ARMY HISTORY

Spring 2018 PB 20-18-2 (No. 107) Washington, D.C.

In This Issue

The Professional Bulletin of Army History

ARMY HISTORY

The Professional Bulletin of Army History

By Order of the Secretary of the Army:

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The U.S. Army Center of Military History publishes *Army History* (ISSN 1546-5330) quarterly for the professional development of Army historians and as Army educational and training literature. The bulletin is available at no cost to interested Army officers, noncommissioned officers, soldiers, and civilian employees, as well as to individuals and offices that directly support Army historical work or Army educational and training programs.

Correspondence, including requests to be added to the distribution of free copies or to submit articles, should be addressed to Managing Editor, Army History, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 102 Fourth Ave., Fort Lesley J. McNair, DC 20319-5060, or sent by e-mail to usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.army-history@mail.mil.

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The opinions expressed in *Army History* are those of the authors, not the Department of Defense or its constituent elements. The bulletin's contents do not necessarily reflect official Army positions and do not supersede information in other official Army publications or Army regulations. The bulletin is approved for official dissemination of material to keep the Army knowledgeable of developments in Army history and to enhance professional development. The Department of the Army approved the use of funds for printing this publication on 7 September 1983.

Issue Cover: Silhouette of troops at Pandu Ghat moving from the Ramgarh Training Center to Myitkyina, Burma, 25 October 1944. /National Archives

EDITOR'S JOURNAL

In this Spring 2018 issue of *Army History*, with a layout not unlike the Winter 2018 issue, we present two pieces covering actions of the Army during World War II and the Vietnam War. Once again, while both are article-length contributions, the second of these is another "preview chapter" from a recently published Center of Military History (CMH) volume.

In the first article, author Christopher L. Kolakowski argues that the fighting in north Burma during 1944 foreshadowed the coming of what we would now consider "modern warfare" in the latter half of the twentieth century and even into the twenty-first. The Allied campaign in Burma saw the establishment of outposts that would be more commonly known during the Vietnam War as firebases, the widespread use of indigenous troops, adaptation to difficult terrain, and a refinement of insurgency and counterinsurgency tactics.

The second article is an excerpt from a recent CMH publication, *Combat Operations: Staying the Course, October 1967 to September 1968*, by Erik B. Villard. Chapter 2, Opening Moves: Battles North and West of Saigon, examines the planning for a new American and South Vietnamese dry season offensive and the numerous battles that took place in the final months of 1967 through January 1968. Some of the actions covered in this chapter include Operations SHENANDOAH II and YELLOWSTONE, as well as the battles at Loc Ninh, CAISSON VI, and Firebase BURT.This issue also contains an Army Art Spotlight featuring the work of Sgt. Howard Brodie. In his sketch, *Under Fire*, Brodie, an artist for *Yank* magazine, captured the raw emotions shared between two soldiers while fighting in Germany in early 1945.

In his Chief's Corner, Mr. Charles Bowery discusses the efforts under way to revise the regulations that govern the Army's history programs. AR 870–5, *Military History: Responsibilities, Policies, and Procedures*, was last updated over a decade ago and AR 870–20, *Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art*, has not been amended for almost twenty years.

Mr. Jon Hoffman, in his Chief Historian's Footnote, follows up on his piece from the previous issue, elaborating further on CMH's new standard operating procedure for writing books at CMH.

In addition, this issue contains eight excellent book reviews, a brief update on the construction of the National Museum of the United States Army, and a farewell to a member of the CMH team who passed away on 14 October 2017.

Bryan J. Hockensmith
Managing Editor

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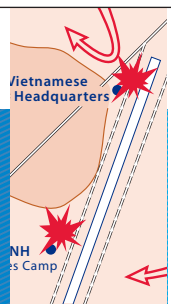
Spring 2018

Features

Articles



The Chief's Corner

Charles R. Bowery Jr.

Updating the Regulatory Foundation of Army History

Happy New Year to all of you in the community of Army historians. The year 2018 will see two notable Army anniversaries, with the Vietnam Fiftieth and the World War I Centennial hitting their high points over the coming spring and summer. Even during this busy time, many of you will be engaged in much-needed collaboration with the Center of Military History (CMH) to update our community's two most important regulations. Army Regulation (AR) 870–5, *Military History: Responsibilities, Policies, and Procedures*, and AR 870–20, *Army Museums, Historical Artifacts, and Art*, are currently under revision by teams composed of stakeholders from across the Army History community. CMH's Field Programs and Historical Services Directorate, under the leadership of Ken Foulks, is leading the AR 870–5 rewrite, which is off to a great start after a weeklong offsite hosted by the Army Heritage and Education Center at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania. Col. Greg Baker and the Army Museum Enterprise (AME) Directorate are conducting the AR 870–20 rewrite, and this cross-functional team reports to the AME General Officer Steering Committee. Both revised regulations should go out for Army-wide staffing this summer, with publication at the end of Fiscal Year 2018.

I am excited and energized by the level of collaboration and engagement that I have seen thus far in both cases. This speaks both to the passion and commitment that all Army historians bring to our craft, and to the serious need for improvement of both of these core documents. AR 870–5 was last amended over a decade ago, and much has changed across the Army, particularly in our institutional base. We need a foundational regulation that acknowledges this new reality in terms of staffing levels, budgets, and the acceleration of change in the digital age. The December 2016 signature of the Army directive creating the AME instructed CMH to revise AR 870–20 to account for these changes in our management construct for museums. It is vital that we revise both regulations in a transparent and collaborative way, so that all Army historians and museum professionals have regulations that facilitate their activities. Thanks to all of you in advance for participating in this process. Let's continue to Educate, Inspire, and Preserve in 2018!

NEWSNOTES

National Museum of the United States Army: Construction Update

As 2017 came to a close, the building of the National Museum of the United States Army achieved several key milestones. The construction of the 185,000-square-foot building began in March 2017. The concrete foundation was finished by early summer, four oversized macro artifacts were installed in August, and the last steel structural beam was placed in November. Crews are moving toward the next major goals of completing the roof and assembling exterior architectural elements. Infrastructure work, including the installation of roads, water and sewer lines, and other utilities, also continues. The Army Historical Foundation is privately funding the construction of the museum and Clark Construction Group, LLC, is the building firm.

"This is an exciting time in the construction of the National Army Museum because the building's exterior is visibly changing every week," remarked the museum's director, Tammy E. Call. "The Army's exhibit staff and contractors are also hard at work for when they get the go-ahead to move in and start turning the building into a museum."

For more information on the National Museum of the United States Army, visit www.theNMUSA.org and follow construction progress at www.armyhistory.org.

In Memoriam: James A. Speraw Jr. (1955–2017)

James "Jim" Allen Speraw Jr. was born in Waterbury, Connecticut, and began a three-year enlistment in the U.S. Army in June 1973 immediately after graduating from high school. He attended basic training at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and was assigned to Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, in 1974.

Jim began volunteering at the Fort Meade Museum in 1975 and one year later joined the Connecticut Army National Guard, where he served until 1978. In 1980 he was hired as a museum technician at Fort Meade and in September 1981 joined the Maryland Army National Guard as a sergeant, eventually attaining the rank of staff sergeant.

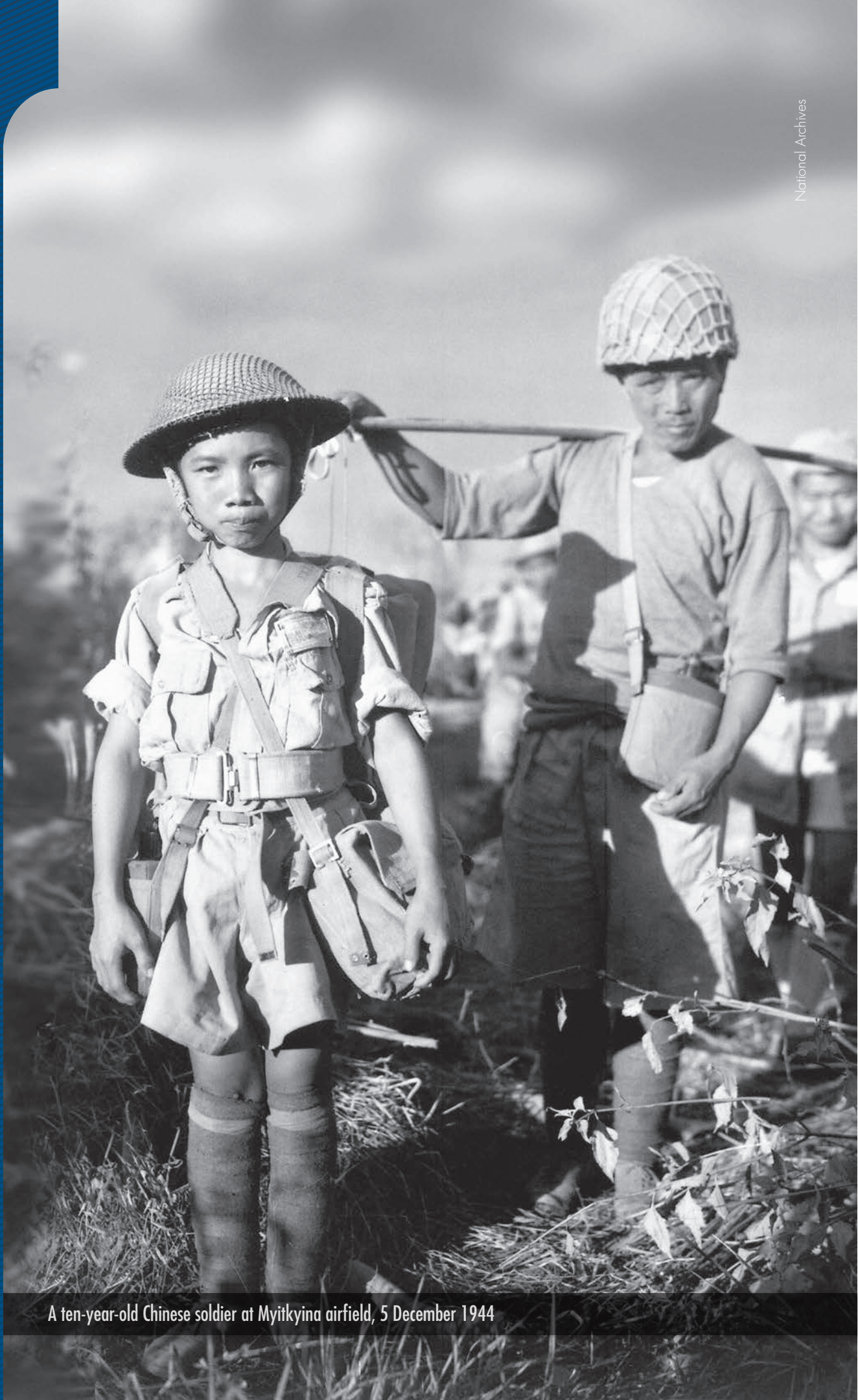
During the Persian Gulf War, Jim volunteered for active service as part of the U.S. Army special property recovery team, for which he earned the Bronze Star. After his release from active duty on 12 September 1991, he reported to his new position as staff curator at the U.S. Army Center of Military History (CMH) and in 1994 deployed to Haiti as the Department of Defense liaison for historic property during Operation Uphold Democracy. After the terrorist attack on the Pentagon on 11 September 2001, Jim served with the joint service recovery team for historic property. In 2002, he helped build the Maryland National Guard Museum at the Fifth Regiment Armory in Baltimore, and in October of the same year retired from the Maryland National Guard. Jim deployed to Iraq in 2003 as an Army curator with the 101st Airborne Division during Operation Iraqi Freedom. In 2010, Jim, a staff curator with CMH's Collections Branch, Museum Division, moved from 14th Street NW, Washington, D.C., to Fort Belvoir, Virginia. His final assignment for the Army came when he returned to where he started his civilian career at the Fort Meade Museum, which he helped prepare for permanent closure.

Having served the U.S. Army for a combined total of forty-four years, Jim was unsurpassed in his knowledge of Army weaponry, uniforms, and equipment. He was always more than willing to provide a helping hand to all his colleagues, but he is best remembered for being a loving and caring individual. No matter what the circumstances, he never hesitated to assist people in some way. Jim passed away on 14 October 2017 and was laid to rest at Arlington National Cemetery on 29 December 2017.

Aerial photography courtesy of Colonel Duane Lempke (USA Ret.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher L. Kolakowski is the director of the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk, Virginia. He received his bachelor's degree in history and mass communications from Emory & Henry College and his master's degree in public history from the State University of New York at Albany. Kolakowski has worked with the National Park Service, the New York State government, the Rensselaer County Historical Society, the Civil War Preservation Trust, Kentucky State Parks, and the U.S. Army. He is the author of *The Civil War at Perryville: Battling for the Bluegrass* (Charleston, S.C., 2009); *The Stones River and Tullahoma Campaign: This Army Does Not Retreat* (Charleston, S.C., 2011); *Last Stand on Bataan: The Defense of the Philippines, December 1941–May 1942* (Jefferson, N.C., 2016); and *The Virginia Campaigns, March–August 1862* (Washington, D.C., 2016), a pamphlet in the U.S. Army Center of Military History's Campaigns of the Civil War series. He is currently working on a book about the 1944 India-Burma Campaigns which is scheduled for release in 2020.



National Archives

A ten-year-old Chinese soldier at Myitkyina airfield, 5 December 1944

National Archives

"The Coming of MODERN WAR"

The Coalition War in North Burma, 1944

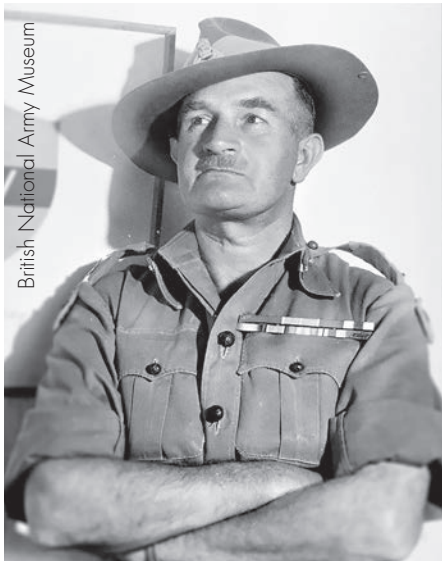
By Christopher L. Kolakowski

In 1956, British Army Field Marshal Sir William Slim wrote his memoirs detailing his time in Burma and India during World War II. At the end of the book, he included a few final reflections. "Some campaigns have more than others foreshadowed the coming of modern war," he wrote. "I believe that ours in Burma was one of these."[1]

On the surface, this is an arresting statement about an area that has been largely overlooked in histories of World War II. But a closer examination shows the validity of Slim's comment. The operations in and around Burma represented the first large-scale U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. Operations involved air mobility, air resupply, jungle bases (precursors to Vietnam's firebases and modern forward operating bases), American advisers to Chinese forces, and other elements recognizable in modern warfare.

The war in Burma was also a true coalition war, involving a mix of nationalities and objectives that required careful managing to pursue operations against the Japanese. "In this case," recalled British Maj. Gen. Derek Tulloch, a Burma veteran, "there was *no* unified High Command with a firm purpose. The Americans, British, and Chinese all had completely diverse objects in view." It was also one of the first times a U.S. general, in this case Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, held top command while directing forces that were primarily not of his nationality. Stilwell's objective was to reopen a land route to China, which meant conducting a campaign from India into the mountains and jungles of North Burma. To liberate this area, he had at his disposal a small number of U.S. combat troops, several Chinese divisions, and various British units with British and U.S. air support. Stilwell's ability to conduct his North Burma advance from December 1943 to August 1944 depended on his determination

Composite Image: A joint patrol in Burma including one American soldier and one British soldier with Kachin Rangers, March 1944/National Archives



General Slim

Chiang Kai-shek (left) and Mao Zedong

General Stilwell (left) with Admiral Mountbatten

and ability to balance the differing politics, tactics, and cultures of his coalition partners. His experiences in North Burma offer an example of how the schemes of coalition politics can affect a campaign.[2]

Personalities and Nationalities

After the Pacific war's outbreak in December 1941, Japanese forces pushed through Thailand into Burma. In a fast campaign over the first months of 1942, the Japanese *Fifteenth Army* drove a mixed force of Chinese, Indian, and British troops almost completely out of the country. At the same time, other Japanese forces secured Malaya, Singapore, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies. The *Fifteenth Army*'s advance stopped at the Indian and Chinese borders, where poor communications and monsoon rains forced a pause. Except for remote Fort Hertz in far northern Burma, the entire country belonged to the Japanese.[3]

After these defeats, the Allies began planning operations to reverse the Japanese gains, but geography presented a formidable problem to any Allied offensive. Burma is the size of Texas, and Allied forces at Ledo in India and Fort Hertz in Burma stood 700 miles from Rangoon, Burma's capital and commercial center. The Bay of Bengal bounds Burma in the south, and jungle-covered mountains border the rest of the country. Most road and rail connections ran from Rangoon into the interior before stopping; very few land routes, most of poor quality, connected Burma with India and China across the mountains. The sole exception was the all-weather Burma Road from Lashio to Kunming, which had been closed by the Japanese advance. Burma's climate also presented problems; from May to October every year, a severe monsoon season floods the area with an average of 200 inches of rain per year.[4]

Lack of resources and strategic disputes prevented large-scale operations for much of 1943, but by the end of the monsoons the Allies were preparing new campaigns. During the summer of 1943 the Combined Chiefs of Staff created the Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) to unify efforts. SEAC's 43-year-old supreme commander, Royal Navy Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, took command in November in Delhi. A member of the British royal family, Mountbatten possessed a boyish charm and enthusiasm that attracted attention but also gave the impression of a lack of depth; many contemporaries thought him overpromoted. He could also be vain, fond of luxury, and was a philanderer. He came to SEAC having most recently commanded Combined Operations in London, which included preparing the raids on St. Nazaire and Dieppe and developing specialized equipment (later famous as "Hobart's Funnies") for the invasion of Normandy.[5]

The appointment of a Royal Navy officer hinted at British plans, which sought to use a sea maneuver to strike for Singapore and beyond. Mountbatten repeatedly proposed invasion plans across the Bay of Bengal, but lost out to higher priorities elsewhere, especially with the looming Normandy invasion. " [Prime Minister] Winston [Churchill] had sent me out primarily to conduct amphibious operations to beat the Japs quickly," Mountbatten later said. "[But] we seemed fated to slog our way through the Burmese jungle and the worst terrain in the world."[6]

General Stilwell, a 1904 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, became SEAC's deputy supreme commander and was one of the most complex American commanders of World War II. He and his contemporary General Douglas MacArthur were the Army's top experts on Asia in 1941. David Rooney, a British intelligence officer in Burma and a Stilwell biographer, noted the general's fierce American patriotism and deep personality—introspective, but very much in tune with the people and cultures around him. He had an excel-

lent command of language, and spoke fluent Chinese. Stilwell held himself to a code of values that stressed modesty, loyalty, and duty above all; anyone who violated Stilwell's code met with public and private venom, the latter usually expressed in his diary.[7]

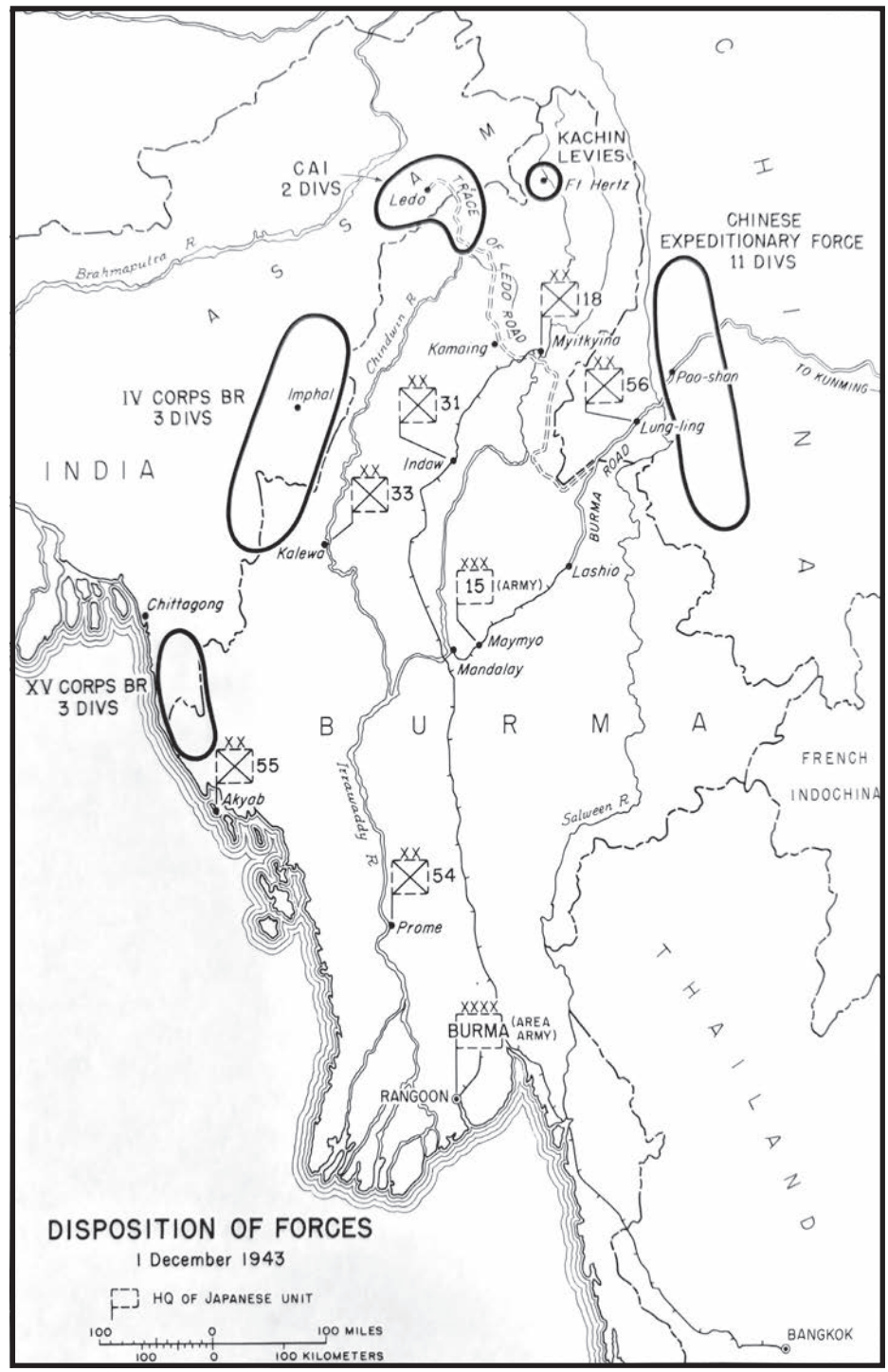
Since leaving Burma in May 1942, Stilwell's objective had not changed: capture North Burma, build a road from Ledo to the Burma Road at Lashio, and reopen land communications with China so lend-lease supplies could get through in quantity. As it stood at the moment, American supplies flew across "the Hump" of the Himalaya Mountains from India to Kunming, a dangerous and limited route subject to adverse weather and Japanese interception. President Franklin Roosevelt told Stilwell in 1942 to "help China," and opening land communications was, to the general, the best way to achieve that objective. Liberating North Burma would also eliminate the Japanese airfield at Myitkyina (pronounced MITCH-in-ah), a major threat to Hump flights.[8]

There was a third major personality involved in Burma strategy: Chiang Kai-shek, China's leader and supreme commander of the China Theater. His country had been at war with Japan since 1937 and had lost most of its eastern third to Japanese forces before the battle lines stabilized. Chiang, governing from Chongqing, also faced a Communist insurgency in the north led by Mao Zedong; both Chiang and Mao knew that after the war they would fight a final showdown. Chiang centralized as much power as he could and by 1944 had weathered several internal challenges to his supremacy. He resisted Stilwell's plans to professionalize the Chinese Army, which would weaken his control, but needed U.S. lend-lease material for his war efforts. Chiang also advocated on behalf of U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Claire L. Chennault, whose Fourteenth Air Force (composed of elements of the former Flying Tigers) offered a way to keep lend-lease supplies flowing while fighting the Japanese with minimal Chinese effort.[9]

In addition to Stilwell's responsibility to SEAC, he was the lend-lease administrator to China, chief of staff and commander of any Chinese units Chiang chose to assign to him, and


National Archives

General Chennault



commanding general of all U.S. troops in the China–Burma–India (CBI) Theater. Depending on which role he filled, Stilwell answered to Chiang, Mountbatten, or the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff; these multiple hats thus gave him considerable influence and power beyond his positions in the chain of command. "To watch Stilwell," remembered Slim, "when hard pressed, shift . . . from one of the several strong points he held by virtue of his numerous Allied, American, and Chinese offices, to another, was a lesson in the mobile offensive-defensive."[10]

Strategy for SEAC came to the forefront in the fall of 1943 at the Cairo-Tehran Conferences. After much high-level discussion, leaders shelved Mountbatten's plans in favor of a multipronged overland advance into Burma from India and China under the code name CHAMPION. This broad directive set the stage for the 1944 operations.

PLANS AND FORCES

CHAMPION called for a converging attack on North Burma. A Sino-American command under Stilwell, X Force, would advance from Ledo into North Burma, aiming for Mogaung and Myitkyina. In support of the south would be Slim's Fourteenth Army, with the British Army IV Corps advancing from Imphal and XV Corps from Chittagong through the Arakan. From Burma's eastern side, the all-Chinese Y Force of eleven divisions with American advisers would attack down the Burma Road from China toward Lashio. In contrast to previous years, fighting would continue through the monsoon season.[11]

The X Force numbered approximately 35,000 men, almost all of them contained in the Chinese 22d, 30th, and 38th Divisions. Most of these units had retreated into Burma in 1942 and all had since been retrained and equipped with U.S. weapons. In support was the battalion-sized Sino-American 1st Provisional Tank Group under Col. Rothwell Brown. The overall command had an array of names: the Chinese called it the New 1st Army, the Americans named it the Chinese Army in India, and SEAC dubbed it X Force, then Northern Combat Area Command (NCAC) beginning in late January 1944. Two thousand American support troops and advisers accompanied the Chinese, but without command authority except over supplies; only two American officers, Brown and Stilwell, received approval from Chiang to directly command Chinese units.[12]

General Stilwell described his planned advance as needing to "go in through a rat hole and dig the hole as we go." His men had to advance south from


National Archives

General Stilwell confers with Colonel Brown (right) and an unidentified Chinese soldier


U.S. Army

M4 Shermans, with Chinese crews, from the 1st Provisional Tank Group


U.S. Army

Colonel Peers


National Archives

Lewis A. Pick, shown here as a lieutenant general, c. 1959

Shingbwiyang through the Hukawng Valley, cross the Jambu Bum Ridge, and through the Mogaung Valley to reach Mogaung (150 miles away) and the railroad to Rangoon. Forty miles east of Mogaung was the key Japanese base at Myitkyina, which needed to be taken to protect Hump flights and to provide a vital link to roads leading to Lashio. Behind NCAC's frontline troops came a small legion of U.S. engineers numbering 9,000 troops and led by Col. Lewis A. Pick; 60 percent of this force was African American in segregated units. As the front advanced, part of Pick's command would widen the trails into roads, while others would improve drainage and run pipelines along the corridor. In this way, the Ledo Road (nicknamed "Pick's Pike" by the men) moved ahead toward Lashio.[13]

Supporting Stilwell's eastern flank was the Kachin Rangers, a scattered guerrilla force of local tribesmen trained and equipped by Detachment 101, Office of Strategic Services (OSS), an American unit commanded by Lt. Col. William R. Peers, who had just taken over when the detachment's original commander, Col. Carl F. Eifler, had been medically evacuated home. Eifler and Peers had set up a network of OSS agents assigned to a base at Nazira on the Indian border; these agents organized the local anti-Japanese Kachin tribes to provide intelligence, rescue downed Allied airmen, and harass the Japanese forces in North Burma. In December 1943, Stilwell ordered this force, which by war's end numbered 10,000 Kachins and 500 American officers, to have 3,000 guerrillas ready to support his advance and help liberate the area south of Fort Hertz. Peers traveled with NCAC's headquarters staff throughout the campaign, and Stilwell conferred with him often.[14]

While Stilwell's men kept pressure on the Japanese from the front, another force would gnaw on the enemy's rear communications. These troops came under Fourteenth Army and were officially designated 3d Indian Division or Special Force, but best known by its nickname of Chindits. In 1943 the brigade-sized Chindits marched into Burma from Imphal and spent three months harassing Japanese rear areas before coming out in scattered groups. The Chindit expedition provided a tonic of victory, but with a cost: the men had left a third of their number behind as casualties, including a large number of wounded who could not be evacuated. Churchill ordered reinforcements, and in 1944 the Chindits numbered six brigades of 4,000 men each, and planned for a longer operation in the Japanese rear, including rotating brigades every 90 days.[15]


Imperial War Museum

General Wingate


Courtesy of Carl F. Eifler

Colonel Eifler

The Chindit commander, British Maj. Gen. Orde C. Wingate, was one of the greatest characters ever encountered by the American military. He achieved infamy fighting Arabs in Palestine in the late 1930s, and later leading Anglo-Ethiopian forces into Addis Ababa against the Italians in 1941. He created the Chindits and directed their 1943 expedition into Burma. Wingate drove himself and his men hard with a single-minded determination to win that infused his Chindits with a very high esprit de corps. Wingate was also deeply eccentric in appearance, wearing an old pith helmet and an alarm clock. Churchill brought him to a high-level strategy conference in Canada in 1943, and Wingate famously showed up wearing the same stained uniform he used in the Burma jungle. He also would receive visitors naked, regularly ate onions because of their supposed curative properties, and ordered his officers to always move at a run. Brigadier Bernard Fergusson, one of Wingate's closest lieutenants, described him as "a broad-shouldered, uncouth, almost simian officer who used to drift gloomily into the office for two or three days at a time, audibly dream dreams, and drift out again . . . he had the ear of the highest, [and] we paid more attention to his schemes. Soon we had fallen under the spell of his almost hypnotic talk."[16]

Wingate captivated more people than just Fergusson. His appearance in Canada and his proposals impressed American leaders, and both U.S. Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall and Army Air Forces Chief General Henry H. Arnold agreed to support Wingate with U.S. troops and planes for a larger and longer penetration into Burma. Marshall combed the Army and sent a unit of 3,000 infantrymen to India under the code name Galahad, officially the 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional). Arnold sent two of his best young officers, Lt. Cols. Philip Cochran and John Alison, to India with whatever aircraft they could find. Their 1st Air Commando departed with 30 P–51 Mustangs, 30 B–25s, 32 C–47 transports, 225 gliders, 100 L–1 and L–5 liaison aircraft, and 6 prototype Sikorsky helicopters. Aviation engineers of the 900th Field Unit also joined the burgeoning Chindit support force.[17]

General Scoones

General Giffard

Brigadier Fergusson

In addition to Stilwell's forces and the Chindits in North Burma, Slim's Fourteenth Army of over 500,000 men would push into south central Burma to join with Chinese General Wei Li-huang's Y Force advancing into Burma from the east. "Hundred Victories" Wei had 100,000 men with American advisers. Slim's spearhead, Lt. Gen. Geoffrey Scoones' IV Corps at Imphal, contained 70,000 men.[18]

The planned convergence of these offensives created questions regarding the overall coordination of operations. Most of the forces were from SEAC, but Y Force was in China and therefore under Chiang's direct command. Further, Stilwell refused for national and personal reasons to serve under General George Giffard, the commander of SEAC's land forces in 11th Army Group. Matters came to a head at a conference of SEAC senior commanders in Delhi on 18 November 1943. After considerable wrangling, Stilwell proposed to serve under Slim for the campaign until he reached Kamaing. The two men, who regarded each other with great respect, left the room and worked out a handshake deal. Stilwell outlined his plans to Slim. "Tactically we were in agreement," recalled Slim, "and, wisely, we avoided strategic discussion. . . . I assured him that, as long as he went on those lines, he would not be bothered by a spate of directives from me." The two men returned and reported their solution. As the conference ended, Stilwell saluted Slim and asked, "Sir, as Fourteenth Army commander, do you have any orders for me?" With a smile, Slim replied, "No, sir. As Deputy Supreme Commander, do you have any orders for me?" "Not on your life," replied the American with a grin. Their personal relationship solved the command issue.[19]

Another command problem came from Chiang. After the Cairo Conference, it became clear that an amphibious landing was not to happen in 1944; once Stilwell broke this news to him, Chiang became reluctant to support the advances of any of his troops in either X Force or Y Force. After much wrangling, he gave in on 18 December. "Surprise," Stilwell wrote in his diary. "I really command the X-Force.

Colonels Cochran (left) and Alison, commanders of the 1st Air Commando Group

General Wei

Without interference! And with the power to hire and fire." "For the first time in history," an exultant Stilwell told his wife, "a foreigner was given command of Chinese troops with full control over all officers and no strings attached. Can you believe it?" Stilwell departed Chongqing for Ledo two days later.[20]

As these discussions went on among the Allied partners, the Japanese in Burma also laid plans for 1944. Lt. Gen. Kawabe Masakazu's *Burma Area Army* held the country with forces scattered

General Kawabe

General Mutaguchi

General Sakurai

General Tanaka

along the major invasion routes. Opposite XV Corps stood Lt. Gen. Sakurai Shozo's *Twenty-Eighth Army* with the *54th*, *55th*, and *2d Divisions*, the latter having just recovered from a mauling at the Battle of Guadalcanal. In central Burma, the *Fifteenth Army* under Lt. Gen. Mutaguchi Renya faced IV Corps with the *15th*, *31st*, and *33d Divisions* supported by the division-sized *Indian National Army (INA)*. The independent (and elite) *18th "Chrysanthemum" Division* under Maj. Gen. Tanaka Shinichi opposed NCAC, while Maj. Gen. Matsuyama Yuzo's *56th Division* held the Burma Road against Y Force.[21]

Wingate's 1943 Chindit operation inspired Mutaguchi about the feasibility of advancing across the mountains to Imphal. A veteran senior commander, Mutaguchi felt that a victorious invasion of India would be a desirable object for both personal and national prestige, especially given the many reverses Japan suffered in the Pacific in 1943. He won approval for an attack in the Arakan by the *Twenty-Eighth Army* followed by a three-pronged advance on Imphal, Kohima, and Dimapur by the *Fifteenth Army*. The Arakan drive would start in February, with Mutaguchi's army advancing in early March.[22]

As 1943 drew to a close, these men and their units would together determine the course of operations in Burma during 1944.

Stilwell's Advance Begins

General Stilwell arrived at X Force headquarters on 21 December 1943. To Stilwell, the top priority was to help China by opening land communications; to do this meant a land campaign in North Burma under his personal attention to ensure success. Consequently, he would spend almost the next seven months in the field and leave other tasks to his deputies in Chongqing and Delhi. This decision, which may have resembled an abdication of responsibility, generated considerable comment. "Personally, I think he was right," said Slim. "The most important thing of all was to ensure that the American-trained Chinese not only fought, but fought successfully. No one could do that as well as Stilwell himself. Indeed, he was the only American who had authority to actually command the Chinese."[23]

Stilwell found X Force's divisions in some disarray. Lt. Gen. Sun Li-jen's 38th Division was inside Burma, facing the Japanese *18th Division* along the Tarung River at the Hukawng Valley's north end. Japanese forces surrounded three battalions of the division that were receiving supplies by air. Behind Sun, Lt. Gen. Liao Yu-sheng's 22d Division was moving up from Ledo. Brown's tankers were en route to the battlefield, while Lt. Gen. Hu Su's 30th Division remained in Ramgarh to complete the last of its training. Stilwell did not like the pace and aggression of operations. "No action for past ten days. Sun's 'attack' would have been a bust," he confided to his diary. "How long would they have sat on their asses here?"[24]

On Christmas Eve, X Force started the drive to Myitkyina. Stilwell understood that the Chinese Army in general had a poor offensive combat record against the Japanese; this translated into a lack of confidence and

highlighted the need for an initial success. In consultation with Sun, Stilwell ordered the 114th Regiment to attack in succession each of the Japanese companies that blocked connection with the surrounded battalions. The attack started with a preparatory artillery bombardment, followed by an infantry assault signaled by a bugle call. Sun's men wiped out all Japanese in thirty-six hours of fighting and restored the position. Chinese morale soared, while Tanaka realized that these Chinese "were far superior in both the quality of their fighting and their equipment" to previous Chinese units he had encountered in China.[25]

General Stilwell led from the front, which made a deep impression on the Chinese troops. Sun and Stilwell had a "heart to heart talk" on 26 December. Sun "swears they are trying to do a good job for the *liao hsien sheng* [Old Man]," recorded Stilwell. "The troops are all bucked up to have me with them, but commanders are uneasy for fear I get hit and they be held responsible. Insistent that I stay back and let them do it. Says everybody appreciative of my backing and interest in them."[26]

The Chinese advance continued on 28 December. Sun attacked the Japanese at Yupbang Ga, securing it in heavy fighting. However, a flanking force against the Japanese left moved too slowly, and Tanaka escaped the trap by retreating southward. Meanwhile a regiment of Liao's division secured X Force's west flank by methodically clearing the Taro Valley. Sun probed the Japanese position at Taipha Ga before advancing on 17 January supported by Brown's newly arrived tank force. Taipha Ga fell in heavy fighting, but flanking forces again failed to move fast enough to trap Tanaka's men. Stilwell temporarily relieved one of Liao's regimental commanders and threatened himself to resign, but these efforts failed to appreciably speed up the advance. By late January 1944, these multiple Chinese offensives only pushed the front line forward a distance of ten to fifteen miles from where it had been on Christmas Eve 1943.[27]

The sluggish Chinese pace was attributable to several factors. "The Chinese-soldier is doing his stuff, as I knew he would if he had half a chance," Stilwell wrote his wife. "It's only the higher-ups who are weak." Sun and Liao were capable leaders and proved themselves in battles between 1937 and 1943. But they and their senior commanders understood that they belonged first to Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang visited them in November and counseled caution; he also indicated that he felt the campaign shouldn't start until February. Chiang clarified his comments as only opinions, but they carried weight with the Chinese officers. Chiang also secretly communicated with his commanders during the campaign, although Sun denied it when Stilwell confronted him. On top of all this, there was the question of face: as Sun told Trevor N. Dupuy, a liaison with his headquarters, he had never lost a battle and was not about to start now.[28]

While this campaign raged, Wingate finalized plans for his Chindit op-

Generals Hu and Stilwell at Myitkyina, Burma, 18 July 1944

A Chinese mortar regiment marching through the entrance to the Ramgarh Training Center, c. June 1944

General Stilwell inspecting Chinese troops in India accompanied by Generals Sun (far left) and Zhuoying Lo.


Library of Congress

General Wei (center), and other unidentified Chinese officers, greet General Wedemeyer (right), c. 1944.


U.S. Army

General Boatner stops to speak to a wounded Chinese soldier in Burma, c. January 1944.

eration, code-named THURSDAY and scheduled for early March. Wingate and Stilwell met on 4 January 1944, and Stilwell successfully assigned GALAHAD to NCAC under the command of Brig. Gen. Frank D. Merrill, one of Stilwell's longtime staff officers. The press seized on the alliterative possibilities combined with GALAHAD's rough reputation and quickly dubbed the unit "Merrill's Marauders." Stilwell ordered Merrill to join him by early February.[29]

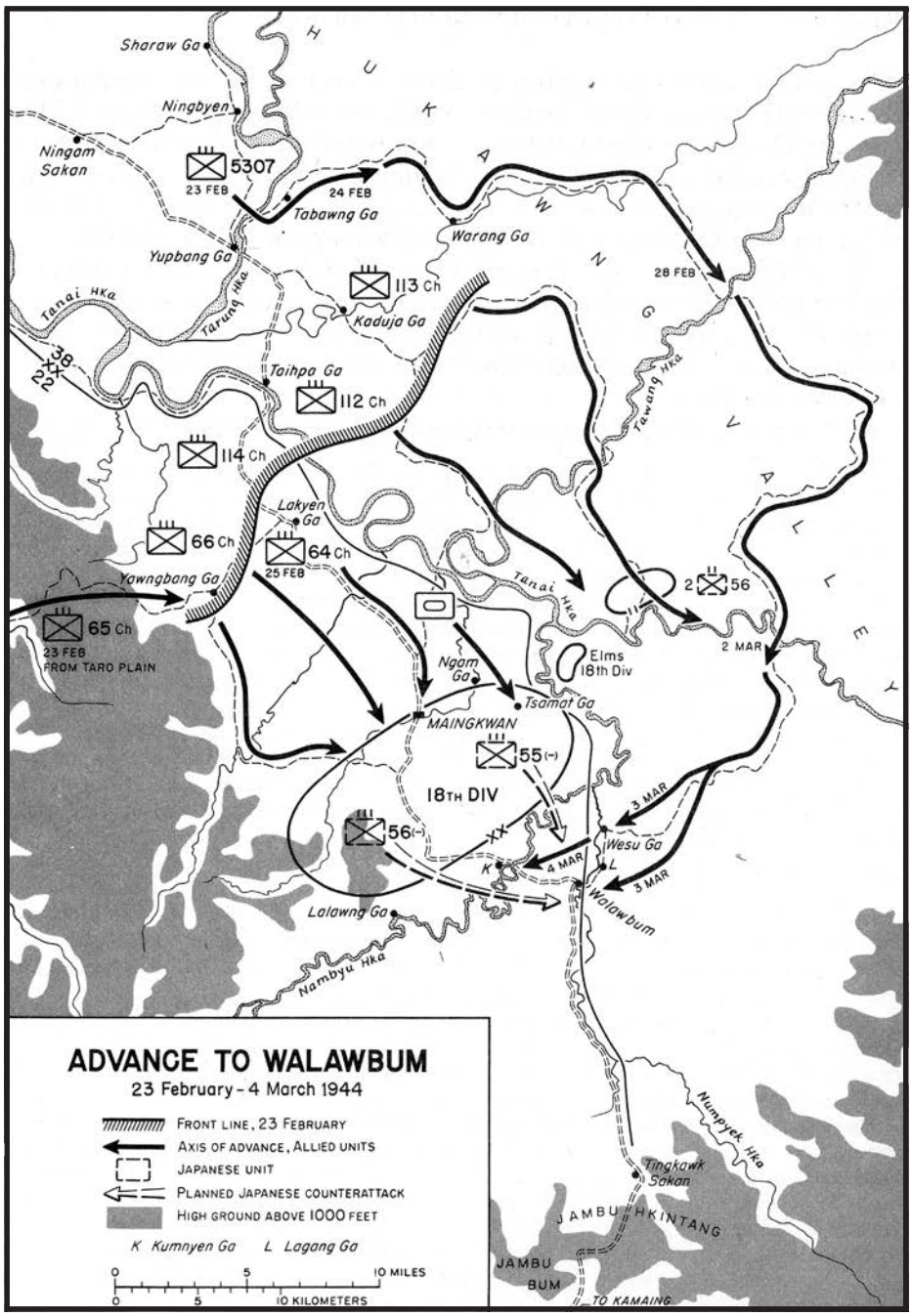
As his men regrouped for the next round against Tanaka's Japanese in front, Stilwell faced a battle in the rear as Mountbatten tried once again to get the CHAMPION plan revoked. SEAC headquarters again proposed cancellation of Burma operations in favor of amphibious offensives in the Bay of Bengal and against Sumatra under the code name CULVERIN. Mountbatten created an Anglo-American delegation to advocate for these plans in London and Washington. U.S. Maj. Gen. Albert C. Wedemeyer would head the mission, named AXIOM.[30]

Mountbatten convened a conference in Delhi on 31 January 1944 to discuss CULVERIN. Stilwell left the field to attend. "The limies are welshing," he wrote in his diary. At the conference, Wedemeyer predicted that Stilwell's Ledo Road campaign was impossible to complete before 1946. Wedemeyer also proposed to halt all operations before the monsoons and conserve strength for the CULVERIN attack to come that fall. It all seemed to Stilwell nothing more than "fancy charts, false figures, and dirty intentions." Stilwell responded, "To hell with logistics," and argued forcefully for continuation of the overland advance into North Burma. He also reminded the attendees—almost all British—that Maj. Gen. Robert Clive had conquered India with just 123 soldiers. "Dead silence," recorded Stilwell, and the meeting broke up soon after. That night Stilwell returned to Burma.[31]

At the end of the meeting, Mountbatten promised that Stilwell's views would be carried forward by the AXIOM mission. Stilwell suspected differently, and used his authority as a U.S. theater commander to send a mission of his own to Washington under Brig. Gen. Haydon L. Boatner. Boatner arrived in Washington ahead of AXIOM, and he spoke directly with the U.S. Joint Chiefs and President Roosevelt. Their conversations confirmed Roosevelt's inclination to reject CULVERIN, despite Churchill's support for the plan. When AXIOM arrived in Washington from London, it met a cold reception. Stilwell's North Burma campaign would continue.[32]

In February Stilwell again clashed with Mountbatten. As Chinese forces pushed steadily southward against Japanese resistance and through heavier-than-usual rain, the first stage of Mutaguchi's offensive got underway in the Arakan. The 55th Division pinned two Indian divisions, surrounding elements of the 7th Indian Division headquarters in a hedgehog defense position called the Admin Box. Slim ordered a stand, and requested transport aircraft and parachutes to supply the men. The only ones available were those earmarked to go over the Hump to China. Twice Stilwell refused; finally Mountbatten diverted thirty aircraft on his own authority, an action later backed by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff on an emergency authorization. After two weeks of heavy fighting, the Japanese withdrew back to their lines as XV Corps pursued. The diversion failed to attract Slim's reserves from Imphal, and also represented the first failed Japanese offensive in Southeast Asia.[33]

As these high-level maneuvers took place, Merrill's men marched in along the Ledo Road. "What we saw of the Ledo Road," remembered Lt. Charlton Ogburn, "was a great, broad, raw gash through the forest dipping, rising, winding, cutting back, going on days without end." He was struck by how "some of the world's most diverse



strands [came] into juxtaposition" as Indian, Chinese, Burmese, and American troops all intermingled at stations along the way. The Marauders arrived in position on 21 February, and Stilwell paid them a visit. "Tough looking lot of babies," noted the general that night.[34]

Two days later Stilwell gave his orders for the next movement against the *18th Division*. His plan envisioned the surrounding and annihilation of Tanaka's division between two forces. While the 22d Division, parts of the 38th Division, and tanks pressed in from the north, the Marauders, supported by the 38th Division's 113th Infantry, would circle around the Japanese and cut their main line of retreat at Walawbum. Merrill received great discretion in how to execute his mission. However, the 113th was independent of Merrill's command, despite requests from Sun and Merrill to combine the units.[35]

On 24 February the Marauders set out on their first operation. Sustained by airdrops, the Americans pushed beyond the Japanese flank and started south through the hilly jungle. Along the way they picked up some Kachin Rangers as guides. "The Marauders took an immediate and lasting fancy to the Kachins," remembered Ogburn. In addition to their pleasant and open dispositions, the Rangers "not only knew the country and the trails, but they also knew better than anyone but the Japanese where the Japanese were."[36]

Tanaka was thrown off guard with the NCAC advance, and his division started falling back. As Chinese infantry pressed in from the north and west, Brown's tanks (supported by a battalion of Chinese infantry) slashed southeast against the Japanese right flank. Communications breakdowns hindered Tanaka's movements, and his division became disorganized; at one point, Brown's tanks brushed against division headquarters and scattered Tanaka's staff via fire from across a creek, but the surprised tankers were unable to press their advantage.[37]

After eight days of marching, Merrill sent his three battalions forward on 3 March against Walawbum. The Americans achieved total surprise, and quickly cut the road. But Tanaka acted quickly, sending half of his force against Merrill. Confused fighting lasted over three days as "Americans and Japanese were running into each other on every side," remembered a participant. "There was no front to speak of." Both sides disengaged on the 6th, and Merrill moved further east and south as the 113th arrived and took over the Marauder positions.[38]

During the battle one of the Marauders' Nisei interpreters, Sgt. Roy H. Matsumoto, tapped into the *18th Division*'s phone network. His translations yielded valuable intelligence about Japanese locations and intentions, including Tanaka's order to withdraw via jungle trails to the south and southwest. Merrill radioed many of Matsumoto's reports to Stilwell, who decided to act. He ordered what he called a "squeeze play," a converging attack by all units against the *18th Division*. The attack did not quite work out as planned due to communications and terrain difficulties; Tanaka's forces escaped—but not before some tough fighting. By 9 March, NCAC owned all of Burma

Chinese soldiers march along a narrow section of the Burma Road toward Salween front.

Sergeant Matsumoto

north of the Jambu Bum. Stilwell's forces were halfway to Mogaung.[39]

As these battles played out, Stilwell again faced a conflict in his rear. Boatner's mission to Washington combined with the wrangle over transport planes to produce a near break between Mountbatten and Stilwell. Stories in the press that implied NCAC was the only formation doing any fighting did not help the situation. General Marshall in Washington ordered Stilwell to meet with Mountbatten and iron out their differences. On 6 March Stilwell left the front to greet Mountbatten in Taipha Ga. The SEAC commander flew in with an escort of sixteen fighters, four times the number of NCAC's support aircraft. Stilwell wore a plain U.S. uniform with a Chinese Army cap; Mountbatten looked crisp with full shoulder boards and ribbons. The men talked for ninety minutes, and Stilwell "ate crow," as he informed Marshall. "We are great personal friends." Mountbatten agreed, writing after the meeting that Stilwell "really is a grand old warrior but only the Trinity could carry out his duties which require him to be in Delhi, Chongqing, and the Ledo Front simultaneously."[40]

The next day the two men toured the nearby battlefields, which still showed the scars of war. "Louis much impressed," recalled Stilwell. "Doesn't like corpses." Mountbatten drove his own jeep back to Taipha Ga; as often, he was going very fast and this time a bamboo splinter struck his eye. The supreme commander was rushed to an American hospital in Ledo, where he remained with eyes bandaged and in complete darkness for a full week. Mountbatten thus became the only Allied supreme commander in the war seriously injured while on duty. He remained in command, transacting his business orally.[41]

Meanwhile another drama opened in India. On 5 March Wingate prepared to kick off Operation Thursday, the Chindits' invasion of Burma and the largest airborne operation of World War II to date. Thursday had three objectives: "1. To help the advance of combat troops (Ledo Sector) [NCAC] to the Myitkyina area by drawing off and disorganizing the enemy force opposing them and prevent the reinforcement of these forces. 2. To create a favorable situation for the Chinese [Y Force] advance westwards across the Salween. 3. To inflict the maximum confusion, damage, and loss on the enemy forces in Burma."[42]

One of Special Force's six brigades (16 Brigade under Brigadier Bernard Fergusson) had set off on a 450-mile march from Ledo a month earlier. Now Wingate planned to fly in two brigades (77 under Brigadier Mike Calvert and 111 under Brigadier W. D. A. "Joe" Lentaigne) to join 16 Brigade near Indaw in the Japanese rear, holding the other three brigades in reserve. The 1st Air Commando would handle air support and glider operations. Planners identified three landing zones in the jungle, all within forty miles of Indaw and the railroad that served as Tanaka's supply line. The zones were code-named Broadway, Piccadilly, and Chowringhee; each was large enough to house a C–47 airstrip, and offered good access to Indaw.[43]

Wingate also envisioned a system of fixed bases for his men to use behind enemy lines. Called strongholds, these fortified centers would hold airstrips, supplies, and artillery. Floater units would operate nearby to ambush the Japanese and if possible draw them into the stronghold itself. "The Stronghold," instructed Wingate, "is an orbit around which columns of the brigade circulate. . . . The motto of the Stronghold is 'No Surrender.'"[44]

On the afternoon of 5 March, Calvert's 77 Brigade and part of 111 Brigade stood at Lalaghat Airfield ready to board the sixty-one gliders that would take them into Burma. Slim, who the day before had briefed Stilwell on Wingate's plans, was also present. The planes were scheduled to take off at 1800 for a night landing by the light of a near-full moon.

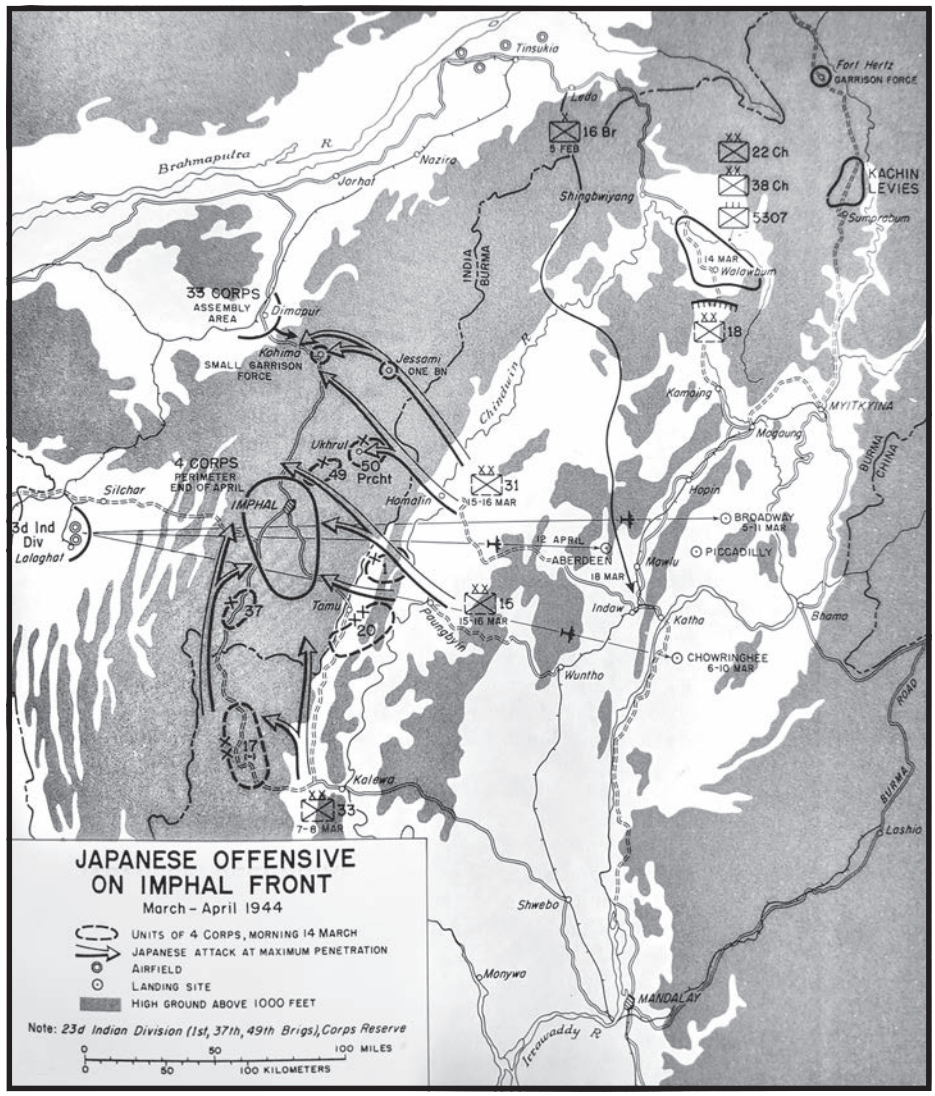
Suddenly at 1630 an intelligence officer appeared with new photos of the

British National Army Museum

Mike Calvert, shown here as a captain

Imperial War Museum

General Lentaigne

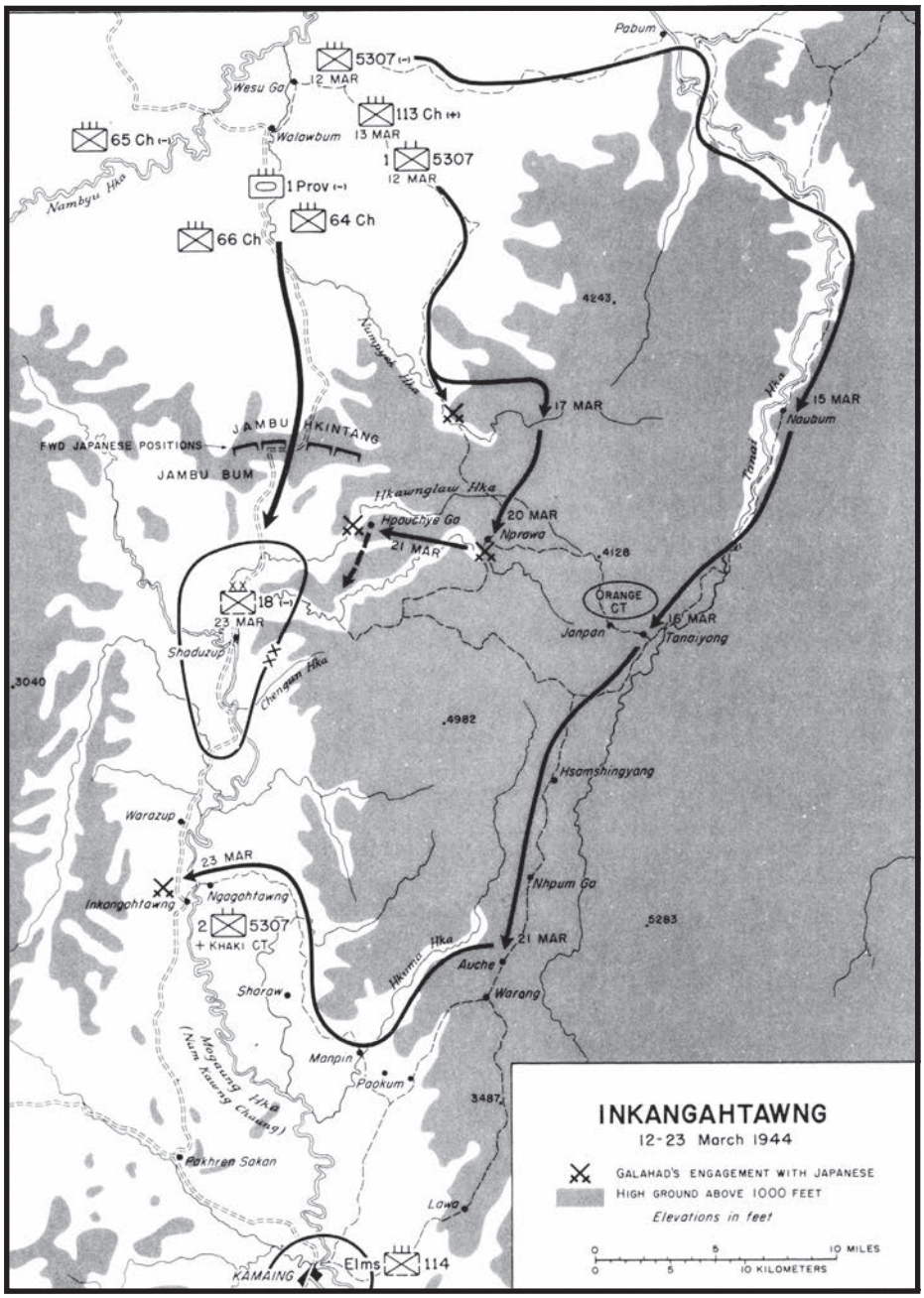


landing zones. Logs blocked one, but the reason was unknown; the other zones were clear. Was this an ambush? Nobody was sure, and there was no time to investigate. Postponement was not an option; they had to go that night or cancel. Slim and Wingate stepped aside to confer. "The decision is yours," said Wingate, THURSDAY's commander, to Slim.[45]

"I knew it was," recalled Slim. "Not for the first time I felt the weight of decision crushing in on me with an almost physical pressure. . . . On my answer would depend not only the possibility of a disaster with wide implications on the whole Burma campaign and beyond, but the lives of these splendid men, tense and waiting around their aircraft. At that moment I would have given a great deal if Wingate or anybody else could have relieved me of the duty of decision. But that is a burden the commander himself must bear." After some discussion, they modified the plan so as to fly all of Calvert's men into BROADWAY that night. Slim signaled his assent. The planes took off at 1812.[46]

The BROADWAY landing did not go smoothly, as Calvert soon discovered ruts in the land undetectable from the air. After a string of glider crashes, he closed the field for the night with the second wave en route. The next morning U.S. Army engineers of the 900th Field Unit, who made it in with most of their equipment, began smoothing out the field. By nightfall BROADWAY was back open; Wingate himself arrived for a look in one of the sixty-four C–47s to land on the night of 6–7 March. Over the next week relays of C–47s came in to BROADWAY and CHOWRINGHEE (opened 10 March) while light aircraft flew out casualties. "In a few days," remembered Calvert, "we had 12,000 men, 2,000 mules, masses of equipment, anti-aircraft and field guns all established behind the enemy lines."[47]

As Allied aircraft roared back and forth overhead, Mutaguchi's forces in western Burma made their final preparations for the advance into India. Although Tokyo portrayed the *Fifteenth Army*'s advance as a "March on Delhi," and Mutaguchi himself entertained dreams of larger goals, Mutaguchi's orders limited him to taking Imphal and the surrounding area.



Military History Institute

Colonel Hunter (right), Lt. Col. William Combs (left), and Maj. Frank Hodges (center) plan the attack on Myitkyina airfield.

While the *15th* and *33d Divisions* and the *INA* attacked Imphal from three sides, the *31st Division* would secure the north flank by capturing Kohima. For his part, Slim knew this offensive was coming; he planned a phased withdrawal to Imphal to fight the decisive battle there. General Scoones, the IV Corps commander headquartered at Imphal, was to decide the timing of the withdrawal.[48]

On 6 March the first of Mutaguchi's forces moved forward, with the rest following in stages over the next nine days. The battle developed gradually, causing Scoones to order the withdrawal at a point almost too late. Moving with speed and ferocity, the Japanese soon pressed IV Corps back toward Imphal. South of town, the 17th Indian Division fought its way out of encirclement twice to reach Imphal. At the end of March, Japanese forces cut the Imphal-Kohima Road, isolating IV Corps.[49]

Slim realized Scoones needed help, and asked for air transport. From his hospital room, Mountbatten stretched his emergency authorization for transport aircraft and directed the 5th Indian Division be flown into Imphal from the Arakan. In one of the first strategic air movements of its type, two brigades and the divisional troops flew into Imphal over seven days, 19–26 March. The division's third brigade, the 161st, diverted to Dimapur and Kohima, and arrived in early April to assist the defense.[50]

Meanwhile, Wingate set his Chindits to raising havoc. Calvert's 77 Brigade moved south toward Indaw while 111 Brigade fanned out north and east of Chowringhee. Wingate flew in two of his reserve brigades, 3 West African and 14, closed down Chowringhee, and set up two more strongholds: White City near Mawlu, and Aberdeen northwest of Indaw. These efforts cut the railroad and panicked the Japanese rear area troops. However, efforts to take Indaw itself

failed in the face of stiff Japanese resistance. It soon became clear that the Chindits had attracted attention from Japanese garrison units and reserves marked for the India offensive.[51]

Just as Operation THURSDAY was developing further, the Chindits suffered a key casualty. On the evening of 24 March, while returning from a series of visits to his commanders, General Wingate's B–25 crashed in the hills west of Imphal; there were no survivors. At a stroke, all Chindit plans were thrown into the air. "Wingate's death," recalled Tulloch, "could not have come at a worse time." On 27 March Slim appointed Lentaigne to take Wingate's place; Maj. John Masters assumed command of 111 Brigade.[52]

Wingate's operations also affected the situation in North Burma. Tanaka and his *18th Division* found their supply lines cut, and were forced to live off accumulated stocks—which they had been doing since January as the buildup for the India attack received all supply priority. Operation THURSDAY commenced just as supply and replacement shipments were about to resume to the *18th Division*. "Tanaka's supply position," noted a later analysis, "was fundamentally compromised by the Chindit fighting along the railway to North Burma."[53]

Stilwell's NCAC also resumed its advance. The 22d Division and Brown's tanks advanced against the Jambu Bum on 15 March, making slow progress despite heavy rain and Japanese resistance. Meanwhile, Merrill's infantry, supported again by the Chinese 113th Infantry, moved into the steep hills to the east of the Jambu Bum in an effort to get around the Japanese flank. The flank operations involved two movements: a close-in flank march of fifty miles by the GALAHAD 1st Battalion supported by the 113th against Shaduzup, and GALAHAD's 2d and 3d Battalions swinging wider and deeper into the enemy rear toward the village of Inkangahtawng.

It was slow going in the hills, especially because men had to hack trails out of the jungle, but air supply sustained the Marauders. The 2d and 3d Battalions, despite facing a march over three times longer than that of their compatriots, made better time using river valleys and reached Inkangahtawng on 23 March. Initially surprised, Tanaka reacted quickly and sent two battalions and scratch division troops after the Americans. Fearing being cut off, Merrill pulled back into the hills toward the hamlet of Nhpum Ga. Farther north, the 1st Battalion averaged two miles a day, and reached Shaduzup on 27–28 March. After some brisk fighting, the Japanese retired southward while pursued by the Chinese.

Tanaka received reinforcements from the *56th Division*, and sent an infantry force north from Kamaing to fight the Marauders. Stilwell ordered the Americans to hold, rather than pull them back as before; such moves resulted in a loss of face for Americans in Chinese eyes. With General Merrill having been evacuated due to heart trouble, Col. Charles Hunter conducted the battle, which quickly developed into a hilltop siege of the 2d Battalion lasting eleven days. The lines were so close that Japanese commands were audible; Sgt. Matsumoto and his Nisei comrades translated orders and shouted commands that sowed confusion in Japanese ranks. The Japanese conceded defeat and retreated on Easter Sunday, 9 April. Thus concluded six weeks of steady marching and fighting that exhausted GALAHAD and reduced the unit to 1,600 of the original 2,997—but during that time the front line moved thirty miles forward. At the same time the Chinese lost 5,000 men to all causes, while Tanaka's division approached 40 percent losses in many combat units.[54]

In the middle of this fighting Stilwell flew to China and then India to discuss strategy. In early March Chiang wired Stilwell asking about his plans and urging caution; from 28 to 30 March the pair held a series of discussions. Stilwell successfully pried away two more divisions, the 14th and 50th, to be flown across the Hump and equipped in India as reinforcements for NCAC. Chiang resisted Stilwell's urgings for a Y Force attack; Stilwell appealed to General Marshall, who in turn asked President Roosevelt to intercede with Chiang as one head of state to another. Roosevelt threatened to cut off lend-lease to Y Force if it didn't attack, and on 12 April Chiang agreed to send the force forward.[55]

The Japanese drive into India also concerned Stilwell; it threatened to sever the Bengal and Assam Railway, which was the supply lifeline for Fourteenth Army, the Hump flights, and NCAC. Stilwell requested a meeting of SEAC leadership, which occurred on 3 April in Jorhat, India. Slim and Stilwell met privately beforehand. Stilwell offered Slim Sun's 38th Division, but warned "it would mean stopping his advance, probably withdrawing, and certainly not getting Myitkyina before the monsoon," recalled Slim. "I was sure this was Stilwell's great opportunity. I, therefore, told him to retain the 38th Division . . . and to push on to Myitkyina as hard as he could go." In March Stilwell had told Slim of a secret plan to strike across the mountains to Myitkyina, and now affirmed he expected to execute it by 20 May. Slim agreed to keep it secret. In the plenary session, Mountbatten approved Slim's directives that NCAC should continue its advance, and directed the Chindits to assist.[56]

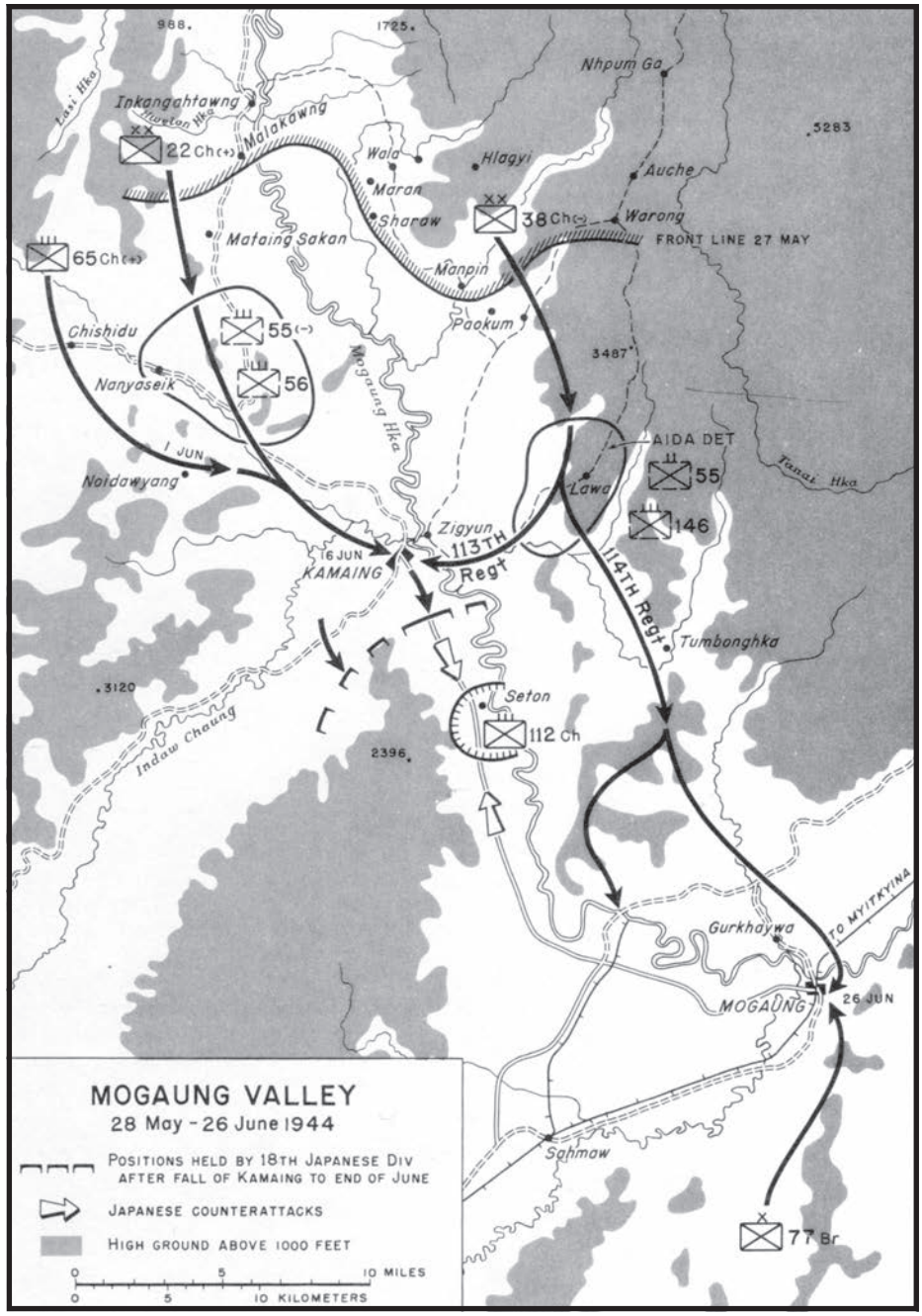
The 161st Brigade reached the Kohima area the same day as this conference, and after some confusion took position in and near the town. That evening the Japanese *31st Division* attacked in force. They surrounded the Kohima garrison, with the bulk of the 161st Brigade isolated on a hilltop two miles to the west. For thirteen days the Japanese compressed the Kohima perimeter, while the garrison barely survived on airdropped supplies. Fighting was at close quarters; in one sector, only the length of a tennis court separated the two sides. Giffard and Slim called forward via rail and air the XXXIII Corps headquarters under Lt. Gen. Montagu G. N. Stopford, the Chindit 23 Brigade of Special Force, the 2d British Division, and the 7th Indian Division to relieve Kohima. On 16 April the 2d Division broke through and raised the siege; both divisions then set about the arduous task of retaking the Kohima area and opening the road to Imphal.[57]

Generals Stilwell and Merrill (right)

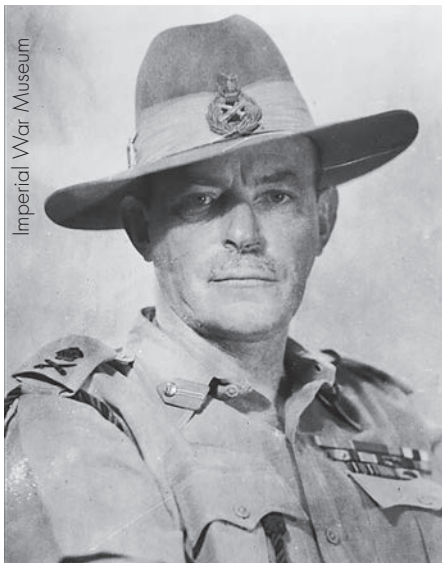
Meanwhile, Mountbatten renewed his efforts to short-circuit the North Burma advance. Several times in April he requested the halting and pullback of NCAC so as to free transport aircraft for the Imphal-Kohima emergency. He again argued that Stilwell's plans were impossible, and advocated for an amphibious operation against Rangoon. The Combined Chiefs of Staff were divided on these proposals. In a series of messages starting 16 April, Marshall (via his direct channel through CBI Theater) shared the U.S. position with Stilwell: possession of Myitkyina was essential to enhancing communications with China and would facilitate land and air operations in China in support of the Pacific offensives. On 3 May those views turned into a directive from Marshall, setting these objectives for U.S. forces in the CBI Theater. The first key task was taking Myitkyina.[58]

Marshall's directive was the clearest break between the British and American strategies in Burma. In effect, it overruled the SEAC directives and set U.S. and Chinese forces on their own mission into North Burma. Whatever happened from here, U.S. forces would act with a degree of independence that Mountbatten could never counter.

Stilwell was all too happy to oblige. His operation against Myitkyina, code-named End Run, was already underway.



Chinese troops advance through jungle terrain toward Myitkyina, c. July 1944.


Imperial War Museum

General Stopford

U.S. Army

A road sign on the newly opened and renamed Stilwell Road

End Run and Endgame

Stilwell had been thinking of a dash for Myitkyina for some time. British and American scouts advised him of a little-known trail over the rugged Kumon Range that connected the Shaduzup area with Myitkyina; the trail was insufficient for a supply route, but a sizable force could move down it if needed. Stilwell assigned the Chinese 88th and 150th Regiments to the Marauders, and formed three groups—approximately 5,000 men total—to make the movement. Kachins would guide the forces; they refused to work with Chinese, but welcomed the Americans. General Merrill, now recovered, would lead the attack with Hunter in tactical command; their specific objective was the Myitkyina airstrip. Both men also let it be known to the Marauders that this was the last effort before withdrawal for rest. On 28 April End Run jumped off.[59]

As Merrill's force set off, Stilwell directed NCAC's Chinese forces, again composed of the 22d and 38th Divisions, to advance south from the Shaduzup area. However, these orders ran afoul of a nervous Chiang, who told his commanders (including Stilwell) to move slowly and "avoid undue losses." In a replay of the December and January battles, the Chinese moved with power but lethargy, especially when Stilwell directed flank marches. The front line stopped at Inkangahtawng and refused to move. Stilwell pressured Liao to advance, but the only part of the 22d Division that moved forward was Liao's personal headquarters. Finally Chiang gave permission to attack, and the Chinese divisions inched forward.[60]

Stilwell knew the monsoon was coming, and anxiously awaited news from Merrill. "Depression days," he wrote in his diary on 1 May. "Commander's worries. . . . The die is cast, and it's sink or swim. But the nervous wear and tear is terrible." Rain slowed the march, but on 14 May NCAC received a message from Hunter indicating they were forty-eight hours away from the objective. On the morning of 17 May Merrill's vanguard erupted from the jungle hills and swarmed the Myitkyina airstrip and environs. At 1530 Hunter sent the code words Stilwell was waiting for: MERCHANT OF VENICE. It signaled complete success. "WILL THIS BURN UP THE LIMIES!" crowed Stilwell in his diary.[61]

The news of Stilwell's achievement quickly shot around the world. Churchill demanded that Mountbatten explain how "the Americans by a brilliant feat of arms have landed us in Myitkyina." However, things immediately began to go wrong. First, the expected reinforcements and supplies did not arrive, replaced instead at the initiative of air force commanders with antiaircraft units. Hunter sent two battalions of the 150th Regiment into Myitkyina late on the 17th; the units got into a firefight with each other and withdrew. A second expedition the next day had the same result. These failures enabled the Japanese to reinforce the town's garrison to 3,500 men. Chinese infantry and American combat engineers, plus half-trained American replacements, also flew into the battle. Merrill suffered another heart attack and was evacuated; his replacement lasted ten days before being incapacitated by illness. General Boatner came forward to take command, and sent his Chinese and American troops, weakened by casualties and disease, into repeated attacks. During one battle on 27 May, a Marauder battalion commander fainted three times at his post. "Galahad," confessed Stilwell, "is just shot."[62]

By early June the situation at Myitkyina reached effective stalemate. The airfield stood only 1,500 yards from Japanese lines, and was frequently shelled. This, plus the monsoon rains that started in earnest on 1 June, made air operations (supply and support) unpredictable. The mud and wetness added to the general air of misery and frustration. Supplies ran low; often, Boatner had just one to two days of rations on hand in reserve for his troops. Thirteen wrecked transport planes littered the field, while shortages of tents and other equipment forced improvisations. Lieutenant Ogburn recalled tents made out of colored parachutes, noting "the effect . . . was an odd one, giving the scene an appearance of fair grounds—one in hell, attended by an army of the condemned."[63]

On 17 May the Chindits came under Stilwell's command, and he directed them northward closer to Mogaung. With Fergusson's brigade having flown out, the four remaining brigades moved north. Masters established 111 Brigade in a stronghold at Blackpool, a clearing near the railway some thirty miles southwest of Mogaung; almost immediately Japanese forces started attacking the position. Movement delays meant other brigades did not arrive to be floater units as expected. On 25 May 111 Brigade evacuated Blackpool after an epic but ultimately futile struggle. Masters' men carried their wounded to Indawgyi Lake, where flying boats and light aircraft flew them to India. Three of the four Chindit brigades stayed in this area to protect this lifeline.[64]

Two days after the fall of Myitkyina airfield, Sun announced, "We go to take Kamaing now." The Chinese were again on the move. While Liao's division (reinforced with part of 50th Division) kept Tanaka's *18th Division* occupied in front and on the left, Sun sent his division around the Japanese right flank. One regiment, the 112th, headed for Seton, south of Kamaing, while another, the 114th, struck out for Mogaung. The 112th caught the Japanese by surprise, effectively surrounding the *18th Division*. Tanaka threw everything he could at the Seton position, but the Chinese held on in bitter fighting. In early June Tanaka pulled out of the trap to the southwest of Mogaung. He had 5,000 men left in his division, less than 40 percent of the number he had in January.[65]

Meanwhile Calvert's Chindits marched to Mogaung. Although his 77 Brigade was down to 535 effectives from the 4,000 he had in March, Calvert reconnoitered the town in early June. It rained an inch each day, and his men had to move through waist-deep water. Too weak to attack, he awaited the Chinese troops. Once the 114th arrived and took position south of Mogaung, Calvert sent his exhausted men forward. Mogaung fell after a sharp battle lasting from 23 to 26 June.[66]

As the North Burma campaign climaxed in May and June, fighting elsewhere turned in the Allies' favor. Wei's Y Force attacked on 12 May,

General Stilwell at Myitkyina

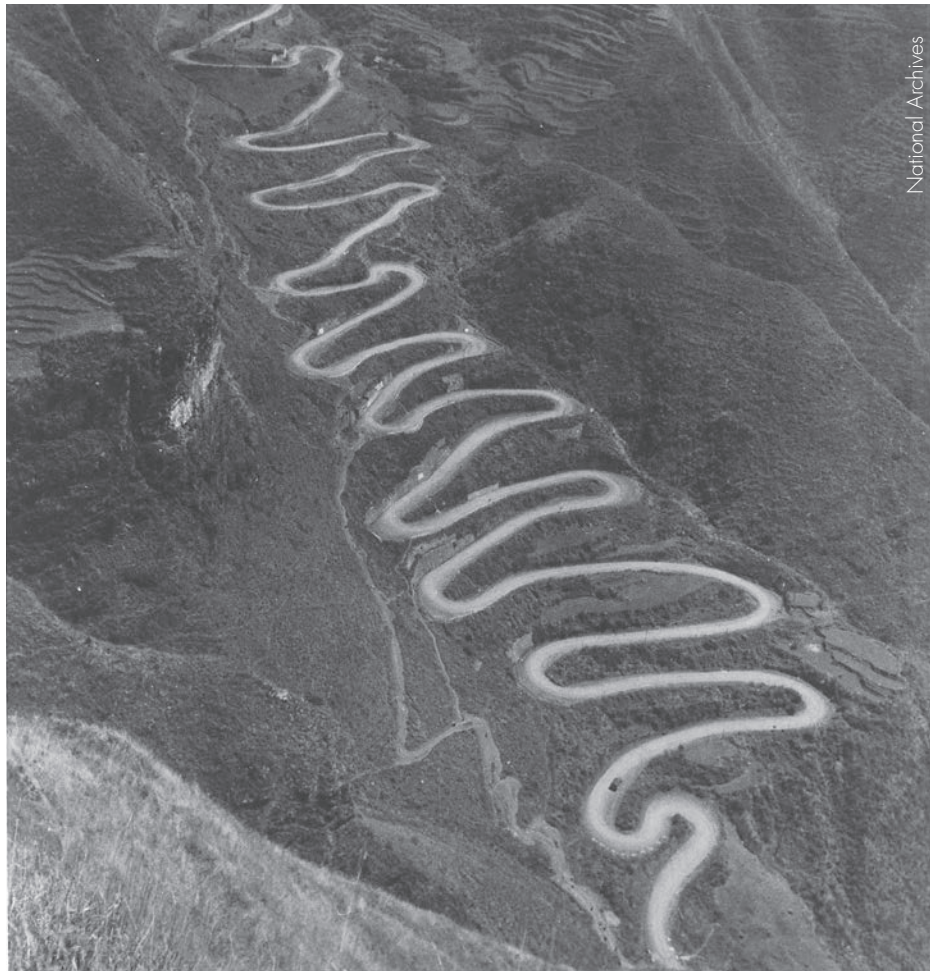
Myitkyina airfield shortly after its fall to Allied forces

moving slowly westward through steep mountains and against determined resistance. By August the front approached the China–Burma border. In India, May and June were filled with heavy fighting around Imphal and Kohima. At Kohima, the 2d British Division cleared the hills around the town, and then XXXIII Corps began pressing south toward Imphal. Scoones' IV Corps meanwhile fended off Mutaguchi's last desperate attacks, and in early June started attacking northward to meet the relief column. The two corps joined forces on 22 June 1944. In early July Mutaguchi ordered a general retreat, and his battered forces limped back to Burma, having suffered an 85 percent casualty rate in their failed March on Delhi.[67]

At Myitkyina the situation remained worrisome as June turned into July. Stilwell canceled all infantry attacks temporarily. He promised Marshall he would "keep an American flavor in the fight," and the Marauders and engineers thus stayed in line. The Chindits also remained in the field. Coalition politics prevented Stilwell, who'd been promoted to full general on 7 July, from appearing to show favor for one nationality over another. All had to fight to the finish.[68]

In late June Brig. Gen. Theodore F. Wessels took over for the ailing Boatner. A former infantry school staffer, Wessels planned a methodical battle; after a short buildup he renewed attacks on 12 July. The Japanese perimeter slowly shrank under continuous pressure from Wessels' 12,000 American and Chinese troops. In early August the last 1,000 Japanese tried to escape, while the Myitkyina commander committed suicide.

Myitkyina fell on 3 August. The siege cost 5,383 Allied casualties and an additional 1,168 sick. Eight hundred Japanese escaped, 187 were captured, and the rest killed. This victory concluded the North Burma Campaign, which cost a total of 13,618 Chinese and 1,327 American casualties. However, it also represented, reported Slim, "the largest seizure of enemy-held territory that had yet occurred."[69]


National Archives

An aerial view of treacherous switchback curves on the road near Qinglong, China, c. 1944

Conclusion

After the war, Slim analyzed the North Burma Campaign in his memoirs. "The capture of Myitkyina, so long delayed, marked the complete success of the first stage of Stilwell's campaign," he wrote. "When all was said and done, the success of the northern offensive was in the main owing to the Ledo Chinese divisions—and that was Stilwell." North Burma was indeed a personal triumph for Stilwell. He successfully prosecuted his campaign despite British opposition, Chiang's interference, and a general local belief that it was an impossible task. Stilwell's ability to navigate the differing and conflicting personalities, nationalities, and objectives to get the job done, especially in a theater where the United States contributed relatively few combat troops, is a lesson in how one U.S. senior officer can leverage resources to shape a campaign.[70]

Once the monsoon season passed, a renewed advance linked with Y Force near Bhamo. On 28 January 1945 the first truck convoy entered China over the new road from Ledo. Chiang christened the route the Stilwell Road, "in memory of his distinctive contribution and of the signal part in which the Allied and Chinese forces under his direction played in the Burma campaign and in the building of the road." The Stilwell Road still exists today, a monument to American ingenuity and leadership.[71]

The coalition war in North Burma affected geopolitics in Asia in several ways. First, it helped establish the strategic primacy of the United

States in World War II's conduct and aftermath. It also represented the first major U.S. foray into Southeast Asia, foreshadowing jungle battles two decades later in Vietnam. But the campaign's biggest impact may have been on China. "By keeping intact the blockade of China for another year," one U.S. Army history notes, "the *18th Division* and Tanaka may have profoundly affected the history of Asia. If Stilwell had won a speedy victory in North Burma, the position of [Chiang's] government in China could have been greatly strengthened by the return of good Chinese troops and the delivery of trucks and artillery in 1944." A stronger Chinese Army would have been a great asset in the 1945 China campaigns and the subsequent Chinese Civil War, perhaps altering the outcome of the latter.[72]

Today Britain remembers Imphal and Kohima among its greatest victories of all time. The U.S. military carries the lineage of Merrill's Marauders, the 1st Air Commando, and other U.S. units from CBI forward to the present. The militaries of India and Pakistan also recall the victories of 1944. In China, the memory of World War II is used to link the People's Republic with the United States. General Stilwell's headquarters in Chongqing is now a museum, which recalls him as a friend to China, and a new Flying Tigers museum recently opened near the former Kweilin airfield complex. Seven decades after the guns fell silent, the war in Burma continues to inform the present and influence the future.

Author's Note

The author wishes to thank John Easterbrook for his perspectives and for permission to quote from the Stilwell diaries.

AH

Notes

1. William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell, 1961), p. 444. The original edition was published in 1956 while Slim was Governor-General of Australia. Burma is today also known as Myanmar; place names in this article are rendered as they stood in 1944.

2. Derek Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War* (London: MacDonald, 1972), p. 255. Emphasis is in the original.

3. Excellent popular histories of the Burma operations in World War II are Louis Allen, *Burma: The Longest War* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984) and Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster Into Triumph 1942–45* (London: Vintage, 2011). For official accounts, see Maj. Gen. S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War Against Japan Volumes I–V* (London: H. M. Stationery Office 1957–1969, Naval & Military Press reprint 2004); Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1953); Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1954); and Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *Time Runs Out in CBI* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1958). All references to Kirby are to *Volume III*.

4. McLynn, *The Burma Campaign,* pp. 5–6, 8–9.

5. Richard Hough, *Mountbatten: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1981), passim. Mountbatten's father was First Sea Lord at the beginning of World War I, and the family was forced to change its name from "Battenberg" to "Mountbatten." For Mountbatten's time heading Combined Operations, see pp. 138–61; Eric Larrabee, *Commander in Chief* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 444; McLynn, *The Burma Campaign,* pp. 183–94.

6. Hough, *Mountbatten,* pp. 184–88. The quote is on p. 187. Mountbatten's plans included an invasion of the Andaman Islands called Buccaneer, an invasion of Sumatra called Culverin, and various lesser operations.

7. David Rooney, *Stilwell the Patriot: Vinegar Joe, the Brits, and Chiang Kai-shek* (London: Greenhill, 2005), p. 13. For other insights into Stilwell's background and personality, see Larrabee, *Commander in Chief,* pp. 509, 516–21; Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911–1945* (New York: Macmillan, 1971), passim. General Stilwell's diaries and papers are in the Hoover Institute Archives at Stanford University, while a selection of his writings from 1941 to 1944 were edited by Theodore White and published as *The Stilwell Papers* in 1948. The latest version is Joseph Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers* (New York: Da Capo, 1991), (hereafter cited as *SP*).

8. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 415–16.

9. Larrabee, *Commander in Chief,* pp. 538–47.

10. McLynn, *The Burma Campaign,* p. 187; Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* p. 178. U.S. Army Forces CBI troop strength increased from 105,000 in January 1944 to 188,000 in September 1944. The vast majority of Stilwell's troops were Air Force or supply and support units. Counting advisers, approximately 10,000 men served in ground combat capacities. British forces in SEAC, by contrast, numbered over a million personnel of all types.

11. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* p. 66.

12. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 418–19; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 122–24, 142. The 1st Provisional Tank Group operated M3 and M4 tanks manned mostly by Chinese crews and maintained by the U.S. Army 527th Ordnance Company. As more Americans joined X Force, it was redesignated NCAC in late January 1944. NCAC was the most commonly used name by all the Allies.

13. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* p. 416. For Ledo Road efforts, see Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1965), pp. 609–18 and U.S. Army Engineer Office publication EP-870-1-42, *Builders and Fighters: U.S. Army Engineers in World War II*, pp. 327–45.

14. David W. Hogan Jr., *U.S. Army Special Operations in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1992), pp. 98–112. In 1969, Peers led the investigation of the My Lai massacre and cover-up.

15. McLynn, *The Burma Campaign,* pp. 136–58; Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War,* pp. 160–74.

16. Bernard Fergusson, *Beyond the Chindwin* (London: Pen and Sword, 2009), p. 20; Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War,* passim; McLynn, *The Burma Campaign,* pp. 69–71. For an alternate perspective on Wingate, see Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 217–23.

17. Larrabee, *Commander in Chief,* pp. 547–52; Charlton Ogburn, *The Marauders,* (New York: Harper, 1959), pp. 14–15. The 1st Air Commando was known as the 5318th Provisional Air Unit until 25 March 1944.

18. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 416–19.

19. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* pp. 178–80; McLynn, *The Burma Campaign,* pp. 242–44. See also Stilwell's diary entry for 18 Nov 1943, in which he sums up this discussion as "Long squabble over command. Finally told them, O.K. at Kamaing. Knocked down arguments of Giffard and Peirse [SEAC air commander]." (Stilwell's diary will hereafter be cited as *SD.*)

20. Stilwell, *SD*, entry for 18 Dec 1943, emphasis in original; Stilwell, *SP*, pp. 262–67.

21. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 71–81. The *54th* and *2d Divisions* arrived in Burma in stages throughout the first months of 1944. General Mutaguchi commanded the *18th Division* until being promoted to command of *Fifteenth Army*. In April 1944 the *18th* and *56th Divisions* came under the newly created *Thirty-Third Army*.

22. Ibid., pp. 75–81; A. J. Barker, *The March on Delhi* (Dehra Dun: Natraj, 1990), pp. 80–82.

23. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* pp. 217–18.

24. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 119–24; Stilwell, *SD*, entry for 22 Dec 1943. Sun Li-jen was a graduate of the Virginia Military Institute, while Liao had graduated from the French military academy at St. Cyr.

25. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 125–27.

26. Stilwell, *SD*, entry for 26 Dec 1943.

27. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 127–38.

28. Stilwell, *SP*, p. 277; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 133–34.

29. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 34–36; Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 64–65.

30. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 161–63; Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 427–31.

31. Stilwell, *SD*, entries for 30 and 31 Jan 1944; Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 427–31. The Ledo Road carried its first traffic to China on 28 Jan 1945, precisely 362 days after Wedemeyer's prediction.

32. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 427–31; See also Stilwell, *SD,* entries for 8, 17, and 20 Jan 1944, which show some of Stilwell's thinking regarding Boatner's mission. Axiom went first to London because Mountbatten reported to the British Chiefs of Staff. Only after obtaining their endorsement could the mission proceed to Washington. Boatner represented an American theater commander to his superiors in Washington, and therefore could bypass London. He later played an important role in resolving the Kojedo prison situation in 1952.

33. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* pp. 206–12; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 166–69; Stilwell, *SD*, entries for 15 and 20 Feb 1944.

34. Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 79–81; Stilwell, *SD*, entry for 21 Feb 1944.

35. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 142–48; Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 88–93.

36. Stilwell, *SD*, entries for 24 and 26 Feb 1944; Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 102–06.

37. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 148–55; See also Stilwell, *SD,* entries for 24 Feb to 2 Mar 1944, inclusive, for Stilwell's brief account of this operation.

38. Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 110–34.

39. Ibid.; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 155–59.

40. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 169–70.

41. Ibid.; Hough, *Mountbatten,* p. 191. Mountbatten was treated at the 20th General Hospital in Ledo. Dwight Eisenhower sustained a leg injury while in charge of SHAEF in September 1944, and Archibald Wavell, while leading ABDACOM, injured his back in Singapore in February 1942; neither man was hospitalized for any appreciable length of time with their injuries.

42. Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War,* pp. 193–94.

43. Ibid., pp. 194–96. The landing zones were named for the major commercial streets in London (Piccadilly), New York (Broadway), and Calcutta (Chowringhee).

44. Wingate laid out the stronghold concept in Special Force Commander's Training Note No. 8. It is quoted in full in Michael Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope* (London: Leo Cooper, 1971), pp. 282–88.

45. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* pp. 225–28; Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope,* pp. 21–24. The intelligence officer who took the photos was U.S. Army Air Forces Lt. Charles Russhon, who later was technical adviser on the first James Bond films. He arranged, among other things, the filming of *Goldfinger* at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

46. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* pp. 225–26.

47. Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope,* pp. 27–33; Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War,* pp. 207–08, has statistics on glider operations of the night 5–6 March 1944.

48. Allen, *Burma: The Longest War,* pp. 150–55, 188–90; Barker, *The March on Delhi,* pp. 15–16.

49. Barker, *The March on Delhi,* pp. 93–130. The 17th Indian Division was nicknamed the "Black Cats"; during the withdrawal they successfully fended off the *33d Division,* nicknamed "White Cats."

50. Ibid., pp. 120–25. See also Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* Appendixes 25 and 26, for details and statistics related to air transport operations in Burma and India from February through August 1944.The 5th Indian Division had no airborne training, and many of its men had never flown before.

51. Tulloch, *Wingate in Peace and War,* pp. 209–34, 265. See also Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope*, pp. 47–106. White City earned its name because of the white parachutes that festooned the surrounding jungle.

52. Ibid, pp. 235–41, 265. Upon hearing the news over the radio of Wingate's death, General Mutaguchi prayed for the soul "of this man in whom I had found my match." The nine people killed included Wingate, an aide, two British war correspondents, and five American aircrew. Individual bodies were unidentifiable after the crash and resulting fire. Because the majority of those lost were American, the commingled remains were sent to Arlington National Cemetery and buried in a common grave in 1950.

53. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* p. 197.

54. This and the preceding two paragraphs are based on Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 175–91; Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 136–220; and James C. McNaughton, *Nisei Linguists: Japanese-Americans in the Military Intelligence Service during World War II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army, 2006), pp. 276–80. Some of the Nisei with NCAC and the Marauders were from the same part of Kyushu where the *18th Division* had been raised.

55. Stilwell, *SD*, entries for 27–31 March 1944; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 176–77, 297–314.

56. Stilwell, *SD*, entry for 3 April 1944; Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* pp. 235–37.

57. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 297–312; Barker, *The March on Delhi,* pp. 170–93. See also Arthur Swinson, *The Battle of Kohima* (New York: Stein and Day, 1967), passim. The 7th Indian Division came from the Arakan, while XXXIII Corps HQ and 2d British Division came from southwest India, where they had been training for amphibious operations.

58. Stilwell, *SD*, entries for 13 April–6 May 1944; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 200–202.

59. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 223–25.

60. Ibid., pp. 204–13.

61. Stilwell, *SD,* entries for 1, 14, and 17 May.

62. Larrabee, *Commander in Chief,* p. 567; Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 229–44; Ogburn, *The Marauders,* pp. 245–64; Allen, *Burma: The Longest War,* pp. 362–68. The Japanese reinforcements came from the *56th Division.* The British 36th Division was available to Stilwell, but he refused to have it flown in to Myitkyina. Louis Allen, an intelligence officer in SEAC and later historian of the campaign, explained why: "After 'burning up' the Limeys, and with a dozen war correspondents describing to the world his great American triumph, it was unthinkable for Stilwell to call on the British to pick his chestnuts out of the fire."

63. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* p. 401; Ogburn, *The Marauders,* p. 266. The 1st Air Commando withdrew to refit at this time.

64. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 279–96, 401–08. U.S. L–5 aircraft provided a majority of these flights for the duration of Chindit operations. One of these missions was the first helicopter medevac in history, on 23–24 April 1944 near Aberdeen.

65. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 215–20.

66. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 408–09. See also Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope,* pp. 175–221. The capture of Mogaung was announced as a Chinese victory. "Chinese reported taking Mogaung," Calvert signaled in response. "My brigade now taking umbrage."

67. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 329–60; Barker, *The March on Delhi,* pp. 194–227; Swinson, *The Battle of Kohima,* pp. 105–245. See also Kirby and Slim. In 2013 a poll of scholars and visitors by Britain's National Army Museum named Imphal–Kohima the greatest battle ever fought by the British Army.

68. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* pp. 233, 238–48. See also Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* pp. 403–15 and Calvert, *Prisoners of Hope,* pp. 245–46 for Chindit conditions. This example of coalition politics is well discussed by Gary J. Bjorge, *Merrill's Marauders: Combined Operations in North Burma in 1944* (Fort Leavenworth, Kan., U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), passim.

69. Kirby, *The War Against Japan,* p. 415; Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* p. 244.

70. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory,* p. 244.

71. Romanus and Sunderland, *Time Runs out in CBI*, pp. 77–141; Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience,* pp. 510–11.

72. Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Command Problems,* p. 220.

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U.S. Army Art Spotlight

Sgt. Howard Brodie, *Under Fire*

pencil on paper, Hottorf, Germany, 1945

By Sarah Forgey

Within the U.S. Army Art Collection, certain works exemplify singular themes or emotions of the combat experience. Howard Brodie's World War II sketch *Under Fire* highlights the comfort that a fellow soldier can provide during a moment of extreme stress.

Howard Brodie (1915–2010) was an artist for *Yank* magazine during World War II, covering Guadalcanal and the European theater. While well-known for his combat sketches, Brodie is perhaps better remembered for his courtroom illustrations of significant twentieth-century events, including the trial of the anti–Vietnam War protesters dubbed the Chicago Seven, debates leading to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Watergate hearings. As a newspaper artist, Brodie also covered the Korean and Vietnam Wars and accompanied French Foreign Legion troops to Indochina. For his last assignment in the late 1990s, he sketched troops training at Fort Irwin, California.

Throughout his long and prolific career, Brodie captured raw emotion by producing quick, spontaneous drawings. According to his notes on this featured sketch, the stirring moment took place inside a grain shed "with 88's and tank fire (MG [machine gun] tracers and shells) coming through the walls." The two soldiers huddle together on the ground, one sobbing and the other embracing him. Brodie focuses on this personal interaction by omitting background details and by placing the two soldiers' faces at the peak of the compositional triangle, drawing the viewer's eye to the grief and compassion shared between the two. While the facial expressions of the soldiers are rendered in detail, their bodies are composed of rough lines, often dark and forceful, as if the artist was also caught up in the sensations of the event.

In an interview for the 2000 documentary *They Drew Fire*, Brodie recalled, "I remember the young soldier well, he screamed, he was just out of control and he screamed and so forth, and there was another soldier next to him who consoled him and embraced him. That was a moving moment for me, to see that compassion in combat. And these are the things that a person feels when he's in proximity to death, his buddy, that next human being, that person in the foxhole is the most important person in your life."[1]

Along with the rest of the *Yank* magazine sketches and cartoons from World War II, Brodie's work is part of the Army Art Collection and preserved at the Museum Support Center at Fort Belvoir, Virginia. As a captivating example of battlefield camaraderie, this sketch will be displayed in the inaugural art exhibit at the National Museum of the U.S. Army in spring 2020.

Sarah Forgey is the chief art curator of the U.S. Army Museum Enterprise.

Notes

1. Brian Lanker and Nicole Newman, *They Drew Fire: Combat Artists of World War II* (New York: TV Books, 2000), p. 133.

U.S. Army Art Collection

PREVIEW CHAPTER

CHAPTER 2:
OPENING MOVES
BATTLES NORTH AND WEST OF SAIGON

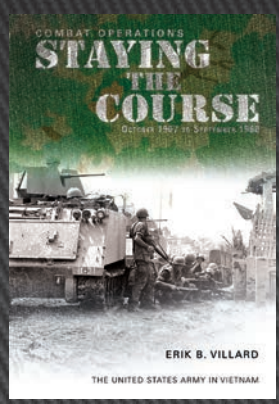
FROM *COMBAT OPERATIONS: STAYING THE COURSE, OCTOBER 1967 TO SEPTEMBER 1968*

By Erik B. Villard

Home to South Vietnam's capital, the III Corps Tactical Zone was in many ways the heart of the Republic of Vietnam. Consisting of eleven provinces spread across 200 square kilometers of forested hills, trackless jungle, marshland, small farms, and vast rubber plantations, the zone linked the nation's rice bowl—the Mekong Delta—with the rest of the country. Although the outlying provinces were sparsely populated, Saigon and the provinces adjacent to it—Gia Dinh, Long An, Hau Nghia, Binh Duong, and Bien Hoa—contained about a third of the nation's population as well as the core of its political administration and logistical infrastructure. Neither side believed that the Republic of Vietnam could survive without Saigon, and hence both had striven to control it since the insurrection's earliest days.

By the time U.S. ground troops arrived in 1965, the zone was clearly in trouble. The government maintained a firm grip inside the capital, but otherwise Saigon was a city besieged. Communist agents wielded significant influence over much of the region's population and territory. Supporting them were several major enemy units that staged out of a series of heavily fortified bases that virtually ringed the city. With Communist forces farther south interfering with the flow of food from the Mekong Delta into the city, the inhabitants lived in a state of perpetual crisis. U.S. Army General Westmoreland, the commander of Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV), responded by deploying many of the troops that arrived from the United States in 1965 to guard the approaches to the city. Initial priority had gone to securing the four key installations without which U.S. intervention in South Vietnam would not be possible—the air bases at Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa (six and thirty kilometers from Saigon, respectively), the port of Vung Tau about sixty kilometers to the southeast, and the port of Saigon itself, the nation's largest. As his numbers grew, he had launched a series of raids into the enemy bases that threatened the city from the north and northwest, particularly War Zone C in Tay Ninh Province and War Zone D centered in Phuoc Thanh Province. He likewise had sought to interfere with the flow of supplies from Cambodia into III Corps (*Map 4*).[1]

Combat Operations: Staying the Course, October 1967 to September 1968



U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2017
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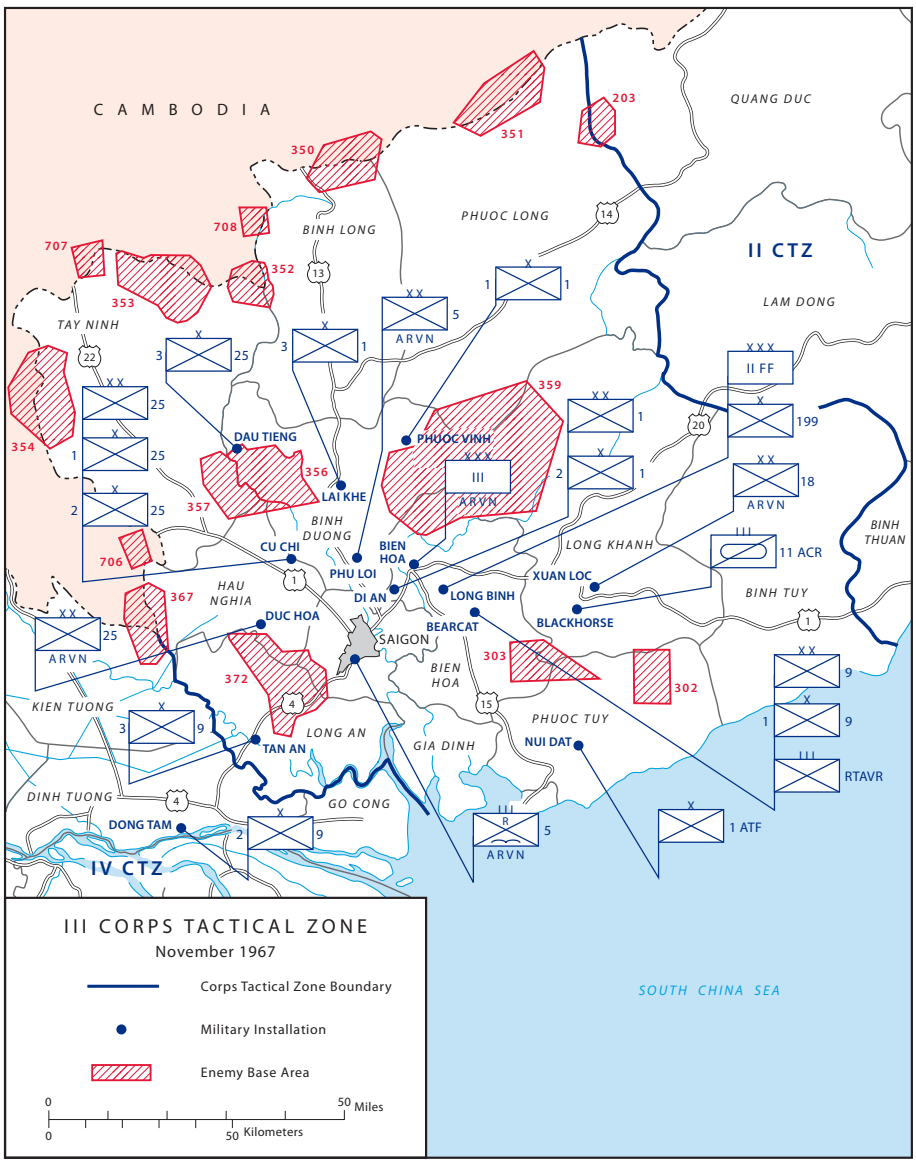


Map 4

By 1966 a web of U.S. installations ringed Saigon, with Westmoreland pushing farther into the interior. By 1967, the general had sufficient numbers to launch a series of major offensives into War Zone C, the most notable of which was Operation Junction City. These actions had bloodied the enemy and kept him off balance as Westmoreland pushed the ring of U.S. camps and forward logistical areas farther out from Saigon, thereby laying the groundwork for additional thrusts toward the Cambodian border on a more sustained basis. Guiding all these operations was Westmoreland's notion that the best way to defend Saigon was to push into the outer provinces of III Corps north and west of Saigon to destroy the Viet Cong logistical system as close to the Cambodian border as possible. This approach would compel enemy main force units to give battle in remote areas, thereby relieving pressure on the South Vietnamese pacification effort and sparing the population from the worst of the fighting.

As U.S. soldiers had expanded the shield out from Saigon, South Vietnamese forces had filled in behind to execute the second element of allied strategy—that of territorial control. The allies had declared the provinces immediately adjacent to Saigon to be National Priority provinces for the receipt of pacification resources. Although the Vietnamese carried the brunt of this effort, U.S. combat forces had contributed by executing a myriad of military and security operations in and around areas targeted for pacification, and by performing humanitarian and civil improvement activities collectively known as civic action. By late 1967, the Americans had made their presence felt, but the allies were still locked in an as-yet indecisive politico-military conflict with the enemy, fighting the same Communist formations over the same pieces of ground. Control over, and the support of, the rural inhabitants continued to hang in the balance.

Planning the Dry Season Offensive

As the MACV commander solidified his plans in the fall of 1967, weather continued to dominate the ebb and flow of events. The dry season, which brought firm ground and clear skies from October to May, was just beginning. This was the traditional time for the allies to launch their major offensives into the interior. These attacks would have to be largely completed by the time seasonal rains complicated the movement of men and materiel between May and October.

The man responsible for U.S. forces in the III Corps Tactical Zone was the commander of II Field Force, Lt. Gen. Frederick C. Weyand. A lanky Californian widely respected in U.S. military circles, Weyand controlled thirty-three U.S. Army and six Free World forces combat maneuver battalions organized into three infantry divisions and several independent brigade-size elements. He arrayed these forces in ten major bases that formed a rough circle around Saigon. Situated thirty and sixty kilometers out from the city, the bases were close enough to defend the approaches to Saigon while still remaining in striking distance of the enemy bases and units clustered in III Corps' outer provinces. Two brigades of the 9th Infantry Division screened the flat and fertile provinces to the south of Saigon and Highway 4, which was the main line of communications to the Mekong Delta. The 3d Brigade of the 9th Infantry Division, the Royal Thai Army Volunteer Regiment, the 11th

Armored Cavalry, and the 1st Australian Task Force screened the provinces to the east and southeast of Saigon. Immediately outside the capital itself, the 199th Infantry Brigade (Light) was preparing to relocate from Gia Dinh Province to Bien Hoa Province, where it would help the 1st Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division guard the important Bien Hoa–Long Binh military complex from Communist units based in the wilderness known as War Zone D north of the Dong Nai River. Farther north and west, the 1st Infantry Division operated along Highway 13, an all-weather, two-lane road that traveled through almost 130 kilometers of farmlands, rubber plantations, and dense forest near the Cambodian border. Finally, to the west of Saigon, the 25th Infantry Division performed a mix of pacification and offensive operations. Backing those maneuver units were twenty-one additional U.S. Army combat battalions representing two artillery groups, an air cavalry squadron, a helicopter-rich aviation group, and an engineer group. Already numbering about 90,000 men, II Field Force expected the arrival of the rest of the 101st Airborne Division around the turn of the year.[2]

In addition to his duties as combat commander of II Field Force, General Weyand also served as the senior military adviser to Lt. Gen. Le Nguyen Khang, head of South Vietnam's III Corps. Considered one of the best generals in the South Vietnamese Army, Khang controlled some 45,000 regulars organized around three light infantry divisions (the 5th, 18th, and 25th), a ranger group, an armored cavalry squadron, and a handful of independent artillery groups. He allocated roughly a third of his infantry battalions to province chiefs who used them to defend Revolutionary Development areas. The rest of the regulars performed reserve, garrison, and limited offensive operations. Also present in III Corps, but under the command of the province chiefs and not the corps commander, were 45,000 Regional and Popular Forces soldiers who performed security and pacification support duties.[3]

General Weyand

For the 1967–1968 dry season, Westmoreland and Weyand intended to mount a large-scale offensive to cut the three main infiltration routes that entered III Corps from Cambodia. The 1st and 3d Brigades of the 1st Infantry Division and the bulk of the 11th Armored Cavalry would push into Binh Long Province to cut the Adams Trail. This route began at Base Area 351 on the Cambodian side of the Phuoc Long provincial border, tunneled its way south through a triple-canopy rainforest, skirted the eastern edge of Song Be, and then passed through the western half of War Zone D. Operated by the *70th Rear Service Group*, the trail terminated in northern Bien Hoa Province at a base area known to the Americans as the Catcher's Mitt.

Once the 2d and 3d Brigades of the 101st Airborne Division had arrived from the United States around the end of the year, Weyand planned to attack the enemy's second major trail network, the Serges Jungle Highway. Operated by the *86th Rear Service Group*, this route began some forty kilometers west of the Adams Trail on the boundary line between Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces. It ran south along the full length of the provincial border and then veered east into War Zone D.

Meanwhile, two brigades from the 25th Infantry Division would strike northwest to interdict the third corridor, the Saigon River Trail. This route wound its way from Cambodia through Tay Ninh and Binh Dinh Provinces to the outskirts of Saigon. Success against the Saigon River corridor was critical, as it was the largest and most important of the three routes. If all went according to schedule, by January 1968 General Westmoreland would have seven U.S. combat brigades arrayed across the northern rim of III Corps to interdict the three routes that threatened Saigon from the north and west. Given the enemy's developing plans—as yet undetected by the allies—to attack Saigon in the coming year, the outcome of these operations would have particular significance.[4]

The Other Side of the Hill

Just as Westmoreland had plans for the upcoming dry season, so too did the enemy, and as it turned out, these ran directly counter to MACV's design. When Lt. Gen. Hoang Van Thai had assumed command of the *Central Office for South Vietnam (COSVN)* in September 1967, he found that the *B2 Front*'s staff had already developed a scheme for the coming months. The plan called for an offensive in an area the Communists termed *Military Region 10*, essentially Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces—two of the three provinces that Westmoreland intended to attack. Just as the allies wanted to cut the Adams and Serges Trails, *B2 Front* wanted to further secure and expand those networks by eliminating one or more of the border surveillance camps that kept tabs on those infiltration routes. Since the Politburo had yet to decide on the timing and objectives of the general offensive–general uprising, Thai decided to go ahead with the regional offensive. Besides, any success in securing the trails would strengthen his position if and when the government in Hanoi ordered a general offensive.

Thai had at his disposal some 50,000 combat soldiers and 10,000 rear service troops that operated within the territorial limits of III Corps and the northeastern corner of IV Corps. His primary strike force consisted of three light infantry divisions each with a strength of between 6,000 to

8,000 soldiers. The *7th People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) Division* and the *9th People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) Division* ranged across the provinces to the north of Saigon, while the *5th PLAF Division* operated to the east of the capital. *COSVN* also controlled the *101st PAVN Regiment*, a unit recently detached from the *7th Division* to defend the Iron Triangle area of southwestern Binh Duong Province. The heavily forested base area, located between Phu Cuong to the south and Lai Khe to the north, with the Saigon River to its west and Highway 13 to its east, contained a maze of underground tunnels and bunkers that the enemy intended to use as a forward staging area for an eventual assault on Saigon. The *Dong Nai Regiment*, another unit directly controlled by *COSVN*, guarded the western approaches to War Zone D. A dozen local force battalions and many small guerrilla units operated under provincial or subregion control, most within twenty kilometers of Saigon. Adding to Thai's strength were the *69th Artillery Group*, which controlled the *84A PLAF Artillery Regiment*, armed with 122-mm. rockets and 120-mm. mortars, and the *52d* and *58th PLAF Artillery Battalions*, armed with 120-mm. mortars.[5]

General Thai chose the *9th PLAF Division*, his most experienced fighting force, to spearhead the offensive in Binh Long Province. Commanded by Senior Col. Hoang Cam, an experienced officer who had fought U.S. forces many times over the past two years, the three-regiment *9th Division* would receive support from the *84A PLAF Artillery Regiment* and the *208th Anti-Aircraft Battalion,* the later armed with dozens of 12.7-mm. heavy machine guns. Two regiments from the *5th PLAF Division*, the *88th PAVN* and the *275th PLAF*, would take the lead role in neighboring Phuoc Long Province. Finally, General Thai would use part of his *7th Division*, the *165th PAVN Regiment*, to interdict Highway 13 in the region around An Loc. *COSVN*'s remaining main force regiments—the *101st PAVN*, the *141st PAVN*, the *274th PLAF*, and the *Dong Nai*—were to spend the final months of 1967 defending base areas and lines of communications in central III Corps.[6]

Thai's initial target was Loc Ninh, a district capital in Binh Long Province that the *9th Division* had attempted to overrun in late 1966. The town of 6,000 inhabitants was located in the middle of a large rubber plantation roughly twelve kilometers south of the border. A border surveillance camp and a small airfield lay on the southeastern edge of town. The camp contained eleven U.S. Special Forces soldiers and around 400 Montagnard CIDG troops, their heaviest weapons being several 81-mm. and 4.2-inch mortars. Located at the northwest end of the airfield was a South Vietnamese district headquarters, a figure-eight compound of sandbags and wooden bunkers that was manned by around 200 Regional Forces soldiers, the South Vietnamese district chief, and one U.S. adviser. A few mortars and machine guns were their main firepower.[7]

General Thai had several reasons for choosing Loc Ninh as the initial target of *COSVN*'s winter-spring offensive. First, he wanted to embarrass the newly elected President Thieu by capturing a district capital just days before he was scheduled to take office. Second, Thai wanted to neutralize the Special Forces camp at Loc Ninh because it served as a staging point for intelligence-gathering missions along the border. Finally, the operation would give Colonel Cam and his staff their first chance to command the entire *9th Division* in battle. As enervating as guerrilla warfare was for the allies, Communist leaders believed that only large conventional

An overview of a CIDG compound and airstrip at Loc Ninh

forces would be able to destroy allied military forces and conquer South Vietnam. The operation would thus be a major step for *COSVN* on its quest to develop a conventional army that could execute complex, corps-size campaigns.[8]

The terrain around the district capital was well suited for the fight that Cam envisioned. Neat rows of mature rubber trees obscured the low rolling hills and gently flowing streams yet allowed easy movement for his foot soldiers. Some of the plantations were still in operation, while others had been abandoned during the war. The high weeds and tangled underbrush that choked these neglected sections offered extra opportunities for concealment. Beyond the plantations, a sea of jungle stretched outward in every direction. The tall trees and thick vegetation hid an elaborate network of trails that Colonel Cam could use to move troops rapidly from one part of the battlefield to another and with small risk of being detected. Moreover, there were few clearings in the jungle large enough to accommodate helicopters, so his troops would have an easier time predicting where the Americans were likely to land their forces. With both the Americans and the Communists planning operations in Binh Long Province, the stage was set for a major confrontation.[9]

The Battle for Loc Ninh

General Weyand officially launched his dry season campaign on 29 September 1967 with Operation Shenandoah II—a two-brigade effort to secure and repair the entire length of Highway 13. The II Field Force commander needed to have the highway reliably open at least during the day before he could start placing his brigades along the Cambodian border. Simply put, the airfields in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces were too small and too few in number to handle the quantity of supplies he would need for sustained combat operations.

During the first weeks of October, the 1st and 3d Brigades from Maj. Gen. John H. Hay Jr.'s 1st Division secured the length of highway between Lai Khe and Chon Thanh along the border of Binh Duong and Binh Long Provinces. His forces also swept through the Long Nguyen Secret Zone, an enemy base area some fifty kilometers north of Saigon just west of the road. This action inadvertently interfered with the enemy's plans. As it happened, Colonel Cam's most reliable unit, the *271st Regiment*, was in the Long Nguyen Secret Zone, waiting for a rice shipment as it returned from a mission in central Binh Duong Province. The commander of the *271st Regiment*, feeling that there was no way to evade the Americans, struck first. On 17 October, the *271st Regiment* lured the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, into a devastating ambush near Ong Thanh, a small stream near the Binh Duong–Binh Long boundary. The enemy killed fifty-six U.S. soldiers, but the *271st Regiment* lost many of its men to air and artillery strikes as it fled north to Cambodia after the battle. As a result, the battered and exhausted unit was in no condition to fight in the upcoming campaign.[10]

Generals Westmoreland and Hay

The next stage of Shenandoah II called for General Hay's 1st and 3d Brigades to secure Highway 13 through An Loc, Binh Long's capital, and up to Loc Ninh twenty-five kilometers farther north. Hay could then build a stockpile of supplies at Quan Loi, a forward base just east of An Loc, giving him the resources to support several brigades in the formerly inaccessible territory of northern Binh Long Province. Weyand put these plans on hold, however, as evidence grew that *COSVN* was preparing to launch a major offensive in northern III Corps.[11]

In late September and early October, small teams of Montagnard irregulars led by U.S. Special Forces soldiers based at the Loc Ninh border surveillance camp had discovered an engineer company from the *9th Division* building what appeared to be a large hospital on the Song Be River several kilometers west of town. The patrols had also found elements of the *84A Artillery Regiment* camped within a few kilometers of Loc Ninh. This unit never operated without significant backup and usually only appeared during major battles. Most ominous of all, the allies obtained a document that claimed the *9th Division* would begin a major operation in Binh Long Prov-

ince on or about 25 October. These findings, supplemented by radio intercepts, aerial infrared scans, and the recent clash with the *271st Regiment*, led General Weyand to warn II Field Force units on 22 October that there was a "definite threat" to Loc Ninh and possibly to Song Be, a district capital in Phuoc Long Province some forty kilometers to the east. Weyand instructed General Hay to prepare a contingency plan should he need to defend either district capital.[12]

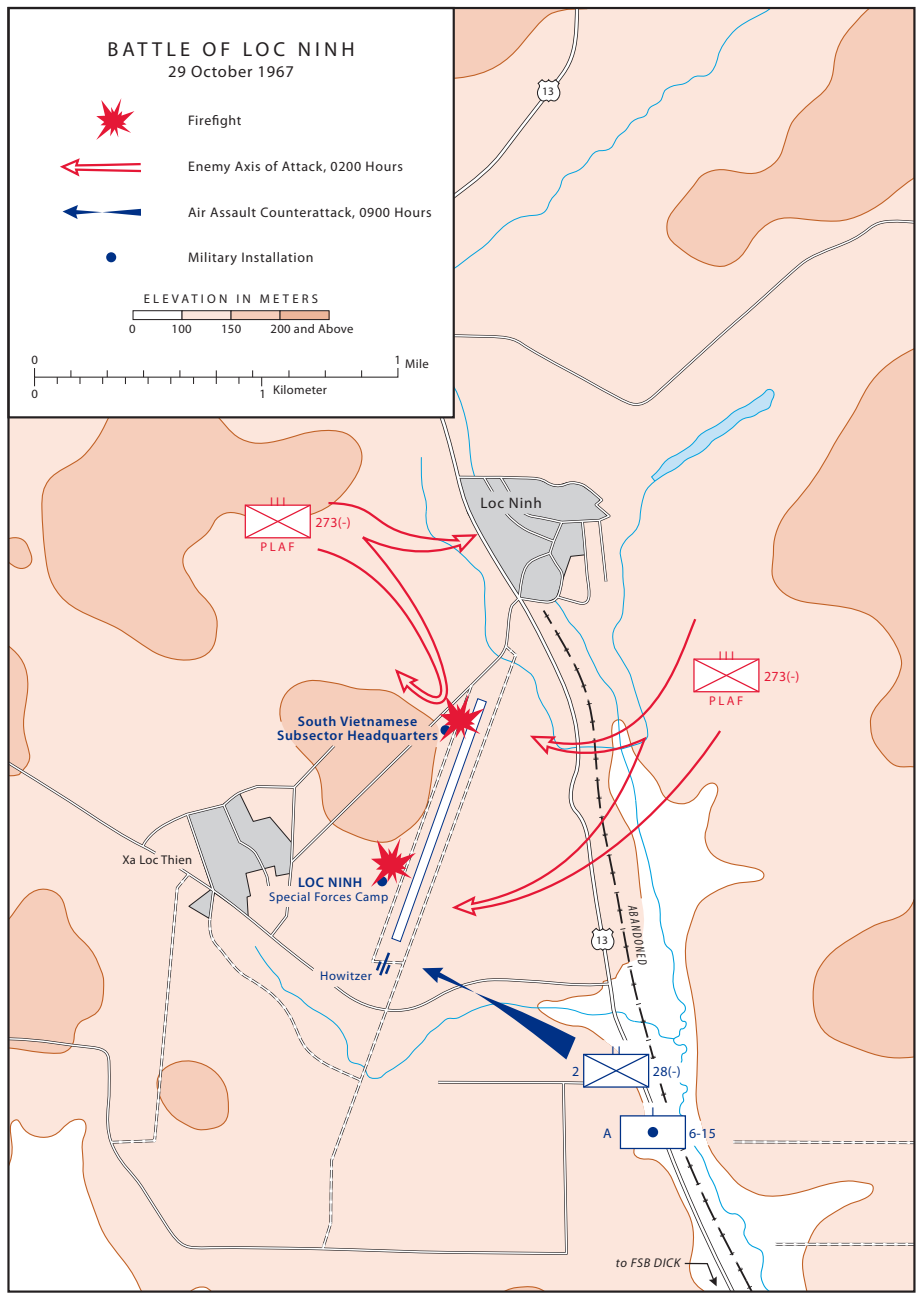
Colonel Cam opened the Communist dry season campaign in *Military Region 10* shortly after midnight on 27 October when the *88th Regiment* attacked Song Be. Mortar crews shelled the town, while two North Vietnamese battalions attacked the base camp of the South Vietnamese 5th Division that was located several kilometers southeast of the capital. Although the camp contained no more than 200 soldiers, their new battalion commander proved to be an aggressive leader. The government troops stood their ground with help from U.S. fighter-bombers and eventually threw the enemy back into the forest. When the defenders searched the battlefield at first light, they found 134 North Vietnamese dead as well as 2 wounded soldiers. Government troops also collected seventy-three abandoned weapons, including three flamethrowers and ten machine guns. South Vietnamese losses amounted to twelve killed, of whom seven were civilian laborers.[13]

Later that day, a South Vietnamese ranger battalion flew into Song Be, as did the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, a unit from the 1st Infantry Division that was based at Lai Khe in southern Binh Duong Province. When its commander, Lt. Col. Richard E. Cavazos, led his men through the surrounding countryside, they found recently used trails but no enemy soldiers. With the scent gone cold, the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, returned to Lai Khe on the afternoon of 28 October.[14]

After darkness had fallen, Colonel Cam unleashed the *9th Division* against Loc Ninh. At approximately one hour past midnight, a salvo of 122-mm. rockets and 82-mm. and 120-mm. mortar rounds slammed into the Special Forces camp and the South Vietnamese district headquarters. Some hit the town and set it ablaze. The defenders responded with their own mortar fire as news of the attack flashed from Loc Ninh to MACV headquarters (*Map 5*).

An hour later, a group of sappers emerged from the rubber trees west of the district headquarters. They sprinted across the open ground and detonated their satchel charges in the wire on the northern side of the compound before the defenders could drive them off. Two battalions from the *273d Regiment* then charged out of the trees and scrambled through the openings. Buckling under the weight of the onslaught, the defenders pulled back into the southern square of the compound through a narrow connecting passage where they continued the fight.

First on the scene to help the defenders was a pair of U.S. Army UH–1B Huey helicopter gunships, each equipped with side-mounted, forward-oriented 7.62-mm. machine guns. The gunships strafed the Viet



Map 5

Cong troops attacking the compound, using the patchwork of burning fires on the ground to orient their runs. The helicopters were soon joined by an AC–47 Spooky, a two-engine transport aircraft of World War II vintage that had been modified to carry a trio of six-barreled 7.62-mm. miniguns. The motorized Gatling-style guns that pointed out the left side of the aircraft were each capable of firing 6,000 rounds a minute. As the lumbering aircraft banked into a shallow counterclockwise turn, the weapons roared to life, sending ribbons of fire into the trees that concealed the enemy reserve force.

The aerial punishment was savage to behold but had no effect on the enemy soldiers who were already inside the compound. In desperation, the South Vietnamese district chief called an artillery barrage down on his own position. The shells he requested were not ordinary ones, however. The high-explosive rounds were armed with proximity fuses. Detonated by a radio signal a fraction of a second before hitting the ground, the shells filled the air with white-hot fragments that did no harm to the defenders in their bunkers but sowed havoc on the Viet Cong fighting in the open. When the barrage ended, U.S. F–100 Super Sabre fighter-bombers dropped cluster bombs into the trees west of the compound to prevent enemy reinforcements from coming up. The combination of artillery and air strikes finally broke the enemy's endurance. The main body of the *273d Regiment* withdrew around 0400.[15]

When the sun rose, the South Vietnamese defenders discovered that some of the bunkers in their compound still contained Viet Cong troops. The worn-out Regional Forces soldiers waited until a Montagnard company from the Special Forces camp and two companies of regulars flown in from the South Vietnamese 5th Infantry Division showed up to finish the job. The U.S. advisers brought armloads of M72 light antitank weapons from their camp to help clear out the bunkers. The job took several hours to complete; not a single Viet Cong soldier surrendered.


U.S. Air Force

An AC–47 Spooky gunship at Nha Trang Air Base

Of the 135 enemy bodies that the allies recovered in Loc Ninh after the battle, 92 came from the northern half of the district compound. The South Vietnamese lost eight killed and thirty-three wounded.[16]

Later that morning, the U.S. 1st Infantry Division sent a battery of 105-mm. howitzers and two companies from the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, to set up a firebase near the southwest corner of Loc Ninh's airstrip. The battery went into action around 0950. Its first job was to soften up a landing zone some 3,500 meters to the northwest near the hamlet of Srok Silamite for Colonel Cavazos' 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry. Cavazos landed his battalion unopposed a short time later. His infantrymen quickly staked out a defensive perimeter and began digging bunkers as helicopters flew in a battery of 105-mm. howitzers, the weapons and all of their ammunition slung like yo-yos on a rope beneath the aircraft.[17]

At 1200, one of the Montagnard companies from Loc Ninh radioed that it had made contact with a North Vietnamese platoon some 1,000 meters to the north of the landing zone. Cavazos immediately sent Company C to trap the enemy. Moving quickly through the evenly spaced rubber trees, his company slammed into the enemy platoon from behind, killing nine soldiers and dispersing the rest. When two more North Vietnamese platoons counterattacked, Cavazos sent Company D to turn the enemy's flank. The outnumbered Communists soon fled, leaving behind five more bodies. Captured documents indicated that the men were from the *165th PAVN Regiment,* two battalions of which General Thai had assigned to Colonel Cam, along with several hundred fillers from the *141st Regiment,* to make up for the loss of the *271st Regiment*.[18]

When Colonel Cam learned that U.S. units were searching the rubber

A soldier carrying an M72 antitank weapon

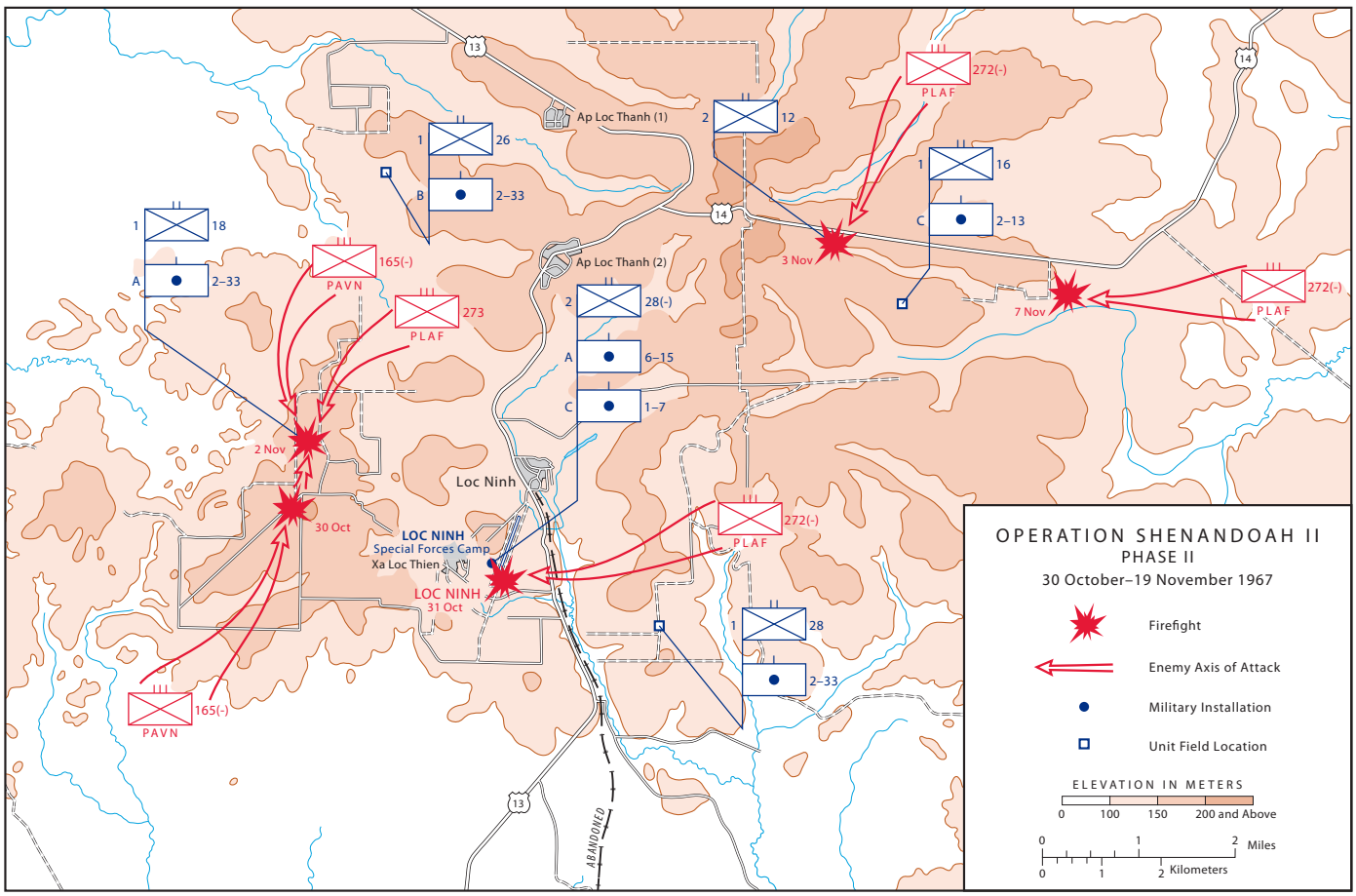
trees four kilometers from Loc Ninh, he dispatched more troops to engage them. The following morning, a battalion from the *165th Regiment* pounced on Company A from the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, as it was reconnoitering the area around the landing zone. Cavazos immediately sent Company D and a company of Montagnards to the rescue. The relief force helped Company A push the enemy back to a low hill where the North Vietnamese soldiers took refuge in some shallow irrigation trenches. The allied soldiers gave air strikes and helicopter gunships a chance to soften up the hill before they resumed their advance (*Map 6*).

The lightly armed Montagnards rarely got the chance to overpower an entire North Vietnamese battalion, so they attacked with particular zeal. Many used up their ammunition so quickly that they began picking up AK47 and RPD light machine guns from dead enemy soldiers to continue the fight. One soldier even snatched a .45-caliber pistol from a surprised U.S. officer and then charged a North Vietnamese machine gunner who was pinned down under heavy fire. When the pistol failed to chamber a round, the Montagnard soldier pistol-whipped the man senseless.[19]

The ferocity of the charge proved too much for the North Vietnamese. They fled into a gully where many died from a rain of artillery shells, cluster bombs, and napalm canisters. The allies found eighty-three enemy dead and captured thirty-two weapons.[20]

General Hay pored over the intelligence that trickled into the 1st Division headquarters looking for signs of the enemy's next move. From captured documents and prisoner interrogation reports, Hay knew that he faced the *165th* and *273d Regiments* along with elements from the *141st Regiment*. The *88th Regiment* remained a threat to Song Be, and Hay was now learning that the headquarters of the *5th PLAF Division* and its *275th Regiment* were marching toward that area as well. There were also signs that the *5th Division* had taken operational control of the *88th Regiment*, raising the possibility that the enemy might open a new front in Phuoc Long Province while the *9th Division* continued its campaign in Binh Long. For the moment, however, Hay's greatest concern was another attack on Loc Ninh.[21]

Hay ordered the commander of the 1st Brigade, Col. George E. Newman, to move his headquarters to Quan Loi, a staging area and airstrip in central Binh Long Province, where he would take charge of the coming fight. At that point, the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, was west of the district capital, while a company from the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, guarded the artillery firebase at the airfield. Colonel Newman's 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, and the remainder of the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, waited at Quan Loi.[22]



Map 6

Soldiers prepare to load a 106-mm. recoilless rifle.

Colonel Newman did not have long to wait for Cam's next move. Shortly after midnight on 31 October, a hail of rockets and mortar shells crashed into the district compound, the Special Forces camp, and the 1st Division artillery firebase at the south end of the Loc Ninh airfield. The bombardment was more accurate than it had been two nights before. At the Special Forces camp, no fewer than six 122-mm. rockets exploded inside or near the compound in the opening moments of the battle. As the barrage tapered off, a swarm of helicopter gunships and a Spooky arrived over Loc Ninh to strafe the surrounding forests. They were met by blistering fire from the heavy machine guns of the *208th Anti-Aircraft Battalion*; one forward air controller later said it was the heaviest antiaircraft fire he had ever seen in Vietnam.[23]

Two hours later, several hundred troops from the *272d Regiment* emerged from the tree line on the eastern side of the airfield. They came under interlocking fire from the two allied camps on the west side of the runway and the 1st Division outpost at the south end. The American artillerymen exploded proximity-fuse shells over the heads of the advancing soldiers, while the infantrymen at the firebase fired directly at them with three 106-mm. recoilless rifles and a pair of .50-caliber machine guns.[24]

Although the enemy took terrible losses, several dozen soldiers made it across the airfield and attacked the district headquarters compound. Using straw mats to slither over the concertina wire that surrounded the headquarters, the platoon-size force fought its way into the compound. With no more Viet Cong troops coming up behind to help them, however, the group retreated less than twenty minutes later. The fighting continued until dawn when the *272d Regiment* withdrew east, leaving behind 110 dead. Friendly losses came to nine killed and fifty-nine wounded.[25]

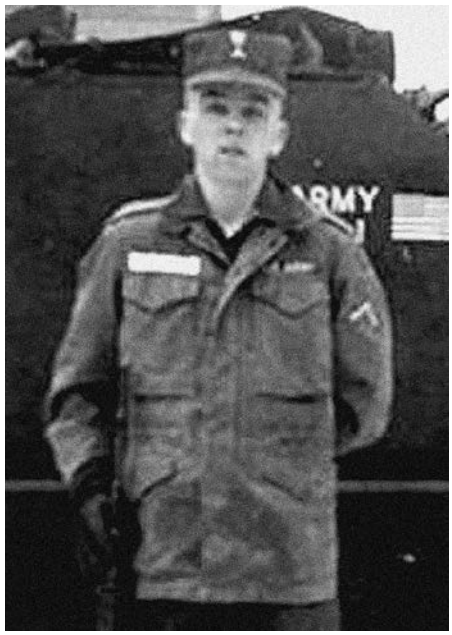
The defenders did not realize it at the time, but they were the recipients of some good luck that night. The *165th Regiment* had been scheduled to join the attack, but its guides had become lost in the seemingly endless rows of rubber trees. The regiment never made it to the fight.[26]

At first light, Colonel Newman organized a pursuit of the *272d Regiment* by sending the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. James F. Cochran III, into a clearing two kilometers southeast of Loc Ninh. The unit built a sturdy firebase using sandbags and wood-reinforced bunkers before going in search of the enemy. Over the next two days, patrols from the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, killed a total of eleven enemy soldiers, but the main body of the *272d* remained out of sight.[27]

On the evening of 1 November, elements from the *84A Artillery Regiment* hit Loc Ninh with mortar and rocket fire. When the barrage ended, a battalion from *272d Regiment* peppered the district compound with machine gun fire. The attacks were a ruse. Cam revealed his true hand around thirty minutes after midnight when 82-mm. mortar shells began to pummel the firebase of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry. From the ambush teams that Colonel Cavazos had placed on nearby trails he learned that hundreds of Viet Cong were converging on the firebase. After making their hushed radio calls, the ambush teams detonated the claymore mines that they had hidden along the trails, shredding dozens of unwary Viet Cong troops. The scouts then slunk away as the enemy columns pressed on toward their target.[28]

When the Viet Cong reached the firebase, they raked it with small arms fire, first from one direction and then from another, to provoke the Americans into firing back and thus reveal their positions. The trick failed because Cavazos had already warned his men to hold their fire. They could see by the light of the parachute flares now drifting down that the ground attack had not yet begun. When enemy mortar crews went into action, Cavazos brought in helicopter gunships to silence them. When U.S. fighter-bombers swooped in to drop their ordnance, at least twelve Viet Cong heavy machine guns blasted back in defiance, sending streams of deadly green tracers into the sky. The fighters immediately focused on the new threat and took out the antiaircraft weapons with several well-aimed bombing runs.

At 0415, the *273d Regiment* finally launched its main assault. Several



Robert Stryker (shown here as a private)

hundred screaming soldiers charged the perimeter. Cavazos now turned his men loose. Claymore mines and machine guns scythed into the advancing force, killing many attackers, including three Viet Cong soldiers who were armed with Soviet-made flamethrowers. The defensive fire was simply too much and the *273d Regiment* called off the attack thirty minutes later. Taking advantage of what darkness remained, the depleted regiment slipped away toward Cambodia.

The next morning, the Americans recovered 263 enemy dead from the battlefield. Numerous drag marks and blood trails hinted at even greater losses for the *273d Regiment*, now on the verge of being combat ineffective. U.S. losses were remarkably light: one killed and eight wounded. Colonel Cavazos had executed a nearly textbook example of how to defeat a numerically superior enemy force at night through a combination of timely intelligence, excellent troop discipline, a well-organized defense, and accurate supporting fire.[29]

Seeing that Cam was eager for a fight, General Hay gave Colonel Newman operational control over the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, from the 3d Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division. Commanded by Lt. Col. Arthur D. Stigall, the battalion made an unopposed helicopter landing four kilometers northwest of Loc Ninh on 2 November. Through General Weyand, Hay also gave Newman control over the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, from the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division. Led by Lt. Col. Ralph D. Tice, the unit made an uncontested landing six kilometers northeast of Loc Ninh on the same day. With their arrival, four U.S. infantry battalions now formed a box around Loc Ninh. Confident that the town now had enough men to repel another attack, and with a South Vietnamese ranger battalion set to arrive there the following day, Hay's next step was to locate the three enemy regiments still lurking somewhere near the district capital.[30]

Cam lost no time going on the attack. That evening he sent the *1st Battalion* of the *272d Regiment* to assault the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, northeast of town, hoping that the firebase would be only half built. Colonel Tice and his men worked quickly, however, finishing their foxholes and bunkers by 0230 when the enemy attacked. Unable to close in on the position and punished by air and artillery strikes, the enemy withdrew from the field around 0400. He left fifty-seven dead on the field, and seven wounded Viet Cong soldiers became prisoners of war. American losses came to four killed.[31]

When the next several days passed without contact, Newman used the lull to rearrange his forces. On 6 November, he ordered the 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, to dismantle its firebase northwest of Loc Ninh where there had been no enemy sightings and to establish a new base northeast of town. Newman instructed the unit's commander, Colonel Stigall, to probe eastward where he thought the *272d Regiment* was regrouping. Just south of Stigall's location, the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, continued to shield the eastern approaches to Loc Ninh. With two of Newman's battalions interposed between the Viet Cong and the district capital, he felt at liberty to move the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, from Loc Ninh back to Quan Loi and to fly the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, east to Song Be just in case Cam was tempted to move in that direction. A portion of the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, remained in Loc Ninh to man the artillery base at the airfield.[32]

Stigall began his search for the *272d Regiment* on the morning of 7 November. Leaving Company A to guard his new base, he marched the rest of his battalion west down a dirt road flanked on the left by a plantation and on the right by jungle. Other than an occasional sniper round whipping through the air, there was no sign of the enemy.

At 1305, three hours into the march, the colonel decided to turn his column northeast into the rubber trees. The lead company had barely entered the forest when dozens of Viet Cong soldiers from the *3d Battalion, 272d Regiment,* sprang their ambush. Enemy small arms and machine guns raked the exposed Americans crowded on the road. A salvo of rocket-propelled grenades killed Stigall and his battalion command group. Enemy fire also wounded two of his company commanders and put most of the U.S. radios out of action.

One of the few officers remaining was the commander of Company D, Capt. Raymond H. Dobbins, who happened to be at the rear of the column and thus outside the main killing zone. When enemy soldiers attempted to curl around Company D's position to roll up the left flank of the American line, Dobbins repositioned some of his men to block the maneuver. One of those men was Sgt. Robert F. Stryker of Company C, who helped foil the assault with well-aimed shots from his M79 grenade launcher. Later he threw himself on a grenade just before it exploded, sacrificing his own life to save several wounded comrades. For his actions he received the Medal of Honor.[33]

After checking the Viet Cong flanking attack, Captain Dobbins assumed temporary command of the battalion, calling in air and artillery strikes as he reorganized his men and moved them back some one hundred meters to a more defensible position on higher ground. The enemy fought for another hour before breaking contact, leaving behind sixty-six of his dead. The 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry, had sustained eighteen killed and twenty-two wounded. After flying out those casualties, bringing in new supplies, and reorganizing the battalion,

Colonel Newman decided that the unit was still capable of performing its mission, and so kept it in the field. When no further contact with the enemy took place around Loc Ninh over the next few days, General Hay concluded that the battle-worn units of the *9th Division* were heading back to Cambodia. The week-long battle for Loc Ninh was over.[34]

Second Wave at Song Be and Bo Duc

Even as the *9th PLAF Division* began withdrawing from Loc Ninh, elements of the *5th PLAF Division* were massing near Song Be town, some forty kilometers to the east. The *275th Regiment* arrived from War Zone D in southern Phuoc Long Province to join the *88th Regiment,* now attached to the *5th Division*. The second phase of *Military Region 10*'s campaign to improve the security of Communist lines of communications into III Corps was about to unfold.

On the morning of 6 November, elements from the *275th Regiment* ambushed a company from the South Vietnamese 5th Infantry Division that was stationed south of Song Be. The enemy continued the fight even when South Vietnamese reinforcements arrived. The two sides became intermingled, preventing the allies from using air and artillery strikes, but the government soldiers eventually prevailed. They claimed to have killed 265 enemy soldiers. That figure is in doubt because airpower and artillery, which together usually inflict the most casualties in a battle, played little or no role here. Whatever the truth, South Vietnamese losses were significant: fifty-four dead, fifty-five wounded, and fifteen missing in action.[35]

General Weyand thought something big might be brewing because the *275th Regiment* did not usually operate this far to the north. With General Hay's 1st and 3d Brigades of the 1st Infantry Division fully committed to Binh Long Province, Weyand ordered two battalions from the 25th Infantry Division to sweep the area around Song Be. After two fruitless weeks of searching, he called off the effort and returned the two battalions to their parent brigades.[36]

An F–100D Super Sabre releases a napalm bomb over a rain forest canopy in South Vietnam.

Just as the two battalions left Song Be, trail watchers observed a new enemy regiment (later identified as the *271st Regiment*) moving into the area. They also detected a large number of Communist troops building fortifications near Bu Gia Map, an abandoned hamlet twenty-eight kilometers northeast of Song Be that had a small airfield formerly used by the Special Forces. The enemy, it appeared, was gearing up for a new campaign in Phuoc Long Province.[37]

More evidence supporting that view came on 25 November when part of the *275th Regiment* attacked the South Vietnamese Army camp south of Song Be. The fight lasted more than four hours, resulting in approximately one hundred enemy dead. That attack, it later turned out, was a diversion. Cam's real targets were Bo Duc, a district capital some twenty kilometers northwest of Song Be, and the neighboring Special Forces camp at Bu Dop, located two kilometers to the north of Bo Duc.[38]

Cam's plan was similar to the one he had used at Loc Ninh. The *272d Regiment* was to overrun Bo Duc and destroy the district headquarters. Following that, the *271st* and the *273d Regiments* would assault the nearby Special Forces camp at Bu Dop and fight any reinforcements that might land at its small airfield. The major shortcoming in Cam's plan was the weakened state of his division. His regiments were short on manpower, despite receiving several hundred North Vietnamese fillers in the intervening weeks. It remained to be seen whether his battered division could rise to the occasion.[39]

Cam's preparations did not go unnoticed. On 26 and 28 November, Montagnard troops from Bo Duc observed unidentified enemy forces moving through the area. General Hay believed that the *88th* and *275th Regiments* were hovering near Song Be, but the *9th Division* had dropped out of sight after the Loc Ninh battle. Hay could not discount the possibility that Cam had snuck into Phuoc Long Province in the intervening weeks. He decided to wait for the situation to develop before committing troops to either Song Be or Bo Duc.[40]

The answer came shortly after midnight on 29 November. The second phase of Cam's dry season campaign began when the *2d* and *3d Battalion*s of the *272d Regiment* attacked the Bo Duc District headquarters, a fortified compound defended by a reconnaissance company from the South Vietnamese 5th Division, a company of Regional Forces soldiers, and two Popular Forces platoons. Viet Cong mortar fire prevented the Montagnard soldiers stationed at the nearby Bu Dop Special Forces camp from reinforcing the embattled district headquarters.

The enemy attacked the compound from multiple directions to take advantage of his superior numbers. The tactic worked. A group of Viet Cong troops fought its way through the southern perimeter and forced the defenders to regroup in the northern half of the compound. The U.S. adviser attached to the reconnaissance company, Capt. Harold E. Bolin, repeatedly exposed himself to hostile fire to direct air strikes against Viet Cong machine gun positions. When the situation became critical, he called down napalm and 750-pound bombs a mere seventy-five meters from his location to prevent the enemy from overrunning the compound. The air strike landed on target, violently jarring the government soldiers in their bunkers but also killing many Viet Cong troops caught in the open.

When the defenders saw the enemy waver, they counterattacked and drove him back into the jungle. Both Communist battalions broke contact around 0630, leaving behind ninety-six dead. Friendly losses came to fifteen killed and fifty-seven wounded.[41]

Allied reinforcements arrived the next afternoon, 29 November, in several flights of helicopters. Two infantry battalions from the South Vietnamese 5th Division took up defensive positions in the town, while General Hay sent Colonel Cochran's 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, as well as Battery A from the 2d Battalion, 33d Artillery, equipped with 105-mm. howitzers, from Quan Loi to Bu Dop. The U.S. units established a firebase at the northwestern end of the runway.

The enemy tested the American position later that night. Shortly after 2200, a salvo of mortar rounds and 122-mm. rockets plunged into the firebase. One rocket landed squarely on a bunker, killing all four of its occupants. When the bombardment ended, hundreds of Viet Cong soldiers from the *3d Battalion, 271st Regiment*, and elements of the *80A Replacement and Training Regiment* emerged from rubber trees on the eastern side of the runway. As they crossed the open ground that separated the woods from the firebase, a distance of some 200 meters, the American artillery crews depressed their howitzer barrels and fired directly into the onrushing infantry. Small arms and machine gun fire from the 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry, brought down more Communist troops, but still the enemy pressed his assault.[42]

Minutes later, the besieged Americans heard the thump of rotor blades as a pair of helicopter gunships arrived overhead. A dozen or more enemy antiaircraft machine guns greeted the aircraft, but their pilots evaded the ribbons of fire that streamed skyward. Keen-eyed helicopter crews spotted a cluster of enemy mortars firing from a soccer field in a nearby hamlet. Several strafing runs disabled the weapons and decimated their operators. A flight of F–100 fighter-bombers thundered in low to tear at the enemy-held woods with bombs and cannon fire. The enemy assault faltered and soon Viet Cong soldiers were scurrying back into the forest. By 0030 almost all of the shooting had stopped. U.S. casualties were seven killed and eleven wounded. The Communists left behind thirty-one bodies. Enemy prisoners later reported that the rest of the *271st* and the entire *272d Regiment* had been lurking nearby during the engagement to exploit any breakthrough that occurred.[43]

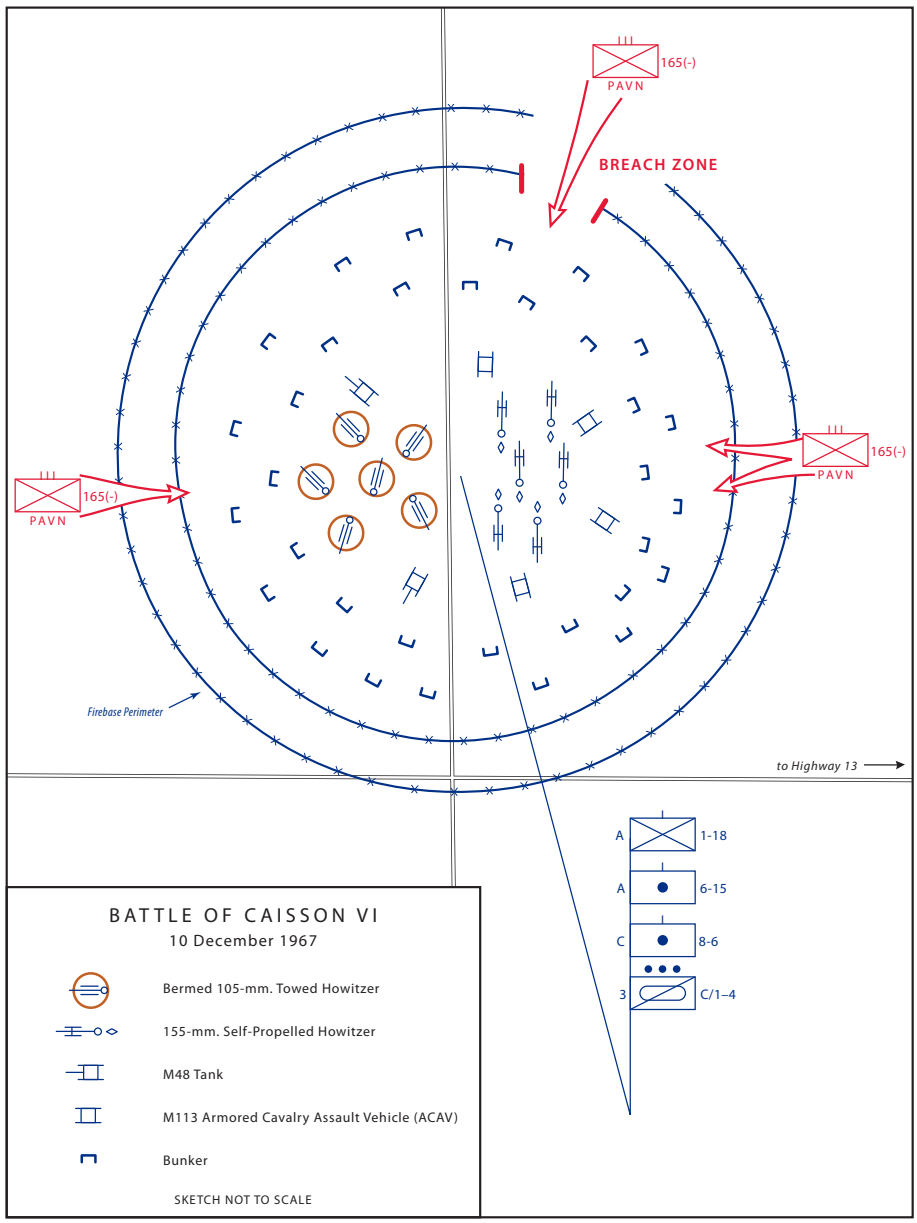
Despite the drubbing he had administered to the *9th Division* so far, General Hay doubted Colonel Cam was ready to give up just yet. During the next week, allied patrols continued to clash with enemy forces around Bo Duc, and each night mortar shells landed in the town. Believing that a second and larger attack against the district capital might still be in the offing, Hay sent the 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry, and a 4.2-inch mortar platoon to fortify a second firebase at the Bu Dop airstrip on 4 December. Two days later, he sent the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, under the command of Lt. Col. Mortimer L. O'Connor, and Battery B, 1st Battalion, 5th Artillery, to establish a firebase southeast of Bo Duc where enemy activity had been spotted.

Viet Cong soldiers were indeed in that area. An hour after midnight on 8 December, the *3d Battalion, 273d Regiment*, attacked the firebase of the 1st Battalion, 2d Infantry, with the main assault party advancing behind a steady barrage of rocket-propelled grenades. U.S. artillery, using the minimum amount of propellant possible because the engagement range was so short, tore through the enemy with high-explosive shells and prevented him from reaching the outer wire. After taking further losses from air strikes, helicopter gunships, and 4.2-inch mortars, the enemy withdrew around 0300. The Americans counted forty-nine enemy dead the next day against their own loss of four killed. When B–52 bombers began to pound the area around Bo Duc and Bu Dop, Colonel Cam finally decided it was time to withdraw back into Cambodia for rest and refitting.[44]

The second phase of the *Military Region 10* campaign had not gone well for the enemy. Between 25 November and 8 December, the Communists had lost at least 400 men and possibly up to twice that number at Song Be, Bo Duc, and Bu Dop in unsuccessful attacks on fixed allied positions. Their only success had occurred on 5 December when a battalion from the *88th Regiment* had attacked a Montagnard refugee camp called Dak Son, located just north of Song Be. In the days preceding the attack, Viet Cong propagandists had warned the villagers to return to their original village in Cambodia so they could provide manpower and food for the Communists. The Stieng tribesmen, who had repulsed three Viet Cong attacks earlier in the year, refused to leave, but this time the enemy came in overwhelming strength. The North Vietnamese soldiers burned down the hamlet with flamethrowers, killing more than 200 women and children and abducting at least 400 villagers.[45]

Thunder Road

As the *5th* and *9th PLAF Divisions* fought their battles at Song Be and Bo Duc in late November and early



Map 7

December, the *7th PAVN Division*, commanded by Senior Col. Nguyen Hoa, tried to cut Highway 13, the allies' main supply route in Binh Long and Phouc Long Provinces. If Hoa succeeded, he would undercut Weyand's dry season offensive by making it impossible for II Field Force to sustain operations along the border.

The *7th Division*'s main adversary was the 3d Brigade, 1st Division, which had spent the last several months reopening the road between An Loc, a district capital in southern Binh Long Province, and the brigade's headquarters at Lai Khe, a distance of some seventy kilometers. The 3d Brigade operated from a series of firebases named Caisson I through VII built at ten-kilometer intervals along that stretch of highway. Early every morning, detachments would emerge from these bases to check for mines or other damage the Communists might have done to the road the previous night. Within two hours the road would be ready for civilian and military traffic. Troops would occasionally search communities along the road for enemy agents, while other soldiers distributed propaganda and performed civic actions. As dusk approached, traffic would be stopped and curfews imposed. Hamlet gates would be locked and positions secured against the possibility of nighttime harassment by enemy mortars. Through the subsequent hours of darkness, the brigade would use tower-mounted radar to detect, and mortars to disrupt, enemy activity along the road. It would also deploy troops to temporary positions between the firebases to further discourage enemy meddling during the night. Still other artillery would launch harassment and interdiction fire against suspected enemy areas of activity. Then, when the dawn again crept over the horizon, the brigade would repeat the process all over again in what had proven to be a highly successful system.[46]

Colonel Hoa made his opening move against Highway 13 on 24 November. Shortly after midnight, the *165th Regiment* sent its *2d Battalion* to overrun a night defense position on the shoulder of Highway 13, some twelve kilometers south of An Loc. Company B of the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, manned the position, assisted by a platoon from the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, consisting of three M48A3 tanks and four M113 armored personnel carriers, and two platoons from the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry (Mechanized), equipped with eleven M113s.[47]

When the North Vietnamese attacked, the armored vehicles that ringed the perimeter exacted a fearful toll on them. Rocket-propelled grenades hit several of the vehicles but did not put any of them out of action. Enemy sappers were unable to reach the wire in order to blow gaps for the infantry behind them. Pinned down by the tremendous volume of fire emanating from the base, the North Vietnamese became easy targets for artillery and tactical air strikes. When helicopter gunships and Spooky aircraft joined the action, the North Vietnamese commander called off the attack and withdrew his men around 0145. The enemy left behind fifty-seven dead and a large amount of equipment. American losses came to four killed. Hoa's first effort had failed.[48]

Nine days later, Hoa sent his *141st Regiment* into action against a second night defense position that was three

kilometers south of his first target. This second outpost might have appeared to be an easier target because it contained a smaller force, Company D, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, and one mechanized platoon from Company C of the 2d Battalion, 2d Infantry. Shortly after midnight on 3 December, the *1st Battalion, 141st Regiment,* stormed the perimeter and got inside the wire before being driven back by defensive fire and an onslaught of artillery, air strikes, and helicopter gunships. The Americans lost seven killed while claiming at least twenty-seven North Vietnamese lives. Perhaps helping to explain the relatively modest enemy body count, the Americans discovered several hundred fighting holes approximately 200 meters from the camp that would have been fairly effective in sheltering the enemy from allied bombs and shells.[49]

A week later, Colonel Hoa gave his *165th Regiment* another chance. The target this time was Caisson VI, situated in the Xa Cat Rubber Plantation six kilometers south of An Loc. The base contained two artillery units, Battery A of the 6th Battalion, 15th Artillery, equipped with 105-mm. howitzers, and Battery C of the 8th Battalion, 6th Artillery, armed with 155-mm. howitzers. Company A from the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry, protected the camp along with three M48A3 tanks and four M113 armored personnel carriers from Troop A of the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry, which were dug into fighting positions along the outer perimeter (*Map 7*).[50]

Two hours after midnight on 10 December, a barrage of 75-mm. recoilless rifles and 82-mm. and 120-mm. mortars slammed into the firebase. When the bombardment lifted, a mass of North Vietnamese soldiers assaulted the perimeter. Sapper teams rushed forward with their heads bowed low to avoid being hit by the rocket-propelled grenades that whooshed through the air from their comrades behind them. When the sappers had blown several holes in the wire, Viet Cong infantry sprinted through the gap. Defensive fire cut down scores of them but some made it through. The U.S. tanks fired canister rounds, shells filled with shotgun-like steel balls, to seal the gaps. The defenders soon hunted down the enemy soldiers who had gotten into the compound, although not before one sapper team managed to disable an M48 tank.

A cascade of artillery shells eventually forced the North Vietnamese to withdraw. By 0330 the fighting was over. When the sun rose, U.S. soldiers collected 143 enemy dead along with large quantities of discarded weapons and military gear. The cost to the defenders had been one killed. After the battle of Caisson VI, the battered *165th Regiment* ceased further attempts to cut Highway 13.[51]

Screaming Eagles

General Weyand received the additional reinforcements he needed to cut the enemy supply lines in Phuoc Long Province when the 101st Airborne Division's 2d and 3d Brigades arrived from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, in November and December of 1967. Known as Operation Eagle Thrust, the deployment was the largest and longest military airlift into a combat zone that the United States had ever attempted, requiring no fewer than 369 sorties by U.S. Air Force C–141 Starlifter transport aircraft. All told, the aircraft carried 9,794 passengers and 5,083 tons of equipment. An additional 4,110 tons of equipment made the journey by sea.[52]

The commander of the 101st Airborne Division, Maj. Gen. Olinto M. Barsanti, and his advance party arrived at Bien Hoa Air Base on 18 November where they established the division headquarters. The division's 3d Brigade arrived in the first week of December and immediately moved to Phuoc Vinh in Binh Duong Province, fifty kilometers northeast of Saigon. When the division's 2d Brigade arrived in the third week of December, it moved in temporarily with the 25th Infantry Division at Cu Chi, twenty-five kilometers northwest of Saigon. The support units of the 101st Airborne Division, the last elements of the division to leave Fort Campbell, arrived at their new stations during the last week of December. By placing the 2d and 3d Brigades of the division at long-established bases, Weyand had given the newcomers a chance to acclimate in relatively safe areas while freeing up his more experienced forces to go after the enemy regiments in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces.[53]

General Barsanti

The unit that escorted the 3d Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division to its new home at Phouc Vinh, the 11th Armored Cavalry, normally operated east of Saigon in Bien Hoa Province, but Weyand shifted two of its three squadrons to northern III Corps in early December to secure Highway 13 during the dry season campaign. Those two squadrons brought with them several dozen M48A3 tanks and over a hundred M113 ACAVs (armored cavalry assault vehicles), a modified version of the M113 troop carrier equipped with a swivel-mounted M60 machine gun on either side of the rear deck behind the commander's .50-caliber machine gun. Backed by a helicopter troop with forty-eight aircraft, the famed "Blackhorse" Regiment was capable of protecting long stretches of roadway while its engineer company made improvements and cleared mines.[54]

On 4 December, the commander of the 11th Armored Cavalry, Col. Jack MacFarlane, began Operation Quicksilver with his 1st and 2d Squadrons. Their task was to open and secure parts

of Highway 13 in Binh Duong Province for the movement of the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, and the 1st Brigade, 1st Division. Mines and roadblocks had rendered some sections of the highway impassable, so it was up to MacFarlane and his men to make the way safe for the hundreds of unarmored trucks that would convey the two brigades to their new base camps.

Operating out of the 1st Division base camp at Lai Khe, the Blackhorse troopers got off to a fast start. Although there were several local force companies in the area, and two battalions of the newly formed *Dong Nai Regiment* were less than a day's march to the southeast, the enemy stayed out of sight. Engineers attached to the 1st and 2d Squadrons disarmed a number of buried mines, including a 750-pound bomb and a 155-mm. artillery round that guerrillas had rigged with a pressure detonator. The engineers also repaired road surfaces that guerrillas or the weather had damaged. Colonel MacFarlane stationed tanks and armored cavalry assault vehicles at regular intervals along the highway to provide around-the-clock security. The regimental helicopter troop and U.S. Air Force observation planes equipped with Starlight night-vision scopes assisted the forces on the ground. Just developed by the Army, these Starlight scopes (optical instruments that magnified the ambient light that reflected down from the stars and the moon) turned night for the viewer into a green-hued day. Under that protective shield, the 3d Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, made its way to Phouc Vinh without loss. With the mission complete, Quicksilver came to an end on 21 December.[55]

The next day, the regiment turned its attention to northern Binh Long Province, initiating Operation Fargo to secure Highway 13 between An Loc and Loc Ninh. After building a base near Loc Ninh, MacFarlane had orders to open Highway 14A between Loc Ninh and Bo Duc. Weyand instructed him to patrol the Cambodian border during the holiday season. In past years, the Communists had used the cease-fire periods at Christmas, New Years, and Tet to step up infiltration.[56]

On 22 December, the 11th Armored Cavalry's 1st and 2d Squadrons began moving north from An Loc. Encountering almost no resistance, the Blackhorse troopers spent the next four days securing Highway 13, constructing three firebases to defend the road, and establishing a regimental command post and logistical center at Loc Ninh. Following the Christmas truce, engineers equipped with Rome plows, armored bulldozers named for the town in Georgia where they were built, cleared a 100-meter strip on either side of Highway 13 to make it harder for the enemy to set up ambushes.

On 28 December, the 3d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry, turned over Camp Blackhorse to the 3d Squadron, 5th Cavalry, from the 9th Infantry Division, so it could travel north to join its sister squadrons in northern III Corps. Lt. Col. Howard R. Fuller Jr. and his 9th Division cavalrymen took over Operation Kittyhawk to protect Highway 1 and other lines of communications in Long Khanh Province. Having only one squadron instead of three to secure his area of operations, Fuller was fortunate that the Viet Cong chose to keep a low profile during the inaugural month of his unit's deployment.

When the 3d Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry, joined the 1st and 2d Squadrons at Loc Ninh on 31 December, it marked the first time that the regiment would operate with all of its subordinate elements together since it had arrived the previous December. It was also the regiment's first exposure to combat in a triple-canopy rainforest. Despite the restricted sight lines and obstacles to movement, Colonel MacFarlane was confident that his troopers could go almost anywhere in the jungle and keep the enemy on the run.[57]

Assessing the Campaign North of Saigon

During the opening phase of his dry season campaign, General Weyand had accomplished his initial objectives in Binh Long and Phuoc Long Provinces while also turning back a major enemy offensive. General Hay's 1st Infantry Division had succeeded in opening Highway 13 as far north as Loc Ninh, a necessary precursor to future operations along the border. Hay had then positioned his 1st and 3d Brigades, reinforced by elements of the 11th Armored Cavalry, into the sector between An Loc and Loc Ninh where they could strike at the Communist bases and supply routes that ran parallel to and across the upper portion of Highway 13. At the same time, Hay's division, with only minor support from the South Vietnamese 5th Infantry Division and the U.S. 25th Infantry Division, had thwarted *COSVN*'s seven-regiment offensive in the battles at Loc Ninh, Song Be, Bo Duc, and Bu Dop, not to mention several clashes along Highway 13. Furthermore, Weyand had successfully moved the 2d and 3d Brigades of the 101st Airborne Division into position for the next stage of his campaign—an airmobile assault into northern Phuoc Long Province to block the Adams Trail supply channel that fed War Zone D.[58]

Weyand nevertheless recognized that the enemy had scored a few points of his own. The Communist offensive had damaged government influence in the border region. In Phuoc Long Province, the North Vietnamese assault on Dak Son had generated nearly 1,800 refugees who by year's end had still not been resettled. The fighting at neighboring Song Be had caused still more suffering. Meanwhile, in Long Binh Province, one Revolutionary Development team and three Truong Son teams (Revolutionary Development teams assigned to Montagnard communities) had abandoned their work through most of November. More serious had been the effect on Loc Ninh District town. At the outset of the battle, most of the town's residents had fled by bus and U.S. Army helicopters to temporary shelters established for them in the provincial capital. When they returned home a few weeks later, they found the town destroyed by the U.S. counterattack and looted by members of the South Vietnamese 5th Infantry Division. The allies provided humanitarian assistance throughout the ordeal, and 1st Division engineers rebuilt Loc Ninh's market, but the populace's faith in the ability of the government

General Mearns

to protect them was shaken. As a II Field Force report conceded, the enemy's seizure of Loc Ninh, no matter how temporary, had represented "a significant political victory" for the enemy.[59]

Tropic Lightning Strikes War Zone C

There was, however, one more piece of Weyand's offensive—the thrust into the Communist base area known as War Zone C. Encompassing the northern half of Tay Ninh Province, War Zone C was one of the largest enemy-controlled areas in South Vietnam. The sparsely inhabited, triple-canopy rainforest offered ideal concealment for the supply dumps maintained by the *50th* and *82d Rear Service Groups*. The trees and vegetation grew so thick in many places that the forest floor remained in near darkness even on the sunniest days. Only a handful of provincial roads penetrated War Zone C and they turned to mud during the wet season. For nearly half of the year, this vast territory was an opaque and nearly impenetrable stronghold.

Hidden from the prying eyes of allied reconnaissance aircraft, Viet Cong logisticians had constructed an elaborate logistical network that ran from Cambodia through War Zone C and down the course of the Saigon River through Tay Ninh, Hau Nghia, and western Binh Duong Provinces to the outskirts of the capital. To counter this threat, Westmoreland had conducted extensive bombing and defoliation campaigns, backed during the past two dry seasons by large search-and-destroy operations. The most recent operation, Junction City in February and March of 1967, had netted around 850 tons of supplies and eliminated 2,700 Communist soldiers. Nevertheless, the supply channel remained open, supporting the *9th PLAF Division*, the *84A PLAF Artillery Regiment*, and at least a dozen Viet Cong infantry battalions. As the third and final component of the dry season offensive, MACV intended to interdict the corridor as close to the Cambodian border as possible until the rainy season once again made operations in the remote areas problematic.

The organization Weyand chose for the task was the 25th Infantry Division. Nicknamed "Tropic Lightning" for the lightning-bolt patch worn by the soldiers of this Hawaii-based unit, the division headquartered at Cu Chi, a Communist-infested section of Hau Nghia Province thirty-five kilometers northwest of Saigon. The division's 3d Brigade (formerly the 3d Brigade of the 4th Division, which the 25th Division had acquired in a troop swap) resided at Dau Tieng, Tay Ninh Province, a former French villa situated on the edge of the massive Michelin Rubber Plantation some thirty-five kilometers northwest of Cu Chi. By the fall of 1967, Maj. Gen. Fillmore K. Mearns led the division. The son of an Army general, Mearns had graduated from the U.S. Military Academy in 1938 and had fought in Sicily and Italy during World War II, receiving a Silver Star Medal in the process.[60]

Mearns' orders for Operation Yellowstone were to cut the Saigon River corridor, to destroy supply caches, and to build two new Special Forces camps deep in War Zone C to monitor the border. To accomplish this mission, Mearns would have available his 1st and 3d Brigades, an armed helicopter unit—the 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry (less one troop)—based at Tay Ninh West, and two battalions from the South Vietnamese 49th Regiment, 25th Division. General Weyand expected *COSVN* to resist the incursion with some of the main force units that used Tay Ninh Province as their rear area. The most likely opponents would be two North Vietnamese regiments, the *141st* and *165th*, believed to be in War Zone C or just to the east in Binh Long Province. The operational area likely contained several rocket or mortar battalions from the *84A Artillery Regiment*, and *COSVN* might even use the *9th Division* despite the recent beating it had taken at Loc Ninh and Song Be.[61]

General Mearns set Yellowstone in motion on 8 December, directing the operation from a forward command post at Dau Tieng. Two battalions

Battery B, 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, at a firebase at Katum await a fire mission during Operation Yellowstone.

from the 3d Brigade—the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, led by Lt. Col. John M. Henchman, and the 2d Battalion, 14th Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. James V. Ladd—moved by helicopter to the small hamlet of Katum, located at the northern terminus of provincial Route 4 in the north-central part of War Zone C. They met no resistance. When the two battalions finished securing the area a few days later, General Mearns ordered several units at Tay Ninh West—the 2d Battalion, 34th Armor, the 7th Battalion, 11th Artillery, equipped with towed 105-mm. howitzers, and the 588th Engineer Battalion—to proceed north along Route 4 to Katum. Arriving without incident, the engineers began building Firebase Custer, which would serve as the 1st Brigade's forward base for the duration of Yellowstone. They also helped the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, build a second base known as Beauregard some five kilometers to the southeast near the village of Bo Tuc. The engineers positioned the base on the shoulder of Route 246, a seasonal road that led from Katum into the eastern half of War Zone C.

As the 25th Division's 1st Brigade punched deep into enemy territory, Col. Leonard R. Daems sent his 3d Brigade into the southeastern edge of War Zone C, led by Lt. Col. Thomas U. Harrold's 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry. Two battalions from the South Vietnamese 49th Regiment joined the search for enemy supply caches. Armed helicopters from the 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry, supported the 1st and 3d Brigades from the air, looking for signs of the enemy around Katum and Dau Tieng.[62]

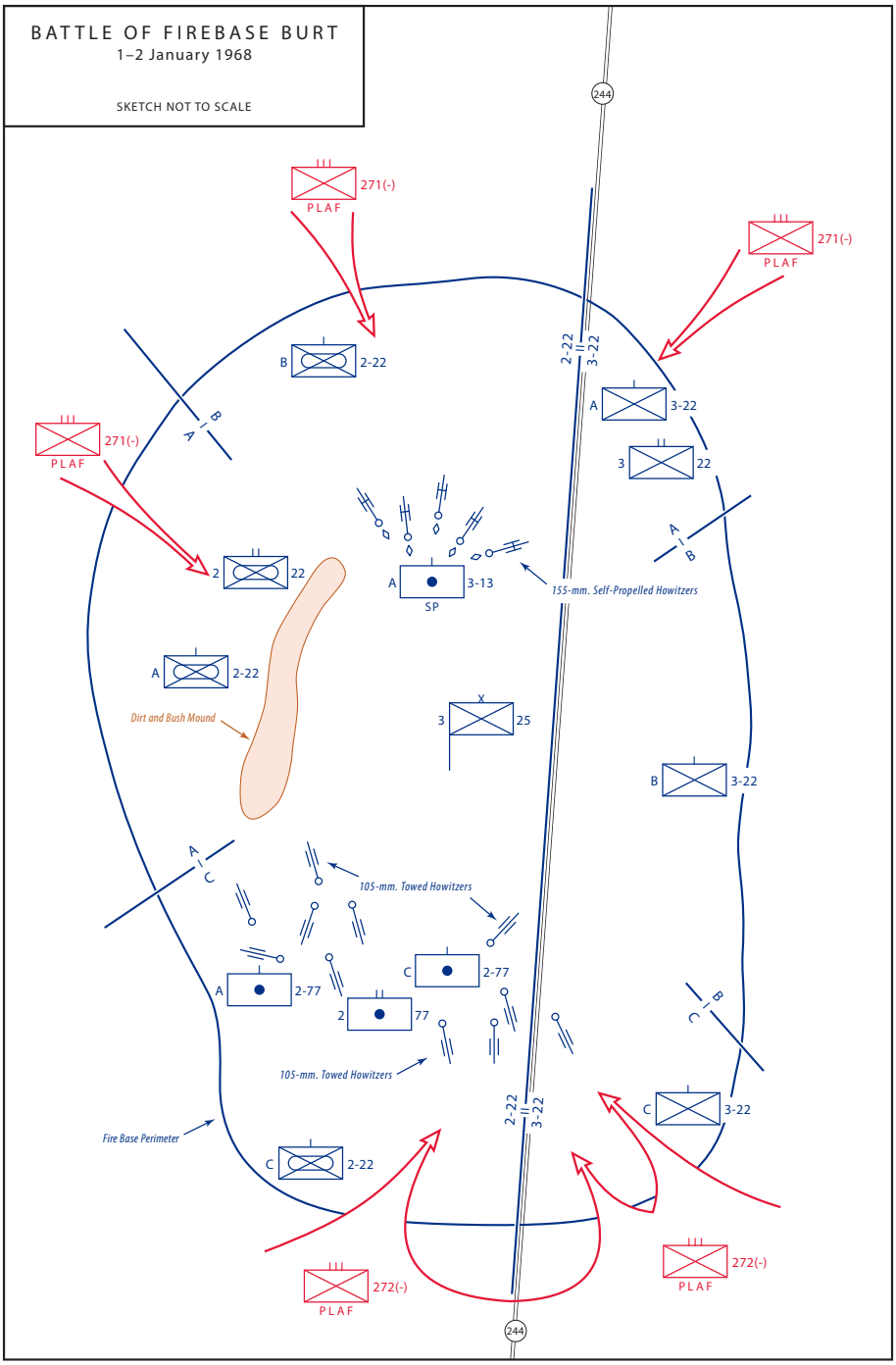
The crews of those low-flying scout aircraft helped the infantry locate dozens of well-concealed supply dumps and bunker complexes. Some were lightly defended by Viet Cong rear service troops while others were unguarded. One of the biggest finds went to the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, which discovered 350 tons of rice stashed six kilometers northwest of Katum. Four days later in the southeastern corner of War Zone C, the 3d Brigade's 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, found 15,000 grenades buried in 55-gallon oil drums. The haul represented enough ordnance to equip ten Communist main force battalions with their normal combat load. The B–52 bombers destroyed any bases spotted by helicopter crews that infantry patrols could not reach.[63]

Soldiers of the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, move through heavy growth in their armored personnel carriers during Operation Yellowstone.

Enemy resistance stiffened during the second week of Yellowstone. Around two hours after midnight on 15 December, mortar crews from the *2d* and *3d Battalions* of the *141st PAVN Regiment* began shelling Firebase Beauregard, which was home to Colonel Henchman's 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry. When the barrage ended, several hundred pith-helmeted North Vietnamese soldiers scrambled across the open ground between the firebase and the forest. Most did not make it through the defensive fire, but a team of sappers found a way into the base and placed satchel charges in the ammunition dump, setting off 600 105-mm. shells before Americans forced the infiltrators to retreat. Colonel Henchman directed air and artillery strikes, which relieved some of the pressure on the base, and the battle settled into a long-distance gunfire duel that raged until 0735. The retreating North Vietnamese left behind forty bodies. The 4th Battalion lost six killed and twelve wounded. That same night, a Special Forces camp at Tien Ngon on the western edge of War Zone C withstood a similar attack that included a 300-round mortar barrage followed by infantry and sapper probes.[64]

The next day, men from the 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, found a notebook on the body of a senior sergeant from the *141st Regiment* who had died during the attack on Beauregard. The notebook indicated that the unit, now operating directly under *COSVN*, had orders to overrun Firebase Custer as well as Beauregard. If left intact, those bases could severely disrupt Communist supply lines that led from the Fishhook region of Cambodia, a wedge of land that jutted into South Vietnam on the border of Tay Ninh and Binh Long Provinces, down through the eastern half of War Zone C.[65]

In anticipation of a showdown, both sides moved extra forces into the region during the second half of December. The *9th Division*'s *271st* and *272d Regiment*s joined *COSVN* in the Fishhook after wrapping up the *Military Region 10* offensive at Song Be. On the U.S. side, the 3d



Map 8

Brigade, 25th Division, conducted a brief blocking operation south of Dau Tieng to support Operation Camden, the search for the *101st PAVN Regiment*, before heading back into War Zone C to join the 1st Brigade with Operation Yellowstone. Colonel Daems decided to build his forward base camp for the 3d Brigade on Route 244, a south-running branch of Route 246, some twelve kilometers southeast of Firebase Beauregard.

Colonel Daems needed only two days to get his men in place. On 28 December, he sent Lt. Col. Awbrey G. Norris and the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry (Mechanized), up Route 4 to Beauregard accompanied by two 105-mm. batteries from the 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery, and a battery of M109 self-propelled 155-mm. howitzers from the 3d Battalion, 13th Artillery. The following morning, Colonel Harrold's 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, boarded helicopters at Dau Tieng and flew to the spot on Route 244 that Colonel Daems had chosen for his new forward outpost, Firebase Burt. Harrold's soldiers encountered no resistance. Later that day, the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, and the three artillery batteries that were waiting at Beauregard traveled east on Route 246 and then south on Route 244, also without incident. Meanwhile, the 2d Battalion, 12th Infantry, commanded by Colonel Tice, and several additional artillery batteries traveled from Dau Tieng to Beauregard where they assumed the defense of the base. By the evening of 29 December, the lion's share of the 3d Brigade, 25th Infantry Division, was now arrayed to the east of the 1st Brigade on the general line of Route 246.[66]

The soldiers at Firebase Burt quickly built fighting positions and strung razor wire around the perimeter, knowing that the enemy might attack at any time. Bisected by Route 244, the outpost measured a kilometer from east to west and half that distance from north to south. Unable to fit all 900 men and their equipment on open ground, Colonel Daems' task force had extended the eastern tip of Burt a few dozen meters into the trees. The brigade commander located his command post and supply area at the center of the base. The 3d Battalion, 22d Infantry, built and occupied around forty bunkers on the eastern half of the perimeter. The 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry, placed their M113 armored personnel carriers in a series of hull-down positions along the western half of Burt. Batteries A and C from the 2d Battalion, 77th Artillery, placed their eleven 105-mm. howitzers in the southern portion of the firebase. The five 155-mm. self-propelled howitzers belonging to Battery A of the 3d Battalion, 13th Artillery, were arrayed in the northern half of the perimeter. A pair of M42 tracked antiaircraft vehicles, colloquially known as "Dusters," from Battery B of the 5th Battalion, 2d Artillery, and a pair of M55 truck-mounted quad .50-caliber machine guns from Battery D, 71st Artillery, gave the defenders additional protection (*Map 8*).[67]

An M42 40-mm. self-propelled antiaircraft gun, or "Duster," provides perimeter defense.

COSVN reacted quickly to the presence of Firebase Burt. Daems' 3d Brigade was now only a few kilometers west of the trail network that connected Base Area 353 in the Fishhook with the *Sub-Region 1* base camps on the Saigon River. *COSVN*'s military head, General Thai, ordered the *9th Division*, which had returned to the Fishhook following the Loc Ninh–Song Be campaign, to attack the base as soon as possible. Colonel Cam moved his *271st* and *272d Regiments* into position on the evening of 31 December, while a 24-hour truce for the New Year went into effect.[68]

At 1800 on the first of January 1968, some of those Viet Cong troops attacked a squad of U.S. soldiers at an outpost some 200 meters east of Firebase Burt. After losing two men killed, the Americans retreated to Burt. Colonel Daems put the firebase on alert and ordered the other ambush teams positioned to the north, south, and west of Burt to remain where they were.

Two hours later, the enemy fired a few mortar rounds into Burt, apparently to check the range, and then the shelling stopped. A few minutes later, U.S. ambush patrols that were hiding in the jungle several hundred meters to the north and to the south of Burt reported large numbers of enemy soldiers moving through the trees. There were so many, in fact, that the ambush teams chose not to open fire for fear of being annihilated. Burt's defenders made a final check of their weapons and ammunition as Colonel Daems' staff got on the radio to coordinate artillery support from Beauregard.

At 2330, Viet Cong mortar crews opened a fifteen-minute barrage. When the final shell hit, a wave of Viet Cong soldiers from the *1st* and *3d Battalions* of the *271st Regiment* streamed out of the trees to attack the northern end of the base, while the *2d* and *3d Battalions* of the *272d Regiment* hit the perimeter from the south.

The Americans let loose with M16 rifles and M60 machine guns, detonated dozens of claymore mines, and fired canister rounds from their 90-mm. recoilless rifles. The lethal metal tore into the advancing Viet Cong, but those who survived did not falter. Firing a steady stream of rocket-propelled grenades at the firebase, which knocked out an M113 carrier and an M42 Duster, the *2d* and *3d Battalions* of the *273d Regiment* advanced toward the razor wire that protected Burt. Artillery rounds from Beauregard smashed into the surrounding jungle, but still the Viet Cong infantry came on.

At 0230, a squad of sappers breached the wire along the southern face of Burt. Enemy soldiers wriggled through the holes and then ran toward the bunker line. Colonel Daems ordered every 105-mm. howitzer that could be brought to bear to lower its barrel and fire directly into the advancing Communists with beehive rounds. The metal darts posed little danger to the American soldiers inside their bunkers, but the onrushing Viet Cong had no such protection. The steel needles cut down dozens of enemy soldiers, including one man who was vaporized by an expanding cone of darts as he attempted to stuff a grenade into a company command bunker.[69]

Confronted by such murderous fire, the Communists fell back beyond the wire to regroup. Taking advantage of the lull, a flight of UH–1 helicopters from the 145th and the 188th Assault Helicopter Companies swooped in to resupply Burt with ammunition and artillery shells. When they departed, U.S. fighter-bombers streaked in to drop napalm and cluster bombs on suspected enemy staging areas.[70]

The Viet Cong resumed the battle at 0330 with a battalion-size attack aimed at the southern end of Burt. Colonel Daems shifted several infantry platoons and two M113s from less-threatened sectors to the area under attack. The enemy assault faltered and then died away at 0500, bringing to an end a twenty-hour battle that General Mearns later described as a "cliffhanger."[71]

As soon as the sun came up, helicopter gunships from the 3d Squadron, 17th Cavalry, went in search of the enemy. They observed small groups of Viet Cong heading toward Cambodia and killed around twenty of the fleeing troops. Meanwhile, Colonel Daems' men collected numerous bodies, some 115 enemy weapons, and large quantities of ammunition and equipment scattered around Burt. General Weyand flew in by helicopter to see the results himself, while General Mearns stayed aloft in his command helicopter to direct the pursuit of the retreating *9th Division*. In all, the *271st* and *272d Regiments* had lost 379 men killed in the attack on Burt and another 8 wounded who became prisoners. Radio Hanoi claimed that the Communists had killed or wounded 600 Americans,

but the actual tally was 23 dead and 146 wounded. Even so, the battle for Firebase Burt was the heaviest action the 25th Division had seen since Operation Junction City back in February, March, and April of 1967. Colonel Daems gave much of the credit for his victory to the precision artillery and close air support that his forces had received.[72]

The Situation at the Beginning of the New Year

At the start of 1968, the 25th Infantry Division appeared to be on track with its dry season campaign. General Mearns' 1st and 3d Brigades were firmly entrenched in northeastern War Zone C and astride the infiltration trail that fed the enemy bases that lined the Saigon River in Hau Nghia and Binh Duong Provinces. In less than a week, the two brigades had already located and destroyed a number of supply caches, and stood to uncover many more before the end of the dry season. As a bonus, their incursion into War Zone C had forced the better part of the *9th PLAF Division* and elements of the *7th PAVN Division* to engage in another costly fight only weeks after sustaining huge casualties in the Loc Ninh–Song Be campaign. Meanwhile, the 2d Brigade of the 25th Infantry Division appeared to have the enemy main force threat under control in the populated districts between Tay Ninh City and Cu Chi. General Mearns later recalled feeling a sense of "supreme confidence" as 1968 began, anticipating the effect his division would have on the Saigon River infiltration network over the next four months, and by his own admission, not yet aware of the massive enemy buildup that would soon result in the general offensive–general uprising.[73]

Illustration Note

Unless otherwise indicated, all illustrations are from the files of Department of Defense, U.S. Army Center of Military History, and National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Notes

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63. AAR, Opn Yellowstone, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, p. 3; AAR, Opn Yellowstone, 3d Squad, 17th Cav, p. 3.

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67. AAR, Battle of Soui Cut, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, 9 Jan 68, p. 1, Encl 2 to ORLL, 1 Nov 67–31 Jan 68, 25th Inf Div, box 71.

68. The following section is based on AAR, Battle of Soui Cut, 3d Bn, 22d Inf, n.d., box 32, AARs, 1965–1971, Cmd Historian, HQ, USARV, RG 472, NACP. AAR, Opn Yellowstone II, 3d Bn, 22d Inf, n.d., in ORLL, 1 Nov 67–31 Jan 68, 25th Inf Div, box 71; AAR, Battle of Suoi Cut, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div; AAR, Opn Yellowstone, 2d Bn (Mech), 22d Inf, 20 Mar 68, in ORLL, 1 Nov 67–31 Jan 68, 25th Inf Div, box 71; ORLL, 1 Nov 67–31 Jan 68, II FFV, pp. 42–44; *9th Division*, p. 98.

69. AAR, Battle of Soui Cut, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, pp. 2–4.

70. Ibid., p. 4; AAR, Opn Yellowstone II, 3d Bn, 22d Inf, p. 2; AAR, Opn Yellowstone, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, p. 3.

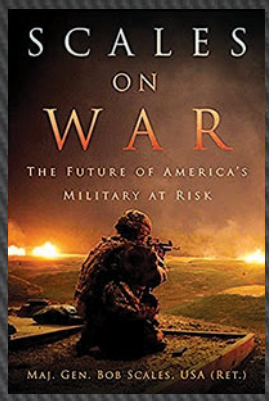
71. Interv, MacGarrigle with Mearns, p. 20.

72. AAR, Battle of Soui Cut, 3d Bde, 25th Inf Div, p. 5; ORLL, 1 Nov 67–31 Jan 68, II FFV, pp. 43–44.

73. Interv, MacGarrigle with Mearns, p. 28.

BOOK REVIEWS

Scales on War: The Future of America's Military at Risk



By Maj. Gen. Bob Scales, USA (Ret.)
Naval Institute Press, 2016
Pp. xi, 234. $29.95

Review by Colin J. Williams

In *Scales on War: The Future of America's Military at Risk*, retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Bob Scales tells of watching the documentary *Restrepo* in 2013 and realizing that the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) soldiers portrayed in it fought with the "same lousy rifle (M16/4), same helicopter (CH–47), [and] same machine gun (M2)" that he and his soldiers used at the Battle of Hamburger Hill in Vietnam in June 1969 (p. 70). Few of his observations support his call for improving the recruiting, training, and resourcing of America's close-combat forces more poignantly. In alarming language, the author fashions *Scales on War* as a case against misguided predictions of future conflict and misplaced weapons development priorities. Through twenty-one chapters, he calls on the Pentagon to make changes so that the most tactical of America's combat units can dominate future battlefields.

Underlying Scales' recommendations is his argument that military dominance has made the twenty-first century an age of infantry. To neutralize American firepower, enemies of the world's only superpower have learned to fight from places where civilians, urban terrain, and proximity to U.S. forces limit their vulnerability to air and land-based indirect fire. Scales cites statistics showing that almost all casualties suffered in recent wars have come from close-combat engagements. Future conflicts may begin with a maneuver campaign but will inevitably devolve into engagements in which large-unit movement is either disadvantageous or impossible. When fighting reaches this stage, the side that can better master information operations will prevail.

Scales posits that adjusting to this new age of infantry requires changes to both the Army's personnel system and its approach to resourcing ground forces. First, close-combat soldiers need to be older, more select, better trained, and better equipped. The Army and Marine Corps can ensure mature close-combat formations by restricting war fighting billets to second-tour enlistees. Limiting membership in this way would not only curb the number of Americans having to make life-and-death decisions before they reach peak mental acuity, but also exclude from combat soldiers who never obtain the constitution necessary for engaging the enemy at close range. Second, those selected for service in the infantry need to train in virtual environments with the same quality of simulation as the Navy's Top Gun and Air Force's Red Flag programs. The military members most likely to die in combat deserve at least the same level of attention as those who fight the enemy from a distance.

For decades, the technology that has made America's Navy and Air Force the best in the world has not been applied to the nation's land forces. Scales claims that he knows how to adjust this balance: learning the enemy's location can be accomplished by blackening the sky with unmanned aerial vehicles, to include small squad-launched drones; massing dismounted infantry against enemy forces rapidly enough to be tactically decisive requires replacing the Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle, capable of transporting six soldiers, with a Stryker-like vehicle that can carry a full infantry squad; and issuing secure cell phones to individual infantrymen will enable these squads to talk to higher echelons and with one another, as well as provide soldiers the emotional contact needed for resolve in combat. Equally important, soldiers and marines should be armed with individual weapons more reliable than the M16. In today's global environment, such a fielding would benefit national security to a greater degree than aircraft carriers for the Navy or airplanes for the Air Force.

To develop the ideal twenty-first-century military leader, Scales would mandate graduate school for senior officers. Advising foreign militaries and interpreting events for diverse audiences—two key roles for officers in the new age of infantry—are skills best developed by those trained to think deeply and write clearly. One exemplar of such an enlightened leader is General Stanley A. McChrystal, the former commander of U.S. Special Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, whom Scales compares to the World War II hero General George S. Patton. To the author, McChrystal is the model of the modern general, able to exploit technology to disrupt enemy forces through unfair fighting that favors his highly trained team of teams. Similarly worthy of emulation is General David H. Petraeus, who authored the Army's counterinsurgency doctrine as commander of the Combined Arms Center at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Scales contends that the general's identification of that narrative as the new "operational tissue" connecting tactics to strategy sets the standard for the intellectual leadership needed on today's battlefield. It was Petraeus' practice of viewing events in Iraq

through the lenses of different audiences that led the author to his conclusion about the dominance of information operations in twenty-first-century warfare.

Disappointingly, Scales does little to present either his leadership argument or his call to focus on squad-level performance in strategic context. He asserts in Chapter 8 that strategic victory will come to America by the accretion of multiple tactical victories. An unending string of successful engagements will inflict devastating losses on the enemy's will to continue fighting while preserving the resolution of the American government to see campaigns through to completion. This reasoning is as unrealistic as it is simplistic. Even if the reader believes Scales' argument that increased attention needs to be devoted to America's infantry squads—as this reviewer does—U.S. forces will need more than mastery of information operations to achieve end-state objectives. Recent experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has shown that the ability of religiously motivated insurgents to mobilize in opposition to American intervention is a governance problem complicated by the longstanding distrust of the multiple societies constituting the two nations. Intentionally pursuing a strategy of attrition against enemies who see themselves as engaged in a protracted war addresses one component of conflict, but not the underlying cause. While inflicting setbacks on American forces is important for stateless organizations, their political ambitions depend more on imposing their way on those they presume to rule than on fighting fairly against American infantrymen.

Despite this one serious failing, Scales' passion, evidence, and lucid writing convey his message. The reader will undoubtedly finish *Scales on War* convinced that America needs to do more to support those who serve at the forefront of its land-based forces. In today's battles, combat efficiency at the squad level may not win wars, but it will definitely generate tactical outcomes favorable to the United States. This reviewer recommends *Scales on War* to any reader interested in the future of the American military.

Dr. Colin J. Williams is a historian with the Contemporary Histories Division of the U.S. Army Center of Military History. A retired Army officer, he is a former assistant professor at the United States Military Academy and a member of the Army chief of staff's Operation Enduring Freedom study group. He is a contributing author to the study group's forthcoming operational history. He holds a doctorate in military history from the University of Alabama.

American Arsenal: A Century of Waging War

By Patrick Coffey
Oxford University Press, 2014
Pp. v, 328. $29.95

Review by Ethan S. Rafuse

In light of the fact that enthusiasm for technological innovation has been one of the more compelling characteristics of the American way of war, it is not surprising that science and the pursuit of advances in weaponry have played a significant role in American national security policy since the outbreak of World War I in 1914. Nor is it a shock that a number of the men who drove and contributed to the quest for progress in arms development, such as James Bryant Conant, Billy Mitchell, Louis Fieser, Edward Teller, and Curtis LeMay, figure prominently in accounts of the United States' emergence as a global superpower. In *American Arsenal: A Century of Waging War*, Patrick Coffey offers an informative and highly readable account of the interaction between science, the people who practice it, and those who employ the results of their work to the ends of American military policy.

Coffey brings solid credentials to the task of producing this study. A professionally trained chemist and visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, the author's first book was a study of the rise of modern chemistry and central figures in the field, such as Marjorie Winch, Irving Langmuir, and Glen Seaborg, and referenced their lives and experiences as points of departure for chronicling its evolution. In his latest work, Coffey employs the same approach, selecting over a dozen specific technologies and describing and analyzing the men (and bureaucracies) who drove (or hampered) their advancement and employment. The writer begins with the most famous American inventor, Thomas A. Edison, and his efforts during World War I to produce a battery for submarines and the frustration of his efforts to convince the U.S. Navy to adopt his work. Of course, one of the more notorious contributions of science made during the Great War was poison gas. Nonetheless, despite its manifest disdain for it (both on moral grounds and because it failed to provide a decisive battlefield advantage), the American military felt compelled to establish a Chemical Warfare Service that worked with chemists to grow its own capabilities in the field both during and after the war.

For all the attention poison gas received, it was the development of the airplane into an effective tool of war that was arguably the most important innovation of the First World War. Certainly, those who worked to establish a theory for the use of airpower afterward believed this to be the case. Coffey effectively discusses the vision of airpower enthusiasts like Billy Mitchell, the

possibilities that the Army Air Corps saw in the Norden bombsight, and the hopes that precision bombing would bolster the case for establishing an independent air force—and provide a lasting escape from the horror of the trenches—all factors that played a significant role in shaping the conduct of World War II. The author also describes how the promises of airpower fell short during the war, as demonstrated in the pursuit of area bombing against Japan. The culmination of that practice came with perhaps the twentieth century's most dramatic manifestation of the impact of science on warfare—the atomic bomb.

The end of the war, however, hardly diminished the importance of science and scientists in the conduct of war. Instead, as manifested in the pursuit of the hydrogen bomb, the maturation of missile technology, and efforts to create strategies for the use of both, the Cold War reinforced the central place of science and technology in the pursuit of national security. The war in Vietnam, of course, revealed there were limits to what science could achieve when applied to war. But that did little to diminish the enthusiasm for technology of those entrusted with the enactment of national security policy, as embodied in the effort to fulfill President Ronald Reagan's vision of a defense against missile attack and the ever-expanding employment of unmanned vehicles in the nation's efforts in the Middle East, both of which are clearly discussed here.

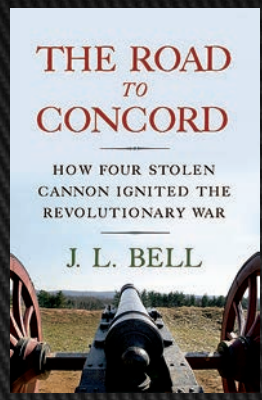
Although he brings a scientific background to his work on this subject, Coffey is remarkably balanced in his narrative of events and his assessments of the individuals at the center of each chapter and those who worked in support of—and in some cases against—their efforts. The author does not romanticize, offer unquestioned admiration, or engage in the demonization or idealization of them, their work, or the consequences they had for the world. To be sure, Edward Teller does not come across especially well and it is not difficult in the later chapters to get a sense that the author is vested intellectually in current debates over technology. Still, on the whole, Coffey's assessments and arguments are balanced, thoughtful, and effectively supported by his evidence.

At the same time, it must be said that for all its positive qualities, *American Arsenal* does not offer a great deal that will surprise anyone familiar with the military history of the United States since 1914. The efforts to achieve advantages in poison gas or missile technology, for example, have been fairly well documented. Nor can the research that went into this book—which draws heavily on previously published works rather than archival or primary sources—be described as especially groundbreaking.

Nonetheless, Coffey merits more praise than criticism. For someone looking for a readable, informative account of Hermann Kahn's views on nuclear strategy, the strategic bombing effort in World War II, the development of the Predator drone, or a general study of the effort of scientists to devise and servicemembers to apply new technologies over the past hundred years, this book fills both needs quite well. While by no means the final word on these subjects, *American Arsenal* offers both a fine starting point for those beginning their study of these topics and a well-constructed refresher for those already familiar with them.

Dr. Ethan S. Rafuse earned his doctorate at the University of Missouri-Kansas City and since 2004 has been a member of the faculty at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, where he is a professor of military history.

The Road to Concord: How Four Stolen Cannon Ignited the Revolutionary War



By J. L. Bell
Westholme Publishing, 2016
Pp. xiv, 234. $26

Review by Gregory J. W. Urwin

The sparks that ignited the American War of Independence at Lexington and Concord could have achieved the same result in any of several confrontations that occurred between Massachusetts colonists and British Redcoats in the months that preceded 19 April 1775. Infuriated by the Boston Tea Party of 16 December 1773, London placed Massachusetts under martial law, installing Lt. Gen. Thomas Gage, the commander in chief of British forces in North America, as the colony's governor. Rather than intimidate Bay Colony Whigs, this move inflamed them, prodding them into redoubling their defiance of British rule.

J. L. Bell's *The Road to Concord: How Four Stolen Cannon Ignited the Revolutionary War* tackles a familiar subject—how Thomas Gage's attempts to prevent a revolution ended up provoking one—but makes the story feel fresh by revealing how drastically the theft of four brass guns from Boston affected the British general's judgment.

Gage decided to head off the possibility of a violent rebellion by practicing arms control. On 1 September 1774, he sent the 4th Regiment of Foot to seize 260 half-barrels of

gunpowder from a magazine located northwest of British-occupied Boston and two small fieldpieces belonging to the nearby town of Cambridge. Local political activists depicted the powder seizure as an attempt to disarm the militia, thus leaving the people of Massachusetts exposed to the imposition of a tyrannous regime by the king's regulars. A boisterous demonstration by 4,000 angry militiamen who converged on Cambridge the next day served notice to Gage that his authority faced a potent challenge.

In the weeks following the British seizure of the colonists' gunpowder, Massachusetts and the rest of New England became the scene of an arms race. Supporters of the Whig cause attempted to carry off and conceal artillery pieces that had been distributed to various towns and cities for the purpose of local defense, while other communities with no access to such ordnance tried to purchase their own guns. Most of these cannon lay beyond the confines of Boston, which made them easy pickings, but not even artillery under the noses of five Redcoat battalions was safe. On the night of 14–15 September some daring Whigs took possession of a pair of shiny 2-pound brass guns belonging to the Boston Train of Artillery and smuggled them out of the city. On 16 September the Whigs surreptitiously removed the Boston Train's two brass 3-pounders from a gun shed opposite the 4th Foot's encampment on Boston Common, hiding them at a school for two weeks until the opportunity came to sneak them past British sentries.

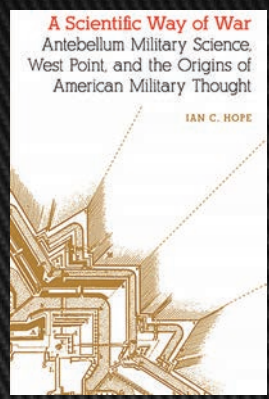
Although Gage's soldiers managed to thwart Whig cannon thieves on more than one subsequent occasion, the Massachusetts Provincial Congress gained control of thirty-eight fieldpieces during the final months of peace. No loss galled Gage more than the four brass guns spirited out of Boston. Reports that filtered into Boston from Loyalist spies in the countryside soon convinced Gage that New England was preparing to rebel. His recommendation that London assemble a British army of 20,000 at Boston to pacify the region shook his political superiors and undermined their confidence in the harried general.

On 14 April 1775, Gage received instructions from England to arrest the leaders of the Massachusetts resistance. By that time, the general's intelligence sources had informed him that the missing brass guns had been hidden at a farm just outside Concord. Rather than send his troops on a wild goose chase to capture a few agitators hiding in the interior, Gage decided to dispatch a raiding force of grenadiers and light infantry to Concord to reclaim the four fieldpieces and destroy the other military materiel that the Provincial Congress had accumulated in the town. That expedition attempted to slip out of Boston late on 18 April, but Whig agents detected its departure and spread an alarm that aroused the militia and triggered the uprising that Gage had hoped to abort. Whig leaders like Samuel Adams and John Hancock assumed that the troops Gage sent to Concord were looking for them, and that error continues to surface in histories of Lexington and Concord. Bell, however, provides a detailed reconstruction of competing efforts at political and military mobilization, while enlivening his narrative with doses of intrigue and suspense.

The Road to Concord is a rare treat—a meticulously researched study unspoiled by pedantry. The book is also one of the first titles in a series sponsored by the online *Journal of the American Revolution*, an exciting experiment that benefits from the combined efforts of independent scholars and professional historians dedicated to re-examining the history of this country's founding by digging deep in previously untapped sources. Bell himself is not a professor, but the proprietor of a popular Web site about the beginning of the American Revolution, www.boston1775.net. The admirable standard that he has achieved in his first book augurs well for the other *Journal of the American Revolution*-sponsored books set to follow in its wake.

Dr. Gregory J. W. Urwin is a professor of history at Temple University and author of several works on U.S. military history. He is currently working on a social history of the 1781 British invasions of Virginia.

A Scientific Way of War: Antebellum Military Science, West Point, and the Origins of American Military Thought



By Ian C. Hope
University of Nebraska Press, 2015
Pp. x, 334. $55

Review by Andrew J. Ziebell

Ever since Russell F. Weigley published his seminal work *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York, 1973), few endeavors can lead to more controversy among American military historians and theorists than the attempt to define or redefine the way the nation approaches the business of fighting and winning its wars. Ian C. Hope, a Canadian Army officer and an associate history professor at the Royal Military College of Canada, is undeterred by the task and presents an expert examination of antebellum military science and the uniquely

American approach to conflict. In *A Scientific Way of War: Antebellum Military Science, West Point, and the Origins of American Military Thought*, Hope demonstrates that the science of military thought and theory during this period was about much more than simply preparing for and waging continental war. From a system of defense that gave primacy to a Federalist "integrated defense policy" to the military logic of "internal improvements," this new discipline affected nearly every aspect of the emerging nation. Some might question the prime position that Hope affords West Point in this book. But when one looks at the instructors who shaped generations of practitioners of military science, and the graduates who continuously employed the lessons they learned at West Point in peace and in war, it is easy to see why Hope chose the institution as his focal point. The reader will find little else to fault in this well-organized, thoroughly researched and engaging book.

Hope sets himself the task of "revealing what constituted nineteenth-century military science, why Americans accepted it as the dominant paradigm, and how it generated an educated understanding of war" (p. 3). He breaks down the antebellum art of war into four distinct components: campaigning, artillery and ordnance, fortifications and engineering, and logistics and administration. Mastery of these staff functions required an attention to detail that only a comprehensive scientific education could instill. Purposefully missing from the calculus is the concept of "martial genius," that sort of Napoleonic feeling for the art of command. Originating in Europe and making its way across the Atlantic was the idea that adherence to strict scientific principles in the campaign could overcome the more passionate aspect of war. Without these scientific methods, decisive battle would prove elusive as nations became increasingly capable of regenerating military power. Elevation of the science over the art was pervasive at West Point, where cadets received very little instruction in history or other liberal arts throughout the antebellum period. The faculty went so far as to forbid cadets from reading popular literature, and enforced the rule by preventing the library from stocking these books well into the 1830s.

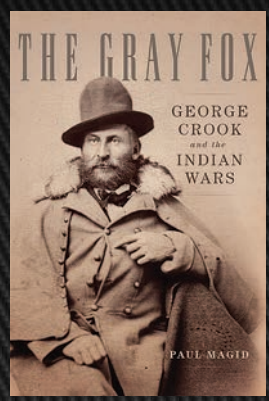
The American interpretation was not a wholesale application of European solutions to American military problems, however. Sylvanus Thayer, who served as West Point's superintendent from 1817–1833, has rightly been named the father of the United States Military Academy. But it was Dennis Hart Mahan who truly left his mark on the institution during his incredible forty-seven years on the faculty (1824–1871). Under his direction, the curriculum grew less reliant on European—primarily French—texts in the original language. Instead, the fundamental principles of these texts were adapted to more adequately address America's coastal defense, the movement of military forces across vast, mostly uninhabited spaces, and the ever-present threat of irregular warfare on the frontier. Mahan saw it as his duty to prepare each of his graduates for a varied experience that required deep analytical thinking.

While the United States possessed unique strategic challenges, it also had to contend with the self-imposed, constitutional constraint of a small standing army compared to those in Europe. It was a force with a very small core of military professionals that could expand when required, but this concept needed a "perfect" foundation on which the army could build combat power. Volunteer officers played an important role, particularly in the field, but it was the officers educated at West Point who formed this base. Hope argues that the demonstrated capacity of the Army staff to generate and support forces during the Mexican-American War made military science both "politically and socially acceptable" to the American public as it seemed to support the ideals the nation had been founded on (p. 249).

The strategic challenges facing the United States have changed dramatically since the antebellum period, and West Point is no longer the sole producer of highly educated and exceedingly competent Army officers. Yet, the reliance on the scientific application of military force by a small core of professionals remains as relevant today as ever.

Andrew J. Ziebell is a U.S. Army Reserve officer currently serving at the U.S. Army, Europe, headquarters in Wiesbaden, Germany. He is a 2005 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He recently graduated from King's College London with a master's degree in war studies.

The Gray Fox: George Crook and the Indian Wars



By Paul Magid
University of Oklahoma Press, 2015
Pp. xv, 495. $29.95

Review by Frank L. Kalesnik

While conflicts between European settlers and Native Americans lasted from 1492 to 1890, the period following the American Civil War is perhaps the best known and most romanticized. Many books, movies, and television shows glamorize the epic struggle for the American West. Famous names like Crazy Horse, Custer, and Geronimo are enshrined in popular culture, and their depictions as both heroes and villains often tell us more about the time a book was written or a film produced than the legendary events they purport to describe. General

George Crook was one such "legend of the Old West," a seasoned Indian fighter who could be at times both ruthless and compassionate in his dealings with Native Americans. His career began in California in the years preceding the Civil War, and service in that conflict brought him the fame and advancement this seemingly reserved and unassuming soldier nevertheless craved. But his later campaigns in the West, particularly fighting the Apache and in the Great Sioux War of 1876–1877, are his most significant, and these form the subject of Paul Magid's *The Gray Fox: George Crook and the Indian Wars.*

Few books have been written about Crook. His aide John Gregory Bourke's *On the Border with Crook* (New York, 1891) and Charles King's *Campaigning with Crook* (Milwaukee, Wis., 1880) are the best known contemporary accounts. The general's own account of his exploits, edited and annotated by Martin Schmitt, was first published by the University of Oklahoma Press as *General George Crook: His Autobiography* (Norman, Okla., 1946). The same press released Charles M. Robinson III's one-volume *General Crook on the Western Frontier* in 2001.

Magid's *The Gray Fox* is the second book in a three-part series. The first is *George Crook: From the Redwoods to Appomattox* (Norman, Okla., 2011); the third, which covers events following the Sioux War, is forthcoming. An attorney by profession, Magid's work is a labor of love, the result of years of thoughtful research. Does a subject so thinly covered previously deserve such extensive attention? Having now read the first two parts of this trilogy, this reviewer says "Yes!"

Crook was notoriously reticent, often keeping his own counsel. A teetotaler and avid outdoorsman, he was a determined campaigner, pursuing his enemies ruthlessly through heat, rain, and snow from Idaho to Arizona. He relied extensively on Native American scouts, believing their employment provided the most effective means of wearing his opponents down. His mobile columns remained in the field in pursuit of his foes, relying on pack mules to supply his hard marching but light traveling forces. Contemptuous of military pomp, he normally wore civilian attire, eating the same meager rations as his men, though these were often supplemented by game meat this avid hunter brought to the community pot.

Crook could also be vain and petty. He grew contemptuous of his old West Point friend Philip Sheridan, under whom he served in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864, believing Sheridan had taken credit for Crook's own achievements. The rift grew in the Western Indian campaigns, where Crook's outstanding reputation, earned largely in operations against the Apache, dimmed with his awkward performance in operations against the Sioux. Given command of the Department of the Platte with headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, forces under his command mistakenly attacked a Cheyenne village in March of 1876, causing that tribe to fight alongside the Sioux in subsequent hostilities.

Leading one of the three columns converging on the Native Americans' assumed location in southeastern Montana, then-Brig. Gen. George Crook was surprised by his foes on the morning of 17 June 1876 while camped on the banks of the Rosebud. His force of about 1,400 men, to include packers and Indian (Crow and Shoshone) scouts allied with the army against the Sioux and Cheyenne, who were estimated to be about 1,000 strong. Both sides claimed a victory, the army holding the field when the Sioux and Cheyenne left at the end of the day. Crook subsequently withdrew to encamp in Wyoming, while the Indians went on to their triumph at the Little Big Horn a week later. He later linked up with Brig. Gen. Alfred Terry's column, but their combined force proved too cumbersome and soon split. Crook's subsequent "mud march" through the Dakotas was a nightmare for all concerned, despite a minor victory against the Lakota at Slim Buttes on 9–10 September 1876.

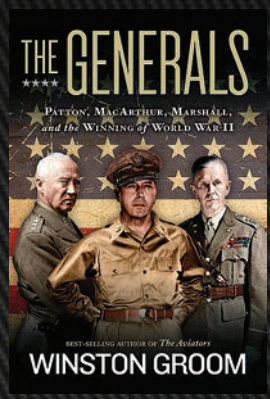
Magid's analysis of these events is thorough, engaging, and incisive. He is particularly adept at unraveling the enigma created by Crook's aloof demeanor.

> Speculation regarding the psychological state of the long dead is an exercise fraught with uncertainty, particularly with respect to a figure as fantastically devoted to concealing his inner self as George Crook. Yet it would be safe to hazard that, caught unawares by an enemy he had seriously underestimated and, for the first time in his career denied a victory against an Indian foe, the engagement at the Rosebud had dealt a violent blow to the general's considerable ego (p. 264).

Despite his lackluster performance in the Great Sioux War, Crook's career continued, and he proved as determined to secure a lasting peace by treating his former enemies fairly as he had been in hunting them down to force them to surrender. This will be the subject of the author's next book, and this reviewer looks forward to it. For readers interested in the Indian Wars, especially those who want to know more about George Crook, Paul Magid's work comes highly recommended.

Dr. Frank L. Kalesnik earned his bachelor's degree in history at the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) and his master's degree and doctorate in American history at Florida State University. He taught at VMI and the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and was a command historian for both the Air Force and Marine Corps. He also served twenty-two years as an officer in the Marine Corps Reserve. He is currently the command historian for U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina.

The Generals: Patton, MacArthur, Marshall, and the Winning of World War II



By Winston Groom
National Geographic, 2015
Pp. 510. $30

Review by Francis P. Sempa

The Second World War continues to fascinate and inform students of history and military strategy, and the larger-than-life personalities who organized and led this country to victory must become known to a new generation of Americans for whom World War II is "ancient" history. Winston Groom, a popular military historian best known as the author of *Forrest Gump*, has written an engaging and informative biography of three of America's most important generals—Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, and George Patton—whose careers intersected throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

All three men were born in the late-nineteenth century, before the United States emerged as a world power. MacArthur's first memories were of troops fighting hostile Indians on the frontier; his father, Arthur MacArthur, a Union Civil War hero, was assigned to Army posts in the far West. Marshall's boyhood was spent hunting and fishing in Uniontown, a small coal town in southwestern Pennsylvania. His ancestry reached back to Jamestown, Virginia, and his uncle served as an aid de camp to Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Patton grew up in Pasadena, California, on his family's 1300-acre estate. He dreamed of becoming a soldier like his grandfather, George Patton, a Confederate colonel who fought in the Shenandoah Valley and was killed in the Third Battle of Winchester.

MacArthur graduated from the U.S. Military Academy, West Point where, in Groom's words, he "arced . . . like a shooting star, setting records some of which remain unmatched today." (p. 108). Marshall attended the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), where he thrived in military studies and on both the drill and football fields. Patton attended both VMI and West Point, struggled academically because of dyslexia, but "seemed to thrive on the starkness, austerity, and hazing" of military life (p. 69). From an early age, MacArthur and Patton believed they were men of destiny. Marshall shared their ambition but not their brashness, flamboyance, and recklessness. MacArthur and Patton would win their glory on the battlefields of two world wars, while Marshall would become first an indispensable staffer and later the "organizer of victory."

Prior to U.S. involvement in World War I, Marshall was stationed in the Philippines at Fort William McKinley with the 13th Infantry Regiment. This was his first opportunity to lead large bodies of troops in military maneuvers, and he performed so well that Maj. Gen. Franklin Bell called him "the greatest potential wartime leader in the Army" (p. 48). MacArthur and Patton, meanwhile, received their baptism by fire during America's incursions into Mexico. Patton was proclaimed a hero for his daring cavalry raid at the San Miguel Ranch in search of one of Pancho Villa's top lieutenants. MacArthur was promoted and recommended for the Medal of Honor for his brave actions on a mission to locate missing railroad engines on the line from Vera Cruz to Alvarado.

The talents and character of these three men were even more evident during the First World War. MacArthur, as deputy commander and commander of the 42d Division, commonly called the Rainbow Division, earned seven Silver Stars and two Distinguished Service Crosses in battles in the St. Mihiel salient and during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive. Groom even implies that MacArthur probably deserved the Medal of Honor. Secretary of War Newton Baker called him "the greatest American field commander produced by the war" (p. 185). One American general cited MacArthur for promotion, explaining that "[o]n a field where courage was the rule, his courage was the dominant factor" (p. 185).

Patton, meanwhile, was assigned to the infant U.S. Tank Corps. During the Meuse-Argonne Offensive his tanks supported two infantry divisions. The author notes that Patton's battle plan "emphasized the offensive and presciently anticipated Germany's armored *Blitzkrieg* two decades into the future" (p. 172). Like MacArthur, he repeatedly and courageously exposed himself to hostile fire—Patton was wounded by machine gun fire during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive.

Marshall, though itching for battle, performed so well at planning, organizing, and staff work that General John J. Pershing would not risk losing him on the battlefield. Marshall drafted the battle plans for the offensive at St. Mihiel and "was one of the chief planners" of the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, which involved logistics and transport for more than 400,000 troops. (p. 170). He was also willing to tell uncomfortable truths to superior officers—a trait also exhibited, albeit less diplomatically, by MacArthur and Patton. "[N]o matter the pressure," writes Groom, "[Marshall] knew the right thing to do and did it" (p. 137).

After the "war to end all wars," the U.S. Army dramatically downsized, and funding was cut further during the New Deal years. On the eve of World War II, Groom notes, "the army was woefully undermanned—perhaps equal only to that of a third-world nation" (p. 255). As Army chief of staff in the early 1930s, MacArthur battled with the New Dealers, including President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself, to secure more funds for the Army, but the nation's political leaders in the midst of a great depression chose butter over guns. Patton, between the wars, continued to extol the virtues of the tank, and developed a friendship with another of the Army's rising stars, Dwight D.

Eisenhower, who shared Patton's views on tank warfare. Interestingly, Patton also wrote a paper predicting a future war with Japan and envisioned a Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. When the United States finally began to prepare for the impending war in the late 1930s, it would be Marshall who organized the nation's armed forces for victory.

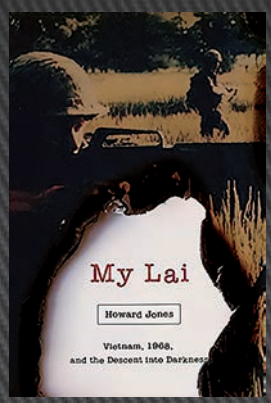
All three generals played pivotal roles in the U.S. and Allied victory in the Second World War. Marshall, as Army chief of staff, oversaw the huge growth of the service and selected the generals who would lead it in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, northwestern Europe, and the southwest Pacific. He was President Roosevelt's top military adviser throughout the war. Patton and MacArthur were, in Groom's words, "the shrewdest, most aggressive, battle-wise, and successful generals in the field" (p. 17). Patton and his troops won victory after victory in North Africa, Sicily, France, and Germany, while MacArthur and his soldiers waged a brilliant combined-arms offensive in New Guinea and the Philippines.

Patton died in a motor vehicle accident shortly after the war. In President Harry Truman's administration, Marshall served as an envoy to China, secretary of state and secretary of defense, and spearheaded the European Economic Recovery Program that bears his name. MacArthur served as military administrator of Japan, overseeing the transformation of that country from an aggressive, imperial, militaristic empire to a peaceful democratic state. He later led U.S. and UN forces after the outbreak of the Korean War, during which he planned and executed one more strategic masterpiece—the landing at Inchon. MacArthur's subsequent public disagreements with Truman's conduct of the war resulted in him being relieved of command. After that, the old soldier gradually faded away.

Winston Groom has done a great service by reminding us about the qualities and character of these three men. "They were exceptionally good soldiers, and great captains," he concludes, "brave as lions, bold as bulls, audacious, and inventive, marshaling huge victorious armies. With all their quirks and foibles and mistakes they were still fine men who served their country with distinction, and . . . their memory enrich[es] the national trust" (p. 473).

Francis P. Sempa is the author of *Somewhere in France, Somewhere in Germany: A Combat Soldier's Journey through the Second World War* (Lanham, Md., 2011), which tells the story of his father's experiences with the 29th Infantry Division in World War II. He has written on historical and foreign policy topics for *Joint Force Quarterly*, the *University Bookman*, the *Claremont Review of Books*, the *Washington Times*, *Strategic Review*, *Orbis*, and other publications. He is an attorney and an adjunct professor of political science at Wilkes University.

My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness



By Howard Jones
Oxford University Press, 2017
Pp. xxvi, 475. $34.95

Review by Edward D. Jennings

Although the Vietnam War continues to fade from the memory of the American public, the events that took place in and around the hamlet of My Lai in South Vietnam fifty years ago still reverberate through the political and military institutions of America today. *My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness,* part of Oxford University Press' Pivotal Moments in American History series, is both useful and timely given the daily news reports and images of the horrors of war that continue in ongoing conflicts throughout the world.

Offering more than just a new interpretation of this horrific event, Howard Jones, a research professor of history emeritus at the University of Alabama, combines his skills as a historian and researcher to provide a deeper understanding of My Lai and the Vietnam War to answer the question of why the massacre took place. Jones uses diverse primary and secondary sources, many previously unavailable, to balance and combine many perspectives—ranging from those of American troops, enemy soldiers, and civilians in the combat zone to that of the president of the United States—to produce a detailed account of the tragedy at My Lai that is graphic, disturbing, and infuriating at times.

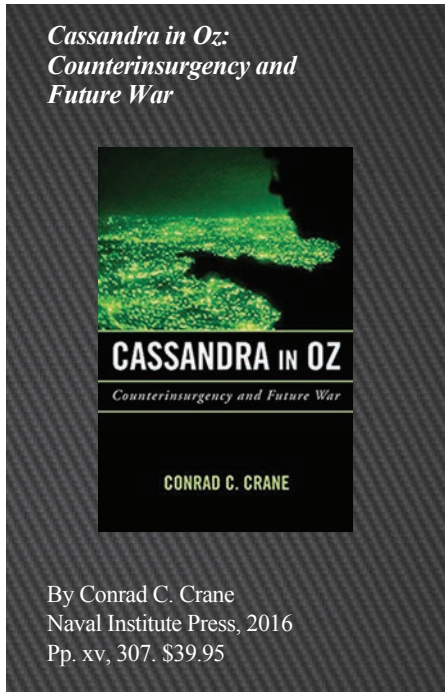
The book is organized into three major sections with multiple chapters sequenced chronologically, enabling the reader to switch perspectives with relative ease. The first section, "Pinkville," provides an overview of the combat environment and context of the Vietnam War in 1968; introduces the organization, training, and select leaders of the U.S Army's 23d Americal Division and subordinate units; and details the planning, preparation, and execution of Task Force Barker's search-and-destroy mission in the vicinity of My Lai that resulted in the murder of over 500 noncombatant civilians. The second section, "Aftermath and Cover-Up," describes the various reports and interpretations of the events at My Lai, the investigations and legal implications for the military chain of command, and the introduction of "evidence" by numerous individuals and organizations with competing agendas. The third section, "My Lai on Trial," chronicles the actions of journalists, investigators, lawyers, and military and political leaders before, during, and after the trials of U.S servicemembers accused of committing war crimes in My Lai. Jones complements his narrative with two reference maps and thirty-two photographs that not only aid in the visualization of the battlefield and the aftermath of operations in My Lai, but also enable the reader to associate the

faces and names of the primary actors involved in the My Lai trials.

A seasoned historian, Jones skillfully exposes the many layers of this story, revealing how a lack of meaningful training on the law of land warfare was a disservice to soldiers fighting a war of attrition against an unconventional enemy. The combined elements of racism and retribution fueled by youth and fear, poor leadership, careerism, and deceit within the chain of command led to American soldiers murdering Vietnamese civilians in My Lai. One of the most intriguing aspects of this book goes beyond the battlefield, linking My Lai to other events occurring on the American home front that continued to erode the American public's support for the war. Jones clearly shows that the My Lai trials were not just about accountability and justice, but were also used to bolster the agendas of businessmen, politicians, and activists. The epilogue, arguably the most important part of the book, provides an update on select individuals (victims, perpetrators, and bystanders) associated with My Lai; discusses the various reforms in military education, training, policies, and laws; and examines the relevance of My Lai to contemporary warfare.

Extensively researched, well-written, and thoughtful, *My Lai: Vietnam, 1968, and the Descent into Darkness* is the definitive work on this tragic event. It should be mandatory reading for military professionals and policymakers because what happened at My Lai and during the subsequent investigations and trials needs to be recounted to every generation—and never forgotten.

Edward D. Jennings earned his bachelor's degree in history from the Citadel and his master's degree in international relations from Troy University. He served as an officer in the U.S. Army for over twenty years with duty assignments in the United States and throughout the world. He is currently an assistant professor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.



By Conrad C. Crane
Naval Institute Press, 2016
Pp. xv, 307. $39.95

Review by Wm. Shane Story

When Conrad Crane retired from the Army in 2000 after teaching history at the United States Military Academy, he was best known as an airpower theorist and for his book *Bombs, Cities, and Civilians: American Airpower Strategy in World War II* (Lawrence, Kans., 1993) and, among West Point alumni, for his detailed analyses of Black Knights' football. Time changes things. Just eight years later, former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Bing West noted Crane's "world-class reputation as a counterinsurgency analyst."[1] *Cassandra in Oz* is Crane's memoir of how this transformation happened; how a strategic whirlwind swept him up in efforts to guide the U.S. Army toward a revitalized counterinsurgency doctrine intended to help the military find its bearings in Iraq and Afghanistan. He wanted Army leaders to better understand challenges that were at once intellectual, doctrinal, institutional, strategic, and political. Crane often felt, however, that they either did not hear what he had to say or outright ignored it. It is hard to tell which experience was worse.

In the first two chapters, which cover the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq, Crane sees himself as a Cassandra whose warnings go unheeded. In early 2002, he could not get past Pentagon gatekeepers to caution senior officials that quick success in Afghanistan was not a model for operations in Iraq. His frustration grew in early 2003 when senior leaders disregarded his book *Reconstructing Iraq: Challenges and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa., 2003). It was maddening to Crane that his best efforts fell on deaf ears, but his prescriptions could be contradictory. For example, if a situation demanded military intervention, he favored using overwhelming force to achieve decisive effects followed months later by a swift drawdown. On the other hand, if stability was impossible and a situation was irredeemable, then the best thing to do was to leave immediately, which would only perpetuate the crisis (pp. 36, 40). Missing is guidance for knowing what advice pertained to which strategic conundrum.

Chapters 3 through 7, the heart of the book, explain the production of Field Manual (FM) 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*, which was a doctrinal response to political and strategic failures in Iraq. These began with the collapse of the Iraqi regime in April 2003, when the Bush administration was so paralyzed by policy contradictions that it surrendered the initiative in post-Saddam Iraq to radical clerics and insurgent groups. Although the administration wanted to use military victory to transform Iraq and the region, it undercut this objective by initiating a rapid drawdown of American forces in Iraq. The troop reduction had multiple purposes, including the avoidance of unnecessary burdens and expense, to prevent a postinvasion backlash, and to shift resources to higher priorities, such as transforming the Department of Defense. Soon enough, however, Iraq's postinvasion chaos scuttled the Pentagon's plans for a hasty withdrawal, and an anti-American insurgency took root amidst Iraq's ongoing internecine conflicts.

By late 2005, with Iraq in turmoil, Crane's reputation as the prescient author of *Reconstructing Iraq* made his appearances a hot ticket on the

D.C. lecture circuit. That is when an old West Point classmate, Combined Arms Center Commander Lt. Gen. David H. Petraeus, asked Crane to review a draft of a new counterinsurgency (COIN) manual. Petraeus, who had commanded the 101st Airborne Division in Mosul in 2003 and the Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq in 2004, was now attempting to revolutionize Army doctrine to guide operations in Iraq. For Crane, joining Patraeus' team led to months of travel, writing and editing, and leading conferences of subject matter experts arguing over precepts. Revisions countered and accommodated criticisms about the efficacy and wisdom of counterinsurgency operations. Crane recounts this frenetic time and adds a valuable reader's guide to the resulting manual. Chapter 7 gives full vent to the doctrine's harshest critics, and engaging those critics leads Crane to his best insight: "Counterinsurgency is an operational approach, not a national strategy, but in the strategic vacuum that existed, the manual came to fulfill that role. The fact that a nation can execute COIN does not mean that it should" (p. 133).

The final section, chapters 8 through 12, offers mixed assessments of the doctrine's utility in Iraq and Afghanistan. In the fall of 2007, after General Petraeus testified that the surge and the mission to protect the population had begun to reduce levels of violence in Iraq, Crane took one of those whirlwind battlefield tours wherein outside experts fly in for brief, exhilarating visits to see what is happening and assess whether it amounts to progress. Generals in charge and young sergeants leading troops left Crane in awe. He was impressed to see that many units were implementing the doctrine, but dismayed when other units did not. He was also humbled where it seemed the manual was unequal to the situation.

If the surge reflected the successful application of the new counterinsurgency doctrine, it did not resolve the larger problems of an Iraqi political settlement and American troop commitments: how many, for how long, and to what end? The aftermath of the surge, coupled with the fact that it did not lead to an enduring commitment to complete the mission and secure its gains, gave Crane the sense of opportunities missed in both Iraq and Afghanistan, where counterinsurgency "was never either fully resourced nor allowed sufficient time." At the same time, however, Crane questions whether counterinsurgency could ever have worked in Afghanistan, because "without the possibility of establishing a legitimate indigenous governing authority, such a campaign is doomed to fail" (p. 219). Because his book focuses on doctrinal development and not on Iraq, Afghanistan, or other geostrategic hornets' nests, Crane does not explain how one knows whether such a possibility exists. Instead, he concludes with postsurge echoes of the doctrinal debates that had been all the rage at the height of the Iraq war and by offering a few final lessons.

Some of those lessons invalidate themselves. For example, Crane laments the fact that headquarters often have to "play the Super Bowl with pickup teams," but then argues that "it no longer makes sense to train every officer to be prepared to take on new responsibilities in an expanded force" (pp. 253–54). In fact, officers and soldiers in recent wars have been called upon time and again to step up to challenges far beyond all their education and training. Some have exceeded expectations and some have not, but there will continue to be a premium on the flexibility and resilience needed to learn from and surmount unforeseen trials. Any who deem themselves warriors must be prepared to assume greater responsibilities in a force that expands, contracts, and adapts to evolving conflicts.

It is worth noting that *Cassandra in Oz* is not about Iraq; there is not a single mention of Ayatollah Sistani, Najaf, Iran or Syria—factors that cannot be ignored by anyone intending to influence Iraqi politics—and Moqtada al-Sadr is named once. The ubiquitous John Nagl, however, appears some thirty-four times, and even the satirist Jon Stewart gets a nod. The point is not that Crane should have explored Iraqi sectarianism, but that doctrinal arguments about counterinsurgency proceeded many thousands of miles away from the drivers of Iraq's sectarian conflicts. Put another way, the center of gravity for FM 3–24 and *Cassandra in Oz* lay somewhere between Washington, D.C.; Carlisle, Pennsylvania; and Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, not between the Tigris and the Euphrates. In effect, the manual and the memoir are more relevant to American concerns than to the future of Iraq or how to resolve that country's conflicts.

If these criticisms seem harsh, my regard for *Cassandra in Oz* is not. Crane's investment in his subject is personal because he taught many who fought in these wars, some of whom never made it home. It is worth reading, and reading over again, because those who served in these conflicts will understand better the doctrinal debates through which the Army sought to define missions and shape outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan. Fill the margins with scribbles about your own ideas and disagreements as Crane explains what he experienced and wrote along the way. In the end, he was left to ponder what difference it had made, whether the costs were worth it, and what he might yet teach anyone willing to listen.

Note

1. Bing West, *The Strongest Tribe: War, Politics, and the Endgame in Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2008), p. 122.

Dr. Wm. Shane Story, a retired Army Reserve colonel, is the chief of the Contemporary Studies Division at the U.S. Army Center of Military History. He has a Ph.D. in history from Rice University and deployed to Iraq as a historian with the Coalition Land Forces Component Command in 2003 and with Multi-National Forces–Iraq in 2007–2008.

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Chief Historian's Footnote

Book Process Standard Operating Procedure, Part II

Before delving into the main topic of this Footnote, I want to recognize Mr. Ed Clarke, who has moved on from the Center of Military History (CMH) to a new position within the Army. Ed came to CMH in 2014 to be the first program manager for Career Program (CP) 61, and as such, he did all the hard work of creating CP61 from scratch. But more importantly, Ed demonstrated a high level of initiative and dedication, continually improving the program in ways both large and small. Each year he obtained a bigger pool of money to spend on training, education, and conferences for the Army's historians, archivists, and museum professionals. In one of his last efforts, he successfully gained approval for CP61 to participate in a pilot program that will allow the CP to directly spend its budget rather than going through the lengthy and difficult G–3/5/7 approval process for each and every expenditure. He will be truly missed, and his successor will be challenged meeting the standard that Ed set.

In my last Footnote, I described some of CMH's efforts to improve how it researches, writes, and produces its official history volumes. In addition to reducing the scope of books and providing graduate research assistants to help authors, one of the key aspects of the new standard operating procedure (SOP) is ensuring that projects receive high-level attention throughout their development. To that end, the chief historian, the director of Histories Directorate, the writing division chief, and the master authors (more on them later) serve as an editorial board to monitor each book from the prospectus stage through final production.

More emphasis on the prospectus will help the author and the editorial board determine what needs to be covered in the book, how much time should be spent on research, and how long the project should take. As with any task, devoting more resources to it could result in a better outcome. The Army, as an example, could always increase readiness to a higher level if it had more ammunition, more fuel, and more training time. But the nation provides a limited budget, and the Army does the best it can with what it has. For a book, the primary resource is the author's time, and the prospectus guides the amount of effort that should be applied. The detailed prospectus also helps ensure that an author will not omit desired topics or go off on tangents.

In a reversion to a practice employed in the heyday of the World War II "Green Books," the editorial board will review each chapter as it is completed and provide guidance to the author as needed. This process of ongoing group review by the board also provides feedback that will serve as the basis for personnel evaluations and help ensure that all authors are treated similarly. Tying evaluations to the deadlines established in the prospectus, and to the results of editorial board reviews, allows the system to reward those authors who meet or exceed desired benchmarks of quality and timeliness.

Some aspects of the SOP are organizational. One key objective is to minimize the distractions to authors and supervisors. To that end, we established a program manager billet in Histories Directorate to take over many of the administrative duties previously handled by historians, such as serving as the designated federal official for our advisory committee. We also are consolidating all authors under a single writing division, down from three just a few years ago. Disbanding the Vietnam group in 2016 freed up one GS–14 historian to become a master author, and we are in the process of establishing a second such position. This track permits the best writers to pursue promotion up through GS–14 without having to become a supervisor, thus allowing CMH to keep that hard-earned expertise and wealth of knowledge focused on producing books (and minimizing the risk that writers will seek a promotion outside CMH).

There are no silver bullets in the SOP, but we think that all the changes working together will have a positive impact.

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