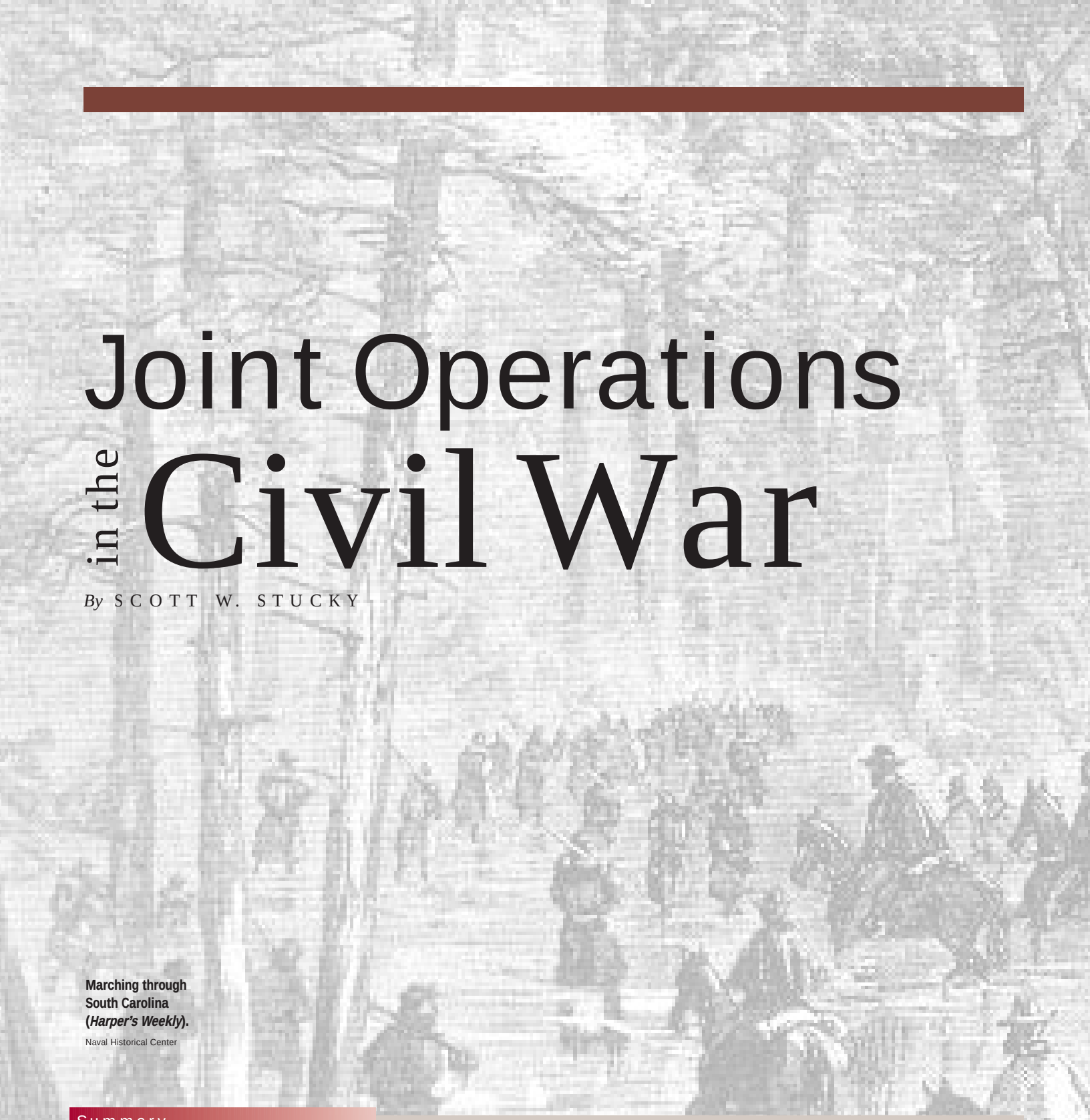
Joint Operations in the Civil War

By SCOTT W. STUCKY



Marching through South Carolina (*Harper's Weekly*).
Naval Historical Center

Summary

While the earliest example of jointness in American military history may be the subject of an open debate, two campaigns conducted during the Civil War display characteristics attributed to joint operations today. The capture in 1862 of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers respectively, involved riverine operations mounted by the Army and Navy. Though Union forces achieved their objectives, there were no joint commands or doctrinal pubs to show the way. The successful assault on Fort Fisher on the South Carolina coast in 1864–65 was an operation undertaken on a much greater scale that called upon the warfighting skills of soldiers, sailors, and marines. That victory revealed the emerging organizational capabilities of joint forces and demonstrated that senior commanders were becoming adept at employing the assets of each service to wage war both on land and at sea.

U.S. Navy

Landing at Fort Fisher (*Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*).

An analysis of two campaigns of the Civil War—at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and at Fort Fisher on the North Carolina coast—may determine the significance of these early joint operations on the evolution of the American way of war. Did the Union have a coherent joint strategy in 1861–62? Were ad hoc joint operations conducted based upon the personalities of Army and Navy commanders? What role did politics play in fostering interservice cooperation? Were there any lasting effects of jointness during the Civil War?

In 1861 Clausewitz had been dead for thirty years. However his major work, *On War*, had yet to be translated into English and was largely unknown to Americans.[1] The tactical manuals in use at the U.S. Military Academy, Mahan's *Out-Post*[2] and Hardee's *Tactics*,[3] did not mention joint operations. Jomini's *The Art of War*, the principal strategy text of the day at West Point, contained a short item on "descents" (a term of art for amphibious operations), but stated that such operations were "rare" and "among the most difficult in war."[4]

Naval thinking on joint operations was sketchier. The traditional attitude was that aspiring officers could learn everything they needed to know by putting to sea at an early age. The Naval Academy was not established until 1845, but since no naval counterpart of Jomini had yet emerged the Navy paid little attention to the theory of war, let alone amphibious or other joint operations.[5]

Experience in joint operations before 1861 was limited. The Revolutionary War involved several amphibious expeditions including a combined French-American fiasco at Newport in 1778 and a successful operation at Yorktown in 1781.[6] But the fact that the Navy was not established until 1794 (and then virtually abolished again by Jefferson) illustrates that no lasting lessons on the efficacy of joint operations were learned.

The most recent experience before the Civil War was Winfield Scott's unopposed landing at Vera Cruz in 1847, a superbly executed operation using the first specially designed landing craft in U.S. military history. Some 8,600 troops were put ashore in a few

hours without losing a man, a fitting prelude to a brilliant campaign.[7] Scott, aged 75, was general-in-chief of the Army in 1861, though physically unfit for field service. He foresaw a long and difficult war. In May 1861 he wrote to his successor, George B. McClellan, describing his famed Anaconda Plan to strangle the Confederacy by means of a blockade and to invade the South by joint operations conducted down the Mississippi to New Orleans. The appointment of McClellan to command the Army of the Potomac, friction among generals, and Scott's debility prompted his retirement and replacement by McClellan in November 1861.

McClellan's tenure as general-in-chief lasted only four months; yet it has been claimed that in this time he formulated a revolutionary strategy of joint operations that would begin with strikes at Charleston, New Bern, Mobile, and New Orleans, and then, driving inward along railroads and the Mississippi, cut internal communications and split the Confederacy.[8] In this interpretation, the Peninsular Campaign is viewed as a triumph of jointness that was only unsuccessful because of Lincoln's obtuseness in keeping McDowell's corps in Washington, by fumbling on the part of the Navy, and by the demotion of McClellan, which "prevented him from coordinating the movements of other Federal armies . . . or obtaining reinforcements from less active theaters of war."[9] The final conclusion is that a major opportunity slipped away:

> *The Navy . . . was allowed to pursue an independent strategy while the Army commanders, lacking McClellan's foresight and flexibility of method, agreed with the Lincoln administration that wars were only won by slugging it out on the battlefield. The failure of the Peninsular Campaign signalled both the demise of Federal grand strategy and the demise of* [joint] *operations planning.*[10]

This revisionist interpretation is deeply flawed. First, it posits that McClellan could have, with the nebulous powers of general-in-chief, achieved results with field armies that he was unable to do with his own when in active command. Second, the notion that McDowell's corps was essential to victory on the peninsula is nonsense. McClellan always greatly overestimated his opponents, and McDowell would not have made a difference. Third, McClellan had no authority whatsoever over naval forces. To assume that as general-in-chief in Washington he could have forced Army-Navy cooperation in distant theaters flies in the face of experience throughout the Civil War. Finally, this interpretation simply ignores fatal flaws in his character. An unwillingness to move quickly and fight, consistent overestimation of his opponents, secretiveness about his intentions, and contempt for his political masters in this most political of wars destroyed McClellan in the final analysis. There is absolutely no reason to think that if he had been general-in-chief and given everything he wanted in the Peninsular Campaign it would have made any difference. Spinning out grandiose plans was an activity that McClellan enjoyed; execution was another matter. Neither command arrangements nor doctrine for joint operations existed at the time. Successful joint operations, like much else, would have to be improvised by those on the scene.

Forts Henry and Donelson

The first large-scale joint operation in the western theater was the campaign for Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, which brought Ulysses S. Grant to public attention. Central Tennessee was of strategic importance to the Confederacy. It was a fertile farming area and held large iron deposits as well as numerous forges and furnaces. With the lack of industrial capacity in the South, the area was a resource almost beyond estimate. The immense natural problems of defending it, however, were devilishly complicated by Kentucky's attempt to remain neutral. Since neither side wanted the opprobrium of violating this neutrality, defensive works to protect central Tennessee had to be built outside Kentucky.[11]

Given the poor roads and lack of north-south railways, the likely invasion route into central Tennessee was by the twin rivers, the Tennessee on the west and the Cumberland on the east. To counter this threat Confederate fortifications were constructed on both rivers in 1861. Fort Henry, on the Tennessee,

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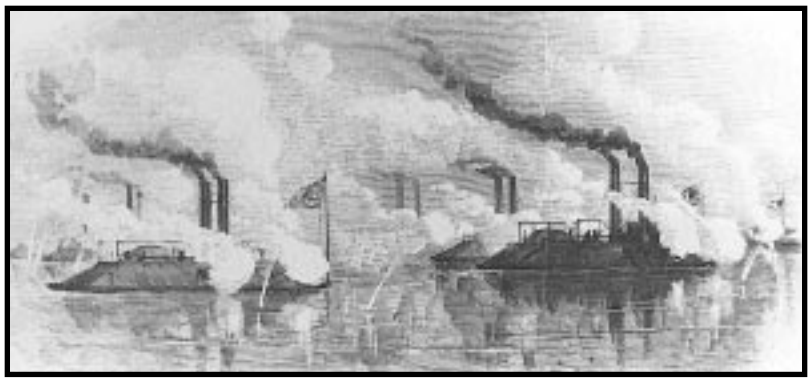
was poorly located on low land facing Kentucky over the river. Fort Donelson, 12 miles east on the Cumberland, was a stronger position. It sat on a bluff 75 to 100 feet above the river and was surrounded by gullies that would hamper assault by land.[12] In November 1861, Union Army forces in the area



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Attack on Fort Henry (Thomas Nast; in *Pictorial Battles of the Civil War*).

were shaken when Major General Henry W. Halleck assumed departmental command in St. Louis. Grant was subordinate to Halleck. But not all Union forces in Kentucky were under Halleck. Rather he shared responsibility for the state with Major General Don Carlos Buell who commanded the Army of the Ohio from Louisville. Buell's department included Kentucky east of the Cumberland and all of Tennessee.[13]

Lincoln was eager for a campaign in Tennessee to succor the Unionists in the eastern part of the state. But mounting such an expedition depended on naval forces which did not as yet exist. The first naval commander in the west, John Rodgers, was sent to the Mississippi primarily to interdict clandestine commerce, although he was also charged with beginning work on the Anaconda Plan's advance down the river. This thrust, it was thought, required construction of a fleet of ironclads. Building them was a joint Army-Navy affair, and squabbles over the contract resulted in the recall of Commander Rodgers and his replacement by Captain Andrew Hull Foote.[14]

Foote, a strongly religious New Englander and a strict temperance man, was instructed by Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to cooperate with the Army without subordinating himself. He threw himself into constructing the ironclads and seven were launched by November. The Army Quartermaster Corps, however, was terribly slow in paying the contractors. Foote also had enormous trouble getting crews. As late as January 9 Foote still had to commission *Cincinnati* and *Carondelet* with only one-third of their crews. And at the start of the Fort Henry expedition Halleck was still authorizing Grant to detail soldiers for gunboat duty.[15] Nevertheless, by the end of January Foote had a workable gunboat fleet.

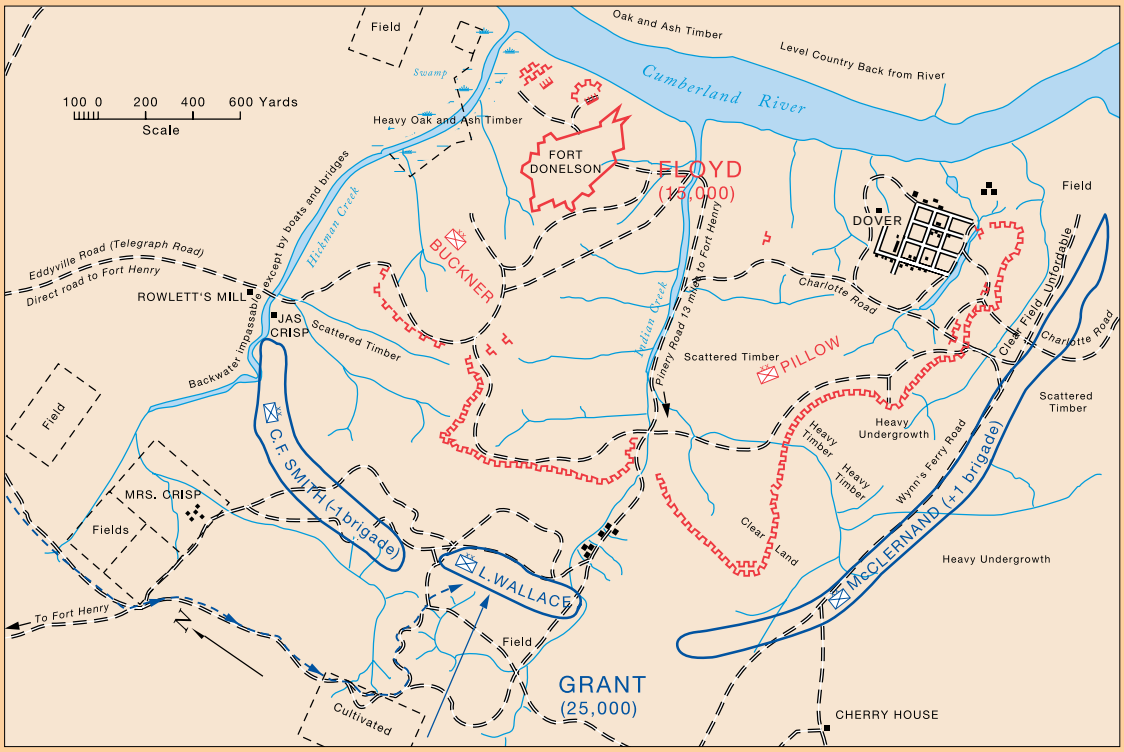
In early January Halleck directed Grant to reconnoiter up the Tennessee to keep Polk from sending reinforcements to Bowling Green, toward which Buell was planning an advance in response to Lincoln's desires. This excursion turned into a miniature version of General Ambrose Burnside's "mud march" a year later. Grant said, "We were out more than a week splashing through the mud, snow, and rain, the men suffering very much."[16] The reconnaissance had its intended effect in that Polk sent no reinforcements, and General George Thomas was victorious at Mill Springs, thereby erasing the threat of a Confederate move against Buell's flank. Grant, however, was restless and impatient; he saw opportunity in a joint operation up the twin rivers but had to persuade Halleck to approve such an expedition. He accordingly traveled to St. Louis for an interview with Halleck, which went badly. Halleck barely knew Grant but was familiar with the stories of Grant's drinking.[17] Grant recounted the scene in his memoirs:

> *I was received with so little cordiality that I perhaps stated the object of my visit with less clearness than I might have done, and I had not uttered many sentences before I was cut short as if my plan was preposterous. I returned to Cairo very much crestfallen.*[18]

Crestfallen Grant may have been, but his spirits revived upon his return to Illinois, where he consulted with Foote, who agreed on the advisability of a joint operation down the rivers. Therefore, on January 28 both officers cabled Halleck, asking permission to occupy Fort Henry. Foote stated that four ironclads would suffice. Foote's endorsement of the plan changed Halleck's mind.[19]

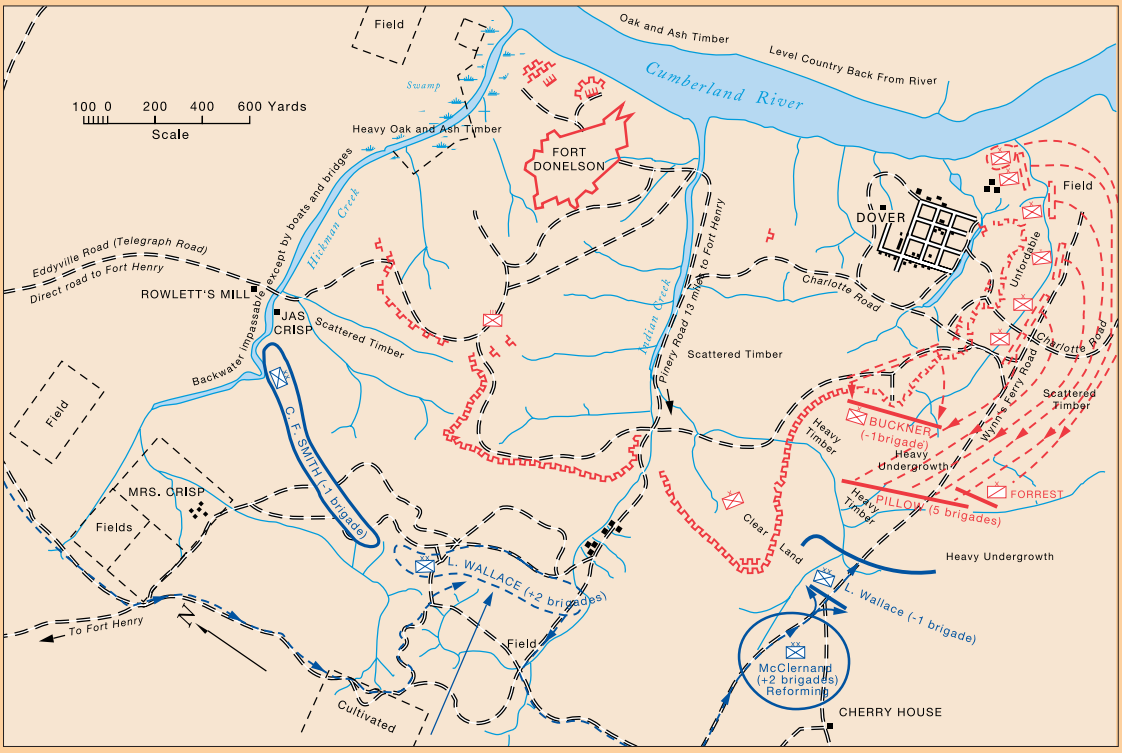
Grant and Foote worked closely together in arranging transportation and planning for the landing of troops. The expedition sailed

Fort Donelson: Situation on the Night of February 14–15, 1862.



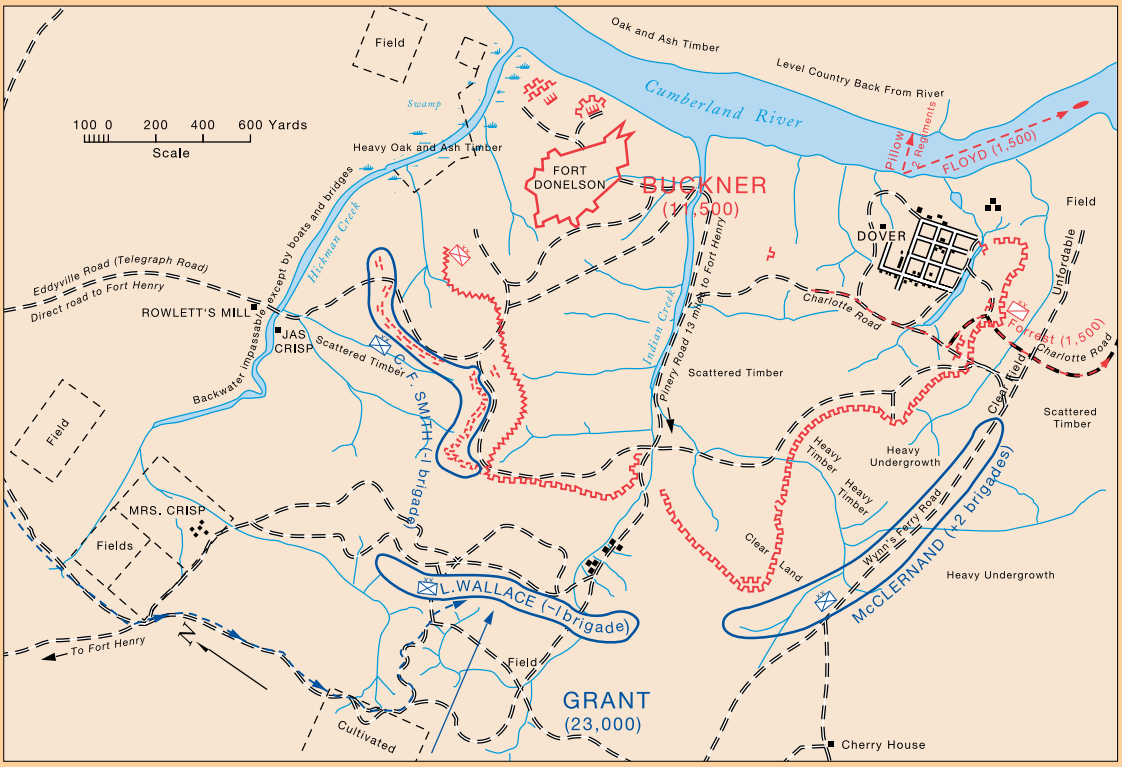
Source: The West Point Atlas of American Wars (New York: Praeger, 1959).

Fort Donelson: Situation at Noon on February 15, 1862.



Source: The West Point Atlas of American Wars (New York: Praeger, 1959).

Fort Donelson: Situation on the Night of February 15–16, 1862.



Source: The West Point Atlas of American Wars (New York: Praeger, 1959).

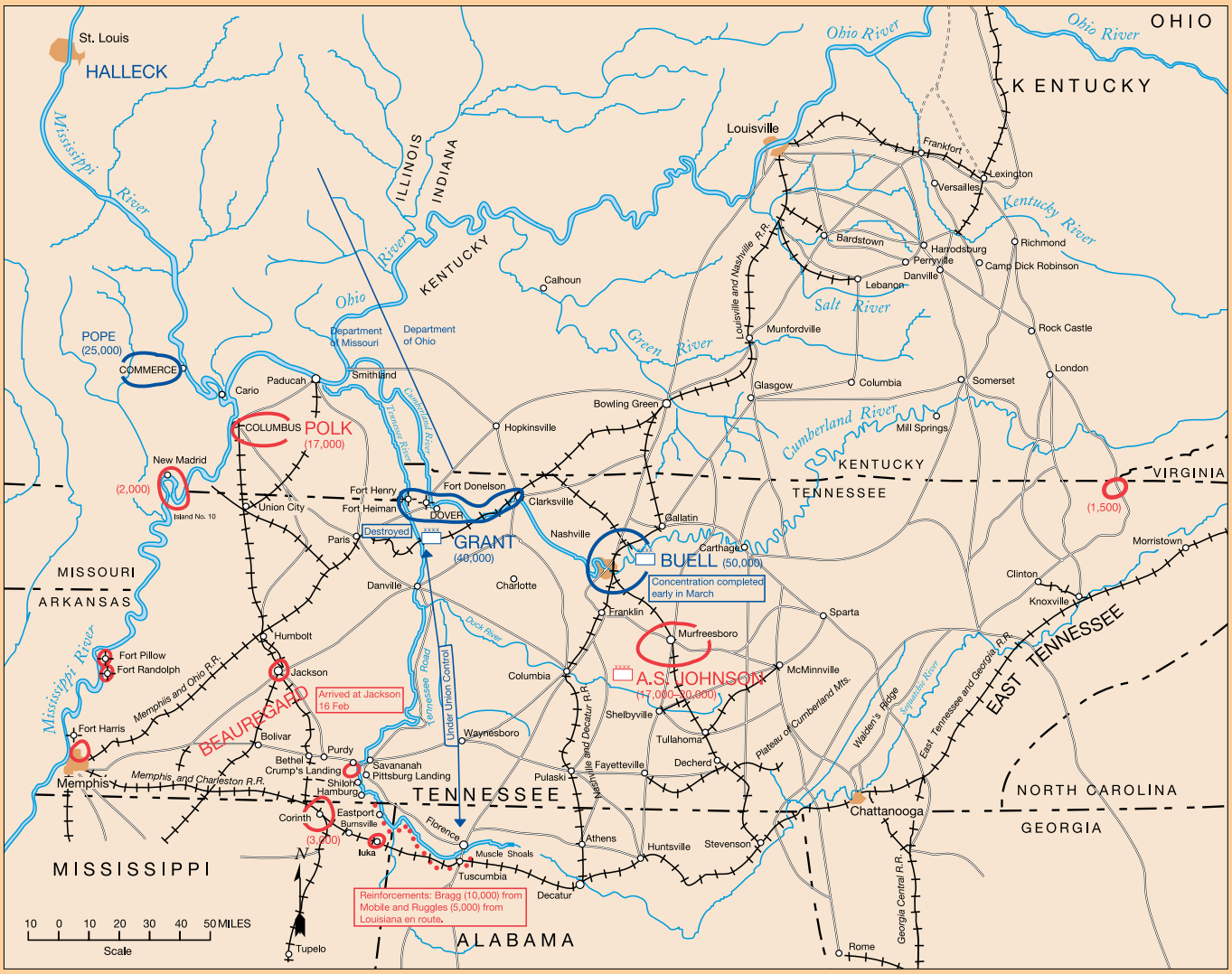
on February 4 and landed troops early the next day some miles north of Fort Henry. The land advance was slow because of severe rains and poor road conditions. On February 6 Foote took his gunboats down to the fort and began a bombardment.

The river in the winter of 1862 crested some 30 feet above normal. This flood was a disaster for the Confederacy because it made the mines anchored to the river bottom useless and put part of Fort Henry under water. Brigadier General Lloyd Tilghman, commanding there, had 3,000 men and 17 guns; however, only two of the riverside guns, a Columbiad and a 24-pounder rifle, were effective against armor. Tilghman, thinking Fort Henry indefensible, had sent most of his men to Fort Donelson.

The artillery battle between Foote's gunboats and the fort was heavy. *USS Essex* was hit in a boiler by the Columbiad, causing "carnage" below decks and scalding the captain and others. *USS Cincinnati*, Foote's flagship, absorbed over 30 hits. But then the fort's 24-pounder burst, killing most of the crew, and the Columbiad was accidentally spiked by a broken priming wire. With the gunboats firing at point-blank range, Tilghman raised a white flag. The river was so high that the boat sent to accept the surrender floated in through the fort's sally port. Grant's forces arrived only 30 minutes after the surrender, having been delayed on the roads, and Foote turned the fort over to the Army.[20]

Foote, who felt unprepared for another attack against fixed fortifications so soon after the heavy Fort Henry action, nonetheless attacked Fort Donelson on the 14th. This bombardment was as unsuccessful as the one on Henry had been successful. Donelson, located on high bluffs, could subject gunboats to an intense plunging fire. One after another, the gunboats were disabled and floated back downstream. *St. Louis*, now Foote's flagship, was hit 59 times and Foote himself was wounded. The weather had now turned bitterly cold, and Grant was faced with conducting a siege under unfavorable condi-

Strategic Situation at the End of the Campaign (c. February 27, 1862).

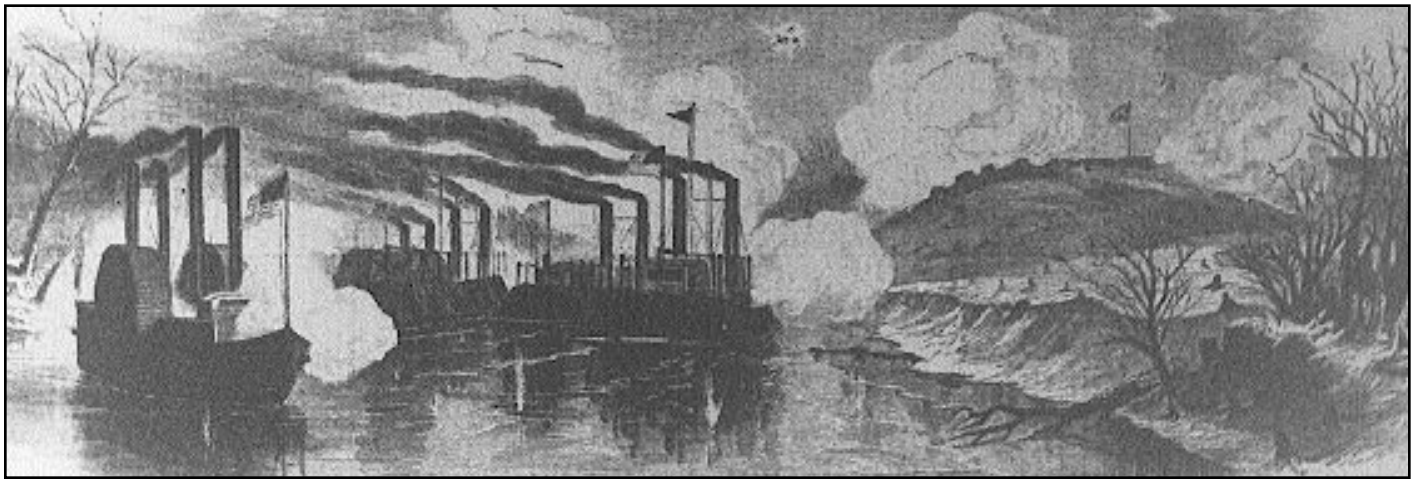


Source: The West Point Atlas of American Wars (New York: Praeger, 1959).

tions. On the 15th he met with the wounded Foote, who said he would have to return to Cairo to repair damages but would return within 10 days and lay siege to the fort with his gunboats. In the meantime, the least damaged vessels would remain on station.[21]

While Foote's attack had been a tactical failure, it had important operational results. The Confederate commanders in the fort, mesmerized by the naval threat, had allowed Grant to invest the post, missing the opportunity for strategic withdrawal and the saving of the 17,000 who eventually surrendered. After squabbles within the Confederate command, the episode ended with unconditional surrender to Grant on February 16.

The Henry and Donelson Campaign illustrates several points about the conduct of joint operations at this stage of the war. First, of course, in the absence of unified command or meaningful joint doctrine, the conception and execution of joint operations totally depended on ad hoc actions by



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Fort Donelson (*Harper's Weekly*).

the responsible commanders, and therefore upon their personal chemistry and communications. Foote and Grant were very different individuals—one a teetotaler who preached sermons, the other a cigar-smoking quasi-alcoholic who had left the Army under a cloud—yet they worked well together. Whatever their differences, they shared a common inclination to attack the enemy, both hating inactivity. They maintained excellent communications without undue worry as to who would get the credit—a quality rare in Civil War commanders.

The second point is that the command arrangements which did exist on the Army side hampered rather than encouraged successful joint operations. Although Grant described Foote as "subject to the command of General Halleck,"[22] he was not in any formal sense. His instructions from the Navy Department were to cooperate, and he did that admirably; but he was not Halleck's subordinate. Halleck therefore had true operational control of only half the joint operation. Moreover, Halleck's dislike and distrust of Grant almost destroyed the operation before it began. In addition, departmental arrangements then were highly unsatisfactory. Halleck had no operational control over Buell, who was supposed to be moving in support of Grant, but who adamantly refused to budge. Another two years would pass before the North developed satisfactory high command arrangements, and even then they depended more on personalities than on well-thought-out doctrine.

Fort Fisher bore more similarity to the amphibious landings in the Pacific during World War II

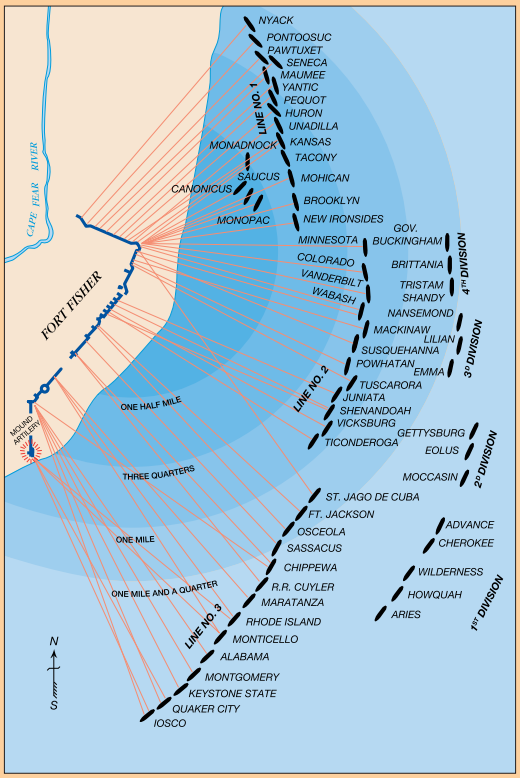
Finally, although the Henry-Donelson Campaign produced important strategic results, it was not followed up. Halleck seemed more intent on curbing his ambitious subordinates than on exploiting the victory. As a result, Grant's services were essentially lost to the Union until fall 1862, and much that lay open to conquest after Henry and Donelson (including East Tennessee, so vital to Lincoln) had to be won by bloody attrition later.

Fort Fisher

Operations at Fort Fisher in December 1864 and January 1865 differ from the Fort Henry and Fort Donelson campaign in several important particulars. First, by late 1864 most observers would have pronounced the Confederates defeated as opposed to early 1862 when the issue was still in question. Second, there was difference of scale, the assaults on Fort Fisher being vastly larger. Third, the amicable relations that had marked the Union high command during the Henry-Donelson Campaign were conspicuously absent in the first phase of the operations at Fort Fisher. Finally, of course, Fort Fisher was a coastal rather than a riverine operation and the execution bore more similarity to the amphibious landings in the Pacific during World War II than to Fort Henry and Fort Donelson.

Fort Fisher was located on a peninsula between the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean 18 miles south of Wilmington and described as "the largest, most formidable fortification in the Confederate States of America."[23] After the Battle of Mobile Bay,

Second Attack on Fort Fisher



Source: Walter A. Lane, *The Soldier in Our Civil War*, vol. II (New York: Stanley Bradley, 1890).

Wilmington, always popular with blockade runners, was the only port open for such commerce—the South's sole lifeline to the outside world. One hundred blockade runners sailed in and out of Wilmington during the war.[24] Blockading the port was difficult because two separate inlets into the river, separated by 25 miles of shoals, had to be watched—an arc 50 miles long.[25]

Colonel William Lamb, the commander, had been working steadily on the fortifications for two years. By late 1864, an L-shaped earthen work consisting of a half-mile landface crossed the peninsula. Made of 15 thirty-foot traverses containing bombproofs and connected by a tunnel, the fort mounted 20 Columbiads, three mortars, and several field pieces. For a half-mile north, trees had been felled to present a clear field of fire. The landface was also defended by a minefield—a great innovation. Twenty-four buried shells and mines were connected electrically to repulse a land assault.[26] By late 1864, Fort Fisher, mounting 44 large guns, was truly impressive. Its principal weakness was manpower, the permanent garrison numbering only 600.

The impetus for a joint Army-Navy expedition against Fort Fisher came from Secretary Welles. When Wilmington became the preeminent blockade-running port in mid-1864, Welles persuaded Lincoln and Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to support a joint operation. But Grant, by now a lieutenant general and general-in-chief of the Union armies, was cool to the idea since he did not want to commit a large number of troops and disapproved of the War Department's choice to lead the Army contingent, Major General Quincy A. Gillmore, who had performed badly in the opening phase of the Richmond campaign earlier in the year. Eventually, Grant approved committing about 7,000 troops to the operation, but vetoed Gillmore and instead chose Godfrey A. Weitzel. Grant particularly approved of Weitzel because he agreed that the fort could be taken without a huge mass of infantry.

Welles had command problems as well. The naval command was offered to Admiral David G. Farragut, but the hero of Mobile Bay was in poor health and declined, believing the expedition to be dubious. It was then offered to Rear Admiral David Dixon Porter, the brash son of a hero of the War of 1812. Seeing a chance for glory and advancement, Porter threw himself into the planning of this largest naval expedition of the war.[27]

Command arrangements were then completely upset by the commander of the Army of the James, Major General Benjamin F. Butler, in whose area of responsibility Fort Fisher lay. He decided to take personal command of the Army portion of the expedition. Butler was the stormy petrel of Federal command who sowed controversy wherever he went. A brilliant and eccentric Massachusetts lawyer and politician, he had, as a delegate to the Democratic convention in 1860, voted 57 times to nominate Jefferson Davis. Commissioned a major general of volunteers in 1861, he regarded escaped slaves as contraband of war. Although scandal resulted in Butler's relief at New Orleans in 1862, his status as a leading War Democrat ensured his continued employment, despite

rascality and almost total failure in the field.[28] The problem with his assuming command was that he and Porter despised each other. But the immediate effect of Butler's interposition was delay. Some of this was the normal confusion attendant upon such a switch; most of it, however, was due to the famous affair of the powder-boat.[29]

Butler was greatly interested in innovative military technology and an unsuccessful inventor himself. Prompted by newspaper accounts of the destruction caused by the accidental explosion of two gunpowder barges in England, he conceived the idea of packing a hulk with explosives and running it in near Fort Fisher. At a meeting with Grant and Porter in November, he predicted that such a huge explosion would flatten the fort's wall and kill most inside, so that infantry could walk in and take it. Grant was unenthusiastic but let the scheme proceed. Porter, despite his dislike for Butler, was taken in and agreed to provide the ship, explosives, and transport. The ship selected was *USS Louisiana*, a flat-bottomed, shallow-draft vessel assigned to blockade duty. It was disarmed, cut down, camouflaged to look like a blockade runner, loaded with 200 tons of gunpowder, and fitted with an elaborate ignition system.[30]

The expedition left Hampton Roads on December 13 and 14. Butler's transports carried two divisions, 6,500 men; Porter had 57 ironclads, frigates, and gunboats. The expedition arrived off Wilmington December 19, but a gale began to blow and the transports returned to Beaufort to wait it out. The storm lasted three days which enabled Colonel Lamb to bolster his defenses; by December 23 he had some 1,400 troops in the fort, though a third were "junior reserves"—boys 16 to 18 years old.[31]

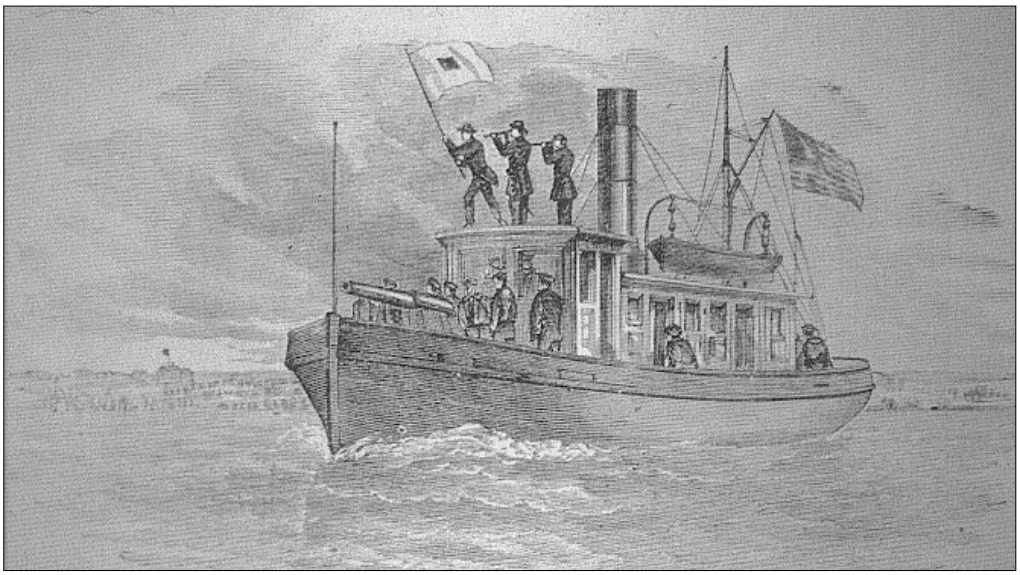
Butler sent Porter word that he would return on the 24th, with bombardment and landing on Christmas Day. Porter, whose ships had ridden out the gale without serious damage, decided to set off the powder-boat early on the 24th—in the Army's absence—and begin bombardment the same day. When he heard this, Butler exploded. The old animosity between the two commanders fused with the Navy's seeming desire to get all the glory. Butler promptly steamed south in a rage, ordering his transports to follow as soon as they finished taking on coal.

Louisiana, under Commander Alexander C. Rhind, was towed close to Fort Fisher on the evening of the 23rd. Her engines were then started and the ship was moved closer. The night was clear, however, and a blockade runner, *Little Hattie*, inconveniently appeared. Not wanting to alert the fort's sentries, Rhind anchored his vessel at a point he thought was about 300 yards away but was actually about twice that.[32] The fuses were lit and the crew got away. *Louisiana* went up in a huge explosion shortly before 0200 on the 24th. Allan Nevins called it "one of the most ludicrous fiascoes of the war." Rhind, watching his work go up in smoke, remarked "There's a fizzle," and went below. The explosion, though impressive, did absolutely nothing to the fort except waken its garrison and badly frighten the teenaged recruits. There would be no easy entry into Fort Fisher.[33]

On December 24, Porter began an exceptionally heavy naval bombardment, firing over a hundred rounds a minute. The fort replied with fairly limited fire because the bombardment made the gun emplacements exceedingly uncomfortable and to save ammunition. Nevertheless, several of Porter's ships were damaged by fire. More serious were five accidental explosions of Parrott rifles in the fleet which caused 37 casualties and forced Porter to silence the 100-pounders.

Butler finally arrived late in the day, exceedingly disgruntled by Porter's actions. Porter, in turn, was peeved at the transports arriving too late to attempt a landing that day and suspended the bombardment. Some 10,000 shells had been thrown into Fort Fisher with very little effect.[34]

The landing took place north of the fort on Christmas. About 2,000 troops went ashore under Weitzel's command, while Porter resumed the bombardment. While unopposed, the landing soon made it apparent that the fort was still full of resistance. Canister exploded in the advancing ranks, and mines took their toll. Moreover, the wind was coming up, which meant reembarkation might be impossible. Finally, Confederate prisoners boasted that 6,000 men under General Robert Hoke were on their way from Wilmington. Though Butler's orders from Grant explicitly directed him to entrench and besiege the fort if necessary, he



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On the Ogeechee near Fort McAllister (in *The Soldier in Our Civil War*).

thought it impossible to carry the place by storm and did not want to undertake a siege. He therefore ordered a withdrawal, although officers on the scene felt that a determined attack would have worked. The withdrawal had to be broken off when the surf became too high to bring in the boats. Butler sailed for Hampton Roads, leaving 700 men on the beach.[35] Porter was livid. Even prior to the attack, relations between the two had become so bad that they only communicated through intermediaries. Now Butler abandoned the joint effort, leaving his men and Porter in the lurch. Porter, to his credit, kept up continuous fire and managed to get the 700 men off the beach when the wind changed the following day. He then gradually withdrew to Beaufort.

The rebels were naturally jubilant at the repulse of the huge expedition. Lamb telegraphed, "This morning, the foiled and frightened enemy left our shore." The departmental commander, General Braxton Bragg, wrote President Davis commending Lamb and Brigadier General W.H.C. Whiting, for "gallantry, efficiency, and fortitude displayed under very trying circumstances."[36]

Reaction in the North was stinging. Grant wired Lincoln that "The Wilmington expedition has proven a gross and culpable failure. . . . Who is to blame will, I hope, be known." Porter, in writing to General William T. Sherman, whom he hoped would replace Butler, criticized the Army: "When you have captured [Savannah] I invite you to add to your brow the laurels thrown away by General Butler after they were laid at his feet by the Navy, and which neither he nor those with him had the courage to gather up." To Welles in Washington Porter wrote: "I feel ashamed that men calling themselves soldiers should have left this place so ingloriously. . . . [In] a war like this, so many incompetent men in the Army are placed in charge of important trusts. . . . If this temporary failure succeeds in sending General Butler into private life, it is not to be regretted." Later, when Butler attempted to blame the failure on the Navy, Porter pronounced Butler's report "a tissue of misstatements from beginning to end."[37] The fiasco ended Butler's military career.

While Porter had wanted Sherman to replace Butler, Grant's choice, Major General Alfred H. Terry, was excellent, as unlike the flamboyant Butler as imaginable. Though not a professional soldier, he had risen to command a corps on merit. He was quiet, dependable, and easygoing, attributes that helped in dealing with the mercurial, self-promoting Porter.[38] Grant's instructions to Terry left no doubt that he did not want a repetition of the former command friction. He wrote to Porter in the same vein:

> *I send* [Terry] *with the same troops General Butler had, with one picked brigade added, to renew the attempt on Fort Fisher. . . .* [He] *will consult with you fully, and will be governed by your suggestions as far as his responsibility for the safety of his command will admit of."*[39]

Porter was somewhat dubious of Terry, because he had been a subordinate of Butler's and because the additional troops he brought were colored, of whom Porter disapproved. However, once the two men met at Beaufort on January 8, things went well. After a three-day gale they set out on January 12, the largest expedition ever to sail under the American flag to that time. Porter had 59 war-

ships mounting 627 guns, while Terry had nearly 9,000 men in 21 transport vessels.[40]

The fleet arrived at Wilmington late at night. Porter had been dissatisfied with the accuracy of naval gunnery in the first bombardment; far too many shells had sailed over the fort and landed in the river or simply buried themselves in the sand. His instructions directed commanders to not fire at the fort's flag but to pick out the guns. The Parrott rifles, whose explosions had caused problems, were to be fired with reduced charges if at all.[41]

The Confederate garrison was only 700 strong. Hoke's division, which had arrived just as Butler withdrew, had itself been withdrawn to Wilmington by Bragg, who did not think that the Union would attack again before spring. Lamb, on sighting the fleet, urgently appealed to Bragg, who ordered Hoke back, telling him to prevent a landing, and if it had already occurred to establish a defensive line to protect Wilmington.

Porter began the bombardment before dawn on the 13th, hoping to provoke the fort's guns into disclosing their location by muzzle flashes. This worked, and after sunrise the rest of the fleet joined in, firing as heavy as, and substantially more accurately than, the December bombardment. The landing began between 0800 and 0900 hours. To guard against a repetition of the December fiasco, where the men had been marooned for a day, the troops carried three days' rations. Terry's biggest fear was an attack during the landing by Hoke's troops; therefore, the Federal troops were ordered to establish a defensive line facing north. But the landing was unopposed and 8,000 men got ashore by mid-afternoon. Porter kept up the bombardment until dark and left ironclads at work all night to discourage repairs to the fort. Several ships were damaged but none severely.[42]

By this time, Hoke's division had advanced from Wilmington and set up a defensive line. Despite appeals from the fort, Bragg, thinking the Union force too strong to resist, at first refused to order Hoke to attack on the peninsula. Lamb was reinforced with North Carolina soldiers and sailors, bringing his force to about 1,550. On the 14th, Bragg ordered Hoke to attack and went to the scene. On seeing well-entrenched Federal troops (who he overestimated), Bragg thought the assault futile, especially given the power of the fleet. He countermanded his order and Hoke remained quiescent.[43]

Porter resumed the bombardment on the 14th. It had a substantial effect. General Whiting, who thought Bragg a fool and had come to share the fort's fate, said, "It was beyond description, no language can describe the terrific bombardment." The fort took some 300 casualties, and only one gun on the landface was still operational.[44]

Porter and Terry met that night aboard Porter's flagship and planned the land assault. The fleet would bombard until 1500 on the 15th. Then two columns would assault the fort, one Army, one Navy. While 4,000 Army troops assaulted the landface near its western end, the Navy with 2,000 sailors and marines would attack the northeast bastion. The remaining 4,000 soldiers ashore would protect the rear against an attack by Hoke. The naval assault was a dubious proposition, consisting of sending sailors ignorant of infantry tactics and armed only with cutlasses and pistols against strong works. Perhaps Porter, despite excellent cooperation with Terry, was loath to give the Army all the glory of storming the fort. The assault failed and the sailors were badly cut up by musket fire and canister, taking about 300 casualties. Pinned down, they desperately attempted to dig holes in the sand and finally broke and ran.

However, the naval assault had done the Army attackers a great service. Convinced that this was the main attack, the rebel manpower and attention were diverted from the landface. Even as the exultant Confederates watched, in Lamb's words, "a disorderly rout of American sailors and marines," Union flags appeared on the western end of the landface. A counterattack was mounted, but then the fleet opened up on the Confederates massed in the fort, creating havoc. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting ensued at the landface, where ships could not fire without hitting friendly forces. The fight moved from one traverse to another and did not end until about 2200 hours.[45] The fort surrendered with some 2,000 men and 169 guns. Terry sustained 955 casualties and Porter 386. An-

other 250 Union casualties resulted from an accidental explosion in the main magazine on the day after its surrender.

The essential part joint operations played at Fort Fisher was readily apparent to participants of both services. Porter wrote to Welles: "[Terry] is my *beau ideal* of a soldier and a general. Our cooperation has been most cordial; the result is victory, which will always be ours when the Army and Navy go hand in hand."[46] Stanton wrote to Terry and Porter: "The combined [joint] operations of the squadron and land forces of your commands deserve and will receive the thanks of the Nation, and will be held in admiration throughout the world as a proof of the naval and military prowess of the United States."[47]

commanders thought jointly in considering the resources which the Army and Navy brought to the table

What conclusions can be drawn about jointness from these two Civil War campaigns? The first is that joint warfare existed and could be effective. Joint operations did not come of age until World War II or perhaps until passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act in 1986; but commanders such as Grant, Porter, and Foote thought jointly in considering the resources which the Army and Navy brought to the table, and how each of the services fought to achieve common objectives. Both the Fort Henry-Fort Donelson and the Fort Fisher Campaigns presented many problems of terrain, weather, logistics, tactics, and strategy. Jointness solved them to the extent needed for success. Joint operations perhaps were not essential to victory, as Joint Pub 1 claims, but they contributed in important ways to attaining victory.[48]

Second, by the end of the war, joint operations had reached a high degree of sophistication. The contrast between the rather small-scale Henry-Donelson operation, advocated by Grant in the face of opposition from the Army, uncoordinated with other movements, and not followed up, and the Fisher operation, which was done on a huge scale with the full support of both the War and Navy Departments, and detailed planning, is instructive. Fort Fisher illustrates as well the industrial and organizational maturity which the war vastly accelerated in the North. Much of this sophistication would be lost after the war (as logistical nightmares and command squabbling during the Spanish-American War were to show), but for the United States to have attained it in the 1860s, with a volunteer army, was a remarkable feat. Indeed, operations of this scale and maturity were not seen again until World War II.

Finally, notwithstanding such advances, the command structure for joint operations remained deficient throughout the war. Ultimately, success or failure of these operations depended upon the personalities of the Army and Navy commanders. In the absence of a unified command, it was only by cooperation and good relations between them that victory could be attained. The hatred between Butler and Porter was enough to doom the first expedition to Fort Fisher in spite of the military, economic, and political power that lay behind it. In our own age we have succeeded, we think, in exorcising interservice rivalries by giving real powers to joint combatant commanders. Have we? The experience in the Persian Gulf was positive, but anyone who thinks that formal command arrangements can guarantee control of events understands neither history nor the fog and friction of war. All they can do is provide the best possible framework for what must be done, and those in the Civil War were deficient in that respect; ad hoc relationships, not formal organization, were the essence of success in joint operations.

Lincoln, in his second annual message to Congress in 1862, observed: "The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. . . . As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country."[49] Those men who conducted joint operations in the Civil War had disenthralled themselves from military dogma; the occasion brought forth innovation, organization, and ultimately victory on a grand scale. **JFQ**

NOTES

[1] Karl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[2] Dennis Hart Mahan, *An Elementary Treatise on Advanced-Guard, Outpost, and Detachment of Service of Troops* (New Orleans: Bloomfield and Steel, 1861).

[3] William J. Hardee, *Hardee's Rifle and Light Infantry Tactics* (New York: J.O. Kane, 1862).

[4] Antoine Henri Jomini, *The Art of War* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1862), pp. 248–52.

[5] Geoffrey S. Smith, "An Uncertain Passage: The Bureaus Run the Navy, 1842–1861," in Kenneth J. Hagan, editor, *In Peace and War: Interpretations of American Naval History, 1775–1984* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 86–87.

[6] Bruce Lancaster, *From Lexington to Liberty* (New York: Doubleday, 1955), pp. 358–59, 430–55.

[7] K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846–1848* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 236–44.

[8] Rowena Reed, *Combined Operations in the Civil War* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), see chapter 2, "The Army Takes the Initiative."

[9] Ibid., p. 188.

[10] Ibid., p. 189.

[11] The obvious place for fortifications on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers was at the Birmingham narrows between Paducah and Eddyville, where the rivers are only three miles apart. However, this site is well within Kentucky and therefore was politically off-limits in 1861. Benjamin Franklin Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson: Key to the Confederate Heartland* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987), p. 46.

[12] Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson*, p. 46.

[13] Bern Anderson, *By Sea and By River: The Naval History of the Civil War* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 91.

[14] Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson*, pp. 23–24.

[15] Ibid., pp. 25–27; U.S. Army Service Schools, *Fort Henry and Fort Donelson Campaign Source Book* (Fort Leavenworth, Kans.: The General Service Schools Press, 1923), p. 158.

[16] Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York: Library of America, 1990), p. 189.

[17] William S. McFeely, *Grant: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), pp. 96–97.

[18] Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 190.

[19] U.S. Army Service Schools, *Source Book*, pp. 139–44; U.S. Department of the Navy, Naval History Division, *Civil War Naval Chronology 1861–1865* (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1971), p. II–14.

[20] Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson*, pp. 101–06; Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), pp. 66–67.

[21] Anderson, *By Sea and By River*, pp. 96–97; U.S. Navy, *Chronology*, p. II–22; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 204; Cooling, *Forts Henry and Donelson*, p. 136.

[22] Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 190.

[23] Rod Gragg, *Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), p. 2.

[24] A ton of coffee could be purchased in Nassau for $249 and resold in Wilmington for $5,500; the blockade runner could then buy cotton for 3 cents a pound and resell it in Great Britain for $1 a pound. A bottle of gin purchased in Bermuda for $4 could be resold in Wilmington for $150. Ibid., p. 8.

[25] Ibid., pp. 11–21.

[26] Ibid., pp. 17–21.

[27] Ibid., pp. 34–37; Reed, *Combined Operations*, pp. 331–33.

[28] Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 38–39. See generally Dick Nolan, *Benjamin Franklin Butler: The Damnedest Yankee* (Novato, Calif.: Presidio, 1991).

[29] Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, vol. 8, *The Organized War to Victory, 1864–1865* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), p. 190; Hattaway and Jones, *How the North Won*, pp. 658–59.

[30] Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 663; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 40–42; also see Reed, *Combined Operations*, pp. 337–38. For the scientific calculations supporting the idea see U.S. Navy Department, *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, series I, volume II (Washington: Department of the Navy, 1900), pp. 207–14 (hereafter cited as O.R.N.).

[31] Shelby Foote, *The Civil War: A Narrative*, vol. 3, *Red River to Appomattox* (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 715–17.

[32] Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 50–51; O.R.N., I, II, pp. 226–27.

[33] Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, p. 190; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 51–53. After the war, Butler blamed the failure of the powder-boat on Navy incompetence. A typical Butlerian squabble followed. O.R.N., I, II, pp. 237–40.

[34] Foote, *The Civil War*, p. 719.

[35] O.R.N., I, II, pp. 149–50, 250–51; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 88–97; Foote, *The Civil War*, p. 720.

[36] Foote, *The Civil War*, p. 720; U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series I, volume 44 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), p. 825 (hereafter cited as O.R.).

[37] O.R., I, pp. 44, 832; O.R.N., I, pp. 11, 264, 268; Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 668.

[38] Foote, *The Civil War*, pp. 739–40; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 103–04.

[39] O.R.N., I, pp. 11, 404–05.

[40] Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 107–09.

[41] O.R.N., I, pp. 11, 425–27; Anderson, *By Sea and By River*, pp. 281–82.

[42] Foote, *The Civil War*, pp. 741–42; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, p. 114.

[43] Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 126–27.

[44] U.S. Department of the Navy, *Chronology*, p. V–11.

[45] Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 157–90.

[46] Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, p. 670; Foote, *The Civil War*, p. 746; Gragg, *Confederate Goliath*, pp. 232–42.

[47] O.R.N., I, pp. 11, 458.

[48] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1991), p. iii; Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, chapters 13 and 14.

[49] Roy P. Basler, editor, *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1946), p. 688.