

## The Role of Intelligence in the Civil War Part II: Support to Military Operations

### Lecture Two: Union Intelligence in Transition – McClellan, Burnside, Hooker

**No Professional Military Intelligence Structure:** As we will see, until 1863, neither side created a professional Military Intelligence structure – relying instead on civilians & amateurs. Commanders also tended to do their own analysis. Why?! At that time, the conduct of military intelligence was considered a “**function of command,**” which any professional soldier could perform. It did not require any special skills. Like: “**Anyone can cook.**”

#### MCCLELLAN APPROACH – ARROGANCE & AMATEURS

- We saw in Part I, how Allen Pinkerton was hired by **Samuel Felton**, President of Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore RR to protect Lincoln - which he did. On 21 April (9 days after attack on Ft. Sumter) Pinkerton wrote to Lincoln offering his services to start: “**obtaining information on the movements of traitors, or safely convey your letters or dispatches.**” Before the President could respond, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan asked Pinkerton to set up a military intelligence service for McClellan’s command – the Division of the Ohio. Pinkerton agreed and, with several detectives, headed for McClellan’s HQ in Cincinnati. Pinkerton remained a civilian, but took a **new cover alias – Major E.J. Allen.**
  - **Allen Pinkerton Background:** Born, Glasgow (1819). Came to U.S. at age 23, worked as deputy sheriff & Chicago policeman. In 1850, founded his own agency. Created early “Detectives Code of Conduct” – “**no addiction to drink, smoking, card playing, low dives or...slang.**”
  - The sign on his HQs was a huge eye & company motto: “**We Never Sleep.**” (origin of term: Private Eye). Specialized in tracking down & capturing railroad train robber gangs.
- **How did McClellan know Pinkerton?** Well, before the war McClellan had been VP of the Rock Island & Illinois Central RR - one of Pinkerton’s largest clients. (Lincoln was its attorney). Pinkerton & McClellan friends.
- Then, shortly after the humiliating Union defeat at First Bull Run/Manassas, Gen. McClellan replaced McDowell as Army commander. **He brought Pinkerton with him as his Chief of Intel.** Pinkerton (civilian) called himself “**Chief of the U.S. Secret Service.**”

- **Pinkerton Background/Methods:** McClellan specified 2 roles for Pinkerton:
  - Espionage, which he did, mostly using spies/agents in DC & Richmond
  - Interrogation of deserters, contrabands, prisoners, civilians

**Main goal: Learn structure & strength (OB) of Confederate Army in Virginia**

Pinkerton, who had **only 6 men initially**, was **isolated from the rest of McClellan's HQ and out of the flow of other sources of intelligence** – Signal Corps and balloonists reported to McClellan, and the cavalry and Southern newspapers were largely ignored.

- **His methodology was flawed:** Ironically, his best estimate was the first one in Oct. 1861 - 98,000 in the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia. Pinkerton got the organization right – corps, divisions, brigades & regiments – same structure as U.S. Army. Still it was well above the actual number (closer to 65,000). There were several problems with the approach:
- **Spies were sent mainly to Richmond**, not the field armies, and collected little of use. Lots of dramatic tales of derring-do published after the war; but little actual **actionable Intel** obtained.
- **Regiment size was inflated:** Pinkerton assumed an average of 700 men, when actual number was 450-500. Didn't allow for enough attrition.
- Information was gathered almost exclusively from **unreliable and unvetted** sources (deserters, civilians, etc.). He even opened several hundred private letters sent from Richmond to citizens in DC! **NONE** of his data came from actual **FIELD OBSERVATIONS** by cavalry or scouts. He was too ready to accept stories as true, especially if they inflated Rebel numbers (mainly because of pressure from his boss – Gen. McClellan).
- Even when **his prized spy, Frank Ellis, turned out to be a double agent**, Pinkerton failed to question his inflated numbers – he was too wedded to them & too embarrassed to admit error. (**Note:** Ellis, 28 yr old from NY, sent 3 times to Richmond Sep-Nov 1861. Out for profit, he quickly sold info to both sides. Sent to Capitol prison in Dec 61. But released for lack of evidence. He had guts and daring - In Jul 1863, he was **accepted as a U.S. War Dept. special agent!** The error was quickly discovered but not before he disappeared with the \$200 cash advance)

## PENINSULA CAMPAIGN - RAW DATA, NO ANALYSIS

- By the start of McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in the Spring of 1862, Pinkerton had 24 men on his staff – but **ONLY FIVE** of them were **IN ENEMY TERRITORY**.
- Pinkerton's **intelligence was sent to McClellan raw without context or analysis** in long, ponderously worded reports – averaging over 50 dense pages a week! Fischel calls Pinkerton's reports "**wordy & flatulent.**" There was no effort to validate sources or to synthesize or cross-check other sources, because Pinkerton had no access to this information or knowledge of analytic methodology.
- **This "padding" was encouraged by McClellan, who already had made up his mind, as early as Aug 1861** that Lee's forces **significantly outnumbered his**. He already was whining that he needed more troops, based on his totally unsubstantiated estimates (Aug- Oct 61) that Rebels in Virginia alone were between 100K and 170K. – more than double Union numbers!
- McClellan did his own data analysis and immediately began **leaning on Pinkerton to adjust his figures "to be sure and cover the entire number of the Enemy."** Pinkerton did his best to defer to his commander's wishes. Under a commander more supportive of objective intelligence, Pinkerton almost surely would have produced a much more accurate estimate. **But Pinkerton worked for a general who did not really use intelligence except to justify his own dislike of fighting.**
- On the Peninsula, McClellan made only minimal use of the cavalry as an intelligence component. He saw its role primarily **as guarding wagons/supplies and army's flanks** on the move. What intelligence was gathered was almost by accident, rather than design. This was in sharp contrast to Lee's very effective use of JEB Stuart's mounted arm of the Army of Northern Virginia.
- McClellan was **never asked to substantiate** his inflated claims of enemy strength, and neither Lincoln nor Stanton ever officially **challenged** them; but both (and others) expressed serious doubts of their accuracy.

**Bottom Line: Mac Knows Best: McClellan used these civilian amateurs and politicized intelligence to suit his purposes.**

## LEE'S APPROACH – NO ORGANIZED INTELLIGENCE STAFF IN HIS ARMY

- Despite the effectiveness of the Confederate cavalry and scouts like Mosby at gathering valuable information, **it must be pointed out** that the Confederate Army commanded initially by General Joe Johnston had virtually no dedicated intelligence staff or methodology. Surprisingly, when he inherited and renamed it the Army of Northern Virginia, Robert E. Lee took no action to remedy this shortcoming.
- **No Intel Staff:** Lee kept his staff very small and devoted none of them to full-time intelligence collation or analysis. Like McClellan, he was his own intelligence analyst. There was no written OB of the Union A of P; and no organized effort to compile, collate or analyze the various reports coming on from many sources. **This is a key failing of Lee & Confederacy in general.**
- **Lee did recognize key tactical Intel and acted on it** – based on his long experience (Mexico & West), judgment & natural aggressiveness. These were to prove his greatest advantages over his early opponents – McClellan, Burnside and Hooker. Meade and Grant would be a very different story.

## THE MARYLAND CAMPAIGN AND BATTLE OF ANTIETAM

**Setting:** With that background, let us move forward a few months to the late summer of 1862. It was the second summer of the war.

### What were the **KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES** for each side?

- **Confederacy** – independence and preservation of slave property rights. They had no interest in conquering the North – just leave us alone.
- **Union** – suppression of the rebellion and reunification of the country. But to do that it had to militarily invade & subdue a **landmass larger than Europe**. An emerging objective was the abolition of slavery (Emancipation Proclamation)

What we must remember, looking back on history is that at this point, the **Confederacy Can Win. South didn't have to conquer the North**; but only to make war too costly & painful & Northern public would stop supporting the war & Lincoln Administration. That's exactly what was happening.

Despite some successes in the West, in the East, the war was going badly for the North, which had suffered a series of defeats. It was a critical moment in U.S. history – nation’s fate hung in the balance. Lee/South was winning on all fronts:

- Peninsula Campaign – (March-May) good strategy; poor execution by McClellan, who inflates Confederate numbers, moves ponderously.
- 7 Days Battles (late June) - Lee pushed McClellan away from Richmond
- Second Manassas (28-30 Aug) – Lee defeated Gen. John Pope & his Army of Virginia was nearly destroyed.

**In 2 months, July-Aug 1862, the strategic military (and political) situation had shifted 180 degrees.** From the verge of capturing the Rebel Capital, Richmond, Lee & Army of N. Virginia had defeated two larger Union armies, humiliating both McClellan & Pope. and was camped just outside Washington.

- Northern public was tired of war, high casualties, lost battles. Peace Democrats calling for a truce & peaceful separation – let the South go – two nations.
- Northern Diarist: **“The feeling of despondency is very great. Things look disastrous...I find it hard to maintain my lively faith in the triumph of the nation and the law.”**
- As Lincoln knew: **“Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment nothing can fail. Without it nothing can succeed. He who molds opinion is greater than he who enacts laws.”**
- Mid-term elections in Nov. Union defeat could give control of Congress to Democrats, who would pressure for an armistice & negotiations.

### **CONFEDERATE STRATEGY – INVASION ALONG A BROAD FRONT**

- Lee knew: The invasion, as he said in a letter to President Davis: **“places it in our power...to propose the recognition of our independence.” “Such a proposal of peace would enable the people of the United States to determine at their coming elections whether they will support those who favor a prolongation of the war, or those who wish to bring it to a termination.”**

- **Foreign Recognition** - England/France were desperate to end the recession caused by Union blockade cutting off supply of Southern cotton. There was talk of intervention to mediate an armistice, peace treaty, Confederate Independence. That would mean trade, legitimacy. Palmerston's govt. had scheduled a Parliamentary debate on the issue for 17 Sept. If that failed, they still might provide **military assistance**, especially if it helped restore the flow of cotton to their factories.
- On the Union side, there was the **Emancipation Proclamation** – Lincoln has it in his desk; waiting for a victory to issue. This would take the war to a higher moral plane – anti-slavery.
- Lincoln quote: Emancipation has become “**a military necessity, absolutely essential to the preservation of the Union. We must free the slaves or ourselves be subdued...Decisive and extensive measures must be adopted...The slaves are undoubtedly an element of strength to those who have their service, and we must decide whether that element should be with us or against us.**”

#### **DECISION TO INVADE:**

Davis & Lee knew that despite Rebel battlefield victories, they had achieved little strategic gain. **So, Davis decided on a bold strategic move & he** authorized a two-pronged invasion of “Border States” - not to occupy them, but to add pressure on the Northern voters to elect Democrats in Nov.

- Braxton Bragg & Kirby Smith were poised to lead two Confederate thrusts into Kentucky (“In God we trust, but I must have Kentucky” - Lincoln)
- Lee's victory at **Second Manassas** had opened the way for his simultaneous invasion of Maryland and Penn. The next day (1 Sep) in driving rain at Chantilly, a small action, 2 Union 2 Union generals – Kearny & Stevens – were killed, and Pope's defeated Union army limped back to the capital.
- Lee also knew that the **Confederate army had been weakened** by 29,000 casualties in 3 months of hard fighting during that summer & it was poorly equipped. All 170 regiments were veteran fighters, but the average size was down from 800 men to just 170.

- His report said as much: **“The army is not properly equipped for an invasion of an enemy’s territory...Still we cannot afford to be idle, and though weaker than our opponents in men and military equipment, must endeavor to harass if we cannot destroy them.”**
- **Unfamiliar Territory:** Lee also knew that as soon as he moved north of the Potomac he would lose the critically important **“home field advantage.”** As Frederick the Great of Prussia once said: **“If I were mindful only of my own glory, I would...always make war in my own country, for there every man is a spy, and the enemy can make no movement of which I am not informed.”**
- **On Wednesday, 3 Sept.,** Lee began moving his 50,000 men out of their camps at Drainsville west to Leesburg. Then north on Rt. 15 to the fords of the Potomac. Lee & staff remained in Leesburg at **Harrison Hall on N. King St.,** (now Glenfiddich House) - next door to doctor treating Lee’s sprained wrists.
- 4-5 Sep: While Lee & his commanders planned the campaign, the Confederate army began fording the Potomac. Despite the straggling (as many as 10K fell behind), morale was sky high (bands played “Maryland My Maryland”)

## WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN WASHINGTON?

- Panic & Confusion in Washington. Two disorganized, defeated armies.
- McClellan’s reputation with troops & cronies was much higher than with Lincoln & cabinet. “Napoleon Complex,” outsized ego, a publicly pompous attitude, stubbornness and timidity in battle cancelled out his more positive attributes. What Lincoln called his **“contemptible failure to aid Pope at Second Manassas”** cost Cabinet support & split the Union officer corps. The Cabinet even debated Mac’s ability to command & his loyalty (Democrat)
- **1 Sep:** Lincoln reluctantly chose McClellan, stating: **“We must use the tools we have. If he can’t fight himself, he excels in making others ready to fight.”** But the reaction among the troops was wildly enthusiastic – **“Little Mac is back!”** was the cry as word spread that McClellan was in command again.
- McClellan’s orders were to:
  - Find and intercept the Confederate Army
  - Protect the Capital and Northern population centers
  - Repulse the Confederate invasion & destroy Lee’s army

- **7 Sep:** In a week, **McClellan had brought order to the chaos** in the capital; he had reconstituted and revitalized the Army of Potomac, blending together units from Pope's Army of Virginia. Reinforced and resupplied, the army was on the road in pursuit. But combination of raw recruits, long supply trains and Confederate disinformation slowed his advance to **6 miles/day**.
- The same day, 7 Sep, **Lee halted in Frederick, MD** to give his exhausted army a rest. Learned that Federal Garrison (12,000 men) at Harper's Ferry has not withdrawn. This threatened his plans.

## CONFEDERATE INTEL MEASURES

During the march into Maryland, Confederate's employed a number of Intelligence measures, with varying degrees of success:

- Stuart's cavalry **seized Sugarloaf Mt.** on 6 Sep from Union Signal Corps. Unit. They held the hill for 5 days, sending Lee intel on the approach of Union army.
- The loss also denied McClellan valuable intelligence about the location and movements of the Confederate Army during a critical part of the campaign. Federal cavalry recaptured Sugarloaf on 11 Sept., as Stuart rejoined Lee.
- Stuart's troopers were very successful at **planting disinformation** with local civilians about Confederate troop strengths and campaign objectives. When Union cavalry questioned Maryland civilians, they were told conflicting stories. Reports sent to McClellan's Hqs, showed Lee heading for Washington, Baltimore, Harrisburg or even Philadelphia. The result was that McClellan had to ensure that all these potential targets were protected by spreading his army across a broad front and slowing down his pursuit of Lee.
- In his campaign report, Lee noted that: "**Stuart with his cavalry was close up to the enemy and doing everything possible to keep him in ignorance and to deceive him by false reports, which he industriously circulated.**"
- But "**Stonewall**" Jackson provided the best example. As he entered Frederick, MD, he pulled off to the side of the road and, according to a local eyewitness: in "**an uncharacteristically loud and ostentatious scene...He demanded from his engineer a map of Chambersburg and vicinity, and then made inquiries of the citizens standing about regarding the various roads leading to Pennsylvania.**" – not a bad acting job for the usually reticent General.



- After leaving Sugarloaf, **Stuart was mostly unsuccessful at collecting intelligence on Union troop movements** and intentions, due to a combination of factors – a hostile local populace, lack of accurate maps, and the actions of the Union cavalry screen. Called “playing offense.” **But Stuart excelled at “playing defense”** using his cavalry for the rest of the campaign to deprive Union cavalry and McClellan of first-hand knowledge of Lee's movements.

## **UNION INTEL MEASURES**

**McClellan's intelligence in this generally friendly country was little better than Lee's but for different reasons. Lee suffered from a paucity of good information, while McClellan had too much information with no effective way to collate and analyze it.**

- There were two sources of intelligence that did **not** contribute much to McClellan's information. One was the **Balloon Corps**, which was absent. Professor Thaddeus Lowe was left behind in Washington because he had no transportation to move his cumbersome equipment to keep up with the army.
- The other, surprisingly, **was Pinkerton's Secret Service** corps of agents. In the chaos of defeat, Pinkerton's agent force and Hqs. staff had been seriously reduced. He was operating with only 7 Agents in Maryland. Despite the protests of his best agent, John Babcock (more later), Pinkerton still failed to send out scouts or spies. He relied only on interrogation of deserters, stragglers and prisoners & made no attempt to cross-check or validate the information.
- **So, who was providing all the information flowing into McClellan's Hqs?** Well, PA Gov. **Andrew Curtin, on his own initiative**, had set up an ad hoc intelligence group of local civilians. McClellan detailed a cavalry troop, commanded by **Capt. William J. Palmer to assist. He was joined by telegraph operator William B. Wilson.** Palmer was a very competent officer, and he was able to use his few troopers as **scouts** to keep track of Confederate movements as well as to **interrogate refugees and deserters.** Wilson's abilities to tap into telegraph wires enabled **very accurate, prompt reports to be sent to Curtin.** Unfortunately, these very effective efforts were delayed and muddled by **Curtin's editing before relaying the information** to McClellan. As amateurs, Curtin and his assistant, Alexander McClure, were not able to recognize the value of the intelligence they received. **Their condensations and interpretations distorted or left out important details. Thus the best Union field intelligence organization formed up to this time was rendered ineffective and its impact actually was counterproductive.**

The damage done by Curtin's amateurish efforts was exacerbated by two factors:

- First, following his usual practice, **McClellan served as his own chief of intelligence**. So he had to review all the raw reporting sent to his Hqs. The volume of paperwork made it next to impossible for McClellan, who also had an army to run, to analyze and make sense of it all.
- Second, as he had done consistently from early on, **McClellan continued to inflate the enemy numbers**. In a report to Lincoln on 10 September, he said: "**statements I get regarding the enemy's forces that have crossed to this side range from 80,000 to 150,000.**" He seems to have settled on the estimate of 120,000 as realistic.

### **LOST SPECIAL ORDER 191 – GREATEST INTELLIGENCE COUP OF CIVIL WAR**

- **On 9 Sep, the Confederate army was still camped outside Frederick, MD.** Gen. Lee met with Jackson & Longstreet to decide what to do about the Union garrison at Harpers Ferry, which threatened the Rebel supply lines. The result was an audacious plan for dividing his army into 4 parts & sending Jackson with over half of his army on daring raid to capture Harper's Ferry & return before McClellan could react. Lee and his C/Staff, Robert Clinton, wrote out **7 numbered copies** of the plan, known as **Special Order 191**. The Staff procedure was to number all copies and account for them thru receipts from receiving staffs. Unbeknownst to Lee & Clinton, Jackson's staff made an extra, 8<sup>th</sup> unnumbered copy for DH Hill, which Hill received. Lee's numbered copy for Hill was sent by courier, but it never arrived. In haste & confusion, Clinton failed to note the receipts for the numbered copies, and the missing copy was not noticed.
- **10-11 Sep:** Lee's army began moving out to execute the complex & daring plan
- **13 Sep: Intelligence Coup:** Two days later, Union army arrived in Frederick. Corp. Barton Mitchell (27<sup>th</sup> IN) was poking around the abandoned Confederate campsite. He found an envelope containing 2 cigars and a copy of Lee's Special Order 191. Went up chain of command to XII Corps Gen. Alpheus Williams.
- **Disinformation?:** How, you might ask, did they know it wasn't more Confederate disinformation? Well, luck mostly. Gen Williams' aide, **Lt. Sam**

**Pitman**, recognized the handwriting of his former West Point roommate – Lee’s C/Staff Clinton.

- **13 Sep, Noon:** McClellan was handed a copy as he was meeting with the mayor and citizens of Frederick, grateful for their deliverance from the invaders. As McClellan read the paper, he shouted: **“Here is a paper with which if I cannot whip Bobbie Lee, I will be willing to go home.”**
- He quickly returned to his HQs and wired Lincoln: **“I think Lee has made a gross mistake and that he will be severely punished for it...I hope for a great success if the plans of the Rebels remain unchanged...I have all the plans of the Rebels and will catch them in their own trap if my men are equal to the emergency.”**
- In the same message he also expressed his low opinion of Lee: **“Lee is too cautious and weak under grave responsibility-personally brave and energetic to a fault, he yet is wanting in moral firmness when pressed by heavy responsibility & is likely to be timid & irresolute in action.”**
- As with most raw intelligence, **Special Order 191 wasn’t perfect. First, it was 3 days old. Second, it made no mention of troop strength.** McClellan lacked any other intelligence to help fill the gaps. As his own analyst, he made incorrect assumptions. He assumed that Lee’s aggressive timetable for Jackson’s capture of Harper’s Ferry was maintained – but Jackson was behind schedule! He continued to assume that Lee’s army far outnumbered his own, believing that no rational general would so divide his forces in enemy territory unless he was confident of superior strength. McClellan was guilty of assuming Lee would act as he, McClellan would in the situation. So, McClellan planned but remained extremely cautious.
- **What did McClellan do with this intel windfall?** What he did best – prepared, but took limited action. He had 18 hours – enough time to seize South Mt. gaps. He sent Pleasanton’s cavalry to scout, but Stuart prevented him from learning much. He moved on Division west toward Middletown. But he missed the opportunity to push hard and split Lee’s forces.

At about 8pm the same evening, **Lee was informed** by Stuart (based on reports from friendly civilians) not only that McClellan’s army already was in Frederick, but also that they were not going into camp, but were preparing to move out. Stuart also reported Union cavalry & infantry moving west toward Middletown. This was a critical moment – should Lee risk the invasion or give up and retreat?

- Lee, again lacking any staff to coordinate and interpret intel, was unsure what was happening. But he did do what he did best – he acted. **Lee decided to risk it. He issued orders to move available forces (D.H. Hill Div & Stuart’s cavalry) to defend South Mt. gaps to delay any Union approach, giving Jackson more time to finish the job at Harper’s Ferry.**
- **NOTE:** Most agree Lee didn’t know McClellan had Special Order 191 until March 1863. Then, he read about it in newspapers that reported McClellan's testimony before the congressional Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War. On 15 Sep: *NY Herald* had published the story about Special Order 191; but Lee apparently didn’t see it. He had no access to papers & he was busy trying to save his army.

### **BATTLE OF SOUTH MOUNTAIN – 14 SEPTEMBER 1862**

- **14 Sep:** Morning: Army of Potomac finally moves toward South Mt. - **As Lee said: “With more speed than was convenient.”**
- **Daylong fight** – successful Confederate holding action. McClellan’s caution and delays cost him the chance to rescue 12,000-man Harpers Ferry garrison, which surrenders on 15 Sep.
- **15-16 September:** McClellan squandered more valuable time – 2 full days - in making detailed preparations – still severely hampered in his decision-making process by his incorrect assumptions that Lee’s forces significantly outnumbered his army. Instead, just the reverse was true. Lee used the time to reunite his army in a strong defensive position on the heights above Antietam Creek near the town of Sharpsburg, MD.

### **17 SEPTEMBER: BATTLE OF ANTIETAM:**

- Bloodiest day in American history: **Cost:** 23,000 casualties (100K engaged) in 12 hours (one every 2 seconds). About 7,600 killed/died of wounds – **all of them Americans.** Fought on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Constitution’s ratification.
- **Tactical/battlefield intelligence failure:** McClellan missed several opportunities to win battle & destroy Lee’s army (possibly end the war) because he failed to move aggressively. Feared committing his substantial reserves because he inflated Pinkerton’s estimates of Confederate troop strength

- **Lee was allowed to escape** across Potomac R. McClellan did not pursue.
- Lincoln issued preliminary **Emancipation Proclamation** a week later.
- **Lincoln visited Antietam**, trying unsuccessfully to get McClellan to move.
- **Day after Nov. elections, Lincoln replaced McClellan with Ambrose Burnside.**

**Bottom Line: There was no clear correlation between the available intelligence and battlefield results**

- This is what frustrates Intelligence professionals the most. We can only provide accurate, timely analysis based on solid sources and methods.
- Our efforts are in the hands of our customers, the military leaders and civilian policymakers.
- Despite the fact that McClellan HAD LEE's PLAN, and a better intelligence organization in Pinkerton, he still managed to fight to a tie against an enemy half his size. And then missed opportunities to destroy Lee and end the war.
- It isn't enough for the Intelligence professionals to provide the "who, what, when, where and why." We also must persuade the customer of the "so what." As the famous Henry Kissinger comment makes clear. When a senior CIA official explained patiently to the Secretary of State that the analysis he had requested had already been presented to him, Kissinger replied: **"Yes, you told me; but you didn't convince me."**

**BURNSIDE'S MINIMALIST APPROACH**

- When Burnside replaced McClellan on 9 Nov. 1862, he sent Pinkerton packing. Pinkerton took all of his files & team of civilian detectives with him - leaving **only Pvt. John Babcock**. Burnside's intelligence branch consisted of only this single private and a few civilian scouts. But Burnside's tenure was too short (less than 3 months - 82 days) to have any impact.

- **Fredericksburg Campaign:** Even with no field Hqs. intelligence infrastructure, Burnside received valuable information. Of course, intelligence has no positive impact unless it is received, believed and acted upon.
- On Dec 13, 1862, only 3 days before the eventual Union disaster, a captured Rebel officer was interrogated by I Corps Commander Gen. Hooker. He offered to provide what Hooker called “**full information of the position and defenses of the enemy.**” But Burnside, fearing a trick, rejected the information and refused to alter his attack plan. The rest is history.
- **Balloon Observations:** Before the battle, Corps Commander Dan Butterfield ascended in one of the 3 balloons still in use to gain “**a view of the topography...that was of great value in making troop dispositions and movements.**” Apparently, Butterfield & other observers missed the Confederate position behind the stone wall at the base of Marye’s Heights.
- **Battle of Fredericksburg** on 17-18 December - somewhat predictably given Burnside’s arrogance and inflexibility - was a crushing defeat for the Union Army of the Potomac.
- **Lincoln’s reaction:** “**If there is a worse place than Hell, I am in it.**”
- It had **lost nearly 13,000** men, most of them in vain assaults against enemy defenses at Marye's Heights, and with shattered morale and fading confidence in its commander, the army was “all played out”. Six weeks later (Jan 20-23) General Burnside tried to retrieve the situation by launching another offensive around Lee’s left flank. But even the weather was against him. 3 days of heavy winter rains turned the entire country into an “ocean of mud.” Artillery, wagons, even infantry became stuck and unable to move. He was soon forced to abandon what became derisively known as the “**Mud March**”.
- **The “Mud March”** finished the destruction of the Union army’s morale & Lincoln’s shaky confidence in Burnside
- **So, on Jan. 25<sup>th</sup> 1863, Lincoln relieved Burnside (after less than 90 days in command). He turned to Burnside’s rival and political enemy: “Fighting” Joe Hooker.**

#### **HOOKER TAKES PROFESSIONAL APPROACH:**

- Burnside's replacement, **Major General Joseph Hooker**, was an experienced corps commander with a well-deserved reputation as an aggressive combat leader. In fact, he had more battlefield experience at that point than any other general. But despite his strong reputation as a fighter, Hooker was unsavory in other ways. His mouth was his worst enemy. He talked too much and too indiscreetly. He also had intrigued (whispered criticism) against Burnside to get the job. He even commented publically that the country needed a dictator.
- Lincoln wrote him a strongly worded letter the day after his appointment, that included this famous response: **"I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the Government needed a Dictator. Of course it was not for this, but in spite of it, that I have given you command. Only those generals who gain successes, can set up dictators. What I ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship."**
- Another unsavory aspect of **his Reputation** focused on his behavior with regard to women and alcohol. As the straight-laced Gen. Meade noted in a letter to his wife: **"I believe Hooker is a good soldier. The danger he runs is of subjecting himself to bad influences."**
- One of his staff officers described Hooker's Hqs. as **"a place that no self-respecting man liked to go, and no decent woman could go. It was a combination of barroom and brothel."**
- Although prostitutes had been known as **"hookers"** for many years, the general's name and the term now became linked as a subject for public humor. A section of Washington's Second Ward, which was filled with brothels, was known as **"Hooker's Division."**
- Finally, the *New York TIMES* probably summarized popular opinion best when it commented: **"Everyone feels that the General will do one of two things, and that right speedily - destroy the Rebel army, or his own."**
- **Hooker excelled as a leader and administrator:** In the weeks that followed, his appointment, Hooker made many far-reaching and positive changes in the management and structure of the army. He cracked down on corruption in supply services; ordered improvements in food and medical care; & demanded results. Desertions sharply declined; morale improved significantly.

- **In early February, Hooker also revamped the Federal Cavalry** into a single Corps. The reorganization helped create a much-needed sense of identity among the horse soldiers. The Union Cavalry Corps consisted of **three divisions** with **Maj. Gen. George P. Stoneman** in command. With new leadership & mission Federal Cavalry began to come into its own as an effective opponent to its Rebel counterpart and as a productive **intelligence collector**.
- Not surprisingly, given Burnside's actions, when Hooker took over the Army of the Potomac, he could not find a single document of any kind at headquarters that contained information about the Confederate forces in his immediate front. Hooker was alarmed and fumed: "**There was no means, no organization, and no apparent effort, to obtain such information.**" As his new Chief of Staff, Dan Butterfield noted: "**We were almost as ignorant of the enemy in our immediate front as if they had been in China.**" But, typical of his style, **Hooker also acted.**
- **One of Hooker's first acts** as army commander was to order his Provost Marshall, General Marsena Patrick, to "**organize and perfect a system for collecting information as speedily as possible.**"
- It was a tall order. Patrick's main job was a police function/keeping law & order in the Army of the Potomac – the second largest city in the South. He complained: "**I am trying to make up a system of Secret Service, but find it hard to organize where there is so little good material..I do not fancy the class of men & think they do not fancy me.**" A few days later, however, Patrick found Col. George H. Sharpe, who had served under him when Patrick was a brigade commander. After a long talk Patrick said that **Sharpe "appears well & I think would be a pleasant man to be associated with."**

## **CREATION OF THE BUREAU OF MILITARY INFORMATION (BMI)**

- **Col. Sharpe** didn't want to leave his 120<sup>th</sup> NY regiment, but reluctantly agreed to take on the assignment. He reported for duty on **11 Feb. 63** as Deputy Provost Marshal. He threw himself into the task of creating the Secret Service Dept. which was soon renamed the **Bureau of Military Information (BMI)**.



- Very soon, Hooker's Hqs. began to receive a steady flow of reports on Lee's army, its movements, disposition, and intentions. These are the materials found in the Archives in 1959 that I mentioned in Lecture #1.
- **Sharpe was** born 1828 in NY (upstate on Hudson). Graduated **Rutgers** at 19, where he gave the salutatory speech in Latin. Finished **Yale Law School** in 2 years & passed NY Bar exam at 21. Practiced in NYC before traveling to Europe where he gained valuable experience and diplomatic skills working in **U.S. legations in Vienna & Rome**.
- Sharpe returned to Kingston, NY set up **private law practice**. With a drooping mustache & receding hairline, he looked like small town merchant, not great spy chief. What Sharpe possessed was formidable intellectual abilities; high level of energy, determination and charisma (he was, in short, a natural leader).
- Sharpe served first as Capt. **in 20<sup>th</sup> NY** & saw action at First Manassas. In 1862, he used his own funds to raise **120<sup>th</sup> NY** & took command at its Col. The Rgmt. fought at Fredericksburg – combat experience. Loyal to his regiment, Sharpe refused promotion to brigade command (and a star).
- **Sharpe was the right man for several reasons:** In addition to being a knowledgeable **customer of Intel**, having served in combat as a regimental commander; he had powerful political connections (law partner was a Congressman close to Sec. of State Seward). **It wasn't just politics, however. At 35, he was older and exhibited a calm maturity. He also was exceptionally intelligent, well-organized and resourceful;** and he held his own among the "personalities" within the Army High Command. It also helped that Sharpe had **no post-war political ambitions** (unlike so many army senior officers).
- **BMI Contributions:** Sharpe immediately threw himself into the task of creating a "**Secret Service Dept.**" (as it was initially known) virtually from scratch (only "holdover" from Pinkerton/Burnside was **Pvt. John Babcock**) and without much in the way of organizational models. As the structure took shape, the name changed to the "**Bureau of Military Information**" or **BMI**. It began with a staff of 18 men that traveled with Army of Potomac HQ & reported directly to Sharpe. The first priority was to gain a "picture" of Lee's army (called an Order of Battle). Sharpe collected information from **hundreds of interrogations** of POW's, deserters & refugees & **correlated** it with other Intel reports from other sources.

- **Key to Sharpe's success** was the critical decision by Hooker to locate the BMI at Army HQ and Hooker's directive that ALL reports from ALL sources to his HQ should go through the BMI, which became the Army's information hub. As you will recall, this was a big change from McClellan's isolation of Pinkerton's force.
- **Sharpe did not directly command the cavalry, balloonists or Signal Corps Operations; BUT he insisted upon seeing those reports and incorporating them into his growing matrix of knowledge about the enemy.**
- **All-Source:** His sources of information included not only these Intel producers but also "contrabands," local citizens, and "open sources" such as Southern newspaper reports. In addition to the OB & location of enemy units, Sharpe began compiling detailed information on locations of artillery batteries, railroad repair updates, local topography, location of mines, enemy supply depots, troop morale, recent orders to troops and impending movements.
- **Analysis & Reporting:** Almost immediately, this raw data was **analyzed** and turned into clear and readable "**finished intelligence**" reports that began to flow into Hooker's headquarters in a steady stream. They still exist (in the Archives). Many of them are in Sharpe's own handwriting, while others are U.S. Military Telegraph messages. They covered not only the structure and size of Lee's army, its movements, disposition, and intentions; but also reports **evaluating the reliability interrogations** of Confederate prisoners of war; comprehensive **assessments** of the enemy's organization; and **maps** that displayed the locations of enemy units and fortifications.
- **Limitations:** Three key issues would eventually somewhat limit the BMI's effectiveness:
  - **Chain of Command Confusion. Sharpe was placed in the Provost Marshall's office (Deputy),** under Marsena Patrick. But his formal supervisor was Army Chief of Staff Dan Butterfield. To further confuse matters, he was ordered to report directly to Gen. Hooker – **he had 3 bosses!** Sharpe employed his diplomatic experience and managed this situation skillfully. But it isn't surprising that these blurred lines of authority and reporting caused confusion and some jealousy.
  - **The Lack of Hqs. Intelligence Structure in War Dept.** – caused chronic communications breakdowns. Distribution of BMI Intel reports to other commands or to key military & civilian leadership too often was delayed or obstructed.

- **Finally, professional jealousy among** other Intel components, especially Cavalry Commanders Stoneman & Pleasenton, who saw Sharpe & the BMI as a competitor rather than a team partner. Hooker & later Meade took too long to clarify the BMI role and to enforce it.

**NEXT TIME - HOW LEE AND HOOKER USED INTELLIGENCE AT CHANCELLORSVILLE.**