**Tradecraft and Technology – Intelligence in the Civil War**

**Lecture Three: From Aerial Reconnaissance to Signals Collection**

**Technologies Improve**

**A. Aerial Reconnaissance: New Intelligence Uses for an Old Technology**

* U.S. Army Balloon Corps was headed by civilian Thaddeus Lowe.
* Bureaucratic and logistical challenges
* McClellan’s Peninsula Campaign saw the first use of aerial reconnaissance.
* Early morning flights, many officers take a turn in the basket
* Confederate counter-measures
* Confederacy attempts to create balloon corps
* Within a year, both sides had given up on balloons – the Union over bureaucratic squabbles, the Confederacy for lack of funds.

**B. Expanding Role of Technology: USA & CSA Signal Corps Organizations**

* CSA Signal Corps, headed by Col. William Norris, had a small nucleus of 50 officers and NCO’s, with another 1,500 men detailed from other branches of the services.
* USA Signal Corps**:** Created & headed by Col. Albert James Myer. At its peak, U.S.S.C. numbered some 300 officers and 2,500 men.
* Signal stations took two forms: 1) observation - observing & reporting on a particular area or looking out for the enemy; or 2) communication **-** relaying messages.
* The “wigwag” tactical battlefield system employed flags during the day and torches at night to send messages by code.
* Wigwag’s first tactical military intelligence success probably was at First Manassas.
* Telegraph: The Signal Corps flag signals were supplemented by (and sometimes interlinked with) a telegraphy system.
* Intelligence perspective - the telegraph permitted the Army of the Potomac & the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia to exchange information with other commands and the governments in Washington & Richmond.
* Field and Headquarters telegraph and telegraphers

**C. Cryptology**

* Codes and ciphers
* Cipher Discs:Developed by both sides. Used for important messages.
* Encoding went from simple ciphers in 1861 to more complex cipher discs and machines by 1864.
* Signal Intercepts: Reading the enemy’s mailbecame big activity for both sides.

**D. Mr. Lincoln’s “T-Mails” – Executive Control of the Military & Intelligence**

* **Lincoln’s daily visit to War Dept. Telegraph Office – “Situation Room”**
* **Lincoln uses telegraph to start conversation, make impactful decisions**