

The Role of Intelligence in the Civil War
Part II: Support to Military Operations
Lecture Three: Lee vs. Hooker at Chancellorsville - Better Intelligence
Doesn't Guarantee Success

Review: Last week, we noted that Gen. Burnside lasted less than 3 months, suffering defeat at Fredericksburg in Dec. 1862 and the “Mud March” in January. He was replaced January 26 by Gen. Joe Hooker, who immediately began making improvements in the army’s structure and supply. One of Hooker’s the key initiatives was the creation of the first professional intel organization - **the BMI**.

What’s Next?: But, as winter began to give way to spring in 1863, the armies remained where they were at the end of the Battle of Fredericksburg the previous December – that is facing each other **across the Rappahannock River**. Both Lee and Hooker were considering offensive operations, when the weather improved.

HOOKER PLANS TO MOVE AROUND LEE’S LEFT FLANK

- **The Army of Potomac** was at peak strength – almost 140,000 men. In a late March letter to Hooker, Lincoln confirmed what he expected: **“Our prime objective is the enemy’s army in from of us, and not with, or about, Richmond.”** In the same letter, Lincoln applied the pressure, closing with: **“YOU MUST ACT.”**
- **Plan Objective:** The Confederate Army, though only about half the size of the Union Army facing it, was in a very strong defensive position on Fredericksburg Heights with the river in front. To force Lee out into the open, Hooker would have to attack straight at him or go around to the right or left. The primary focus of Hooker’s plan involved a move by a significant portion of his army around Lee’s left flank – ironically, the same plan that Burnside had in mind which ended in the disastrous Mud March. His plan was complex and audacious, but to succeed it required sound communications and strong execution. **Most importantly, it would depend on solid intelligence and surprise.** To achieve both, Hooker would rely upon the **capabilities of the BMI** to provide accurate, reliable intelligence about the strength and location of the Confederate Army; and upon the Provost Marshall and the Union Cavalry to maintain “Operational Security,” denying JEB Stuart’s Confederate cavalry access to similar information about Union strength and intentions.

- **First the newly created Cavalry Corps** would move west, following the river upstream, cross the Rappahannock well beyond the end of Lee's defenses, then move south to cut off communications between Lee's army at Fredericksburg and Richmond – Confederate Capital.
- **Next**, 3 infantry Corps (42,000 men) would move, **undetected**, 30 miles upstream; cross the river at Kelly's Ford, and then move down the river & secure U.S. Ford. Then 2 more Divisions (10,000) would cross at U.S. Ford. Entire column (52,000) then would advance on Lee's rear at Fredericksburg
- **Meanwhile, to "sell" the deception, Gen. Sedgwick was to remain behind with 2 Corps** (65,000) to hold Lee's attention by threatening an amphibious attack across the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg. Sedgwick's orders were to advance if Lee was not fooled and moved west to meet the threat on his left.
- Hooker's biggest fear was that Lee would escape south before he could put his plan in motion. This assumption colored his view of the Intel reports he was getting.
- But he was confident - proclaiming with his typical bombast: **"My plan is perfect. God have mercy on Robert E. Lee, for I shall have none."**
- **If successful, the move would squeeze** Lee's Confederates in a vice between the two Union forces. In open country, Lee would have to fight against 2:1 odds or attempt to retreat. BUT stealth & surprise were keys to success. **Accurate, timely intelligence was critical to achieving the surprise upon which Hooker's success depended.**

LEE PLANS OFFENSIVE MOVE INTO MARYLAND/PENN.

- Lee assumed Hooker would stay on the defensive. Ironically, in a 9 April letter to Sec. of War Seddon, Lee suggested taking the offensive himself. It would mean a second INVASION! In meetings with President Davis in Richmond a few days later, those plans began to take shape. Lee noted that: **"Should General Hooker's army assume the defensive, the readiest method of relieving the pressure upon General Johnston and General Beauregard (guarding Richmond) would be for this army to cross into Maryland."** - and then Pennsylvania.

- Before Lee could go on the offensive, he would need **provisions, ammunition and transportation**. But most importantly, he must have **reinforcements**. During the winter lull, Longstreet and half his Corps (2 Divisions -20,000 men) had been sent to southeastern VA. Lee had **only 61,000 men**. **He requested that Longstreet rejoin his army, but until then, he was forced to delay offensive plans.**
- As with Hooker, **Lee's plans depended on deceiving the enemy into** believing that the Confederates were holding in place; and, critically, in keeping Hooker ignorant that Lee's army was not at full strength. Lee knew that if Hooker became aware of his army's weakened state, he might well maneuver around Lee and force him out of his lines, driving him back to the defenses of Richmond.
- Lee quoted Sun Tzu, the famous Chinese military strategist on the importance of intelligence: **"If I am able to determine the enemy's disposition while at the same time I conceal my own, then I can concentrate and he must divide."**

INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN HIGH GEAR

As both sides prepared to attack, Lee & Hooker spent much of March & April gathering critical intelligence and making efforts to deceive the enemy of their intentions. Both received reports, and adjusted their calculations for offensive operations.

- **Both use similar methods:** 1) Balloons, 2) Cavalry; 3) Scouts/Spies; 4) Signal Corps, and 5) Press. In addition, Hooker needed good, **detailed maps** of the Wilderness area in Lee's rear.
- **Union Topographical Engineers and the BMI** (still in its formative stages) set to work assembling detailed information about the river crossings, road network and topography of the 70-sq. mile area in Lee's rear known as **"The Wilderness."** This data was analyzed and summarized by BMI analysts at Hqs. No such detailed plan had ever before been prepared for the army leadership.
- **Thaddeus Lowe had two balloons** aloft frequently 1,000 ft. above east bank of Rappahannock. By this time, the Union Balloon Corps had a staff of skilled military observers, commanded by Capt. Comstock, who made detailed reports on Confederate positions and movements. Although they could only see 6-8 miles west, it would be enough to give tactical warning if Lee pulled away from his lines & moved.

- The **Confederates had no balloons** at this point, having abandoned them for economic reasons. As Longstreet later observed: **“We were longing for balloons that poverty denied us.”**
- **Meanwhile, Sharpe and the BMI** were busy setting up a local espionage network. It was no easy task in enemy territory among a largely hostile population. **But what the BMI lacked in quantity it made up for in quality.** Sharpe and Hooker depended primarily on a few BMI spies and a handful of loyal civilians. But Sharpe had recruited some good men, who were able to penetrate Lee’s lines and began to send back useful Intel. They also recruited several locals who were loyal Unionists and who willingly share valuable info on Confederate troop dispositions and movements. Sharpe requested thousands of dollars of captured Confederate currency to give to his scouts and civilian spies for their use as bribes, payment for info, etc.
- Unlike Pinkerton, Sharpe’s scouts, mostly NCO’s and enlisted, were **sent right into the enemy camps.** Some masqueraded as smugglers or Federal deserters and hung about the Rebel camp for a few days before vanishing back across the lines; others, more daring donned Confederate uniforms and posed as soldiers separated from their units or members of irregular units like Mosby’s Rangers.
- **In late (Feb 24-Mar5)** one especially daring **BMI Scout, Sgt. Milton W. Cline,** dressed in a Confederate uniform, managed to attach himself to a Confederate Cavalry captain and rode the entire length of Lee’s lines (covering 250 miles) in 10 days and bringing back details of troop dispositions & camps.
- Among **the 6-7 civilians** reporting on Confederate activities near their homes was a man named **Isaac Silver.** He was 52 (hence his code name “The Old Man.”); and originally from NJ. His wife was Scottish (32) neither had any Rebel ties. His farm was in a key location near the Orange Plank Road – main road between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville and at an important crossroads – heavy Rebel traffic. He also knew his way around all the Confederate camps where he did odd jobs. He passed his first report to his handler - **BMI agent Ebenezer McGee** on 13 March. It was full of detail, including fortifications, artillery emplacements and an estimate of Rebel troop strength down to the brigade level – not bad for an amateur.

- **The BMI methodology was paying off.** For several weeks, Sharpe's men had been observing Lee's army on the march. They interrogated Rebel prisoners and deserters after Fredericksburg. They picked up on exchanges between pickets, and much more. They were beginning to compile an accurate picture of the numbers and leadership of Army of N. Va. down to the regimental level.
- **On 15 March, the BMI delivered its first major report on the Army of Northern Virginia.** After only a month of operations, it incorporated information from all sources; and this initial estimate corrected many of Pinkerton's erroneous calculations. It used realistic numbers for regimental strength (350 vs. Pinkerton's 700), and it correctly reported Longstreet's absence with his 2 divisions! But it had no information on 3 of Lee's brigades and thus underestimated Lee's strength by 7K (42K). It was actually 49K at that time (close to civilian Silver's report of 51K). But in a refreshing change from past practice, Sharpe described his methodology clearly and logically; and he **admitted what it didn't know, promising to have better numbers soon.**
- The BMI report contained one more startling revelation. Sharpe had learned from the **Union Army's Signal Corps Chief** that he "**was in possession of the full code of signals used by the Enemy's Signal Corps.**" The embarrassing fact was that the Union Signal Corps had broken the Rebel flag code back in November 1862 and its messages were being intercepted and recorded. **But incredibly this fact was not reported to Army HQS and none of the messages were forwarded! Remember this because there is more to the story.**
- Throughout the campaign **both Cavalry commanders** provided news of enemy activities, and here the **Confederates continued to enjoy a decided advantage.** Some of the best regiments in Lee's cavalry were made up of men who grew up in the area, and they could always count on the enthusiastic support of the local population. General J.E.B. Stuart was the best Intel gatherer on either side until his death a year later. **Union Cavalry, although improved, was still having trouble penetrating Stuart's cavalry screen to gather Intel.** But this advantage would be at least partly mitigated by Union Signal Corps deception. **More shortly.**
- **When it came to local Scouts & Spies, Lee had "home field advantage."** In VA most locals are pro-South, even in MD, many southern sympathizers. Scouts become the eyes & ears of the armies, as they probed as far as enemy picket lines and then used observation training to find out what was happening.

- **As early as 12 March**, Lee had civilian reports that **“the enemy will, as soon as the roads permit, cross at United States Ford...”** Therefore, Lee sent these orders to commander at U.S. Ford: **“If your position can be strengthened, have all needful work done...Let me have timely notice of any movements of the enemy.”** Three weeks later, in early April, Lee reiterated his prediction: **“All reports from our scouts...indicate that Gen. Hooker’s army has not diminished, and is prepared to cross the Rappahannock as soon as the weather permits.”**

NEWSPAPERS also were good sources for estimating enemy intentions & capabilities. **Here again, the Confederates had the advantage**, because Union papers had more reporters; and there was less security control over leaks.

- Since the Civil War was the first to be fully covered by the press, newspapers often revealed important military information. **On 17 April**, for example, the *Washington Morning Chronicle* published extracts from a letter by the medical director of the Army of the Potomac to Hooker, revealing the sanitary condition of the army by providing the **number of sick soldiers** and including the **ratio of sickness per thousand men**. This was all that Lee needed to compute the size of Hooker's forces, which we know he did because Lee later referred to these figures in his own correspondence. When Hooker saw the article, he was furious, raging the Stanton: **“The chief of my secret service dept. would have willingly paid \$1,000 for such information in regard to the enemy.”**
 - Fortunately for Hooker, the Confederates mishandled the intel and Lee didn’t receive confirmation of Union strength until 10 May – after the battle.
 - **In reaction, Hooker tried to clamp down.** A circular was quickly published stating **“if there is in this command such a person as the correspondent of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, he will, by direction of the commanding general of the Army of the Potomac, be immediately sent out of the lines of the army, never to return.”** The following day Hooker demanded that the *New York Times* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* be called upon to name their correspondents who had furnished the information on a story about an alleged **submarine cable** in use by the Confederates between Falmouth and Fredericksburg, and threatened to suppress the circulation of both papers in the army and exclude their correspondents from his lines if the names were not supplied.

- And finally, Hooker's headquarters issued a **general order requiring all correspondents to publish their communications over their own signatures, which would at least identify those responsible for a serious breach in security.**
- Despite these efforts, we find Secretary of War Stanton writing to Hooker scarcely a month later to complain of an officer who had recently been assigned to his staff: **“We cannot control intelligence in relation to your movements while your generals write letters giving details. A letter from General van Allen to a person not connected with the War Department describes your position as entrenched at Chancellorsville. Can't you give his sword something to do, so that he will have less time for the pen?”**
- The **Southern press** exercised greater discretion and also was under stricter control. It also was less active in the field because resources were much more limited. **Confederate generals**, who were far less active in politics, also acted with greater discretion. One of Jackson's staff officers recorded in April how Jackson, after agonizing over writing his after-action reports, would cross out entire passages, **“saying that it would not do to publish to the enemy the reason that induced one to do certain things and thus enable them to learn your mode of doing.”**

Still, press reporting could be a two-edged sword.

- For instance, Lee was aware from reading Northern papers that McClellan had systematically **overestimated Confederate troop** strength; and that knowledge had been exploited by Lee on several occasions. But he was not aware that the more accurate BMI analysis had eliminated that advantage.
- Lee also was aware from published reports that a large number of Union regiments were near the end of their enlistments in April. This led him to conclude incorrectly that he could safely mount an offensive during this period when Hooker's army would **“be weakened by the expiration of the term of service of many of his regiments, and before new recruits can be received.”**
- **In these cases, Lee's reliance on press information caused him to become overconfident and left him unprepared as the campaign began.**

UNION SIGNALS DECEPTION SHIFTS BALANCE IN HOOKER'S FAVOR

On April, 13th, Hooker began to implement his planned flanking movement around Lee's left. Stoneman's Cavalry Corps of almost 10K men, the largest cavalry force ever assembled, began moving northwest on its mission to swing well behind Confederate lines and to disrupt Lee's supply lines and block his retreat.

- **To mislead** the Confederates about his real objective, Stoneman was told to "leak" the rumor that the real purpose of his move was to attack Grumble Jone's cavalry in the Shenandoah Valley. Hooker assumed that Rebel spies or "captured" cavalrymen would pass along this disinformation. And hopefully, Lee would send Stuart's cavalry to the Valley.
- Now Union Army C. of Staff Dan Butterfield had an inspiration. He remembered that **the first BMI Report revealed that the Union had been reading Confederate Signal Flag messages for 3 months!** He also knew that a couple of weeks after that report, a captured Rebel Signals officer revealed to BMI interrogator that **the Rebels also had broken the Union signal flag code.**
 - **Now, the truth is that** signal flags and the telegraph were not viewed as sources of actionable Intel because neither side considered them secure and didn't send critical information via these methods. Still, as a result of these developments, Union Signal Corps Commander, Col. Myer implemented a new system of 7 revolving codes, which were much harder to break.
 - Lee's policy was to **"send no dispatches by telegraph or signal flag relative to...(troop) movements, or they will become known."**
- On the afternoon of April 13, Butterfield wrote a fake message and directed that the Flag Signal Station send it. The message began: **"Our cavalry is going to give Jones & guerillas in the Shenandoah a smash..."** To make sure the fake message was intercepted, it was sent between two stations clearly in Confederate view. To make it believable, it was sent in the old code without formal address lines, but in informal flagman "chatter" format. **The Deception was confirmed the next day (14 April),** when the Union intercepted & decoded a Rebel flag message: **"Dispatch from Yankee signal flag," followed by the exact text of the fake message.**

- **Ruse Worked: More importantly, Lee believed the report and responded by sending Stuart with two Cavalry brigades (2K men) toward the Valley.** Convinced that Stoneman was headed to the Valley, Stuart moved his HQS. far to the west to Culpepper CH. This left a **20-mile gap in Stuart's cavalry screen** opposite **Kelly's Ford** on the critical Rebel left flank – **just where Hooker planned to cross!**
- **15 April: Ebenezer McGee delivered Isaac Silver's third report,** which provided a wealth of vital and accurate intel. The key portion stated that **"there (are) no other standing troops"** between the Grady House and the Spotsylvania Road intersection – a distance of 5 miles. The news of a 5-mile gap in Confederate infantry defenses west of Fredericksburg, along with the 20-mile gap in cavalry coverage after Stuart's departure, provided the key intelligence Hooker needed to implement his plan to move around Lee's left flank and attack his army from the rear. **A vast area in the Confederate rear was almost entirely devoid of Confederate troops.**
- **Three days later, on April 18th,** the BMI chief analyst, Pvt. Babcock was able to update his earlier projections of Confederate Army strength. By correlating hundreds of interrogations of prisoners, deserters, and refugees with other scraps of intelligence, the new **BMI estimate placed Lee's strength at 55,300, a mere 2 percent less than the actual figure of 56,500.** The level of detail was startling. He identified 26 of 28 brigades and 116 of 130 infantry regiments. His system of calculating the size of a Confederate regiment gave the number at 429 men. The actual average was 432.
- A distinguished visitor who inspected Hooker's headquarters at the time wrote that **"we have a moral certainty of all that is necessary to know in regard to the enemy, every regiment and brigade, division etc., all the latest arrivals and departures, etc., all collated, compared from many sources and fully confirmed. The secret service of Gen. Hooker is far superior to anything that has ever been here before. . . . Nothing transpires in the enemy's camp that he is not speedily informed of."**

These BMI reports directly influenced Hooker's brilliant march on Lee's rear, which ended at Chancellorsville.

CHANCELLORSVILLE CAMPAIGN

- **Lee & Hooker prove that effective Intel can influence the outcome of a battle; but only in competent hands.**
- **Hooker** was happy about the stream of accurate Intel, but **he misinterpreted** it at certain key points. For instance:
 - On 21 April, he learned from BMI interrogations of deserters that Lee had ordered pontoon bridges 10 days earlier. This was accurate intel, but for what purpose? He **assumed** Lee intended to use them TO AID HIS RETREAT TOWARD RICHMOND. In fact, Lee was planning his own offensive.
- **Hooker also was obsessive about security.** He was understandably worried that his flanking movements would be discovered. Hooker took several steps:
 - Limited movements of civilian contractors (sutlers, etc.) from Army camps
 - Cut back on picket/sentry chat with the enemy
 - Restricted newspaper correspondent reports
 - He even had soldiers' personal mail halted for 24 hours just before the move
 - He wrote a friend: **"I have communicated to no one what my intentions are. If you were here, I could properly and willingly import them to you. So much is found out by the enemy in my front with regard to movements, that I have concealed my designs from my own staff, and I dare not entrust them to the wires, knowing as I do that they are so often tapped."**
 - Provided cavalry guards at every civilian farm along the army's line of march.
- **Lee**, meanwhile, continued to send out scouts. **But, thanks to the fake flag message and the resulting absence of much of Stuart's cavalry, Lee lacked a clear picture of Hooker's movements.** Lee still wasn't sure where Hooker intended to attack. Remember, Lee had no intelligence staff to cross-check and evaluate reports and to provide analysis.
- 19 Apr: In fact, he complained in a message to Stuart that he could learn nothing from his scouts. **"I have been able as yet to learn nothing which goes to show the real intention of the enemy."**

- **20 Apr: Stoneman's** Union cavalry force began concentrating on the Upper Rappahannock. Lee assumed in preparation for the fictitious raid into Valley; but we know differently.
- **21 Apr:** Small Union infantry forces appeared opposite Kelly's & U.S. Fords. But they went into camp and remained inactive for a week. That fooled Lee into thinking that this was a diversion or deception.
- **23 Apr:** Sedgwick crossed some Union infantry below, SOUTH of Fredericksburg. Lee was not sure if this was a feint or the main Union attack.
- **5 days later, on 28 Apr,** At Fredericksburg, Sedgwick's Union troops laid a pontoon bridge across Rappahannock & began crossing; which caused Lee to believe that this was the main Union attack.
- **The evening of the same day, 28 Apr, Kelly's ford was in Federal hands. Three Corps were ready to cross the next morning.**

JEB STUART WAS COMPLETELY SURPRISED. The ford was in Federal hands with 39,000 troops beginning to cross before he even learned of the enemy's approach.

- **But then, Hooker shot himself in the foot (figuratively).** On 29 Apr, Hooker severely damaged his intelligence gathering capacity by sending the **entire Cavalry Corps** on a recon across the Rapidan. This left **Hooker's army "blindfolded" for the next 10 critical days**, during which he fought and lost the Battle of Chancellorsville. Remember this critical mistake – we will see this same mistake repeated by the Confederates in the next lecture.
- **29 Apr: Three Union Corps (V, XI & XII) crossed Rappahannock at Kelly's Ford.** Hooker had pulled off probably the greatest intelligence coup of the war – moved much of his army 55-60 miles into Lee's rear and was positioned to deal Lee a mortal blow. **ADVANTAGE HOOKER!**
- **Stuart misinterpreted these cavalry & infantry moves. He assumed the target was the rail junction at Gordonsville to the southwest – not Lee's army to the east.**

BUT LEE FINALLY ACTED TO SAVE HIS ARMY, issuing a series of orders:

- 29 Apr: Lee requested that **Longstreet's divisions** be returned to him ASAP!
- 29 Apr: Lee ordered troops at Fredericksburg to prepare to move to the left to meet the threat **"and make arrangements to repulse the enemy."**
- **Lee Used Deception of his own:** He made effective use of **planted false stories**, which he assumed would be relayed by BMI spies or contrabands to Hooker.
- **Where in the World Is Longstreet?:** The most important, and ultimately effective disinformation effort by Lee was to send out **"deserters"** shortly before the battle. When captured and interviewed by BMI Agents, they claimed to be from Longstreet's 2 missing divisions (Hood & Pickett). **They reported that the divisions had rejoined Lee's army** – greatly increasing his strength by as much as 25% (20,000 men). As we will see, these reports confused and influenced Gen. Hooker's decisions on the first day of the battle
- 30 April: Hooker's army advanced toward the Wilderness. **Stuart finally recognized his mistake & informed Lee. Stuart realized** that Hooker's target was not the Valley or Gordonsville RR or Fredericksburg; but that he intended to turn Lee's left & attack Lee's army from the rear.
- 30 Apr: Lee moved most of his army toward the Wilderness (leaving only a Div. & extra Brigade to hold at Fredericksburg)

BATTLE BEGINS: HOOKER & SEDGWICK FAIL TO ACT ON INTELLIGENCE

- **1 May:** Hooker advanced into Wilderness on 3 roads from Chancellorsville toward Fredericksburg. All was going well initially. Due to the heavy, tangled undergrowth and the confusing labyrinth of roads, **it was imperative that the Union forces push through the Wilderness quickly**, where Confederate defenders could slow the advance, and into the open country beyond, where the much larger Union forces could maneuver freely.

- **Since 29 April, balloons** along Rappahannock had been reporting Confederate troops & wagons moving west: A key report noted that: **“All Rebel camps west of the railroad have been struck save one small one.”**
- **1 May Noon:** Hooker was informed that a large enemy column was moving toward Chancellorsville, leaving Confederate strength at Fredericksburg **“considerably diminished.”**
- Almost immediately, **Butterfield** reported from Fredericksburg (balloon Intel): **“The enemy will meet you between Chancellorsville & Hamilton’s Crossing. He cannot, I judge, from all reports, have detached over 10,000 or 15,000 men from Sedgwick’s front since sun cleared fog.”**
- Shortly after the Butterfield report, **a single Confederate Div. attacked &** drove back the Union center column. That caused Hooker to pull back into the Wilderness to a prepared defensive position at Chancellorsville.
- **Hooker hesitated despite strong Intel** (Contrast with Lee who belatedly acted on strong Intel.)
- **Because the Intel clashed with his preconceptions,** Hooker became confused; and then he added his own interpretation, rejecting BMI analysis. Despite the accurate BMI estimate that Lee had only 55,000 men in his entire army, **Hooker suddenly doubted the numbers &** decided to believe the Lee misinformation “rumor” that Longstreet’s divisions had returned. **He hesitated & became cautious, thus missed an opportunity to destroy Lee’s army.**
- **Sedgwick at Fredericksburg Compounded the Errors:** He had strong force of 40,000 men (I and VI Corps), with orders **“to keep a sharp lookout, and attack if you can succeed.”** Despite balloon reports that Lee had moved troops away from Fredericksburg, Sedgwick decided not to attack.
- He apparently was influenced by I Corps Cdr **John Reynolds warning:** the Confederates **“have been showing weakness...tempting us to make an attack on their fortified position and hoping to destroy us and strike for our depot over our bridges.”**

LEE, IN SHARP CONTRAST, MADE THE BEST USE OF HIS INTELLIGENCE

- **1 May:** When Hooker withdrew, Lee acted, based primarily on Intel from Stuart's cavalry (remember Hooker's cavalry was not present) that Hooker's right flank (XI Corps) was "in the air", that is not protected and vulnerable.
- **1 May, Evening: Lee & Jackson planned classic flanking movement.** Jackson took most of Lee's force on long flanking march toward Hooker's unprotected right flank. Stuart's cavalry covered the march, providing timely tactical Intel.
- **2 May: Hooker Received but Misinterpreted Timely Warning Intelligence**
 - **2 May, Early Morning:** Union lookouts in trees observed Jackson's column & gave Hooker warning. III Corps Commander Dan Sickles also saw the movement across his front of large columns of infantry, artillery, ambulances **moving south "toward Orange Court House."**
 - Hooker did send word to XI Corps Commander O.O. Howard: **"We have good reason to suppose that the enemy is moving to our right."**
 - **But Hooker misinterpreted the Confederate movements.** He dismissed the flank attack possibility & continued to assume that once he crossed the river and cut Lee's lines of supply & communication: **"the Rebels may as well pack up their haversacks and make for Richmond."** He was convinced that Lee must be retreating in the face of his advance.
- **May 2-4 - Battle Decided - Lee's Most Brilliant Victory**
 - **2 May,** Jackson's flanking attack succeeded brilliantly; but was halted short of total success by darkness. Scouting between the lines, Jackson was mortally wounded by his own panicky troops. He was replaced by Stuart.
 - **3 May,** in bitter fighting, the outnumbered Confederates advanced on two fronts. Lee drove back Hooker's 3 corps into tight defensive lines north of Chancellorsville. Meanwhile, Lee sent reinforcements east to support the small force delaying the Federal advance at Fredericksburg.
 - **4 May,** Lee focused on Sedgwick's forces & drove them back toward the Rappahannock River.

- **By 6 May**, Hooker's army, despite its successful flanking maneuver, catching Lee off guard, began to withdraw across the Rappahannock, **giving the outnumbered Lee his most brilliant tactical victory.**

RECAP – LESSONS LEARNED

- **Lee had a steady stream of information** from multiple sources that Hooker was moving on his left flank. Yet, without a staff to turn the raw reports into intelligence, Lee misinterpreted the information. The usually reliable JEB Stuart also misinterpreted movements by Union cavalry and infantry.
- Despite his concerns that both flag signals and the telegraph were untrustworthy and insecure, **Lee believed the Union fake signal flag message was genuine.** As a result, Lee moved most of Stuart's cavalry far off to the NW to meet a phantom threat to the Valley. This deprived Lee of his most effective intelligence "gathering and denial" force at a critical period.
- Only at the last possible moment did Lee realize the threat – but then, at least, **he did take decisive action.**
- **Hooker sent his entire cavalry division away from his army** at a critical time, when he needed the tactical Intel that was best provided by the cavalry.
- Hooker panicked and decided to **ignore BMI painstaking research** on OB & balloon tactical Intel observations, and he **succumbed to Confederate disinformation (planted deserters from Longstreet's phantom reinforcements). He snatched defeat from the very jaws of victory.**
- 28 Apr: He had solid OB estimate that he **outnumbered Lee over 2-1**
- 29 Apr: Had **warning** that Lee was moving west, toward him.
- 1 May: **Specific warning** from balloonists of when & where to expect Lee & in what strength (only 10K – 15K).
- Instead of aggressively pushing through the Wilderness, **Hooker became confused by the initial Rebel attack**, believing the deception that Longstreet had returned, and pulled back into a defensive position at Chancellorsville.

- Sedgwick, too, convinced himself that it must be a trap.
- On 2 May, Hooker had **ample warning of Jackson's flanking movement**, but didn't take appropriate action & convinced himself that Lee actually was retreating.

RECAP/SCAPEGOATS: PREDICTABLE BUREAUCRATIC RESPONSE TO FAILURE

- **Don't Confuse Me with the Facts: Both Lee and Hooker believed rumors or intentional deceptions and ignored actionable intelligence.**
- Lee, to his credit, made brilliant use of tactical Intel once he understood the real situation. He maneuvered to hold off both parts of Hooker's army; launched a flanking move of his own and ultimately drove a superior force from battlefield.
- Hooker made use of BMI Intel about the 20-mile cavalry gap and the 5-mile infantry gap - and some luck - to pull off a brilliant surprise flanking movement of 50 miles by almost 40K troops. Lee's artillerist E. Porter Alexander, in his highly respected *Personal Recollections* of the war, wrote: **"On the whole, I think this plan was decidedly the best strategy conceived in any of the campaigns ever set on foot against us."**
- But then, as we have noted, he gave into the pressures of his preconceptions, reinforced by Confederate disinformation, and began rejecting the BMI intel reports. At first contact, he discontinued his offensive movements, and pulled back into the maze of the Wilderness, thus squandering all that he had gained.
- Within a few weeks of the battle, **Thaddeus Lowe had resigned as head of the Balloon Corps.** In part it was over chain of command military vs. civilian, and accusations that Lowe has misappropriated funds. Gen. Gouverneur Warren assumed command, cut funding and demanded significant increases in flight operations. Incredibly, Butterfield (A of P C/Staff) also claimed he could not remember any contributions "of value" made by the Balloon Corps. **One could argue that the balloonists were made the scapegoat for the Union defeat!**
- The written record of messages from the balloonists and from Butterfield himself citing balloon observations makes it clear that the problem was not with the quality of intelligence, but in the inability of the Union commanders to make effective use of it.

Union Bureau of Military Information (BMI) Comes of Age

- **After Chancellorsville, in May-June 1863, Col. Sharpe & the BMI continued to improve their tradecraft – setting the stage for a Union success story: timely, accurate intelligence put to effective use during the campaign and on the battlefield – at a place called Gettysburg.**
- **Rise of the BMI:** “The first all-source intelligence organization in U.S. history,” according to the **CIA Historian’s office**, was created during the Civil War (in 1863) by George H. Sharpe. He **established the Bureau of Military Information (BMI)** in the Union Army of the Potomac, which pioneered the fundamental principles of modern intelligence analysis and organization that remains valid to this day. **CIA history quote:** Sharpe “obtained, collated, analyzed and provided reports based on scouting, spying behind enemy lines, interrogations, cavalry reconnaissance, balloon observations, flag signal and telegraph intercepts, captured Confederate documents and mail, southern newspapers, and intelligence reporting from subordinate military units. **This structured approach, which ended with the Confederate surrender, was not re-institutionalized until 1947, when the CIA was created.**”
- **Sharpe succeeded because he was integrated into the information flow to Army Hqs.** 1) He received all the collector reports from ALL SOURCES; 2) he attached his men to cavalry and signal corps units; 3) he sent spies directly into enemy military camps , not cities; 4) he made use of more sources of data; 5) he effectively assessed, collated and synthesized this data into highly refined products that went directly to the top generals. Eventually, he set up branch offices throughout Eastern Theater (each with 30-40 men).
- **Source Validation:** Sharpe used his growing database of details on Lee’s army to continually evaluate and validate new sources of information. His interrogation reports are notable for their keen assessments of the source’s credibility. Here are examples of source credibility evaluation:
 - **“from a reliable source”;**
 - **“honest but not intelligent”;**
 - **“informants are intelligent and not disposed to state more than they know to be true”;**
 - **“all this is rumor but it comes from so many sources it is worth attention”;**

- **“informant is very ignorant of the route he has taken or names of places he has been, so much so as to raise a doubt as to whether he has made the trip at all.”**
- Sharpe pioneered the modern practices of utilizing a broad range of information sources; validating these sources; and producing comparative, all-source analysis that provided the “so what” to customers. He clearly saw his job as telling it like it is – rather than telling it like the commander wanted to hear.