

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC STAFF FROM 1862 TO 1864

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC STAFF FROM 1862 TO 1864, by MAJ Esther S. Pinchasin, 110 pages.

The United States Army's general staff structure and functions at the beginning of the American Civil War reflected the same organization and functions of George Washington's staff during the Revolutionary War. Commanders served as their own operations and intelligence officers, and did not necessarily understand the role and potential utility of a Chief of Staff. Officers were not trained to serve on a staff and in most cases did not understand their true function as staff officers. The staff performed basic resource management and administrative functions to assist the commander in all phases of warfare, relying on the commander for analysis and most decisions. The large-scale war about to take place in the United States in 1861 necessitated an organization capable of collecting, analyzing, processing, and disseminating information quickly and accurately. The Industrial Revolution produced transportation and communication systems to support the expedient delivery of information, material and combat power over vast distances. Generals required a robust staff to assist in directing the execution of battle and maintaining oversight of a widespread array of forces. The manner in which general officers utilized their staffs differed among leaders.

The staff of the Army of the Potomac serves as the best example of the adaptive transformation of capabilities out of necessity and experience. It developed systems similar to an operations process, organic intelligence processing capabilities, and advised the commanding general whose span of control and operational reach surpassed the capacity of his mental genius. Staff processes evolved because of the decentralization of responsibilities to staff departments and away from the commander. Accurate assessment of enemy and friendly combat power were critical to battle planning, including long distance logistics operations. Understanding how the general staff developed its capabilities and processes provides insight into how the Army of the Potomac was able to defeat large-scale armies while conducting simultaneous operations. This monograph examines the significant impact of the staff on commanders as operational artists, how commanders utilize their staffs, leverage staff products and analysis, and support their planning to achieve their strategic objectives. Three qualitative case studies explore the composition and capabilities of the Army of the Potomac during three distinct periods during the American Civil War and assess the effectiveness of the staff, its impact on the commander's decision-making process, and activities during combat operations.

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ACRONYMS

USMRR United States Military Rail Roads

INTRODUCTION

In the late morning of 13 September 1862, Major General George B. McClellan was meeting with a group of local citizens of Frederick, Maryland, where the Army of the Potomac had just arrived and was beginning its preparations for battle. It was just a few months ago that the Union was on the verge of taking Richmond and now the Army of Northern Virginia was one victory away from taking Washington. Colonel S. E. Pittman, the assistant adjutant general of the 1st Division of McClellan's XII Corps, cut through the crowd and handed the general a document with great haste.¹ As McClellan reviewed it, he suddenly exclaimed, "Here is a paper with which if I cannot whip Bobbie Lee, I will be willing to go home!"² McClellan loudly proclaimed to Brigadier General John Gibbon, "Now I know what to do!"³

This infamous document was General Robert E. Lee's Special Order 191 to the Army of Northern Virginia, which McClellan asserted contained the "full information as to the movements and intentions of the enemy."⁴ The 27th Indiana Volunteers, found it near Frederick, Maryland, in the area occupied by Confederate General D.H. Hill's division the previous evening, and passed it up to their leaders who immediately realized its importance.⁵ McClellan received the order,

¹Stephen W. Sears, *Landscape Turned Red: The Battle of Antietam* (Norwalk, CT: Easton Press, 1988), 113.

²Bruce Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1962), 217.; Donald R. Jermann, *Antietam: The Lost Order* (Gretna, LA: Pelican Pub. Co., 2006), 147.; and Ronald H. Bailey, *The Bloodiest Day: The Battle of Antietam* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1984), 38.

³Sears, *Landscape Turned Red*:113.

⁴McClellan is quoted from his letter to Major General W. B. Franklin, VI Corps Commander, dated 13 September 1862, 6:20 p.m., U.S. War Department, ed., *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (OR)*, ser. I, vol. 29 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), pt. 1, ch. 31, 45-46.

⁵The 27th Indiana Volunteers belonged to 3rd Brigade, 1st Division, XII Corps, arrived at Frederick, Maryland on 13 September 1862. Silas Colgrove, "The Finding of Lee's Lost Order," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York, NY: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), 603.

delivered with the utmost urgency and impressive efficiency, so uncharacteristic of the standard passage of information within the command. The same urgency and efficiency was necessary to capitalize on this miraculous good fortune and turn it into a much-needed tactical success. “From the moment Special Order 191 was handed to McClellan, the clock started running. The information was perishable.”⁶ McClellan immediately rushed back to his headquarters and began planning. His staff noticed a rebirth of enthusiastic energy they had not seen in weeks.

Lee’s Special Order 191 directed the capture of the Martinsburg and Harpers Ferry Garrisons by dividing the army into four components and reuniting them before McClellan was alerted and able to respond.⁷ Before he could use this order to his advantage however, McClellan had many time consuming tasks to perform. The order had to be verified as genuine and not part of a deception plan deliberately placed by the Confederates so soldiers from the Army of the Potomac could find it. The specific information in the order had to be analyzed and processed into useful intelligence. The locations and movement routes of the Confederate forces had to be confirmed, to ensure that the order was still valid and had not been changed. Risks had to be identified along with associated mitigation measures to lessen their impact. Completion of these staff tasks would ideally inform the commander’s understanding of the current situation and operational environment. Only then, could he develop plans, issue guidance, and inform his subordinate commanders of their new missions. In addition, his plans and orders had to be reproduced and disseminated to each unit. He also needed to take care that all actions he and his commanders took following the discovery of *Special Order 191* would not alert the Confederates that the Army of the Potomac was in possession of its battle plan. McClellan completed virtually all of these tasks by himself, with minimal input and assistance from his staff.

⁶Jermann, 147.

⁷Ibid., 79-80.

While the tasks associated with analyzing and verifying Special Order 191 could occupy a modern planning staff for days, the Army of the Potomac staff did not have the systems, processes, or skill sets required to conduct this analysis, nor were they assigned to do so. General staffs in the modern model did not exist.⁸ Modern staffs support commanders in understanding the operational environment, decision-making, and implementing decisions while conducting operations.⁹ The fundamental structure of the United States Army's current general staff system is based on the French staff system and was established in the National Defense Acts of 1916 and 1920, and further institutionalized in 1921.¹⁰ It created four primary staff sections, which emulated the long established French staff system, consisting of personnel (G1), intelligence (G2), operations (G3), and supply (G4). A separate section of the general staff, known as the war plans division, formulated war plans, manned the general headquarters during times of war, and continued to develop and evolve through World War II until today.¹¹ McClellan did not have an equivalent department for the development of campaign plans. He did not delegate or share the burden of these tasks with any of his subordinates or members of his staff.¹² Instead, he single handedly developed his own plans to address Lee's Special Order 191.

⁸Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones, *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 103.

⁹Staffs accomplish their purpose through the continuous execution of four primary staff tasks defined in Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-0; conduct the operations process consisting of planning, preparing, executing, and assessing operations, conduct knowledge and information management, conduct inform and influence activities, and conduct cyber electromagnetic activities. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), ADRP 6-0, *Mission Command* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 3-5.

¹⁰David W. Hogan, *A Command Post at War, First Army Headquarters in Europe, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 2000), 5-6.

¹¹J. D. Hittle, *The Military Staff, Its History and Development*, 3rd ed. (Harrisburg, PA: Military Service Division, 1961), 214-215.

¹²Edward Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization, and Field Command* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988), 50.

Like most general officers of the time, McClellan interpreted all of the information he received and formulated his plans essentially alone. Officer training prior to and during the Civil War did not include staff officer training, which was perceived primarily as a superfluous administrative position that did not require specialized training.¹³ None of the Civil War commanders had ever observed the details of staff work, and therefore, had little idea of how to use one. They were accustomed to having small personal staffs that assisted with administrative and organizational tasks, and did not participate in the commander's battle planning. Most senior officers never commanded anything larger than a company, having gained the majority of their combat experience as lieutenants and captains during the Mexican-American War. Formal officer training consisted of initial military education at the United States Military Academy, with significant focus on tactics and engineering. The academy believed that leadership, and the ability to command, was an "inspirational, largely intuitive art, in which some individuals naturally excelled and others did not."¹⁴ They developed leadership skills, management expertise, and staff techniques through their own military and civilian work experiences. These officers served in the highest positions in both armies and became the nucleus of intelligence compilation and operational planning. At the start of the Civil War, General in Chief Winfield Scott was by far the most experienced soldier and leader in both armies. He fought heroically in the War of 1812 and numerous engagements over 30 years before being appointed Commanding General of the United States Army in 1841.¹⁵ During the Mexican-American War, Scott led an army of 30,000 men,

¹³Hittle, 186-187.

¹⁴Hogan, 3.

¹⁵Timothy D. Johnson, *A Gallant Little Army : The Mexico City Campaign* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 11-12.

which was by far the largest force any Civil War general commanded in battle at that time.¹⁶ Scott executed the campaign organized as a small-unit army, dispersed over a large area. As such, Scott developed his staff to meet the mission's immediate and relatively modest requirements.¹⁷ By 1861, small headquarters staffs met the administrative and organizational requirements of the army's previous operations.¹⁸ These commanders selected the members of their staffs, established staff structure, and instituted informal specialization using new technologies to control the mass armies of that conflict.¹⁹

The Union Army based its staff structure on organization General George Washington used during the Revolutionary War.²⁰ Despite the developments and advancements in the general staffs in Prussia and France, the United States did not keep up with the progress made abroad. The Prussian staff model, developed to support large-scale armies over the previous 200 years, consisted of a comprehensive organization that coordinated strategic and operational planning.²¹ A military commission to Europe in 1855-1856, known as the Delafield Commission, observed the end of the Crimean War and focused on the "materialistic aspects of war."²² The commission reported observations of the tactical employment forces, use of rifled weaponry, and the

¹⁶"The Mexican War and After," in R. Stewart, *The United States Army and the Forging of a Nation, 1775-1917* (Washington, DC: U.S. Center of Military History, 2005), 179.

¹⁷Hattaway and Jones, 106.

¹⁸Hittle, 189.

¹⁹Hogan, 3.

²⁰At the onset of the American Revolution, the Continental Congress worked to provide George Washington with an appointed staff, which reflected the British staff structure. George Washington served in several staff positions in the British Army that shaped his understanding and appreciation for British military capabilities and organization. This resulted in the Continental Army under Washington mirroring British command and staff organizational structure. Hittle, 166-169.

²¹Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 34.

²²Hittle, 188.

application of general principles of war. The Americans missed the Prussian officer corps' general staff organization, military education, and staff system functions and procedures.²³ Inspired by Napoleon's success, the United States Military Academy attempted to integrate elements of the French staff system into its officers' education in 1861, to address the imminent need of the army's larger formations. West Point Professor William P. Craighill translated the manual of the French staff corps, which included a new command and basic general staff organization. His work incorporated existing laws and regulations as well as additions from American, French, and English military practices. The manual ultimately became *The 1862 Army Officer's Pocket Companion: A Manual for Staff Officers in the Field* published in 1862.²⁴ Despite this introduction to the French staff system, the rebellion gaining tremendous momentum caused difficulty introducing a new staff structure, and the army could only implement its ideas gradually.²⁵

The staff organization the army developed before the war was simply unable to accommodate the changes in complexity and scale of the war, which required larger armies to fight over an immense geographical area. To meet the administrative and logistical demands of the large-scale war, Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton,²⁶ created the Union's War Board in early 1862, which consisted of the heads of various army departments and bureaus.²⁷ President Lincoln relied on the War Board for military advice because the position of general in chief was

²³Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 33.

²⁴William P. Craighill, *The 1862 Army Officer's Pocket Companion: A Manual for Staff Officers in the Field* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2002).

²⁵Hogan, 5.

²⁶Edwin McMasters Stanton took over the War Department from Simon Cameron on 20 January 1862 and served as President Lincoln's secretary of war. President Buchanan had previously appointed him as attorney general in late 1860. After Lincoln's assassination, Stanton served as secretary of war for President Andrew Johnson until 1868.

²⁷Hattaway and Jones, 102.

vacant. Major General Ethan Allen Hitchcock served as chairman of the War Board and fulfilled responsibilities commensurate with that of a chief of staff until Henry Halleck was appointed general in chief.²⁸ This innovative administrative structure established the essential organization, to liaise between civilian and military leaders, and served as an “embryonic version of an American general staff.”²⁹ This structure was far less formal than army-level staffs but possessed the necessary duty positions which accomplished vital coordination. This staff model was not designed, nor was it prepared to prosecute the extensive challenges that lay ahead and continued to evolve throughout the war.

The structure and composition of the Army of the Potomac’s staff reflected the conventional forces of the mid-nineteenth century. Its commanders reorganized the army, its corps, and its staff to meet tactical and organizational requirements and shortcomings. At the beginning of the rebellion, an army staff’s primary task was to assist the commander in exercising command of his forces.³⁰ It assisted the general with the administrative and organizational tasks of supporting his forces; however, it did not assist in developing operational plans but merely provided personal assistance to the general in commanding his units. As one historian pointed out: “With no official government guidelines, the character and quality of personal staff work in the American Civil War army depended entirely on its commander.”³¹

The staff of one organization, the Army of the Potomac serves as the best example of the adaptive transformation and development of capabilities out of necessity and experience.

²⁸John H. Eicher and David J. Eicher *Civil War High Commands* (Stanford, CT: Stanford University Press, 2001), 41.

²⁹Hattaway and Jones, 1.

³⁰Hittle, 3; and Hattaway and Jones, 102.

³¹R. Steven Jones, *The Right Hand of Command: Use and Disuse of Personal Staffs in the Civil War*, 1st ed. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2000), 11.

Throughout the war, this was the Union's most important military organization and the one that captured the attention of Lincoln and his advisor the most. Its infrastructure continued to grow with the size of the army, the scope of its campaigns, and the distances it covered. Although historians have written a great deal about American Civil War battles and commanders, there has been little attention paid to those who supported the command process. The most valuable reference material for this research has undoubtedly been the complete compilation of the original Union and Confederate documents of the War of the Rebellion's Official Records, entitled *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (or the *Official Record*).³² The *Official Record* contains the orders published to the commands from which the headquarters recorded appointments, tasks to the staff, and its capabilities. By examining the orders, reports, and correspondence in the *Official Record*, historians can understand the headquarters' structure, composition, duty descriptions, and specific tasks, as well as their coordination processes.

Some secondary sources are helpful in reviewing this organizational development. Stephen R. Taaffe provides a detailed chronological illustration of the leaders of the Army of the Potomac in *Commanding the Army of the Potomac* that complements the *Official Record*.³³ Stephen Sears' *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865*, presents a consolidated and sequentially organized compilation of primary source material.³⁴ It is helpful to match events in the *Official Record* with the associated personal correspondence of the army's leaders, in order to understand their personal perspective, thought

³²OR.

³³Stephen R. Taaffe, *Commanding the Army of the Potomac* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

³⁴George Brinton McClellan and Stephen W. Sears, *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1992).

process, and relationships between them. The diaries, memoirs, and journals of George B. McClellan, George Gordon Meade, Theodore Lyman, Ulysses S. Grant, and Marsena Rudolph Patrick provided insights into the perspectives of key leaders, and the dynamics within the headquarters and staff.³⁵ These publications bring to light the innermost thoughts and reasoning behind critical decisions, as well as alliances and personality conflicts that affected the interactions within the staff.

J. D. Hittle surveys the roles and responsibilities of staffs in *The Military Staff, Its History and Development*, where he discusses the history and development of staffs, beginning with the Roman Empire and culminating with the American general staff through World War II. According to Hittle, both the Union and Confederate armies struggled to improve their staff organization and effectiveness.³⁶ Hittle equates the improvements in staff organization and capabilities during the American Civil War to the same lessons “unlearned” during the Revolutionary War.³⁷ It is valuable to cross-reference Hittle’s work with William P. Criaghill’s

³⁵George Brinton McClellan and William Cowper Prime, *McClellan’s Own Story: The War for the Union* (New York, NY: C. L. Webster & Company, 1887).; George Gordon Meade, *Life and Letters of General George Gordon Meade*, vol. 2 (New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913).; Theodore Lyman and David W. Lowe, *Meade’s Army: The Private Notebooks of Lt. Col. Theodore Lyman* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2007); Ulysses S. Grant and E. B. Long, *Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1982); Marsena Rudolph Patrick and David S. Sparks, *Inside Lincoln’s Army; the Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshall General, Army of the Potomac* (New York, NY: T. Yoseloff, 1964); Marsena Rudolph Patrick, *Marsena Rudolph Patrick Journals, 1862-1865* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1965).

³⁶Hittle admonishes the Crimean Commission’s failure to analyze the organization and staff education system of the Prussian staff. Hittle, 188.

³⁷The systems and developments were not permanently implemented until legislation was finally passed in 1903, institutionalizing the much-needed changes to the general staff at the turn of the century. Congressional legislation was introduced by the U.S. Secretary of War, Elihu Root, in 1902 and became law on 14 February 1903. The Act of 1903 abolished the position and office of command general of the army and replaced it with the office of chief of staff, which would be supported by 44 officers. Hittle describes this legislation as the “basis for progress” and it set in motion advances in staff officer training at Fort Leavenworth and the War College. Hittle, 203-205.

1862 Army Officer's Pocket Companion, which served as a guidebook for American officers.³⁸

This book specifies the composition of the model general staff, the staff corps, and staff departments of the United States Army. It defines duty descriptions and the organization of army units, including most staff positions of the time. *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare: Ideas, Organization, and Field Command* by Edward Hagerman discusses the reorganization of the army and its staff structure, which he noted as struggling with coordination.³⁹ Hittle and Hagerman describe the absence of a functional staff, deficient internal procedural capabilities, and the lack of staff officer training as symptomatic of the time.⁴⁰

Herman Hattaway and Archer Jones' *How the North Won: A Military History of the Civil War*, also describes the lack of the modern staff concept as commonplace, being a product of the officers' knowledge and past experiences.⁴¹ Steven R. Jones presents select examples of the proper use and misuse of staffs during the Civil War in his book *The Right Hand of Command: Use and Disuse of Personal Staffs in the Civil War*.⁴² It is the single publication devoted specifically to the commander's use of his staff during this time and describes how commanders utilized their staff. Timothy Johnson's *A Gallant Little Army: The Mexico City Campaign* illustrates the frame of reference used by the staffs to approach their tasks and early stages of analysis.⁴³ The most comprehensive authority on the American Civil War is James McPherson's

³⁸Craighill partly translated the text of the French Corps d'Etat-Major, originally prepared by Colonel de Rouvre. Although this type of corps did not exist in the U.S. Army, the book served as an important educational tool for a relatively inexperienced Army led by inexperienced leaders.

³⁹Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*.

⁴⁰Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 40-50; and Hittle, 187-189.

⁴¹Hattaway and Jones.

⁴²Jones.

⁴³Johnson.

Battle Cry Freedom: The Civil War Era, which provided fundamental contextual background for each case study.⁴⁴ Bruce Canton's *Army of the Potomac* trilogy focuses on the historic specifics and particular dynamics facing commanders and their staffs.⁴⁵

Despite the countless references and books about the American Civil War discussing the importance of a staff to its commander, very little is written specifically about staff structure, processes, and procedures. The Army of the Potomac staff did not develop operational plans nor did it provide analysis for the commanding general. Each staff department served a specific function as directed by the commanding general with minimal staff integration, and the role of the chief of staff was in its early stages of development. At the onset of the Civil War, the inexperienced staffs consisted of immature teams that attempted to execute the large-scale war, while not having the structure or procedural systems to best support the commander. By the end of the war, staffs' structure and capabilities evolved and developed out of necessity and experiences. How did the staff of the Army of the Potomac and its capabilities transform during the American Civil War?

The Army of the Potomac's staff and its capabilities developed and improved over the course of the Civil War, most notably in its operations process, intelligence, and logistics. It enhanced its ability to execute combat support and service support operations and provide better viable intelligence to the commanding general. These incremental improvements were the result of individual and organizational experiences over the course of many campaigns and the development of systemic procedures supported by technological advancements. The staff organization, supporting the command structure of the Army of the Potomac, reflects the enormity and complexity of the American Civil War. Three sequential case studies present the

⁴⁴James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988).

⁴⁵Bruce Catton, *The Army of the Potomac* (New York, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc, 1952).

transformation of the Army of the Potomac's staff by analyzing its structure, capabilities, and processes during three points in time, covering a three-year period. Each case presents the contextual background of the campaign its commanding general, an overview of the staff, chief of staff, and staff positions, and an assessment of the staff's operations process, intelligence-gathering system, and logistics support procedures. The staff reflected the commander it supported, because of his input and influence on its administrative and battlefield operations. The cases discuss each commander's relationship with his staff and the impact on its transformation. Each case is in essence a snapshot in time, presenting raw data regarding the staff's functionality and capabilities.

The first case study examines the Army of the Potomac's staff at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862. George Briton McClellan commanded the army and campaigned in Maryland in 1862 with a staff that mirrored the structure of the War Department's staff departments. He instituted several staff changes and internal capabilities later established at the national level. The second case study examines the staff of George Gordon Meade at the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. Meade was only in command for four days when the battle commenced, having just replaced Joseph Hooker. Meade inherited Hooker's staff and made minimal changes to personnel and procedures, however, his utilization of Hooker's staff, complemented by his own leadership, led to successful operational execution, unit coordination, and staff integration. The third case is unique because it examines the Army of the Potomac's staff during the Battle of the Wilderness, while the army headquarters is collocated with the general in chief's headquarters. Although Meade was in command of the army, the presence and close proximity of the headquarters of the General in Chief Ulysses S. Grant influenced staff operations and interaction with its commander. The analysis of these cases presents the evolution of the position of the chief of staff, the development in the army's operations, intelligence, and logistics processes, and the integration and coordination between its staff departments. The staff's transformation, over the course of the

war, is revealed in its administrative and operational contributions, which ultimately influenced the commander's ability to command the army.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC STAFF–SEPTEMBER 1862,
BATTLE OF ANTIETAM, MARYLAND CAMPAIGN

In the fall of 1862, the rebellion was only a year old and Union military forces had not fared very well in the east. Two defeats in Manassas, Virginia and the humiliating abandonment of the Peninsula Campaign resulted in the Army of the Potomac's concentration near Washington. President Abraham Lincoln reduced Major General George B. McClellan's command responsibilities following the failure of the preceding Peninsula Campaign, which culminated in the Seven Days Battle. McClellan's performance and conduct revealed his propensity for caution, hesitation, and insubordination.⁴⁶ Lincoln placed the preponderance of the forces of the Army of the Potomac under Major General John Pope's Army of Virginia, while retaining McClellan and his remaining forces to defend Washington.⁴⁷

Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia continued offensive operations into Maryland. Confederate forces, led by Generals Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson and James Longstreet, quickly stopped Pope's Army of Virginia. Lee's divided army encircled and captured Harper's Ferry, while continuing to push north in dispersed formations.⁴⁸ McClellan was ordered to reinforce Pope's forces but did not cooperate properly, rendering insufficient support.⁴⁹ Following the Confederate defeat of Pope's army at the second battle of Bull Run, Lee invaded north across the Potomac and threatened Washington. Despite numerous calls for McClellan's

⁴⁶McPherson, 525; David W. Miller, *Second Only to Grant: Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs: A Biography* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Books, 2000), 166; and Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, 109.

⁴⁷Hattaway and Jones, 210-211.

⁴⁸Taaffe, 43.

⁴⁹Pope to Halleck, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 22, ch. 24, 82-83.

dismissal, President Lincoln restored McClellan's command of the Army of the Potomac and charged him with preparing, mobilizing, and moving quickly into Maryland to stop the Army of Northern Virginia.⁵⁰ McClellan was ordered to pursue the enemy "with all the troops which were not required for the defense of Washington . . . to assume control of all troops within his reach, without regard to departmental lines."⁵¹ McClellan possessed the ability to organize and prepare forces for war, which was the driving force behind Lincoln's decision to allow McClellan to lead the Army of the Potomac.⁵²

McClellan was known for his keen intellect, having graduated second in his class from West Point in 1846. He served with great distinction as an engineer in the Mexican-American War under the command of Major General Winfield Scott.⁵³ Not surprisingly, his experiences during this war shaped his perspective and future operational decisive actions.⁵⁴ McClellan later served as an instructor at West Point, took part in the Red River expedition in Arkansas, and was selected as a military diplomat for the United States to observe military operations in the Crimean War in Europe.⁵⁵ He resigned his commission in 1857 and pursued a successful career in the growing railroad industry.⁵⁶ McClellan returned to the army as a major general on 23 April 1861, commanding the Ohio militia's volunteers and subsequently took command of the Department of

⁵⁰Halleck General Report, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 22, ch. 24, 8.

⁵¹Halleck Report of Operations, *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, ch. 35, 4.

⁵²Taaffe, 35.

⁵³McClellan's reconnaissance and engineering achievements were critical efforts that earned him the recognition of Major General Winfield Scott. George Brinton McClellan, *The Mexican War Diary of General George B. McClellan* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1972), 87; and Johnson, 95.

⁵⁴Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 33.

⁵⁵Taaffe, 7-8.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 7.

the Ohio on 14 May 1861.⁵⁷ Following McClellan's successful West Virginia Campaign in July, President Lincoln appointed McClellan to command the Army of the Potomac on 26 July 1861.⁵⁸

McClellan was widely criticized by Lincoln and congressional leaders in Washington for his slow movement and continuous demands for additional resources. He was perceived as overly cautious, for his inability to wage the necessary lethal battles to defeat the rebellion, attributed to his inability to accept that many of his soldiers would die to preserve the Union.⁵⁹ McClellan was criticized further for treating Lincoln disrespectfully publicly and privately, as well as flaunting his relationships with Lincoln's adversaries in the opposing political party.⁶⁰ McClellan consistently advocated for limited war and strongly opposed the idea of total war.⁶¹ He clearly favored safer limited engagements and disagreed with Lincoln's "forcible abolition of slavery," and aimed to minimize the impact on the civilian population.⁶² These views framed the problem

⁵⁷McClellan and Prime, 3.

⁵⁸McClellan changed the Department of the Potomac to the Army of the Potomac upon taking command. McClellan replaced the aging Winfield Scott as general in chief from November 1861 to 13 March 1862. Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, 103.

⁵⁹For this his men loved him. While his devotion to his men was never in question, it is often blamed for his excessive caution and lack of moral courage to jeopardize the welfare of his soldiers "Time and again he missed battlefield opportunities because he could not bring himself to launch the ferocious all-out attacks necessary to grind down the opposing Confederate army." Taaffe, 7, 41. Catton is very critical of McClellan's actions as well as professional conduct. Catton, *Mr. Lincoln's Army*, 109, 112. Other critics include Hittle, 188, 191; and Hattaway and Jones, 210, 283.

⁶⁰McClellan's performance and merits as military leader have been subject to debate from the time he was in command of the Army of the Potomac until today. His political beliefs and affiliation undoubtedly tainted the views of many of his contemporaries. McClellan's own autobiography, intended to articulate his perspective, fueled the criticism against him because it reveals his immodest and self-aggrandizing traits. McClellan and Prime. McClellan's disrespectful treatment of President Lincoln is exemplified in an incident on 13 July 1861. McClellan refused to see the president who had been waiting for him in McClellan's home for over an hour. McClellan's actions reflected his feelings he expressed in private letters to his wife to whom he wrote "the president is nothing more than a well-meaning baboon." McClellan, George B. Letter to Mary Ellen McClellan. 11 October 1861. University of Georgia. http://berry.myweb.uga.edu/teaching/civilwar/docs/mcclellan_to_wife.pdf (accessed 15 September 2013).

⁶¹McClellan and Sears, 344-345; and McPherson, 489.

⁶²McPherson, 502-503.

and the operational environment in McClellan's mind. This greatly affected the manner in which he planned and executed his campaigns, which he charged his staff to support.

The organizational structure and staff of the Army of the Potomac in 1862 resembled that of the armies of its time. The staff consisted of a headquarters staff that performed specific administrative and organizational functions for the commanding general and the army. This headquarters staff was different from McClellan's personal staff, which was comprised of over 20 officers, including aides-de-camp and adjutant-generals.⁶³ It mirrored the staff structure of the War Department but contained additional capabilities not yet instituted in Washington. McClellan established a provost marshal, signal chief, and inspector general, and then clearly defined their responsibilities and key tasks. McClellan restructured the Army of the Potomac and specifically outlined the duties and actions of each staff department under his command.⁶⁴ Despite failing to implement the superior organization and efficiency of the Prussian general staff structure, McClellan was the first to establish the position of chief of staff and continued to develop it while in command.⁶⁵ McClellan's staff consisted mainly of his own supporters, although President Lincoln appointed the Army of the Potomac's four corps commanders. The staff served in an administrative capacity and assisted the general in commanding the army and facilitating its operations. Most officers lacked staff training and worked with personnel replicating their civilian organizational and administrative experiences.⁶⁶ This commander-centric system did not foster collaboration or input from the staff, which was not involved in the army's operational planning.

⁶³McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 23.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 24-31.

⁶⁵Hattaway and Jones, 107; Hittle, 190.

⁶⁶Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 38.

McClellan appointed his father-in-law, Colonel Randolph B. Marcy, to the position of chief of staff, and utilized him for a variety of tasks, not necessarily in keeping with the current understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the chief of staff. He stated that his chief was “indispensable to supervise the various departments and to relieve the commanding general of details.”⁶⁷ He also believed that this position was not needed during peacetime, and claimed to base the employment of his chief of staff on the model he observed in Europe.⁶⁸ McClellan’s appointment of a chief of staff, which modified staff procedures at the time, is considered one of his greatest contributions to staff improvement because of the manner in which he utilized that position.⁶⁹ As Chief of Staff, Marcy supervised the army’s headquarters, assisted with communications, and fulfilled numerous functions. There is little evidence of his direction to the staff, and it appears that his primary function overlapped at times with the tasks of the adjutant generals.⁷⁰ The chief of staff was not second in command of the Army of the Potomac.⁷¹ Marcy represented the commander directly to the president, secretary of war, and general in chief, and spoke directly to subordinates for the commander.⁷²

The chief of staff represented the commanding general directly and indirectly, which was the most significant role of this position, under McClellan. Marcy routinely communicated with Halleck and Stanton, and traveled to Washington personally to deliver McClellan’s

⁶⁷*OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 22-23.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*

⁶⁹Jones, 16-17; and Hittle, 190.

⁷⁰McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 22-23; and Russel H. Beatie, *The Army of the Potomac*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2002), 12.

⁷¹Second in command during the Maryland Campaign was Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, who commanded the North Wing of the army consisting of I Corps and IX Corps, led by Major General Joseph Hooker and Major General Jesse L. Reno.

⁷²Beatie, 12.

communications to the president.⁷³ McClellan trusted Marcy to articulate his intent and expected him to carry out critical negotiations for additional supplies and manpower. He also disseminated intermediate orders and instructions to subordinate commanders in McClellan's absence.⁷⁴ Marcy received battle reports from subordinate commanders containing explicit questions for McClellan. In this respect, Marcy fulfilled the duties of an operations officer and did not possess authority to make battlefield decisions regarding tactical actions.⁷⁵ He also received reports from staff departments regarding their completion of previously issued orders and directed tasks. There is little evidence in the *Official Record* of Marcy issuing orders tasking staff departments directly.⁷⁶ He articulates his instructions as suggestions and recommendations, while relaying information and concerns from subordinate commanders.⁷⁷ The *Official Record* shows that the direct coordination, between the army's staff department and the corps' staff counterparts, was already underway. Marcy's gentle language and polite tone does not reflect the forcefulness and urgency of specific tasks and requirements during the Battle of Antietam, which points toward a less directive and authoritarian role of the chief of staff. Instead, Marcy served as a conduit for information and correspondence to and from the commanding general, which appears to be how McClellan utilized him at this time.

McClellan's innovative reorganization of his headquarters staff preceded the development of several key departments and capabilities within the War Department. McClellan recommended the consolidation of the topographic engineers into the corps of engineers, which

⁷³Lincoln to Marcy, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 1, ch. 23, 37, 72.

⁷⁴Marcy to Sumner, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 1, ch. 23, 6, 58.

⁷⁵Peck to Marcy, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 1, ch. 23, 307-308.

⁷⁶McClellan to Halleck, Marcy to Tripler, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 1, ch. 23, 84-85, 205-206.

⁷⁷Marcy to Ingalls, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 19, pt. 1, ch. 31, 75.

he instituted in the Army of the Potomac. Washington finally heeded McClellan's recommendation instituted through congressional legislation on 31 March 1863.⁷⁸ The separate departments of engineers and topographic engineers routinely worked together to determine the best locations for specific tactical actions, such as establishing basing positions and river crossing sites, as well as validating the existence and conditions of the roads. McClellan eventually consolidated the two engineer departments into one command, headed by Captain James C. Duane, to control the implementation of both and reduce any duplication of effort.⁷⁹ Trained topographers were scarce so the department relied on civilian experts. McClellan tasked this small department to create reliable maps, often under battle conditions, which included surveys of roads, positions of trenches, descriptions of battlefields, and the location of the enemy.⁸⁰ McClellan insisted that the maps were perpetually incorrect and that all roads required validation, instead of the existing practice of cartographers placing unconfirmed roads on maps. This is an example of how the commander himself directed the staff's specific tasks and actions.

The Chief Signal Officer, Major Albert J. Myer, was the mastermind of a variety of techniques used for the first time by the army during large-scale actions, making McClellan the first commander to use the telegraph for strategic communications in the field.⁸¹ Myer devised a system to send messages by using flags during the day and torches at night. In addition, he

⁷⁸Congress approved the legislation on 3 March 1863 and the War Department issued General Orders No. 79 on 31 March 1863. *Congressional Serial Set, Reports, Documents, and Journals of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1901), U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, <http://www.archives.gov/research/alic/reference/admin-history/congressional-serial-set.html> (accessed 4 January 2014), 438.

⁷⁹Prior to the Maryland Campaign, Brigadier General Andrew A. Humphreys was in charge of the department of topographical engineers but took command of V Corps' 3rd Division for the Battle of Antietam. McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 25.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 36-37.

developed a portable insulated telegraph wire that could be easily set up while moving from place to place.⁸² Telegraph capabilities began as an essential communication tool for the army's headquarters and subsequently implemented in subordinate elements' headquarters. Every division used these methods, which proved very valuable while units were engaged in battle because they enabled commanders to transmit mission critical information rapidly.⁸³ This technology still required significant development to improve its reliability. The dependability of telegraph lines and the handling of the information transmitted to and from the army's headquarters may have been questionable, as indicated in the correspondence immediately following the Battle of Antietam. Halleck expressed frustration with McClellan's lack of reporting his movements, and the actions of the enemy, to which McClellan replied that he did indeed telegraph Halleck the previous day.⁸⁴ The War Department did not establish a signal department staff component until 1863.

McClellan established a provost marshal organization and appointed Colonel Andrew Porter of the 16th Infantry Regiment to be his provost marshal but also hired Allan Pinkerton to establish an intelligence collection capability for the Army of the Potomac. Pinkerton's assessments were usually inflated but at least based on sound calculations and estimates. Porter was charged with maintaining order and enforcing discipline, which was an essential component to McClellan's success in rebuilding the army.⁸⁵ The provost marshal, however, had no responsibility for intelligence gathering, which was left to Pinkerton's detectives. The provost

⁸²McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 31.

⁸³Major Thomas T. Eckert was the administrator of telegraphic operations and Mr. A. Harper Caldwell served as chief cipher operator and assisted in managing a team of operators, who erected new lines, even under fire, and planned new installations supporting the army's constant movement. McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 31.

⁸⁴McClellan to Halleck, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 19, pt. 1, ch. 31, 68.

⁸⁵David S. Sparks, "General Patrick's Progress: Intelligence and Security in the Army of the Potomac," *Civil War History* 10, no. 4 (1964): 372.

marshal organization had access to people with potentially valuable military information, and as such, it was a wasted opportunity to leverage internal capabilities within the army.⁸⁶ Following the Peninsula Campaign, McClellan appointed Major W. Wood as provost marshal general and outlined the tasks of what he termed to be a special department. He tasked the department with policing the troops and the civilian population, as well as overseeing prisoners of war and carrying out the sentences of general courts-martial. This department was never formerly in service and did not have a counterpart in the War Department until 1863.⁸⁷

Colonel Thomas M. Key, aide-de-camp, filled the post of judge advocate for the Army of the Potomac. The judge advocate evaluated the judgments of courts-martial, and augmented the army's standard of justice and principles of obedience.⁸⁸ McClellan appointed Brigadier General Delos B. Sacket as assistant adjutant general, which was another position not yet formally established in the War Department.⁸⁹ The departments of the inspector general and judge advocate general are areas for further research and not examined in detailed in this study.

Maneuvering a massive army, over extended lines, supported by large supply trains, required the commander to issue a plan and rely on his communications and command procedures to control his subordinate corps.⁹⁰ The Army of the Potomac did not have the staff structure or capability to analyze information, produce intelligence, and integrate it into the operational planning process, nor did it have standardized procedures for publishing orders.⁹¹ McClellan

⁸⁶Sparks, "General Patrick's Progress," 373.

⁸⁷McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 30.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 24.

⁹⁰Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 40.

⁹¹Stephen A. Bourque, *Operational Command and Control: The Maryland Campaign of 1862* (Muncie, IN: Ball State, 1987), 152.

developed his own intelligence and developed his own plans. No one, other than the commanding general, incorporated strategic guidance in the development of battle plans.⁹² This inadequate use of the staff and the lack of procedural systems to assist in command and control resulted in the inefficient and disorganized coordination of tactical actions.⁹³ Although adjutants and aides assisted in drafting and disseminating orders verbalized by the commander, the commanding general conceptualized, synthesized, and developed plans, while attempting to integrate and corroborate new or duplicate information as it arrived. McClellan issued vague and disjointed orders to his subordinate commanders, without necessarily describing the situation or providing any strategic reasoning. These orders were not formal orders as we understand them today, but rather sets of instructions that failed to explain the complete plan, and demonstrated a lack of a procedural method for articulating and disseminating clear orders.⁹⁴ In examining McClellan's direction to his commanders, following his analysis of Special Order 191, and comparing it to Lee's written order, this procedural deficiency is clearly apparent.⁹⁵ He personally issued separate orders to his commanders, which consisted of explicit and detailed instructions; however, these orders varied in structure and did not include instructions given to other commanders.

The staff did not contain a department designated to contribute to the development of the commander's operational plans. The existing departments provided raw data and unevaluated information, which McClellan analyzed himself. He consulted with his allies on strategic and organizational issues, but blatantly ignored those he did not trust.⁹⁶ This reinforced the lack of

⁹²T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and his Generals* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011), 6.

⁹³Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 40.

⁹⁴Bourque, 153.

⁹⁵McClellan and Sears, 453-467.

⁹⁶Taaffe, 13.

diversity in the army's headquarters, and limited the objectivity and fidelity of information McClellan was receiving and analyzing, in order to develop operational plans. He also received information from Allan Pinkerton's civilian detective agency, which he hired to collect intelligence. Staff departments collected relevant information from its various sources, as well as its internal capabilities, notably Brigadier General Alfred Pleasonton's cavalry. The staff as a whole did not possess the procedural systems or capabilities of processing and transforming information into intelligence for the commander.⁹⁷ The next section discusses intelligence production and analysis in detail.

McClellan utilized informal war councils to communicate his intent and concerns to his subordinates, although he rarely conducted analysis or deliberate planning at these gatherings.⁹⁸ He became the hub for compiling and analyzing information, while personally processing and responding to reports from his subordinate commanders, and answering telegraphs from President Lincoln and General in Chief Henry Halleck. It was common for numerous telegrams to accumulate, requiring his attention and responses.⁹⁹ Despite having appointed competent officers to perform specific functions on the staff, McClellan did not involve them in his operational planning. At the same time, he continued to be involved in the reorganization of the army, coordinating unit movements and army supply operations, as standard for generals at the time.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Bourque, 143.

⁹⁸Taaffe, 27.

⁹⁹During movements, McClellan communicated with Washington primarily using telegrams, delivered by courier, generally not time sensitive, and contained longer text and discussion. Telegraphs appear to have been reserved for questions requiring immediate replies or to provide direct and timely guidance. Telegraph stations were available at fixed locations but were not feasible for McClellan's army on the move. McClellan and Sears, 406.

¹⁰⁰Bourque, 146.

McClellan was his own chief intelligence officer and did not establish an efficient and productive intelligence department within his staff.¹⁰¹ Clearly recognizing the need to gather intelligence, he attempted to fulfill this requirement by hiring Allen Pinkerton's detective agency. McClellan received information in various forms, from numerous sources, including the cavalry, provost marshal, subordinate commanders, and superiors. Individuals, organizations, and units reported information to the headquarters but did not communicate or coordinate their efforts, and often did not know of other ongoing missions.¹⁰² While Pinkerton's detectives conducted information collection and basic compilation, McClellan exclusively analyzed the information and attempted to apply his conclusions at the operational level. Information arrived to McClellan in a seemingly disorganized fashion, and without a formal or standardized process.¹⁰³ The headquarters received telegraphs from President Lincoln and General in Chief, Henry Halleck, as well as situation reports directly from subordinate commanders. These contained estimates of enemy strength that often appeared vague and lacking numerical figures of true combat power and disposition. The analysis needed to produce credible intelligence was not conducted. It was simply too much for one person to process the constant influx of so much information.¹⁰⁴

The staff departments excelled at collecting information from available sources, but did not evaluate, interpret and provide analysis, which is the critical process that transforms

¹⁰¹Hittle, 191.

¹⁰²Sparks, 371.

¹⁰³The undocumented conversations and dialogues with his subordinate commanders undoubtedly shaped his thinking and planning because their exposure to the conditions on the ground often provided the only validation and corroboration of information on hand. McClellan to Halleck, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 12, pt. 3, ch. 24, 690.

¹⁰⁴McClellan constantly received information from higher, often cloaked with advice or outright direction, regarding the future actions and maneuvers of the Army of the Potomac. A significant component to McClellan's intelligence analysis was his own overly cautious mindset and staunch opposition to total war, which inherently made him too willing to accept the inflated estimates of enemy strength. Taaffe, 7.

information into intelligence.¹⁰⁵ The staff gathered information from sources outside the organization, including newspapers, prisoner interrogations, and civilians. McClellan selectively tasked the cavalry and provost marshal to confirm specific information, clarify details with a source, or gain additional fidelity in order to ensure his correct application of the information.¹⁰⁶ He relied on information gathered about friendly forces from stragglers, to understand the disposition of his own units.¹⁰⁷ The staff could have been constantly evaluating and analyzing the information to provide the commander with enemy assessments and assist the commander in understanding and visualizing the current situation. That did not happen.

McClellan received duplicate information at different times and from different sources.¹⁰⁸ He often expressed his frustration with the lack of information about enemy forces and their actions, and of the overall situation.¹⁰⁹ He did not receive an accurate assessment of enemy activities, as well as enemy casualties, and habitually suffered from inflated estimates of enemy presence. These numbers differed significantly from the actual numbers on the ground. All these factors may have contributed to his consistent overestimation of enemy forces. McClellan estimated the enemy's loss at Antietam at nearly 30,000 although the actual Confederate accounts were approximately 14,000 killed and wounded.¹¹⁰ This routine overestimation of enemy disposition and capabilities is symptomatic of the intelligence collection methods used by

¹⁰⁵Bourque, 145.

¹⁰⁶McClellan and Sears, 325-326.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 405.

¹⁰⁸Bourque, 144.

¹⁰⁹McClellan and Sears, 406-408.

¹¹⁰Halleck Report, *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, ch. 31, 4-7.

Pinkerton.¹¹¹ He reported daily findings in a piecemeal manner, which would flow directly to McClellan in the form of findings from interrogations that his detectives conducted. Pinkerton explained the rationale behind his estimated report, which indicated that his figures were “made large” to prevent underestimating the numbers and the enemy’s capabilities.¹¹²

McClellan set a cautious tone and risk averse climate with his questionable “safety first” intelligence reporting policy, which Pinkerton was arguably attempting to follow with his estimates and calculations.¹¹³ The lack of information analysis by the staff resulted in McClellan basing his operational plans on inflated enemy assessments, which he wholeheartedly believed to be true. This significantly contributed to McClellan making critical tactical decisions, to delay action or retrograde, based on the supposition of the enemy’s overwhelmingly advantageous strength.¹¹⁴ McClellan did not have an objective and unbiased intelligence chief to oversee the corroboration of information, provide analysis, and offer recommendations. Instead, McClellan naturally sought out and interpreted information that validated his own estimates and supported his own military plan. He could not make, what he believed would be, the catastrophic decision to send his army into battle against a force that outnumbered him two to one.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹There is debate as to a possible conflict of interest Pinkerton faced, stemming from the need to provide his employer, McClellan, with what he needed to know which might have opposed what McClellan believed and therefore wanted to hear. Pinkerton submitted only six formal estimative reports during the 15-month period of contract with McClellan. Edwin C. Fishel, “Pinkerton and McClellan: Who Deceived Whom?” *Civil War History* 34, no. 2 (1988): 118.

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 120.

¹¹³Edwin C. Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1996), 109.

¹¹⁴During the battle of Seven Days, McClellan deduced that Lee would not dare attack so boldly without an overpowering force, which he estimated to be 200,000. Lincoln to McClellan, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 3, 259.

¹¹⁵Williams, 119.

The Army of the Potomac created, and subsequently expanded, its logistical support structure, while developing new systems and capabilities to support its forces.¹¹⁶ These procedures were born out of necessity, due to the large expanse of the battlefield, the size of its subordinate units, and the distances it traveled.¹¹⁷ The logistical staff consisted of four supply departments led by the quartermaster general, the commissary general, chief of ordnance, and the surgeon general. These department heads would formulate guidance for subordinate units in order to forecast and estimate future requirements and capabilities. Instructions published in general orders outlined allowances for commodities such as; baggage trains, mules and horses, mess kits, and wagons, and specified the priority of supplies to be transported.¹¹⁸

Major Rufus Ingalls, originally assistant quartermaster, was appointed chief quartermaster in July 1862 and responsible for the acquisition of all clothing, equipment, housing, transportation, animals, and forage.¹¹⁹ He previously worked for McClellan managing a large supply depot. The duties of the quartermaster department entailed the purchase of all forms of supplies for the soldiers and the horses, as well as transporting them to their units with all their various supplies.¹²⁰ For the first time in American history, armies had to coordinate the acquisition and movement of such a large number of soldiers, horses, mules, and equipment, across vast distances, which was a mammoth undertaking. It is important to consider the massive

¹¹⁶Charles R. Shrader, "Field Logistics in the Civil War," in *The U.S. Army Guide to the Battle of Antietam* (New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers, 1987), 256.

¹¹⁷Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 44-46.

¹¹⁸Shrader, 273; and General Orders No. 153, McClellan to Williams, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 11, pt. 3, 365-366.

¹¹⁹Shrader, 257.

¹²⁰McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 27-28.

task involved in supplying the large Army of the Potomac with rations and forage.¹²¹ Colonel Henry F. Clarke, was the chief of the commissary of subsistence and was responsible for organizing depots to supply rations throughout the campaigns. His own staff of eight officers, assisted not only in ensuring the subsistence of such a large army but also establishing and implementing a system of directions for a future commissary corps.¹²² The methods they developed for supplying such a large army in the field laid the foundation for the continued improvement of sustainment capabilities in later campaigns.

First Lieutenant Thomas G. Baylor commanded the ordnance department, which was responsible for setting up depots to facilitate the supply of artillery and guns, while increasing the number of officers trained to handle the variety of arms and ammunition. To ensure the quality of ordnance available, the officers formed a board of examiners to test the firearms, which was an important contribution towards the advancement of rifled ordnance at the time.¹²³ Although there was good availability and an established supply chain for various kinds of artillery, the manufacturing capability of small arms was not yet developed for use by such a large army.¹²⁴ It was through the efforts and selectivity of the ordnance department that large amounts of small arms were purchased from foreign manufactures, as well as testing arms from local companies of inventors. The quality of arms and ammunition increased and the newly developed arms would later prove to be valuable in all the campaigns.

¹²¹The Army of the Potomac required 400 tons of forage per day to feed its 15,000 horses and mules. This amounted to 48 rail cars of bushels of grain. Shrader, 270. The estimates used at the time were 14 pounds of hay and 12 pounds of grain per horse per day. Mules required the same amount of hay but only nine pounds of grains. A soldier needed a minimum of three pounds of food per day. Miller, 120.

¹²²McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 28-29.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴Miller, 96; and McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 28-29.

Surgeon General Jonathan Letterman took charge of the Army of the Potomac's medical department and continued to modernize it.¹²⁵ He initiated field sanitation procedures to reduce and attempt to control the spread of disease, in order to protect the health of a fighting army on the move. Letterman established division level field hospitals and the army's ambulance corps, which did not fall under the quartermaster department. The ambulance corps was officially established under McClellan's General Order 147, which explicitly defines the ambulance allocation for subordinate units, the responsibilities of the ambulance corps' personnel, and its strict operating procedures.¹²⁶ The medical department was responsible for maintaining medical supplies, requisitioning and furnishing pharmaceuticals, ambulances, hospital tents, and caring for the wounded.¹²⁷ The army's medical staff procedures established standards for future military health departments.

The Army of the Potomac was supplied exclusively by wagon trains running directly from Washington, until it reached locations within the vicinity of the military railroads.¹²⁸ The supply department deliberately planned and placed their local and advance depots within close proximity to specified military rail lines. The United States Military Rail Roads (USMRR) consisted of over 2,000 miles of lines.¹²⁹ McClellan was intimately involved in the development

¹²⁵Charles S. Tripler was the first surgeon appointed to this position on 12 August 1861 and built the foundation that Letterman inherited and continued to improve. The civilian doctors were not accustomed to military protocol and martial chain of command, and this presented a problem throughout their indoctrination. Military guidance as well as professional evaluations were conducted to determine their competence as part of a medical corps. McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 28-29.

¹²⁶Williams General Reports, *OR*, vol. 11, pt. 1, ch. 23, 217-219; General Orders No. 146 and 150, *OR*, vol. 11, pt. 3, ch. 23, 348-349; vol. 11, pt. 1, ch. 23, 217-219.

¹²⁷McClellan General Reports, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 5, ch. 14, 25-27.

¹²⁸Ingalls General Reports, *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, ch. 31, 94-96.

¹²⁹Secretary of War Edwin Stanton established the USMRR in February 1862, after congress authorized the president to take over public railroad lines to ensure public safety in January. Herman Haupt led the USMRR, which constructed and repaired bridges and rail lines at a very impressive pace. Rail work

of the Union's military railroad capabilities.¹³⁰ His knowledge and experience with the growing railroad industry enabled him to utilize this capability to supply his army, and integrate logistical calculations into his plans.¹³¹ This directly influenced the activities of the staff and established the railroad as a critical logistical tool that the army utilized for the remainder of the conflict. The supply departments exploited the use of the railroad system, unlike some of his contemporaries that perceived the railroad system as being a targeted liability and unreliable resource.¹³² With McClellan's influence, his staff capitalized on the revolutionary strategic mobility and massed concentration of resources the railroads provided.¹³³ Unlike Pope, who insisted that military quartermasters control and manage the movement of supplies on the railroads, McClellan and his quartermaster did not interfere with the civilian management of the railroads; however, during the battle of Antietam, lack of military cooperation caused slower movement of the trains and track

was executed by the first of the Union's construction corps and included the use of prefabricated segments of bridges. McPherson, 514-515, 527.

¹³⁰In February 1862, McClellan represented the Union, along with Stanton and Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, in a meeting with a group of railroad operators, which precipitated in the standardization of tracks, set priorities for freight usage, and established its signaling systems. Donald R. Jermann, *Civil War Battlefield Orders Gone Awry: The Written Word and Its Consequences in 13 Engagements* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2012), 120.

¹³¹McClellan started as chief engineer, then vice president, and ultimately president of the Illinois Central Railroad Company, followed by becoming the president of the Eastern Division of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad Company. McClellan and Prime, 3.

¹³²The vulnerabilities along the long railroad lines that passed through towns of enemy sympathizers made their usage risky when supplies and troops, especially when time was of the essence. General Sherman stated that "railroads are the weakest things in war . . . a single man with a match can destroy and cut off communications." McPherson, 515.

¹³³Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 34-35.

congestion.¹³⁴ McClellan communicated his logistical priorities and understood the military railroad system's organization, which was managed in Washington by veterans of the industry.¹³⁵

Despite having four distinct logistical departments responsible for the acquisition of different types of supplies, the commanding general was still involved in the arrangement of supplies for his forces. The chief quartermaster, however, provided estimates, forecasted requirements, and communicated directly with the quartermaster general in Washington.¹³⁶

McClellan coordinated directly with the superintendent of the USMRR, requesting estimates of railroad distances and capabilities, as well as outlining where future railroads needed to be constructed, to support the operations of the Army of the Potomac.¹³⁷ This was instrumental in the logistical success of the army because rail lines were constructed deliberately and expeditiously to support this critical military effort.

The departments of the staff of the Army of the Potomac mirrored the established departmental structure of the War Department and communicated with their counterparts in Washington. McClellan established several key capabilities that had yet to be developed within the War Department's staff. The quartermaster department, signal corps, and provost marshal developed procedures and relationships, which built the foundation for the army's future capabilities. McClellan instituted the position of chief of staff and organized his headquarters and staff departments with explicit tasks. Although the chief of staff improved the functionality of the

¹³⁴Albert J. Churella, *The Pennsylvania Railroad* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 289.

¹³⁵Assistant Secretary of War, John Tucker, was a transportation agent who managed the eastern rail and water transportation since May 1861. Tom Scott was the vice president of the Pennsylvania Railroad, and placed in charge of all government railways and telegraphs. Scott retired from the War Department in 1862, but continued to influence and advise Stanton as a field observer. Hattaway and Jones, 120-121.

¹³⁶Miller, 166.

¹³⁷McClellan to Haupt, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 19, pt. 2, ch. 31, 494.

staff and the headquarters, the staff departments operated independently of each other and coordinated provisions through their counterparts in Washington. The department chiefs and their officers accumulated valuable institutional knowledge and established a rapport with the War Department that resulted in a certain level of trust and confidence that McClellan had lost.¹³⁸ These relationships contributed significantly to successful coordination of supplies and replacement personnel from Washington. McClellan's unwillingness to share his operational decisions and thought processes consequently removed his input from the development of Lincoln's national strategy. This may have affected support to the Army of the Potomac at times.¹³⁹ Unlike his staff's relationship with Washington, McClellan's relationship with President Lincoln, his cabinet, and the Congress regressed into a strained and contentious one at best.¹⁴⁰

McClellan's embracing the technological advances in railroad operations and telegraph systems influenced his department chiefs and their subordinate staff officers. However, the lack of a functional intelligence staff department, to analyze and process information into intelligence, contributed significantly to poor decision-making and tactical failures. McClellan recognized deficiencies in his staff's organization and effectiveness and later attributed its progress to the developments made by prosecuting the war itself. He also noted that these advances were not

¹³⁸McClellan created the perception of insubordination, disrespect, and even incompetence by failing to report his progress, especially when delaying to execute orders or modifying the orders at hand. McPherson, 528.

¹³⁹McClellan's insubordination and lack of communication with Washington was habitual and culminated with his final demonstration before being relieved of command. Major General McClellan disapproved of an order to cross the Potomac south of Blue Ridge, which was issued to him via telegraph on 6 October 1862. McClellan replied that he would cross at Harpers Ferry. McClellan did not begin movement until 26 October, and completed the passage on 3 November. General In Chief, Major General Halleck, was exasperated by the lack of communication articulated in his Report of U.S. Army Operations 25 November 1863. Halleck General Reports, *OR*, vol. 19, pt. 1, ch. 31, 4-5.

¹⁴⁰By September 1862, when it was clear that Pope was not equal to the task of leading his army against Robert E. Lee, Lincoln turned to McClellan only because of the dismal state of the morale and readiness of the Army of the Potomac. Lincoln felt that he must pull what he could out of the military leaders. He stated that no one could "lick these troops of ours into shape as well as he . . . If he can't fight himself, he excels in making others ready to fight." McPherson, 533.

permanently implemented after the war and were eventually lost. Hittle agrees with McClellan's assertion that during the war many improvements were made in the administration of the staff departments, but unfortunately only the officers who served in these departments gained valuable expertise, which was lost when they passed away, just as McClellan predicted.¹⁴¹

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC STAFF–JULY 1863, BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, GETTYSBURG CAMPAIGN

The Gettysburg Campaign was the Army of the Potomac's reaction to Robert E. Lee's Pennsylvania Campaign following the Confederate victory at Chancellorsville on 1-4 May 1863.¹⁴² Defeating a Union army, twice its size, infused the Army of Northern Virginia with a sense of invincibility. Lincoln and Hooker had a fundamental disagreement regarding the army's strategic objective. Hooker was in pursuit of Richmond while Lincoln always believed the objective should be the Army of Northern Virginia.¹⁴³ Hooker's actions convinced Lincoln that it was time for a different commander of the Army of the Potomac.¹⁴⁴ Lincoln relieved Hooker and replaced him with Major General George Gordon Meade on 28 June 1863.¹⁴⁵ Meanwhile, the Confederacy vigorously renewed its momentum in an attempt to gain international recognition

¹⁴¹Summarized from George B. McClellan's memoirs by Hittle. Hittle, 193.

¹⁴²Jermann, *Civil War Battlefield Orders Gone Awry*, 124.

¹⁴³Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln. Second Supplement, 1848-1865*, vol. 6 (New Brunswick, ME: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 257.

¹⁴⁴Lincoln accepted Hooker's resignation upon discovering that Hooker ordered his subordinates to disregard an order from General in Chief Henry Halleck. Albert E. Castel and Brooks D. Simpson, *Victors in Blue : How Union Generals Fought the Confederates, Battled Each Other, and Won the Civil War* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2011), 177.

¹⁴⁵President Lincoln attempted to replace Hooker with four other generals who all declined the position. As a result, Hooker remained in command after the humiliating and costly defeat at the Battle of Chancellorsville, where Union casualties were 17,287 of which 5,738 were wounded or missing. The figures listed were compiled and calculated using the work of William Fox in 1889, Thomas Livermore in 1909, and John Bigelow's analysis in 1910. Castel and Simpson; and Ernest B. Furgurson, *Chancellorsville, 1863 : The Souls of the Brave*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Knopf, 1992), 363-365.

from France and Britain.¹⁴⁶ Lee intended to aggressively push north, across the Potomac River, and into Pennsylvania to gain the initiative. An overwhelming victory on northern territory could potentially have a decisive effect and secure the trajectory of the war.¹⁴⁷

In developing his plans, Lee considered the mindset and tendencies of the opposing general, as a critical component of the enemy's capabilities. He therefore estimated that the Army of the Potomac would be in low spirits, with poor confidence, and lack cohesion.¹⁴⁸ Lee's prediction of his enemy's morale proved incorrect, evident in Meade's officers reporting the surprising resilience of their troops.¹⁴⁹ Despite losing the battle at Chancellorsville, the Army of the Potomac inflicted severe casualties on the Army of Northern Virginia, including mortally wounding Stonewall Jackson. The prospect of fighting in Pennsylvania, on Union soil, inspired the men and rejuvenated their spirits.¹⁵⁰ The army demonstrated remarkable speed in its movements, including shifting its base of operations 45 miles in two days, which was a vast improvement over its previous rates of march in 1862.¹⁵¹

Meade graduated from West Point in the class of 1835 and only served one year. During his break in service, he worked as a civil engineer until he returned to the Army in 1842. He served with the United States Army Corps of Topographical Engineers building lighthouses and

¹⁴⁶McPherson, 650-651.

¹⁴⁷Stephen W. Sears, *Gettysburg* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 2003), 15.

¹⁴⁸Sears, *Gettysburg*, 14-15.

¹⁴⁹Officers described the troops' morale as surprising high because the army's extremely low morale following its defeat at Fredericksburg. Sears, 26-28.

¹⁵⁰Bell Irvin Wiley, *The Life of Billy Yank: The Common Soldier of the Union* (repr. Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1971), 283.

¹⁵¹The Army of the Potomac improved the rapidity of its movements to unprecedented speeds compared to other formations on the east coast. The Army of the Potomac moved at an average rate of six miles per day in 1862. In June 1863 it moved over 20 miles per day. Edwin B. Coddington, *The Gettysburg Campaign; a Study in Command* (New York, NY: Scribner's, 1968), 126.

surveying the eastern coastlines.¹⁵² His combat experiences consisted of fighting alongside many of his peers during the Mexican-American War, in Palo Alto, Resaca de la Palma, and Monterrey.¹⁵³ In the American Civil War, he demonstrated reputable competence, with a strong performance record in combat. The army's senior officers respected Meade's intellect, modesty, and proven good judgment, and were pleased with his appointment to replace Hooker. Although known to be clear headed and to exercise common sense in battle, he had a temper and could be extremely blunt, hurtful, and tactless. These traits eventually earned him the nickname of the "damned old goggle-eyed snapping turtle."¹⁵⁴

Meade commanded V Corps under Hooker and served with the Army of the Potomac from the time McClellan commanded it. He commanded units from brigade to corps, before his appointment as the army's commander. His experiences under the leadership of all the army's previous commanders undoubtedly influenced the manner in which he led. He expressed frustration with Hooker's tendency to keep his corps commanders in the dark.¹⁵⁵ Unlike his predecessor, Meade regularly consulted with his subordinate corps commanders and ensured they knew the details and logic behind the army's plan. He also communicated his strategic views and intentions to Halleck from the very day he took command of the army, which facilitated mutual understanding.¹⁵⁶

The organizational structure of the Army of the Potomac's staff did not change significantly from 1862, under McClellan, to July 1863 under Meade. The staff departments

¹⁵²Lyman and Lowe, 5.

¹⁵³Taaffe, 109.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., 110.

¹⁵⁵Sears, *Gettysburg*, 129.

¹⁵⁶Coddington, 221.

mirrored those at the War Department in Washington and continued to develop competence and capabilities through experience and practice. From November 1862 to June 1863, although Lincoln replaced the army's commander three times, most department heads remained in their positions and executed their tasks in accordance with previously issued orders. The chiefs of artillery and cavalry commanded their respective corps, while still fulfilling their advisory roles as staff officers to the commander. Over the course of the year, several departments developed internal capabilities and systems that improved the capacity of the Army, which Meade inherited. The army's staff at the Battle of Gettysburg was essentially Hooker's staff, other than Meade's aides de camp. Meade did not make many significant staff changes to Hooker's staff, because of the imminent battle. Typically, the most significant change to the staff coincided with the arrival of a new commanding general, that of the appointment of a new chief of staff. Meade did not replace Hooker's chief of staff until after the Battle of Gettysburg.

Meade's chief of staff was Major General Daniel Butterfield, who served as Hooker's chief of staff. Hooker utilized Butterfield in the same capacity as McClellan used his Chief of Staff, Randolph Marcy, although he had a more forceful approach, and represented Hooker in direct communications with senior leaders, including President Lincoln.¹⁵⁷ He assisted the commanding general with all matters of communication including official written correspondence, telegram transmission, and authoring orders in line with the general's directives. Hooker demonstrated trust and confidence in Butterfield, which was reflected in his expanded role and contributions to the organizational management and administration of the army.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷Sears, *Gettysburg*, 119; Taaffe, 101; and Butterfield to Lincoln, *OR*, vol. 25, pt. 2, ch. 37, 421-422.

¹⁵⁸Hooker placed Butterfield in command of the army in his absence, even though Hooker's most senior corps commander was officially second in command. Patrick and Sparks, 220-221.

Butterfield continued his duties as Meade's chief of staff in the same manner, however, Meade did not communicate to Lincoln through Butterfield.

Unlike Hooker, numerous senior officers distrusted Butterfield and resented the authority he exercised as chief of staff. Major General Marsena Patrick, the army's provost marshal, stated that Butterfield was "held in universal contempt yet is regarded with more than loathing by those who feel his power."¹⁵⁹ Brigadier General Andrew Humphreys, commander of III Corps' 2nd Division, characterized him as "false, treacherous, and cowardly," which reflected the distrust most corps commanders felt towards Butterfield.¹⁶⁰ It was well known that Meade, as the V Corps commander, did not trust or approve of Butterfield's performance and conduct, and would not have chosen him.¹⁶¹ However, with the critical and time sensitive information on hand, Meade ultimately decided to retain the man who possessed the best knowledge of the disposition, capabilities, and locations of the scattered units of the army.¹⁶² As the army's commander, he worked well with Butterfield and communicated much gratitude for his notable efforts during the Gettysburg campaign.¹⁶³

Meade provided oral instructions to his chief of staff and entrusted him to convey his intent in orders. Depending on the urgency of the orders and their destination, Meade dictated certain instructions to Butterfield to ensure his intent was absolutely clear and unambiguous.¹⁶⁴ Meade continued the practice of the times, where the commanding general served as his own

¹⁵⁹Patrick and Sparks, 2 June 1863.

¹⁶⁰Coddington, 219.

¹⁶¹Ibid.; and Taaffe, 84.

¹⁶²Meade offered the position of chief of staff to the Army of the Potomac's chief engineer, Brigadier General Gouverneur Warren, who not only declined it but also urged Meade to retain Butterfield because of his expertise and knowledge of the army's disposition. Coddington, 327.

¹⁶³Taaffe, 110-111.

¹⁶⁴Coddington, 219.

operations officer. In that respect, the chief of staff served as his assistant operations officer and clarified orders, provided additional guidance, and drafted follow-on instructions during engagements.¹⁶⁵ As Meade's principal operations officer, Butterfield issued specific instructions, which stipulated the conditions regarding unit movements and designated routes to travel, and coordinated support from the army's staff departments. He participated in Meade's formal meetings with the corps commanders, known as councils of war, administered the structure for a deliberate vote on specific issues, and documented the tallied votes.¹⁶⁶ Councils of war are described below in the discussion of the army's operations process. The role of the chief of staff evolved from mainly coordinating outside the army for the commanding general, to include the significant responsibility of coordinating and directing the activities of the staff departments.

Butterfield clearly articulated lines of authority and the impact of poor judgment on the command and control capabilities of the general. On one occasion, he identified and directly addressed a specific decision and follow-on action of the signal corps, made without authority or permission. He vehemently admonished the failure to follow procedures in this independent action and articulated its negative impact on Meade's ability to communicate.¹⁶⁷ This demonstrates the transformation of the role of the chief of staff from primarily serving as the commander's representative, into ensuring the departments understood their role as not only supporting subordinate units, but also their purpose to enable the commanding general to command.

Wounded on 3 July 1863, Butterfield departed the battlefield two days later to recover. Generals Pleasonton and Warren fulfilled the duties of the army's chief of staff for the next few

¹⁶⁵Taaffe, 111.

¹⁶⁶Council Minutes *OR*, vol. 27, ch. 39, 73-74; and Gibbon to Williams, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 29, 127.

¹⁶⁷Sears, *Gettysburg*, 344.

days;¹⁶⁸ however, Warren alone was officially the acting chief of staff.¹⁶⁹ Meade permanently assigned Brigadier General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys as his chief of staff on 8 July 1863.¹⁷⁰ He charged Humphreys with “forming an opinion respecting everything of importance that takes place in the Army.”¹⁷¹ This order marked a significant change in the function of the position, to evaluate problems within the army, with a clear expectation of developing solutions, instead of leaving it entirely up to the commander.

The army’s staff departments remained the same and retained their department heads when Meade took command.¹⁷² Seth Williams remained the army’s assistant adjutant general. The assistant adjutant general’s duties included regulating the army’s manpower, record keeping, managing correspondence and handling military protocol. During battles, however, Williams was heavily involved in transmitting and receiving tactical communications, besides administrative correspondence. He produced clear written orders and authored official correspondence for Meade. Williams wrote the orders to corps and division commanders, and provided specific instructions for each unit’s task and purpose at particular positions on the battle lines.¹⁷³ He copied and distributed orders from the War Department to the respective departments within the Army of the Potomac and drafted orders to subordinate units when applicable. Williams received

¹⁶⁸Coddington, 558.

¹⁶⁹Howard to Warren, Benham and Roeblin to Warren, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 600-601, 606.

¹⁷⁰Humphreys assumed that the position of chief of staff on 9 July 1863. Special Orders No. 183, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 600.

¹⁷¹Henry H. Humphreys, *Andrew Atkinson Humphreys; a Biography* (Philadelphia, PA: The John C. Winston company, 1924), 207.

¹⁷²The departments of the inspector general and judge advocate general are not examined in this case study and remain areas for future research and examination.

¹⁷³General Orders No. 62, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 78.

reports from corps commanders and relayed Meade's responses with succinct instructions.¹⁷⁴ In essence, he performed many of the duties of a modern adjutant.

Other key department heads remained in place, including Gouverneur K. Warren as the chief engineer, Marsena R. Patrick as the provost marshal general, Rufus Ingalls as chief quartermaster, and Henry J. Hunt as the army's artillery chief. Hunt continuously reorganized and refitted the artillery corps, which was not a staff department assigned to the army's headquarters. Its relationship with the commanding general and its consolidated organizational structure resembled that of the cavalry corps. Hunt possessed autonomous and unconstrained tactical command of the army's five brigades of artillery.¹⁷⁵ Meade collaborated with Hunt during battlefield surveys to identify best fields of fire and critical positioning and also routinely confided in and consulted with Warren, a trusted friend who shared an affinity for engineering. Meade inherited the topographical maps compiled over the past years of the war and immediately assessed their deficiencies, especially in areas of Maryland where the army found itself.¹⁷⁶ He subsequently ordered the general staff and his artillery chief to examine the terrain between Little Pipe Creek and Gettysburg to familiarize himself with the road network and topography.¹⁷⁷ The engineer staff produced a terrain sketch based on an extensive examination of the area, which Meade used to draw the position of each corps and distributed copies to all his corps commanders.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴Williams to XII and V Corps Commanders, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 500-503.

¹⁷⁵Sears, *Gettysburg*, 130.

¹⁷⁶Coddington, 330.

¹⁷⁷Having served as a topographical engineer himself, Meade was comfortable with terrain analysis and personally inspected the proposed defenses of his forces. During his inspection, Meade discovered that Culp's Hill was a more advantageous position and personally adjusted the locations of XII Corps and elements of I Corps.

¹⁷⁸Corps commanders obtained maps from local citizens and supplemented the lack of topographical maps with descriptions from citizen guides. Sears, 355.

The Signal Corps Chief, Captain Benjamin F. Fisher, was captured on 17 June 1863, during a reconnaissance mission near Aldie, Virginia.¹⁷⁹ Captain Lemuel B. Norton served as the acting signal chief and supported the army by dispatching observation posts and signal teams to subordinate units, including telegraph teams during the army's movements. Two signal officers were assigned to each corps to specifically enable commanders to communicate on the move. The signal chief, and the signal reserve, remained with the army headquarters to guarantee the communication ability of the commanding general.¹⁸⁰ Meade personally oriented Norton to the army's defensive line and directed him to extend telegraph lines to the corps' specific locations.¹⁸¹ Observation and communication stations established on key terrain, such as Round Top Mountain, enabled immediate reporting of the enemy's movement to the army's headquarters. The signal corps repaired telegraph lines severed during the battle and reestablished lines for the headquarters as it relocated.¹⁸² Signal officers continually accompanied unit and cavalry reconnaissance missions and submitted reports directly to the Bureau of Military Information, which are detailed in the discussion of the army's intelligence operations below.

Much like his predecessors, Meade continued to serve as his own operations officer. He continually assessed the current situation and developed plans based on the information he received from various sources and existing systems within the staff, including intelligence provided by the Bureau of Military Information, established by Hooker. Hooker, like McClellan and Burnside before him, developed his own operational plans with minimal input from the corps commanders and the staff, although he did share his vision and intent with a few trusted

¹⁷⁹Norton General Reports, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 200.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 199-207.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁸²*Ibid.*, 203.

subordinates.¹⁸³ Hooker relied heavily on the bureau's analysis and enemy order battle estimates, which he passed on to Meade.

Meade actively incorporated and applied the experience and perspectives of his corps commanders through formal gatherings known as councils of war. Councils of war, sometimes referred to as councils of generals, enabled the corps commanders to understand fully the current situation and what transpired during operations of the entire army.¹⁸⁴ At these meetings, corps commanders discussed courses of action, tactics, and the details of the battle plan with the commanding general. Select staff members attended the councils of war, which generally included the chief of staff, the assistant adjutant general, and the chief engineer.¹⁸⁵ Meade maintained authority for all battlefield decisions but still sought out the opinions of his subordinate commanders.¹⁸⁶ The discussions and collaborative interactions contributed to building a strong cohesive team of commanders within the army. Meade used councils of war to understand his commanders' thinking as well as inform them of his own thought process and tactical assessments, which proved valuable in generating confidence and trust among his generals.¹⁸⁷ His officers appreciated being consulted during the many war councils, which is evident in their descriptions of events in the *Official Record*.¹⁸⁸ The shared understanding and mutual trust among these officers generated unity of effort. The army's commanders expressed the value of these gatherings and the importance of knowing the planned operations of the entire

¹⁸³Coddington, 329.

¹⁸⁴Butterfield, Minutes of Council, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 73-74.

¹⁸⁵Sears, *Gettysburg*, 93.

¹⁸⁶Taaffe, 119.

¹⁸⁷Gibbon to Williams, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 126-127.

¹⁸⁸Sykes, Newton, Sedgwick, and Pleasonton to Williams, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 123-127.

army as a whole.¹⁸⁹ This was a significant departure from the previous manner in which commanders received individual orders from the commander, specifying their unit's tactical tasks, often with limited knowledge of the precise orders given to other elements.

Meade routinely informed his commanders of the state and safety of the routes and surrounding country in which they were traveling.¹⁹⁰ When possible, he briefed his generals individually on the overall plan and the thought process behind it, and often provided contingency plans for specific leaders in their sectors.¹⁹¹ This reduced instances of needing to reissue orders. In one instance, Meade distributed a dispatch he received from Lincoln, to the corps commanders, including his own response to the president, to ensure they understood his intent and how each corps' tactical actions supported the strategic plan.¹⁹² Examining the official record through the lens of a staff officer indicates a distinct transformation in the content of the army's orders and a deliberate effort to ensure that commanders know and understand the army's entire plan of action.

At times when Meade was unavailable to communicate directly with his commanders, the chief of staff interpreted his wishes and instructed subordinate commanders in the field.¹⁹³ If orders instructed a staff department to support the movement or action of a subordinate unit, the department chiefs reported to the chief of staff or the assistant adjutant general. Meade communicated up and down the chain of command and made a special effort to continuously inform the general in chief in Washington, by relaying information through generals who were

¹⁸⁹The army's commander's described Meade's councils of war in letters submitted as a part of an investigation of Meade's conduct during the Battle of Gettysburg. In March 1864, Hooker loyalists accused Meade of planning to retreat at Gettysburg, which Meade adamantly denied. His officers wrote letters repudiating these allegations and detailed the discussions at Meade's councils of war. *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰Stephen Minot Weld, *War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld, 1861-1865*, 2nd ed. (Boston, MA: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1979), 232.

¹⁹¹Meade to Couch, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 502.

¹⁹²Williams, Circular, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 605.

¹⁹³Sears, *Gettysburg*, 186.

within closer proximity to Washington.¹⁹⁴ The relationship between the Army of the Potomac's commander and the War Department was markedly improved under Meade. He apprised Halleck of his intent and the rationale behind his strategy and orders to the army.¹⁹⁵

Various members of the staff assisted in generating orders, however, the chief of staff and assistant adjutant general published the commander's orders in his name. The most progressive type of order that emerged under Meade at this time was the publication of circulars authored by the assistant adjutant general, which contained the orders for all commanders and staff departments.¹⁹⁶ Meade's circulars provided direction and guidance to subordinate commanders in narrative form. Circulars, like mission type orders, assigned tasks, allocated resources, issued broad guidance, and emphasized the desired results, without detailing the specific actions.¹⁹⁷ The chief of staff and the headquarters staff organized and efficiently managed administrative actions and organizational movements, by carefully plotted routes and start times for the movement of the army.¹⁹⁸ Meade also tasked Butterfield to develop a contingency plan for the army's orderly movement to Washington.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴Meade to Halleck, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 23, 70-71.

¹⁹⁵Meade to Halleck, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 61-64, 67-68, 103-104; and Meade to Couch and French, copies to Halleck, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 514, 518.

¹⁹⁶Williams, Circular, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 458-459.

¹⁹⁷HQDA, ADRP 6-0, 2-4 - 2-5.

¹⁹⁸Sears, *Gettysburg*, 342-345.

¹⁹⁹Meade instructed Butterfield to examine the army's routes back to Washington following the first day of the battle. Butterfield later accused Meade of planning to retreat from Gettysburg as pt. of an effort by several generals to have Meade replaced as the Army of the Potomac's commander. Meade was called to Washington to testify regarding his conduct of the battle and refuted this statement. The written testimony of Meade's subordinate commanders supported Meade's position. This incident is also discussed in footnote 190 of this case study. Meade to Hardie, Williams to Gibbon, Newton, Sedgwick, Slocum, and Sykes, *OR*, vol. 27, pt.1, ch. 39, 123-127.

The headquarters distributed written orders to subordinate elements as well, which Meade demanded occur with the utmost expediency, especially with new orders and circulars. He adamantly expressed the necessity to inform his generals of the plan to provide them with as much time in advance of the operation ahead. Before the Battle of Gettysburg, Meade intended to issue the Pipe Creek circular to his generals on the evening of 30 June 1863; however, the headquarters staff did not complete and publish it until 1 July 1863. He was irate and furiously stated that he “arranged for a plan of battle, and it had taken so long to get the order out that now it was all useless.”²⁰⁰ Meade insisted on immediate distribution of orders and intelligence, which is evident in the subsequent responsiveness and timeliness of orders published by the chief of staff and the assistant adjutant general and documented in the official record.

Staff departments routinely used formal telegraphic correspondence to report forward progress, task completion, and equipment and personnel status. Staff departments reported this information to the assistant adjutant general and the chief of staff. Reports contained critical information for the commander, which informed his subsequent decisions regarding movements, and advised of him of expected rates of march.²⁰¹ Staff department chiefs requested additional information from the chief of staff and the adjutant general regarding the commanding general’s plan of action through formal written requests. These requests for information focused specifically on changes to the commander’s intent and any changes to previously issued orders.²⁰² As the departments reported new information and progress, they simultaneously requested an update to their existing orders based on expired information.

²⁰⁰Sears, *Gettysburg*, 145.

²⁰¹Butterfield to French, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 501-502.

²⁰²Benham to Williams, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 565.

This method of correspondence enabled staff departments to contribute indirectly to the commander's operational plan and resembles the request for information process used by contemporary staffs.²⁰³ Staff department chiefs sent inquiries for the commanding general through the chief of staff and the assistant adjutant general instead of communicating with him directly. Meade also interacted directly with select department chiefs regarding specific tasks including the placement of defenses, positioning of artillery, engineer reconnaissance and battlefield survey, along with the selection of the army's headquarters.²⁰⁴

Meade's plan for the battle of Gettysburg required quick and efficient maneuver, for which he issued his orders as soon as he reached a decision. He directed each corps commander to submit a sketch of their positions, including surrounding roads and the position and estimated strength of the enemy.²⁰⁵ The commander created a common operating picture from the corps commanders' sketches in his headquarters. He sent key officers from his staff to each corps and directed they learn the location of the headquarters, including positions of infantry and artillery, and avenues of approach.²⁰⁶ Meade successfully overcame his inherent tendency to take control of critical tactical situations. Despite having to make such an abrupt change in mindset three days

²⁰³Field Manual (FM) 3-93, *Theater Army Operations*, describes the staff sections involved in answering requests for information submitted by subordinate units and staff elements. The Current Operations and Integration Cell (COIC) manages requests for information process. In addition to handing requests for information, Meade's operations center in the headquarters fulfilled the same responsibilities as a theater army COIC. "The COIC conducts short-range planning, issues orders, and monitors, assesses, collects and processes relevant operational information to produce and disseminate a common operational picture to subordinate elements." Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 3-92, *Theater Army Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 10-4.

²⁰⁴Williams to Benham, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 565.

²⁰⁵George Gordon Meade, "Circular to Corps Commanders, July 2, 1863, 11:00 A.M.," *George Gordon Meade Papers*," The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, http://hsp.org/search/apachesolr_search/George%20Gordon%20Meade (accessed 16 January 2014).

²⁰⁶Williams, Circular, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 27, pt. 3, 487.

before a major battle, Meade remained at the center of operations in his headquarters and relied on his headquarters staff to assist him in commanding the Army of the Potomac.²⁰⁷

By July 1863, the Army of the Potomac possessed a remarkable intelligence gathering capability, established by Hooker under the provost marshal department. The Bureau of Military Information is considered Hooker's greatest contribution to the Union Army and had a lasting impact until the end of the American Civil War.²⁰⁸ Hooker applied the bureau's enemy assessments, which included meaningful conclusions, to formulate a campaign plan to pursue Lee after Chancellorsville.²⁰⁹ Subsequently, the bureau provided insightful analysis and accurate enemy assessments to Meade, who incorporated this into his strategy at Gettysburg.²¹⁰ Colonel George H. Sharpe, deputy provost marshal,²¹¹ headed the bureau that not only gathered and analyzed information, but also transformed the collected information from numerous sources into useful intelligence.²¹² This capability was a significant and progressive leap forward from Pinkerton's activities under McClellan. The bureau's products assisted the army's commanding general in understanding the operational environment and enemy situation.²¹³ It provided input and proposed deliberate actions that reflected the analysis of information. The bureau's intelligence network confirmed and expanded upon the information collected by the cavalry and the signal corps.²¹⁴ This demonstrates improvement in staff integration, which generated useful

²⁰⁷Sears, 245.

²⁰⁸Coddington, 323-325.

²⁰⁹Castel and Simpson. 180.

²¹⁰Sears, *Gettysburg*, 93.

²¹¹General Orders No. 32, *OR*, vol. 25, pt. 2, ch. 37, 167.

²¹²Sharpe Report, *OR*, vol. 25, pt. 2, ch. 37, 189, 332, 528.

²¹³Sears, *Gettysburg*, 129.

²¹⁴Babcock to Sharpe, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 228.

products that reduced the burden of analysis on the commander. Despite the success and accuracy of the bureau, the highest leaders in the Army of the Potomac continued to place greater importance on information from the cavalry, which was a more familiar methodology.²¹⁵

Upon taking command, Meade appeared to be unfamiliar with the full capabilities of the Bureau of Military Information because he planned to utilize the cavalry to attain an estimate of enemy capability. Meade reported to Halleck that although he has not yet received specific information as to Lee's strength and position he is prepared to go forward. He explained his reasons for the intended actions and informed Halleck that he planned to use the cavalry to scout the enemy positions.²¹⁶ Meade helped shape the army's military intelligence operations by immediately reorganizing the cavalry corps. Hooker established the cavalry corps in February 1863 by consolidating the dispersed cavalry from the army's corps and divisions, intending to create a cavalry corps that could operate independently.²¹⁷ Meade expanded upon Hooker's concept, which yielded a cavalry corps of 15,000 men.²¹⁸ He quickly restored Alfred Pleasonton's full range of responsibilities as commander of the cavalry and promoted three officers to command the brigades within the corps.²¹⁹

Meade soon learned the capabilities of the Bureau of Military Information and used it and the cavalry concurrently to formulate and visualize operations. The direct coordination between

²¹⁵Sears, *Gettysburg*, 39.

²¹⁶Sparks, 380.

²¹⁷Hooker's General Order No. 6, 5 February 1863, consolidated the cavalry into a corps as part of the reinstatement of the corps structure and abandoning its organization into grand divisions. General Orders No. 6, *OR*, vol. 25, pt. 2, ch. 37, 51.

²¹⁸Taaffe, 85.

²¹⁹Hooker passed over Pleasonton and appointed Brigadier General George Stoneman to command the cavalry corps on 5 February 1863. Stoneman assumed command on 7 February 1863 as indicated in the official record. General Orders No. 6, *OR*, ser. 1, vol. 25, pt. 2, ch. 37, 51. Meade places three capable officers under Pleasonton's command of the cavalry corps. Special Orders No. 175, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 373.

the cavalry and the Bureau of Military Information is a significant improvement in the intelligence gathering process and capabilities of the staff. It demonstrates a systematic process of utilizing and maximizing resources within the army, and performing analysis of information to produce useful intelligence for the commander. The development of this process removed the burden of deciphering, compiling, and corroborating information from the commander. Unlike McClellan, who hired Allan Pinkerton's detective agency to perform the army's intelligence gathering functions, Hooker and Meade received actual intelligence, as opposed to the raw data and information Pinkerton provided. McClellan separated the cavalry from Pinkerton's missions and only repeated an effort with both to corroborate his own analysis of the information received from numerous sources. By 1863, the Bureau of Military Information integrated information from the cavalry, the provost marshal, and the signal corps.

The signal corps established observation posts and supported the bureau's scouting parties with telegraph capabilities paralleling the regional railroad networks.²²⁰ The contribution of the signal officers is another example of the developing staff integration in the Army of the Potomac staff of 1863. Besides facilitating intelligence gathering, by providing infrastructure to transmit information, signal officers themselves constantly sent messages regarding the enemy's strength and position.²²¹ Although not formally in the bureau, the signal corps contributed to the overall enemy assessment and the processing of information into intelligence.

Once intelligence was provided to the commander, the biggest problem the staff faced was the expedient dissemination of mission critical intelligence. Meade applied the intelligence to his strategy, adjusted his battle plan, and issued new orders or modified existing orders. It was virtually impossible to ensure that everyone concerned would receive the information and

²²⁰Sears, *Gettysburg*, 130.

²²¹*Ibid.*, 118.

associated instructions in time. Often new information from the cavalry and unit scouts reached Meade after he had already published orders. The physical distance and the process itself contributed significantly to this problem. The telegraph capabilities of the signal corps enabled quicker communication but could not completely overcome the constraints imposed by operating across vast distances. These conditions exacerbated the expedient dissemination of the latest intelligence and instructions. To mitigate this, Meade discussed intelligence reports and enemy assessments at his councils of war.

The conventional process of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield was not yet developed.²²² However, the commander summoned Sharpe each day to provide the most up to date intelligence and analysis, as he sketched out his battle plans. Meade and his corps commanders benefited from the bureau's carefully charted order of battle for the Army of Northern Virginia, which proved to be the most accurate enemy assessment and the most critical product for the commander.²²³ Upon receiving vital intelligence from Sharpe, Meade called his subordinate commanders and key department chiefs into council to discuss the plan for the following day.²²⁴ Meade provided the bureau's intelligence to his commanders and informed them of subsequent changes to the plan. It was not considered a routine intelligence update brief as is the practice today; however, the councils developed a shared understanding among the army's most senior leaders, who planned accordingly.

²²²Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 2-0, *Intelligence* defines Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield as a collaborative process, led by the intelligence staff, to assist the commander in understanding all aspects of the operational environment with respect to mission accomplishment. Information includes threat assessment, enemy disposition and strength, and expected enemy courses of action. Headquarters, Department of the Army, ADRP 2-0, *Intelligence* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 1-2.

²²³Taylor and Lyon to Meade, *OR*, vol. 37, pt. 3, ch. 39, 516.

²²⁴Sears, *Gettysburg*, 342.

The Army of the Potomac's logistics capabilities improved significantly from 1862 to 1863 because of the experience and institutional knowledge accumulated during the war. Industrial mechanisms, technological advances, and interpersonal relationships facilitated the accomplishment of monumental logistical tasks during the Gettysburg Campaign. The structure of the logistical staff remained the same and consisted of four supply departments led by the assistant quartermaster general, the commissary general, chief of ordnance, and the surgeon general. These department heads continued to formulate guidance for subordinate units, forecasted and estimated future requirements, and worked diligently to improve the army's capacity. The most evident and significant transformative trend is the inclusion of the logistical staff at the war councils during the battle of Gettysburg.

Major General Rufus Ingalls continued to serve as the assistant quartermaster general of the Army of the Potomac with distinction, and is credited with significant contributions to the army's success at the Battle of Gettysburg. Ingalls corresponded frequently with his counterpart in Washington, Major General Montgomery Meigs, which included detailed comprehensive reports following major battles.²²⁵ Colonel Henry F. Clarke remained the army's commissary general, and Captain Daniel Webster Flagler was appointed chief of ordnance following the battle at Antietam. During the Battle of Gettysburg, however, Lieutenant John R. Edie was the acting chief of ordnance in Flagler's absence. Major Jonathan Letterman continued his impressive service as the army's surgeon general, which was also referred to as the medical director of the Army of the Potomac. Letterman maintained oversight of over 600 medical officers at the Battle of Gettysburg and expanded the capabilities of the ambulance corps, he established under McClellan. Clarke supported Letterman's army-wide effort to treat and feed the wounded by

²²⁵Sears, *Gettysburg*, 342-343.

distributing 30,000 rations to the divisions' field hospitals.²²⁶ While the quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac led the execution of supplying the force, the commanding general was still very much involved in the coordination and arrangement of the supplies, as was the trend in the past. Three days after taking command of the Army of the Potomac, Meade spent the day in Taneytown, Maryland, ensuring the proper arrangement of sustainment and supply prior to the imminent Battle of Gettysburg.²²⁷ The chief of staff also represented the commanding general in the coordination of supplies, especially when additional emphasis was required in Washington.²²⁸

Ingalls coordinated for long-range supplies and replenishment of losses and expenditures through formal requests following major battles. He submitted expenditure reports and supply dispositions directly to Meigs, which were based on requirements ascertained from Meade's operational plan.²²⁹ His reports demonstrate an understanding of Meade's plan of action and the army's movement requirements. He also participated in the councils of war at Gettysburg and discussed supply requirements to support the battle plan, especially important as the army's maneuvers outran its supply lines.²³⁰

Meade supported his staff's continued utilization of the railroad system, which had become a pillar of the Army of the Potomac's supply operations.²³¹ Meade's relationship with Herman Haupt, who headed the USMRR, facilitated the herculean effort to construct and repair rail lines within days, to support the Battle of Gettysburg. Haupt directed the construction of new

²²⁶Letterman General Reports, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 195-199.

²²⁷Meade to Halleck, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 29, 68-69, 114-119; and Smith to Stanton, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 427.

²²⁸Castel and Simpson, 183.

²²⁹Sears, *Gettysburg*, 119.

²³⁰Ingalls to Meigs, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 543.

²³¹Sears, *Gettysburg*, 343.

supply lines over the Western Maryland Railroad and enabled critical transportation of troops, equipment, and supplies.²³² He also assisted Provost Marshal Patrick in examining torpedoes for use by scouts for blowing up bridges and provided plans for temporary bridges.²³³ Meade's personal relationships and alliances spread to the department chiefs of the army's staff. Ingalls, guided by his thorough knowledge of the army's operational plans, crafted his concept of support to match the terrain and objectives of his commander, as evident by his coordination and transportation decisions. The quartermaster department moved bridges by wagons, canal barges, or railroad depending on the routes and destination of the forces. The quartermaster department's staff worked in teams and often marched for long hours over many days, establishing advance supply depots and overseeing the transport of supplies.²³⁴

Despite its perpetual shortage of quartermaster personnel, the department was very successful in capitalizing on the robust railroad systems in the north and incorporated non-quartermaster personnel to execute sustainment and support operations. Ingalls expertly managed and cross-leveled resources across the army. Soldiers in reserve were assigned to fill vacant quartermaster positions or lost manpower. Mule teams decreased in size to provide mules to substitute for horses needed by the artillery.²³⁵ He worked closely with the army's chief of artillery to replenish ammunition, repair or replace wagons, and facilitate the consolidation of broken batteries.²³⁶ The quartermaster department, more than any other, demonstrated consistent staff integration by virtue of the necessity of supply acquisition and distribution. Ingalls

²³²Ingalls to Meigs, Haupt to Stanton, Shoemaker to Stanton, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 472, 494, 511.

²³³Patrick and Sparks, 222.

²³⁴Sears, *Gettysburg*, 131.

²³⁵Benham to Williams, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 565.

²³⁶Butterfield General Orders, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 542.

coordinated with the ordnance department to use vacant ammunition wagons to transport ordnance and equipment gathered from the battlefield, as well as using excess empty wagons, both temporarily and permanently, for other transportation requirements.²³⁷ Ingalls' requests for support reflect the meticulous compilation of battle damage assessments and required replacements, indicating effective transmittal of information within the headquarters and to the necessary departments, for future action.²³⁸

Within the army, the procedures for requisitioning supplies were disseminated in the form of orders published by the headquarters, instead of directly from the quartermaster department. Orders designated the approval authority for requisitions prior to submission to the quartermaster department. Procedures for the acquisition of horses and supplies detailed budgetary considerations and included the availability, prioritization, and time constraints associated with the requisition.²³⁹ Despite the systemic improvements to the army's internal logistical systems, structure and capabilities, the Army of the Potomac depended on the Union's national logistical capabilities and overarching strategic decisions. For example, the Union's Chief of Ordnance, Brigadier General James W. Ripley failed to standardize the rifles throughout the army and issued infantrymen various types of shoulder arms.²⁴⁰ The lack of unit rifle integrity, in some cases down to the battalion level, made it extremely difficult to maintain proper inventories of the different types of ammunition and repair parts. Ripley's administrative policies for the Union's inventory and personal aversion to innovation exacerbated the problem,²⁴¹ which

²³⁷Sears, *Gettysburg*, 355.

²³⁸Ingalls to Meigs, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 503, 524.

²³⁹Williams to Artillery Corps, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 555.

²⁴⁰Schneck to Halleck, Schneck to Ripley, Williams to Artillery Corps, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 29, 293, 315, 555.

²⁴¹Coddington, 253-255.

the army's chief of ordnance and assistant quartermaster general, along with their counterparts in other Union armies, attempted to overcome.

The Army of the Potomac achieved great success at the Battle of Gettysburg under Meade's leadership; however, it was unable to capitalize on the opportunity to destroy the Army of Northern Virginia. Meade made informed decisions based on sound intelligence and accurate enemy assessments, yet his reasoning and decision to delay movement to attack Lee, before he crossed back into Virginia, is debated to this day. He argued that the high casualties, supply shortages, and the disposition of his forces precluded his ability to pursue Lee.

Meade suppressed his natural tendency to take charge in times of crises, delegated responsibilities to competent subordinates, and relied heavily on his staff.²⁴² He routinely consulted with his corps commanders and department heads, which served him well during the campaign and reflected his experience as a corps commander. He valued the perspectives of his commanders and considered them carefully in his own decision making process. Meade anchored his operations process in councils of war, which demonstrated key principles of mission command. He benefitted from the army's Bureau of Military Information, which relieved him from serving as his own intelligence chief. His delegation of tasks and appointment of general staff officers to each corps, while remaining at his headquarters, demonstrated the trust, empowerment, and support he extended to his subordinates. This undoubtedly contributed to the officers of the Army of the Potomac acting with calm, controlled, and disciplined initiative.²⁴³ One of the most significant factors that contributed to Meade's trust in his staff and subordinates

²⁴²Coddington, 254-258.

²⁴³McPherson, 660.

was that he carefully entrusted his most competent and loyal colleagues with critical tactical tasks and that they united behind him.²⁴⁴

The exploitation of technology, including the telegraph and the railroad systems, enabled the army to transport, equip, and concentrate a tremendous force quickly, as well as facilitate vertical and lateral communication. These systems, however, did not drive the necessary operational process and forward planning to enable subsequent actions after the main battle. There was a lack of foresight and strategic planning to achieve the overarching objectives so clearly directed to the Army of the Potomac. Meade offered his resignation upon learning of Lincoln's disappointment in the army's failure to pursue Lee after the battle.²⁴⁵ Halleck diffused the situation immediately and subsequently praised Meade for his efforts at Gettysburg, while consoling him at the same time.²⁴⁶ He explained why Lincoln was so disappointed that the fighting ceased, expressed his confidence in his abilities, and reemphasized Lee's army as the strategic objective.²⁴⁷ Such clarification of the objective should have occurred prior to the battle. The only contingency plan for subsequent action was Meade's directive to Butterfield to examine routes back to Washington, in preparation for a catastrophic failure. He did not develop a plan for follow-on action in case of great success, and therefore neither did his staff. Despite remarkable improvements in the operations process, intelligence, and logistics, there appears to have been a perpetual inability of the commander to internalize the strategic objective of the President.

²⁴⁴Taaffe, 121-122.

²⁴⁵Meade to Halleck, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 93.

²⁴⁶Coddington, 323.

²⁴⁷Halleck to Meade, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 104-105.

ARMY OF THE POTOMAC STAFF–MAY 1864, BATTLE
OF THE WILDERNESS, OVERLAND CAMPAIGN

By the spring of 1864, Union and Confederate armies were led by experienced men who had been involved in this conflict for at least two years. Political appointees no longer filled the highest levels of command and one's performance in battle was recognized through continued assignment of progressing importance. President Lincoln named Grant general in chief to replace Halleck, after Grant demonstrated bold leadership and operational success at Vicksburg and Chattanooga.²⁴⁸ Grant assumed command over all Union armies upon his promotion to lieutenant general, a rank reinstated by Congress for the first time since George Washington.²⁴⁹ Grant visualized the Union strategy quite differently than his predecessor and articulated his intentions in his strategy. He disliked that distinct departments and armies "acted separately and independently, giving the enemy an opportunity often of depleting one command, not pressed, to reinforce another more actively engaged" and stated that he was determined to stop this.²⁵⁰ As such, Grant identified the Army of the Potomac as the centerpiece of the Union's strategy and forcefully ordered Meade's objective to be the Army of Northern Virginia. "Lee's army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, there you will go also."²⁵¹ The Army of the Potomac had no territorial boundaries and did not remain close to Washington. The Overland Campaign, and specifically the Battle of the Wilderness, cut the army's confining ties to Washington and the Potomac River.²⁵²

²⁴⁸Halleck served as general in chief since 1862 but failed to meet the command expectations of the position. Miller, 150.

²⁴⁹McPherson, 718.

²⁵⁰Grant and Long, 364-365.

²⁵¹Grant to Meade, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 828.

²⁵²Bruce Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), 143.

Grant formulated and tested a strategic offensive system that proved successful in the Meridian Expedition, from which he developed his plan for Union operations in 1864.²⁵³ However, he quickly realized that he faced political interference in addition to the constant discourse with Lincoln, Stanton, and Halleck. Therefore, Grant relocated his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac to distance himself from Washington's meddling and remained determined to put an end to political obstacles to military progress.²⁵⁴ Grant's staff consisted of 14 officers, similar in size to a division staff, consisting of his chief of staff, aides-de-camp, military secretaries, assistant adjutant general, and assistant inspector general.²⁵⁵ Grant insisted on selecting each member of his staff, which included regular and volunteer officers with whom Grant had served.²⁵⁶

Major General Ambrose Burnside's XI Corps accompanied the Army of the Potomac as a separate corps and did not fall under Meade's command, which created a divided command structure. Grant moved the XI Corps up to enable the Union army to outnumber Lee's Army of Northern Virginia by nearly two to one.²⁵⁷ The Battle of the Wilderness revolved around the contested route to Richmond, which contained the railroad line to the resource rich Shenandoah

²⁵³Hattaway and Jones, 516.

²⁵⁴Castel and Simpson, 252.

²⁵⁵Brigadier General John A. Rawlins served as Grant's chief of staff. Lieutenant T. S. Bowers served as Grant's assistant adjutant general and Lieutenant Colonel W. L. Duff served as the assistant inspector general. Six other lieutenant colonels served as aides and military secretaries. U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Wilderness Spotsylvania Staff Ride Briefing Book*, 2012, Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Secretary of the Army, <http://www.history.army.mil/StaffRide/wilderness-spotsylvania/wilderness.pdf> (accessed 18 January 2014), 14.

²⁵⁶Grant declined to accept an officer recommended by Lincoln and only selected men he personally knew and who have demonstrated exceptional intelligence, competence, and qualifications. Jones, 191-192.

²⁵⁷Hattaway and Jones, 539.

Valley. Once the army crossed the Rapidan River into the Wilderness, Grant and Meade planned to outmaneuver Lee, turn his right flank, and prevent him from trapping the Union Army.²⁵⁸

The Army of the Potomac, like the majority of the Union's forces, was facing the expiration of three-year enlistments under which most troops entered the service. Their experiences and convictions conflicted with the nation's ongoing need for re-enlistments, especially the battle-hardened veterans whose field-craft and skillful expertise could not be generated quickly. This occurred at the same time the "psychological balance" began to shift because of the long war.²⁵⁹ Despite the abundant manpower in the north, trained and healthy veterans were a valuable resource that became increasingly harder to maintain.²⁶⁰ The government offered financial incentives, which did not yield the expected results; however, furloughs renewed motivation and successfully reinvigorated many veterans' spirits. Ironically, the government failed to realize that "a simple desire to see the job through" was the prevailing reason that drove the war's veterans to re-enlist when they eventually did.²⁶¹ By the end of March 1864, Meade reported to the War Department that 26,767 veterans re-enlisted.²⁶²

Meade had commanded the Army of the Potomac since 28 June 1863 and stayed in command for the remainder of the war. His success at Gettysburg broke the army's pattern of defeat and set him on good footing with the president, his cabinet, and Congress.²⁶³ Grant

²⁵⁸Hattaway and Jones, 539; and Theodore Lyman, *Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865; Letters of Colonel Theodore Lyman from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Freeport, NY: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), 85.

²⁵⁹Gordon C. Rhea, *The Battle of the Wilderness, May 5-6, 1864* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 11, 29-31.

²⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 34.

²⁶¹Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 34-35.

²⁶²*Ibid.*, 35.

²⁶³Meade's inaction immediately following the Battle of Gettysburg infuriated Lincoln and leaders in Washington. Meade offered his resignation on 14 July 1863, upon learning of Lincoln's dissatisfaction,

directed the actions of the Army of the Potomac, although Meade was in command of the army itself. He worked relatively well with Grant despite what may have appeared as an awkward, uncomfortable, and overbearing command relationship. Meade impressed Grant at their first meeting by making the selfless suggestion of being replaced by one of Grant's trusted officers such as Sherman.²⁶⁴ Grant wrote of Meade's offer, "it is men who wait to be selected, and not those who seek, from whom we may always expect the most efficient service." Grant wrote that he already possessed a favorable opinion of Meade from his great victory at Gettysburg. Meade's humble suggestion earned him Grant's utmost respect and set the initial tone for their professional relationship.²⁶⁵ Over the course of the Overland Campaign, however, the relationship was tested numerous times but remained solid. Grant maintained a strategic horizon and perspective, while Meade commanded the army's tactical actions.²⁶⁶

In the months following the Battle of Gettysburg, Meade began appointing new staff officers to replace the remnants of Hooker's staff. By September 1863, his staff officers had been through many battles together and definitely respected him, as they spoke about him with magnanimity.²⁶⁷ Each staff department head had at least two assistant staff officers called aides, and in some cases four or five captains and lieutenants.²⁶⁸ The staff consisted of the same departments, led by department heads that communicated with Meade directly on urgent matters

as documented in the official record in vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 92-93. Halleck immediately clarified his statement of the president's disappointment the same day and subsequently, on 28 July 1863, expressed Lincoln's appreciation for his efforts and Lincoln's confidence in Meade's abilities. Halleck also commended Meade's superior generalship and relayed the government's and the country's gratitude. *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 94, 104-105.

²⁶⁴Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 36.

²⁶⁵Grant and Long, 359.

²⁶⁶Williams, 303.

²⁶⁷Lyman, 12.

²⁶⁸Lyman and Lowe, 128.

and decisions. The chief of staff and assistant adjutant general addressed most routine tasks and administrative issues. The departments continued to mirror the structure of the War Department's staff in Washington. The army's staff departments included the assistant adjutant general, signal corps, assistant quartermaster general, commissary general, chief of ordnance, surgeon general, provost marshal, and chief engineer, as well as the inspector general and judge advocate general.²⁶⁹ The cavalry and artillery chiefs served as critical advisors to the commander as well, but were not organized as staff departments in the headquarters. The cavalry and artillery chiefs commanded their respective corps but performed the staff role of advising the commander and coordinating this essential function across the army. The most important position on the staff was the chief of staff, who served as the commanding general's chief advisor and administrator.

Meade replaced the wounded Butterfield with Humphreys on 8 July 1863, immediately following the Battle of Gettysburg.²⁷⁰ He initially attempted to replace Butterfield, upon taking command of the army, but retained him as chief of staff out of necessity.²⁷¹ Meade trusted and respected Humphreys, which produced a far better relationship between the chief of staff and the army's commander. Meade used Humphreys as a second set of eyes and expected him to manage the administration and organization of the army. While he was away from the command center, Humphreys assessed incoming reports, issued updated orders, coordinated with department heads, and attempted to maintain calm and controlled operations in the headquarters.²⁷² However,

²⁶⁹This case study does not examine the departments of the inspector general and judge advocate general.

²⁷⁰Special Orders No. 183, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 600.

²⁷¹Meade approached Brigadier General Gouverneur K. Warren, his trusted friend, to replace Butterfield, who was Hooker's chief of staff; however, Warren declined the position and advised Meade to retain Butterfield because he was most knowledgeable and best suited to support Meade in command during the imminent battle. Butterfield understood the disposition, movements, and location of all the army's forces, which was critical to Meade's transition into command four days before the Battle of Gettysburg. Taaffe, 111.

²⁷²Rhea, 420-421.

Humphreys did not serve as second in command. Major General John Sedgwick was acting commander in Meade's absence.²⁷³ He instructed Humphreys "to form an opinion respecting everything of importance that takes place in the Army."²⁷⁴ Meade's instructions to Humphreys demonstrate the development of the position of the chief of staff and expansion of the role of this position.

Humphreys' discipline and training strategy had a positive effect on the army's movement and bivouac activities. Grant noted the army's efficiency and expediency of the troops' entrenched defenses and was impressed with their physical strength and endurance.²⁷⁵ The chief of staff was a hard fighter, incredibly intelligent, and the strictest disciplinarian. He instituted drills, training events, and work details, which eliminated idleness in the headquarters.²⁷⁶ Although Humphreys was a very capable engineer and administrator, he did not possess the ability to translate his commander's conceptual vision and intent into clear executable orders.²⁷⁷ At the Wilderness, Humphreys still lacked vital chief of staff experience during critical tactical situations. Directed by the commanding general, he then actively managed the administration of the army, coordinated the activities of the various departments, and disseminated orders to subordinate commanders during battle.²⁷⁸

The staff's key department heads remained in position from 1863 to 1864, and provided the organizational continuity that facilitated the continual development of internal systems and capacity. Brigadier General Seth Williams remained in the position of assistant adjutant general

²⁷³Rhea, 38.

²⁷⁴Humphreys, 207.

²⁷⁵Grant and Long, 409.

²⁷⁶Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 328-329.

²⁷⁷Ibid., 118.

²⁷⁸Humphreys to Hancock, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 48, 410.

and continued to produce clear and concise orders on Meade's behalf. Williams compiled general orders for the commander, which issued regulatory guidance for the various departments on the staff. The orders instructed subordinate commanders regarding leave regulations and transportation of supplies. Meade placed Williams as the approving authority for granting passes for civilian visitors to the Army of the Potomac, which was in stark contrast to Hooker's policy.²⁷⁹ Williams facilitated the removal of wives and family members from the camps of the army.²⁸⁰ He included specific instructions to all departments and subordinate commands with orders that established regulations and procedures for the army. Williams' orders outlined each department's role and responsibilities, demonstrated vital staff integration, and informed commanders of the army's process. He also disseminated War Department orders and associated instructions to the army, detailing the specific implications and requirements of its subordinate units and respective departments.²⁸¹ Williams published special orders, coordinated through the various staff departments, such as the handling and transportation of the wounded.²⁸² He also announced unit commendations in writing, as directed by the commanding general.²⁸³ Williams' primary means of orders distribution was through the telegraph system, maintained by the signal corps, led by Major Benjamin Franklin Fisher.

Fisher returned to the Army of the Potomac after his escape from Confederate captivity.²⁸⁴ He served with the army since the Peninsula Campaign and appointed its signal chief

²⁷⁹General Orders No. 78, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 78-79.

²⁸⁰Special Orders No. 219, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 51.

²⁸¹General Orders No. 83, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 85-87.

²⁸²General Orders No. 78, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 78-79.

²⁸³Williams to Tyler and Kitchings, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 3, ch. 48, 6.

²⁸⁴Fisher was captured near Aldie, Virginia on 17 June 1863 and was sent to the Libby Prison in Richmond. Fisher escaped from prison along with 109 Union prisoners on 9 February 1864 and linked up with Union forces at Williamsburg, eventually returning to the Army of the Potomac and assuming his

in September 1862. He possessed tremendous institutional knowledge and developed many of the improvements in the signal corps' capabilities. The army's signal corps continued to improve its capabilities and operations since the Battle of Gettysburg. Grant commended the skill, organization, and discipline of the army's signal corps and was most impressed with their use of insulated wires.²⁸⁵ This technological development advanced the communications of the army because its leaders embraced the capabilities it provided. The signal corps distributed fully equipped signal teams to each division and corps headquarters, in addition to headquarters of the Army of the Potomac and Grant's headquarters.²⁸⁶ The signal chief coordinated and resourced the required materials and equipment, for the signal corps, especially during the army's movements. The signal corps routinely provided reports to the Bureau of Military Information, for compilation and analysis in the production of intelligence summaries for the commander.²⁸⁷ However, as evident in the official record, by 1864 Humphreys acted upon signal reports now submitted directly to the headquarters.²⁸⁸ Meade directed signal reports be submitted separately, which degraded the level of analysis the bureau conducted as well as staff integration. The bureau continued to receive reports from signal officers but the information was no longer included in the consolidated reports to the commander, as he requested.²⁸⁹ Meade's changes to intelligence

position as its signal chief. Josiah Rhinehart Sypher, *History of the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps* (Lancaster, PA: Elias Barr and Company, 1865), 504-506.; Norton Report, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 1, ch. 39, 200.

²⁸⁵Grant and Long, 409-410.

²⁸⁶Each signal team consisted of a telegraph operator and telegraph instruments operating out of a traveling wagon, supported by two-men details and a mule for each reel of wire. The signal corps assigned operators to specific headquarters and distributed signal equipment wagons throughout the army, which included light poles, wire racks, and support systems. *Ibid.*, 409.

²⁸⁷Babcock to Sharpe, *OR*, vol. 27, pt. 3, ch. 39, 228.

²⁸⁸Humphreys to Sheridan, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 830.

²⁸⁹Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union*, 541.

operations, and specifically the Bureau of Military Information, are detailed in the intelligence discussion below.

Major James Chatham Duane replaced Brigadier General Gouverneur K. Warren as the army's chief engineer, a position he held under McClellan during the Maryland Campaign in 1862. Duane served on the engineer staff under Warren and witnessed the critical contributions of the chief of engineers at Gettysburg. Meade valued engineers and their input to his plan, as demonstrated by his seeking out and assigning engineers to his staff and integrated them into his planning. He directed the engineers to survey, verify, and compile information from scout reports, cavalry reconnaissance, spies, and deserters, and incorporate them into detailed maps to be distributed to the corps, divisions, and brigades. The engineers produced scaled maps of one inch to the mile throughout the winter, in an attempt to alleviate the constant complaint regarding insufficient maps of the area of operations.²⁹⁰ These maps were especially useful to the supply departments, for selecting potential supply depots and possible routes in unfamiliar areas, as well as for the artillery corps' planning.

Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt remained the chief of artillery for the Army of the Potomac and continued to provide guidance to the commanding general. While the chief engineer was a formal member of the headquarters staff, the chief of artillery was not, although he advised the commanding general and performed the function of integrating artillery into the battle plan. Hunt worked very closely with the army's ordnance chief and the Union's ordnance chief in Washington to ensure the correct acquisition of equipment and ammunition.²⁹¹ Meade outlined the duties and responsibilities of the artillery chief, and specifically described the administrative

²⁹⁰Rhea, 33.

²⁹¹Hunt to Ramsey, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 935.

and executive responsibilities of the position, in garrison and in battle.²⁹² He ordered Hunt to implement his instructions for positioning the artillery reserve and described its relationship in supporting the tactical operations of the corps commanders. The chief of artillery and chief engineer provided specialized support to the army's subordinate corps by designating certain assets to each corps with specific capabilities. The chiefs outlined the tasks performed by their detached units and stated the reciprocal responsibilities of the corps receiving support. The chief engineer directed engineer support for the army's corps by assigning a detachment equipped to execute entrenchments for the corps.²⁹³ The chief of artillery directed that artillery battalions from the Fourth New York Foot Artillery Regiment be assigned to each of the army's three corps. Because the regiment was camped with 2nd Corps, Hunt also recommended the appointment of the 2nd Corps' artillery chief to manage their tasks and workload.²⁹⁴

Major General Marsena Patrick remained the army's provost marshal and served in that position since his appointment by McClellan. He continued to focus on security within the army's bases, management of enemy prisoners, and general enforcement of good order and discipline.²⁹⁵ The provost marshal department, under Meade, regulated civilian employees within the army, issued permits for exceptions, and enforced private and public property damage assessment and confiscation. The provost marshal department coordinated with the quartermaster department for the acquisition and storage of non-military civilian property. General Order 17 dated 7 April 1864, details these procedures to the army, and charges the provost marshal to manage the purging of civilian employees and surplus property. It explicitly states the commander's intent to

²⁹²General Orders No. 82, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 84-85.

²⁹³Duane to Corps Commanders, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 829.

²⁹⁴Hunt to Williams, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 829.

²⁹⁵Patrick and Sparks, 362-363.

prepare the army to move and begin active operations, and the lack of authorization to ship certain private and public property.²⁹⁶

The provost marshal also facilitated the removal of non-employed civilians and journalists from the army's camps by revoking permits as directed.²⁹⁷ Colonel George Sharpe, the army's deputy provost marshal, led the Bureau of Military Information, which still fell under Patrick's supervision. Sharpe and the bureau served Meade very well during the Battle of Gettysburg; nevertheless, after several months in command, Meade ordered that the bureau submit reports to the headquarters through Patrick and limited the signal corps' input in these reports as well. Therefore, the commander received two separate reports, which he then reconciled and analyzed with the assistance of his chief of staff.²⁹⁸ Meade's change marked a decline in staff integration and capability, discussed in the intelligence section below.

In April 1864, Meade published General Order 15, in which he ordered significant organizational changes to the duties of the provost marshal department, with weighty emphasis on security capabilities and pioneering tasks, including the assignment of an infantry company to perform guard duty. The order established pioneer teams at the brigade and division levels, as part of their respective provost marshal departments, to facilitate movement by clearing roads and bridges.²⁹⁹ Conspicuously, General Order 15 does not reference the Bureau of Military Information nor mention the provost marshal's role in supporting the army's intelligence operations. General Order 15 referred to paragraph 1 of General Order 81 issued 20 August 1863, which outlines the army's regulatory provisions for submitting correspondence to the

²⁹⁶General Orders No. 17, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 816-817.

²⁹⁷Meade to Grant, *OR*, vol. 40, pt. 2, ch. 52, 582.

²⁹⁸Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union*, 541.

²⁹⁹General Orders No. 15, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 804-806.

headquarters.³⁰⁰ This marks a clear departure from the integrated manner the provost marshal previously contributed to the intelligence gathering and operations processes.³⁰¹

The Army of the Potomac's center of operations remained at Meade's headquarters, where he conducted most of his planning and held councils of war, and from which he published all orders to subordinate commands.³⁰² Grant established his headquarters in the same location and gave Meade orders for the army's movements. Under certain critical circumstances, Grant issued orders directly to Meade's subordinate units.³⁰³ Grant communicated instructions for specific actions directly to Meade to ensure the chain of command was clear and unchanged. Meade quickly disseminated those orders, sometimes within minutes, especially while Grant's headquarters was adjacent to his.³⁰⁴ During Grant's time with the Army of the Potomac, he made a special effort in an attempt to give Meade autonomy and space. Grant explained that he "tried to make General Meade's position as nearly as possible what it would have been had I been in Washington or any other place away from his command."³⁰⁵ Meade certainly appreciated Grant's efforts and lack of interference in the administration of the army and communicated with him

³⁰⁰The *OR* contains the Army of the Potomac's 1863 General Orders 78, 79, 82, 83, and subsequent orders. It appears to be missing General Orders 80 and 81; however, the content of paragraph 1 of General Order No. 81 is detailed in the 1864 General Order No. 15.

³⁰¹The *OR* contains a report submitted by Patrick to Meade on 10 August 1863, replying to Meade's inquiry, explaining the process of supplying newspapers to the Army of the Potomac. In the report, Patrick explains that the provost marshal department followed its standing procedures instituted in June by Hooker, documented in the *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 26-27. It is not surprising that Meade issues an order 10 days later, first establishing correspondence regulations for officers within the provost marshal department, and subsequently further modifying its responsibilities and priorities of work. Special Orders No. 78, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 78-79.

³⁰²Many books and articles about the Army of the Potomac's actions in 1864 until the end of the war depict Grant as the commander and seem to marginalize Meade, if he is mentioned at all.

³⁰³Grant and Long, 359.

³⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 402-403.

³⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 359.

face to face almost daily. Meade received immediate feedback from the general in chief regarding his plans, and Grant personally ensured that Meade understood his intent. Grant listened and adopted Meade's suggestions, and consequently Meade felt relieved from the constant tension, scrutiny, and pressure from Washington.³⁰⁶ In communicating with the Union's other armies, Grant sent staff officers, with his written orders, to ensure the complete understanding of his intent.³⁰⁷

Meade continued to rely on information from his subordinate commanders, most specifically the three corps commanders. He reorganized the Army of the Potomac into three corps commanded by Winfield Scott Hancock, John Sedgwick, and Gouverneur K. Warren. At the Wilderness, Meade received situation reports and updates directly from division commanders, with whom he was very familiar, and accepted their varying methods of communications. He was able to extract vital information from his commanders' updates, without being distracted or overcome by the emotional overtones in the delivery of the message itself.³⁰⁸ Meade continued to hold war councils, which he often expanded to include specific commanders, to discuss the battle plan for the following day. He explained the role of each commander, which was confirmed in written orders disseminated by the assistant adjutant general and the chief of staff.³⁰⁹ These orders included synchronized movement orders and instructions to all corps commanders in one document, which further facilitated their understanding of the army's whole plan.³¹⁰ The headquarters staff issued orders in the afternoon and early evening, which enabled the generals to

³⁰⁶Meade, *Life and Letters of General George Gordon Meade*, 183, 185, 187.

³⁰⁷Grant to Butler, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 904-905.

³⁰⁸Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 66.

³⁰⁹Williams, Circular, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 48, 406-407.

³¹⁰Williams Orders, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 48, 371, 483-484.

read them in preparation for Meade's councils of war held later that night. Meade articulated Grant's strategic guidance at the councils of war, which sometimes included members of Grant's staff and the IX Corps commander, Major General Ambrose Burnside.³¹¹

The proximity of Meade's headquarters to Grant's enabled their staffs' direct interaction and joint execution of reconnaissance tasks, battlefield surveys, and coordination.³¹² The army's staff department heads did not have official counterparts in Grant's headquarters staff. However, for tactical planning purposes and battlefield assessment, the two staffs collaborated face-to-face frequently. Grant's staff integrated its activities with the army's staff and members of subordinate corps staffs, which generated a measure of parallel planning.³¹³ Grant joined Meade on numerous battlefield surveys and visited the army's subordinate units, but did not interfere with Meade's directions to his commanders. On these occasions, the generals and their staffs informally shared opinions about the mission and personal stories, forming professional relationships between the staffs as well as personal friendships.³¹⁴

During the Battle of the Wilderness, Meade continued to apply intelligence and battlefield updates from the field into his subsequent orders. He sent officers to Grant's headquarters at crucial times to keep him well informed.³¹⁵ Grant's guidance to Meade was more prescriptive and detailed than Halleck's, which may be attributed to Grant's directive personality. Halleck's passive tone disappointed and frustrated Lincoln because he often delivered Lincoln's forceful and explicit guidance in the form of suggestions.³¹⁶ During this campaign, Grant clearly

³¹¹Rhea, 265-266.

³¹²Grant and Long, 411.

³¹³Hancock General Report, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 1, ch. 48, 334.

³¹⁴Lyman and Lowe, 170-180.

³¹⁵Catton, *A Stillness at Appamatox*, 64.

³¹⁶Coddington, 85-86.

articulated the army's objective, ensuring the permanent mindset shift from aiming for Richmond to focusing on the Army of Northern Virginia.³¹⁷ Despite Grant's efforts to provide Meade the same autonomy of command he afforded other army commanders, by virtue of their geographical proximity, Grant instructed Meade on issues that appear significantly beneath the level of responsibility of the general in chief.³¹⁸

Meade's operations center, located in his headquarters, was the focal point of information flow, where he developed a keen understanding of the events of the battle. This enabled him to understand the implications and validity of the updates because he viewed them in context and in relation to other information received. He continually assessed the topography and inspected his corps' battle positions, which resulted in new updated orders and instructions to his subordinate commanders. Meade and Grant demonstrated their tactical judgment and quick analytical capabilities, as they processed information mentally, assessed its significance and validity, and made subsequent decisions.³¹⁹

Meade inherited the army's information gathering and intelligence processing systems from his predecessor and did not make many major organizational changes because of the imminent battle at Gettysburg. Meade received information from various sources including the cavalry, signal corps, the provost marshal's Bureau of Military Information, and his subordinate commanders. He communicated with the president, Stanton, and Halleck in Washington and received guidance as well as operational information. Meade read Union and Confederate

³¹⁷Grant to Meade, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 827-829.

³¹⁸Grant issued a short order to Meade with a specific task to the engineers, without explanation or background information. There are no references to previous discussions or communications regarding this task in the official record. Assuming Grant and Meade discussed this in the past, the order resembles one that the commanding general would issue his staff. It is not in line with the strategic concerns of the general in chief and appears as though Grant is micromanaging the Army of the Potomac. *Ibid.*, 918.

³¹⁹Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 89.

newspapers and impressively received Richmond newspapers within 48 hours of publication.³²⁰ Intelligence gathering continued to be one of the most critical functions of the provost marshal, which consisted of collecting published documentation and human intelligence. The provost prisoners, kept in temporary guardhouses, moved with the headquarters as it traveled, until they were exchanged or released on parole.

When Meade took command, the Bureau of Military Information functioned very well and developed the most accurate enemy assessments the Army of the Potomac since its establishment. The bureau operated through teams of spies and many trusted informants it had accumulated over the last year. Sharpe's reports to Meade, documented in the *Official Record*, were superior to all other information.³²¹ They provided the most detailed and relevant information, already corroborated and verified through the army's organic information gathering capabilities. After learning the processes and procedures in place, Meade changed the scope of the bureau's responsibilities and made several critical decisions regarding its priorities of work. The modification of this staff process intended to meet a short-term organizational requirement, but had a negative effect on an existing capability. He restrained the bureau's all-source intelligence activities,³²² which proved essential to the analysis previously provided to the commanding general.³²³ Meade directed the bureau to report only current intelligence from the bureau's sources, which included prisoners, deserters, and its own scouts and spies. This eliminated the direct collaboration between the bureau, signal corps, and cavalry. Meade reverted

³²⁰Lyman and Lowe, 41, 406.

³²¹Sharpe to Humphreys, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 3-4.

³²²All-source intelligence is defined by ADRP 2-0 as "the integration of intelligence and information from all relevant sources in order to analyze situations or conditions that impact operations." It is specifically meant to enhance situational understanding of the operational environment and support the planning process. HQDA, ADRP 2-0, 4-1.

³²³Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union*, 540.

to the same method as McClellan, that of serving as his own intelligence chief, choosing to assimilate and reconcile information from various sources himself, with the help of his chief of staff.³²⁴ Meade and Humphreys directed the cavalry to conduct specific reconnaissance missions to gain additional fidelity for information flowing into the headquarters, which was no longer compiled and analyzed by the Bureau of Military Information. The cavalry was a critical component of the army's intelligence gathering system and relayed specific information regarding the enemy's disposition to the headquarters and the army's commanders.

Meade preferred to use the cavalry as a primary source of information and relied heavily on the cavalry's reconnaissance to determine the enemy's activities. This became even more evident as he reorganized the provost marshal department and limited the scope of the Bureau of Military Information.³²⁵ The cavalry also regularly patrolled the army's picket line and guarded all bases and movements. Grant placed Major General Philip H. Sheridan in command of the Army of the Potomac's cavalry corps, hoping Sheridan would replicate his success and energize Meade's cavalry.³²⁶ Sheridan relentlessly petitioned for the change to his soldiers' mission and convinced Meade to try a new utilization of the cavalry.³²⁷ Sheridan quickly took action to improve the conditions of the cavalry's horses and better defining the scope of the cavalry's mission. He divided the picket line into manageable sections, established cavalry outposts at critical locations for security, and began plans to better utilize his dismounted infantry soldiers.³²⁸ Instead of expanding and maximizing the established capabilities of the bureau, Meade separated

³²⁴Fishel, *The Secret War for the Union*, 540-541.

³²⁵Meade to Halleck, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 82-83.

³²⁶Rhea, 40.

³²⁷Sheridan to Williams, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 909-910.

³²⁸*Ibid.*

the staff departments and eliminated the integration. The official record reveals a new process established under Meade, with the oversight of his chief of staff Humphreys.

Sharpe continued to serve as deputy provost marshal and submitted reports to Humphreys. The chief of staff in turn ordered the cavalry to take action in response to those reports, which he enclosed with the order.³²⁹ Meade and Humphreys rarely mentioned the bureau by name and only referred to the information contained in the intelligence reports. This was significantly different from Hooker's practice of sending Sharpe's reports to the general in chief and crediting the bureau for its valuable work.³³⁰ In the same order, however, Humphreys notifies the commander of the cavalry that he tasked additional staff departments to support the effort, such as the chief engineer providing a map of the attack position. It appears that the chief of staff performed the function of assessing reports and directing subsequent actions to the staff and functional units such as the cavalry, signal corps, and the engineers.³³¹ Sharpe's subsequent reports demonstrated a change in focus and included prisoner status and enemy assessments and disposition garnered mostly from the interrogation of prisoners and deserters.³³² This further demonstrates the degradation in quality products and highlights the lost opportunity for an all-source compilation of input from the signal corps, cavalry corps, newspapers, and prisoners.

In a sense, Meade began to micromanage the bureau and altered the focus and the activities of the provost marshal department, including that of its leaders Patrick and Sharpe. Morale improved when Grant arrived and realized the immense capability of the bureau and that Sharpe was not being used to his fullest potential. Grant reorganized his intelligence capabilities

³²⁹Humphreys to Sheridan, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 830.

³³⁰Sharpe to Williams, *OR*, vol. 25, pt. 2, ch. 37, 528.

³³¹Humphreys to Sheridan, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 829-831.

³³²Sharpe to Humphreys, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 3, ch. 48, 5-6, 45, 80, 184, 209, 292.

in July 1864 and divided the workload between his headquarters and the headquarters of the Army of the Potomac. Sharpe split his time between the two headquarters while the bureau's best intelligence analyst, John C. Babcock, remained with Meade. Sharpe still worked closely with the Army of the Potomac's provost marshal and provided intelligence reports. He also represented the army in Washington where his assessments and conclusions proved correct.³³³ Meade and Grant differed significantly in their approach to how intelligence operations should proceed, which caused additional tension in their relationship, especially as Grant relocated key personnel. Despite claims that Meade thought the bureau was useless and produced information already known by the cavalry, he and Humphreys clearly still applied intelligence and analysis from the bureau's reports.³³⁴ They also shared Sharpe's reports directly with the corps commanders and department heads.

Meade's own changes to the bureau's priorities of work may have eventually contributed to his perception of the uselessness of the bureau in relation to the cavalry. Examining the context and surrounding events of those statements revealed that Meade might have felt his authority and decision-making power usurped by his provost marshal's continued preference for Grant. The unusual command relationship and war fighting arrangement undoubtedly contributed to this escalating tension. Although Meade later lost possession of the capability to Grant, who appreciated the bureau's value and potential, the close proximity of the two headquarters prevented any detrimental effects of the loss.

The tactical success and industrial advances of the Union over the previous two years, improved the overall living conditions for soldiers because the flow of sustenance, forage, and

³³³Lyman and Lowe, 235.

³³⁴Williams to Cavalry Corps, and Humphreys to Sheridan, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 666, 682, 830-831.

ordnance was reliable and well managed.³³⁵ The Army of the Potomac's logistical staff structure did not change and consisted of four supply departments. These departments continued to mirror the War Department's organization in Washington to include the assistant quartermaster general, commissary general, chief of ordnance, and surgeon general. Three of the four department heads were replaced by either their respective assistants or highly capable staff officers. Colonel Henry Clarke served as the army's commissary general for Antietam through Gettysburg and replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Wilson. The Chief of Ordnance, Captain Daniel Webster Flagler, was replaced by the very capable Lieutenant John R. Edie, who also served as acting chief of ordnance at Gettysburg.

Thomas A. McParlin replaced Jonathan Letterman as the Army of the Potomac's surgeon general in 1864. This position was also known as the army's medical director and is referenced in official orders and documents both ways. McParlin served as assistant surgeon general under Letterman since 1862 and possessed the necessary familiarity, competence, and institutional relationships to continue the systems established by Letterman. McParlin executed Letterman's casualty evacuation system efficiently and introduced additional improvements directed by the Union's surgeon general, William A. Hammond.³³⁶ At the Wilderness, McParlin coordinated with Hammond directly and arranged for treatment for 7,000 wounded soldiers at hospitals in Washington, because the required level of care exceeded that of the division field hospitals.³³⁷ McParlin also arranged for the delivery of battlefield medical supplies and rations for 3,000 wounded for seven days, which he coordinated with the quartermaster and commissary departments. McParlin reported the status and scope of this proposal, including the internal staff

³³⁵Hattaway and Jones, 538.

³³⁶Louis C. Duncan, *Experiences of a Medical Officer in 1849*, vol. 48 (Washington, DC: The Association of Military Surgeons of the United States, 1921), 314.

³³⁷McParlin to Williams, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 48, 482.

coordination, followed by a request to authorize corps commanders to collect the remaining wounded in the event the army departs the area. The assistant adjutant general in turn published orders with instructions to the corps commanders regarding specific routes for ambulance and wagon trains, designated railroad stations, as well as ordering the cavalry to provide escort security for these movements.³³⁸

Rufus Ingalls remained in his position of assistant quartermaster general for the Army of the Potomac and known to be the best quartermaster in the Union. He was instrumental in overseeing and supporting all the army's supply departments.³³⁹ Ingalls managed the acquisition, transportation, and delivery of supplies to the army and maintained oversight of the other three supply departments. He provided the commanding general detailed reports of supply expenditures, consumption rates, and allocations to subordinate units.³⁴⁰ Meade used Ingalls' comprehensive analysis to justify the number of troops, wagons, and supplies within the army and to prove that a reduction in the army's transportation wagons was impracticable.³⁴¹ He coordinated directly with Major General Montgomery Meigs, the Union's quartermaster general in Washington, with whom he developed a strong relationship since assuming the position with the army under McClellan. Ingalls continued to coordinate directly with the USMRR for the prioritization and transportation of supplies.³⁴² Ingalls also managed the army's tremendous supply train, which consisted of over 4,000 wagons.³⁴³ He recommended several key

³³⁸McParlin to Williams, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 48, 482.

³³⁹Rhea, 33.

³⁴⁰Ingalls to Williams, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 852-855.

³⁴¹Meade to Ingalls, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 855.

³⁴²Ingalls to McCallum, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 413.

³⁴³U.S. Army Center of Military History, *American Military History* (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1985), 10.

modifications to the army's supply trains, provisions, and allowances, which enabled more efficient land movement and maximized the existing logistical infrastructure. He gradually improved his own system through a series of formal incremental modifications.

Ingalls proposed modifications to General Order 100 published 5 November 1863, and included the same guidance he had recommended the previous year for approval.³⁴⁴ Meade immediately approved the modifications within the purview of his authority and submitted the remaining proposed modifications for approval.³⁴⁵ The assistant adjutant general subsequently published General Order 20 on 20 August 1864, which implemented Ingalls' recommendations.³⁴⁶

During the Battle of the Wilderness, the most critical depots ran along the Rappahannock River. These were the Rappahannock Station and Brandy Station, supplied by the Orange and Alexandria Railroad from Washington and Alexandria respectively.³⁴⁷ The army's supply departments faced many challenges, including the extended distance from Washington and the Potomac River, in conjunction with the span and vulnerability of the railroad lines. The Army of the Potomac operated in areas that did not contain natural resources to sustain the army. All food and forage was transported initially by rail and by water.³⁴⁸ Grant's follow-on strategy included tactical operations far away from the railroad lines upon which the army routinely based its logistical support plan. Ingalls established new supply lines and utilized prepositioned mobile warehouses known as flying depots to provide continuous reinforcements to the army on the

³⁴⁴General Orders No. 100, *OR*, vol. 29, pt. 2, ch. 41, 420-422.

³⁴⁵Meade to Ingalls, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 852.

³⁴⁶General Orders No. 20, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 919-921.

³⁴⁷Ingalls to Meigs, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 48, 353-354, 482.

³⁴⁸Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 246.

move, deep into enemy territory. The primary depot at Brandy Station distributed materials to six flying depots, each with assigned depot officers to manage the supplies.³⁴⁹

The Army of the Potomac's logistical operations improved as a result of experience and the continual development and strengthening of relationships. The theater matured, bringing with it technological improvements in field transportation and supply reforms. The supply departments and field organizations developed exceptional efficiency, as did the national level bureaus supporting them.³⁵⁰ Logistics operations demonstrated the most inter-staff integration and communication in accomplishing required tasks to sustain and support the army. Department chiefs coordinated directly with their national counterparts in Washington and through the Army of the Potomac's chief of staff, assistant adjutant general, and assistant quartermaster general.³⁵¹ These logistical capabilities enabled subordinate commanders to be ready to move and maneuver in the same direction at the same time.

Ingalls maintained a very good relationship with Montgomery Meigs and was selected to replace him as the quartermaster general in Washington. Meigs supported and trusted Ingalls' assessments and filled the requests from the army's supply departments. Meigs understood that requests from Ingalls, for the Army of the Potomac, were supporting Grant's strategic plan and tactical requirements. The official record of correspondence also shows the collaborative and shared understanding achieved between Ingalls and other staff departments.³⁵²

³⁴⁹Ingalls Report, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 1, ch. 48, 278.

³⁵⁰Hagerman describes the efficiency of quartermaster operations in terms of durability, maintenance, and organization. Wagon trains operated as efficiently as mass-production assembly lines. Standard specification of repair parts enabled maintenance on the move and virtually eliminated the need to abandon wagons. The supply departments maximized the use of these advances, which complemented their own developmental experiences. Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare*, 245-246.

³⁵¹Ingalls to Meigs, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 2, ch. 46, 482.

³⁵²Ingalls to Hunt, *OR*, vol. 39, pt. 2, ch. 41, 261.; and Ingalls to Rucker, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 856.

Grant's presence with the Army of the Potomac undoubtedly brought a particular sense of urgency and internal resourcefulness, as well as Washington's enhanced responsiveness. Grant provided specific instructions to Meade concerning the army's supply departments, which Meade immediately conveyed and the department chiefs implemented.³⁵³ This demonstrates the influence Grant exerted on the army's staff operations. Although it appears to border on usurping the authority of the commanding general, it was a glimpse of things to come. Grant earned a reputation for persistently accomplishing his missions without constantly requesting additional supplies and reinforcements. Lincoln respected Grant for planning and executing operations without placing prerequisite demands for reinforcements, unlike many of his peers who not only insisted on reinforcements but also practically refused to move without them.³⁵⁴ Stanton also noted Grant's lack of demands and complaints, evident in his influence over the army to do more with less.³⁵⁵ He lived up to that reputation by directing reductions in artillery and transportation trains within the Army of the Potomac.

Meade transformed the Army of the Potomac's staff into a more professional organization through several key appointees. As Chief of Staff, Humphreys enforced discipline, stressed training, and instilled professionalism in the staff, which arguably added to its overall efficiency and overall functionality. Meade's headquarters atmosphere was starkly different from that of his predecessor, and continued to change after the Battle of Gettysburg. He removed most civilians, wives, and non-military women from within the camps of the army. Meade demanded quick responsiveness from his staff, especially in the dissemination of orders and intelligence to

³⁵³Meade to Grant, *OR*, vol. 33, ch. 45, 889-890.

³⁵⁴Williams, 272.

³⁵⁵Miller, 225.

his commanders. Meade's routine consultation with his corps commanders created a collaborative and communicative environment, attributed to his own experiences as a corps commander.

The Battle of the Wilderness is rarely referred to as a battle between Meade and Lee, but rather between Grant and Lee. This reflects Grant's direction of the battle and the entire campaign, which directly influenced the army's subordinate elements. His influence undoubtedly affected the army's staff as well. Grant directed the operations through Meade and consciously removed himself from the army's command center, in an attempt to enable the commander to command as he saw fit. However, Grant determined he would actively direct the tactical actions of the Army of the Potomac, following the disappointing results of the battle. This undoubtedly changed the subsequent relationship between Meade and Grant.³⁵⁶ Despite the tension that developed between them, Grant and Meade both fostered impressive coordination within their staffs, which increased shared understanding and efficiency in transmitting information. As general in chief, Grant maintained a good relationship and constant communication with Stanton and Halleck, which combined with his reputation, enabled him to shape their decisions.³⁵⁷

The Battle of the Wilderness is considered a tactical defeat for the Union. Despite the tremendous efforts of the staff, "the army had conquered nothing and it possessed not a foot of Virginia soil except the ground on which it actually stood."³⁵⁸ However, Grant accomplished one of his strategic objectives, to pin the Army of Northern Virginia by turning it east.³⁵⁹ Grant demonstrated confidence in Meade by assigning Burnside's IX Corps to the Army of the Potomac on 24 May 1864, after determining that the separate command structure for Burnside's corps was

³⁵⁶Hattaway and Jones, 434.

³⁵⁷Ibid., 519.

³⁵⁸Catton, *A Stillness at Appomattox*, 142.

³⁵⁹Donald J. Stoker, *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 364-366.

detrimental to efficient execution of operations.³⁶⁰ Grant recognized his failure to lead the divided command structure of the Union's forces as effectively as he had hoped. Grant's presence on the battlefield, as general-in-chief, introduced a new method of fighting, that the Army of the Potomac struggled with consistently. Grant forced the execution of continuous battle, pursuing the enemy, driving the Army of the Potomac to engage the Army of the Northern Virginia at Spotsylvania for an additional two weeks.³⁶¹ Battles normally lasted a few days, followed by the withdrawal of both sides only to meet again later.³⁶² Grant broke the pattern established by the commanders of the Army of the Potomac and attempted to instill his personal philosophy of gaining and maintaining the initiative, which was critical to the Union's perseverance and eventually winning the war.

CONCLUSIONS

The Army of the Potomac staff transformed during the civil war, mainly out of necessity and because of the individual experiences of its staff officers and commanders. Staff structure, processes, and capabilities developed and evolved to meet operational requirements, complemented by the improvement and maximization of innovative systems and technologies. The army's staff identified and adapted to emerging wartime conditions, and proved indispensable to the commander's operations process, intelligence production, and logistical capabilities. The initial composition and organization of the staff set the conditions for subsequent development and incremental improvements as the operational requirements changed and increased over time.

McClellan established the army's staff when the Rebellion was only one year old. He was a relatively inexperienced but talented commander with strong leadership and superb

³⁶⁰Special Orders No. 2, *OR*, vol. 36, pt. 3, ch. 48, 169.

³⁶¹Castel and Simpson, 257.

³⁶²Stoker, 366.

organizational and administrative skills. He organized the staff into departments and assigned them specific tasks and responsibilities. His departments became a more purposeful organization, with focused direction, than their national counterparts in the War Department. Staff departments appeared to be working somewhat independently of each other although in close coordination with Union counterparts. This was due, perhaps to the proximity to Washington and its primary task to defend it. Following the Battle of Antietam, the president replaced the army's commander three times in eight months. All three commanders first served as corps commanders, which undoubtedly shaped their leadership and direction to the staff. As the army gained valuable battle experience, the staff developed and strengthened its systems and capabilities. Meade, only in command for four days before Gettysburg, inherited Hooker's entire staff and made minimal changes to its manning and existing systems.

By 1864, as an experienced commander, he implemented changes to the staff's processes and procedures, which improved some capabilities while risking staff integration and efficiency. At this time, the collocation of Grant's headquarters facilitated close interaction with the general in chief's staff. Grant's headquarters staff was mostly involved in the events surrounding the Army of the Potomac and supporting general in chief's information requirements. Grant was physically and operationally detached from Washington and the other Union armies. His efforts remained focused on the operational level instead of the strategic level, which influenced Meade's decision-making, the employment of the staff, and their activities. Meade interacted directly with the general in chief and spent much time planning the army's operations, which left the direction of the headquarters staff to the chief of staff more than at any other time in the army's existence.

The chief of staff position evolved from being primarily a commander's representative with staff oversight to a critical and extremely influential position. Butterfield and Humphreys, under Hooker and Meade respectively, contributed significantly to shaping the organization of the

army and assisted the commander by focusing efforts on administrative, training, and logistical efforts. This freed the commander to concentrate on planning and leading combat operations. In 1862, the chief of staff's primary and most significant role was to represent the commanding general. Marcy met with the secretary of war, the general in chief, and the president, to articulate intent and plan of actions for the commander. He coordinated with War Department staff and supported logistical reinforcement efforts. Marcy advised McClellan because he was a trusted ally but was not as involved with the staff processes. By 1863, the chief of staff had become a powerful presence in the headquarters.

The evidence shows Butterfield driving the staff to complete tasks in a timely manner, including forceful articulation of the consequences of staff failures and the negative impact on the commander's ability to command and make timely decisions. As the commander gained experience with his battle-tested army, Meade formally instructed his chief of staff to develop opinions on all matters within the army. He merged the advisory role and staff oversight, but did not rely on Humphreys to represent him in Washington. The chief of staff's efforts revolved around increasing the efficiency of the headquarters and the army's discipline, organization, and training, and less on coordination or representation of the commanding general to Washington. This was enabled by the proximity of the general in chief's headquarters and the long established relationships between the Army of the Potomac's staff departments and their War Department counterparts.

Several key staff departments contributed to the overall operation and administration of the army and provided continuity and skill that cannot be overstated. Seth Williams served as the army's assistant adjutant general from the time McClellan took command of the army. He supported all four of the army's commanders with competence and professionalism, through the Battle at the Wilderness, and then moved to Grant's staff to serve as his inspector general. His role as the adjutant encompassed far more than the management of human resources of the army.

He authored and published the majority of the army's orders and circulars and enforced many administrative and organizational mandates from the commander. Another officer who provided continuity within the army was Henry J. Hunt, the army's artillery chief in a staff role while also commanding the army's artillery forces. Although he did not lead a separate staff department, Hunt coordinated artillery support for the army, consistently integrated with the efforts of the chief of ordnance, and worked closely with the commanding general to implement the artillery support required for the army's operations. Hunt routinely consulted with the chief of engineers who also advised the commander with terrain analysis and the positioning and construction of defensive fortifications.

Throughout the war, the chief of engineers served as a critical component of the staff, as a key advisor to the commander, and contributed significantly to the commander's assessment of the battlefield. The army's commanders all trusted and respected this valuable capability, which supported combat operations as institutionalized in the United States Military Academy. The engineers enabled the army's operations with general construction and topographic support since its departure from Washington to unfamiliar areas. The most significant innovation within this department occurred in 1862 under McClellan, and created unity of effort among the engineers, which best supported the army's mission requirements. He consolidated the army's topographic engineers and corps of engineers, mirroring the recommendations he made to Washington, finally implemented through congressional legislation in 1863. He also established the army's provost marshal department, signal department, and inspector general department, which also preceded these formal capabilities within the War Department. The progressive staff of the Army of the Potomac illustrates McClellan's talent for organizing an army and set the conditions for continuous progress in the years to come. Three staff capabilities demonstrated the most development and transformation: the operations process, intelligence, and logistics.

The army's commander served in the capacity of his own operations officer, as was the norm, and continued this practice throughout the war. The chief of staff position evolved to serve as the assistant operations officer, supporting the commander by generating orders, receiving reports, and later conducting information analysis. The staff did not participate directly in the commander's planning process, but contributed with important information for the development of battle plans. The type and content of the army's orders evolved as well. In 1862, McClellan issued very specific orders to individual commanders that did not include instructions given to adjacent units. He used informal councils of war, but only sought advice from trusted friends.³⁶³ McClellan's operations process centered on him as was the practice of the time. Meade continued the valuable practice of councils of war and served as his own operations officer as well. Unlike his predecessors, however, he relied heavily on his councils of war, which were significantly more inclusive and included corps commanders, staff department chiefs, and sometimes even division commanders. Under Meade, the headquarters staff published comprehensive circulars and orders that detailed instructions to all corps commanders at once, which enabled each commander to understand his role in relation to the entire plan. They also enabled the staff departments to understand and visualize the entire operational plan, and fulfill their respective roles in supporting it. The best example of this transformative characteristic in the operations process is Meade's dissemination of a directive from the president to the army's corps commanders, which included his own response to Lincoln. It ensured the widespread understanding of the strategic objective, the president's long-term vision, and how the army as a

³⁶³McClellan's distrust of subordinates may be attributed to the underlying political environment and command climate. Unlike subsequent commanders, McClellan had no say in the appointment of his corps commanders, nor did he have the luxury of observing their performance over a long period. He commanded at a time when political appointees were commonplace, as opposed to merit and performance based that precipitated because of several years of war.

whole intended to achieve it. It enabled each commander to better understand his role in accomplishing the army's mission.

Meade worked diligently to create a shared understanding of the current situation and the operational environment and took special measures to ensure his commanders understood his thought process and that he understood their perspectives as well. He actively sought their input and listened to their assessment of the battlefield conditions and enemy disposition. Corps commanders provided narratives of their current situation, estimates of combat power, and status of their forces. They attempted to assess the enemy's strength, any sustained casualties, and observations made during battle. They also submitted sketches of their position, consolidated at the headquarters to create an embryonic version of the common operating picture. During the Battle at the Wilderness, however, Grant's proximity to the headquarters modified the operations process further. He inadvertently reduced Meade's autonomy through his presence as general in chief. Although he provided all orders directly to Meade, who issued them to his corps commanders, under certain circumstances, Grant issued orders directly to the army's subordinate elements and eventually affected other mechanisms such as intelligence processing.

The Army of the Potomac's intelligence gathering and processing systems have transformed dramatically over the course of three years. Each commander utilized these systems differently. McClellan served as his own intelligence chief and became the depository for gathering and evaluating all information from numerous sources, including the cavalry, subordinate units, and the War Department's senior leaders. He was the hub of intelligence production, conducting his own analysis and applying it to his operational planning. Lacking an internal intelligence element within the staff, McClellan hired Allan Pinkerton's detective agency to gather information and assess enemy strength and disposition. He used the cavalry separately, although in a similar capacity; however, there is little evidence that these two entities communicated or systemically coordinated efforts. McClellan had to decipher, corroborate, and

analyze the raw data he received. Pinkerton's calculations were meticulous but the numbers he used were inaccurate because he significantly over-estimated the number of Confederate troops. This seemed to have fueled McClellan's tactical caution by constantly reinforcing his belief that he faced an enemy with a superior number of troops.

Intelligence shaped the operational and tactical decisions of the commanders by formulating their understanding and visualization of the situation. This was complemented by their assessment of the acceptable risk and consequences. McClellan made assumptions about enemy actions by placing himself in the enemy's shoes, such as in the Seven Days Battle. As McClellan conceptualized the enemy's course of action, Pinkerton's inflated numbers corroborated his rationale that the enemy would not be so bold and dare to attack if it did not possess a numerical advantage. He made this assumption because that is how he fought, and that is what it would have taken him to pursue his own enemies, as seen by his persistent requests for reinforcement and refusal to chase Robert E. Lee, while in retreat, until his army was resupplied and reorganized.³⁶⁴ McClellan routinely settled for inaction and opted to wait, based on exaggerated enemy assessments. Meade at times, and even more so Grant, exploited opportunities presented before them. Meade's willingness to accept risk, and Grant's relentless pursuit of the enemy, is credited to their leadership style and personality, but must also be attributed to the correct enemy assessments and superior battlefield intelligence provided by the army's internal intelligence capability.

Hooker's Bureau of Military Information truly transformed the army's intelligence production process and removed this burden from the commander. The results produced assessments that were more accurate and incorporated other resources within the army. The bureau developed a system to compile the army's all-source reporting methods, reconciled

³⁶⁴McPherson, 568.

gathered information, and integrated reports from the cavalry and the signal corps' observation posts. Its products consisted of valuable analysis of enemy actions and disposition. This was a significant improvement to Pinkerton's inflated assessments. The bureau's robust spy network developed relationships within the sympathetic civilian population, which yielded critical details of the enemy's activities. Meade did not modify the bureau's responsibilities or focus until having been in command for a few months. Despite its significant contributions during the Battle of Gettysburg, he reduced the scope of the bureau's tasks to focus mainly on prisoner and deserter interrogations.

Meade reverted to depending more on cavalry reports submitted separately and directly to the headquarters. He also required the separate reporting of the signal corps, which degraded the analytical value of the bureau's report. Meade performed this analysis with the help of his chief of staff and severely degraded the internal intelligence production capabilities within the army staff. Grant took special notice of the bureau's capability and moved Sharpe from the Army of the Potomac's headquarters to his own headquarters. This put a strain on his relationship with Meade. The intelligence processes of the army improved significantly over the course of the war. Unfortunately, instead of building upon existing systems as he did in several other areas, Meade degraded the internal intelligence processing capacity within his staff. The separate reporting procedures enabled the commander to provide the cavalry and signal corps with individual and specific instructions to focus their efforts, however, the onus of analysis once again fell back on the commander. It also reduced integration of his own staff departments, specifically of the signal corps and the provost marshal. Although staff departments continued to share, they complied with the separate submittal procedures. The commander did not benefit from any of the shared understanding his departments attained. It is doubtful that Meade intentionally wanted to eliminate staff integration, especially considering his efforts to always ensure that subordinates understood his intent and the operational plan. He may have been attempting to gain better

understanding of the situation and wanted to analyze the raw data himself. Unfortunately, his change to the bureau's reporting procedures halted information analysis and reduced staff unity of effort.

Logistics support operations and capabilities evolved over the course of the war and improved significantly as the army and its leaders became more seasoned and experienced in combat. Systems developed and adapted out of necessity to support a massive army moving across vast distances and varying terrain. The unsung heroes of the battlefield, as many logisticians often are, were the quartermasters of the Army of the Potomac, known for their effective coordination and remarkable mission accomplishment. In 1862, the army's logistics infrastructure consisted of four supply departments that mirrored those of the War Department. Rufus Ingalls was appointed assistant quartermaster general of the army following the Peninsula Campaign where he established and managed forward supply depots. He maintained oversight of the other three supply departments including the commissary general, ordnance department, and the army's surgeon general. Each department chief coordinated directly with his counterpart in the War Department, while Ingalls often facilitated transportation using the military railroad system and the army's supply trains.

In 1863, three of the four supply department chiefs remained in position and each continued to develop and refine his respective department's capabilities. The army's strong relationship with Herman Haupt enabled the construction and repair of an extended railroad line to support the operations at Gettysburg. Improvements to prepositioning supplies, wagon trains, and ambulance corps enabled expedient delivery of supplies, maximization of organic transportation resources, and increased efficiency to medical evacuation of wounded soldiers. Ingalls continued oversight of all matters of supply within the army and worked closely with the army's corps quartermasters. During the Overland Campaign, the army no longer operated in close proximity to Washington and robust railroad networks. In 1864, three of the four supply

department heads were replaced. The men that filled these positions served as deputies within the staff and possessed institutional knowledge of the army's procedures. Rufus Ingalls remained in his position, adapted the army's wagon trains, resupply procedures, and further integrated the efforts of all supply departments to support the army's operations. The army disseminated these changes in general orders, which included specific guidance to commanders and the staff departments supporting the new supply procedures. Ingalls' longevity and continuity enabled the continual improvement in logistical support to the army and the maximization of resources and infrastructure. His strong and trusted relationships with Meigs, the Union's supply departments, and subordinate quartermasters proved critical to attaining supplies for the army on the move. The commanding general's strengths had an equally positive impact on the staff as well.

Ingalls and Meade endorsed and supported the exploitation of the military railroads. The army's commanders consistently advocated use of the railroads, differed from several of their peers who believed the railroad was too vulnerable, and produced too much risk to operations. Utilizing the railroad system, institutionalized by the army's first commander, became a functional capability that facilitated the operations of the Army of the Potomac until the end of the war. McClellan understood the railroad system and its potential, which contributed to the staff's routine utilization of this capability. The army's subsequent commanders, all whom commanded subordinate units within the Army of the Potomac, were conditioned to depend on the railroads for sustainment, forage, and transportation of troops. Moreover, Meade perpetuated this relationship with the military railroad system. The army exploited the railroad system and integrated it into its logistical support plan of its campaigns, which exemplifies how the impact of the commander's experiences and propensities shape the staff's processes, directly and indirectly. The logistics departments of the Army of the Potomac created and subsequently expanded its structure and capabilities in order to support the large-scale military operations it was executing.

They developed procedures and systems to support its large force while moving and fighting over tremendous distances, never achieved before the American Civil War.

The prolonged duration of the rebellion enabled the national senior leadership of the United States Army to evaluate and eliminate officers who performed poorly. At the onset of the war, political appointees and volunteers were widespread and afforded rank, position, and responsibility beyond their experience and expertise. Officers with military experience developed new skills and exposed both talents and weaknesses that determined their subsequent involvement in the war. Despite the natural attrition and turnover of leadership due to promotion, dismissal for unsatisfactory performance, and battle casualties, the interpersonal networks of the military and political leaders played a significant role in the placement of leaders within the army. Personal and professional alliances continued to lie under the surface of the fabric of the Army of the Potomac and plagued each of its commanders before, during, and after the war. This undoubtedly tainted many of the relationships among junior and senior officers and influenced the army's communication and cooperation.

Much like the army's staff officers, the experiences, predispositions, and biases of the commanding generals shaped the manner in which they led the army, utilized their chief of staff, and directed staff operations. McClellan stated, "Our own experience, and that of other armies, agree in determining the necessity for an efficient and able staff. To obtain this, our staff establishment should be based on correct principles, and extended to be adequate to the necessities of the service, and should include a system of staff and line education."³⁶⁵ The officers of the Army of the Potomac staff never had any formal staff officer training. They served in their appointed positions and performed their duties using skills and experiences attained from previous military service and working in the private sector. Although on-the-job training is one of

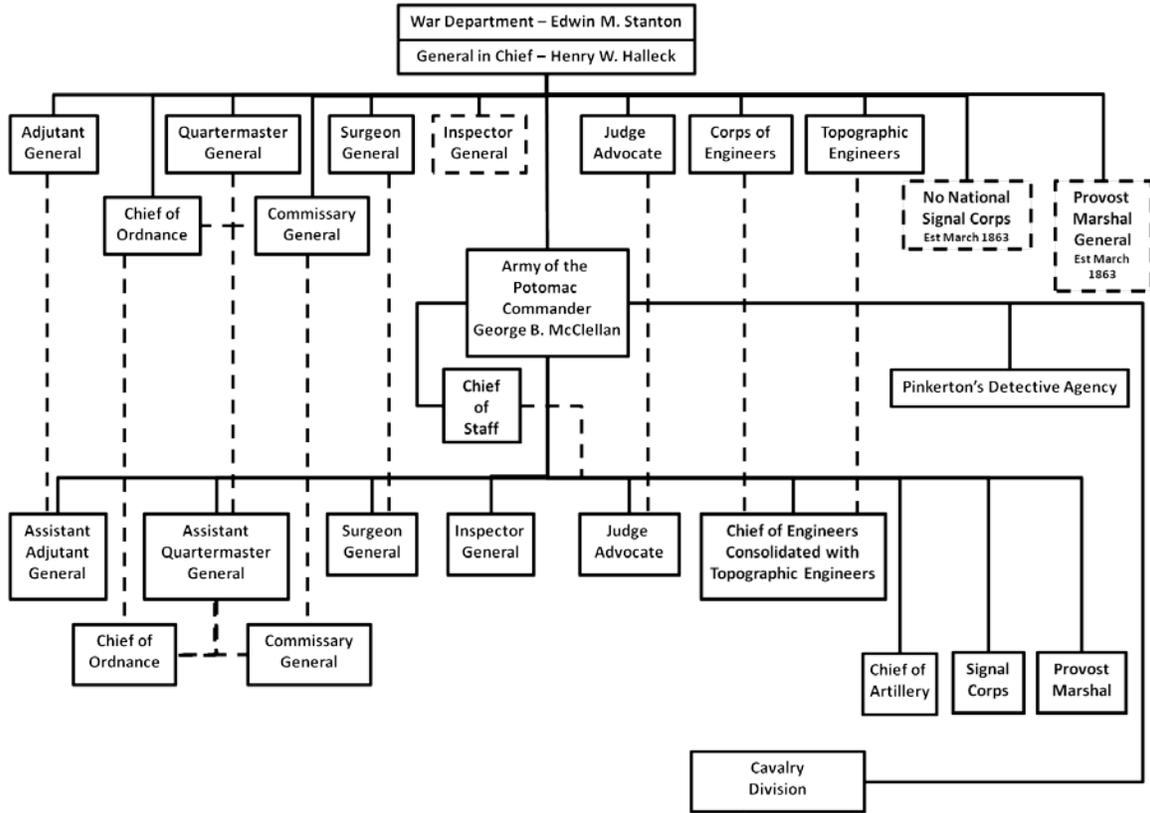
³⁶⁵Quoted from McClellan's unspecified memoirs in Hittle, 193.

the best ways to learn a position, the challenges these officers faced consisted of tasks of a scale never attempted prior to the American Civil War. The transformation of the staff's processes, systems, and overall capabilities demonstrate the inherent value in a versatile, resourceful, and integrated staff to the command of an army.

APPENDIX A: ARMY OF THE POTOMAC STAFF CHARTS

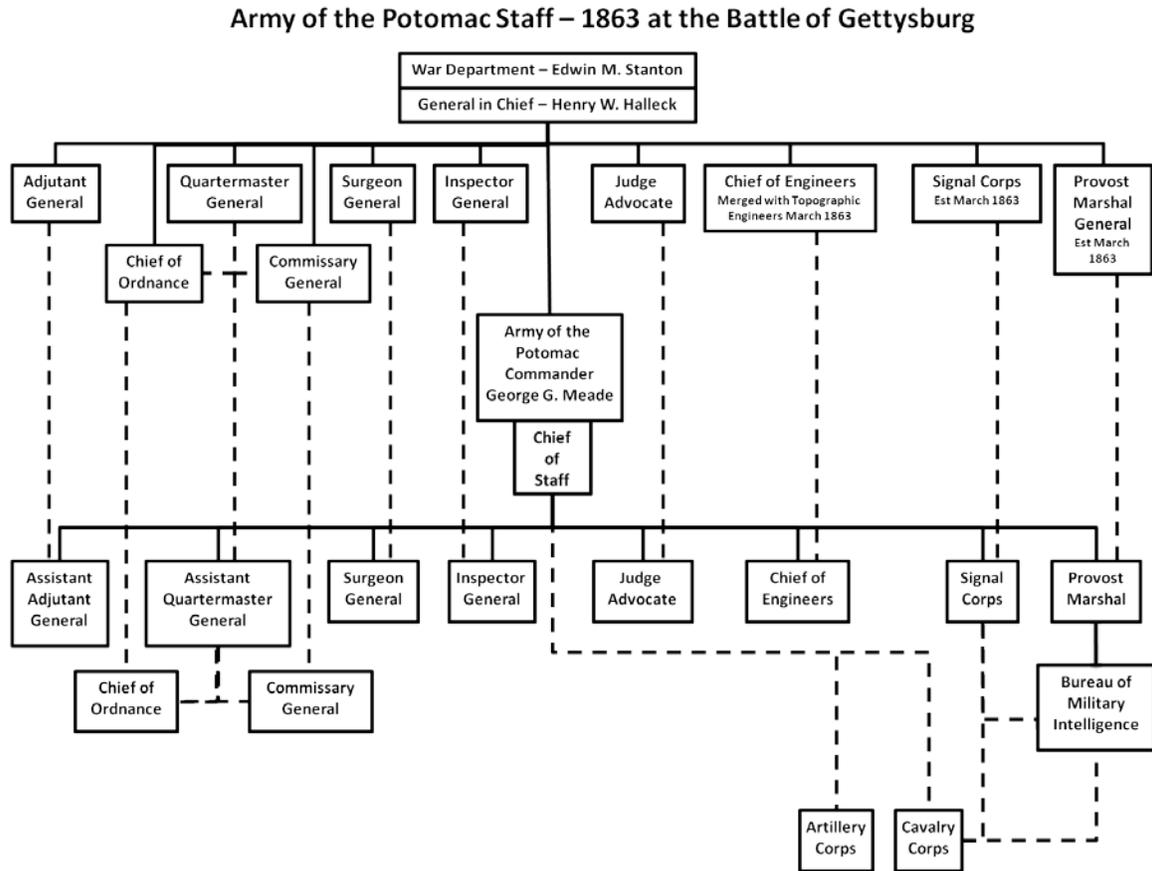
Table 1. Army of the Potomac Staff-September 1862 at the Battle of Antietam

Army of the Potomac Staff – 1862 at the Battle of Antietam



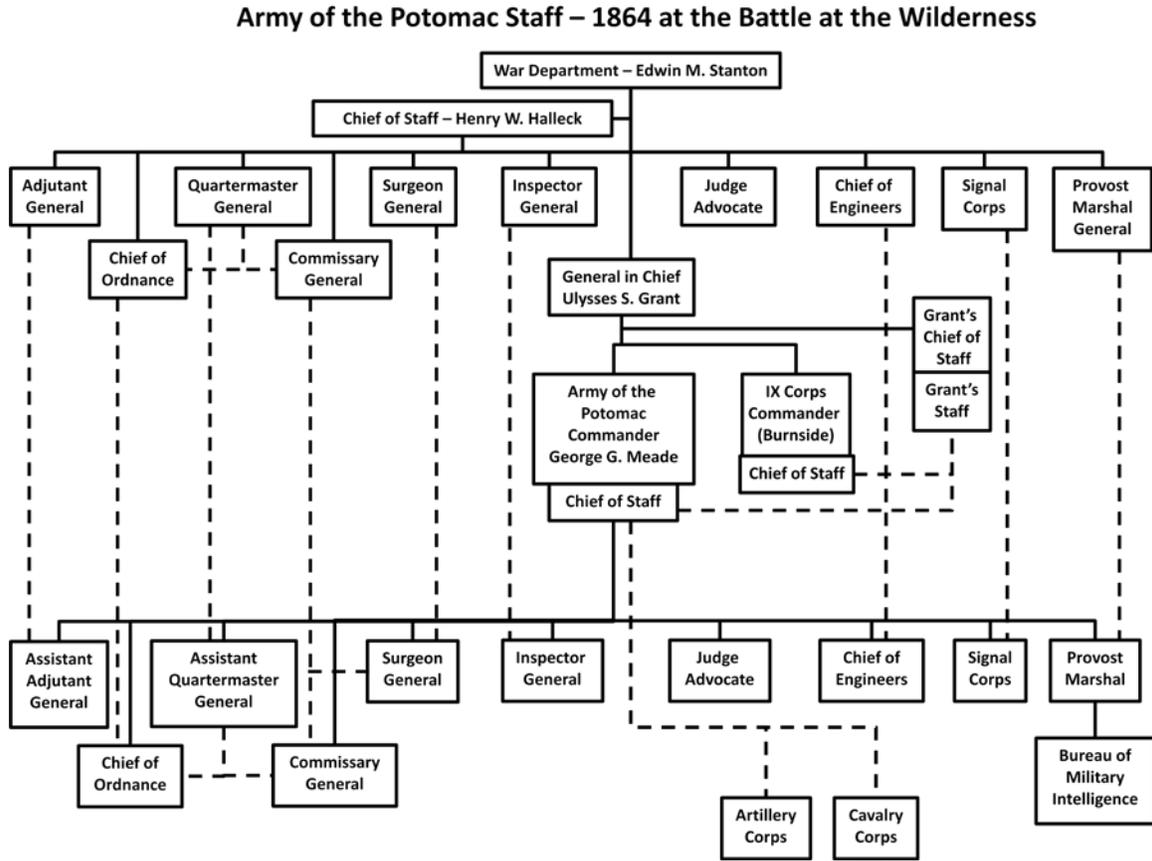
Source: Created by author.

Table 2. Army of the Potomac Staff-July 1863 at the Battle of Gettysburg



Source: Created by author.

Table 3. Army of the Potomac Staff-May 1864 at the Battle at the Wilderness



Source: Created by author.

APPENDIX B: STAFF OFFICERS OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

Position	September 1862	July 1863	May 1864
Commanding General	Major General George B. McClellan	Major General George G. Meade	Major General George G. Meade
Chief of Staff	Major General Randolph Marcy	Major General Daniel Butterfield	Major General Andrew Atkinson Humphreys
Assistant Adjutant General	Brigadier General Seth Williams	Brigadier General Seth Williams	Brigadier General Seth Williams
Engineer	Major James C. Duane	Brigadier General Gouverneur K. Warren	Major James C. Duane
Provost Marshal	Colonel Andrew Porter	Brigadier General Marsena Patrick	Brigadier General Marsena Patrick
Chief of Artillery	Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt	Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt	Brigadier General Henry J. Hunt
Signal Chief	Major Benjamin Fisher	Major Benjamin Fisher (captured) Captain Lemuel Norton *Acting	Major Benjamin Fisher
Assistant Quartermaster General	Lieutenant Colonel Rufus Ingalls	Brigadier General Rufus Ingalls	Brigadier General Rufus Ingalls
Commissary General	Colonel Henry F. Clark	Colonel Henry F. Clark	Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Wilson
Chief of Ordnance	First Lieutenant Thomas G. Baylor	Captain Daniel Webster First Lieutenant John R. Edie * Acting	First Lieutenant John R. Edie
Surgeon General	Major Jonathan Letterman	Major Jonathan Letterman	Doctor Thomas A. McParlin
Inspector General	Brigadier General Delos B. Sacket	Colonel Edmond Schriver	Colonel Edmond Schriver
Judge Advocate General	Colonel Thomas M. Key	Major Edward R. Platt	Major Edward R. Platt

Source: Created by author.

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