

**Tradecraft and Technology – Intelligence in the Civil War**  
**Lecture One: Initial Efforts Yield Great “Spy” Stories,**  
**But Have Limited Impact**

**A. Background/Introduction**

**B. Purpose & Scope:** Focus on Eastern Theater in first two years of the war

**C. Definitions**

- What is the difference between information and Intelligence? Webster’s definitions:
  - Information: facts provided or learned about something or someone
  - Intelligence: The communication or reception of knowledge obtained from investigation, study, or instruction
- CIA Comment: “Definitions carefully formulated by intelligence experts do exist, but all seem deficient in one respect or another; the concept remains as sprawling and thorny as a briar patch. “ But they do offer a definition:
- CIA Definition: “Intelligence is the collecting and processing of that information about foreign countries and their agents which is needed by a government for its foreign policy and for national security, the conduct of non-attributable activities abroad to facilitate the implementation of foreign policy, and the protection of both process and product, as well as persons and organizations concerned with these, against unauthorized disclosure.”

**D. American Civil War and Intelligence**

- Intelligence in Civil War: Challenge for historians - the lack of reliable information.
- Civil War intelligence literature is made up mostly of “pot boilers” focusing primarily on the exploits of spies, hopelessly mixing fact and fiction.

## **E. Value of Intelligence: Relearning the Lesson**

- We continue to “forget and relearn” the same lessons about the value of taking information from all sources and “fusing” it into a correlated and cross-checked whole
- Key goal of intelligence – protecting against surprise
- Data overload and rice bowls – challenges then and now

## **F. Espionage & Treason in Buchanan’s Cabinet - 1860**

- VP Breckenridge
- Treasury Secretary Cobb
- Interior Secretary Thompson
- Secretary of War Floyd

## **G. Early Efforts: No Centralized Structure; Civilians Fill the Gaps**

- In 1861 neither side saw the need for a national-level, centralized intelligence effort
- U.S. Government hires civilian detectives
- Pinkerton protects President-Elect Lincoln’s arrival in Washington

## **H. Early Efforts: Confederacy – Focus on Washington D.C.**

- Virginia’s Governor Letcher - earliest recruiter
- Story of Rose O’Neal Greenhow, Rebel spy
- The “Secret Line” delivery route from Maryland & DC to Richmond
- “Secret Service Bureau” - clandestine unit within the Signal Corps, which was part of the War Department.

## **I. Early Efforts: Union - Who Is in Charge?**

- Union had no readymade spy network. Each general handled his own intelligence collection & analysis
- Securing the Capital – Ward Hill Lamon & Washington DC Police Force
- Lincoln’s personal spy – William A. Lloyd
- Pinkerton’s early activities

- Timothy Webster – Pinkerton’s double agent