

# **The Civil War Experiences of General Quincy Adams Gillmore: The Challenges of Transitioning from the Tactical to the Operational Level of Command**

**A Monograph  
by  
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## Abstract

The Civil War Experiences of General Quincy Adams Gillmore: The Challenges of Transitioning from the Tactical to the Operational Level of Command by MAJ Adam J. Lewis, United States Army, 59 pages.

A leader's transition from the tactical to operational level of command has challenged military commanders throughout history. Some leaders are very successful at making the transition, while others encounter difficulty. Understanding the commonalities and differences in leadership at these two levels of command is helpful toward better preparing our leaders to understand and succeed at both levels.

Union Army General Quincy Adams Gillmore provides an excellent case study for comparison of tactical level versus operational level command. Gillmore experienced success in tactical engagements but was challenged when required to lead a military campaign. Gillmore's 1863 campaign against the Confederates defending Charleston provides an interesting case in operational level leadership, especially when analyzed against his education, military background, and tactical command experiences.

This monograph explores from General Gillmore's early life through to his command of the campaign against Charleston. First, it examines Gillmore's educational background and provides additional context with a brief overview of his military career. Second, it examines two of Gillmore's most significant tactical experiences at Fort Pulaski and the Battle of Somerset. It assesses Gillmore's tactical performances in each of these experiences by answering the following questions: Did General Gillmore accomplish his directed task and purpose? Did he understand the capabilities and intentions of the enemy in relation to the terrain? How did he operate in light of these factors? Third, the monograph analyzes Gillmore's performance in the Charleston campaign. It assesses his performance by determining whether he accomplished the strategic aim. It also assesses his ability to sustain his forces for the duration of the campaign. Additionally, it analyzes his level of creativity during the Charleston campaign. Did he seek to create additional options for his forces? Finally, the monograph searches for links between Gillmore's tactical and operational level experiences.

Although this monograph recognizes General Gillmore's efforts at both Fort Pulaski and Somerset as tactical successes, it questions his overall tactical ability. The monograph finds significant links between Gillmore's tactical and operational level experiences. Broadly stated the monograph finds that Gillmore was unable to account for the increased temporal and geographical aspects associated with command at the operational level. Specifically, Gillmore did not appreciate the increased risk, end state criteria, or expanded logistical factors that accompany command at the operational level. Additionally, he did not possess the creativity required of the operational level commander. The monograph finds that General Gillmore's tactical experiences limited his ability to perform at the operational level of command.

## Table of Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
II. Gillmore's Life and Education .....	11
III. Fort Pulaski.....	16
IV. Battle of Somerset.....	24
V. Charleston Campaign .....	32
VI. Conclusion.....	50
Bibliography.....	57

# I. Introduction

A leader's transition from the tactical to operational level of command has challenged military commanders throughout history. Some leaders are very successful at making the transition, while others encounter difficulty. Understanding the commonalities and differences in leadership at these two levels of command is helpful toward better preparing our leaders to understand and succeed at both levels.

Victory by an individual in tactical engagements does not equate to understanding or success at the operational level. There are different perspectives, required levels of understanding, and challenges associated with each level of command. Tactical success focuses on individual engagements while success at the operational level requires a much broader view. At the operational level of command leaders are required to understand and exercise operational art. A successful operational artist is able to employ military forces to attain strategic goals.<sup>1</sup> These aims are not typically achieved with individual victories. Instead they require the operational level leader to logically integrate military actions simultaneously and sequentially over time. This integration of military activities is commonly referred to as a military campaign.<sup>2</sup> To do this operational level leaders must understand the political and strategic environment as well as tactics. They must understand failure on their part risks more than a single military defeat. Failure risks the entire campaign, potentially making political and strategic aims unachievable. Operational level leaders are often required to cooperate with other military

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations, 17 September 2006 Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), GL-22. As per *JP 3-0*, operational level of war is defined as, "the level of war at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within theaters or other operational areas. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to achieve the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve the operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about and sustain these events."

<sup>2</sup> James Schneider, "Vulcan's Anvil: The American Civil War and the Foundations of Operational Art" (Fort Leavenworth, KS: United States Army Command and General Staff College, 1992), reprinted by Presidio Press, 1994, 36.

services. The operational level commander's battlefield is of greater scale than the tactical level commander. This expansive battlefield requires the operational level leader to possess a broader geographical and temporal view. This difference in scale requires the operational level leader to sustain his forces for the duration of the campaign. At this level logistical considerations go beyond resourcing forces for singular engagements. Commanders at this level are concerned with operational durability.<sup>3</sup> Are one's forces able to sustain combat through multiple simultaneous and sequential engagements over extended time horizons? All of these aspects of operational level of command require one to be forward-thinking and creative. Success for the operational level commander is not dictated by a single victory at a specified place and time. Instead success for the operational level leader is characterized by continually increasing one's advantage over an opponent – limiting the adversary's options while increasing one's own options.<sup>4</sup>

The tactical level leader has different concerns. The tactical level leader typically masses the necessary amount of combat power at a specific place and time to achieve a specific directed effect on the enemy. This is typically in support of a single purpose. Tactical actions are focused on a single point. As a result these actions typically lend themselves more to a scientific approach. They require leaders to be more methodical and less creative than the operational level leader.<sup>5</sup>

Strong performance at the tactical level may not predict success at the operational level. In fact education and tactical experiences can limit an individual's ability to make the transition.<sup>6</sup> Civil War Union Army Major General Quincy Adams Gillmore is an excellent example of a

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<sup>3</sup> Schneider, 35-37, 41-42.

<sup>4</sup> Schneider, 50-60.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *FM 3-90: Tactics* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001) 1-3. The Field Manual defines tactics as "...the employment of units in combat. It includes ordered arrangement and maneuver of units in relation to each other, the terrain and the enemy to translate potential combat power into victorious battles and engagements."

<sup>6</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 75.

nineteenth century leader who enjoyed success in tactical engagements but was challenged when required to command at the operational level.

At the age of twenty, Gillmore was appointed to United States Military Academy at West Point. He graduated in 1849, head of his class and was commissioned as an engineer officer. Prior to the Civil War his most significant area of service was as an engineering instructor at West Point.<sup>7</sup> His mathematical and engineering background would serve him well in the early part of the Civil War. Gillmore performed well at the tactical level of command. In two separate tactical actions during the Civil War, forces under General Gillmore achieved victories for the Union Army. In April 1862, he commanded the forces that caused the surrender of Fort Pulaski, Georgia. This victory closed Savannah as a Confederate blockade running port. It also was the first time rifled artillery was used against masonry forts. This operation was anticipated to take several weeks, but Gillmore's force defeated the Fort within 30 hours. The rifled artillery was very effective against Fort Pulaski, rendering masonry forts almost obsolete from that point forward. Gillmore received praise and honor for the victory. Beginning the siege as only a captain, he finished with the rank of Brigadier General of Volunteers.

Less than one year later Gillmore once again demonstrated ability as a tactician. In March 1863, as a division commander, he attacked and defeated a Confederate raiding party near Somerset, Kentucky. This raiding party, commanded by Confederate General John Pegram, was twice the size of Gillmore's force. The Confederates had occupied a hasty defensive position on Dutton's Hill in hopes of buying time for the removal of cattle they had acquired during their raiding operations. Gillmore attacked and defeated the superior force, driving them back across the Cumberland River and recovering the majority of the cattle the raiding party had acquired.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ezra Warner, *Generals in Blue: Lives of Union Commander*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1964), 167.

<sup>8</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume XXIII, Part 1 Reports (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1890), 167-173.



At this point in his career, General Gillmore was deemed to be a gifted and successful commander in the Union Army.

However, Gillmore did not enjoy this same level of success when required to conduct his own campaign at the operational level. Gillmore was assigned command of the Union Army Southern Department in June 1863, an operational command.<sup>9</sup> His Department consisted of the coastal areas of South Carolina, Georgia, and northern Florida. This appointment was given as a result of his earlier tactical successes and the leadership potential he displayed. During this period the Union was focused on controlling Charleston to prevent Confederate blockade running. Gillmore adopted a campaign which possessed similarities to his tactical experiences. The Union Army would move along a series of sea barrier islands until coming to within an acceptable distance of Fort Sumter. From here the Union forces were to reduce Fort Sumter, allowing for Union naval forces under the command of Rear-Admiral John Dahlgren to move into Charleston harbor and control the city.<sup>10</sup> In Gillmore's mind this was the only available option.<sup>11</sup> To accomplish this mission, Gillmore divided his forces into three components. He directed one division to move inland and cut a critical rail line from Savannah to Charleston, eliminating the potential for reinforcements. He ordered another supporting brigade to perform a deception operation on James Island. The purpose was to give the impression that the Union Army would invest Charleston overland, preventing internal reinforcement of Morris Island. Finally he directed his main force to conduct an amphibious assault and secure a foothold on Morris Island. From there the Union Army would defeat a series of Confederate defensive positions until moving within acceptable range of Fort Sumter. Unfortunately Gillmore's estimate of the

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<sup>9</sup> Stewart Sifaks, *Who Was Who in the Civil War: Volume 1 Who Was Who in the Union* (New York: Facts on File, 1988), 249.

<sup>10</sup> Quincy A. Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston in 1863, Battle and Leaders of the Civil War*, Volume IV, Part I, Grant-Lee Edition (New York: Century, 1884), 55.

<sup>11</sup> Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston in 1863*, 55.

situation was overly optimistic and what he promised would take a short period of time failed. The Confederates did not evacuate Charleston until nearly a year later. Their decision to relinquish the Confederate city was completely independent of any actions taken by Gillmore or the Union Southern Department.<sup>12</sup>

Several authors have analyzed General Gillmore's actions and his results at both the tactical and operational levels. Herbert M. Shiller, provides a detailed description and detailed analysis of Gillmore's tactical performance during the siege Fort Pulaski in 1862. In his work, he points out that initially Gillmore was opposed to bombardment of the Fort from the nearby sea barrier islands. Gillmore advocated cutting Fort Pulaski's lines of communications with Savannah to avoid a "doubtful and expensive" siege operation from neighboring Tybee Island.<sup>13</sup> He also questions Gillmore's ability as a tactician. He argues that Gillmore's initial gun emplacements for the siege were flawed and had to be corrected by subordinate officers.<sup>14</sup> Shiller also addresses the strong effect the rifled guns had on Fort Pulaski and how this led to its quick demise. However, he argues credit for this action does not lie with Gillmore. Shiller maintains that Gillmore's plan did not initially account for the potential effects of rifled artillery. The rapid taking of the Fort was simply good fortune.<sup>15</sup>

Other authors have identified the impact Fort Pulaski had on Gillmore's later career. Milby E. Burton addresses this link in his work, *The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865*. In his book Burton criticizes General Gillmore's actions during the Charleston campaign. The author questions Gillmore's approach to Charleston using the outlying sea islands. He highlights a claim made by Confederate General Beauregard that the Union would select this approach because of

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<sup>12</sup> William Tecumseh Sherman, *Memoirs* (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2000), 646, 673-674.

<sup>13</sup> Herbert M. Shiller, *Sumter is Avenged: The Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1995), 28.

<sup>14</sup> Shiller, 80-82.

<sup>15</sup> Shiller, 99, 134.

their experiences at Fort Pulaski. Burton also emphasizes General Gillmore's initial estimate that he could possess Morris Island in less than one week.<sup>16</sup> Although, Gillmore was able to gain control of a significant portion of the island in a short period of time, it would take more than two months before he controlled all of Morris Island – his initial objective. Finally, Burton discusses Gillmore's failure to act after the Union forces successfully eliminated the cannon threat from Fort Sumter.<sup>17</sup> He highlights the growing tension between Gillmore and the Union navy. He also makes note of an idea Gillmore proposed to Union General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck. In late in 1863, Gillmore advocated a different approach towards Charleston. The approach he submitted required significant resources, and Gillmore's request was denied.<sup>18</sup> Burton also provides interesting insights into General Gillmore's actions at the operational level. He does not address the link between Gillmore as a tactician versus Gillmore as an operational artist, outside of noting Beauregard's conjecture that Gillmore would attack Charleston in a method similar to the one Union Forces had used against Savannah in 1862.

While Burton focused more on the history of the Charleston throughout the war, Stephen Wise provides a narrower, deeper focus on the Charleston campaign in 1863. In his work, *Gate of Hell: Campaign for Charleston Harbor, 1863*, Wise discusses both the strategic and political value of the city of Charleston. He provides strategic context by demonstrating Charleston's value as a seaport, munitions center, and military stronghold.<sup>19</sup> He provides political context by addressing the importance of the city as the symbol of the revolution.<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, Wise maintains that the concept for Gillmore's Charleston campaign was developed by one of his

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<sup>16</sup> Milby E. Burton, *The Siege of Charleston, 1861-1865* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1970), 152.

<sup>17</sup> Burton, 203.

<sup>18</sup> Burton, 206.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen R. Wise, *Gate of Hell: Campaign for Charleston Harbor, 1863*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 1,7.

<sup>20</sup> Wise, 25.

subordinates, Brigadier General Truman Seymour. Seymour had extensive experience in the Union Southern Department as the Chief of Staff and eventually a division commander under General Gillmore.<sup>21</sup>

Like Milby Burton, Wise also addresses the Union decision to approach Charleston via the sea islands. He discusses Beauregard's reference to the logical approach being the landward approach through James Island. He also discusses Beauregard's prediction that the Union forces would approach on Sumter as they had Fort Pulaski in 1862.<sup>22</sup> However, Wise does not argue in support of Beauregard's logic, he merely references it. Wise criticizes Gillmore's action, not because of the selected approach, but because of the way he distributed his forces. He argues if General Gillmore massed his forces on Morris Island and Battery Wagner, Gillmore would have overwhelmed the Confederate defense. Wise claims the science of engineering with exact answers to real problems cannot always be found on the battlefield. He further contends Gillmore's short experience as a division commander in Kentucky did not prepare him for running his own campaign.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, Wise addresses Gillmore's lack of action at the end of the campaign. He points to sickness and Gillmore's depression as contributing to his feeling that the navy should run the gauntlet of Charleston Harbor and attack the city. He maintains because the Federals did not have adequate resources to approach along multiple lines of operation, including James Island, they settled for Morris Island. He credits the tenacious Southern defense with preventing early occupation of Morris Island. Wise argues the two months of stalling before taking Wagner allowed Beauregard to adjust his defenses – completing defensive works on James Island,

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<sup>21</sup> Wise, 26.

<sup>22</sup> Wise, 57.

<sup>23</sup> Wise, 63-64, 211.

reallocating Sumter's cannon to other positions, and fortifying the naval avenues of approach in Charleston Harbor with additional obstacles.<sup>24</sup>

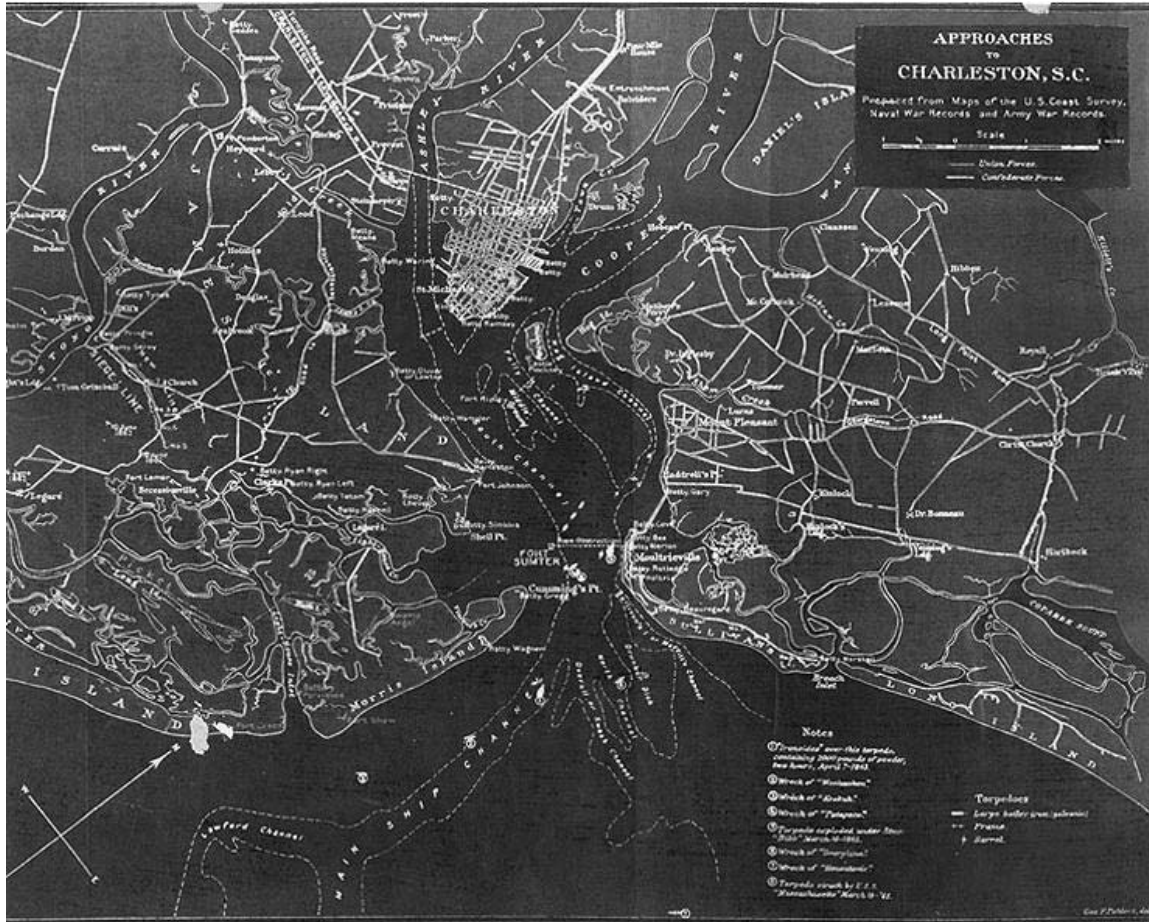


Figure 1: Map of Charleston Harbor and Approaches<sup>25</sup>

Why did General Gillmore, a person who enjoyed success throughout his early career, encounter so much difficulty in what he thought would be a short campaign? Stephen Wise argues Gillmore should have massed his available resources on Morris Island. He contends

<sup>24</sup> Wise, 212.

<sup>25</sup> Naval History and Heritages Command, "Resources and Research," <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/h42000/h42917.jpg> (Accessed February 21, 2011).

conducting a deception operation on James Island and temporarily disrupting the lines of communication at the Edisto railroad bridge robbed the Union Army of valuable manpower costing them the campaign. He maintains this approach might have allowed for the rapid seizure of Morris Island followed shortly by the destruction of Fort Sumter.<sup>26</sup>

This approach may have proved effective; however, further analysis is warranted. For example, the force Gillmore directed to disrupt the rail lines at the Edisto Bridge did not accomplish its mission.<sup>27</sup> Because of this the Confederate Army was able to reinforce Battery Wagner the night prior to Gillmore's July 11 attack.<sup>28</sup> Wise criticizes Gillmore for directing this force to disrupt the rail line, but had this supporting effort been successful Battery Wagner may have fell on July 11. This would have reduced the number of Union Army casualties and bought valuable time. Wise's work provides valuable detail on the engagements and challenges of the Charleston campaign.

This paper will go further in demonstrating the link between Gillmore's efforts during the Charleston campaign and his previous tactical experiences. First, it examines Gillmore's educational background and provides additional context with a brief overview of his military career. Second, it examines two of Gillmore's most significant tactical experiences at Fort Pulaski and the Battle of Somerset. It assesses General Gillmore's tactical performances in each of these experiences by answering the following questions: Did Gillmore accomplish his directed task and purpose? Did he understand the capabilities and intentions of the enemy in relation to the terrain? How did he operate in light of these factors? Third, the paper analyzes Gillmore's

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<sup>26</sup> Wise, 63-64, 211.

<sup>27</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 8.

<sup>28</sup> G.T. Beauregard, *Report of General G.T. Beauregard of the Defence of Charleston* (Richmond: R.M. Smith, 1864), 46; Charles H. Olmstead, *Reminiscences of Service with the First Volunteer Regiment of Georgia, Charleston Harbor, in 1863*, An Address Delivered Before the Georgia Historical Society, March, 3, 1879, (Savannah: J.H. Estill, 1879), 3-4.

performance in the Charleston campaign. It assesses his performance by determining whether he accomplished the strategic aim. It also assesses his ability to sustain his forces for the duration of the campaign. Additionally, it analyzes his level of creativity during the Charleston campaign. Did he seek to create additional options for his forces? Finally, the paper searches for links between Gillmore's tactical and operational level experiences. It does this by determining whether or not Gillmore accounted for the variance in scale when transitioning from the tactical to the operational level. It also explores potential links by examining General Gillmore's creativity as an operational artist juxtaposed against his previous experiences as a tactical level leader. By answering these questions this monograph helps today's military practitioner better understand the transition from tactical to operational level command and the varying challenges associated with the transition.

## II. Gillmore's Life and Education

General Gillmore consistently demonstrated competence at the tactical level. Some of this success is attributable to his early education and military background. Gillmore developed a fondness for the hard sciences at a fairly young age, and he was very successful at applying them. This knowledge and appreciation for the hard sciences would carry over into Gillmore's military officer training and into his military career.<sup>29</sup> Although his tactical engagements were limited, they reinforced this early training and experience and would inform Gillmore's later actions at the operational level.

Born in Lorain, Ohio in 1828, Gillmore originated from a modest rural background.<sup>30</sup> His early education was that of a typical rural child, as he received the majority of his scholastic instruction during the winter season apart from the crop cycles. By the age of 13, Gilmore had advanced beyond what his rural teachers could offer. His parents transferred him to Norwalk Academy, where for one winter he received a more adequate education. This experience also, "inspired him with a longing for something beyond the life of a farm boy." Gillmore began to self educate buying and borrowing books wherever and whenever possible. By the age of seventeen Gillmore had become a country school teacher. He balanced this teaching with summer study at a high school in the town of Elyria, Ohio. At this high school it was noted Gillmore had a high aptitude for mathematics.<sup>31</sup> This would serve him well in his upcoming military career.

He would follow this desire to study and apply mathematics and hard sciences at both the United States Military Academy and into his early career. Gillmore attended West Point beginning in 1845 and graduated at the head of his class in 1849. Because of his success as a

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<sup>29</sup> Sifaks, 249.

<sup>30</sup> Warner, 167.

<sup>31</sup> Whitelaw Reid, *Ohio in the War: Her Statesmen, and Generals, and Soldiers, Volume I: History of the State During the War and the Lives of her Generals* (Cincinnati: Moore, and Wilstach, and Baldwin, 1868), 618. Whitelaw Reid provides the most detailed biographical sketch of Major General Gillmore. His information is based off an unpublished article of the *Cincinnati Times*.



cadet and his aptitude for mathematics, Gillmore was commissioned a second lieutenant in the United States Army Corps of Engineers.<sup>32</sup> In his initial assignment Gillmore served as an engineer at Hampton Roads, Virginia. Following this assignment he was directed to serve as an instructor at the United States Military Academy. He would serve at the Academy for four years, three as an instructor in the engineering department and one as the Academy's treasurer. After this tenure at West Point Gillmore was promoted to first lieutenant and was assigned to New York City as head of the engineering agency. He would remain here until the start of the war.<sup>33</sup>

Gillmore very much enjoyed the engineering practice and tried to shape his initial assignments as ones which allowed for service in this capacity. At the outbreak of the war the Governor of Ohio offered Gillmore command of an infantry regiment of Ohio volunteers. Gillmore did not accept this offer as it did not provide the same opportunities as that of an active army engineer. Instead Gillmore recommended he be given charge of a "brigade of Sappers, Miners, and Pontoniers for service in the Western Armies."<sup>34</sup> The Governor supported Gillmore's request urging President Lincoln to promote Gillmore to Brigadier General of Volunteers. This request was denied by the War Department, and instead First Lieutenant Gillmore was promoted to captain and assigned to the Southern Theater.<sup>35</sup>

Gillmore would serve in this Theater from October 1861 until August 1862. During this time he primarily served as the chief engineering from Major General T.W. Sherman's Southern Expeditionary Force. This would eventually become the Union Department of the South under command of Major General David Hunter. His initial responsibilities entailed reinforcing the Union Headquarters at Hilton Head Island, as well as, performing various reconnaissance

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Mayo Boatner III, *The Civil War Dictionary* (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1921), 343; Reid, 619; Sifakas, 249.

<sup>33</sup> Boatner, 343; Reid, 620; Sifakas, 249.

<sup>34</sup> Reid, 621. A pontonier is one who builds a pontoon bridge.

<sup>35</sup> Boatner, 343; Reid, 620; Sifakas, 249.

missions and environmental assessments for Hunter. However, Captain Gillmore was eventually given command of the siege forces that were directed to reduce Fort Pulaski. He was promoted to Brigadier General of Volunteers as a result of this action.<sup>36</sup>

Gillmore's first significant break from his traditional engineering duties would occur in his next assignment to the Army of the Kentucky. Here he assumed command of the Central District of Kentucky, with a division size element. Gillmore's unit saw limited action during this period, the Battle of Somerset being the only noteworthy engagement. It is important to understand this is the first and only time in Gillmore's career prior to the Charleston campaign where he operated in a fairly dynamic environment. Although he still primarily operated at the tactical level, this environment demanded more rapid decision-making and required more forward thinking on Gillmore's part. This was the first occasion where General Gillmore led forces using offensive maneuver. However, even this experience was limited to only one engagement which with preparation did not last more than a few days. Not long after this engagement, Gillmore was assigned to command the Union Army Tenth Corps and the Union Army Department of the South. It was during this time that General Gillmore organized and led the Charleston Campaign.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of Gillmore's education and early experiences cannot be overstated. He spent four years as a cadet and three years as an instructor under the tutelage of Dennis Mahan. During this time Dennis Mahan published several major works, but two emerge as especially significant. Both a *Treatise on Field Fortifications* (1846) and *Summary of the course of Permanent Fortification and of the Attack and Defense of Permanent Works* (1850), emphasize

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<sup>36</sup> Reid 621-629; Warner 167. Reid's provides a very friendly account of Quincy A. Gillmore's actions as part of the Savannah Campaign.

<sup>37</sup> Boatner, 343; Reid, 629-634; Sifakas, 249.

the difficulty of attacking prepared defenses.<sup>38</sup> Mahan maintains the works must be, “attacked slowly, and with the greatest caution under the cover of entrenchments.”<sup>39</sup> He further advocates the attacking force should be five times greater than the garrisoned defensive force.<sup>40</sup> The impacts of this educational experience are demonstrated throughout Gillmore’s career, in both his tactical and operational experiences.

This brief history demonstrates the limited tactical battle experience Gillmore experienced before he was assigned as commander Tenth Corps. He especially lacked opportunities to lead formations in offensive maneuver. Outside of his command of siege forces at Fort Pulaski and the brief battle of Somerset, the majority of Gillmore’s war experience consisted of improving the Union’s fortifications and securing lines of communication.<sup>41</sup>

Still, it must be recognized that as a staff officer Gillmore personally observed and assisted his commanders in their planning efforts. Although his opportunities to command at the tactical level were limited, he was still afforded the opportunity to participate in the planning of a

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<sup>38</sup> Dennis Hart Mahan, *A Treatise on Field Fortification, containing instructions on the methods of laying out, constructing, defending and attacking Intrenchments, with the General Outlines Also of the Arrangement, the Attack and Defense of Permanent Fortifications*. (New York: Wiley and Putnam, (1846); Dennis Hart Mahan, *Summary of the course of Permanent Fortification and of the Attack and Defense of Permanent Works For the Use of the Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy* (West Point NY: U.S. Military Academy Press, 1850), 371; Dennis Edward, Hagerman, *The American Civil War and the Origins of Modern Warfare* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 6-27. Hagerman maintains that D.H. Mahan advocated maneuver and the active defense as the preferred method of victory and that an open attack of a permanent fortification should only be pursued when surprise is achieved or when turning a flank. He uses the 1863 version of *Permanent Works* to support his argument, maintaining that it was written before the war. However, Mahan’s *Permanent Fortifications* is a sequel to his work *A Treatise on Field Fortification*. Both were published and in use when Gillmore was a cadet or instructor at West Point.

<sup>39</sup> Dennis Hart Mahan, *A Treatise on Field Fortification, containing instructions on the methods of laying out, constructing, defending and attacking Intrenchments, with the General Outlines Also of the Arrangement, the Attack and Defense of Permanent Fortifications*, 135.

<sup>40</sup> Dennis Hart Mahan, *Summary of the course of Permanent Fortification and of the Attack and Defense of Permanent Works For the Use of the Cadets of the U.S. Military Academy*, 371.

<sup>41</sup> Reid, 621, 631. Reid’s work provides the most detail of Gillmore’s experiences outside of Fort Pulaski and the Battle of Somerset. He mentions the sixty days General Gillmore spent improving the Union base at Hilton Head. He also describes Gillmore’s experiences in the Central District of Kentucky as, “...trifling, and the whole campaign – if it could be called so by imposing a name – was inconsequential.”

major campaign. He observed and assisted Sherman in planning and executing the Union campaign against Savannah.<sup>42</sup> It was during this campaign where he received his first opportunity to lead a tactical engagement.

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<sup>42</sup> Shiller, 28. Shiller quotes then Captain Gillmore directly in primary source material Shiller obtained from Gustavas Vasa Fox. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 1, 193-195, 217, 219-220. The report, dated December 1, 1861, is given by Captain Gillmore and details the potential for Tybee Island as an approach for the investment of Fort Pulaski. The subsequent reports are dated January 4 and 20 1862 and are from General T.W. Sherman to the United States Army Adjutant General offering the bypass of Fort Pulaski and a direct approach of Savannah as a potential option.

### III. Fort Pulaski

Gillmore's first significant tactical experience occurred at Fort Pulaski, near Savannah, Georgia, about one year into the war. From a broad perspective, Captain Gillmore performed exceptionally well during the campaign and specifically, the siege of Fort Pulaski. He played a key role in selecting Tybee Island as the location for the bombardment of the Fort. He also recommended the use of rifled guns at extended distances to reduce the Fort. This was critical to the rapid reduction of Pulaski.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, Gillmore selected the site and emplaced a Union battery that isolated the Fort for the duration of the campaign.<sup>44</sup> Finally, he planned and led the bombardment of Fort Pulaski, forcing the Confederates to acquiesce within 30 hours.<sup>45</sup>

In the fall of 1861 a joint force of Union Army and Navy departed Hampton Roads, Virginia initiating the Union invasion of the South. This task force's objective was to secure two ports along the Confederate coast to sustain the Union blockading fleet. The commander of the army and navy forces were General Thomas W. Sherman and Rear-Admiral Samuel F. Du Pont, respectively. The commander's were given leeway to determine which sea ports were feasible for securing and acceptable for the navy's demands. They settled on Port Royal, South Carolina and Fernandina, Florida as their two objectives.<sup>46</sup> The first objective, Port Royal, fell rapidly.

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<sup>43</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 195.

<sup>44</sup> Gillmore, Siege of Fort Pulaski, *Battle and Leaders of the Civil War*, Volume II, Part I, Grant-Lee Edition (New York: Century, 1884),5-6; Charles H. Olmstead, Fort Pulaski, *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 1, no. 1(March), 101.

<sup>45</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 159.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas W. Sherman, U.S. Army Generals' Report of Civil War Service, 1864-1887, vol. 10 (microfilm), p. 46-47. The original plan called for Bulls Bay, South Carolina and Fernandina, Florida but the decision was amended because the Union naval component was larger than anticipated. Port Royal was the ideal objective but was originally tabled because of an assumption lack of available combat power; Charles H. Olmstead, "Fort Pulaski," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, March 1917, vol. 1, no. 1, 101. Charles H. Olmstead, commander of Fort Pulaski during the siege, states that the Confederates had realized it unrealistic to maintain many of the sea islands after the fall of Port Royal. Tybee Island was one of the sea islands that was abandoned at that time.

This was mostly a result of Union navy efforts. At this point two significant occurrences forced the Union to reevaluate their plan. First, the Fernandina expedition was delayed because troops earmarked for that expedition had been committed to securing Port Royal. Second, as a result of the fall of Port Royal, the Confederate forces abandoned all coastal positions between Charleston and Savannah, creating unopposed avenues of approach for the Union forces. This presented the Union with the possibility of seizing Savannah, Georgia. To do this they had to deal with the cities outlying coastal Fort, Fort Pulaski.<sup>47</sup>

In his article, "Siege and Capture of Fort Pulaski," Quincy Gillmore describes the Fort as isolated. It was positioned on Cockspur Island in the middle of the Savannah River. Most of the surrounding terrain was marshy. The Fort had deep channels of water on both sides. The nearest overland approach was one to two miles away.<sup>48</sup> The walls of the Fort were "seven and a half feet thick, and twenty-five feet high."<sup>49</sup> The Confederate leadership felt because of the make-up of the Fort and the surrounding terrain "siege operations against it were almost impracticable."<sup>50</sup>

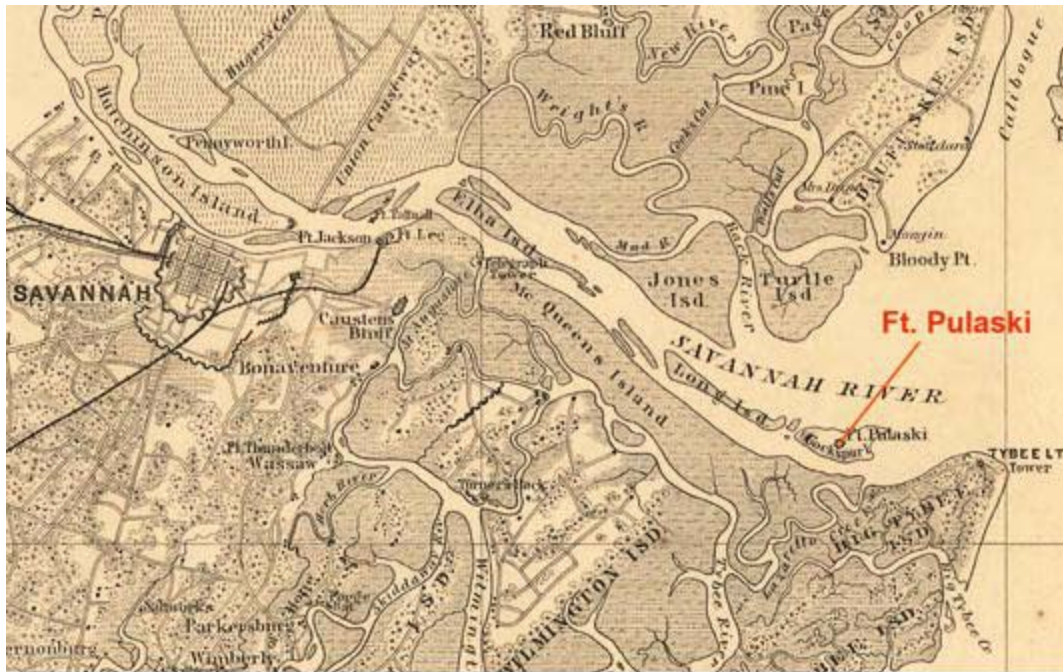
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<sup>47</sup> Thomas W. Sherman, 217, 219-220, 225. General T.W. Sherman strongly desired to seize Savannah by either by surprise or with overwhelming force. He wanted to reduce Pulaski only if he first had Savannah. He never had the conditions necessary for either approach and based off guidance from General McClelland had to settle for the Pulaski first approach.

<sup>48</sup> Gillmore, *Siege and Capture of Fort Pulaski*, 1.

<sup>49</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862* (New York: D Van Nostrand, 1862), 9.

<sup>50</sup> Gillmore, *Siege and Capture of Fort Pulaski*, 1.



**Figure 2: Map of Fort Pulaski and the Surrounding Area<sup>51</sup>**

In late November 1861 Sherman assigned Gillmore to conduct a reconnaissance of Tybee Island and Fort Pulaski. He also directed him to determine the potential for holding Tybee Island, reducing Fort Pulaski from that location, and if practicable the best method to accomplish this.<sup>52</sup> As a result of his reconnaissance, Gillmore deemed the course of action feasible. He recommended the western half of Tybee Island be used to establish batteries of both mortars and rifled guns to reduce Fort Pulaski. He provided a very detailed description on exactly how the weapons should be employed. He also identified the increasing risk of Southern forces seizing the western portion of Tybee Island before Union forces were able to occupy the terrain.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> GeorgiaInfo, "Georgia Studies Images," <http://georgiainfo.galileo.usg.edu/gastudiesimages/Fort%20Pulaski%20Map.htm>, (accessed February 23, 2011).

<sup>52</sup> Gillmore, *Siege and Capture of Fort Pulaski*, 2.

<sup>53</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 195.

Sherman concurred with Gillmore's report and forwarded it to the Union Army Adjutant General. Sherman's only reservation was the use of rifled artillery at the distances Gillmore had recommended. He felt the rifled guns should be substituted with larger columbiads until the rifled guns were further tested at that distance.<sup>54</sup> Following this report, Sherman directed the 48<sup>th</sup> Regiment of New York to occupy Tybee Island.<sup>55</sup> Now the Union Army only awaited the resources to conduct the operation.<sup>56</sup>

In mid-January General Sherman directed operations to further isolate Fort Pulaski and sever its lines of communication with Savannah.<sup>57</sup> Gillmore as chief engineer was responsible for a portion of this operation. He led a reconnaissance of Jones Island and selected Venus Point as a point for construction of siege batteries. In early February he began construction of a causeway from Danfurskie Island to the battery. Because of the marshy conditions vicinity Venus Point, Gillmore's force had to build the firing position using sandbags and planks transported over a self-made dike.<sup>58</sup> The battery, consisting of six siege guns, was completed by February 12 and immediately had an impact on vessels transiting the Savannah River.<sup>59</sup>

On February 19, Gillmore was ordered to Tybee Island to improve the defenses and begin operations in preparation for the bombardment of Fort Pulaski. He was officially given command of the troops on Tybee Island on February 29. His command consisted of two infantry regiments,

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<sup>54</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume 6, 195.

<sup>55</sup> Quincy A. Gillmore, U.S. Army General's Report of Civil War Service, 1864-1887, vol. 9 (microfilm), p. 547; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume 6, 196.

<sup>56</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 11.

<sup>58</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 13, 16.

<sup>59</sup> Gillmore, U.S. Army General's Report of Service, 549; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Volume 6, 229.



two companies of engineers, and two companies of artillery. His initial tasks were to isolate and be prepared to reduce Fort Pulaski.<sup>60</sup> Gillmore completed construction of eleven batteries comprised of heavy mortars, columbiads, rifled guns, and siege mortars on April 9. Their distances from Fort Pulaski ranged from 1650 to 3400 yards.<sup>61</sup> In General Order Number 17, Gillmore assigned each battery specific targets on the objective, as well as, types of fuses, and rates of fire. He specifically tasked the rifled artillery with engaging the south and south-east walls of Fort Pulaski to create a breach.<sup>62</sup>

Gillmore initiated the bombardment of Fort Pulaski on the morning of April 10. By that afternoon two things were apparent. The majority of the mortar fire was ineffective, but “the rifled projectiles were doing excellent service.”<sup>63</sup> Gillmore’s force continued to fire throughout the day and intermittently that evening. The following morning, April 11, all batteries resumed firing. By 2:00 pm the engagement ended.<sup>64</sup> One of the Union shells penetrated the Fort’s magazine leaving the Confederate commander, Colonel Charles H. Olmstead, with no choice but surrender.<sup>65</sup>

Although Gillmore appears to have been incredibly successful during the reduction of Fort Pulaski, reviews on Gillmore's performance by the engagement’s participants were mixed. His superiors and subordinates primarily credited him with forcing the Fort’s surrender. General

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<sup>60</sup> Gillmore, U.S. Army General’s Report of Service, 549-550.

<sup>61</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 24; “*Siege of Fort Pulaski*,” 6.

<sup>62</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 31-32; Quincy A. Gillmore, U.S. Army Generals’ Report of Civil War Service, p. 556-558. Gillmore’s General Order #17 provides detailed direction to each battery including specific targets, lengths of fuses, rate of fire, as well as, engagement and disengagement criteria.

<sup>63</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 34.

<sup>64</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 159.

<sup>65</sup> Olmstead, “Fort Pulaski,” 104.

Hunter, commander of the newly formed Union Army Department of the South, stated, “Too much praise cannot be given Capt Q.A. Gillmore, U.S. Engineers...”<sup>66</sup> Benham, Hunter’s replacement, stated, “To Acting Brig. Gen. Q.A. Gillmore, captain of engineers, the highest praise is due for the exercise of his great professional skill and judgement...” He also endorsed the recommendation for Gillmore’s promotion to Brigadier General.<sup>67</sup> Benham would later be relieved by Hunter for failures near Charleston. Gillmore would assume responsibility for this campaign. As a result, Benham’s later reports on Gillmore’s performance are not as flattering.<sup>68</sup> Also of note, Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, one of Gillmore’s subordinate regimental commanders would later state there was nothing exceptional about General Gillmore and that he was just an engineer and nothing else.<sup>69</sup>

Present day author, Herbert Shiller provides analysis of Gillmore’s actions as well. First, Shiller maintains that Gillmore’s original gun placement was inadequate and Gillmore was forced to allow one of his subordinate artillery lieutenants to emplace the guns.<sup>70</sup> Second, he notes that only Gillmore claimed he had intended to attempt the penetration Pulaski’s magazine with rifled artillery. In doing this, Shiller implies that General Gillmore success in this area was simply good fortune.<sup>71</sup> Finally, he questions the level of confidence Gillmore actually had in the rifled artillery. He bases this off the high proportion of mortars and columbiads Gillmore had emplaced on Tybee Island for the bombardment.<sup>72</sup> Regarding, the question of gun emplacement,

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<sup>66</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 159.

<sup>67</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 138

<sup>68</sup> Benham, U.S. Army Generals’ Report of Civil War Service, 1864-1887, vol. 10 (microfilm), 8.

<sup>69</sup> Shiller, 143. Shiller obtained this information from General Terry’s personal correspondence.

<sup>70</sup> Shiller, 80, 82.

<sup>71</sup> Shiller, 106, 134, .

<sup>72</sup> Shiller, 82.

Shiller himself admits there are varying opinions on who actually sited the guns on Tybee Island. Even if Gillmore adjusted his gun emplacement or allowed his subordinates to do so, there is nothing abnormal about this. This adjustment would be based off the recommendations of an active artillery officer on his staff, a logical decision. Shiller's argument that Gillmore had no prior intent to breach Fort Pulaski's magazine, stands true. Penetration of the Fort's magazine was not mentioned or implied anywhere in Gillmore's orders or initial reports.<sup>73</sup> Finally, Shiller's questioning of Gillmore's gun selection is unfounded. Gillmore recommended an even distribution of rifled guns and mortars following his reconnaissance of Tybee Island in December. Sherman did not concur with this approach and recommended to the Adjutant General of the Army a different apportionment of the guns be shipped.<sup>74</sup> Captain Gillmore emplaced the guns he had available. His desire for additional rifled artillery was evident. Furthermore, it is reasonable to infer from Gillmore's initial plan that he at least intended to experiment with the rifled artillery. He may have not known the exact outcome, but he did direct the commanders of these gun positions to breach Fort Pulaski's walls.<sup>75</sup>

Regardless of these critiques, Gillmore accomplished his assigned tasks at Fort Pulaski. He forced the surrender of the Fort within thirty hours.<sup>76</sup> More importantly, he accomplished this through bombardment alone, meaning the Union did not have to spend countless lives with a ground assault. Gillmore also understood the decisive terrain within the area of operations. His selection of Venus Point for a firing battery directly led to the isolation of Fort Pulaski.<sup>77</sup> This

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<sup>73</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 144-147.

<sup>74</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 195.

<sup>75</sup> Gillmore, U.S. Army General's Report of Service, 556-557.

<sup>76</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 133-134.

<sup>77</sup> Olmstead, Fort Pulaski, 104.

prevented the Confederate forces from reinforcing the Fort. Furthermore, Gillmore recognized that securing Tybee Island was a critical shaping operation that logically supported reduction of the Fort. He recommended securing Tybee Island over a month before the construction of the siege works actually began. He recognized that the potential reoccupation of Tybee Island by Confederate forces would hinder future siege operations.<sup>78</sup>

What is most important is the tactical experience Captain Gillmore gained from this operation. He now understood the effectiveness of rifled artillery at increased ranges.<sup>79</sup> This experience reinforced his educational background and his affinity for the scientific approach. This experience clearly aligned with the training and knowledge Gillmore had received from Dennis Mahan. Additionally, Gillmore learned of the potential to isolate sea island forts by using artillery emplacements to block lines of communications.<sup>80</sup> All of these facts point towards a leader whose has grown accustomed to and been advanced because of his ability to lead forces in methodical battle. These tactical experiences resonate in the approach Gillmore used later in his campaign against Charleston. However, before assuming the role of operational level commander, he had another significant tactical level leadership experience. In this case General Gillmore was able to experiment with offensive maneuver.

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<sup>78</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 195.

<sup>79</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 24; "Siege of Fort Pulaski," 7.

<sup>80</sup> Gillmore, *Official Report to the United States Engineer Department of the Siege and Reduction of Fort Pulaski, Georgia, February, March, and April 1862*, 24; "Siege of Fort Pulaski", 8.

## IV. Battle of Somerset

Following the reduction of Fort Pulaski, Captain Gillmore was promoted to Brigadier General of Volunteers and assigned to the Army of the Kentucky. He assumed command of the Central District of Kentucky on October 30, 1862.<sup>81</sup> This portion of Gillmore's career was relatively uneventful, save for one tactical engagement, the Battle of Somerset.<sup>82</sup> At this engagement Gillmore was successful once again; however, this engagement was unlike his past experiences. The operations in Kentucky were more decentralized. Gillmore was operating unilaterally for much of the time. Also, a field engagement of comparable forces is far different from a siege or bombardment operation. This engagement required Brigadier General Gillmore to make decisions more rapidly in a dynamic environment. This was his first experience leading offensive maneuver.

At this point in the war, the majority of the Confederates western armies were focused outside of Gillmore's area of operations. The Confederates treated central Kentucky as an economy of force operation. The majority of their actions in this area consisted of raids designed to acquire resources, primarily beef cattle.<sup>83</sup> On March 23, 1863, Halleck provided Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, soon to be commander of the Army of Kentucky, with some fairly strong guidance. He recommended Burnside center the majority of his combat power in Lebanon, Danville, or Richmond Kentucky and conduct a mobile defense against Confederate raiding parties. He further recommended the Army of the Kentucky simultaneously conduct raids into

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<sup>81</sup> Reid, 630.

<sup>82</sup> Reid, 631. Whitelaw Reid discusses how Gillmore's time in Kentucky was considered to be insignificant. He does note that Gillmore was brevetted to a Regular Colonel of Engineers as a result of his actions at the Battle of Somerset.

<sup>83</sup>*War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 "Correspondence," 163. In official correspondence with General Burnside, dated 23 March, General Halleck warns General Burnside of impending Confederate raids from East Tennessee into Kentucky. He estimates the total Southern forces in that area at no more than a few thousand as the majority of the Confederate combat power is tied up with General Rosecrans and Grant to Burnside's west.

Eastern Tennessee to occupy Confederate raiding parties. The Union lacked significant combat power in this area. This made simple tasks like securing lines of communication challenging as they required significant portions of the available manpower. This left the Union Army with limited options for offensive operations.<sup>84</sup> It would be nearly six months before Gillmore saw any significant action.

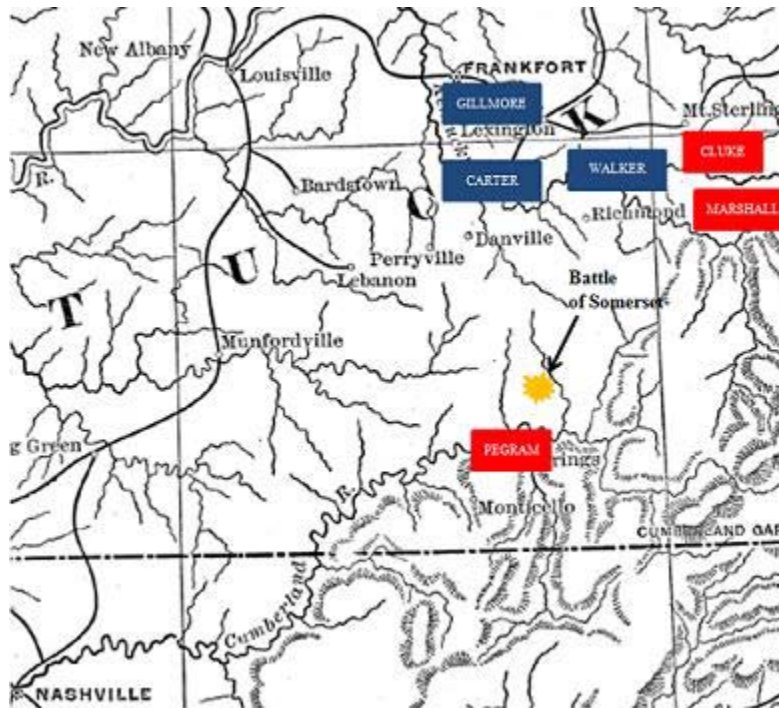


Figure 3. Union and Confederate Troop Locations March 22, 1863<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup>*War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 163.. General Halleck presented General Burnside with three general options but then recommended the active defense with simultaneous raiding. The three general options were as follows: first, General Burnside could attack directly into East Tennessee and occupy the raiding forces on their own ground; second, the Army of the Kentucky could seize key terrain (mountain gaps) along the Kentucky – East Tennessee border to prevent Confederate raids into Kentucky; finally, General Burnside could center his forces on Lebanon, Danville, or Richmond Kentucky and execute a mobile defense against Confederate raiding parties. Burnside was not commander of the Army of the Kentucky at this time. He would assume command 2 days later on March 25, 1863.

<sup>85</sup>Maps Etc., “The Theatre of Western Campaigns, 1861-1865,” <http://etc.usf.edu/maps/pages/000/95/95.htm>, (Accessed February 23, 2011). Troop locations and location for the Battle of Somerset were added by the author.

On March 18, 1863, the Union forces in Kentucky began receiving reports of a large Confederate force concentrating in Wayne County, Tennessee. This force was being assembled for “the purposes of invasion and plunder.” Between March 21 and 22, three separate Confederate raiding parties entered Kentucky. Confederate Colonel John Pegram, commanding 3,500 soldiers had crossed the Cumberland River near Waitsboro and was advancing north. Simultaneously, Confederate Colonel Roy S. Cluke with 700 to 800 men was operating near Mount Sterling, Kentucky. Finally, Confederate General Humphrey Marshall was reported operating in the vicinity of Hazel Green with approximately 1,500 mounted forces.<sup>86</sup>

Burnside’s primary concern was that the Confederate forces would converge within his area of operations. If this occurred, it would be difficult for the Union forces to generate a comparable force while simultaneously maintaining their lines of communication. On March 27, 1863, he directed Gillmore to attack all three Confederate raiding parties simultaneously.<sup>87</sup> At this time Gillmore had 8,460 soldiers present under his command.<sup>88</sup> Nearly half of these men were dedicated to securing bases of operation, important infrastructure, and lines of communication. He had 3,600 men under Brigadier General Samuel P. Carter positioned near Hickman Bridge and Nicholasville available for the attack. He also had Colonel C. J. Walker, commanding the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, with 700 mounted men at Winchester. Additionally, Gillmore had roughly 1,500 men with him at Lexington.<sup>89</sup> Of these troops only 2,300 of them were mounted, a clear disadvantage against a Confederate force totaling roughly 6,000 mounted

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<sup>86</sup> Quincy A. Gillmore, U.S. Army General’s Report of Service, 562.

<sup>87</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 “Correspondence”, 181.

<sup>88</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 “Correspondence”, 198.

<sup>89</sup> Quincy A. Gillmore, U.S. Army General’s Report of Service, 562.

men.<sup>90</sup> Burnside's plan called for the main portion of Gillmore's force, led by Carter, to capture or disperse Pegram's element. He also directed Gillmore to send his cavalry and whatever other reinforcements he could generate against the other two raiding parties. Burnside intended to follow and support this second force with portions of the Army of District of Western Kentucky, under General Jeremiah T. Boyle. He also authorized Gillmore to travel with either of the two elements.<sup>91</sup> Due to logistical challenges Boyle's force never cooperated with Gillmore's cavalry force against the other two Confederate raiding parties. As a result this second attack never materialized.<sup>92</sup> Gillmore opted to join the main force under Carter and lead it against Colonel Pegram. Gillmore, accompanied by 250 mounted troops, joined Carter's force on the morning of March 30. Upon reaching Brigadier Carter's element, Gillmore learned two important pieces of information. First, Pegram's Confederate force had been withdrawing since April 28. Second, Carter had separated from his dismounted forces during the pursuit. They were at least one day's march behind. Gillmore's force now consisted of 1,250 mounted infantry. They continued advancing toward Pegram's Confederates.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 168.

<sup>91</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 "Correspondence", 181.

<sup>92</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 "Correspondence", 185-186, 194. There is very little mention of the second column that was supposed to attack the other two Confederate forces in conjunction with General Boyle's force. In a report to General Burnside, General Boyle tells him of a train derailment that has impacted his movement. In a subsequent report General Burnside informs General Gillmore that he will not be able to cooperate with him immediately due to these challenges. As Gillmore advanced forward to face Colonel Cluge's column his aide-de-camp stated regarding the other Confederate force, "...Cluke is still southeast of here, and if more men could be crossed and put here, it would make our communications secure, as we can't move forward from here without endangering them."

<sup>93</sup> Quincy A. Gillmore, U.S. Army General's Report of Service, 563; *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 167.



Pegram occupied a strong position on Dutton's hill not far from Somerset, Kentucky. He had under his command 2,600 men.<sup>94</sup> General Gillmore's force was outnumbered, and he recognized he was at a clear disadvantage.<sup>95</sup> Still, Gillmore opted to attack. He broke his force into three elements and formed a line of battle. He placed one dismounted cavalry force on the left, a dismounted cavalry force on the right, and a mounted force with four mountain howitzers in the center. Gillmore also used the horses from his dismounted flank elements to form a "fictitious" reserve. He placed the horses near the rear center of his line, partially concealed by wooded terrain. The engagement began with artillery fire from both sides.<sup>96</sup> The Confederate force followed its artillery fire by launching a small cavalry column in an attempt to turn Gillmore's right flank.<sup>97</sup> Gillmore's right element fell back but never broke. The attacking Confederate column bypassed General Gillmore's force and attacked his logistical trains to the rear of his formation. At this point in the battle, Gillmore launched his own assault. He directed his entire dismounted element from his left and a portion of his mounted forces from his center to attack the Confederate defenses on their front right. Subsequently, he sent a small cavalry force around the Confederate left. His main assault force penetrated the Confederate defenses, and his cavalry force enveloped them as well, forcing the Confederate army to withdraw. Confederate losses as a result of the engagement were two hundred men. Gillmore's losses were less than

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<sup>94</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 169.

<sup>95</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 168-169. In his official report of the battle Brigadier General Gillmore states, "It then became evident that we were greatly outnumbered, and that if it had been the intention of the enemy to draw us from beyond the support of our infantry, so as to place us under a disadvantage, he had apparently succeeded.

<sup>96</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 169.

<sup>97</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 173.

thirty.<sup>98</sup> The two forces had minor skirmishes after this engagement, but the Confederate forces were able to withdraw into Tennessee.<sup>99</sup>

Based on casualty numbers and the Confederate withdrawal, the Battle of Somerset appears to demonstrate another tactical success for General Gillmore. He was ordered by Burnside to “capture or disperse” the Confederate force. He clearly met his objective by forcing Pegram back into Tennessee. This battle was unlike Gillmore’s previous experiences. The Battle of Somerset required Gillmore to make quicker decisions in a more dynamic environment. Additionally, this operation was more decentralized. As a member of staff or as the commander of the siege forces against Pulaski, he was under the close, direct supervision of a superior commander. In spite of these differences, Gillmore still emerged successful.

However, some of his actions merit further analysis. Gillmore was clearly outnumbered by a ratio of 2:1. Pegram commanded a force comprised of regulars from Louisiana, Tennessee, and Georgia. The Confederate force was “strongly posted” on key terrain. Gillmore recognized his enemy had him at a disadvantage. He even suspected Pegram may have shaped the outcome deliberately.<sup>100</sup> In light of these force ratios and considering the terrain, why attack? Other options were available; two are most obvious. First, Gillmore could have used Carter’s dismounted force and nearly doubled his aggregate strength. Second, he could have maneuvered his element into a more advantageous position, rather than confront Pegram on terrain Pegram chose. The answer may lie in the orders Gillmore received from Burnside. He was ordered to

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<sup>98</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 “Reports”, 170.

<sup>99</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 “Reports”, 173.

<sup>100</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 “Reports”, 169.

“attack the enemy vigorously,” and this is what Gillmore did.<sup>101</sup> He did try to mitigate his general disadvantage by building a “fictitious reserve,” in hopes that it would misinform and limit the enemy’s aggressiveness.<sup>102</sup> Still, Gillmore’s purpose was to prevent Pegram from converging with his Confederate counterparts Humphrey and Cluke. Pegram had been steadily withdrawing for nearly 48 hours.<sup>103</sup> Why become decisively engaged if what one sets out to accomplish is already occurring? It is possible General Gillmore understood that Pegram was trying to withdraw back to Tennessee with 750 head of beef cattle.<sup>104</sup> He may have attacked to prevent this. However, he never made this explicit in any of his orders or battlefield reports.

In later reports, General Carter criticizes Gillmore for not bringing his dismounted infantry forward for use against Pegram. Carter maintains that Gillmore, upon reaching his trailing dismounted force, ordered it to halt.<sup>105</sup> He argues if General Gillmore had used the additional infantry he could have captured Pegram’s forces, their equipment and all the stolen beef cattle.<sup>106</sup> Of course this is pure conjecture on Carter’s part. Still, there is value regarding the accusation against Gillmore. Gillmore never countered or even acknowledged Carter’s claim. He merely reported the dismounted force as being one day behind his mounted forces.

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<sup>101</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 2 “Correspondence”, 181.

<sup>102</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 “Reports”, 169. In his report Gillmore claims that the enemy acted passively as a result of this endeavor, but there is no evidence of this impact in any of the Confederate after action reports. In fact, Colonel Pegram cites the Union artillery advantage and the failure of his initial envelopment force as the reasons for the defeat.

<sup>103</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 “Reports”, 169.

<sup>104</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 “Reports”, 173. In his report Colonel Pegram identifies his main objective of securing beef cattle for the Confederate Army. His forces had initially secured 750 head of cattle but as a result of his rapid withdrawal the Confederate forces were only able to return to Tennessee with 537.

<sup>105</sup> Samuel P. Carter, *U.S. Army Generals’ Report of Civil War Service, 1864-1887*, vol. 11 (microfilm), 91.

<sup>106</sup> Samuel P. Carter, 94.

Regardless of who ordered the light infantry to detach and possibly hold their position, Gillmore attacked Pegram's force prematurely. Pegram had the advantage in both numbers and terrain. Gillmore had already accomplished Burnside's intent in his pursuit of the force. Perhaps he did not await the arrival of the dismounted element because he knew they were not coming. Either way Gillmore's victory in this case is due more to fortune and failure on the Confederate part than to Gillmore's ability as a tactician.

This was General Gillmore's first experience using offensive maneuver. The environment at Somerset was more dynamic than the static bombardment of Fort Pulaski. Still, it did not present the increase in scale or requirements for creativity that are demanded of the operational level leader. In this case Gillmore maneuvered his force toward a single decisive battle near Somerset. Of interest, he broke with some of the tactical principles one would normally associate with this kind of engagement. Outnumbered against an enemy on superior terrain, Gillmore attacked. In doing so, he assumed significant risk to his force and his mission. However, commanding at the tactical level, Gillmore was only concerned with this individual battle. Strategic and political implications were of little relevance. The long term durability of his force, most of which remained garrisoned in other areas, was of little concern. A few months later, the situation changed dramatically for Gillmore. In June he was assigned to command the Union Army's campaign against Charleston.

## V. Charleston Campaign

In the summer of 1863 the city of Charleston remained firmly in Confederate hands. President Lincoln selected Gillmore to lead the Union Army in a third attempt at seizing the city.<sup>107</sup> To this point operations to take the city were conducted by individual service components. This attempt was more of a joint effort. Gillmore was directed to assume the role of supported commander for the initial part of the campaign up to the reduction of Fort Sumter. Upon accomplishing this, the Union Army was ordered to assume a supporting role as the Union Navy took the lead in attacking the city.<sup>108</sup>

For the Union, Charleston presented both political and strategic opportunities. As early as April 1862 General George B. McClellan described to General Thomas W. Sherman the significant “moral effect” the Union could achieve by reducing Charleston and its defenses. The Union Army Commander described Charleston as the place where, “...the rebellion had its birth; there the unnatural hatred of our Government is most intense; there is the center of the boasted power and courage of the rebels.”<sup>109</sup> In early 1863 Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavas Fox, told the Southern Naval Blockade Commander, Rear-Admiral Samuel F. Du Pont, “Finances, politics, [and] foreign relations all seem to ask for Charleston before Congress adjourns, so as to shape legislation.” The political value of Charleston was clear in the minds of Union military and civilian leadership.<sup>110</sup> Charleston possessed strategic value as well. Although the Union Navy had blockaded the Confederacy by mid-1862, they were never able to entirely block the flow of supplies in and out of Charleston. The Confederate defensive positions

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<sup>107</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, 464.

<sup>108</sup> Gillmore, U.S. Army General’s Report of Service, 569.

<sup>109</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 6, 225

<sup>110</sup> Gustavas W. Fox, *Confidential Correspondence*, 173, 180. Assistant Secretary of the navy Fox explains to Admiral Du Pont how important it is to take the city where the “wicked rebellion first tore down the stars and stripes.”

along the sea islands and at Fort Sumter prevented them from completely closing the port as they had done in Savannah and other locations.<sup>111</sup> Additionally, if Union land forces were in control of Charleston additional naval power would be available for use in other theaters.<sup>112</sup>

The Union's first attempt to seize the city occurred in mid-June 1862. Union Major General Henry W. Benham, operating unilaterally and against orders, conducted what he phrased, a "reconnaissance in force," of the Confederate defenses on James Island. In this operation Benham led nearly seven thousand Union soldiers against Confederate forces commanded by Major General John C. Pemberton. The engagement is known as the Battle of Secessionville. In this battle the Union Army attempted to penetrate the Confederate defenses on the Island but was blocked by an inferior Confederate force. The Union Army Southern Department suffered 600 casualties in the engagement and Benham was relieved of his command.<sup>113</sup>

It would be almost a year before another attempt was made on Charleston. On April 7, 1863, a naval fleet under command of Admiral Du Pont entered Charleston Harbor with the objective of reducing Fort Sumter, reducing batteries on Morris Island and controlling the city of

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<sup>111</sup> Donald Stoker, *Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) 103; *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863 (Washington: Government Printing Office, X), 72. In his official report of his failed attempt to take Charleston Admiral Du Pont maintains that unless a significant joint operation is undertaken to control Charleston then all the navy can do is "endeavor to enforce the blockade of Charleston, which, notwithstanding, the presence here of a larger force than I have had before it previously, is still evaded;" G.T. Beauregard, "The Defense of Charleston," *Battle and Leaders of the Civil War*, Volume IV, Part I, Grant-Lee Edition (New York: Century, 1884), 7. C.S.A. General Beauregard maintains that the South was evading the Union blockade of Charleston until nearly the end of the war.

<sup>112</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 13, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 803-804. Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Gustavas Fox, informs Admiral Du Pont that immediately following the April attack on Charleston the Southern Atlantic Squadron Ironclads will be reallocated to Union forces tasked with clearing the Mississippi River. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863, 61. Letter from the Secretary of the Navy dtd. May 14, 1863, informing Du Pont that no naval power will be reallocated at that time. The letter implies that pending control of Charleston or failure to attain it will result in reallocation of naval assets.

<sup>113</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, 51-53.

Charleston.<sup>114</sup> This would allow ground forces commanded by of Union Army Major General David Hunter to occupy the city.<sup>115</sup> The same type of approach was used to defeat Confederate forces at Port Royal at the onset of the war.<sup>116</sup> Unfortunately for the Union this attack also failed. Upon entering Charleston Harbor, Du Pont's naval fleet was disrupted by obstacle belts at the entrance to the harbor. The fleet received fire from several Confederate artillery positions. This disrupted their formation and stalled their movement. Several of the navy's ships were either partially or totally disabled and Du Pont was forced to withdraw.<sup>117</sup> After the failure of these two attempts the Union was skeptical of its ability to seize Charleston via James Island or by a unilateral naval attack into Charleston Harbor.<sup>118</sup>

The idea of using land forces for a sea island approach did not originate with Gillmore. Hunter proposed the idea to President Lincoln and senior cabinet officials in February 1863.<sup>119</sup> Brigadier General Truman Seymour, then Hunter's chief of staff, claimed the idea for siege operations on Morris Island originated with him.<sup>120</sup> Gillmore did not learn of the idea until mid-

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<sup>114</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863 (Washington: Government Printing Office, X), 8-9.

<sup>115</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, 425.

<sup>116</sup> Thomas W. Sherman, p. 47.

<sup>117</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863, 6-7.

<sup>118</sup> Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston in 1863*, 53-54; *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, 71. In this article written shortly after the war Gillmore maintains that the James Island defenses were too strong for a landward approach towards Charleston. He cites Benham's failure as proof of this assessment. Admiral Du Pont reports to the Secretary of the Navy that because of the superiority of land artillery against ships another attack cannot be made against Charleston without Union Army ground support.

<sup>119</sup> Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles: Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson*, Volume 1 1861 – March 30 1864 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 236-237. Brigadier General Foster, a subordinate of Hunter actually proposed the idea. Gideon Welles discusses Foster's proposal for Army siege operations in Charleston. He views this as evidence of apprehension on Du Pont's part for a navy led attack.

<sup>120</sup> Truman Seymour, *U.S. Army Generals' Report of Civil War Service, 1864-1887*, p. 70; Fox, 183. In his report following the war Seymour claims to have originated the idea and procured the

May 1863. It was also during this time Gillmore became aware of the Secretary Stanton's consideration to have General Gillmore lead the next campaign against Charleston. Gillmore wrote Halleck's chief of staff on May 23, 1863 making him aware of his willingness to serve in that capacity. Gillmore also stated the forts in Charleston Harbor could be reduced with the current resources available to the Department of the South as long as they were increased by a "suitable number of the best heavy rifled guns..." He stated he was willing to stake his reputation on the attempt.<sup>121</sup> Shortly thereafter Gillmore was summoned to Washington to meet with Union Secretary of War Stanton. The Secretary informed the General the Navy strongly desired to make another attempt on Charleston, but for their attempt to be successful the Army would need to reduce the opposing sea forts. Several meetings were held in the latter half of May to lay out the objectives of the campaign.<sup>122</sup> Attendees included Gillmore, the Secretaries of Navy and War, Halleck, and Rear-Admiral Andrew H. Foote, the naval component commander. Even President Lincoln participated in some of the discussions. From these conferences four general objectives were agreed upon. The first three were shaping operations with the army the supported command. First, the Union Army would obtain a foothold on the southern end of Morris Island. Second, the army would seize Battery Wagner, and third, the Union Army would reduce Fort Sumter. After this the Army would support the Union Navy as they reduced obstacles within Charleston Harbor and attacked the city.<sup>123</sup>

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equipment for siege operations. In a letter to Assistant Secretary Fox, dated February 1863, Admiral Du Pont references Union General Foster's plan as Seymour's idea.

<sup>121</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, Part 2 "Correspondence," 459.

<sup>122</sup> Gillmore, Report of Civil War Service, 568.

<sup>123</sup> Gillmore, Report of Civil War Service, 568-569; Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston*, 54-55. Rear-Admiral Andrew H. Foote died unexpectedly of illness resulting in Rear-Admiral John A. Dahlgren replacing Admiral Du Pont as commander of the Union Navy's Southern Fleet.



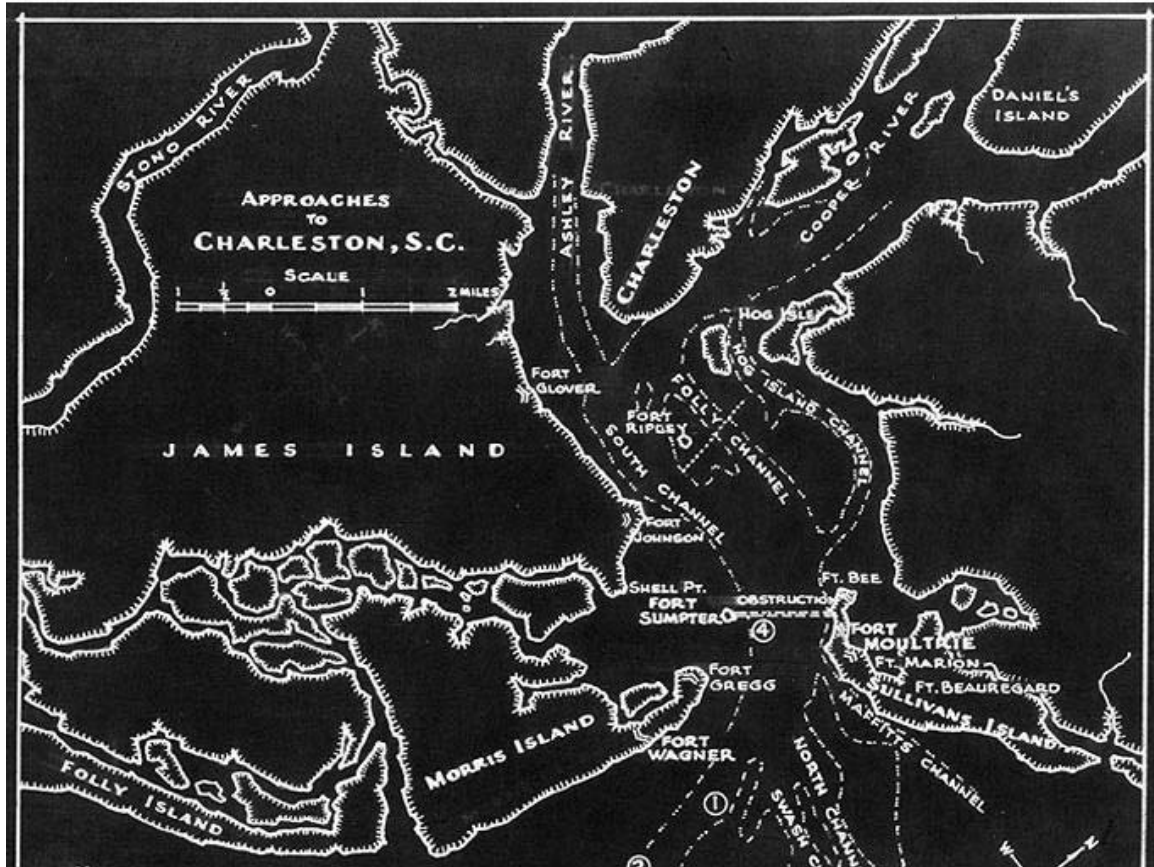


Figure 4: Charleston Area of Operations<sup>124</sup>

On June 3, 1863, Gillmore was appointed commander of the Union Southern Department.<sup>125</sup> He reported to the Department on June 12 and immediately began preparing for the campaign. His Department consisted of a large portion of the coastal southeastern United States. The northern boundary of his area of operations was Folly Island, South Carolina. From

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<sup>124</sup> Naval History and Heritages Command, "Resources and Research," <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/images/h42000/h42916.jpg>. (Accessed February 21, 2011).

<sup>125</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, 464.

there his Department extended south through a series of garrisoned coastal positions to St. Augustine, Florida. The majority of his combat power was located in the area of Charleston.<sup>126</sup>

Gillmore described Charleston Harbor as similar to New York City Harbor. The city occupied the lower end of a narrow peninsula between two navigable rivers. It was seven miles from the ocean with its harbor partially protected by an outer sand bar and its approaches guarded by several sea islands. These islands were separated from each other and the mainland by dense marshes. The marshes ranged from one to three miles in width and were fifteen to eighteen feet deep. These conditions severely restricted ground movement and limited options for offensive operations against the city.<sup>127</sup>

The Union was opposed by 5,841 Confederate soldiers under the command of General G.T. Beauregard. The assignment of Gillmore to the Department and increased Union troop movements indicated to Beauregard that the Union was preparing for another attack on Charleston. Beauregard's greatest concern was the Union approaching Charleston via James Island. His predecessor, Pemberton, had abandoned many of Charleston's defensive lines and, in Beauregard's opinion, made the city more vulnerable to attack.<sup>128</sup> Beauregard, like many others, recognized the key to the harbor's defense was Fort Sumter. The brickwork Fort had three tiers of guns protecting the entrance to Charleston harbor. It was supported by two additional forts, Fort Moultrie on Sullivan Island and Castle Pickney in the center of the harbor, just east of Charleston. In addition to these forts, the harbor and its approaches were defended by several artillery batteries, including Batteries Wagner and Gregg on Morris Island. An amphibious approach using the Stono River was defended by Fort Pemberton, and a landward approach via

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<sup>126</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 7-9

<sup>127</sup> Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston*, 54-55.

<sup>128</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 1-2, 14.

James Island was defended by a robust system of earthworks.<sup>129</sup> Beauregard also had a line of defenses emplaced on the neck of land north of the city to protect it from northern attack.<sup>130</sup>

Gillmore's force consisted of 10,000 volunteer infantry, 600 engineers, and 350 artillerymen.<sup>131</sup> A portion of this force still occupied Folly Island and had since Du Pont's failed attack in April.<sup>132</sup> On July 10, 1863, Gillmore attacked to secure a foothold on the southern end of Morris Island.<sup>133</sup> His initial plan called for a primary force, under command of General Seymour, to conduct an amphibious assault onto Morris Island. He also dispatched a supporting effort under command of Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry to conduct a demonstration on James Island. Finally, he ordered a third element under command of Colonel Thomas Higginson to disrupt the Charleston and Savannah Railroad at the South Edisto River to delay Confederates attempts to reinforce Morris Island. The initial operation, intended to seize of a foothold on Morris Island, posed significant risk as the assaulting column had to approach fixed artillery positions and entrenched infantry over open water.<sup>134</sup> The lead element consisted of Union soldiers under the command of Brigadier General George Strong. Their assault was preceded by a massive artillery barrage. The preparatory fires proved successful and Strong's assault force was able to gain a foothold with little difficulty.<sup>135</sup> After seizing the Confederate defensive

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<sup>129</sup> Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston*, 52-53. The Union referred to Wagner and Gregg as "forts," but the Confederates used the term "battery" to describe the positions. This paper refers to both positions as batteries for the purpose of consistency.

<sup>130</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 2-3.

<sup>131</sup> Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston*, 54.

<sup>132</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, Part 1 Reports, 58.

<sup>133</sup> Quincy A. Gillmore, *Report of Engineer and Artillery Operations Against Charleston* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1865), 32.

<sup>134</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 8-9.

<sup>135</sup> G.T. Beauregard, *Report of General G.T. Beauregard of the Defence of Charleston*, (Richmond: R.M. Smith Public Printer, 1864). Beauregard acknowledges the immediate success of the Union amphibious assault. He maintains the works on the southern end of Morris Island were not yet complete

positions Strong's force continued to advance along Morris Island. The naval force led by Rear-Admiral John A. Dahlgren fired in support of the continuing Union attack.<sup>136</sup> Within a few hours the Union Army had accomplished their first objective, seizure of the Southern end of Morris Island.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, they had advanced to within 600 yards of Battery Wagner, their second objective.<sup>138</sup>

However, this success was short-lived. The next day, July 11, Gillmore ordered Seymour to seize Battery Wagner, the second military objective.<sup>139</sup> Again Strong's Brigade was selected to lead the attack. He attacked with four regiments. Two regiments comprised the assault force, and two regiments served as the reserve. The Union advanced under cover of darkness and attacked at daybreak with hopes of surprising the Confederate defenders. The ruse did not work. The Confederates repulsed the Union advance, inflicting 330 casualties in the process.<sup>140</sup> Unbeknownst to Gillmore and his Military Department the Confederates were able to reinforce Wagner the night prior.<sup>141</sup> An under strength Brigade commanded by Colonel Charles H. Olmstead moved from Savannah and reinforced Charleston.<sup>142</sup> The element Gillmore directed to

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and available transportation did not allow him to send reinforcements quickly enough to block the Union attempt. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 12.

<sup>136</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902), 320.

<sup>137</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 12, 344.

<sup>138</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 344.

<sup>139</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 12.

<sup>140</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 356.

<sup>141</sup> Beauregard, *Report of General G.T. Beauregard of the Defence of Charleston*, 46.

<sup>142</sup> Charles H. Olmstead, *Reminiscences of Service with the First Volunteer Regiment of Georgia, Charleston Harbor, in 1863*, An Address Delivered Before the Georgia Historical Society, March, 3, 1879, (Savannah: J.H. Estill, 1879), 3-4.

disrupt the Savannah to Charleston rail line failed, allowing Beauregard to reinforce Battery Wagner.<sup>143</sup>

Following this defeat, Gillmore began to prepare for a deliberate attack against Wagner. After conferring with Dahlgren, Gillmore opted to use fires from both his batteries and Dahlgren's fleet to "dismount the principal guns of the work, and either drive the enemy from it or open the way to a successful assault." Union batteries were emplaced and began preparing for offensive operations to occur on July 18.<sup>144</sup> For this attempt Gillmore chose to attack at sunset. This time was chosen to minimize the effect of multiple Confederate gun positions on advancing Union infantry. After several hours of bombardment Gillmore determined he could seize the Battery. "In a short time the Fort was entirely silent on the face fronting the land batteries, and practically so on the sea front..."<sup>145</sup> Seymour led the attack. His force consisted of three Brigades. These Brigades were to attack in column with their regiments on line. The attack was spearheaded by Colonel Robert Shaw's 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regiment. As soon as the column began to advance the guns from Wagner, Gregg, Sumter, as well as, the batteries on James and Sullivan islands began to fire on them.<sup>146</sup> This was soon followed by direct grape, canister, and musketry fire from Wagner. Seymour realized the Confederate force was defending more vigorously than expected. Understanding he required additional combat power, he sent back orders for his second Brigade to advance. Seymour's first Brigade, under General Strong, was

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<sup>143</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 8, 194-195. Colonel Higginson's force was blocked by a Confederate battery of six guns as it advanced by boat up the Edisto River. The Union force was unable to reach the rail line and isolate Charleston.

<sup>144</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 13.

<sup>145</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 15.

<sup>146</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 "Reports," 15. Colonel's Shaw's regiment was too large to form one line forcing it to form and attack with two lines.

able to breach the battery and gain a foothold, but the second Brigade was not there to exploit it. After a delay, Seymour's second Brigade, under Colonel Haldiman S. Putnam, began to advance. However, by this time the lead element had taken significant casualties and was retreating through the advancing units. The second echelon force was able to penetrate the walls of Wagner with around 100 men. They maintained this position for over an hour before Putnam was shot dead. Unable to seize the battery, the Union forces withdrew.<sup>147</sup> Union casualties totaled 1,515 men. This included General Seymour, who was wounded in the battle, and the deaths of two brigade and two regimental commanders.<sup>148</sup> At this point in the campaign, Gillmore had lost one third of his combat power.<sup>149</sup>

As a result of these losses Gillmore requested 8,000 to 10,000 additional troops from Army Headquarters in Washington.<sup>150</sup> The request was denied. With no other options Gillmore chose to conduct siege operations against Battery Wagner and begin the reduction of Fort Sumter.<sup>151</sup> Gillmore's force proceeded to build a series of parallels approaching Battery Wagner. This construction began on July 18 and continued until August 27. By this date Union forces were within 100 yards of the Battery.<sup>152</sup> As planned, Gillmore also bombarded Fort Sumter from August 17-23. Using fourteen rifled guns from seven different batteries the Union

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<sup>147</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 1 "Reports," 347-348.

<sup>148</sup> Wise, 114.

<sup>149</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 22.

<sup>150</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 23.

<sup>151</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 "Reports," 16-17. Gillmore divided his engineering, civil, and military operations for the long duration operation. He tasked Colonel E.W. Serrell with construction of wharves on both Morris and Folly Islands, as well as, the construction of a battery between Morris and James Islands. He ordered Major T.B. Brooks to lead siege operations against Battery Wagner.

<sup>152</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 "Reports," 17-26.

Army launched five thousand and nine artillery projectiles at Fort Sumter. Half of these hit their mark.<sup>153</sup>

Additionally, General Gillmore directed the emplacement of an artillery battery north of Morris Island. This marsh battery, known as the “Swamp Angel,” consisted of one artillery piece. On the nights of August 21 and 22 Gillmore used this marsh battery to bombard the city of Charleston.<sup>154</sup> Hours before initiating the bombardment Gillmore ordered Beauregard to evacuate both Morris Island and Fort Sumter. He told the Confederate General that within a few hours Fort Sumter would most certainly be demolished. He warned the Confederate commander that failure to comply would result in the Union bombardment of Charleston.<sup>155</sup> Beauregard did not receive Gillmore’s message until the firing on Charleston had already commenced. Disgusted with Gillmore’s techniques, Beauregard accused Gillmore of deliberately attacking innocent civilian targets. He refused to comply with Gillmore’s terms.<sup>156</sup> The debate became irrelevant when the Union’s marsh battery gun burst. Gillmore did not attempt to replace the artillery piece.<sup>157</sup> He shifted his focus back to seizing Wagner and reducing Sumter.

On the morning of September 5 Gillmore initiated another joint bombardment of Battery Wagner. This support allowed Union engineers to push their works forward to Wagner by the night of the September 6. That night General Gillmore prepared his forces for a morning attack. However, the Confederate forces withdrew from both Batteries Wagner and Gregg before the

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<sup>153</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 23.

<sup>154</sup> William S. Stryker, *The Swamp Angel, Battle and Leaders of the Civil War*, Volume IV, Part I, Grant-Lee Edition (New York: Century, 1884), 72-74. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 23.

<sup>155</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 57.

<sup>156</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 58-59.

<sup>157</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 23.

attack commenced. Union forces occupied both works on September 7. It took the Union Army Southern Department 57 days to accomplish the second Union Army objective.<sup>158</sup>

At this point in the campaign the relationship between General Gillmore and Admiral Dahlgren had begun to deteriorate. The crux of the issue between the two leaders was a disagreement over Union Army and Navy responsibilities regarding Fort Sumter. Gillmore felt that his August bombardment of Sumter had accomplished the Union Army objective of reducing the Fort. From Gillmore's perspective, the Confederate artillery had either been destroyed or withdrawn from the Fort thereby opening Charleston Harbor for the Navy's attack. Dahlgren maintained that because the Confederates still occupied the Fort they could overwatch the harbor's obstacles. The Confederates still had the ability to block the Union Navy's attack.<sup>159</sup> On September 8<sup>th</sup> both the Union Army and Navy assembled separate assault forces with the aim of seizing Fort Sumter. Both of these elements were organized and directed in isolation from one another. Gillmore's force was unable to launch on time and never conducted an attack. Dahlgren's naval force tried to seize Fort Sumter but repulsed by Confederate infantry from within the Fort.

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<sup>158</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 "Reports," 26-27.

<sup>159</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863, 659-660. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 97-98, 100. In this correspondence, dated September 26 1863, Admiral Dahlgren requests the Union Army reduce the Confederate resistance as much as possible. Admiral Dahlgren asks General Gillmore to, "...complete the reduction of Sumter by your batteries on Cummings point." He also asks Gillmore if he can assist with "driving the enemy out" of Fort Sumter. In a subsequent letter Admiral Dahlgren informed General Gillmore he was not as concerned with the artillery capability from within Fort Sumter as much as he was concerned with "...a severe musketry fire, which will prevent me from using boats to cut away obstructions..." Dahlgren does relieve Gillmore of the responsibility of assaulting the Fort by stating he would bear that responsibility if required, but he does this while reminding Gillmore that it was Gillmore who originally intended to assault Fort Sumter.



Following this attempt, General Gillmore claimed the Union Army had accomplished its mission.<sup>160</sup> On September 15, he published an official message congratulating Tenth Corps for their achievements.<sup>161</sup> Dahlgren maintained the Army had not accomplished the third objective. Gillmore disagreed. He argued the Union Army had “reduced” Fort Sumter. In a September 27 message Gillmore explained to Dahlgren the Confederate artillery threat from Fort Sumter was neutralized. The Union Navy ironclads could penetrate the Confederate defenses and access the interior of the harbor.<sup>162</sup> Dahlgren did not make the attempt. Gillmore bombed Fort Sumter a second time in October after receiving reports of a Confederates plan to reinforce the Fort with artillery.<sup>163</sup> This was the only additional action he took against the Fort or against Charleston.

On December 15 Gillmore informed Halleck that with an additional 10,000 to 12,000 men he could penetrate the Confederate land defenses and seize Charleston. He recommended either James Island or Bulls Bay as lines of attack against the city. If he was unable to receive the reinforcements, Gillmore recommended the Union retain their current gains around Charleston and shift focus to seizing Savannah. This would be followed by offensive operations against Confederate forces in Florida.<sup>164</sup> On December 23, Halleck told Gillmore he would not receive any additional reinforcements. He ordered Gillmore to “undertake operations in your department

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<sup>160</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 28.

<sup>161</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 39.

<sup>162</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, “South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863, 681-684. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 97-98, 100. There was clear debate over the definition of “reduction of Sumter.” General Gillmore felt neutralizing the Confederate artillery was enough. Admiral Dahlgren maintained the threat of direct musket fire watching over the harbor obstructions had to be removed.

<sup>163</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 30.

<sup>164</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 129-130.

as you may deem best, making secure the positions you already hold in front of Charleston.”<sup>165</sup>

The Union Southern Department would accomplish little in the subsequent months. In May 1864 Gillmore and his Corps were assigned to the Army of the James.<sup>166</sup> The city of Charleston would not be occupied by Federal forces until February 18, 1865, when General William Tecumseh Sherman’s attack through the Carolina’s turned the Confederates from their defenses.<sup>167</sup>

Whether or not General Gillmore was successful is questioned to this day. Proper analysis of these issues begins with examining whether or not Gillmore accomplished his assigned military objectives in support of the Union’s strategic aim. The Union wanted to occupy Charleston and close it as a blockade running port. This aim was never reached.<sup>168</sup> However, the analysis cannot rest there. Gillmore clearly accomplished his first two objectives – seizing a foothold on Morris Island and the subsequent seizure of Battery Wagner.<sup>169</sup> However, the question remains whether Gillmore accomplished his third objective – the reduction of Fort Sumter. Gillmore always maintained that by neutralizing the Confederate artillery at Fort Sumter he had accomplished his objective.<sup>170</sup> The Union Navy commander, Admiral Dahlgren,

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<sup>165</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 134.

<sup>166</sup> Sifaks, 249.

<sup>167</sup> William Tecumseh Sherman, 646, 673-674.

<sup>168</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 7. General Beauregard maintains that Confederate “...blockade-running steamers entered and left the port of Charleston at regular, stated intervals, up to nearly the very close of the war.” Wise, 214. Wise disputes Beauregard’s claim. He maintains that after the Union seized Morris Island they were able to establish a line of picket boats east of the harbor obstacles and effectively close the port. Although this probably mitigated the Confederate blockade-running ability in Charleston, it did not close the port to blockade-running. *Military Order of the Legion of the United States. The Commander of the State of Illinois*, 4 vols. (Wilmington, NC: 1992), 243-246. Horatio Wait’s report indicates that Southern blockade running continued. *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 15, “South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From October 1, 1863 to September 30, 1864, 420.

<sup>169</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 “Reports,” 3.

<sup>170</sup> Gillmore, *U.S. Army Generals’ Report of Civil War Service*, 575. In his report at the conclusion of the war Gillmore stated that by August 17, 1863, “Fort Sumter therefore possessed no offensive power whatsoever.”

maintained the Confederate force from within Sumter's walls could still overwatch the harbor obstacles with musket fire, meaning Fort Sumter was still a threat.<sup>171</sup> One way to analyze this case is by attempting to determine the exact meaning of the word "reduce." However, that approach is secondary to another question – one of purpose. Why was the Union Army required to reduce Fort Sumter? The purpose of the third objective was to allow the Union Navy access to interior of Charleston harbor and to the city itself.<sup>172</sup> Although Gillmore maintains he met these criteria, the Union Navy was not able to move past the Fort and attack Charleston. The Union Navy's attempt to seize the Fort failed.<sup>173</sup> In fact, Gillmore planned and prepared to seize Fort Sumter with his own forces.<sup>174</sup> Why make this attempt if his final military objective was achieved? It was not.

Gillmore's force had culminated. Union losses during the Wagner assault coupled with the 45 days of siege operations took their toll on both the Union force and the Union equipment.<sup>175</sup> Gillmore had no additional options available. Current United States Military Doctrine defines culminating point as "the point at which a force no longer has the capability to continue its form of operations, offense or defense."<sup>176</sup> It is the responsibility of the operational level commander to identify points in the campaign where his force could culminate. He then

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<sup>171</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863, 681-684. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 97.

<sup>172</sup> Gillmore, U.S. Army Generals' Report of Civil War Service, 569.

<sup>173</sup> *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Volume 14, "South Atlantic Blocking Squadron From April 7 to September 30, 1863, 561-562.

<sup>174</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 89. General Terry's Special Orders, No. 150 details the plan for a Union Army assault of Fort Sumter. The assault never took place but if General Gillmore had felt he had accomplished his third objective why plan for an amphibious assault against the Fort?

<sup>175</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 64, 66, 102-103.

<sup>176</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations, 17 September 2006 Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), GL-11.

adjusts the timing of the operation or available resources to avoid these pitfalls. Gillmore did not appreciate the operational durability of his force. One could argue he had culminated following the failed attack on Wagner. Immediately following the failed deliberate attack he requested an additional 8,000 to 10,000 troops. This would have raised his total strength for the campaign to over 16,000.<sup>177</sup> That was 5,000 more men than Gillmore originally estimated he would need before initiating the campaign. General Gillmore did not have the required combat power to achieve his objectives. The sea island approach required more men than he initially projected. As a result of this lack of foresight, the Union Army fell short of its third and final objective and the campaign failed.

Were there any other military options available to Gillmore or was the sea island approach the only one? Both Generals Gillmore and Halleck maintained no other options for Charleston were ever discussed in the meetings that preceded the campaign.<sup>178</sup> The original concept for the campaign was clearly not Gillmore's alone.<sup>179</sup> The concept had originated with Seymour while Gillmore was still serving in Kentucky.<sup>180</sup> Basing the military objectives on an agreement between services decreased the campaign's flexibility even further.<sup>181</sup> Still, Gillmore clearly supported the concept. Furthermore, he staked his reputation on his ability to execute it.<sup>182</sup> Only after his force had failed in the sea island approach did Gillmore demonstrate a willingness to explore other options. Unfortunately, at that point, he did not have the resources at

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<sup>177</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 31. These numbers are based on The Union Southern Departments July reports.

<sup>178</sup> Gillmore, *The Army Before Charleston in 1863, Battle and Leaders of the Civil War*, Volume IV, Part I, Grant-Lee Edition (New York: Century, 1884), 55. *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 17, Part 1 "Reports," 3.

<sup>179</sup> Gillmore, *Report of Engineer and Artillery Operations Against Charleston*, 12-13.

<sup>180</sup> Seymour, 70; Fox, 183.

<sup>181</sup> Gillmore, *Report of Engineer and Artillery Operations Against Charleston*, 12.

<sup>182</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, 459.

his disposal to adopt another line of attack. His December 15 request for reinforcements illuminates this fact. This time Gillmore asked for an additional 10,000 to 12,000 troops to pursue other options, including the overland approach using James Island.<sup>183</sup> Beauregard criticized the Union Army and specifically Gillmore for adopting the sea island approach. He readily admitted that James Island was the door to Charleston and referred to the Union sea island approach as trying to attack Charleston through the window. Beauregard further contended that Benham's 1862 attack via James Island was against the strongest part of the Confederate line and was poorly executed on Benham's part. Benham's failure should not have eliminated James Island as an option in 1863. The Confederate General stated that in 1863 he only had 1,184 men defending James Island. A task he claimed required at least 8,000. In light of these facts one must consider the James Island approach as a viable option. Unfortunately General Gillmore did not explore this option until it was too late.<sup>184</sup>

Clearly, Gillmore did not enjoy the same level of success at Charleston as he did at Fort Pulaski or Somerset. Stephen Wise maintains that had Gillmore massed his forces against Battery Wagner in early July the Union Army would have been successful and preserved enough combat power to achieve their military objectives.<sup>185</sup> Although this theory is plausible, it is not likely. First, Beauregard admits the effectiveness of Gillmore's deception operation on James Island and that the operation fixed Confederate forces there. The Confederate General could have reallocated forces from James Island to Battery Wagner had Gillmore not conducted the deception.<sup>186</sup> Also, if the Union force tasked with disrupting the rail line from Savannah was

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<sup>183</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 129-130. General Gillmore's message to General in Chief Halleck dated December 15, 1863.

<sup>184</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 14, 21.

<sup>185</sup> Wise, 63-64, 211.

<sup>186</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 14.

successful, Beauregard could not have reinforced Battery Wagner before the Union's hasty assault on July 11. Battery Wagner may have fallen then. The possibility also exists that if Gillmore timed the attack properly he may have been successful during the July 18 attack. Specifically, if he had decreased the time and distance between Strong and Putnam's formations the second echelon may have been in a better position to exploit the initial penetration. Still, all of these possibilities are based on variance in tactical actions and skirt the true issues – issues of creativity and scale.

## VI. Conclusion

General Gillmore's tactical and operational experiences demonstrate the different challenges associated with the operational level of command versus those associated with the tactical level. The Charleston campaign required Gillmore to employ and sustain forces over a greater geographic area and for a longer period of time. This campaign was much different than Gillmore's experiences at Fort Pulaski, Georgia or Somerset, Kentucky. Those engagements were focused on a single victory at a specific place and time. The Charleston campaign required Gillmore to be forward thinking and develop the situation from a broader perspective. Although he still needed to focus on the individual engagements with the Confederate forces around Charleston, Gillmore also had to appreciate the broader purpose and the strategic context. He had to understand the operational durability of his force and recognize that even though he may have achieved a tactical victory, or a series of them, culmination of his force could result in losing the campaign.

Gillmore's earlier experiences were not like this. When using tactics one focuses more on the science of war. The aim of the tactician is victory in single engagements. The tactician does not necessarily need to be forward thinking or concerned with multiple moves ahead. Instead the tactician is focused on the here and now. How does one effectively defeat the opposition to achieve the directed purpose? There is little concern for strategic aims. There is no requirement to appreciate the broad spatial and temporal aspects that the operational level demands. Because of this, tactics lends itself more to principles and scientific application. As Stephen Wise maintains, this is an area where Gillmore was comfortable.<sup>187</sup>

When examining General Gillmore's background, tactical experiences, and performance as a Corps Commander in the Charleston campaign, it is difficult to determine if success at the

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<sup>187</sup> Wise, 63.

operational level is predicated on success at the tactical level of command. Although Gillmore achieved victory in both of these tactical engagements, his actions at the battle of Somerset bring his tactical ability into question. However, the links between Gillmore's actions at the tactical level and their impacts on his performance at the operational level are clear. Both Stephen Wise and Milby Burton acknowledge the impacts of Gillmore's Fort Pulaski experiences in relation to his Charleston approach.<sup>188</sup> However, this case requires additional examination beyond the adoption of the sea island approach or the effects of rifled artillery on masonry forts versus its effects on earthen ones.

Although these are valid points, several links exist between Gillmore's tactical experiences and how they shaped his actions during the Charleston campaign. These links relate to the temporal and spatial differences associated with the operational level versus the tactical. These links involve one's understanding of operational durability of one's force and the impacts of the environment and contact with the enemy over time. In Gillmore's case he failed to understand these differences. First, he did not grasp the risk he assumed with his actions, primarily the attack on Battery Wagner. He did not grasp how risk varies in scale between the tactical and operational levels of command. Secondly, Gillmore did not appreciate the operational durability of his force and the capabilities versus requirements of his force over time. He was clearly able to understand tactical level requirements. This is evidenced during his analysis of the Fort Pulaski mission. However, he was unable to understand the requirements for the entirety of the Charleston campaign. Thirdly, Gillmore had no clear vision for his end state. This led to ambiguity regarding the reduction of Fort Sumter and whether or not the Union Army had accomplished its third objective. Finally, there was very little creativity in Gillmore's approach. Granted, his campaign objectives were proposed before he assumed command. Also,

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<sup>188</sup> Burton, 152; Wise, 57.



this was a joint campaign with service components answering to different leaders. These factors may have limited Gillmore's opportunities to employ different options. Still, General Gillmore did not examine other available options until it was too late.

Gillmore was clearly not a risk averse individual. His actions at Somerset, Kentucky in March of 1863 are evidence of this. Outnumbered by a 2:1 ratio against an opposing force defending from an advantageous position, Gillmore still opted to attack. He increased risk for speed by attacking with only his mounted forces, but he mitigated this risk through use of deception with a fictitious "cavalry reserve."<sup>189</sup> He also assumed significant risk in his July 18 attack on Battery Wagner. In this case Gillmore attacked over narrow, open terrain against a prepared defensive position. His assault force was directly observed and engaged by multiple prepared Confederate artillery positions. Once again Gillmore assumed significant risk to his force and to his mission. Also, like at Somerset he attempted to mitigate this risk. In this instance he used significant artillery and naval gunfire preparation combined with a limited visibility attack. However, unlike Somerset, this time he failed. The differences in these two cases go beyond just tactical victory versus tactical defeat. A defeat at Somerset, Kentucky would have forced Gillmore to withdraw and would have allowed Colonel Pegram's forces to displace and return to Tennessee with its stolen provisions. The defeat at Battery Wagner placed the entire Charleston campaign in jeopardy. By attacking on July 18 Gillmore risked more than his force and loss of a battle. In attacking he risked the Union's ability to seize Charleston. Following this attack, Gillmore had lost one-third of his force. Included in these losses were a significant number of his officers. Gillmore, seemingly out of options, initiated siege operations

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<sup>189</sup>*War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 12, Part 1 "Reports", 168-169.

to defeat the Battery. The siege operations took 49 days and significantly wore on Gillmore's force and equipment.<sup>190</sup>

This demonstrates an additional component Gillmore failed to consider in his attack on Battery Wagner. The operational commander is responsible not only for the employment but for the sustainment of his force over time. At the operational level this goes beyond the scope of sustaining forces during singular battles or engagements. The operational level commander must sustain his force for the duration of the campaign. This involves understanding the intermediate objectives necessary to achieve the strategic aim and specifically understanding the combat power and sustainment capability required to achieve those objectives. Time and the corresponding impacts of the environment and the enemy are the critical factors that inform this understanding. General Gillmore's intermediate objectives were very clear. However, Gillmore did not appreciate the requirements of the entire campaign. From his perspective he felt the Union Southern Department possessed sufficient combat power to meet its objectives. The Department only lacked a "suitable number of the best heavy rifled guns..."<sup>191</sup> However, after the July 18 defeat at Fort Wagner Gillmore quickly realized he needed additional infantry to meet the requirements for the sea-island approach, but Halleck could not provide Gillmore with any additional combat power.<sup>192</sup> The losses during the failed attempts on Battery Wagner nearly caused Gillmore's force to culminate. At a minimum this removed any options for offensive maneuver. Gillmore resorted to siege operations. The duration and challenges of these activities did force culmination. His force had lost the initiative and a stalemate ensued.

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<sup>190</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 64, 66,102-103.

<sup>191</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, Part 2 "Correspondence," 459.

<sup>192</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 23.

With no other options available Gillmore stated the Union Army Southern Department had achieved its objectives and reached its end state. In this case it was the third military objective – the reduction of Fort Sumter. This leads to another responsibility of the operational commander. The operational commander must establish the set of required conditions that defines achievement of his objectives.<sup>193</sup> Gillmore was responsible for ensuring Confederate forces in Fort Sumter could not prevent the Union Navy from attacking into Charleston Harbor. As the supporting commander, General Gillmore was responsible for identifying this condition and disseminating it to his Corps and the supported commander, Dahlgren. Gillmore failed to do this. He thought the tactical task of reducing Fort Sumter sufficient. He later defined it more specifically as the neutralization of Confederate artillery.<sup>194</sup> However, this “new” definition was based off his capability at the time and not his original vision. Accomplishment of either the task of reduction or demolition may have been sufficient for his tactical experiences at Fort Pulaski. In the Pulaski case Gillmore clearly understood what was required of him and he accomplished it. However, for the operational level commander it is about establishing the conditions in support of the strategic aim or in this case the conditions that supported Admiral Dahlgren’s attack.

Still, had Gillmore properly defined and shared his criteria for success the results would most likely have remained the same. At the time Gillmore did not possess the creativity required of an operational commander. His backing and acceptance of the sea island approach is evidence of this.<sup>195</sup> The objectives and sequencing used in the sea island approach were logical if the ultimate goal was the control of Fort Sumter. However, the final objective was the occupation of Charleston. Because of this, one cannot ignore the potential opportunity a James Island approach

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<sup>193</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations, 17 September 2006 Incorporating Change 1, 13 February 2008* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2008), GL-11.

<sup>194</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 “Correspondence,” 94, 97-98.

<sup>195</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 14, 459.

offered. Beauregard admitted that his defense was most vulnerable against an enemy using the overland approach.<sup>196</sup> Benham's uncoordinated attack a year earlier was not an adequate test for ruling out the James Island option. Although the James Island approach was not ideal, the terrain offered the attacker more options against a relatively thin Confederate defense. The restricted sea island approach offered very little in the way of offensive maneuver. Of course, one cannot hold Gillmore entirely responsible for selection of the sea island approach. He did not develop the original concept, and the Union Navy would have little to offer if the Union Army used the James Island avenue. Still, General Gillmore completely supported the sea-island approach via Folly Island, Morris Island, and Fort Sumter. It was not until his force had culminated and he had redefined his criteria for success that Gillmore recommended other options. This of course would have required the Union Army to shift resources from other theaters. This was not an option at this time.<sup>197</sup>

For the military commander comfort and apparent familiarity with the situation based on past experiences can be limiting and dangerous. Gillmore whole-heartedly supported the sea island approach because it was very similar to the Fort Pulaski case.<sup>198</sup> He also thought the reduction or demolition of Fort Sumter would function as a condition for end state. Reduction of Pulaski had been effective in 1862. Gillmore had also developed a habit of assuming significant amounts of risk in his operations -- amounts of risk that possessed potential for failure. Unfortunately he did not see how this behavior translated to the operational level. At the operational level tactical failures may risk more than a single defeat. For the operational commander they risk the campaign and the possibility of achieving strategic aims. Because of this risk and the resulting failure, Gillmore could not sustain his force for the duration of the

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<sup>196</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 14.

<sup>197</sup> *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. Series I, Volume 28, Part 2 "Correspondence," 134.

<sup>198</sup> Beauregard, *The Defense of Charleston*, 14; Burton, 152; Wise, 57.

campaign. He failed to appreciate the temporal differences associated with operational level. He did not take into account the effects of the enemy and the environment on his Corps over time.

German war theorist Carl von Clausewitz warns us of the dangers of ready-made strategies. Without analysis and thought, methodism can take over at the highest levels.<sup>199</sup> The idea of methodism refers to the application of previous actions to a different situation in hope of similar positive results. The danger of misunderstanding context is evident in this case.

Gillmore relied on his knowledge, experience, and the Union history in the Southern theater when commanding his Corps. His nominal tactical experiences limited his thinking and were a detriment to his performance at the operational level. He was comfortable with methodical singular battle, but when challenged with command at the operational level General Gillmore was not prepared.

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<sup>199</sup> Clausewitz, 75.

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