

**The Role of Intelligence in the Civil War**  
**Part II: Support to Military Operations**  
**Lecture Four: Gettysburg: “High Water Mark” of the**  
**Union Bureau of Military Information**

**GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN BACKGROUND: MAY 1863**

**War’s Third Summer. Confederate morale/hopes were high. Union morale and war support were low**

- Union civilian & troop morale was low due to defeats in Eastern Theater; and despite victories in Western Theater & a Union Naval blockade that was beginning to severely restrict imports/exports. Also, Union “Copperhead” Democrats offered strong political opposition, calling for an end to the war and peaceful separation of the Confederate states.
- **Lee & ANVA – continued to win** against odds in the East – as we saw last time, at Fredericksburg (Dec. 62) and in our last lecture at Chancellorsville (2-6 May 63). Confederate morale & hopes for independence remained high (their hopes rest on Lee’s army)

As the two armies faced off across the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg, during the early spring of 1863, Gen. Lee traveled to Richmond for strategy sessions. **Lee persuaded Davis/Cabinet of wisdom of another invasion: His goals remained the same as the previous fall.**

- Relief for farmers of war-torn Virginia, & gather supplies for ANVA.
- Relieve Union pressure on Vicksburg
- Possibly threaten Baltimore or Washington
- Defeat the A of P – Lee knew a strategic military victory was not possible, but a tactical victory on ground of his choosing was likely.
- **Cause panic in North, increase war weariness, cause Northern electorate to lose hope and stop supporting the war effort - possibly tip scales in favor of Democrats, pressuring Lincoln to reach political settlement and Confederate independence.**

**KEY: Home Court Advantage Shifted to Union:** The Confederate invasion would shift **the moral “high ground”** to the Union. Now the Army of Potomac (38% from PA) would be fighting to repel the invader from its home soil. It also shifted the Intelligence advantage to the Union.

- **Up to the Gettysburg Campaign, Lee had the intelligence advantage. But at Chancellorsville, we began to see the balance shift toward the Union - thanks to the BMI.**
  - He was operating in familiar territory and could rely on most (not all) of the populace to provide intelligence on the enemy invaders and to help guide his army's moves (like the flank march that resulted in Jackson's attack at Chancellorsville).
  - He also made much more effective use of the cavalry under JEB Stuart as an offensive and defensive intelligence weapon than his Union counterparts.
- **Again, as we saw in the Maryland Campaign, where Lee was operating among a hostile populace.**

#### **BMI TACTICAL OPERATIONS ALERTED HOOKER TO LEE'S IMPENDING MOVE**

- **Intelligence Information "Advantage Union:"** Not only had the Union intelligence improved across the board; but **for the first time, the Army of Potomac knew more about what was happening on Lee's side of the Rappahannock than vice versa.**
- **The Bureau of Military Information**, under Col. George Sharpe had expanded its size and capabilities with over 70 agents (called "guides") - a blend of 21 civilians and over 50 soldiers. BMI still a small operation, but it was now a strikingly professional one that knew its business.
- **By now Sharpe had two deputies:**
  - **John Babcock – Chief Assistant** (expert interrogator): He was only 26 years old. He had been a civilian architect in Chicago, before being hired by Pinkerton to make maps for Gen. McClellan. He was walking encyclopedia of Rebel Order of Battle. His 28 April estimate of Confederate strength was off by only 2%.
  - **Capt. John McEntee – In charge of scouting ops** (expert scout & disguise artist). He was a former neighbor of Sharpe's from upstate NY. McEntee's team of 5 guides was attached to Buford's cavalry division as it moved north. In a position to influence cavalry ops. **In the 2 weeks between 27 May & 12 June he produced 37 BMI Intel reports on Lee's movements.**

- **27 May: Sharpe produced a comprehensive (9-part) report** - a combination of deserter interrogations, spy reports, and informants in Fredericksburg, visual observations from Signal Corps flagmen, and balloon observations. It began with a detailed Order of Battle of Lee's army & their locations.
- It also reported that something was afoot: **"The Confederate Army is under marching orders, and an order from General Lee was very lately read to the troops, announcing a campaign of long marches and hard fighting, in a part of the country where they would have no railroad transportation. All of the deserters say the idea is very prevalent in the ranks that they are about to move forward upon or above our right flank."**
- **But still no clear objective.** Due to bureaucratic ineptitude & lack of Union Army Hqs. structure, this report "went missing" for 2 weeks - until 8 June - just as Lee began his move north.

## **LEE PREPARES FOR INVASION**

In addition to arranging for the supplies, equipment, artillery & transportation needed for a major invasion, Lee also struggled with the composition of his leadership team. **The death of Stonewall Jackson and the increased size of his army caused Lee to reorganize & expand his army into 3 Corps.**

On 30 May, he promoted **Dick Ewell and AP Hill** to command the II and III Corps respectively. Longstreet (I Corps) was only experienced Corps commander.

- On 1 June Lee met with his new team to finalize the invasion plan.
- **The BMI identified all of these Rebel leadership changes within a week.**

## **GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN BEGINS**

On 3 June, with all preparations completed, units of Longstreet's and Ewell's corps began moving NW toward the assembly point - Culpeper Courthouse. **But the activity did not go unnoticed.**

- As early as 4 June, Sharpe was reporting **"There is considerable movement of the enemy. Their camps are disappearing at some points."**

- Hooker immediately sent Sedgwick's VI Corps in pursuit to keep an eye of the Rebels, but he had hard time penetrating Stuart's cavalry screen. He also telegraphed Lincoln that the enemy appeared to be preparing "**with a view to the execution of a movement similar to that of Lee's last year.**" (Antietam)
- **Lee knew it would be hard to hide large troop movements, so he tried disinformation.** He intentionally leaked news that **Stuart's cavalry was massing** near Culpeper for a raid. The hope was that the Union would assume all the activity in Confederate camps was connected to the cavalry raid, and that the infantry movements would go unnoticed. **It worked, at least at first.**
- Union Cavalry, now commanded by **Gen. Alfred Pleasanton** (Hooker unfairly blamed Stoneman, among others, for his Chancellorsville defeat) reacted to this disinformation by moving toward Culpeper.
- **On 9 June, at Brandy Station,** the two mounted commands, each 10,000 strong, clashed in the largest cavalry engagement ever seen in Western Hemisphere. The results were inconclusive. But Union cavalry clearly demonstrated that it was now capable of fighting Stuart on equal terms.
- **On 10 June:** The next day, Lee's army began to move north out of its Culpeper CH camps – with Ewell's Corps in lead. Lee gambled (as usual) that he could "steal a march" on Hooker. **He should not have been quite so confident.**
- **The BMI assets followed closely Lee's 150 mile trip into PA.** Agents and civilians provided details of Rebel troop numbers, movements. Of the 30-40 BMI guides roaming the Shenandoah Valley, 10 were killed in action. Telegraph lines in MD & PA kept information flowing to Army Hqs. (Hooker, then Meade).
- **Confederates weren't idle.** Stuart also, had kept a close eye on the Army of Potomac along the Rappahannock River and continued to report as Hooker began to move north. He also had **very effectively screened Lee's army** to limit Union Cavalry access to, and awareness of, Lee's plans.
- Despite early warning that Lee was on the move, **Hooker had trouble at first in figuring out where he was going.** This was due largely to the fact that, **Pleasanton was jealous** of the BMI success and only grudgingly cooperated with Shape's BMI agents. Those prisoners and deserters the cavalry did capture were not turned over to the BMI for interrogation. A frustrated C/Staff Dan

Butterfield fumed: **“We cannot go bogging round until we know what we are going after.”**

- Hooker further confused the situation by arguing with Stanton and Lincoln that, Lee’s move north was the perfect time for Hooker to strike south and capture the lightly defended Confederate capital, Richmond. Fortunately, Lincoln quickly and decisively ended that argument, telegraphing Hooker: **“I think Lee’s army and not Richmond is your true objective point. If he comes toward the upper Potomac, follow on his flank, and on the inside track, shortening your lines, while he lengthens his. Fight him when the opportunity offers.”** That ended the argument, and Hooker readied his army to move – **but where?**
- **The answer came quickly, not from the cavalry, but from the BMI.**
- **Late on 12 June**, Sharpe received a telegram in his HQ at Fredericksburg from Agent **McEntee** who was **in Culpeper**. There McEntee had accidentally found and interviewed a **contraband named Charlie Wright**, who had been a slave/servant in Lee’s army until 2 days earlier. As the Confederate army moved north, Wright was “liberated” by Union cavalry, who captured his “owner” – a rebel officer. Wright went to work as a servant for the Union Cavalry Quartermaster. Wright claimed to know the senior Confederate commanders on sight and said that he had overheard many details about the destinations of the various Corps. He reported that Ewell’s corps had passed through a few days earlier **“destined for the Valley and Maryland;”** to be followed by Longstreet’s Corps two days later.
- Later the evening of the 12<sup>th</sup> a second, more detailed telegram arrived: **“Gen RE Lee HQ were in Culpeper...Ewell arrived there with command night of 6<sup>th</sup>. Cooked 4 days rations. Marched morning of 7<sup>th</sup>. Column half day passing thru town. Longstreet arrived night of 8<sup>th</sup> & marched 9<sup>th</sup>. This boy knew many of the troops. I think statement reliable.”**
- Further confirmation came from **BMI Scout Martin Hogan** whose report said: **“Saw another contraband, who makes a similar statement.”**
- **Once again, it was Sharpe & Babcock’s meticulous attention to the Confederate OB that provided the vital check on the reliability of the information supplied by the two contrabands.** Wright had identified the leadership of more than a dozen regiments in Ewell’s and Longstreet’s Corps, and all of them agreed with Sharpe’s data.

- **Finally, on June 13<sup>th</sup>, prompted by the BMI report, Hooker ordered the Army of the Potomac to move north in pursuit of Lee.** Although 3 days behind Ewell's Corps, Hooker's army now was parallel to, and east of, Longstreet's Corps and actually ahead of A.P. Hill's Corps, which was just departing Fredericksburg for the Valley. Hooker moved the army rapidly with **two objectives: shield Washington and shadow Lee's invasion of MD/PA.**
- **Union Intel was not perfect:** The lack of HQ Intelligence component hampered communications. There was not a single Staff Intel officer in Halleck's Hqs! It was up to the telegraphers to recognize and distribute BMI warnings; and nobody thought to pass them on to other commands.
- **Union Cavalry –BMI Friction:** The fact that the contraband Wright had not been interrogated when freed 2 days earlier, emphasized the Union cavalry's ineffective intelligence activities. Also, McEntee, complained about the **hostility and lack of cooperation from the cavalry.** As McEntee and other BMI scouts moved about the countryside, which was teeming with Confederate cavalry, they desperately needed the protection of Union Cavalry (as their high casualty rate suggests). Yet, 1<sup>st</sup> Div. Commander Buford only reluctantly agreed that McEntee and his team of scouts could accompany them. McEntee wanted HQ to issue orders giving him permission to interrogate all enemy prisoners and deserters. **Remember, the BMI was only 4 months old!** It would take time to work out the lines of authority and chain of command. In the meantime, cooperation among Intel components often would come down to personalities.
- **Comparison of Union Cavalry and BMI reporting** at this time shows clearly that, although new, the BMI reports were much more timely, accurate and analytical. For instance, Pleasonton, who often did his own analysis, was convinced for days that Lee's actual target was Pittsburg. Also, his report on the Battle of Brandy Station claimed that Stuart had over 30,000 cavalry (3 times the actual number). The BMI's McEntee also was present during the battle and accurately reported the Rebel cavalry numbers.

**The next day, on June 14<sup>th</sup>,** Ewell's Corps (20K) surprised & defeated the small Union garrison (Milroy Div – 7K) at **Second Winchester.** **Part of the reason for the defeat was the fact that BMI warnings of the approaching Confederate**

force were slow in being rerouted through Army HQs in Washington. The telegraphic report reached Milroy at Winchester too late to help.

- **For the next 10 days (15-25 June), the two armies moved north separated by Blue Ridge.** Thanks to BMI, Lee didn't get much of a lead. Hill & Longstreet Corps began moving north on June 15<sup>th</sup> AFTER Hooker had moved. **Only Ewell's Corps was across Potomac by 19th.** Hooker was catching up fast.
- But Hooker still lacked much accurate reporting from Pleasonton's cavalry. As Hooker noted on 16 June, **"we can never discover the whereabouts of the enemy, or divine his intentions so long as he fills the countryside with a cloud of cavalry. We much break through that to find him."** So far Pleasonton's contributions to the intelligence picture were mostly wild guesses. Hooker called it **"very unsatisfactory,"** reminding Pleasonton: **"I rely upon you and your cavalry force to give me information of where the enemy is, his force and his movements...get us information. It is better that we lose some men than be without knowledge of the enemy, as we now seem to be."**

### **17-19 JUNE: LOUDOUN VALLEY CAVALRY ACTION**

The criticism spurred Pleasonton into action, but with only slim results. During these 3 days, JEB Stuart's cavalry, with intelligence and tactical support from Mosby's Rangers, effectively fended off repeated Union Cavalry thrusts toward Ashby's Gap (from where they could observe Lee's army movements in the Valley). The huge cavalry engagements of **Aldie, Middleburg and Upperville** resulted in significant casualties (Union - 883; Rebels - 510). But Stuart's delaying tactics limited the intelligence Pleasonton was able to collect.

- By 20 June, with Dick Ewell's Corps had moved quickly through MD and was fanning out in the Cumberland Valley of PA. Joe Hooker had to keep his army south of the Potomac, to ensure that Lee did not intend to move east toward Washington or Baltimore. Intel on Lee's exact location and intentions was now more critical than ever.

**INTEL KEY EVENT: STUART'S RECON:** Until Lee began to cross into MD, Stuart's cavalry had been quite effective in screening Lee's move North. But Stuart argued that Lee lacked critical information on the whereabouts and intentions of the Union Army. This was true, but both Lee & Stuart held the Union army, especially the cavalry, in contempt and **apparently had no knowledge of the existence of**

**the BMI.** They exhibited an overconfidence that would result in one of the key intelligence failures of the campaign.

- 18 Jun: Over a week into the campaign, Lee, Stuart & Longstreet met in Paris, VA (near Ashby Gap) & discussed the need for Intel about Union intentions and movements.
- 22 Jun – With Ewell in PA and Hill & Longstreet nearing the Potomac, Lee sent Stuart written orders authorizing his reconnaissance in force against Hooker’s army, which were further “clarified” on 23 Jun. They were complicated, but discretionary. Lee authorized Stuart to ride to the east to raid Union supplies and to gather information about Union troop movements, but always with the intention that Stuart would stay in touch and **not “leave him blind”** in enemy territory. Lee specifically stated that as soon as Stuart confirmed that the Union Army was crossing the Potomac in pursuit, Stuart was to rejoin Lee’s column, screening along the east side to avoid **surprise** – there’s that word again!

**Beginning on 25 June, for 8 critical days,** JEB Stuart’s cavalry was not present to conduct “denial” operations against Union cavalry and BMI agents because he led the cream of Lee’s cavalry (3 brigades; 5,000 men) on his scouting raid.

- Things began going wrong for Stuart almost immediately. The Union army moved northward faster than anticipated, clogging all roads in the area and blocking Stuart from communicating with, or returning to, Lee. Stuart sent at least two couriers to Lee warning that Hooker’s army was on the move northward. But both were captured. The massed Union troops forced Stuart to retreat, moving further south and west, before finally crossing the Potomac at Rowser’s Ford (border between Fairfax & Loudoun counties) early on June 28<sup>th</sup>.
- **He was 74 hours behind schedule and 70 miles away from his intended rendezvous with the leading elements of Lee’s invading army. During those critical hours, the situation had changed dramatically.**
- Lee had other cavalry, but he lacked confidence in their leadership. The brigades of **Jones & Robertson** were directed to focus on guarding the mountain gaps to the south. **Jenkins’s** brigade and **Imboden’s** irregulars were ahead of Ewell raiding farms and capturing runaway slaves. Lee never attempted to engage them in the critical role of screening the eastern flank of the army. For that, Lee was depending on Stuart, whom he trusted to provide his primary offensive & defensive intelligence capability.



**25 JUNE-1 JULY: LOCAL CITIZENS REPORT:** With Stuart's cavalry screen gone, Lee's hidden movements became much more visible to Union cavalry and the BMI. Also, the movement away from the Rappahannock River in Virginia to Pro-Union regions in Maryland and Pennsylvania meant that the Army of the Potomac could depend more on the local populace for information. **The "home field advantage" was shifting to the Union.**

- **15 locally organized groups of citizen-spies and militia scouts reported** on the Confederates as they dispersed widely through MD and south-central PA. Over 100 Intel reports in those critical 8 days were cross-checked, validated and analyzed by BMI. They proved to have an accuracy rate of 75% !

In addition to the scouts and agent-recruited groups run by the BMI, PA Militia Commander Gen. Darius Couch was receiving and forwarding reports from citizen scouts organized by a Gettysburg civilian, David McConaughy.

- **Example: "The students of St. James College Hagerstown came down from there today-They report...Gen Ewell's corps, including the General himself, with 70 pieces of artillery as having passed through Hagerstown - the last passing yesterday going toward Chambersburg ...They report no force between Hagerstown and Frederick on the Boonsboro road except one cavalry camp 4 miles from Hagerstown."**
- By 24 June, the reports located all of Ewell's lead Corps and confirmed that it, basically, was a huge raiding expedition gathering/stealing huge quantities of foodstuffs, horses, wagons and other supplies. What was not yet clear was the location and intentions of Lee's other two Corps – under AP Hill & Longstreet. The critical question was: **where are they and do they plan to join Ewell's raid in PA, or will Lee consolidate his forces and move east to threaten Washington, Baltimore or Philadelphia?**
- On that same day, June 24<sup>th</sup> - the **BMI's John Babcock provided the answer:** Risking his life, he rode alone into Frederick, MD to gather information. In two dispatches telegraphed to Hooker's HQs in Fairfax, VA, he reported: **"the main body" of Lee's army...Longstreet and AP Hill are crossing (the Potomac) rapidly" near Shepherdstown... "large bodies of troops can be seen" ...."all of which may be considered as reliable."** Fortunately, he was able to escape when a detachment of Rebel cavalry rode suddenly into town.

- Hooker now had **the key, missing piece of the Intelligence puzzle** about Lee's intentions. And he acted! That night orders went out to the Army of the Potomac to begin crossing the river next day, 25 June.

**24-26 JUNE: POTOMAC CROSSINGS:** Over a 3-day period, both Hill's & Longstreet's Corps & the entire Union Army crossed the Potomac simultaneously, in some cases, only 20 miles apart. The Confederates crossed at Shepherdstown & Williamsport, MD. The entire Union Army concentrated in Loudoun County, just east of Leesburg, and crossed on two pontoon bridges thrown across the Potomac on either side of Goose Creek (River Creek CC).

**INTEL ADVANTAGE HOOKER:** Thanks to Stuart's absence and the BMI's efforts, Lee was unaware of the whereabouts of the Union Army of the Potomac; but Hooker was kept informed. He now knew not only: 1) that he had caught up with Lee; but also 2) that he had the inside track – his army was positioned to block any Confederate move toward the East Coast cities.

### **HOOKER'S RESIGNATION: SNATCHING DEFEAT FROM JAWS OF VICTORY:**

For some days, as he pursued Lee's army, Gen. Hooker had been pressing Lincoln & Sec. of War Stanton to send reinforcements. But the risk to Washington had been deemed too great. Now, **on 27 June**, with Intel that Lee was moving away, not toward Washington, Hooker telegraphed a request that the 10k-man Harpers Ferry garrison be sent to him. Again he was denied. The impulsive Hooker replied immediately: **"I am unable to comply with this condition with the means at my disposal and earnestly request that I at once may be relieved from the position I occupy."** It was typical grandstanding Hooker style. He didn't manage his boss effectively. Lincoln, who already had been sounding out replacements for Hooker, didn't hesitate. He called the bluff and dispatched a messenger with **SO 194 – relieving Hooker of command.** Think before hitting the "send" button.

### **28 JUNE 1863 – A BUSY DAY**

- **At 3:00am, Gen. George Gordon Meade, asleep in his tent at Frederick, MD, was awakened and informed that he was the new commander of the Army of the Potomac.** Meade was jumped over 3 others (who had turned it down), because he stayed out of the political games & bureaucratic sniping. He had solid experience - not flashy, but a dependable professional. Meade's **dual orders were somewhat conflicting.** He was to find, engage and defeat Lee's army; but to protect the Capital from attack at all costs.

- **Meade Developed a Plan:** based on the Intel reporting and BMI analysis. He would draw Lee into battle; but, if possible, he would fight defensively on ground of his choosing. To make that plan work, he needed detailed, “real-time” Intel on the movements of Lee’s scattered forces. He issued orders for **Buford’s Cavalry Div** (with BMI Agent Babcock) to scout toward the small PA town of Gettysburg; and for all Corps to concentrate in that direction. As he wrote in a letter to his wife that evening: **“We are marching as fast as we can...but have to keep a sharp lookout that the rebels don’t turn around us and get at Washington and Baltimore in our rear ....I am going straight at them and will settle this thing one way or the other.”**
- **At 10:00pm that evening, Henry Thomas Harrison**, a Confederate spy, turned up at Confederate Gen. Longstreet’s HQs near Chambersburg, PA. It had been 3 weeks since Longstreet had dispatched his favorite agent to Washington to gather Intel. Since then he had tracked the Union Army for over 50 miles. **He had disturbing news.** The Union Army was not in Virginia, but had crossed to Potomac 3 days earlier; and now its lead elements were less than 20 mile away. Harrison also correctly identified the location of 5 of the 7 corps in the Union Army. **Lee was shocked.** His Army was very vulnerable - spread out over 60 miles. His most dependable Intel source, JEB Stuart had let him down.
- **Lee’s first reaction** was to dispute the validity of the report. **“If it were true, we would have heard from Stuart.”** But, Longstreet pointed out that, if it was accurate, the threat was great. Lee agreed that he could not afford to ignore such intelligence. HE ACTED based solely on that information. Within the hour, riders were heading toward Lee’s dispersed Corps commanders with orders to concentrate immediately toward a small crossroads town in south-central Pennsylvania - **Gettysburg**. But he specifically cautioned them **“if you encounter the enemy, do not bring on a general engagement.”**

**As two armies approached Gettysburg on a collision course, the Intelligence needs of each commander changed from strategic to tactical. That was best provided by cavalry. Here again, with Stuart’s absence, the advantage clearly was with Meade and the union army.**

- **29 June:** At his HQs, now in Taneytown, MD, only 14 miles from Gettysburg, Gen. Meade **reviewed the recent reports from BMI's Babcock & McEntee**, who were imbedded with John Buford's Union Cavalry Div. They painted a clear picture of the location & disposition of Lee's scattered army & noted that **Lee appeared to be concentrating near Gettysburg.**
- Meade now also had **updated BMI reports** putting Confederate troop strength at about 80,000 men and 270 cannon. **The intel was off – by 13 cannon.** Meade knew that with 113,000, his army only slightly outnumbered the Confederates. But, thanks to the BMI and Buford's cavalry, he had what Lee lacked – a clear picture of his opponent's strength and movements.
- **At 11:00am on 30 June: John Buford's cavalry** (with Babcock & McEntee) rode into Gettysburg. His orders were clear: **“cover and protect the front and communicate all information of the enemy rapidly and surely.”** He immediately sent scouting parties, including the BMI agents in all directions. By evening he had a clear picture of the Confederate army closing on Gettysburg.
- **At 10:30pm**, he sent a detailed report to I Corps Commander John Reynolds (only 5 miles away). His men had encountered parts of Hill's Corps west of town. His scouts also reported Longstreet was west of Cashtown Gap; and that Ewell's Corps had turned around from Harrisburg and was swiftly approaching from the north. Reynolds immediately passed this Intel on to Sharpe at Meade's HQs.
- **For JEB Stuart, 30 June was a terrible day.** His troopers had fought off Union Cavalry in a day-long engagement near Hanover, PA (30 miles east of Lee's HQs at Cashtown Gap) and then had marched all night with men and horses beyond exhaustion. He still was not sure where to find Lee or the Confederate Army. So, he headed toward Carlisle PA.
- **Critical intelligence factors brought the Armies to Gettysburg**
  - BMI & civilian reporting & intelligence analysis
  - Absence of Stuart's cavalry allows Lee to be surprised
  - Harrison's warning saved Lee from disaster (temporarily)
- **THE STAGE WAS SET for the largest military engagement in the history of North America. Over 3 days (1-3 July), 200K men, 650 artillery pieces would clash in a decisive battle. Over 50K casualties.**

## BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG – DAY ONE, July 1st

- **Morning Phase: McPherson’s Ridge/Chambersburg Pike 0700-1100**
  - **Meeting Engagement – Buford** understood the risk. Aware of the need to act, he took the initiative and decided to fight a delaying action until Reynolds I Corps could arrive. Buford had BMI Rebel OB & used it to locate & identify all of Lee’s major units. Had confidence of what he was facing.
  - **Rebel Div. Commander Harry Heth** had no cavalry screen to let him know what was in front of him. So he was moving forward blindly and blundered into a fight that Lee didn’t want.
  - As word reached **Lee** late that morning that fighting had erupted at Gettysburg, he voiced his concern: **“In the absence of reports from Gen. Stuart, I am in ignorance as to what we have in front of us here....If it is the whole Federal force, we must fight a battle here.”**
  - **At 10:00am, the Union I Corps arrived and drove back the Confederates, but lost Gen. Reynolds in the process.**
- **Afternoon Phase: Oak Ridge/Cemetery Hill 1200-2300**
  - 1200: Race for Oak Ridge (high ground) **Ewell’s Confederate Corps** arrived from north & **Howard’s Union XI Corps** from south. Both deployed. Ewell won by whisker, forcing Howard to deploy his XI Corps divisions on low ground north of the town.
  - **INTEL: Howard, now in command, recognized significance of heights and deployed a Division (3K men) and 30 cannon as a reserve on Cemetery Hill.**
  - 2:00pm: Lee arrived on battlefield and learned that Confederates held 2:1 numerical advantage. Lee decided to continue attack.
  - **INTEL:** Lee’s decision was based on limited intelligence. He didn’t know the location of Union units. But he was used to taking risks.

- 5:00: **INTEL:** Lee-Ewell exchanged notes. Lee ordered Ewell to attack “**if practicable, but avoid a general engagement until the entire army has arrived.**” In the face of this confusing order, Ewell consulted Early and Rodes. Ewell replied that he would attack if supported on his right.
- **When that request reached Lee, uncharacteristically, he declined to send support. The key reason, again involved Stuart’s absence.** Given his almost total lack of intel about Union unit locations, Lee feared surprise if he committed his only available reserve – Anderson’s Div (7K).
- **The same lack of intel, also impacted Ewell’s decisions.** He was prepared to attack Culp’s Hill. But was concerned by false reports of Union troops on his left. Fearing surprise, he sent 2 Brigades to protect his flank – something Stuart’s cavalry would have provided. With Johnson’s Div. still marching; and his other two Div. reduced by casualties & covering against surprise; he decided that he didn’t have strength to attack Cemetery Hill.
- **4:30-8:00pm: Hancock arrived,** assumed command from Howard and stopped the retreat, stabilizing the Union line. Meade needed Intel about situation at Gettysburg. He trusted Hancock to go forward, assess & report – right man for job. Fighting has been brutal. Every I Corps Rgmt lost over 50%. Rebels seized 5,000 prisoners in the town. **But the Federals held the high ground.**
- **INTEL: Hancock was Meade’s eyes,** gathering information to make a tactical assessment. He sent a written analysis to Meade with assurances that the position could be held until Meade could personally assess the situation. Actually, he performed so well that Meade made the decision to fight at Gettysburg before he even arrived on the field at midnight.

## **BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG - DAY TWO, July 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**Evening 1&2 July: Both commanders made plans: Troops on both sides continued to arrive and be deployed.**

- **Meade, exceptionally well informed with solid Intel,** decided to hold his positions and invite Lee to attack, despite the severe beating his two Corps had suffered on Day 1.

- **Lee, in contrast, lacked critical tactical Intel** – location of Union forces. Stuart's cavalry was close but absent. About 4:00am, well before dawn, Lee sent two staff engineer officers, **Capt. Johnson and Maj. Clarke**, to locate the left flank of the Union deployment. The officers claimed to have traveled all the way to Round Tops and **encountered no enemy forces. Highly doubtful.** Union infantry & cavalry were all over the area. In the dark, unfamiliar terrain it is hard to know where they went. But Lee was forced to rely upon this sole source. By the time the Confederate attack was launched in the afternoon, Lee had to understand that the scout's report was **12 hours old.**
  - **Lee's Strategy for Day 2:** was to launch a major attack against an enemy of equal size holding strong defensive position and based on very limited Intel - extremely risky. **Longstreet disagreed** strongly with Lee's plan, arguing instead to maneuver southeast around the Union Army toward Washington and take up a strong defensive position. That would force Meade to pursue and attack them. Lee might have agreed, but **recognized the extreme risk that maneuver entailed, especially without Stuart's cavalry to guard against surprise attack.** It was a complex plan requiring close coordination among all 3 corps commanders. Despite everything, it came close to victory.
  - **2:00: Sickles moved III Corps** forward  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile – disobeying orders. This exposed III Corps flanks, vulnerable – A furious Meade ordered Gen. Warren to make a reconnaissance on the left.
  - **3:30pm: Avoiding Surprise** – C/Eng. Gouvenor Warren arrived on Little Round Top to find only Signal Corps Wig-Wag Station. But Warren took the initiative, and redirected troops toward the unprotected left flank – just in time.
  - **4:00pm: Longstreet Offensive began with artillery, then 18,000 infantry**
  - **4:00pm-9:00pm: Fighting Raged:** Devil's Den; Little Round Top; Wheat Field, Peach Orchard; even Cemetery Hill. **Union lines held, barely – thanks in part to Warren's warning & action.**
  - **4:00pm - Stuart finally arrived – too late to provide Intel for attack.**
  - **Lee's options were limited by Stuart's failure to provide timely intelligence.** This critical fact, coupled with improved Union intelligence reporting & initiative determined the battlefield and both commanders' tactics.
- GETTYSBURG: Intelligence Role in Plans for Day Three**

- **Evening, 2 July: At his HQs, Lee** planed to continue Day 2 attacks on Union flanks. Given Lee's almost total lack of information on the terrain and location and strength of enemy forces, it is **strange that he did NOT order ANY cavalry reconnaissance by the 3 brigades Stuart left with him, nor by Stuart's cavalry when it finally arrived.** Instead, JEB Stuart was ordered to move to Ewell's left and then to get in Union rear and disrupt resupply & reinforcements.
- Lee made no effort to interrogate the large numbers (over 5K) of Federal prisoners. This job normally was performed by the Provost Guard (military police). **But in Stuart's absence,** the provost had been left behind in Winchester to protect Lee's supply depot there.
- **Sharpe/BMI have been busy:** Fittingly, it is once again Sharpe's emphasis on patient, unspectacular amassing of data - rather than any dashing spy cloak & dagger exploits on Richmond streets - that **provided the final key to victory for the Union.** The BMI has been continually updating the Confederate OB first issued back on 15 March. In addition to being a key source of Intel, it also served as a continual check on the reliability of Intel from other sources.
- **Sharpe Quote: "The state of our information has been such as to form a standard of credibility by which these men were gauged, while each was adding to the general sum."**
- **At 9:00pm, Gen. Meade summoned Col Sharpe to his HQs in the Leister House.** Only Gens Hancock & Slocum were present. After 2 days of hard fighting, Meade was unsure of how much more his troops could take. Before he called together his generals for a War Council, he wanted an Intel update. Sharpe made a startling statement: **"Prisoners have been taken today and last evening from every brigade in Lee's Army excepting the 4 brigades of Pickett's Division."**
- His team of interrogators, led by John Babcock, had questioned 1360 Rebel prisoners in 24 hours. They came from over 30 Bdes/100 Rgmts that had seen hard fighting. He also confirmed that Pickett's Div had been guarding the sizable supply wagon trains & captured livestock in the rear – a job normally performed by – you guess it – the cavalry. But with Stuart's arrival, he continued: **"Pickett's Div. has come up and it now in bivouac, and will be ready to go into action fresh tomorrow morning."**



- At this news, Gen. Hancock turned to Meade, raised his fist and shouted: **“General we have got them nicked.”** (implying we have stolen Lee’s hopes for victory). Hancock and Meade had good reason for confidence. Meade had just shared the news that Union cavalry had captured a Rebel courier carrying dispatches from President Davis for Gen. Lee. They revealed that Davis denied Lee’s requests for reinforcements and for a diversionary advance on Wash DC.
- **These two key pieces of Intel, taken together made it clear that Lee’s offensive punch was gone.** Pickett’s 6K men was his only reserve of fresh troops - essential to another attack. Meade also knew what Lee did not – he could expect no help from Richmond. He was on his own.
- Meade, on the other hand, had substantial reserves – VI and XII Corps (58K fresh troops)
- A moment of silence settled over the room. Sharpe, who had not eaten all day, had been eyeing a plate of crackers & pint of whiskey sitting on the table. Finally, Hancock continued: **“General Meade, don’t you think Sharpe deserves a cracker and a drink?”** While Sharpe ate, Meade’s council voted overwhelmingly to stay and fight.

### **DAY THREE, July 3rd: Pickett/Pettigrew/Trimble Charge**

- 4:00am-11:00am: Fighting broke out on Culp’s Hill, forcing Lee to change plans – takes time. Lee lost 2500 casualties & several hours.
- Lee ordered Pickett, Pettigrew, Trimble attack – 12,500 men (over mile of open ground) – He again rejected Longstreet’s pleas to maneuver around the enemy.
- 11:00-1:00pm: Battlefield fell silent for first time in 3 days, as Lee prepared.
- **1:00pm:** Alexander’s **Confederate artillery** – 160 guns - fired for 2 hours. Answered by 80 Union pieces – heard in Baltimore. Smoke obscured Union lines; defective fuses; overshoot.
- **Deception: Hunt ordered gradual Union artillery ceasefire. Fooled Confederates into thinking Union artillery had been knocked out.**

- 3:00pm: **CHARGE** was well executed, but doomed. In less than 1 hour. 50% casualties (6,500); all 18 of Pickett's Bde & Rgmt commanders casualties. Greatest battle ever fought in this Hemisphere is over. 51,000 casualties.
- **4 July:** Armies held in position; no fighting. Counting the cost, weighing options.
- **5 July:** Evening. Lee's army, under cover of darkness, heavy rains, began retreat into Virginia, never again to cross the Potomac.
- Lee's last best chance to have an impact on Northern morale through invasion was undone – partly by lack of accurate intelligence.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM - REST OF THE STORY

- **McIntee & Babcock (Sharpe's deputies):** Stayed with Meade & Grant for the rest of the war. They took over Provost Marshal duties in post-war Richmond. McIntee left the military in 1868 as a Col. Returned to Kingston, NY; became a businessman in foundries and machine shops. Died in 1903. Civilian Babcock became Richmond Chief of Police. He returned to NY and resumed his career as an architect. One of 3 founders of the NY Athletic Club, he invented the sliding seat for rowers. Suffered a stroke and died in 1908.
- **Spy Harrison:** Based solely on the information he provided, Lee directed his army to converge near Gettysburg. **Harrison's news saved Lee from a potential disaster and thus altered the course of history.**
  - No one on Longstreet's staff even knew his first name.
  - Longstreet praised his spying in a post-war article: He provided me "with information more accurate than a force of cavalry could have secured."
  - Harrison, native of Miss. & sometime actor, married Laura Broders in Washington, DC. In Sept. 1863. He continued his espionage activities in Washington and New York for the remainder of the war.
  - Harrison deserted his family to prospect for gold in MT. Gone for 25 years. Harrison's wife assumed he was dead and remarried.
  - 1893-1911 - Harrison turned up in Cincinnati, OH. He was [employed as a detective](#) & applied for a Confederate pension.
  - 1923, October 28 - Harrison at age 91, died in Covington, KY. He is buried at Highland Cemetery, Fort Mitchell, KY.

- **Detective & McClellan’s “Chief of Intelligence” Allen Pinkerton:**
  - After war, returned to Chicago, a famous man.
  - His fame grew as his detectives pursued such notorious bandits as the James Brothers & Butch Cassidy & Sundance Kid.
  - The “Pinkertons” also worked as “strikebreakers” for company executives battling unions for coal miners & railroad workers
  - Pinkerton wrote his memoirs, *Spy of the Rebellion*, which Fischel says “abounds in ludicrous stretchings of the facts and outright fictions.”
  - Pinkerton died in 1884 & buried next to executed spy Timothy Webster.
  - Pinkerton National Detective Agency continued as a family business for 4 generations. In 1999, it was sold to **Securitas**, an international security firm.
  
- **Col. George Sharpe (BMI):** Sharpe led an expanding BMI for the rest of the war, serving Meade and Grant, and being praised by both. Promoted to BG.
  - At Appomattox, Sharpe supervised the paroling of 28,000 Conf. prisoners.
  - After war, Sec. of State Seward sent him to Europe on “secret mission” to track down John Surratt, suspected in Lincoln assassination.
  - 1870, President Grant appointed Sharpe U.S. Marshal in southern NY. He went after notorious Boss Tweed political ring, securing two key convictions.
  - Elected to NY State Assembly, he later served as Speaker.
  - Died in 1900
  - Unlike dozens of self-proclaimed spies who wrote flamboyant, self-dramatizing (and even wholly invented) memoirs of their Civil War exploits, George Sharpe and his BMI colleagues kept their accomplishments to themselves. His obit. In NY TIMES devoted several paragraphs to his “distinguished military career” but referred to his assignment as chief of the BMI in but a single sentence, noting that it was “**a dangerous and delicate mission**” – and providing no other enlightenment.

## WRAPUP – INTELLIGENCE LESSONS LEARNED

- **Dramatic stories of spy exploits** are entertaining, but rarely produce intelligence that changes the course of military campaigns or battles. However,

on rare occasions, the HUMINT produced can have an immediate and dramatic impact as we have seen at Chancellorsville & Gettysburg.

- **It takes all sources.** Every source of intelligence must be exploited to “connect the dots”
- **End-to-End Process Produces Results:** BMI performed exceptionally well. Impact felt before & during actual battle. Integration, collation and analysis of information from multiple collection sources by skilled officers produces intelligence.
- **Tactical Surprise Can Lead To Strategic Failure.** Even best leaders suffer when information is lacking: Lee’s northern invasion (and the war) might have gone very differently if Stuart’s cavalry had performed effectively as intelligence arm.
- **Headquarters Plays Critical Role:** The BMI lacked a Hqs. Intelligence Component, which limited both tactical and strategic impact of BMI’s successes. No communications and analysis clearing house, seriously limited Intel dissemination beyond Meade’s command. Little coordination, communications with key national leaders.
- **The customer has the last word.** Even the best intelligence has no impact unless it is communicated; understood and believed by the customer and then acted upon with dispatch.