

Running Head: THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING OUR MILITARY HISTORY

Enabling our Soldiers to Succeed

Course Argumentative Essay

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Abstract

Insight, strategies, doctrine, success, and failures are all inherent in our history. Our military history enables us as service men and women to remain proficient. Our history provides indispensable information on lessons learned, it provides significant information on the tactics and techniques that have proved to assist in our missions. The study of our military history is extremely important to save lives and to ensure mission success.

We as military professionals are very busy with our daily mission; however, we must take time from our schedules to study military history. Our military history holds integral data on tactics, strategies, and operational lessons from past conflicts. It is vital and necessary to aid in the success of conflicts in the future.

Insight and Knowledge Gleaned from our History

Military history is full of insight and sometimes that insight can be very painful in the end state of the wars we have fought. The study of our military history is imperative for our future success in those conflicts and wars we find our military engaged in. Our military history provides documented information on tactics, heroic actions, defending positions, terrain, climate, and the actions of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. The study of past battles and conflicts provides tactical, strategic, and operational lessons learned.

As military professionals we are often overwhelmed with the demands of our daily mission. At times we are overwhelmed with Soldier issues and deadlines we must meet; however, we have to etch out those critical hours that we can dedicate to the study of our history.

Our military history provides instinctive knowledge into past patterns, trends, and relationships necessary for the development of doctrine. It provides important understanding of doctrine, technology, tactical maneuvers, equipment, planning, and the best method of directing our forces.

Information and Technological Advancements

The Industrial Revolution produced mass amounts of technological advancements in the areas of weapons, transportation, and communication. Transforming from the industrial age to the information age is still a long way from complete; however, during Operation Iraqi Freedom we witnessed how the maneuver phase was the emerging power. The information provided to our troops provided vital data on terrain and enemy movement. The maneuver phase was vital to mission success. Our goal was to place the

enemy at a disadvantage with our use of combat power. Maneuvers are a part of combat power coupled with the use of air strikes provided the advantage for our forces.

Additionally, the information provided to troops on the habits and behaviors of the society in Iraq proved critical to our mission. Ensuring that our Soldiers and military members received information on the customs of Middle Eastern societies and the capabilities of the Iraqi Army were extremely important for our mission. This information was imperative so not to offend the Iraqi people while performing our mission.

Doctrine and the Civil War

Doctrine provides military forces with concise information on how we will contribute to our campaigns, operations, wars, and engagements. The doctrine studied and used by our military combines, theory, history, and practice. Our understanding and study of what has proved to save lives, what has worked for past campaigns and wars, and how our doctrine has advanced with every operation the military engaged in.

The doctrine implemented during past conflicts such as the Civil War with the use of the rifled musket on the battlefield changed our doctrine. The increased lethality of artillery and machine guns during World War 1 changed our doctrine. Our current weapons technology and the development of advanced systems changed our doctrine. We do not fight at close contact in linear formations. We are able to maintain distance and use the technology of our advanced weaponry to preserve life.

When our American Soldiers first fought against the Germans they made errors. The errors were made in training, leadership and equipment which failed to meet the battlefield requirements. However, the study of these mistakes afforded that they could

be corrected. The knowledge gained was not only for battlefield doctrine, it also provided insight in logistical needs (Stewart, 2004).

Our leaders' understanding of military history proves extremely important for the selection and execution of policies. The realm of warfare depicts the importance when the lives of our Soldiers, civilians, and friendly forces rely on the decisions made. During the planning for the attack in 2001 on Afghanistan, cabinet members argued against using ground forces. Many wanted to engage with air power; however, using the study of past operations, the British invasions which occurred in the 19th century and the Soviet invasion of 1979. The Secretary of Defense had a vision of military transformation and believed that a partially transformed military could revolutionize warfare. In these any other cases, a simple and distorted comprehension of military history, has had serious practical developments for American policy (Kagan, 2006).

As a professional military we must understand organizing, equipping, planning and directing our troops, and the role training plays both in and out of combat. The information acquired when we study military history produces trained and educated forces. This training and education is passed on to subordinates and shared with peers.

Our Forces in Cuba

Assembling our forces for operations in Cuba in 1898 proved that many of the volunteers were enthusiastic; however, they were inexperienced. Additionally, the lack of quality officers hindered the training of these forces and affected the quality of training they received. Public opinion and pressures from political figures demanded immediate action against the Spanish in Cuba. Our involvement began without any proper knowledge of our enemy, and no plan of operation (Stewart, 2005). Col Robert L.

Bullard believed that “our aversion and long failure to use the justifiable and necessary severity against insurgents prolonged the war” (Birtle, 2004, p.135).

This necessary and justifiable severity can only come from knowledge which is gleaned from our history and the intelligence gathered for the operation we are about to engage in. Only through the study of past operations can we have assured information on what has proved to work and those that have proved to fail.

Our training is indicative of the Soldier we become. Our training in doctrine, rules of engagement, terrain, maneuvers, weapons qualification, logistical needs, and physical fitness are paramount to our success. Further, we must study past engagements, operations, campaigns, and the available intelligence on our enemy and the general populace to fully have the training we need to engage in battle.

Our Study and Inaccurate Perceptions

The principal use of studying military history is to form leaders who use critical thinking skills. These skills require a foundation and provide the benefits from and grounded in our military history. Some might think that reading our history is something used to past the time. I will propose that the study of our history is important to provide those critical answers to problems that we are currently facing.

I believe that if the answers are not gleaned from our history, one might say ask then why do we study it? Our military history when studied will provide theory and opinion. It will raise arguments that will lead to vital information.

We must have a basic understanding of past techniques, tactics, and doctrine and those issues that have proved to be fruitful. The use of critical thinking and the review of

our history will continue to provide answers and assist in resolving those issues we currently face.

An inaccurate perception of our campaigns, operations, and conflicts can lead to indecisiveness. It can lead to uniformed leaders who take unnecessary risks and place the lives of our forces in harm's way. The distortion of our military history can provide a powerful and wrongly formulated American policy. This can lead to catastrophic incidents that lead to death and destruction that we may not recover from.

Conclusion

If we elect to go with hear say and what we think might work opposed to the actual study of the doctrine implemented and the events of the battles, we are doomed to fail or repeat past mistakes. The study of our history prevents the repetition of past errors and provides critical data to those leaders charge with making decisions.

Our colleges and universities today study military history and are indicative of how we are serious about preventing the distortion of our history (Kagan 2006).

Our history is imperative to our success on the battlefield. Our history is full of critical insight into doctrine, tactics, and is vital to operations, campaigns, or conflicts that we can find our military engaged in.

As military professionals and as Soldiers serving in the greatest Army, we have to find the time from our busy schedules to study history. The use of staff rides and local historians can provide a wealth of information for our forces. As leaders in this great Army, we have to ensure that we use every opportunity to glean as much information from our history and continue to teach our Soldiers the importance.

The study of our history can and will provide our Soldiers a better understanding of past wars, battles, campaigns, and operations. These facts will prepare our Soldiers for the possible challenges that can and will lie ahead. Our study of military history enables our Soldiers to prepare and provides them with the information needed to succeed.

Bibliography

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