventually conduct amphibious landings on Hokkaido, the northernmost of the Japanese Home Islands.

The Manchurian campaign was also an opportunity to employ strategic *maskirovka* (deception) at the beginning of a war.<sup>23</sup> Among other measures, the Soviets moved most troops along the Trans-Siberian Railway at night in order to deceive Japanese intelligence.<sup>24</sup> During the buildup, Japan and the Soviet Union were party to the Russian-Japanese Neutrality Pact but eyed each other warily. The nations signed the pact in April 1941 because they foresaw the possibility of war on other fronts and pragmatically wanted to avoid a repeat of their 1939 clash at Nomonhan, when Soviet forces decisively defeated Japanese units in an undeclared border conflict.<sup>25</sup> Japanese military leaders anticipated that the Soviets would invade Manchuria after redeploying forces from Europe. They expected the invasion would be after the Americans landed in the Japanese Home Islands but certainly not during the August rains, which traditionally brought movement to a standstill across the broad expanses of Manchuria. As a result of the Soviet efforts at *maskirovka*, the Japanese forces in Manchuria were surprised by the Soviet offensive.

The Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation commenced at 1700 Moscow time on 8 August, minutes after Moscow informed the Japanese ambassador that their nations were at war.<sup>26</sup> Just after 0100 in Manchuria, the Red Army began its assault in a light rain.<sup>27</sup> The campaign was a smashing success. In the first nine days, Soviet troops captured territory larger than Germany and France combined, driving between 310 and 590 miles into Manchuria.<sup>28</sup> Historian David Glantz commented that at “every level, in every sector, Soviet commanders in Manchuria took great risks, planned bold operations, and executed their plans with abandon.”<sup>29</sup> The stiffest fighting was in Eastern Manchuria, but even there, Japanese defenses fell quickly to Soviet armor and veteran troops.

The Kwantung Army fled toward the region’s major cities. The army staff had drafted a new defense plan that would create a light screen at

Manchuria's borders and concentrate Japanese forces in central Manchuria where the terrain would slow advancing Soviet forces, but Japanese commanders did not implement the plans in time.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, after years of siphoning off the best troops to fight in the Pacific, the Kwantung Army was quantitatively strong but qualitatively weak. In contrast, the Red Army sent some of its best-equipped and combat-hardened troops east to face the Kwantung Army.

Even after years of anticipating a Soviet offensive in Manchuria, the Japanese were in shock as the attacks began. After the first day of fighting, Japanese leadership in Imperial General Headquarters believed that "the scale of these attacks is not large;" they estimated the Soviet force was four to five times smaller than it actually was.<sup>31</sup> Later on 9 August, the Japanese Prime Minister Suzuki asked a member of his military staff, "Is the Kwantung Army capable of repulsing the Soviet Army?" The officer replied, "The Kwantung Army is hopeless."<sup>32</sup> If the Kwantung Army had initially been in denial of the scope or scale of the Soviet offensive, the mood quickly turned toward defeat.

American operations against the Japanese in China and the Home Islands stopped in mid-August after the second atomic bomb, but Soviet tanks kept rolling through Manchuria. Stalin was determined to seize as much territory as possible. Furthermore, the Soviets deployed airborne troops deep into the Japanese rear to secure vital objectives and present the Japanese with the instruments of surrender.<sup>33</sup> Soviet troops landed in Harbin, Changchun, Shenyang, Girin, Lushung, Luda, and Yanzi to seize key terrain and preclude resistance.<sup>34</sup>

As well as the immediate benefits of occupying Manchuria, Stalin saw an opportunity to seize a foothold in Hokkaido—which was expected to earn the Soviets a seat at the table when dividing up postwar Japan. Such a seizure could have ultimately resulted in a partitioned Japan and Tokyo, similar to what the Allies had agreed to do in Germany and Austria.<sup>35</sup> However, the Soviet timetable did not account for the dropping of the atomic bombs or the subsequent Japanese surrender. Historian John Gaddis Lewis opined that when the Soviets finally invaded Manchuria "two days after the destruction of Hiroshima, it came across as an undignified scramble on Stalin's part to salvage an unexpectedly promising situation."<sup>36</sup> Others were sharper in their assessment of Soviet motives. Professor Edwin O. Reischauer described the Soviet campaign as "an eager effort to get in on the kill and the disposition of the Japanese carcass."<sup>37</sup> Regardless of the characterizations, the Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation was a bold and successful operational and strategic accomplishment.



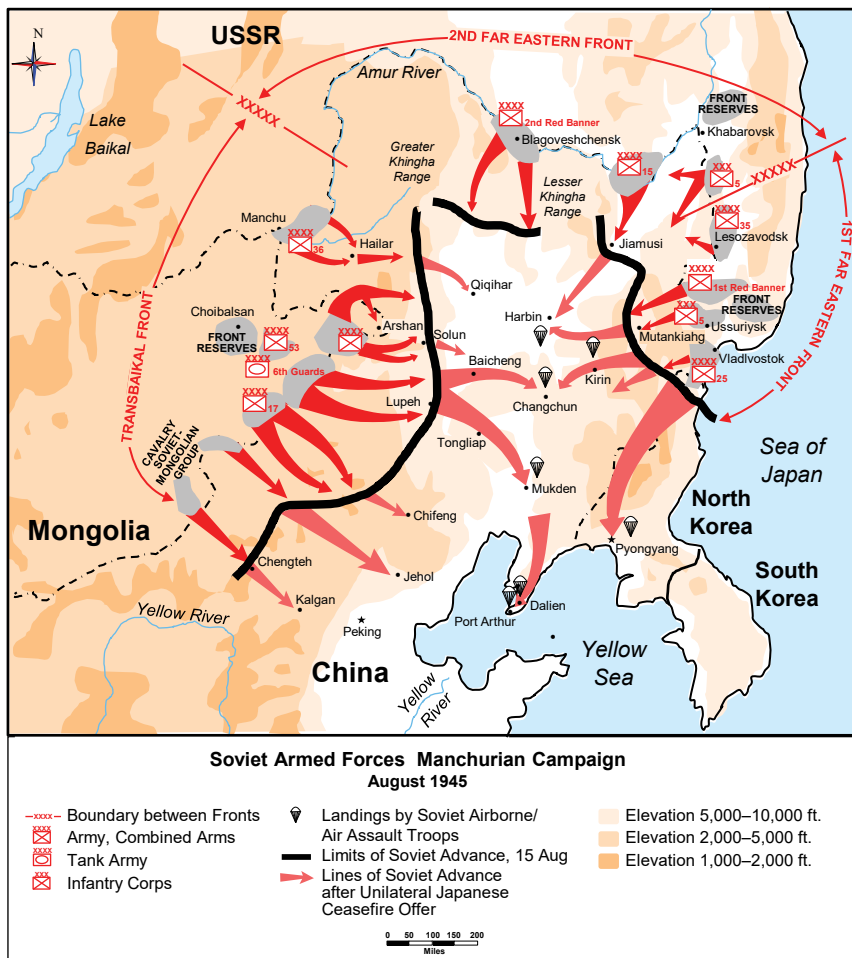


Figure 9.2. Map of the Soviet advance into Manchuria, 9 to 20 August 1945. Created by Army University Press.

Stalin's ambitions went beyond Manchuria. In rapid fashion, Soviet forces moved south across the Korean Peninsula, both overland and by a series of amphibious landings. On 11 August, they landed on Sakhalin Island and a week later seized Shimushu Island. Stalin himself canceled a planned 22 August amphibious assault on Hokkaido after a terse exchange of telegrams with President Truman. But the Soviets would continue consolidating their gains on Sakhalin Island and the Kuriles until 5 September, three days after the war's official conclusion.<sup>38</sup>



Figure 9.3. Soviet Troops in Harbin. US Army Signal Corps photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

### **Coordination with Insurgent Forces**

The Soviets coordinated and cooperated with Chinese forces to expand their control, offset Japanese plans, and secure strategic objectives. Soviet relations with Chinese forces, both Nationalist (Kuomintang, KMT) and Communist, were complex and far from consistent during the Second World War. Throughout the period, China was embroiled in an internal civil war which saw Chinese Nationalists and Communists fighting each other as well as the Japanese. The Soviets worked with both the Nationalists and the Communists at different times—balancing their local military and governance goals, as well as their strategic goal of spreading Communism and assuring their hegemony over those states that joined the socialist bloc.

As early as 1940, Soviet military authorities were trying to achieve these goals by training, equipping, and directing politically reliable (Communist) forces of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army (NAJUA) in their insurgency against the Japanese.<sup>39</sup> The NAJUA was an ethnically mixed army formed with the objective of removing the Japanese from Manchuria. While many of the original groups that formed the NAJUA were politically mixed, they fell under increasing Soviet control. The NAJUA

launched raids against the Japanese but eventually was driven from Manchuria across the Soviet border. Despite this seeming defeat, Soviet support for the NAJUA continued even as fears of a German attack in the West grew.

Soviet preparations for liberating northeast China using Chinese troops began in earnest when the 88th Independent Infantry Brigade was formed in the Soviet Far East in the summer of 1942. The 88th Brigade and the NAJUA as a whole were politically indoctrinated, militarily trained, and tasked by the Red Army. While notionally an anti-Japanese guerilla force led by the Chinese Communist Party, the 88th Brigade was essentially a Soviet auxiliary that drew from local Chinese as well as Korean Communists and became a regular formation of the Red Army. While some forces conducted guerilla operations in Manchuria and on the Korean peninsula, many 88th Brigade members were held in reserve for future large-scale operations against Japan.

During the Manchurian Strategic Offensive Operation, the Chinese forces of the 88th Brigade accompanying the Soviet fronts were tasked with “elevating the prestige of the Soviet Army among the masses, and promoting friendship between the Chinese and the Soviet peoples. They were to set up party organizations by utilizing the lawful status of participating in a military takeover and to establish a people’s militia and base areas outside of the Soviet military control zone.”<sup>40</sup> In short, their role was to help Soviet forces secure Soviet control in areas seized.

Almost immediately after the Soviets invaded, Mao Zedong’s Chinese Communist forces started their drive into Manchuria. As the gateway to Korea and a link to the Soviet Union and the Pacific, Manchuria was a strategic region for Mao. Also, because of the Japanese occupation, Manchuria had been almost completely cleared of Chinese Nationalist forces and was, therefore, ripe for Chinese Communist takeover. On 10 August, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) decreed, “We should prepare to put ourselves in a position to occupy all big and small cities, as well as vital transportation lines.”<sup>41</sup> The next day on 11 August 1945, Chinese Communist commander Zhu De publicly ordered his units to help Soviet forces defeat the Japanese in Manchuria. But the speed of the Soviet invasion caused confusion among the Chinese Communists. Over the following days, CCP headquarters in Yan’an issued conflicting and contradictory orders on what should be done.

Despite previous Soviet collaboration with Mao’s forces, the Yalta Agreement had stipulated that Stalin cooperate with Nationalist forces in administering Manchuria. On 14 August, the day before the Japanese

surrender, Stalin signed the Treaty of Friendship with the Chinese Nationalists, which required both sides to work together to defeat Japan.<sup>42</sup> Critical for Soviet occupation and coordination with local Chinese forces were articles IV and V. Article IV required both sides to avoid joining or supporting any alliance or coalition against the other. This precluded the Soviets from directly supporting the Chinese Communists. Article V stipulated both sides were to “act according to the principles of mutual respect for their sovereignty and territorial integrity and of noninterference in the internal affairs” of the other.<sup>43</sup> But on the ground, the situation was more complicated. Chinese Communist forces were heading into Manchuria and there were no Nationalist forces to be found.

By late August, only 15,000 Chinese Communist troops and cadre had arrived in Manchuria, but that did not prevent them from trying to seize and administer as much of Manchuria as they could.<sup>44</sup> On 30 August, more than twenty days after the invasion began and two weeks after the Treaty of Friendship, Communist troops under Li Yunchang captured the city of Shanhaiguan from the Japanese with the assistance of a Soviet artillery unit.<sup>45</sup> Further successes were achieved in Jinzhou and other cities and towns as the CCP advanced to assist Soviet consolidation. Shortly thereafter, however, cooperation between Soviet and CCP forces became more problematic.

When a portion of Li’s troops arrived in Shenyang on 10 September, Soviet troops prevented them from disembarking their trains. After a series of tempestuous meetings between the Soviet commander and CCP leadership, the Soviets eventually allowed the CCP troops to enter Shenyang. Along the Korean border, another CCP force was greeted with Soviet suspicion that they might be bandits or remnant Japanese forces. Only when the CCP troops sang “The Internationale,” the socialist movement anthem, were they welcomed by the local Soviet military leadership.<sup>46</sup>

Soviet actions and policies toward the Chinese Communists were inconsistent. On 16 September, Soviet commanders notified CCP leadership in Yan’an that they desired CCP forces to take over Chahar and Suiyuan provinces when Soviet troops departed. This request came with the promise of weapons.<sup>47</sup> Wang Ruofei, a ranking member of the CCP’s Central Committee, noted that CCP and Soviet leaders previously agreed to allow 250,000 CCP troops to occupy Manchuria. Furthermore, the CCP had already been given 15,000 rifles, 15 artillery pieces, and other weapons in Shenyang.<sup>48</sup> In early October, however, Soviet forces denied CCP troops about 10,000 captured Japanese weapons which had been previously promised, citing “various international reasons.”<sup>49</sup> The Soviets were caught between their ideological alliance with CCP forces and their Yalta

Conference commitment to support Nationalist control. At the same time, uncertainty remained about whether the Nationalists or the CCP would ultimately control China, and this made it harder for the Soviets to pick a side. By mid-October, Stalin started to reverse course and ordered his forces to turn over cities to Nationalist troops, using force as needed to repel CCP troops.<sup>50</sup> In November, the Soviet People's commissar of defense warned Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, commander of the Transbaikal Front, to avoid collaboration with CCP forces. In a 16 November 1945 cable, General Aleksei I. Antonov instructed Malinovsky to "drive [CCP detachments] away by force" if necessary.<sup>51</sup> By this date, official Soviet policy was unambiguously supportive of the Treaty of Friendship and Alliance. Soviet forces waffled between their treaty obligation to support Chinese Nationalists (under pressure from the Western Allies) and the reality that the Nationalists were in no position to assume local control of Manchuria—in contrast with the Chinese Communists, who were both ready and willing to assume control.

Nevertheless, the sheer size of Manchuria and distance from Moscow allowed for tacit Soviet cooperation with CCP units at the tactical level in spite of treaty requirements. CCP forces who entered southern Manchuria reported "the Soviet Union controlled only a few large and medium-sized cities—most of the medium-sized and small cities were unoccupied or occupied by Japanese forces which were ready and waiting to surrender to the first Chinese unit that showed up."<sup>52</sup> Ongoing relationships between the CCP and the Soviets were officially denied, but many local commanders turned a blind eye to CCP operations.<sup>53</sup>

Initially, Stalin had limited faith that the CCP could succeed in their ongoing civil war against the Nationalists. As 1945 turned to 1946, however, Soviet desires for withdrawal from Manchuria and increasing CCP success forced the Soviets to rethink their positions. Of the Japanese weapons captured by the Soviets, the vast majority were turned over to or seized by CCP forces, especially starting in 1946. The Soviets are estimated to have captured almost 300,000 rifles; nearly 5,000 machine guns; more than 1,200 mortars and artillery pieces; 369 tanks; and 925 aircraft from the Japanese.<sup>54</sup> Most of the small arms, artillery, and some of the tanks and aircraft went to CCP forces who then turned them on the Nationalists. As CCP victories continued, Stalin increasingly supported the CCP "and by late 1947 had begun to aid the CCP in a major way."<sup>55</sup> By the time of the CCP's victory in the Chinese Civil War, the Soviets had directed, armed, and assisted in moving approximately 400,000 CCP troops and 20,000 cadres into Manchuria, while also providing sufficient military equipment

(either Soviet or captured Japanese) for 600,000 troops, as well as tanks and heavy artillery.<sup>56</sup> The Soviet grand strategic objective of consolidating the security of the socialist state was ultimately achieved in 1949 when the CCP took control of China.

The Soviet experience in Manchuria shows that tactical and operational considerations on the ground will often trump larger strategic decisions. After Stalin officially aligned the Soviet Union with the Nationalists, Soviet commanders worked with Chinese Communist forces because there were simply not enough Soviet troops to occupy the entire region. Flexibility was needed at the tactical level to adapt to the realities during consolidation. Once the Soviets recognized that the Nationalists were not a major force in Manchuria, they shifted to supporting the Communists. This approach enabled a more rapid Soviet withdrawal from Manchuria while also achieving the primary Soviet strategic goal of creating spheres of influence that would act as geographic buffers to enhance Soviet security. The concomitant ideological beliefs of the Soviet Union and CCP also aided Soviet work with local forces.

### **Issues Establishing Governance**

Contact between Soviet forces and the local populations in Korea, China, and on Sakhalin all presented problems for the Red Army. Despite later claims that “the population of Northeastern China enthusiastically welcomed the liberators,” Soviet occupation was a complicated affair.<sup>57</sup> Advancing Soviet forces encountered a variety of civilian and military personnel, including now-liberated Allied prisoners of war, a multiethnic native population, and significant Japanese colonist/settler population left behind. Additionally, the Red Army faced a variety of governance and stabilization issues after seizing population and economic centers. In their efforts to consolidate gains, the Soviets needed to plan for and effectively shelter, clothe, feed, and, as a goal of Marxist-Leninism, politically educate the population now under their control. Furthermore, they needed to address economic concerns. The unexpectedly rapid Japanese collapse further complicated efforts to impose Soviet governance. Many population centers were seized by relatively small forces which were already stretched logistically.<sup>58</sup>

The inability of either Chinese Communist or Nationalist forces to assume governance in Manchuria was exacerbated by the speed of the Japanese collapse. Zhou En-Lai, a senior CCP official and later premier of the People’s Republic of China, remarked at the time: “The end of the war and the Japanese capitulation were for us very sudden and unexpected

events. We had absolutely no idea that the finale to the war would come so quickly.”<sup>59</sup> Similarly, American leaders did not anticipate governance by either the CCP or the Nationalists. Lt. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer, commander of the American China Theater, remarked in August 1945: “If peace comes suddenly, it is reasonable to expect widespread confusion and disorder. . . . The Chinese have no plans for rehabilitation, prevention of epidemics, restoration of utilities, establishment of a balanced economy, and redistribution of millions of refugees.”<sup>60</sup> Years of internecine warfare, invasion by Japan, and a brutal occupation had left China without effective governance, or even a single, unified government to turn to after the peace.

Although they had done relatively little to prepare, the Soviets were the force most capable of creating stability in these regions in the short-term. The Soviet forces arrived with troops, weapons, and a willingness to impose their will in occupied territories. While they did not show much interest in governance, after their arrival it was clear who was in charge. To avoid epidemics, the Red Army forbade its soldiers from billeting “with the indigenous population” and vaccinated its troops.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, sanitary-epidemic subunits were deployed to follow troops into Manchurian cities.

Some Soviet leaders worked to protect local populations, but not all troops complied. Soviet actions to consolidate gains were complicated by violence against civilian populations in occupied territories. Perhaps most devastating, sexual violence against women was not uncommon in Soviet-occupied areas in Manchuria and Korea.<sup>62</sup> While official and accessible records are sparse, some recently available documents describe the suffering of ethnically Japanese women at the hands of Soviet soldiers. “Going house to house and shouting *Madam davai!*—Russian for Give us women!—the berserk Soviet soldiers perpetrated gang rapes, pillage, infanticide, and the wholesale murder of defenseless women and the elderly.”<sup>63</sup> Additionally, women who left Manchuria for the Home Islands were often uncertain where to turn after arrival; many committed suicide or had illegal abortions after they arrived.<sup>64</sup> The history of violence, including sexual violence, perpetrated by the Red Army during the Soviet occupation of Eastern and Central Europe and Germany is well-documented and remains a central narrative in accounts of the end of the war.<sup>65</sup> In contrast, relatively limited information has been made public of Soviet actions in Asia.

Furthermore, the Red Army systematically stripped Manchurian economic resources and prepared them for transport to the Soviet Union, largely to Siberia. This organized looting was likely conducted under the leadership of the Main Trophy Directorates—organized under Col. Gen. V.

I. Vinogradov, who commanded the Far Eastern Command Rear Service Directorate.<sup>66</sup> The Soviets treated all Japanese-owned factories in Manchuria as war booty subject to confiscation, just as they had in Germany.<sup>67</sup> As such, resource seizure became an action to consolidate economic gains made during the Manchurian campaign.

The removals process, documented in two US Department of State reports, was well-organized and efficient. Soviet officials identified machinery and equipment to be evacuated and then often turned the preparation and packing over to the Japanese manager or plant foreman with assistance from workers, prisoners of war, or Soviet troops.<sup>68</sup> The Soviets were particularly interested in electric power generating and transforming equipment and railroad materials. The removal of these items further hampered Manchuria's economic recovery because "disruption of power and transportation facilities made much of the remaining [un-looted] equipment inoperable."<sup>69</sup> But disruption and inconvenience in Manchuria, a territory captured from the enemy, simply did not register to a Soviet government faced with rebuilding not only the Soviet Union, but most of Eastern Europe.

Livestock was also plundered, with 34,910 "trophy horses" captured by the three fronts.<sup>70</sup> The Soviets, however, were prepared for such looting: "significant work was carried out by the veterinary service to prevent the carrying of such dangerous animal diseases as cattle plague, glanders, and so forth *into* [emphasis added] Soviet territory."<sup>71</sup> These horses, along with other livestock, were likely removed to the Soviet Union, causing further economic hardship on local Manchurians. Horses, after all, were used both for transportation and agricultural purposes, hampering rebuilding efforts in multiple sectors.

In addition to violence perpetrated by its own soldiers, the Red Army turned a blind eye to violence in some of the areas it occupied. In Mukden, the former capital of Manchuria, Soviet forces allowed Chinese, Koreans, and Manchurians to loot and burn Japanese-owned homes and businesses. An American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) team reported: "The city is in an uproar with machine guns and rifles chattering constantly. . . . For three days there was no law and order in the city and the Chinese were going wild with looting, burning, and terrorizing" Japanese civilians.<sup>72</sup> At the end of the three days, the Soviets demanded all weapons be turned in within seventy-two hours. Failure to abide by this directive was punishable by death.<sup>73</sup> Another OSS report remarked: "The Russians excelled the Chinese in large-scale house-breaking, looting, and in numerous cases rape."<sup>74</sup> A later OSS report indicated the Soviets were "proceeding with a



policy of scientific looting. Every bit of machinery is being removed and all stocks of merchandise from stores and warehouses. Mukden will be an empty city when they get through.”<sup>75</sup> The OSS reports did not distinguish between looting by front-line troops and rear area soldiers. At Pa Tao Hao, Soviet forces stripped the mines of anything remotely of value, including broken automobiles, while individual soldiers stole clothing and bedding from the local inhabitants.<sup>76</sup>



Figure 9.4. Soviet soldiers removing machinery from a Manchurian factory. US Army Signal Corps photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Japanese were not the only victims of post-liberation violence. By 1944, an estimated 1.5 million ethnic Koreans lived in Manchukuo and occupied a privileged status over the ethnic Chinese. Japan’s defeat opened opportunities for revenge. As a 1946 Soviet report remarked, “The Chinese population undoubtedly felt hatred not only toward the Japanese, but also the Korean population in Manchuria.”<sup>77</sup> From 13 September to 20 October 1945, more than 171,000 ethnic Koreans fled from Manchuria into northern Korea, where housing, food, and heating were scarce—putting further strain on Soviet occupation forces there.

Despite the 88th Brigade’s presence and mission, the majority of Soviet interactions with the local populace were detrimental to their efforts to consolidate gains. While removing economic assets helped the Soviet



Figure 9.5. The Manchu Ironworks in Anshan, Manchuria, after Soviet troops removed all of the steel rolling equipment. US Army Signal Corps photograph courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Union with strategic requirements to rebuild its own economy, the looting and violence put strains on the civilian population, local Chinese forces attempting to restore order, and restoration of peace efforts by Soviet forces. Heavy-handed methods, such as the death penalty for weapons possession in Mukden, undoubtedly did not generate goodwill or ideologically compliant citizens.

### **Prisoners of War and Civilian Displaced Persons**

In addition to displaced populations, violence against civilians, and looting, Soviet forces had to contend with two prisoner populations as they sought to consolidate their gains in Manchuria. Soviet treatment of prisoners of war—both recently surrendered and captured Japanese and liberated Allied prisoners—directly impacted the achievement of strategic goals in both the near and long term.

Soviet forces encountered two kinds of refugees and displaced persons as they advanced: ethnic Japanese, many of whom had come to Manchuria in the 1930s as part of colonization efforts, and ethnic Koreans. Both populations were foreign to the native ethnic Chinese and perceived by them as invaders. At least 1.2 million Japanese soldiers and civilians, mainly

agricultural workers, were located in Manchuria when Japan surrendered. Japanese authorities estimated the number was even higher, asserting that “between 1.6 and 1.7 million Japanese fell into Soviet hands.”<sup>78</sup> Soviet policy was to use Japanese labor “to help offset the great manpower losses the Soviet Union had experienced in the war as well as through the Stalinist purges.”<sup>79</sup> Many of the captured Japanese were eventually repatriated to mainland Japan, but it was years later.

On 23 August 1945, Stalin signed a secret order authorizing the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) to select “up to 500,000 Japanese . . . physically fit to work in the conditions of the Far East and Siberia.”<sup>80</sup> Eventually more than 600,000 Japanese were put to work in the Soviet Union “in coal-mining, lumbering, urban and railway construction, agriculture, fisheries, and other industries.”<sup>81</sup> Approximately 10 percent died in Soviet captivity. The majority of survivors were returned to Japan by the late 1940s, but some Japanese were not repatriated until the 1990s.<sup>82</sup> The fullest tally of Japanese prisoners of war taken by the Soviet Union is 639,635, but that number is likely incomplete; historian John W. Dower noted that “the overall numbers never jibed.”<sup>83</sup> It became clear by 1948 that the Soviet Union was holding Japanese prisoners not just for forced labor but also to politically indoctrinate them in the hope that they would eventually become Communist agitators in Japan.<sup>84</sup> As Soviet military authorities established control in northern Korea, they started closing off the border between their zone of occupation and the United States-occupied south, trapping Japanese nationals in the north.<sup>85</sup> In contrast, US soldiers in the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula were “working to accelerate the evacuation of Japanese citizens back to Japan,” mostly on American naval vessels hastily converted to carry civilian refugees.<sup>86</sup>

The plight of Japanese settlers who remained in Manchuria was compounded by a prior lack of planning by the Japanese and Manchukuo governments. As late as mid-August 1945, many Japanese officials, and the settlers themselves, believed Japan would be allowed to retain territorial holdings in China and Korea in the event of a surrender. As a result, the Japanese government did not plan for the withdrawal of Japanese settlers.<sup>87</sup> These civilians were left to be captured by the advancing Red Army. “For many Japanese in Manchukuo, the humiliation of defeat was mixed with the anger at being abandoned to the enemy that killed, raped, and looted its way through the Manchurian colony once hailed as the ‘new heaven on earth.’”<sup>88</sup> For many, capture was not the worst alternative. As many as 179,000 civilians and 66,000 Japanese soldiers died in the confusion and harsh winter following the Soviet invasion.<sup>89</sup>

Additionally, Soviet forces encountered Allied prisoners of war in camps, including high-ranking commanders captured during Japan's early war successes. According to summer 1945 American estimates, approximately 2,500 Americans were held in northern China and Manchuria, plus an unknown number of other Allied prisoners, mainly at the Hoten camp outside of Mukden.<sup>90</sup> The OSS parachuted teams into areas around the northern China prisoner camps and started the liberation process, an oft hair-raising experience given the uncertain peace between Chinese, Japanese, and later Soviet forces.

## Conclusion

The end of the war in China came suddenly for the Japanese. At the start of 1945, Japan occupied more territory in China than at any point since the conflict began in 1937.<sup>91</sup> By the end of August, however, the Kwantung Army had been completely routed, and Soviet troops occupied an area larger than France and Germany combined. The Soviets had taken Korea north of the 38th Parallel as well as Sakhalin Island and most of the Kurile Islands.<sup>92</sup> Chinese Nationalist and Communist forces returned to their civil war, now armed with hundreds of thousands of ex-Japanese weapons. Local Soviet commanders, tasked with consolidating their gains, were often beset with conflicting demands from Moscow and operational realities on the ground. While ideologically fraternal to the Chinese Communists, they were obligated by the Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Alliance to support Nationalists. The Nationalists' lack of physical presence in Manchuria, however, made the treaty somewhat irrelevant; over the following years, the CCP converted Manchuria into a base from which they eventually defeated the Nationalists and, by 1949, seized control of all of mainland China.

The Soviets occupied Manchuria until May 1947 but retained control over Port Arthur and the China Eastern Railway until 1954. Furthermore, they seized goods worth hundreds of millions of dollars as war reparations during their occupation.<sup>93</sup> As well as the invasion had been planned, the occupation had been executed on the fly—violently and viciously. One historian wrote, “The invaders had invested relatively little effort into planning their occupation after fighting ceased.”<sup>94</sup> Not unlike their consolidation in Europe, Soviet formations arrived and unleashed an orgy of violence, looting, and rape. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese died, and hundreds of thousands more were sent to labor camps and indoctrination centers. Soviet forces expected Chinese forces to rapidly establish governance in Manchuria; the Nationalists were not able to do so,

however, so the Red Army was forced to consolidate political control in uncertain circumstances.

The Manchuria case study offers several important lessons for contemporary leaders conducting operations to consolidate gains. Actions to consolidate gains need to be deliberately planned and resourced in order to maintain order after the capture of hostile territory. In the Soviet invasion of Manchuria, the occupation was an afterthought. Preparations needed to be made for movement and repatriation of displaced persons. Because this was not done in the Soviet operation, hundreds of thousands of displaced persons and prisoners were not repatriated until years after the end of the war; almost all had to spend the winter in Manchuria. In many cases this was intentional because the Soviets wanted their labor; in others it was unintentional, resulting from the lack of any planning or effort. These obvious examples of the human cost of poor planning should garner the attention of any current planner charged with preparing a force for operations in a complex environment.

Likely the most important lesson from the Manchuria case is the need to understand ahead of time about the relative balance of power between local populations, especially potential allies. In 1945, the Soviet Union and the Chinese Nationalists signed a Treaty of Friendship even though the Nationalists had little to no presence in Manchuria. Soviet forces were in some cases met by Chinese Communists but rebuffed them. The Soviets sought to make their occupation of Manchuria as short as possible. Their failure to understand which Chinese forces were best postured to arrive quickly in Manchuria (Nationalists or Communists), however, slowed their ability to hand over control and complicated their political situation. Such delays could have been avoided with better intelligence and outreach as well as coordinating with potential Chinese allies during the planning stages of the operation. The Friendship Treaty, which was signed several days after the Soviet invasion—perhaps a delay for strategic reasons—likely prevented any overt, preinvasion tactical and operational coordination with the Chinese Communists during the seizure of Manchuria. The price for this lack of planning was significant. In the immediate wake of the war, Soviet leaders were desperate to begin rebuilding their country's economy and required manpower inside the USSR to begin that effort. Red Army leaders had hoped to evacuate Manchuria as quickly as possible so their soldiers could be demobilized. Instead, the occupation dragged on for almost two years. Failure to plan for the Consolidation of Gains in this case undermined this aspect of the overall Soviet postwar recovery.

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## **Chapter 10**

### **The Tentative Occupation of North Korea: October–December 1950**

Eric B. Setzekorn

The short-lived occupation of North Korea by United Nations forces in the fall of 1950 offers a fascinating glimpse into the challenges of planning and organizing a stabilization program when large-scale military operations are ongoing, and the strategic situation is in flux. The September 1950 United Nations (UN) offensive resulted in the rapid collapse of North Korean (Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) military forces; and by early October 1950, UN forces moved past the 38th Parallel, which marked the prewar border, and into North Korea. As UN forces moved northward toward the Yalu River during the fall and early winter of 1950, consolidating gains and conducting stability operations was given little attention despite numerous organizational problems. In North Korea, UN forces strove to create a functioning administrative and relief program as part of the UN mandate while major combat operations were occurring. Moreover, US Army planning for civil assistance was rudimentary, and North Korean soldiers isolated by the rapid UN advance used guerilla attacks to destabilize the consolidation effort. In addition, strategic guidance from Washington and the United Nations was unclear, with competing notions about North Korea's long-term status. As a result, Chinese Communist forces intervened in December 1950 and began to push UN forces out of North Korea. This study highlights the challenges of stabilizing a territory with uncertain political guidance, and examines the political coordination and military planning involved to create a new administration in a formerly Communist-held area.

US Army Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*, defines operations to consolidate gains as “activities to make enduring any temporary operational success and set the conditions for a stable environment allowing for a transition of control to legitimate authorities.”<sup>1</sup> This chapter examines the fall 1950 North Korea stabilization effort, focusing on two key factors that hindered creation of a stable environment and transition to legitimate authorities. First, political coordination was incredibly important for stabilizing North Korea, an “enemy” area that would be occupied by UN forces rather than handed over to the Republic of Korea (ROK) administration. Because US military forces commanded by General Douglas MacArthur were part of the UN effort, MacArthur had to respond to both the Truman

administration in Washington and political directives from UN headquarters in New York. An additional political challenge with stabilizing North Korea: South Korea's ROK government under President Syngman Rhee did not recognize North Korea and sought a de facto unification of the Korean peninsula by integrating the northern areas directly into the South Korean state. Second, the effort to stabilize North Korea began while major North Korean military units were still engaged in combat operations, leaving few UN personnel to handle civil assistance tasks. UN units focused on reaching the Yalu River and conventional military operations

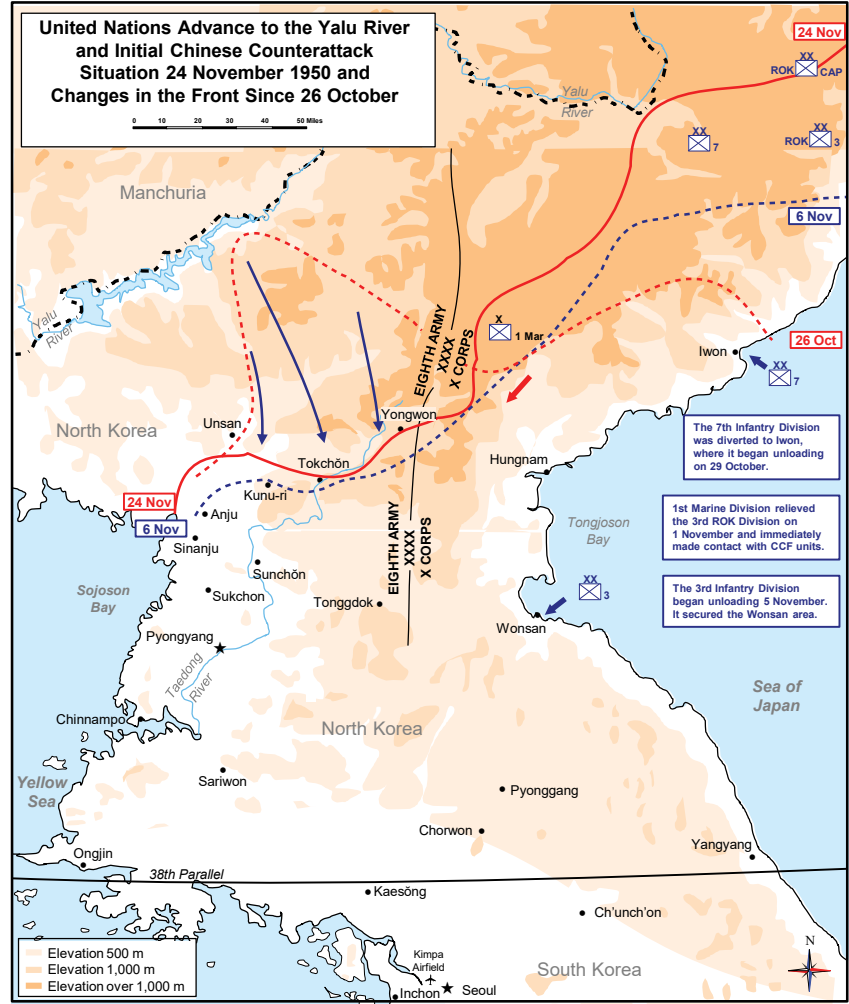


Figure 10.1. United Nations Advance into North Korea, October and November 1950. Created by Army University Press.

rather than devoting resources to rear areas. This was dangerous because large-scale military operations up to brigade-sized engagements occurred behind the front lines and posed a significant threat to establishing a new non-Communist government. In combination, these two factors would have made any long-term occupation difficult and inefficient.

### **Political Uncertainty and the Beginnings of Occupation**

The North Korean occupation and stabilization effort, which began in October 1950, was only possible because of a remarkable turnaround in the UN's fortunes of war. After North Korea invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950 (Seoul Time), the Soviet-trained and -equipped North Korean People's Army (NKPA) swept through South Korean defenses, defeated the initial American reinforcements (Task Force Smith), and pushed ROK and US forces into the southeast corner of the Korean peninsula. In response, General MacArthur landed his UN forces at the port of Inchon near Seoul with the American X Corps, while the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) and US Eighth Army forces attacked out of the Pusan Perimeter. The daring gamble led to the swift destruction of most of the NKPA. Then UN forces captured Seoul on 29 September 1950, giving the appearance that much of the North Korean military power had been shattered. UN political leaders and military commanders had to decide whether to stop at the pre-war boundary, the 38th Parallel, or continue to advance into the northern half of the Korean Peninsula and potentially establish a unified Korean government. A critical factor in this decision was the imbalance in the military forces. On 30 September 1950, the UN had roughly 230,000 troops in Korea, primarily US and South Korea soldiers plus a British brigade, and more UN forces were en route. In contrast, North Korean forces had been decimated. UN intelligence estimated only 25,000 to 30,000 disorganized and lightly equipped soldiers had escaped back into North Korea.<sup>2</sup>

According to the initial UN mandate to defend South Korea—issued in late June 1950—General MacArthur had no authority to move his UN troops north of the prewar border. As UN forces gained in strength, President Harry S. Truman stated in a 1 September 1950 speech that he supported a unified Korea, but on 21 September he clarified that he would leave the decision on crossing the 38th Parallel to the UN.<sup>3</sup> State Department planners in Washington were similarly eager to let the UN lead, and cautioned the Department of Defense to work with undefined “Teams of UN forces” as well as North Korean civil authorities rather than impose a military government north of the 38th Parallel.<sup>4</sup> On 29 September, Secretary of Defense George C. Marshall, in coordination with President Truman,

authorized MacArthur to proceed into North Korea.<sup>5</sup> South Korean forces began moving across the border on 1 October, but follow-on UN forces waited until the UN General Assembly approved operations north of the 38th Parallel on 7 October. The UN resolution provided vague instructions that “all appropriate steps be taken to ensure conditions of stability throughout Korea,” and identified the end state of UN operations as establishing a “unified independent and democratic government of a sovereign State of Korea.”<sup>6</sup> General MacArthur, who commanded the occupation of Japan after 1945, envisioned a multiphased military, political, and economic occupation that would encompass significant reforms. MacArthur stated in Congressional hearings after his relief from command in 1951 that he believed at the time that his mission was to “clear out all of North Korea [of enemy forces], to unify it, and to liberalize it.”<sup>7</sup> In contrast to the long-term occupation of Japan, he envisioned the occupation of Korea would be much shorter and emphasized that “the military should get out the minute the guns stop shooting and civilians take over.”<sup>8</sup> Like others in Washington, MacArthur was reluctant to commit the US military to a long-term program of occupation; despite his success in Japan, MacArthur recognized the political and military challenges that a North Korean occupation would pose to US military forces.

By 3 October, Army planners in Washington sent the first draft of a North Korean occupation plan to General MacArthur for comment. The three-phase program initially focused on internal security then to gradually hand over administrative functions to UN authorities, followed by a UN withdrawal after elections and the formation of a unified Korean government.<sup>9</sup> On 12 October, the UN asked General MacArthur to assume civil administration responsibilities in North Korea until the UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea provided further assessments and guidance.<sup>10</sup> The commission would consist of representatives from Australia, Chile, the Netherlands, Pakistan, the Philippines, Thailand, and Turkey, all of whom had friendly relations with the United States.<sup>11</sup> The State Department didn’t circulate more specific objectives for the occupation until the end of October—nearly four weeks after South Korean forces had begun moving into North Korea. The directive specified that American forces would not seek fundamental reforms of the North Korean economy; they were to limit economic measures to relief only, and the UN would be responsible for any long-term recovery efforts.<sup>12</sup> Where possible, North Korea’s existing government structure would be retained for the time being, with only North Korean Communist Party elements pushed out of key positions. These US plans clearly indi-

cated that stability would be the only definite US goal. Long-term stabilization, and the heavy commitments required, theoretically were passed off to UN organizations.

These political decisions in DC and New York often lagged behind the pace of events as North Korean military power collapsed. By mid-October, UN forces had reached the outskirts of Pyongyang, and the city was captured on 19 October. The 24 October crossing of the Chongchon River further boosted UN optimism that North Korean forces might be shattered. An intelligence summary prepared for General MacArthur concluded that by the end of October, "Organized resistance on any large-scale has ceased to be an enemy capability. Indications are that the North Korean military and political headquarters may have fled into Manchuria."<sup>13</sup> Despite this optimistic assessment, UN ground forces were becoming increasingly spread out and fatigued. During the initial six weeks, many Eighth Army units had advanced more than 300 miles into North Korean areas—with no accurate maps, limited intelligence of enemy forces, and increasing losses due to maintenance issues and illness. UN combat forces could only move forward, hoping to catch the elusive enemy while the drive still had momentum.

Behind the front lines, consolidation of civilian authority was just beginning; an early issue that had to be handled was defining the UN Command's scope of authority. Since military operations were still ongoing, General MacArthur as UN commander initially would be responsible for establishing a military government with the assistance of a UN Public Health and Welfare detachment. On 2 September 1950, US Brig. Gen. Crawford T. Sims took command of a UN Public Health and Welfare detachment in Tokyo.<sup>14</sup> In the fall of 1950, this organization had an assigned strength of 161 officers and 117 enlisted men and embedded its personnel with the Eighth Army as a Civil Assistance Section. Initial plans called for teams of roughly six to ten personnel to manage each of North Korea's major population centers.<sup>15</sup> Although US commanders supported the principle of UN authority over North Korea, integrating a multi-national aspect to the country's already complicated command and control system was difficult. For example, any UN policy change in North Korea required the collaboration of the UN Korean Reconstruction Agency, UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea, General Headquarters Tokyo, the Department of the Army, Eighth Army, the Government of the Republic of Korea, the Korean Military Advisory Group, and several other organizations.<sup>16</sup> Language difficulties, slow communications between these geographically dispersed organizations, and lengthy legal reviews further impeded the byzantine command and control structure.

Distant political leaders dictated poorly conceived and unfeasible programs that hindered the process of consolidating gains in North Korea. While waiting for Washington and New York decisions on North Korea's eventual political fate, the UN forces created a temporary "caretaker" government in Seoul that was not favorably received by South Korean President Rhee. A December 1948 UN General Assembly resolution had limited the Republic of Korea government's jurisdiction to the area south of the 38th Parallel. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) had instructed General MacArthur not to recognize South Korean authority outside of prewar borders. The UN plan for new elections in a post-war North Korea would not allow the South Korean government to expand its jurisdiction north of the 38th Parallel.<sup>17</sup> South Korean authorities, particularly President Rhee, strenuously objected to UN administration and began dispatching governors to North Korea's five provinces—governors who had been elected in absentia during the 1948 ROK election.<sup>18</sup> Rhee eventually backed down on his demand of immediate administrative control over all of North Korea, but began dispatching (South) Korean National Police to North Korea. The newly arrived police units quickly began attacking and killing Communists and suspected sympathizers, a move which the US State Department criticized as an unnecessary complication to UN diplomatic efforts.<sup>19</sup> The South Korean government also supported the Republic of Korea Youth Corps, a paramilitary wing of President Rhee's political party that moved into North Korean areas to purge Communist loyalists.<sup>20</sup> Many of these South Korean youth were refugees who had fled North Korea after 1945 and were persecuted by Communists. As a result, many sought revenge against their former tormentors. In late October, General Walton Walker, Eighth Army commander, ordered all South Korean police out of his area, leaving MPs under UN command in formal control of the rear areas; however, the units had few personnel on the ground to actually exercise control.<sup>21</sup> In total, the political guidance given to UN military personnel regarding the desired framework and end state for the North Korea occupation was badly flawed.

### **Policy Challenges at the Grassroots**

While political debate and discussion continued in Washington, New York, and Seoul, substantial parts of North Korea came under UN control by the middle of October; the situation in these occupied areas was volatile. Before withdrawing, North Korean forces often executed anyone suspected of being disloyal or potentially disloyal to the DPRK regime as well as those with skills that could be useful to UN forces. The rapid UN



advance also strained the order and discipline of South Korean and American troops. UN forces “foraging” for supplies were often callous, destroying private property, and their capture of alcohol often led to dangerous situations for both friendly military forces and local civilians. For example, one enterprising American anti-tank unit, after likely “liberating” several bottles of alcohol, fired its 3.5-inch bazooka to crack open the vault at a nearby bank, only finding documents they could not read.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, UN commanders often lacked sufficient boots on the ground to establish direct control over large areas, particularly with continued conventional fighting as North Korean forces withdrew north. Issues like lawlessness in cities such as Pyongyang, fighting with stay-behind guerillas, and financial difficulties were all typical of challenges with creating an occupation without solid planning or clear political guidance.

The late October occupation of Pyongyang presented UN forces, particularly the Eighth US Army, with the first major test of their ability to maintain stability in a densely populated urban area of North Korea. The results were not encouraging. Already stretched very thin, the UN military presence in the North Korean capital was limited even more when combat units moved farther north; reports of looting, violent attacks, rape, and other crimes were numerous during a lawless period of roughly two weeks. Official guidance to include North Koreans to the maximum possible extent often led to ad hoc decisions regarding administrative staff. Col. Archibald Melchoir, the first military administrator of Pyongyang, literally pointed at people on the street to appoint them as administrators, a process he referred to as “conscription.”<sup>23</sup> The first Civil Assistance Team (CAT) from Tokyo arrived on 29 October, led by the highly experienced Col. Charles R. Munske, who had previously worked in the Philippines and as a military governor in Japan. The CAT leader quickly determined these appointed officials had little experience and learned that no funds were available to pay civilian laborers, resulting in a slow rebuilding effort.<sup>24</sup> While these issues were not easily resolved, Colonel Munske’s CAT was successful at improving medical care and sanitation in Pyongyang, in large part because the team could use US Army medical supplies and personnel to address public health issues such as administering vaccinations against typhus and smallpox through vaccinations and using DDT dusting for malaria control. Despite a few effective programs, the overall lack of progress by many American-appointed provisional administrators led to a walking back of official guidance. A 21 November 1950 Eighth Army order authorized that up to two-thirds of North Korean

government personnel could be recruited from South Korea. It was hoped that the South Korean personnel, many of whom had fled North Korean purges in the 1945 to 1950 period, would have a higher level of experience and education.<sup>25</sup> These personnel had little time to make any impact in North Korea, however, because UN forces abandoned Pyongyang on 3 December 1950 after the Chinese intervened.

Another challenge to stability operations was the ongoing threat from North Korean military and Communist Party organizations. During October and into November 1950, UN forces moved forward quickly to keep the pressure on the fleeing North Korean forces. By early November, many bypassed North Korean forces who had fled into the hills were beginning to coalesce into guerilla units that attacked UN supply lines and rear areas. These attacks also led North Korean civilians to hedge their support for UN civil administration, because North Korean guerillas would swiftly punish any collaboration. These guerilla forces attempted to rebuild the Communist Party apparatus in UN-occupied areas, and by mid-November, American intelligence reports detailed the creation of underground networks engaged in recruiting, stockpiling weapons and, sabotage. In response, the US military formed counterintelligence teams to conduct interrogations and collect information regarding North Korean stay-behind networks.<sup>26</sup> Acts of sabotage such as setting fire to the house of a neighbor working with a Civil Affairs team typically were minor. Because they were difficult to prove due to minimal evidence or unreliable testimony, however, such acts deterred cooperation with UN forces.<sup>27</sup>

Potentially more dangerous to the military campaign was the growing strength of North Korean guerilla forces behind the front lines. They had grown to battalion strength by early November and were capable of blocking resupply efforts by closing major roads and rail lines. As early as 5 November, the I Corps commander reported to General Walker that his command post was threatened by “constant, presently augmented, roving groups of bypassed and infiltrated NK elements in the rear areas.”<sup>28</sup> Eighth Army had taken steps in October to use Korean National Police and Railway Police forces north of the 38th Parallel for rear-area security, but these forces did not have enough firepower to deal with North Korean military units; Eighth Army had to divert combat formations from the frontlines for short-term antiguerilla operations.<sup>29</sup> For example, a battalion of American troops and a battalion of ROK Marines made an amphibious landing south of Wonson to pin down one especially large band of North Korean guerillas who had been raiding towns and destroying trains along the east coast.<sup>30</sup> The ROK Marines stayed on the east coast for the next month,

conducting sweeps and raids into the mountains in a continued cat and mouse struggle with North Korean guerillas.<sup>31</sup>

Another issue that became quickly apparent in the military government and civil administration effort was a lack of financial support. The State Department directed General MacArthur that UN troops should not use South Korean currency north of the prewar border to pay for labor or goods because it could be seen as part of a de facto effort to annex North Korea into a South Korean political system; this would have violated UN proclamations. American commanders also could not pay with American military payment certificates, which the US military had used overseas from 1946 to 1973. In accordance with UN guidance, UN forces in North Korea had to pay with North Korean *won* banknotes. Because much of the currency had been taken out of circulation as North Korean forces

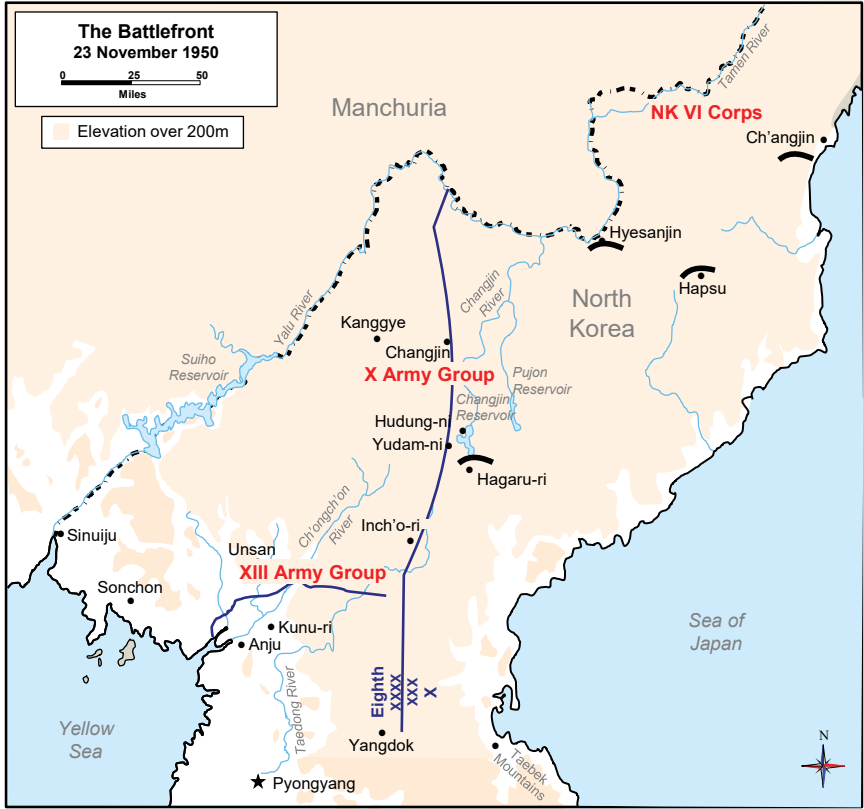


Figure 10.2. Map of Chinese and North Korean forces (shown in red) poised to attack United Nations forces. Created by Army University Press.

fled north, and the printing plates were not captured, many UN commanders could only “promise” to pay North Korean civilian laborers at a later date. Not surprisingly, most North Koreans refused to accept promises to pay later, slowing rebuilding and relief efforts.<sup>32</sup> More complicating, many North Korean civilians began using outdated currency issued by the Korean Bank of Chosen, a Japanese colonial institution, that had not been printed since 1950 when the North Korean government introduced *won* banknotes.<sup>33</sup> In desperation, General MacArthur began plans to print a new “United Nations scrip” for use in North Korea, but this effort had not reached the printing stage when the Chinese intervened.<sup>34</sup> On 14 November, General Walker authorized the use of South Korean currency above the 38th Parallel in North Korea because essential work was not being accomplished due to a lack of payment.<sup>35</sup> In effect, flawed political decisions regarding currency removed financial tools for stabilization, relief, and recovery during the critical transition period.

### **Assessments of a Tentative Occupation**

The short-lived North Korean occupation provides insights into the nature of operations to consolidate gains, and the delicacy of the transition period after major military operations. Two primary issues stand out. First, political guidance was poorly coordinated between national and multinational levels, leading to inefficiencies and problems. Military commanders in North Korea struggled to balance political mandates with the reality of day-to-day issues, creating significant organizational friction that hindered operations to consolidate gains during the October and November 1950 window of opportunity. In addition, political guidance often lagged behind the facts and events. As a result, UN military forces squandered the opportunity to form new administrative structures during the vital period when enemy forces were in disarray. While many of these issues were outside of military control, communicating with higher military echelons and political leadership about the damaging impacts of flawed strategic decisions would have been a first step for positive changes.

Second, the US Army, which dominated the UN military staff process, displayed little desire to fully engage with stabilization efforts. During the short-lived occupation, the lack of talent and skills among many US Army personnel assigned to military government and Civil Affairs was a major problem. In World War II, the Army recognized that civilian skills in civil engineering, banking, public sanitation, and civil administration were required to fulfill many stability operations tasks.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, North Korean officers responsible for Civil Affairs and assistance missions were rare-

ly specialists; US Army units used the Civil Affairs assignments process to get rid of their worst officers and noncommissioned officers. In a survey of Civil Affairs teams in Korea, 87 percent agreed with the statement that Civil Affairs was an assignment for “misfits, surplus, and undesirables.”<sup>37</sup> Without any desire to remain in Korea, planning suffered and US military staff achieved “Band-Aid” solutions. A decision to reassign combat units to handle Civil Affairs tasks would have been unpopular while North Korean—and later Chinese military forces—were in the field, but the US Army’s ad hoc approach to military government and Civil Affairs would have led to serious, even catastrophic, problems if the occupation had continued through the winter.

The most important lesson from North Korea in the fall of 1950 is reflected in FM 3-0: “The window of opportunity for setting a geographic area on a desirable path to consolidate gains is potentially narrow.”<sup>38</sup> UN forces in North Korea did not have an established plan for occupying the area and creating an effective government to provide order, economic rehabilitation, and medical and humanitarian support. This failure was to some extent mitigated by the context—that the rapidly changing fortunes of war overtook any coherent plan—but it does not absolve UN military and political leaders who failed to address basic command and control issues. While the tentative occupation of North Korea lasted only six or seven weeks, from mid-October through the first week in December 1950, the effort was built on a poorly structured foundation of flawed policies and unworkable political mandates that squandered the vital window of opportunity to consolidate military gains by creating a civilian administration.

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## Chapter 11

### **Mopping-up: Consolidating Gains in the Eighth Army Rear, 25th ID in South Korea, October 1950**

Eric M. Burke

Compared to the unrelenting intensity of large-scale combat operations (LSCO) they had conducted since arriving in Korea three months earlier, the first days of October 1950 seemed almost idyllic to the men of Capt. Sam Holliday's company of the 3rd Battalion, 35th Infantry Regimental Combat Team (RCT). Along with the rest of General William B. Kean's 25th Infantry Division and Maj. Gen. John B. Coulter's IX Corps, they were tasked with "mopping-up" pockets of Communist forces bypassed during the Eighth Army's dramatic breakout from the Pusan Perimeter. Holliday's exhausted GIs appreciated the respite at first. The company commander later recalled that it all began as "primarily a good break" and reminisced about the improved rations and opportunities to repair combat-worn equipment and vehicles.<sup>1</sup> Cut-off from communication with the still northward-surging frontlines of the United Nations Command (UNC) offensive, "we really did not know much of what was going on outside of our battalion," he remembered. Even the larger mission of his own division remained mostly obscure beyond "attempting to capture the NKPA [North Korean People's Army] stragglers going north."<sup>2</sup>

Roving bands of Communist soldiers, orphaned from their shattered parent units, still roamed the rugged southwestern Korea mountains seeking safe passage northward through UNC lines. In an oft-overlooked Korean War episode, Kean's 25th Infantry Division was tasked with finding, securing, or neutralizing these rogue elements before they escaped Eighth Army's grasp. In doing so, the command would consolidate the army's recent gains won through hard fighting and swift maneuver. The more Communists they could capture, the higher the price the NKPA would pay for its chaotic rout from South Korea.

Initially stationed in Okcheon-gun county just east of the division headquarters at Daejeon, Holliday's battalion commanded by Maj. Robert L. Woolfolk III rounded up more than 1,300 Communist prisoners in the first week. Defeated "Reds" poured from the densely wooded hills to surrender of their own free will shortly after the battalion's arrival. All appeared quite "weary and hungry."<sup>3</sup> Still, scattered patrols had comparatively little success locating more stalwart Communist fragments hidden in the local hills. To solve this problem, Holliday solicited the assistance

of the locals in the hunt. He coordinated with Okcheon-gun's chief of police for the Okcheon people to spread a narrative throughout the area that "Americans are crazy! They give food to everyone! They even give the Communists rice and cigarettes. How can anyone treat enemies like that? They are crazy!"<sup>4</sup> Holliday knew the enemy had a keen sense of honor. "I do not want the North Koreans to lose face," he emphasized to the chief. "Just offer to show them where they can get rice, other good things to eat, and cigarettes," Holliday said, and the rest would fall into place.<sup>5</sup> The influence campaign seemed to pay off. "In a few days we filled all the jails in the district and our soldiers were very happy that they did not have to go out to walk for hours through the hills," he proudly recalled.<sup>6</sup> Hostile expressions on the faces of some detainees made Holliday glad he had taken them out of the war without unduly risking the lives of his soldiers.<sup>7</sup>

Having apparently neutralized the Communist threat in Okcheon-gun, division headquarters later in the month transferred 3rd Battalion to the Chinsan-Gunsan sector south of Daejeon to try its hand at mopping-up a much larger area. The enemy there was markedly different. "We had been trying to capture soldiers who had been defeated and were trying to escape," Holliday later observed of the battalion's old sector.<sup>8</sup> While similar transient NKPA remnants were scattered across this new sector, they were not the only threat. The vast 6,500 square-mile southwestern Korea swath assigned to the division's three regimental combat teams, most especially the region encompassing and abutting the Chiri-san Mountain mass, had long been home to some of South Korea's most volatile pro-Communist insurgents.<sup>9</sup> Republic of Korea (ROK) forces, along with their American counterparts of the Korean Military Advisory Group (KMA), had enjoyed considerable success in countering the "Red" insurgency by 1949. The sudden invasion of conventional Communist forces into the south the following summer, however, brought guerrillas out of hiding and into power in many villages.<sup>10</sup> Even following the Pusan breakout, Korean locals warned American patrols that several thousand Communists still occupied the Chiri-san Mountain area. UNC intelligence reports corroborated the warnings and cautioned that the division's area of responsibility contained pockets of bypassed enemy forces and guerrillas ranging "from a few completely disorganized soldiers to skeleton equipped units of suspected battalion size."<sup>11</sup>

Upon arrival in the new sector, Holliday's patrols discovered two trenches cut across a road just outside Chinsan intended to block the passage of UNC traffic. Holliday dispatched a road repair team to remedy the problem along with a few soldiers from the battalion intelligence section

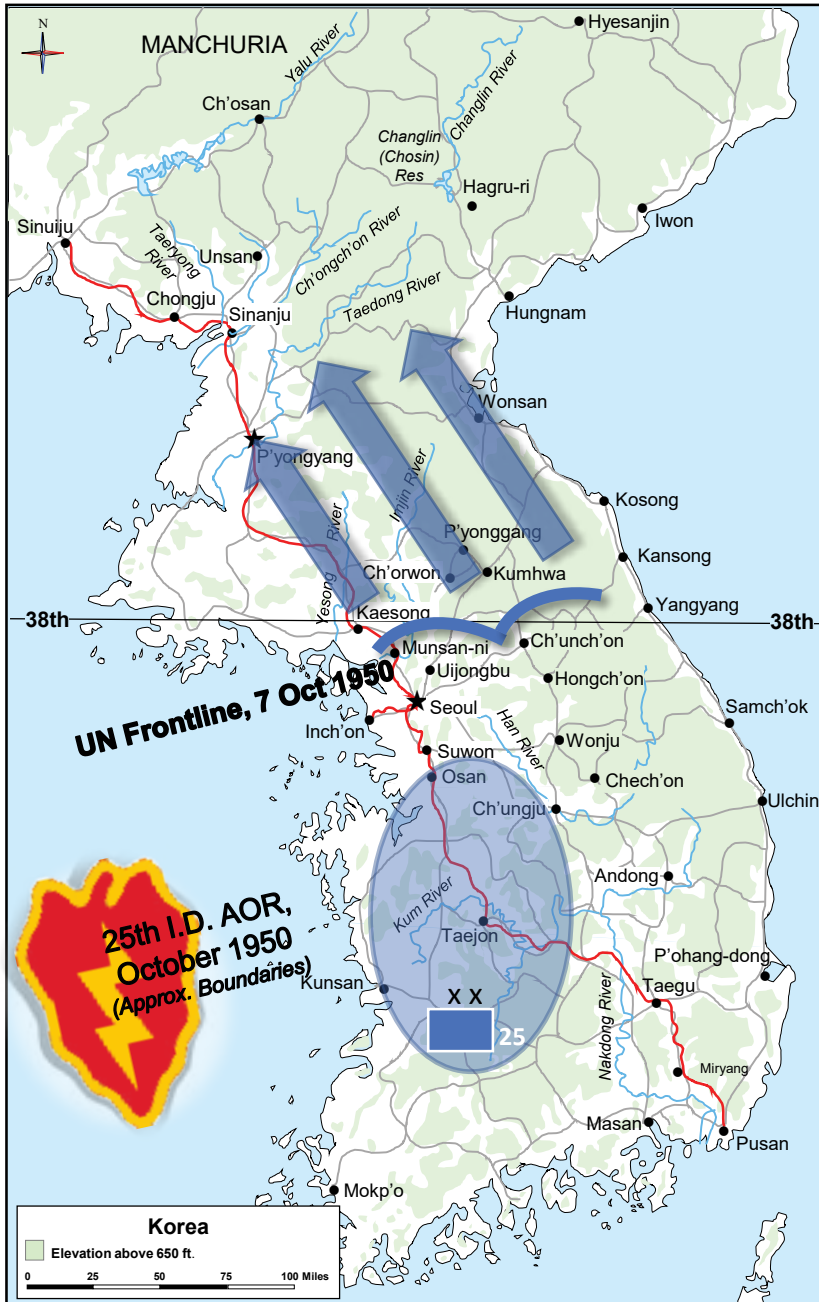


Figure 11.1. The 25th Infantry Division area of responsibility, October 1950.  
Created by Army University Press.

“to check out the area.”<sup>12</sup> They never made it. Only a short time later, a few shell-shocked survivors stumbled back into the company command post, prompting Holliday to personally organize a rapid response. Cautiously approaching the ambush site, the quick reaction force “found the trucks burning, but no enemy.”<sup>13</sup> The Communists were gone and American bodies littered the ground, all with their “shoes removed and [each] had at least two wounds—one always through the back of the head at close range.”<sup>14</sup>

Infuriated and frustrated at the lack of opportunity to exact revenge on the elusive guerrillas, American patrols scoured the hills in search of the lone missing member of the ambushed intelligence team—a personal friend of Holliday’s. “We immediately sent patrols to all of the neighboring villages,” he remembered, “but no one would admit that they had seen anything or knew who might have staged the ambush.”<sup>15</sup> Holliday knew full well that “someone from these very villages probably did it. But how do you know? What do you do? What can you do to find the truth?”<sup>16</sup> The men canvassed each village looking for “weapons or anything that might have been connected to the ambush. We found nothing.”<sup>17</sup> Besides the burning wreckage of jeeps in the roadway, the only evidence that guerrillas had ever been present was the body of a Korean man discovered by Holliday’s men in the hills overlooking the ambush site. Hanged by the neck from a tree, his big toe had been severed “and a message pinned to his chest . . . written in blood, no doubt from his own toe.”<sup>18</sup> The crudely scrawled Korean characters warned locals that the victim “was an enemy of the people and he was therefore being killed as an example of what would happen to anyone who did not support the Communists.”<sup>19</sup> After months of struggling against organized battalions of uniformed North Koreans, Holliday’s veteran riflemen had stumbled into a very different kind of war.

## **From Japan to Gunsan**

General Kean’s 25th Infantry Division, Tropic Lightning, had been leisurely prosecuting occupation duties on Honshu and Kyushu Islands, Japan, when the Communist tide suddenly swept across the 38th Parallel and into South Korea on 25 June 1950. Alerted by General Douglas MacArthur to prepare the division for combat deployment, Kean’s headquarters scrambled to consolidate its regimental combat teams and embark them toward the peninsula.<sup>20</sup> Under Kean’s direction were Col. John H. Michaelis’s 27th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, Lt. Col. John T. Corley’s 24th Infantry Regimental Combat Team, and Col. Henry G. Fisher’s 35th Infantry Regimental Combat Team. Attached in support were the M24 Chaffee and M4A3E8 Sherman tanks of the 89th Tank Battalion and M24 Chaffee tanks of A Company, 79th Heavy Tank Battalion, along with the division’s com-

plement of 105- and 155-mm howitzers. With the full panoply of these combined arms assets, the division was well prepared and equipped to conduct large-scale combat operations in defense of South Korea.<sup>21</sup>

By 18 July, less than a month after the North Korean onslaught, the entire 25th Infantry Division was on the peninsula. Charged with shoring up the rapidly withdrawing South Korean forces and their American 24th Infantry Division counterparts, Tropic Lightning component elements rushed into a defensive line between Taegu and Pohang Dong as they arrived in-country. After violently hurling back successive NKPA assaults against its positions, the division silently pulled out of the northern line on the night of 2 August and rushed 150 miles to the southwest to block 4th and 6th North Korean Divisions threatening to turn the Eighth Army's left flank. The command's adeptly conducted maneuver was one of the most "veritably miraculous" of the war, and earned considerable accolades from both American and ROK governments.<sup>22</sup>

Arriving in their new positions just in time, the division counter-attacked alongside other UNC command elements throughout mid-August, pushing back Communist forces along the Nam River near Chinju. After falling back later that month to take up an assigned sector comprising the extreme left of General Walton Walker's "Pusan Perimeter," the division struggled to protect vital UNC supplies on the coast. "As a band of steel, the line held," the division historian later proudly recalled, "withstanding the repeated hammerings of the Reds."<sup>23</sup> Sparring with division-sized Communist elements required all of UNC firepower and combined arms assets. On 16 September, these assets were directed against Communist positions in preparation for a massive breakout attempt designed to coincide with General Douglas MacArthur's daring landings at Inchon.<sup>24</sup>

Punching out of the perimeter along with the rest of IX Corps, Tropic Lightning was backed by deadly close air support. The soldiers plunged through North Korean lines, shattering the Communist divisions that fronted their positions and routing those adjacent to them. In a headlong rush west across the peninsula, they retook Chinju by 25 September. Five days later, advance elements of Kean's command liberated Gunsan on the western coast, effectively isolating all of southwestern Korea from the north. After covering nearly 200 miles of rugged Korean terrain, the division had much to be proud of, but its work had only just begun. Despite the "tremendous wear and tear on all equipment, particularly vehicles, tanks, and tractors" incurred on the slog from Chinju, the men of Tropic Lightning would have little time to rest.<sup>25</sup> When follow-on orders arrived from IX Corps headquarters on 5 October, Kean knew his command was in for what one

veteran referred to as the “ticklish and unspectacular task” of mopping-up the fragmented and bypassed NKPA remnants strewn across southwestern Korea—in effect, consolidating the battlefield gains they had just won.<sup>26</sup>

Successfully consolidating IX Corps’ gains would require: (1) rounding-up, securing, or neutralizing the remnants of defeated NKPA forces seeking safe passage northward, (2) addressing the humanitarian needs of war-torn Korea’s civilian population, rehabilitating regional infrastructure, and reestablishing civil authority—and confidence—in the ROK government, and finally (3) capturing or killing yet-undefeated Communist guerrillas hiding in the densely wooded mountains. These three objectives were intricately interwoven. Scattered remnants of NKPA forces could still harass Korean villages, undermine civilian confidence in the ROK government, and bolster the otherwise limited military capabilities of Communist guerrillas in the region. At the same time, gaining the Korean peoples’ trust and assistance would be crucial. Tropic Lightning needed human intelligence to locate and pursue remaining NKPA forces and identify local guerrilla hideouts. Moreover, as the larger political objective of the war was to ensure the ROK government’s sovereignty, assisting that government in caring for its embattled population was key to a lasting UNC victory.

Finally, the division’s consolidation operations occurred contemporaneously with Eighth Army’s ongoing large-scale combat operations to the north, so its southwestern Korea efforts were also crucial for purely operational reasons. Due in large part to the tortuous winding roads and unforgiving terrain of the Korean peninsula, sustaining forward-deployed UNC forces was heavily reliant upon rail supply. At the junction of three major railroads, including the only double-track north-south route in the country, the security of the city of Daejeon—Kean’s new headquarters—and its hinterland was central to the secure and dependable supply of Eighth Army from the south.<sup>27</sup> Located halfway between Pusan and Seoul along Highway 1, one of Eighth Army’s two north-south main supply routes (MSRs), the city represented a critical node within the UNC logistical network.<sup>28</sup> Any Communist threat to the network could potentially hamper the sustainment of operations farther north and significantly limit the operational freedom and mobility of UNC forces.

### **“A Coordinated Sweeping Program”**

Despite the US Army’s nearly two centuries of experience in counterinsurgency operations, its 1950s doctrine left much to be desired in the way of instruction for a campaign to “mop-up” scattered enemy remnants or hunt down guerrilla groups. Field Manual (FM) 100-5, *Field Service*

*Regulations, Operations* (1949), paid considerable attention to operations in support of partisan forces like those marshalled against the Japanese during World War II, but only a handful of paragraphs addressed how to combat them. Stressing the importance of employing “native elements” organized into “small mobile constabulary-type units” in conjunction with American forces, FM 100-5 advised “vigorous and bold action by mobile forces” as the “quickest and surest way of defeating enemy bands.”<sup>29</sup> After penetrating into a guerrilla-infested region and securing the principal villages and strongholds in the sector, these mobile forces were to be “organized as defensive areas, from which highly mobile columns conduct operations against any organized resistance located.”<sup>30</sup>

For the most part, the division’s approach to its new mission adhered closely to these prescriptions. After receiving IX Corps’s orders for the mop-up, the division left its old post on the coast at Gunsan and officially opened its new Daejeon headquarters at 1400 on 5 October. After each of the command’s six infantry battalions reached their various assigned areas of responsibility (AOR), their respective headquarters established command posts and company billets in local schoolhouses and promptly began a thorough reconnaissance in preparation for “a coordinated sweeping program.”<sup>31</sup> At the same time, battalion commanders met with village leaders to clarify the UNC mission and ascertain the area’s most pressing security issues.

Similar to its sister battalions across the division, 1st Battalion, 24th RCT, established its headquarters in Anseong, forty-five miles north of Daejeon, on 10 October then subdivided its area into smaller company zones assigned to each of its subordinate commands. Several at battalion headquarters worried that it would be impossible for the single rifle battalion’s fewer than 650 available soldiers to secure the expansive area of responsibility completely.<sup>32</sup> In the spirit of FM 100-5 instructions, the command team decided instead to “let the ROK police locate the enemy and then our units would eliminate them.”<sup>33</sup> Two days later, the battalion commander held a meeting with Anseong’s local authorities, “defining the mission of our unit and the aims of the United Nations Army in Korea.”<sup>34</sup> During the meeting, the parties discussed “the local communists [sic] problems and also the steps to be taken by all in accomplishment of our mission.”<sup>35</sup> Col. John Michaelis’ 27th RCT, assigned to the Chongju area, was spared the challenge of patrolling its entire sector when the regiment fortuitously recovered an enemy operations plan during an early reconnaissance patrol. The document, which included prescribed escape routes for Communist forces in the area, allowed Michaelis’s Wolfhounds to employ Korean ci-

vilians as scouts—much in the manner as the 24th RCT used ROK police—to help spot fruitful positions to ambush enemy contingents.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, Col. Henry Fisher's 35th RCT patrolled together with local Korean police and relied heavily upon intelligence gleaned from Communist detainees regarding its three battalion sectors. On the same day the division arrived at Daejeon, IX Corps Headquarters temporarily transferred control of the 9th ROK Regiment and Puerto Rican 65th Regimental Combat Team to Kean. Both commands deployed east of Daejeon and commenced blocking and patrolling their own respective AORs.<sup>37</sup>

With only 14,722 effectives present for duty on 1 October (just over 75 percent of the command's authorized strength), Kean's division was responsible for more than 6,500 square miles of rugged mountainous terrain.<sup>38</sup> This was, as the 27th RCT's war diarist observed, "an area greater than the now-famous Pusan-Perimeter."<sup>39</sup> The division's battalions were scattered over vast distances, which necessitated tight coordination between commands. All battalions maintained a schedule of regular motorized or foot patrols to their boundaries in order to keep close contact with adjacent units. Sensing this vulnerability, Communist guerrillas did their best to habitually threaten UNC communications. Almost as soon as it was established, the division's VHF station near Daejeon received harassing small arms fire from an invisible enemy in the surrounding hills. Responding patrols failed to discover the source.<sup>40</sup>

### **Rounding-up the Defeated**

By far the easiest of the division's assigned tasks involved finding and securing scattered NKPA remnants shaken by their recent defeat during the breakout offensive. Although bypassed, surrounded, and nominally defeated, lingering enemy elements across the division's zone of responsibility still proved elusive and dangerous foes. While many had no arms or ammunition, some were armed and forced Kean's patrols to remain perpetually alert.

According to NKPA prisoners, fugitive groups were primarily nocturnal, moving northward under cover of darkness in large contingents so as to simplify navigation. During the dangerous daylight hours, they typically fragmented into smaller groups of four or five in search of food and water.<sup>41</sup> Civilians informed 27th RCT patrols that these groups "dressed as civilians" and were covertly scouting UNC positions "to enable several sizeable enemy units to bypass them without contact."<sup>42</sup> They often posted lookouts near rice paddies while others hurriedly reaped a modest harvest before fleeing back into the hills. Others brazenly made their way into



villages and demanded sustenance, the division war diary reported, “even if [they] had to murder to satisfy [their] needs.”<sup>43</sup> Many threatened locals with ominous warnings about thousands of nearby Communist comrades who would “come into the village and wipe them out” if they refused to provide aid.<sup>44</sup> As night came on, these scattered groups reconsolidated with others at prominent landmarks and continued the march north.<sup>45</sup>

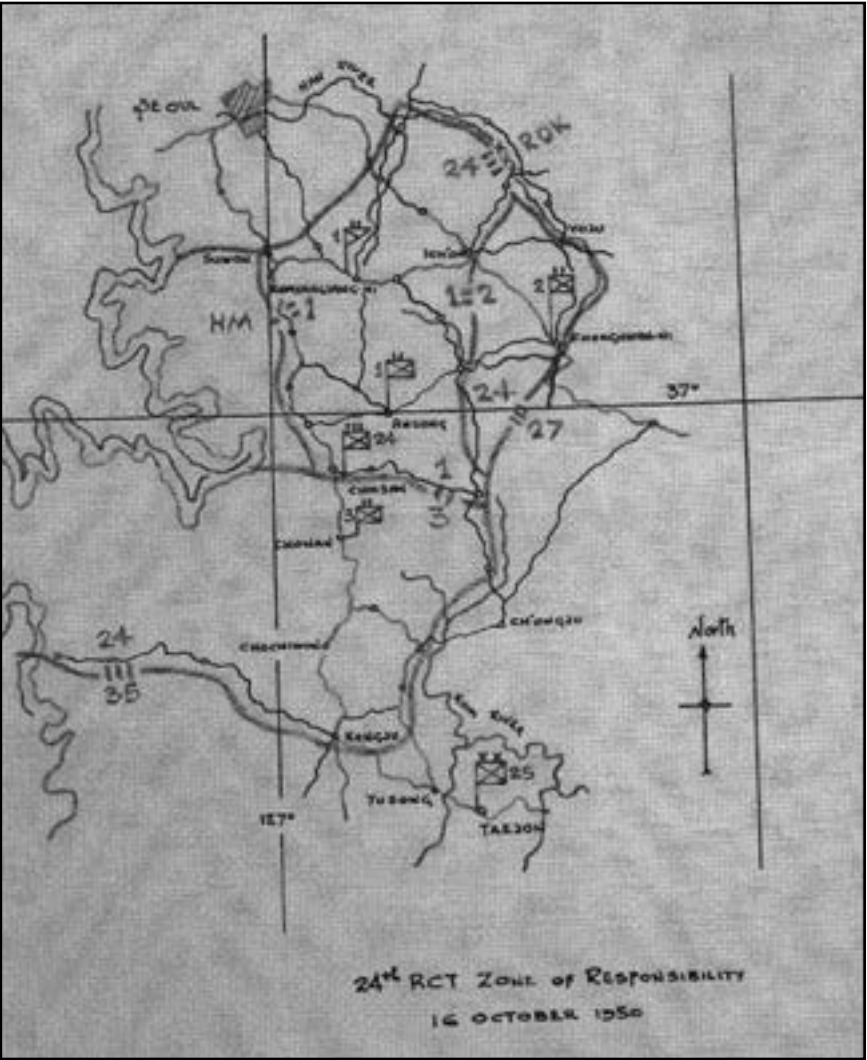


Figure 11.2. The 24th Regimental Combat Team zone of responsibility, 16 October 1950. Courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration.

In order to “give the North Korean troops every opportunity to surrender without fighting,” the division leaned heavily upon influence operations to encourage the most disheartened to surrender.<sup>46</sup> Throughout the month, flights of B-29s armed with loudspeakers cut across the skies over the division’s zone announcing that all capitulating Communists should promptly congregate “in open spaces without arms, . . . build a white cross on the ground, and notify the nearest UN Forces of their desire to surrender.”<sup>47</sup> While this merciful tactic initially bore some fruit, the daily haul of willing prisoners plateaued. Interrogation teams eager to understand the flagging effectiveness of the broadcasts asked detainees whether had heard and understood the messages and if the information affected their decision to surrender. Teams posed similar questions about a contemporaneous leaflet campaign.<sup>48</sup> The answers proved disconcerting. One North Korean captain reported the broadcasts were usually inaudible from the ground: “Either the volume is too low or usually the plane is too high.”<sup>49</sup> While pilots flew high to avoid ground fire, such precautions were mostly unnecessary as Communist fugitives were fearful about giving away their positions. Similarly, UN leaflets promising “good food—and good treatment” were ignored.<sup>50</sup> In fact, the offer may have done more harm than good. “NKPA personnel are prone to feel that this is all false bait,” one division report read. “They do not expect ‘good’ food and ‘good’ treatment so believe such promises to be false.”<sup>51</sup> Even if such statements were true, the ideologically hostile and intensely wary foe had to believe the message. Instead, prisoners suggested that leaflets and loudspeaker announcements should have offered “more clear-cut pictures of POW enclosures” and emphasized the separation between the “average soldier” and the Communist officials ultimately responsible for the war.<sup>52</sup> “Average soldier is being sacrificed by communists,” one intelligence report suggested, highlighting class and even ideological divisions within the enemy ranks.<sup>53</sup>

The same detainee who shed light on the shortcomings of the aerial broadcasts shared an insightful story with interrogators. Just before surrendering to UNC forces in late October, the officer had discussed the relative efficacy of surrender with others in his wandering band. Of the nine officers in the contingent, seven openly said they planned to surrender at the earliest opportunity “even if it cost them their lives.”<sup>54</sup> The other two trusted that either China or the Soviet Union would soon enter the conflict “and save the present situation.”<sup>55</sup> They ignored counter-arguments made by their fellow officers that the Chinese could never successfully combat “the UN armies with their superior weapons,” and that the Soviets “were

not ready to wage a long war with the United States.”<sup>56</sup> Communist influence operations helped bolster their conviction. After flushing a pocket of enemy guerrillas from a bivouac in late October, one 35th RCT patrol discovered an enemy leaflet addressed “To All Guerrilla Troops, Men and Women.” The document asserted that ROK and UNC forces were “killing our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters everywhere,” requiring all Communists to “sacrifice our blood for our country, for the purpose of the emancipation of our country and to kill the slaughterers of our fathers and mothers.” Further, it noted that in their campaign to “cut down and destroy railroads, bridges, [and] communications that is [sic] being used in the enemy rear area and to attack important enemy headquarters,” the guerrillas were not alone—at least in spirit. “Our friends, the Soviet Union, Red China, and other Peoples’ Republics are giving moral support to bring the final victory.”<sup>57</sup>

Where influence operations fell short, daily foot and motorized combat patrols had to pick up the slack. The division’s aerial reconnaissance assets provided invaluable support in the hunt for scattered NKPA. Pilots kept eyes on roving enemy contingents, frequently warning American patrols of potential ambushes. Kean insisted on “prompt aggressive action” against identified enemy pockets “in order that opportunities for them to escape would be minimized.”<sup>58</sup> Often with the help of aerial observation, the division’s far-flung platoons occasionally stumbled upon large groups of NKPA fugitives. On 10 October, elements of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 24th RCT discovered approximately 100 Communists bivouacked in their sector. In the ensuing ambush, Golf Company killed seventy-five, scattered the remainder, and captured a lieutenant who provided a detailed description of enemy evasion tactics. The large group, he alleged, was part of a much larger body of nearly 800 camped nearby.<sup>59</sup> Three days earlier, 35th RCT elements had caught up with another battalion-sized Communist element and killed more than 300 with a combination of small arms and well-directed artillery fire before they could escape.<sup>60</sup>

Interrogation teams pressed detainees to gain basic information about the capabilities and capacity of these enemy remnant forces: how much ammunition did they have? Had their equipment been destroyed? Who commanded their unit? What was their parent organization? What was the exact name of their organization? Anxious prisoners revealed on 7 October that the remainder of the battered 7th North Korean Division—still somewhere near 4,000 strong—was carefully and quietly picking its way northward through the division’s zone. The North Korean general officers,

the detainees confessed, “will not permit surrender;” yet the detainees’ surrender suggested some insubordination in the Communist ranks.<sup>61</sup> Other high-ranking prisoners divulged the location of three entire regiments of fugitives along with their intended routes northward.<sup>62</sup>

While the brunt of the work to hunt down and destroy NKPA pockets was left to independent company patrols, the division prosecuted multiple-battalion “hammer-and-anvil” clearance across the southern portion of its AOR between 17 and 19 October. First, Colonel Michaelis’s 27th RCT, along with attached UNC and ROK commands, established a blocking position in the Koesan-Chinsan area. Then the 1st and 3rd Battalions of Colonel Fisher’s 35th RCT assaulted northward to drive NKPA remnants into the 27th RCT’s anvil. Sweeping over rugged hillsides and through meandering valleys during terrible weather, the regiment killed or wounded nearly 150 NKPA fighters and captured 60. Meanwhile, Michaelis’s Wolfhounds observed hundreds of enemy troops fleeing northward from the 35th’s line of advance and dispersed or destroyed many more with artillery and tank fire. At the conclusion of the operation, the regiment reported taking more than 200 prisoners.<sup>63</sup>

The division’s Civil Liaison section at Daejeon was responsible for the care and evacuation of the many thousands of enemy prisoners collected by Tropic Lightning. By 21 October, the sheer volume of detainees in the division’s custody had grown to an almost unmanageable extent. In Daejeon, a makeshift enclosure for Communist prisoners consolidated from battalion POW cages across the division zone was quickly running out of space. Caring for the medical and sustenance needs of the prisoners proved an especially vexing challenge. “All of the POWs, when taken prisoner, have only the clothing on their back,” one division report read. “This may consist of remnants of uniforms, Korean type wrap around trousers and cotton undershirts, [but] most of them are with out [sic] footwear and blankets.” Officers coordinated with the Eighth Army quartermaster’s office to remedy the problem.<sup>64</sup>

The evacuation of detainees to secure facilities farther south also presented a problem. Fortunately, Eighth Army provided assistance with this as well. When the 27th RCT’s prisoner holding area started to overflow, the regimental S-4 was incapable of securing sufficient transportation to evacuate the detainees. One call to division headquarters, however, brought a train to within ten miles—“the nearest point . . . because of bombed bridges.”<sup>65</sup> The prisoners were marched from regimental headquarters to the train then embarked for more secure areas to the south.<sup>66</sup>

## Restoration and Rehabilitation

Responsibility for coordinating the division's response to the humanitarian crisis that plagued southwestern Korea in the aftermath of the NKPA invasion and breakout offensive fell to Civil Liaison Sections (the equivalent of modern S9/G9 sections) at the division and regimental levels. Upon arrival in Daejeon on 5 October, the division's Civil Liaison Section established a labor office at City Hall and gathered more than 200 police under the leadership of a former provincial police chief. These officers manned twenty-four-hour security checkpoints scattered across the city. Similar steps were taken for each regimental area of responsibility. Taking the police chief's word that ROK authorities had screened the approximately 130,000 Daejeon citizens for Communist sympathies prior to the division's arrival, the section settled into its primary missions: "Restoration and maintenance of civil law and order within the area in cooperation with ROK National Police . . . [and] collecting and safeguarding of arms, ammunition, and other munitions now scattered in the areas."<sup>67</sup> These tasks required close coordination with local law enforcement and the assistance of the civilian population—referred to colloquially as "PIWs" or "People in White" after their traditional Korean garments.<sup>68</sup> Unfortunately, even with reestablished police forces, many villages still lacked arms, transportation, or communications capabilities. These handicaps significantly limited their ability to help hunt down NKPA fugitives or area guerrillas; this task was often left to UNC troops.<sup>69</sup>

Reestablishing ROK authority in South Korean villages was high on the division's list of priorities. Many newly installed mayors and police harbored Communist sympathies, so replacements needed to be carefully screened. The process of identifying strong candidates was further complicated because during the recent NKPA invasion, many villages had been abandoned by those with the most fervent anti-Communist sentiments. Many of these individuals still hid in the surrounding hills, afraid of returning to yet-unsecured communities. UNC forces had difficulty finding these individuals and convincing them to return to help stabilize their villages.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, even after reliable and legitimate authorities were returned to power, the leaders could only be encouraged to assist UNC forces. "We are not allowed to order the local government to do these things," one division memorandum lamented about meager support from reestablished Korean authorities. Still, "frequent conferences with them will often accomplish the same purpose through the method of suggestion."<sup>71</sup>

The Civil Liaison sections established arms and ammunition collection points throughout the division zone, each under constant guard and in direct communication with the division ordnance officer. This officer also collated daily reports on the “quantity, type and location of ammunition and arms located for the period” and secured at each collection point.<sup>72</sup> Disposing of the voluminous stores of captured (or, in many cases, re-captured) weaponry and equipment proved “a large problem.”<sup>73</sup> Worse, fleeing Communist forces and local guerrillas caught on to the division’s efforts to find, collect, and destroy dropped or cached war materiel; they “booby-trapped” weapons and explosives. These caches required careful handling by specially trained technicians arranged through the division ordnance officer at headquarters. Patrols requesting assistance with explosives disposal were advised to provide precise “locations and nature of the hazard to be reduced.”<sup>74</sup>

The repair, maintenance, and security of all railroads within the division sector was one of the Civil Liaison section’s most important responsibilities. The rail nexus at Daejeon was strategically vital to ensure a maximally robust logistical network to support Eighth Army operations farther north. Crews needed to repair the track as well as power lines and tunnels knocked out by bombing and shelling in support of the Pusan breakout.<sup>75</sup> Sustaining the static division itself as well as making these repairs frequently presented a challenge. “The use of retaken rail lines was complicated by the numerous blown rail bridges and tunnels along with the lack of vital rolling stock,” the division war diary noted.<sup>76</sup> Bombed-out stations and depots, targeted by UNC air forces in an effort to cripple NKPA logistics, became “a grave problem of team work to rebuild for immediate use.”<sup>77</sup> Engineers of the 65th Engineer Battalion and 77th Engineer Company attached to Kean’s headquarters toiled “around-the-clock,” working “to minimize the delay” in getting things up and running again.<sup>78</sup>

The division’s Civil Liaison sections were also responsible for assisting ROK authorities caring for the legions of homeless refugees who populated southwestern Korea. By mid-October, more than 262,000 refugees had been identified and inoculated against disease at nine separate facilities. After establishing “screening points” at the entry of each village, ROK police and American troops attempted to discern Communist sympathizers from the general population. This delicate task frequently proved impossible, the division war diarist explained, “due to the massive hordes that were seeking new habilitation or their own dwellings.”<sup>79</sup> Refugees traveling back to their villages were barred from using major roads

because they might slow or even block military traffic. Eighth Army transportation officers arranged for two daily trains to help repatriate residents who had fled the region during the fighting. In the first week of October, more than 21,000 refugees returned to their homes.<sup>80</sup> Over the course of the month, upwards of 50,000 people returned to Daejeon. The division estimated that more than 80 percent of them were homeless because their dwellings had been destroyed in the heavy fighting that rocked the city.<sup>81</sup>

Above all else, displaced Koreans assisted the division by providing actionable human intelligence on Communist forces in the area. Although many of the forwarded civilian reports of armed Reds ultimately proved false, cooperation by loyal South Koreans helped UNC and ROK forces neutralize the remaining NKPA in the region.<sup>82</sup> Civilian assistance was especially crucial for rooting out “die-hards.”

### **The “Die-Hards”**

By the end of October, the division had enjoyed so much success in rounding-up defeated NKPA elements in its sector that the aggressiveness with which troops pursued them occasionally began to flag. After accumulating more than 10,000 Red prisoners in less than thirty days, many soldiers began to wonder how many more could remain in the hills. At one point in late October, prisoners were so abundant that the division employed a particularly risky tactic: sending groups of Communist prisoners “up in the hills to bring others in.”<sup>83</sup> Frustrated with the minimal return on investment enjoyed by his 35th RCT’s daily patrols, along with the constant risk of guerrilla ambush he knew they faced, Col. Henry Fisher quietly informed his subordinates that he wanted “to ensure that we found no more enemy.”<sup>84</sup> He surmised that most NKPA troops were already captured and—with UNC forces poised to sweep all Communists from the peninsula—the war would soon be over. Captain Holliday recalled Fisher “thought it would be best for us just to manage to leave the insurgents alone.”<sup>85</sup> There is little evidence of similar instructions in the division’s other regiments; if the psychologically defeated elements of uniformed Reds in the area of responsibility had proven relatively easy prey, however, the exact opposite was true of the local die-hards.

As Holliday’s company learned the hard way, the most dangerous of the undefeated enemies in the sector were Communist insurgents who had plagued the area for years prior even to the outbreak of conventional warfare. Unlike their shaken NKPA compatriots, most guerrillas in the region remained undefeated in both physical and psychological terms af-

ter the Pusan breakout. Ambushing Holliday's engineer and intelligence team upon the company's initial arrival into sector was only the beginning. By the end of the month, the 35th RCT had enjoyed tremendous success rounding up shaken NKPA fugitives, but neither they nor their ROK allies had managed to snuff out a lingering low-grade insurgency in and around Chinsan. The enemy "seemed to be doing a better job of making us look ineffective," Holliday lamented. "Our patrols would wander around the hills finding nothing, only to be ambushed by those that vanished as fast as they appeared."<sup>86</sup> Frequent ambushes of UNC convoys led to a strict ban on the passage of lone vehicles down the MSR, especially at night. Railroads had to be vigilantly guarded by Americans first, and later by ROK forces and special police. Several Korean civilians and ROK police were killed in hit-and-run attacks on local villages. The perpetrators disappeared without a trace.<sup>87</sup>

Desperate guerrillas were the most dangerous. On 16 October, eighteen fighters "blew themselves up with grenades" to avoid capture when cornered by members of Company K, 3rd Battalion, 27th Infantry.<sup>88</sup> On other occasions, the Communist insurgents erected crude obstacles at bridges or other chokepoints to logjam jeep and truck convoys before ambushing them, creating frequent headaches for the division's logisticians.<sup>89</sup> While the majority of insurgent activity proved little more than an aggravation to UNC operations, occasionally larger-scale coordinated attacks threatened to erode the legitimacy of the ROK government in the region. During the early morning hours of 31 October, two contingents of nearly a hundred fighters assaulted 3rd Battalion, 35th RCT and ROK positions in Chinsan—aiming to capture the police station in the center of town. While the attack was eventually beaten back with heavy Red losses, the spectacle of insurgent military capabilities partly achieved its terroristic purpose.<sup>90</sup>

The persistent guerrilla war challenged the division's otherwise successful prosecution of its mission. This complication greatly frustrated Colonel Fisher. It vexed him so much, in fact, that toward the end of the month he gave up. Holliday remembered that Fisher quietly told his battalion commander: "I want you to sweep the area for several days, but I do not want you to find any Communists. Send patrols to all those areas where we have had contact, but make sure they don't get into any firefights." Fisher wanted "to see reports that you found no enemy."<sup>91</sup> Fisher hoped that after reporting the same to division, his command could be reassigned to a more conventional mission farther north. "The South Koreans are going to have to take care of these people after we leave," he asserted.<sup>92</sup> As far as he was concerned, it was no longer an American problem.



Fortunately for the security of southwestern Korea, ROK authorities did indeed “take care of these people” after the fundamentally LSCO-focused division departed in November. Applying a mixture of political incentives to erode already meager popular support for the insurgency and merciless efforts to exterminate remaining pockets of resistance, South Koreans eventually ended the guerrilla conflict without much American help. Having boldly emerged from hiding in the wake of the NKPA invasion, the remaining Communists in southwestern Korea now had little means of escaping or receiving vital support from the north. Once this became apparent, most simply gave up.<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, the next time Tropic Lightning faced a hybrid conflict simultaneously involving LSCO operations against a uniformed enemy and a nagging insurgency to the rear amid the rice paddies and mountainous jungles of Vietnam, the foe would not be so quick to capitulate.

Between 1 and 31 October, the 25th Infantry Division captured 14,676 Communist soldiers and insurgents across its assigned zone—the equivalent of nearly one and a half full-strength North Korean Army infantry divisions. While exact figures do not survive, aggressive patrolling by the division’s RCTs and attached UNC formations resulted in the killing of at least 800 additional Communist fighters during the month.<sup>94</sup> The division’s efforts materially contributed to ensuring that southwestern Korea would never again fall into Communist hands. Its tireless efforts to consolidate Eighth Army’s gains during the fall of 1950 ensured that UNC forces would enjoy unhindered lines of communication across the area for the rest of the war. Had the equivalent of a division and a half of Communist guerrillas remained in the southern mountains at the moment UN forces fell back from the Yalu River later that winter, the already traumatic reversal may have proven an irreversible disaster. Instead, as Allied commands withdrew from North Korea, they retreated toward a comparatively secure rear and supply base capable of fueling a hard-fought defensive stand along the 38th Parallel to preserve a free and democratic Republic of Korea.

At the same time, the primarily LSCO-focused division had struggled to adapt to the novel challenges of counterinsurgency operations, especially after being so recently focused on fighting organized NKPA maneuver forces. Fortunately, the command benefitted from the capabilities of effective local ROK law enforcement and the many strategic missteps of Communist guerrillas. Even so, Tropic Lightning’s experiences conducting mop-up operations in October 1950 looked far more like the division’s later experiences in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan than the high-intensity

large-scale combat operations of the early (and later) phases of the Korean War. Although Korea was usually thought of as a primarily “conventional” war, the challenges that the 25th Infantry Division confronted in southwestern Korea in October 1950 suggest that all the complicated dynamics and frustrations associated with conducting counterinsurgency and stability operations are still a major component of “consolidating gains” behind a LSCO close area. Today’s and tomorrow’s military leaders will need to be prepared to lead those operations.

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## **Chapter 12**

### **An Incomplete Campaign: Consolidating Gains during the Invasion of Iraq, March–April 2003**

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From its inception, the US campaign in Iraq was ambitious. Initial planning began in the weeks after the 9/11 attacks and by the summer of 2002, senior political and military officials had decided on three main goals for the campaign: overthrow Iraq's ruling regime; destroy Iraq's capacity to build and employ weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and ensure that Iraq no longer posed a threat to its own population, the larger region, or the United States.<sup>1</sup> These objectives, however, did not capture the full purpose of the campaign, which was to create a new Iraq with a stable society governed by a system that represented its population in its entirety. In an August 2002 planning summary, US Central Command (CENTCOM), the combatant command responsible for planning and conducting operations in Iraq, described the US strategic objective in Iraq as the creation of a "stable" state which renounced terrorism and the development and use of WMD, and was ruled by a "broad-based" government.<sup>2</sup> By March 2003, the breadth of the Coalition's objectives in Iraq was clear to most observers. And if there was any doubt about the ambitious vision for the campaign, President George W. Bush made it clear when on the evening of 19 March 2003, as the invasion began, he announced that one of its key goals was to help Iraqis "achieve a united, stable, and free country."<sup>3</sup>

This set of strategic objectives had a critical effect on CENTCOM and its subordinate organizations. In planning the campaign, the Coalition could not focus solely on defeating the regime and locating and securing WMD. Instead, Coalition commanders also had to consider operations that would lay the foundation for a new Iraq by securing its economy, stabilizing its society, and creating the groundwork for a new political system. In the months leading up to the invasion, Coalition commanders and staffs identified key actions that would consolidate gains made during combat operations in order to support both the successful removal of the Saddam regime and the strategic vision for Iraq's future. CENTCOM assigned many of these actions to specific units. Other consolidation tasks emerged unexpectedly and quickly became necessary to secure success after the victory over the Saddam Hussein regime. Unfortunately, CENTCOM commanders gave least attention to planning for the most general

post-conflict tasks, arguably those actions most necessary to begin constructing a stable foundation in the immediate wake of military conflict.

As the planning for the campaign evolved in 2002, CENTCOM staff created a structure for the campaign in Iraq that would transition through four phases. Phase I, Shape the Battlespace, would set conditions for the invasion. The main combat phases of the campaign would occur in Phase II, Decisive Operations, and Phase III, Complete the Regime Destruction.<sup>4</sup> Phase IV, Post-Hostility Operations, was dedicated fully to the Consolidation of Gains.<sup>5</sup> However, CENTCOM planners foresaw the need to begin consolidating gains during phases II and III as well.<sup>6</sup> Otherwise, emerging problems in the rear areas might undo the Coalition's success as its combat forces approached Baghdad. In his formal commander's intent statement, Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, CENTCOM Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC) commander, described this approach as "blurred" or "rolling" transitions. McKiernan envisioned the need for actions to consolidate gains—traditionally considered part of post-combat operations—to begin while combat operations were still ongoing, close on the heels of the Coalition's lead forces as they moved north from Kuwait.<sup>7</sup> In its conception, the CENTCOM approach to consolidating gains was comprehensive, a result of decade-long preparations for a renewed Iraq campaign that began not long after Operation Desert Storm ended. Over this period, Coalition planners had accurately identified many of the actions that would become necessary to consolidate the gains made in any offensive operation against Saddam Hussein. However, in conceiving the plan, they also made critical assumptions about the enemy and, as this chapter will show, overlooked the need to ensure that Coalition forces were fully prepared for the transition to Phase IV.

### **A Broad Mission Set: Coalition Plans to Consolidate Gains**

As part of the planning process, CENTCOM staff looked to recent operations, especially Operation Desert Storm, for insights into the types of problems Coalition forces might face in consolidating tactical-level actions as they moved north toward Baghdad. In 1991, problems with handling of Iraqi enemy prisoners of war had threatened to degrade combat operations.<sup>8</sup> The Iraqis also destroyed oil fields and other physical infrastructure both to disrupt Coalition operations and to prevent enemies from using those resources. The US military's experience in Desert Storm, as well as in Somalia, Haiti, and the Balkans later in the 1990s, also highlighted the likely occurrence of humanitarian crises that would require proper attention by military forces. In 2002, CENTCOM planners believed these challenges would again become major concerns during future operations in Iraq.



## Phases of the Iraq Campaign

<b>Phase 1</b>	Shape the Battlespace—Set conditions for following phases.
<b>Phase 2</b>	Decisive Operations—begin offensive operations against Iraqi forces; destroy or degrade WMD infrastructure.
<b>Phase 3</b>	Complete the Regime Destruction—defeat Iraqi forces; eliminate key Iraqi leaders; secure known WMD sites.
<b>Phase 4</b>	Post-Hostility Operations—begin recovery and reconstruction activities; support establishment of provisional Iraqi government and Iraqi Security Forces.

Figure 12.1. Phases of the Iraq Campaign. Created by Army University Press.

The overall vision for the 2003 invasion of Iraq, however, was far broader than that which guided the operations of the 1990s, including Desert Storm. Coalition forces intended to defeat the Iraqi Army, remove the Saddam regime, and secure the regime's suspected weapons of mass destruction. Simultaneously, Coalition forces had to maintain enough stability in Iraq so that the local economy did not grind to a halt and society did not plunge into sectarian strife and other forms of disorder. If the Coalition did not preserve some semblance of economic and social order in the post-Saddam period, it could not begin setting the foundation for the new Iraq. For this reason, CENTCOM prepared to conduct an equally broad set of missions to consolidate the gains made by Coalition combat forces. The most important tasks identified were securing key Iraqi oil infrastructure, searching for and securing weapons of mass destruction, maintaining public order, restoring essential services, and assisting in the transition to new Iraqi governance.<sup>9</sup> True to Lieutenant General McKiernan's concept of rolling transitions, CENTCOM planned to begin these actions during the initial phases of the invasion rather than wait for hostilities to end.<sup>10</sup>

To address some of the most important Consolidation of Gains tasks, CENTCOM created separate organizations whose missions focused solely on those actions. Working with the US Army Corps of Engineers, CENTCOM planners in January 2003 created Task Force Restore Iraqi Oil (Task Force RIO), an organization composed of military personnel and contrac-

tors responsible for both putting out fires in the southern oil fields near the city of Basrah and restoring the fields—and those in the north near the city of Kirkuk—to full operational capacity as quickly as possible.<sup>11</sup> In the final invasion plan, the US 1st Marine Division had the mission of seizing the southern oil fields.<sup>12</sup> This success would be consolidated by Task Force RIO, which would begin operations as soon as the fields were secure. Other Coalition forces operating north of Baghdad would seize the oil fields near the city of Kirkuk then hand them over to Task Force RIO's control.

To locate and secure Saddam's suspected weapons of mass destruction, CENTCOM reorganized the 75th Field Artillery Brigade, III Corps' main field artillery unit, as the 75th Exploitation Task Force (XTF). The new task force, based on the brigade's headquarters of about 200 personnel, grew into an interagency organization of close to 600 people, including intelligence and scientific specialists from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and other US and UK government agencies.<sup>13</sup> During the invasion, the task force's Sensitive Site Exploitation (SSE) teams would move with combat forces and identify facilities involved in the production, testing, and storage of nuclear, biological, chemical, and radiological weapons.<sup>14</sup> Mobile exploitation teams moving behind combat forces would then inspect and secure those sites.<sup>15</sup> When possible, the task force planned to interview Iraqi officials and scientists involved in the research and development of these weapons to develop a fuller picture of Saddam Hussein's WMD program.<sup>16</sup>

Coalition planners also turned to the unique capabilities of Coalition Special Operations Forces to seize control of infrastructure that had critical military and economic significance. These sites were so vital to the Coalition's strategic objectives that CENTCOM chose not to wait for conventional combat forces to secure them as they moved north toward Baghdad. Of utmost consequence were Iraq's critical hydrological installations, especially its dams. In 2002, CENTCOM directed the Coalition Forces Special Operations Component Command (CFSOCC) to plan for securing the three most important dams in Iraq as well as other hydrological "nodes."<sup>17</sup> Leaving the dams unsecured, senior commanders believed, would allow the Iraqis to flood key terrain and disrupt Coalition maneuver. The Hadithah Dam, located northwest of Baghdad on the Euphrates River, was the largest of these three structures. If breached, the resulting floods would inundate the southern approaches to Baghdad that the Coalition's mechanized forces intended to use to attack the Iraqi capital. Moreover, Coalition planners knew that the dams generated a significant proportion of Iraq's electricity. The dam at Hadithah, for example, supplied approximately one-third of the



Figure 12.2. Map of Coalition Invasion of Iraq, March–May 2003, with key Consolidation of Gains objectives shown. Created by Army University Press.

country's power.<sup>18</sup> Securing these sites would be crucial to ensuring that the Iraqi economy and essential services would continue with little or no interruption after the removal of the Saddam regime.

Basrah, Iraq's second largest city, received special attention in the CENTCOM plan. Located in the southeast corner of Iraq, close to the border with Kuwait, Basrah was a port city of approximately one million residents, most of whom were Shia Muslims. The population had rebelled against Saddam's Sunni-dominated government in 1991 and again in 1999. Lieutenant General McKiernan, the CFLCC commander, was concerned about humanitarian crises generally but especially about the

disaster that could occur in Basrah if its residents chose to flee or riot once the Coalition invaded.<sup>19</sup> Because of the city's size and proximity to the southern oil fields, the deep-water port at Umm Qasr, and the oil pumping infrastructure on the Al Faw Peninsula to the city's south, Basrah was of critical importance. Growing increasingly concerned about securing the infrastructure in the Basrah region, McKiernan planned for an entire division, the UK 1st Armoured, to seize and clear Basrah and its environs. Seizing Umm Qasr as part of this plan would facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the event there was a crisis in Basrah.<sup>20</sup> The 1st Armoured Division would also plan to take control of the southern oil fields from the US Marines and work with Special Operations Forces to secure the Al Faw Peninsula, the site of pumping facilities and other oil infrastructure.<sup>21</sup>

Another great concern for Lieutenant General McKiernan was maintaining control of the lines of communication (LOCs) as the invasion advanced north. To a large degree, the Coalition scheme of maneuver depended on high-tempo offensive operations to keep the numerically superior Iraq Army off balance. This required CFLCC's lead elements—US Army V Corps and I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF)—to move north quickly toward Baghdad, the main objective, which was approximately 600 kilometers from the Kuwaiti border. By late 2002, McKiernan had become concerned about sustaining a maneuver force moving on lines of communication that would dramatically increase in length every day of the invasion.<sup>22</sup> In May 2003, after the Coalition seized Baghdad, McKiernan recalled why the lines of communication had emerged as a critical concern during the planning process: "One thing we could not afford to do was run out of fuel or have a LOC that was cut so that we couldn't get resupplies or medevac or anything else back and forth, so LOCs were very important to me."<sup>23</sup>

McKiernan and his planners determined that the best way to maintain the tempo was to bypass the urban areas of southern Iraq where Saddam's forces could wage a brutal fight of attrition. Still, the planned axes of advance for both V Corps and I MEF would pass close to these cities, and the extended lines of communication would become vulnerable to Saddam's forces willing to attack from those urban areas. To secure the LOCs, McKiernan and his staff considered which of his forces were available and best suited for the task. US Army doctrine assigned the LOC security mission to Military Police (MP) units. The scale of the LOC security mission, however, would likely overwhelm the capacity of the MP units available to CFLCC, especially with all the demands of other

MP missions, most importantly the handling of enemy prisoners of war (discussed below). By January 2003, McKiernan determined that the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, which was equipped and trained to conduct route security, was ideal for the mission.<sup>24</sup> The CFLCC commander also considered using his operational reserve, the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division, to secure the LOCs. In the larger plan, this brigade—and the 82nd Division headquarters which would also deploy into Iraq—gave CFLCC operational flexibility. McKiernan considered several contingencies for this reserve, most of which would require projecting combat power quickly across long distances inside Iraq. One of those potential contingencies was a parachute assault to seize Saddam International Airport if the regime collapsed before Coalition ground forces neared Baghdad.<sup>25</sup> Less than a month before the invasion began, McKiernan told the commanding general of the 82nd to add the securing of LOCs to the list of possible missions his unit might have to conduct.<sup>26</sup>

Enemy prisoners of war (EPW) also threatened to disrupt the lines of communication and the tempo of the invasion. CFLCC planners were well aware that during Desert Storm, approximately 86,000 Iraqi soldiers surrendered to Coalition forces over the course of just four days. This large and unexpected number of prisoners made movement on US lines of communications difficult.<sup>27</sup> One study of EPW operations in Desert Storm described the Iraqi prisoners as a “tremendous management and logistical problem.”<sup>28</sup> In 2002, Lieutenant General McKiernan and other Coalition leaders expected Iraqi soldiers to again surrender in similarly high numbers and sought to prevent these prisoners from interfering with the movement of forces and supplies.<sup>29</sup> By US Army doctrine, the EPW mission fell to Military Police (MP) units. Early planning in 2002 tasked the MP companies organic to each division to quickly transfer any EPWs to the 18th MP Brigade, which directly supported US Army V Corps. Ultimately, the 800th MP Brigade, a US Army Reserve unit, would intern all EPWs in twelve holding facilities that the unit planned to build across Iraq.<sup>30</sup> However, in early 2003, it became clear that the 18th MP Brigade would not have the required number of MP companies available to handle the EPWs expected in the first several days of combat operations. Only as Coalition forces moved north toward Baghdad would more MP units arrive in Kuwait and join the effort. To address this problem, in the weeks before the invasion began, MP planners at the tactical level made changes to the EPW handling process to help ensure that Iraqi prisoners would not disrupt either Coalition combat forces or the logistics required to sustain the planned high-tempo offensive.<sup>31</sup>

In terms of scale and strategic importance, the most demanding Consolidation of Gains actions facing CENTCOM were the myriad tasks required, especially on the regional and local levels, to stabilize Iraq immediately after the Coalition removed the Saddam regime. This set of missions was exceedingly broad, ranging from reduction of civil unrest and establishment of law and order to restoration of essential services and creation of a new Iraqi system of governance. The stable social, economic, and political foundation critical for the construction of a new Iraq depended on the Coalition's ability to conduct these tasks successfully.

CENTCOM assigned responsibility for these missions to CFLCC, which in July 2002 began planning for what was labeled the Phase IV—Post Hostility Operations; this portion of the campaign immediately followed the removal of the Saddam regime and was entirely dedicated to consolidating gains.<sup>32</sup> Other US Department of Defense agencies would later join the effort to plan for the Phase IV stabilization of Iraq, including Joint Task Force 4 which began planning in late 2002 and the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) which was established in January 2003. As the date of the invasion approached, these agencies fell under CFLCC's operational control. It was the CFLCC staff, however, which created the most comprehensive and detailed plan to consolidate the gains made during the military campaign.<sup>33</sup>

Between summer 2002 and the onset of combat operations in March 2003, the CFLCC Post Hostilities plan grew increasingly complex as the planners came to grips with the daunting breadth of expected requirements in the immediate aftermath of Saddam's defeat.<sup>34</sup> They recognized that general disorder might destabilize Iraq following the fall of the regime but assumed that some portion of the Iraqi Army and Police would be available to assist with reasserting order.<sup>35</sup> While they did not view the emergence of an insurgency as likely, the planners had minor concerns that small groups of Saddam loyalists would mount armed resistance after the regime fell. Coalition forces would need to neutralize these groups. Equally important were the fundamental tasks that would set Iraq on the path toward social, political, and economic stability. The plan identified restoration of critical civil infrastructure, delivery of humanitarian assistance, repatriation and reintegration of EPWs, handling and processing of dislocated civilians, control of the Iraqi military, and establishment of governance and civil administration as the most important actions required in Phase IV.

CFLCC planners at times described Phase IV tasks very generally, collectively referring to them as Civil-Military Operations or CMO. By

definition, this term includes everything from reconstruction of a regional electrical grid to providing medical assistance to an Iraqi village. CFLCC planners had also conducted a troop-to-task analysis which estimated that twenty combat brigades and appropriate logistical support—approximately 300,000 troops—would be required to stabilize Iraq in Phase IV.<sup>36</sup> Which forces would be designated to accomplish these actions? While Coalition forces would begin conducting some consolidation tasks before Phase IV as part of the “rolling transitions” that Lieutenant General McKiernan envisioned, the CFLCC plan directed all Coalition forces—combat units as well as enablers—to shift to Consolidation of Gains once that phase formally began. Specifically, Lieutenant General McKiernan directed V Corps and I MEF to be the two subordinate commands that executed the Phase IV plan. General Tommy Franks, the CENTCOM commander, and others argued that after the destruction of the Saddam regime, the Iraqi Army could be used to assist with rebuilding infrastructure and similar tasks.<sup>37</sup> However, as the invasion approached, the use of Iraqi soldiers in reconstruction remained conjecture.

The CFLCC commander did have some assets to assist with Phase IV tasks. Most important were US Army Civil Affairs battalions and US Marine Corps Civil Affairs groups under McKiernan’s control. The Army Civil Affairs battalions were almost all from the US Army Reserve and each had approximately 500 soldiers, organized into small teams that specialized in fields such as civil administration, sanitation, education, and legal affairs. These teams served primarily as consultants and planners, partnering with nongovernmental organizations, contractors, and the host nation, which provided funding, manpower, and materials. CFLCC’s 352nd Civil Affairs Command attached eight Civil Affairs battalions to various units, most at the tactical level. The 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, for example, was attached to the 3rd Infantry Division before the invasion and intended to accompany that division all the way to Baghdad. As part of the rolling transition to stability tasks, the battalion prepared to conduct humanitarian assistance missions as they moved north with the division.<sup>38</sup>

In the months leading up to the invasion, most CFLCC forces focused on the main tasks: defeating Iraq’s military forces and removing the Saddam regime. Col. Kevin Benson, the CFLCC chief of plans, recalled that the command’s senior leaders placed most of their energy into ensuring their forces were ready for phases II and III of the campaign.<sup>39</sup> Commanders at lower levels clearly took their cue from this prioritization and similarly focused on defeating the Iraqi Army and toppling the regime. Maj.

Gen. David H. Petraeus, the 101st Airborne Division commander, recalled that the plans he had seen focused “primarily on the fight to Baghdad . . . and the ensuing fight that was anticipated to take place in Baghdad.”<sup>40</sup> As a result, few, including General Franks and Lieutenant General McKiernan, spent much time thinking about Phase IV. To be sure, some higher-level staffs conducted analysis of likely conditions after the defeat of the regime. In January 2003, for example, the V Corps staff held a conference on the problems most likely to emerge after Saddam’s regime was deposed.<sup>41</sup> However, CFLCC’s operations order for the invasion contained only a short, relatively general section on Phase IV. Colonel Benson believed few of the commands subordinate to CFLCC read the PH IV section because “we did what our Army always does, in my view, we focused on the initial task—getting to Baghdad—and ignored the totality of the order because we ‘knew’ things would change.”<sup>42</sup> Benson and his staff would complete a more-detailed Phase IV plan after the invasion began, but CFLCC did not distribute that document until 12 April 2003, a week after US forces had entered Baghdad and the transition to Phase IV had already started.<sup>43</sup>

As Coalition forces began the invasion on 20 March 2003, commanders at all levels were almost completely focused on defeating the Iraqi military and removing the Saddam regime. While CFLCC did plan for Phase IV, the large majority of tactical-level units were not aware of this plan and their role in it. Even in some Civil Affairs battalions—the units best trained and organized for Phase IV tasks—soldiers recalled that when the invasion began, they had not seen a Phase IV plan and did not know their mission in that part of the campaign.<sup>44</sup> Without this knowledge—and given the general lack of preparation for those tasks across the Coalition force—CFLCC’s planning to consolidate gains in Phase IV was incomplete at best.

### **Fighting the Plan: Consolidating Gains during the Invasion**

CENTCOM had planned to begin ground operations in Iraq on 21 March 2003. However, sudden moves by Saddam Hussein to sabotage Iraqi oil infrastructure on the Al Faw Peninsula and in the southern oil fields forced General Franks to begin the invasion twenty-four hours earlier than planned. Despite the fact that preparations were not complete, Franks determined the oil infrastructure was of such critical importance to the Coalition’s strategic vision for Iraq that the early start to the operation was worth the risks inherent in disrupting the planned timetable.<sup>45</sup> Early on 20 March, Franks directed Coalition Special Operations Forces to execute plans to secure the oil facilities on the peninsula and just offshore. After SOF units quickly completed these tasks, elements of the British



1st Armoured Division and I MEF seized the port of Umm Qasr on 21 March.<sup>46</sup> Three days later, British and Marine forces found similar success when they secured the oil fields. The key oil infrastructure in southern Iraq as well as the country's second largest port were now in Coalition control. The oil fields in northern Iraq were secured several weeks later by Special Operations Forces and elements of the US Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade. After military forces secured both fields, Task Force RIO arrived and repaired the minimal damage caused by the Iraqis.<sup>47</sup>

After I MEF passed control of the oil fields to the British, the Marines continued north on the eastern side of the Euphrates River toward the city of Nasiriyah. On the western side of the river, V Corps moved on a parallel axis of advance toward Baghdad. The 3rd Infantry Division, V Corps' lead unit, had moved quickly once the ground invasion began on 20 March. The division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team had marched approximately 350 kilometers since that date and reached the outskirts of the city of Najaf. On that march, the 2nd Brigade and the units that followed had met minimal resistance from Iraqi Army units deployed in southern Iraq. However, the large majority of soldiers in these Iraqi formations did not surrender to the Coalition. Instead, most took off their uniforms and began moving toward their homes or blending into civilian populations of nearby towns.<sup>48</sup>

These desertions had a salutary effect on CFLCC's operations. Most importantly, the dissolution of Saddam's regular units dramatically decreased the number of enemy forces the Coalition had to defeat on the way to Baghdad. The added benefit was that these Iraqi deserters did not become EPWs. By 1 May 2003, CFLCC had only taken approximately 8,000 EPWs, roughly 10 percent of the forecasted number.<sup>49</sup> Unlike during Desert Storm, Iraqi prisoners of war in 2003 were so few that they never became a logistical burden or disrupted Coalition lines of communication.

Threats to the LOCs did emerge but from a source that CFLCC had largely discounted. As I MEF and V Corps moved rapidly north on their axes of advance, their units began reporting contact with irregular forces near Najaf and other major southern Iraq cities. Saddam had manned these paramilitary formations with fighters fanatically loyal to his regime. Coalition intelligence expected these forces to deploy in Baghdad and other cities where they would control the population and stiffen resistance. However, as the Marines approached Nasiriyah on 22 March and the 3rd Infantry Division reached the outskirts of Samawah on 23 March, the Fedayeen Saddam and other irregular formations attacked out of those cities. Lightly armed and poorly trained, they could not stop the US units but did slow their momentum and inflicted a significant number of casualties.

These assaults surprised and concerned senior Coalition leaders. Lt. Gen. Scott Wallace, the V Corps commander, noted “the fanaticism and the suicidal nature of the paramilitary” and was caught off guard by the fact that “they seemed to be attacking out of the towns and along our main supply routes.”<sup>50</sup> This last point was the most troubling. In planning the invasion, Lt. Gen McKiernan had worried about securing the lines of communication so the Coalition offensive could be sustained all the way to Baghdad. Saddam’s paramilitaries now appeared poised to sever the supply routes, especially after the 3rd Infantry Division’s armored brigades moved north past Samawah and Najaf and the I MEF moved north from Nasiriyah.

McKiernan now needed to find forces that could reduce the threat from the Iraqi paramilitary groups and secure the LOCs. In planning the invasion, McKiernan had considered using the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment and the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne Division, CFLCC’s operational reserve, for this mission. With the emergence of the Fedayeen threat, however, he felt compelled to commit the 101st Air Assault Division to the effort as well. Moreover, McKiernan directed these units to secure the lines of communication by clearing the southern cities of Fedayeen formations. On 28 March, units of the 101st moved into city of Najaf and on 29 March, the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne, with elements of the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, attacked into Samawah. At the same time, I MEF directed its forces to begin clearing Nasiriyah. These attacks were successful, and CFLCC secured the LOCs. But the task had required McKiernan to commit most of his available combat power to the arduous task of clearing dense urban terrain of an irregular enemy.

As combat forces moved north toward Baghdad, CFLCC began conducting another mission directly connected to the Coalition’s strategic vision: the location and securing of Saddam’s suspected weapons of mass destruction. Beginning on 21 March 2003, the 75th XTF’s teams began visiting suspected WMD facilities. Despite poor intelligence and limited transportation assets, the task force had by 1 May visited several hundred sites and interviewed a number of Iraqi officials suspected of having knowledge about Saddam’s efforts to produce WMD. Yet they found no definitive evidence of what one task force member characterized as an “active, ongoing WMD program.”<sup>51</sup> The 75th XTF would remain in Iraq until June 2003 when the larger Iraqi Survey Group arrived to replace it and continue the hunt for Saddam’s WMD.

As the 3rd Infantry Division pushed through the Karbala Gap on 1 April and prepared to move on Baghdad, CENTCOM directed its Special

Operations Command to take control of the Hadithah Dam west of the Iraqi capital. That day, Company B of the 3rd Ranger Battalion seized the dam, securing it after multiple counterattacks from Iraqi forces. Inspection of the dam showed that the Iraqis had not maintained the structure and that it was close to failing. Within a week, US Army Civil Affairs soldiers and a team from the US Army Corps of Engineers arrived to assist. Although none of these soldiers had prepared to restore the dam complex, including its turbines and control systems, they worked with the Iraqi staff to stabilize the dam, ensuring that it would continue to generate electricity.<sup>52</sup>

While the Rangers secured the Hadithah Dam, elements of the 3rd Infantry Division entered western Baghdad and by 7 April had seized control of key sites in the city's center. On that same day, I MEF units entered eastern Baghdad and linked up with the 3rd Infantry Division. By 10 April, all Iraqi resistance in the capital had ended and the Iraqi government's authority along with it. Although combat operations would continue in other parts of Iraq for the next week, it was clear by mid-April that the Saddam regime had collapsed. CENTCOM had expected the fight for Baghdad to take at least a month. Instead, it took CFLCC's forces less than two weeks.

### **The Sudden Transition to Phase IV**

Abruptly, the Coalition found itself in Phase IV of the campaign. On the ground, the clearest sign of this transition was widespread looting that broke out in Baghdad, Basrah, and other cities after regime control disappeared. Looters focused on government buildings and other symbols of the regime, but even infrastructure became a target. The control center for the Iraqi electrical grid in Baghdad, for example, was stripped bare of equipment. Looters also took down power lines made of copper and other metals that could be resold.<sup>53</sup> Senior US Army commanders recognized that US soldiers might encounter looting and other civil disturbances in Iraq's cities, and CFLCC even explored the possibility of training conventional units in crowd control.<sup>54</sup> With the focus on initial combat operations, however, Coalition commanders did not direct their units to conduct the training, and CFLCC planners continued to assume that the Iraqi Army and police would assist with maintaining stability. Ultimately, no Coalition command issued guidance on the proper response to looting, leaving tactical units uncertain of their role as order broke down in the cities.<sup>55</sup>

This was the point in the campaign where the lack of planning to consolidate gains played a significant role. As noted earlier, CFLCC had issued its formal Phase IV plan to V Corps and I MEF on 12 April, as the units under those commands were in the midst of the looting. V Corps then wrote

a very detailed fifty-page order for Phase IV which tasked specific units across Iraq with a variety of Consolidation of Gains actions. However, the corps did not publish that order until 27 April, two weeks after the actual transition to Phase IV.<sup>56</sup> Without clear guidance, soldiers in Baghdad were unsure of what their mission was once the major fighting stopped. Lt. Col. Steven Landis, executive officer for 1st Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, recalled that although he had heard there was a plan for Phase IV, his brigade never saw it and he did not know what the plan tasked his soldiers to do now that they were in the Iraqi capital.<sup>57</sup> A major from the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, the unit which had accompanied the 3rd Infantry Division to Baghdad, stated that his unit received no explanation of their mission in the city; once combat ceased and when the disorders began, they were unprepared: “There was no guidance on which [facilities] to protect once we got into Baghdad. We weren’t told to protect museums or banks and we didn’t expect the scale of the looting.”<sup>58</sup> On their own initiative, 422nd Battalion leaders began organizing their teams to deter looters.<sup>59</sup>

In late April, Coalition commanders in Iraq did change the official rules of engagement to allow tactical units to use force to curtail looting. However, that was two weeks after the disorder began and Coalition units like the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion, had improvised their response to the widespread instability—reacting with the resources and information they had at hand. By late April, the looting and general disorder had greatly damaged the Iraqi economy. One report estimated \$12 billion in economic losses caused by the disorder, a level of destruction that dramatically undercut the Coalition’s ability to begin constructing a stable foundation for post-Saddam Iraq.<sup>60</sup> The American and British failure to put an immediate stop to the looting had a more insidious effect on the Coalition’s ability to achieve its strategic vision in Iraq as it signaled to many Iraqis that the Coalition was incapable or unwilling to establish stability in their country.<sup>61</sup>

Lack of certainty characterized all Coalition Phase IV operations in the first weeks that followed the collapse of the Saddam regime. As noted earlier, tactical-level commanders simply did not know what their responsibilities were in this phase of the campaign. In some places, units did little more than conduct security and presence patrols. Moreover, the Coalition had no presence at all in many parts of Iraq, even by late April. This was especially true in the north and west of the country, which would not see the arrival of US forces until May or even later.

Still, many soldiers chose to act on their own initiative based on their understanding of the larger mission in Iraq. The scope of this chapter does not allow a comprehensive description of these actions. However,

several examples illustrate the larger improvised effort. In this chaotic environment, Coalition units tended to focus on addressing immediate and obvious needs, especially restoring essential services such as electricity and water. In late March, British military engineers in Umm Qasr determined that a secure source of water was necessary to stave off a humanitarian disaster; they constructed a pipeline to bring water from Kuwait to the city.<sup>62</sup> In early April, the infantrymen of the 3rd Brigade, 101st Airborne Division confronted a similar problem in the city of Hillah. They repaired a water filtration plant, restoring the city's source of clean water.<sup>63</sup> In Baghdad, the 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion commander prioritized the reestablishment of the city's electrical grid. By the end of April, he had coordinated with 3rd Infantry Division combat units to secure transformers and collaborated with Iraqi engineers to return the grid to working condition. At the same time, the 442nd began working with Iraqi officials to reestablish the capital's firefighting service.<sup>64</sup> South of Baghdad, the 2nd Brigade, 82nd Airborne Division transitioned from combat operations to providing security and other support for approximately one million Shia Muslim pilgrims traveling to the city of Karbala as part of the annual Arba'een commemoration in late April.<sup>65</sup>

In April 2003, some Coalition units also took steps on their own to establish new systems of governance. Although CENTCOM had emphasized the need to establish a new Iraqi government in its plans for the campaign prior to the March 2003 invasion, there was no Iraqi government-in-waiting prepared to take political control of the country immediately following the removal of the Saddam regime. In fact, the Coalition would take months to determine how to transfer political power to a new Iraqi government, a transition that would occur a year later in the summer of 2004. Facing a glaring absence of political authority in the immediate wake of the military victory—and understanding the larger goals of the invasion—US soldiers in some locales chose to act. In early April in the town of Ar Rutbah, for example, a US Army Special Forces company decided on its own to hold elections for a new mayor and establish a governing council that had representation from all the major tribes and sects within the town.<sup>66</sup> The 2nd Squadron, 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment commander, with the help of a Civil Affairs team, began a similar program in the city of Fallujah at the beginning of May.<sup>67</sup> Lt. Col. Kenneth Tovo, commander of 3rd Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, took a slightly different approach in the northern city of Kirkuk. After his unit entered the city in the first week of April, Tovo served as “mayor” of Kirkuk and convened multiple town-hall-style meetings in which the various ethnic and

sectarian groups could work out their differences peacefully.<sup>68</sup> Officers like Tovo had no preparation to establish any type of local governance and the governing arrangements they introduced were rudimentary, reflecting the reality that unprepared military personnel are rarely the proper agents to establish political structures in unfamiliar environments. While highly improvised, arrangements like the two described above continued to function for the next twelve months as the Coalition, its Iraqi political partners, and the United Nations negotiated a path for Iraq to attain full sovereignty.<sup>69</sup>

As the Saddam regime's political authority vanished, so did almost all of the regime's military and security forces. As noted above, the Coalition had expected to accept the surrender of the Iraqi Army; instead, that army fell apart as its soldiers largely deserted, taking off their uniforms and melding into the civilian population. Because CENTCOM planners had assumed that the Iraqi Army would be available in Phase IV to provide security and perhaps assist with other stability tasks, the absence of Iraqi forces presented a huge problem to the Coalition. The situation was made worse in early May when the new Coalition Provisional Authority formally dissolved all Iraqi military forces, making it impossible to call Iraqi soldiers back to their units so that a reconstituted force could be used to stabilize the country. In the weeks that immediately followed Saddam's removal, Coalition units in some locales assisted in organizing local forces to help create order. The 422nd Civil Affairs Battalion in Baghdad, for example, helped that city's police force return to routine operations by the end of May.<sup>70</sup> And in mid-April, the British 1st Armoured Division in Basrah similarly reestablished the police in that city and began conducting joint patrols with its officers.<sup>71</sup>

Well-intentioned improvisation, however, was not uniform across Coalition units. Without guidance or preparation, unit actions sometimes seriously undermined the Coalition effort. In early April, for example, CFLCC sent the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) to the city of Mosul with little notice and no preparation. The 26th MEU's mission was to help stabilize a city that was riven by long-standing ethnic tensions. On 15 April, a large crowd of Iraqi protesters approached Mosul's main government building, prompting a company from the Marine unit to form a protective line in front of the structure. The protest became violent as shots rang out, some reportedly aimed at the Marines. The Marines retreated inside as gunfire followed them, striking the building's walls. In response, they opened fire on the crowd and killed at least ten protesters, with another sixteen wounded. Iraqi leaders blamed the Marines for initiating the violence, but the MEU commander claimed his unit was fired on first and had

to respond with lethal force.<sup>72</sup> A strikingly similar incident occurred thirteen days later in the city of Fallujah, where a protest against the Coalition escalated into a violent encounter between the crowd and 82nd Airborne Division soldiers deployed in the city. Although the cause of the escalation remains in dispute, the US soldiers fired into the crowd, killing seventeen Iraqis and wounding dozens more.<sup>73</sup> These tragedies reveal how lack of preparation and planning adversely affected gains made in the wake of the victory over Saddam, stoking suspicion and fear among Iraqis about the Coalition's attitude toward them and their country.

## **Conclusion**

Beginning in May 2003, roughly a month after the collapse of the Saddam regime, Coalition leaders at all levels began to plan and organize for stability operations more efficiently and effectively. However, as the summer began, Coalition forces became the targets of insurgent attacks. By late summer, senior US military officials contended the Coalition was fighting a full-blown insurgency. Further, it was clear to most participants and observers that the campaign in Iraq had transformed into a new type of conflict that the US and its partners had neither expected nor planned for.

The Coalition's war in Iraq would continue for the next eight years. Given the conflict's lengthy and brutal history, any assessment of CENTCOM's actions to consolidate gains in the first six weeks of the war might seem less than relevant. However, there is an argument that the failure to adequately plan and fully prepare for the Consolidation of Gains down to the lowest levels contributed to the development of a sustained insurgency. Careful examination of Coalition planning seems to lead inevitably to a conundrum: CENTCOM planners understood the need to plan for the Consolidation of Gains and as early as mid-2002 had identified specific actions necessary to link combat operations to strategic goals. The Coalition conducted some of these missions successfully, carefully thinking through options and designating forces to seize several key energy-related sites and secure lines of communication. However, CENTCOM planners also clearly understood that a myriad of lower-level stability tasks would be required in Phase IV, the portion of the campaign which would begin fully transforming the military victory over Saddam into a strategic success. Despite extensive CFLCC planning for Phase IV, no senior commander ensured that the plan was understood within CFLCC's subordinate commands. Coalition forces were almost entirely ignorant of and unprepared for their roles in that critical part of the campaign. The confused reaction to the widespread looting was just the most visible example of this lack of preparation.

Why did this initial confusion about Phase IV matter so much, especially when many tactical-level units improvised to deal with the disorder? What Coalition leaders did not appreciate was that while their forces had removed the Saddam regime, the Iraqi population remained largely unaffected by the conflict. Unlike Germany and Japan in 1945, Iraqi society had not been exhausted by years of war. Because of this, Iraqis did not comprise a defeated population that would react compliantly to the actions of a victorious foreign force. The response of the Iraqi people would to a significant degree hinge on their understanding of the actions and perceived motives of the Coalition.

In retrospect, this dynamic was most critical in the weeks just after Saddam fell from power.<sup>74</sup> Members of the Coalition as well as Iraqis described this period as crucial to the overall campaign.<sup>75</sup> As commander of 2nd Brigade, 3rd ID, Col. David Perkins was one of the first senior Coalition commanders in Baghdad. He watched the outbreak of disorder firsthand. Perkins contended, “Right after we got into Baghdad, there was a huge window of opportunity that if we had this well-defined plan and we were ready to come in with all these resources, we could have really grabbed a hold of the city and really started pushing things forward.”<sup>76</sup> An Iraqi diplomat, Faruq Ahmed Saadeddin, echoed these sentiments, asserting that if the immediate post-Saddam period had gone smoothly, many Iraqis would have supported the Coalition. However, after witnessing the events in Baghdad, he saw that outcome disappear: “When we saw the burning and looting, that was like raping the city, that was like raping my country. I cried when I heard the news on the radio. I was pissed off. And I cried. That was the golden opportunity to win the people and [Coalition forces] messed it up.”<sup>77</sup> While not all Iraqis would join the insurgency in the years that followed, popular skepticism about the legitimacy of the Coalition vision for Iraq directly or indirectly aided those looking to use violence to undermine that vision. Further, even though there may have been an opportunity for the Coalition to “win the people” early in the campaign, there is no certainty that a more complete effort to consolidate gains would have averted the outbreak of the insurgency and led to strategic success.

Ultimately, the Coalition’s failure to plan and prepare adequately for consolidating gains in Phase IV may be best explained by institutional norms within the US military. Despite the completion of plans at the CFL-CC level, US commanders at all levels were simply focused on what they believed would be the critical part of the campaign—defeating Iraqi forces and removing the Saddam regime—and were not willing to divert time



and resources to prepare for what followed the military victory. As noted earlier in this chapter, Kevin Benson commented that the US Army has historically tended to “deal with the initial task.” Benson further described a collective belief that plans, especially those for post-conflict operations in which Consolidation of Gains actions dominate, are so affected by contingency as to have marginal value and require limited attention. This attitude logically leads to a reliance on improvisation, a response that clearly was not successful in initiating a stable transition to a post-Saddam Iraq in April 2003. In its scope, the Coalition’s vision for a new Iraq was vastly ambitious. The campaign to attain that vision, however, was incomplete, undermined by the Coalition’s inability and unwillingness to prepare fully to consolidate gains in the aftermath of victory on the battlefield.

## Notes

The author would like to thank Col. (Retired) Kevin Benson for his assistance and review of early drafts of this chapter.

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24. Fontenot, 13.
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39. Benson, "'PH IV' CFLCC Stability Operations Planning," 196.
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42. Kevin Benson, email correspondence with author, 15 October 2020.

43. Wright and Reese, *On Point II*, 73.
44. Briscoe et al., *All Roads Lead to Baghdad*, 349.
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46. Rayburn and Sobchak, *The US Army in the Iraq War*, 85; and Col. Nicholas E. Reynolds, *US Marines in Iraq, 2003: Basrah, Baghdad, and Beyond* (Washington, DC: US Marines History Division, 2007), 125.
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74. A recent study by RAND argued that there are periods in recent US military interventions in which transitions between combat and Consolidation of Gains operations are decisive. The authors of the study characterized these periods as “Golden Hours” because success in making this transition can help stabilize the situation and set the foundation for further success. See James Dobbins et al., *Seizing the Golden Hour: Tasks, Organizations, and Capabilities Required for the Earliest Phase of Stability Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2020).

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## Chapter 13

### Conclusion

Col. (Retired) Richard D. Creed

The explicit introduction of consolidating gains into the US Army's capstone operational doctrine is arguably more important to the strategic success of Army forces, the Joint force, and the nation than any other element in the 2017 Field Manual (FM) 3-0, *Operations*. While heavily influenced by the multi-domain operations concept at the time, Army forces have been operating within and across multiple domains for decades and so the multi-domain approach represented an evolutionary view of both the environment and the Army's potential adversaries. Making "consolidate gains" an Army strategic role was something completely new from a doctrinal standpoint, even if the logic behind it was an implicit element of successful operations, campaigns, and conflicts throughout the US Army's history. Looking through a historical lens, as the authors have in this *Large-Scale Combat Operations Series* volume, makes it clear that the decisiveness of a military outcome is largely dependent upon how well ground forces consolidate the gains they make in terms of the overall operational environment and political context of the operations being conducted.

The US Army is a learning organization, and by 2016 it was time for leaders to address some of the lessons from large-scale combat operations campaigns in the Army's recent past; particularly in Iraq, early decisions about how to fight, uninformed by realistic considerations of how to consolidate gains, had strategic ramifications that linger to this day. While writing FM 3-0, *Operations*, the Army determined there was a significant doctrinal need to provide a means for senior Army commanders to make a logical case, to the Joint force commanders who employ them, for the resources necessary to achieve the strategic policy goals of a military campaign requiring employment of ground forces. The Army also needed to destroy the assumption that conflicts involving the occupation of land and control of populations could be waged without accounting for the messy human dimension of war, as if technology or the fall of a gov-

ernment would by themselves cause an enemy to give up. Leaders cannot talk about war being a contest of wills without understanding the enemy they are fighting, the means by which enemy forces can continue to fight even after their initial defeat, and what is necessary to remove the means that sustain the enemy's will to fight. When the Army has approached war and conflict with that understanding, and allocated the resources to follow through in pursuit of ultimate political objectives, US forces have been more successful than not. The Army experience in the Philippines, the Second World War, and Korea shows this to be true. Ultimately, following through means recognizing that consolidating gains often requires more fighting and resources earlier in a campaign, requirements that ultimately become more costly the longer a commander defers or ignores them.

Some might ask why the Army did not address how or why to consolidate gains in the past, or at least during the doctrinal renaissance of the 1970s and 1980s. Our deduction is that military or political leaders who served in the Second World War implicitly understood the concept based on how the Army conducted campaigns during that conflict. Consolidating military gains in support of the defeat and transformation of the Axis powers was the ultimate goal of those battles. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 in this volume describe the US Army's increasingly well-organized and sophisticated approach to consolidating gains in the Mediterranean theater of operations. During the Korean War, both the US and Republic of Korea armies supported a relatively ruthless if effective South Korean-led approach to consolidating gains. The US Army's strategic approach in Vietnam put the burden of consolidating gains on an ally that was not particularly up to the task, but it would be difficult to argue that the importance of consolidating gains did not weigh heavily on US leadership there. During the Cold War and even today in Korea, there were and are plans and force structure committed by US allies to consolidate gains were it necessary to retake territory lost to the Warsaw Pact or North Korea. The United States had measures in place to coordinate with its treaty allies to ensure the relatively smooth establishment of legitimate authorities over the areas Army forces pushed aggressors from. However, when dealing with operations in less-mature theaters without host nation allies to



shoulder the burden, the Army seems to have neglected the requirement to consolidate gains for a variety of reasons, both military and political. Many would say that was true in Iraq, and Donald Wright convincingly and comprehensively argues the point in Chapter 12 of this volume.

Ironically, prior to the 2003 invasion of Iraq, significant numbers of US Army forces had recent experience consolidating gains in Bosnia, where they enforced the Dayton Accords as part of a multinational force. There was no shooting war involving US ground forces and we labeled the missions peace enforcement or peacekeeping, but that did not change the purpose of what many US soldiers were actually doing from a strategic perspective. One could argue that the localized tactical level success consolidating gains in Iraq in 2003 to 2004—and there were many such cases—was informed by leader experiences during missions like Bosnia, Kosovo, or Haiti during the 1990s, including my own and that of more than a few peers. In any event, Army senior leaders recognized there was a gap in our professional body of knowledge that needed to be addressed, and that consolidating gains should be an Army strategic role addressed doctrinally. While change in any organization as large as the US Army, especially doctrinal change, can take a long time to permeate throughout the force, it is increasingly obvious that the requirement to consolidate gains has begun to take hold. It's being incorporated during training simulations for corps and divisions and during operations like Operation Iraqi Resolve, where the requirement for Iraqi Security Forces to consolidate gains significantly influenced the tempo of the overall campaign. We view that as a success.

The US military is unlikely to avoid conflict in the near future. We already see the shape of future campaigns when looking at recent battlefields in Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Yemen. Like these conflicts, the next war the US Army becomes involved in will be characterized by messy political dynamics and less than fully clarified strategic goals. Planning for Consolidation of Gains will be a critical factor if the Army hopes to succeed in these campaigns.



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