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JOINT OPERATIONS AGAINST CHARLESTON

BY

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ABSTRACT

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Desiring to improve the joint operational proficiency of the U.S. Military, Congress mandated jointness by fiat! In doing so, the Congress failed to grasp the root cause for the failure by the military in the conduct of joint operations. The problems associated with coordinating the joint employment of armies and navies are ancient. In this country, lessons learned from joint operations date, at least, from the Civil War.

Examination of one notable example, the Union's campaign against Charleston reveals an intense interservice rivalry between the Army and the Navy. This rivalry not only clouded the judgement of the component commanders but of their civilian superiors as well. The commanders refused to cooperate and concentrate their efforts. The service secretaries sought only to further their own political careers. As a result, the campaign concluded as a failure for the Union and a moral victory for the Confederacy. Not until the services can put their own self interests aside, and work together toward a common end, will jointness become a reality.

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JOINT OPERATIONS AGAINST CHARLESTON

For years now, the U. S. military has labored under the strain of jointness. In the past ten years, a joint force made up from all the services, has executed every military operation, no matter how small in scope. However, the services have had a tough time executing in that arena. As a result, Congress, supported by the military reformers, began to mandate jointness in an effort to improve the military's overall joint warfighting capability.

The issue of jointness is not a new one. The services have been conducting joint operations for a long time. Unfortunately, the military did not learn the lessons provided from these early operations and continued to make these same mistakes on into the twentieth century. To support this thesis, I will use the Union's attack on Charleston, SC during the Civil War.

In the years prior to the Union's assault on the harbor defenses at Charleston, South Carolina in 1863, the war had been going poorly for the North. Faced with a series of losses and missed opportunities, Lincoln's administration was under fire from the press and antiwar groups. In an effort to alleviate this situation, Major General George B. McClellan was replaced by Major General Henry W. Halleck as commander of all the Union's armies.

Halleck used a decentralized approach in commanding the Army. His various field commanders were responsible for preparing their own individual plans in isolation and without the benefit of a cohesive military strategy.

The promotion of Halleck also promoted the lack of unity of effort between the Army and Navy. "Halleck's experience with Admiral Foote in the West had left him with a bad opinion of the Navy's capability against land defenses and of its willingness to cooperate fully with the Army."¹ The war became purely a continental endeavor carried out primarily by the Army. The Navy had been relegated to a supporting role and spent most of its time convoying men and supplies and blockading ports along the Atlantic and Gulf coasts.

The Navy, under the control of Secretary Gideon Welles and Assistant Secretary Gustavus Fox, was pleased at not being tied to the Army.

They felt that the Navy, and not the Army, had won the only significant battles of the war.

Despite Admiral Farragut's view that military force was always necessary to reduce shore batteries, Porter's conviction that the New Orleans Campaign was purely a naval triumph confirmed their belief that operations with the fleet alone almost always succeeded, while those requiring cooperation with the Army almost always failed.²

The victories at New Orleans, Port Royal, and Memphis had enhanced the Navy's popularity in the North.

The land war was being fought in two theaters. The eastern theater was in Virginia, centered around the confederate capitol, and the western theater was aligned in the Mississippi River basin. It was in the eastern theater that the Union Navy was tasked with blockading the major ports in order to prevent the South's exporting of cotton and its importation of European goods. Charleston harbor was one of these ports, and the South Atlantic Squadron under Admiral Samuel F. Du Pont was charged with blockading this city.

Major (later Brevet Brigadier General) Hazard Stevens in his account of military operations in South Carolina described the Charleston area.

Behind the line of islands, which cover the whole sea front from Cape Hatteras to the St. John's River in Florida, is a continuous waterway of creeks and bayous, navigable the entire distance by small craft and for much of the way by steamboats of considerable size. Every inlet, which connected these inside waters with the ocean, furnished a ready outlet and entrance for blockade runners, and all the channels of each inlet and harbor had of course to be closely guarded. One feature of the larger harbors is the number of channels having mouths quite out at sea; so that, unless the blockading vessels can lie close inside the harbor or behind the islands, they are in many cases obliged to lie in a wide semi-circle several miles from shore, and in foggy or very stormy weather it was quite impossible to prevent the expert blockade runner, with his long, low, lead-colored hull, from occasionally slipping.³

It was precisely because of this difficulty in effectively blockading Charleston that the Union's objective for the campaign's actions was the city itself. In the war, there were three planned undertakings to capture the city. One was by the Union Army, in 1862, under the command of Major General David Hunter. His plan was to capture the city over James Island. However, due to the lack of surprise and the incompetency of some of his officers, the attack went for naught. The second operation was conducted by the Union Navy.

As stated earlier, the Army under Halleck and the Navy under Welles and Fox had gone their separate ways in conducting the war. Fox, in particular, was infatuated with the prospect of capturing the "Cradle of the Confederacy."⁴

This campaign was undertaken by Admiral Du Pont. Initially Du Pont was not in favor of this expedition. In his opinion, the city could only be taken by a joint Army Navy operation. In fact, Du Pont believed that the initial attack by General Hunter was the correct one. In his opinion, the failure of that operation was due in large part to the ineptitude of the commander. Hunter was relieved, and General Ormsby Mitchel was put in charge of the Department of the South.

General Mitchel approached Du Pont with a plan for the capture of Charleston. Mitchel's plan called for a joint attack on

James Island. Du Pont was all in favor of such a plan but had to contend with Assistant Secretary Fox. Fox had other plans for Charleston. Fox was not pleased with the developments as they did not fit in with his plans. Fox had become enchanted with the monitors and was convinced that the Navy, using the monitors, could capture Charleston. Though Du Pont was willing to cancel the operation in support of Fox, he was unaware that the secretary desired an unsupported naval campaign.

It was now the admiral's turn to issue a strong warning. Reminding Fox that there was no similarity between a city situated on a river bank, like New Orleans, and one at the head of a cul-de-sac, he urged the department not "go off half-cocked about Charleston." Any operation must be studied carefully and thoroughly prepared, not because Charleston was of any military importance, but because failure would have disastrous political repercussions at home and abroad.⁵

Du Pont's warnings were to no avail. Fox saw this place as the ultimate propaganda prize for the U.S. Navy and was not to be denied.

In October, Du Pont was called to Washington ostensibly for a conference with naval officials. Knowing Du Pont's reluctance for a purely naval attack on Charleston, Fox cleverly arranged for the admiral to tour the New York shipyard and the Naval Ordnance Bureau. This was done to acquaint the admiral with the innovations that were taking place with the monitor program. Impressed as he was with the new gun and the armor plating,

Admiral Du Pont had serious reservations concerning their utility at Charleston. Based on his experiences at Port Royal, Du Pont was not convinced that the monitors could provide the necessary rate of fire required to take the forts guarding Charleston's harbor entrance and would not support Fox's scheme.

Understanding Du Pont's desire for Army forces, Fox convinced Secretary of War Edwin Stanton to provide General Hunter with about ten to fifteen thousand troops. At the same time, Fox made it clear to the admiral that this was to be a Navy show. Halleck had no objection to sending the force as most of the Army forces were recruits not needed in other areas. This promise of ill-trained troops did nothing to persuade the admiral. As a last resort, Secretary Welles informed Du Pont that Captain John A. Dahlgren, Chief of Naval Ordnance and a favorite of the President, had requested an opportunity for command. Welles further stated that Dahlgren believed that the monitors could take Charleston. This pressure by the secretary was too much for the admiral, and he agreed to undertake the mission.

Du Pont received a letter from Admiral Percival Drayton, a close friend, which bothered him considerably. Drayton was convinced that the monitors could enter the harbor only after the Army had cleared the Confederate positions covering the approaches. The untimely death of General Mitchel convinced Du Pont that the operation was doomed. Because of his concern at

being sacked, he never relayed his fear to Washington. Instead, Du Pont continued to give the impression that Charleston could be taken with a few more monitors.

At about the same time, the Union General John G. Foster, with the aid of Admiral Samuel P. Lee, was attempting to capture Wilmington, North Carolina. However, their efforts were thwarted by tough Confederate resistance and the loss of the two monitors. The end result was that Foster was sent to reinforce Hunter for the upcoming attack on Charleston.

Foster had a plan which did not rely on the Navy's ability to reduce the forts by themselves. This plan was of interest to Hunter. If he had things his way, the Army was not going to be left out of the attack on Charleston.

Foster proposed that while Hunter's X Corps remain in relief his own troops (XVIII Corps) under Naglee would land on the southern tip of Morris Island under the cover of light-draft gun boats. Meanwhile, the monitor squadron with the flagship New Ironsides would silence Fort Sumter in preparation for an infantry assault on Battery Wagner, a strong sand fort on the northern end of the island. Siege artillery could then be emplaced on Morris Island within range to reduce Sumter, after which the navy could run into the harbor.6

The naval officers were not willing to support Foster's plan. They believed that the monitors would be unable to provide the necessary volume of fire required to insure the success of the operation.

Du Pont's alternative plan was to have the Army land over James Island. The Stono River was deep enough to allow the monitors, as well as the flagship, to be in positions that provided for better fire support.

Foster was not at all pleased with Du Pont's plan. No matter how much fire support the Navy provided, the terrain, which was primarily coastal marsh, was not suited for an attack. The ships' ability to provide direct fire was blocked by the stands of trees. Also, the Confederates, having interior lines, had the ability to react quickly and in mass to defeat such an attack. In the end, both Foster and Du Pont abandoned the idea. Foster believed that placing heavier guns across the inlet on Folly Island would provide him with the ability to bring effective fire on the forts on Morris Island without the requirement for naval support.

Foster returned to Washington on the premise that he was going to pick up the necessary ordnance and confer with the authorities on the problems uncovered in his planning conferences with the Navy. He had a meeting with the President and the Secretary of the Navy and Halleck. The report he relayed was that Du Pont would not provide him the required support for the capture of Morris Island and that Du Pont was hesitant about attacking Charleston by himself. Both the President and the Secretary of the Navy were eager for the capture of the city, but on the other hand, had no desire for this enterprise to become a long, drawn

out siege. In their opinion, "it would take too long, cost too much, damage the administration with the press, discourage the public, encourage foreign intervention, and so forth."7 Foster reminded those present

. . . that Charleston was of no military importance and that he had no interest in the project. Halleck reminded Foster that the troops were not expected to do anything; they were only sent at Fox's request to satisfy Du Pont. Fox then reassured Lincoln and Halleck that the Navy Department never intended a combined (joint) operation either.8

Fox further stated that "Du Pont knew what was expected of him and had agreed in October to force the harbor with the fleet alone. Nothing had changed, said Fox; the monitors were invulnerable, and no batteries could stop them."9

While Foster was in Washington, undermining the position of Du Pont, his own position was being challenged by Hunter. It seems that no sooner had Foster left for his meeting with the President and the secretaries of the Navy, than Hunter decided to assert his position as the commander of the Department of the South. Hunter demanded that Foster's second in command, General Henry M. Naglee, and the other division commanders report the strengths of their organizations to him. The altercation between Hunter and General Naglee resulted in the dismissal of all of Foster's staff and the attempted absorption of Foster's command into Hunter's. The situation was further aggravated by Hunter's threat to have

Foster jailed upon his return. Halleck only made things worse by his involvement. He would not allow Foster's command to be absorbed by Hunter nor would he allow Foster's command to be under the administrative control of Hunter. The only authority Hunter had was the operational control of Foster's forces. Furthermore, Halleck left the problem of dealing with General Naglee up to Hunter.

This situation left Hunter in a quandary. Hunter was preparing to assault Charleston and could ill afford the loss of Naglee. Furthermore, when Foster's staff left they took the operations plans with them. Hunter, faced with the threat of failure even before he began, decided to keep Naglee on. However, the rift between Hunter and Naglee could not be resolved. Hunter placed his chief of staff, General Trueman Seymore, in charge of the planning for the assault.

General Seymore's plan was to have Hunter's corps landing on the north side of Sullivan's Island in an effort to drive the Confederates into Fort Moultrie. The fort would then be taken in conjunction with the fleet. The X Corps, which had been Foster's, would make a demonstration on James or Morris Island to draw the Confederates' attention away from the main attack.

Naglee, upon learning of the plan, was furious.

In a confidential letter to Foster on 3 March, he graphically described the

rampant confusion and the ineptitude in Hunter's department. No one knew who was in command of what, he had no corps staff, nor did he know his tactical plan. The dismissal of Foster's staff had caused a hopeless muddle in the quarter-master department so that the North Carolina divisions had no transport. Such gross incompetence, said Naglee, was more than he could stand and would surely produce a disaster.¹⁰

About that same time, Hunter advised his superiors that all was ready, and the operation could begin as soon as the Navy was ready. Naglee, being the most competent of the field commanders, continued to complain openly of the problems with the plan. Hunter became convinced that this was nothing more than an attempt by Naglee to get even with him for his treatment of Foster. Hunter had no choice but to relieve Naglee for what he considered blatant insubordination.

The end result of all this internal bickering was the impact it had on Admiral Du Pont. The Army's participation in the campaign was scuttled, and the Navy was left to undertake the operation on its own.

By this time, Du Pont was under additional pressure to begin operations against Charleston. The President and the secretaries were looking for a quick victory to get the press and the anti-war activists off their backs.

The New York Tribune warned that, unless the war ended in three months, the United

States would be bankrupt. The Treasury had been forced to ask the New York financial houses for another large loan; this one for \$300 million to fund the war debt. While the bankers agreed to the loan, it was conditional upon the government's promise that it would be the last. If such a promise could not be given, the Tribune urged the President to negotiate with the Confederacy. The New York World was even more pessimistic. Subduing the South was impossible; the government should sue for peace at once, regardless of the decision on the loan.¹¹

However, Du Pont was hoping that the Army, given time, would be able to work out their internal problems and put someone in charge who would be able to provide the required assistance for the operation. He also did not share Fox's enthusiasm for the monitors and was still not convinced of their ability to render the forts on their own.

The bleak future painted by the press caused a great amount of hand wringing by the administration. There needed to be a victory and soon.

Secretary Welles sent Du Pont a letter that gave the admiral two courses of action.

If, after careful examination, Du Pont should deem the number of ironclads insufficient to render the capture of that port (Charleston) reasonably certain, he could cancel the operation. While not explicitly stating what would become of the monitors in this case, his reference to a possible offensive against Mobile left Du Pont in no doubt they would be sent immediately to Farragut. If, on the

other hand, he should consider a naval attack practicable, it must be carried out at once.¹²

Welles lead Du Pont to believe that his blockading vessels were needed to stave off the commerce raiders in the West Indies. According to Welles, this made " . . . the capture of Charleston and Mobile imperative."¹³

Before Du Pont could come to a decision he was overcome by two events. First was the loss of the gunboat Isaac Smith to the Confederates and its subsequent use as a blockade runner. Second was the attack by the Confederate navy on the Union blockading fleet with two of their own ironclads. The resulting damage convinced Du Pont that something had to be done to protect his wooden hulled ships. These events put Du Pont in a quandary. He had to have the monitors to protect his wooden hulled blockading ships and in order to keep them, he had to undertake a naval attack on the port city, an attack that could not succeed.

Faced with this dilemma, Du Pont decided to attempt an attack against Fort McAllister on the Ogeechee River in an effort to prove to the powers in Washington that the monitors were no match for the forts defending Charleston harbor. Fort McAllister was a well constructed fort with heavy guns handled by experienced gun crews. For four hours, the Union ironclads poured round after

round into the fort without results. The superficial damage to the monitors did little to overcome Du Pont's fears.

In a letter to Welles, Du Pont stated,

Whatever degree of impenetrability they might have, there was no corresponding quality of aggression or destructiveness as against forts, the slowness of fire giving full time for the gunners in the fort to take shelter in the bombproofs. Since the enemy's fire could not be smothered by a greater volume of fire from the ships, the channel obstructions barring the entrance to Charleston's inner harbor could not be removed. In short, the engagement had conclusively demonstrated that the department's idea for running by the forts was impracticable and that in all such operations, to secure success, troops are necessary.¹⁴

Unfortunately for Du Pont, Fox was overconfident in what he perceived as the indestructible nature of the monitors. Fox sent Du Pont a dispatch which told Du Pont "...not to worry about the fleet's capability, since the department didn't envisage a stand-up fight with the forts. He should simply run past the batteries in imitation of Farragut at New Orleans."¹⁵ Fox further instructed Du Pont to "carry your flag supreme and superb, defiant and disdainful, silent amid the 200 guns, steam up to the city docks and receive the surrender."¹⁶ Fox ended by saying, "The sublimity of such a silent attack is beyond all words to describe, and I beg you not to let the army spoil it."¹⁷

In an effort to sway Fox away once more from the ludicrous plan he had envisioned, Du Pont again attempted an attack on Fort McAllister. This time he sent four monitors against the fort. The results of this battle were no better than the first, and the monitors fared badly.

In his report of the fight to Fox, Du Pont stated

. . . that of the four monitors involved, two got aground, two had their concussion boxes injured, one had her XV in. gun carriage injured, one was injured by a torpedo (mine), and one by bomb shell---without taking a 7 gun fort.¹⁸

Du Pont concluded by stating, "Part only of those vessels which go into the fight at Charleston will be efficient at the end of it."¹⁹

Du Pont sent a subsequent report to Fox complaining of the many problems found in the monitors. This report, like all the rest, fell on deaf ears. In a personal letter to his friend, James Biddle, Du Pont stated,

The monitors were not only vulnerable; they were entirely "unfit for action." Attacking the Charleston forts with these inferior vessels and their unreliable batteries was an invitation to disaster. As for combined (joint) operations, nothing could be done. The army ought long ago to have landed on James Island where it could have destroyed all of the harbor forts. It was now too late; the enemy commanded the landing sites and the whole island was covered with earth-works.²⁰

So the stage was set. The Army commander Hunter was reeling under the pressure to save his own reputation, and the Naval commander Du Pont was convinced that the attack on Charleston would fail because of the lack of support from the Army commander.

On the 7th of April, 1863, Admiral Du Pont sailed into the harbor entrance with his flag ship the New Ironsides and eight monitors. Du Pont's plan was to dash between Forts Sumter and Moultrie and attack the forts from within. The lead monitor was provided with a bow raft used to blow up obstructions. The Navy Department considered these bow rafts as the means necessary for entering the harbor of Charleston. However, the rafts were not popular with the captains of the monitors. They made an already unresponsive ship more so. True to form, before the monitor could reach any of the obstructions, the bow raft had to be cast off.

Dupont reported the incident as follows:

The ironclads withdrew after a short engagement, five of the eight disabled wholly or partially. One of them, the Keokuk, was so much injured that she sank outside and was abandoned. Nothing was accomplished, except to show that Charleston was in no danger of being taken by the naval force at our disposal. The Confederates fished up two 11-inch Dahlgren guns from the wreck of the Keokuk, and gained further confidence in their ability to repel our attacks.²¹

In a later report

. . . to the Department, dated April 15th, Admiral Du Pont gives with particularity the fire delivered by the vessels engaged

and the injuries sustained by the vessels held under the most severe fire of heavy ordnance that had ever been delivered, and while it was barely possible that some vessels might have forced their way through, it would only have been to be again impeded by other and more formidable obstructions and to encounter other powerful batteries with which the harbor of Charleston was lined. He says that the slowness of our fire and our inability to occupy any batteries we might silence are disadvantages of the gravest character. . . .22

He further stated,

I had hoped that the endurance of the ironclads would have enabled them to have borne any weight of fire to which they might have been exposed; but when I found that so large a portion of them were wholly or one-half disabled by less than an hour's engagement, before attempting to remove (overcome) the obstructions, or testing the power of the torpedos, I was convinced that persistence in the attack would result in the loss of the greater portion of the ironclad fleet, and in leaving many of them inside the harbor, to fall into the hands of the enemy.23

That evening, Admiral Du Pont received a letter from Welles. It read as follows: "Sir--The exigencies of the public service are so pressing in the Gulf that the Department directs you to send all the ironclads that are in a fit condition to move, after your present attack upon Charleston, directly to New Orleans, reserving to yourself only two."24 The letter was dated 2 April, five days prior to the unfortunate attack.

Fox also sent Du Pont a letter on the same date which reiterated Welles' letter. The receipt of these letters was un-

fortunate, for that very night, Hunter's staff had proposed a plan to Du Pont's staff for a joint attack on Morris Island.

Following the unsuccessful attack on the port city, Du Pont was all for giving up any hope of taking any more offensive action. He told Hunter that the ships were in no shape to attempt another attack and told the same story to his superiors in Washington. The President and the Secretary of the Navy both wrote Du Pont ordering him to remain in the Charleston area and to continue to blockade the port.

However, on the 14th of April, the President sent the admiral the following letter:

This is intended to clear up an apparent inconsistency between the recent order to continue operations before Charleston, and the former one to remove to another point in a certain contingency. No censure upon you, or either of you, is intended; we still hope by cordial and judicious co-operation you can take the batteries on Morris Island and wish the demonstration kept up for a time, for a collateral and very important object, we wish the attempt to be a real one (though not a desperate one) if it affords any considerable chance of success. But if prosecuted for a demonstration only, this must not be made public, or the whole effect will be lost. Once again before Charleston, do not leave before further orders from here. Of course this is not intended to force you to leave unduly exposed Hilton Head Island or other points in your charge. 25

The monitors that were damaged during the fight were sent to Port Royal for repairs. While there, the Naval Department sent

Chief- Engineer Allan C. Stimers to inspect the ships and report his findings. Stimers had observed the attack on the harbor and was upset that the monitors' captains had been reluctant to use the two rafts that he had brought with him. Stimers was also not in agreement with the admiral as to the amount of damage sustained by the monitors during the engagement. In his report to Washington, he stated,

In consideration of the vast importance to our country that the stronghold of rebellion should be reduced, I take the liberty to express to the Department my firm opinion that the obstructions can be readily passed with the means already provided and our entire fleet of ironclads pass up successfully to the wharfs of Charleston, and that the monitor vessels still retain sufficient enduring powers to enable them to pass all the forts and batteries which may be reasonably expected. 26

This report of Stimer's was the last nail in Du Pont's coffin. In June, 1863, he was relieved of his command.

Du Pont's replacement, Admiral Dahlgren, arrived at Port Royal on the 4th of July. He said in his memoirs,

General Gillmore (Hunter's replacement) wished to act, and had called for assistance. Du Pont had no specific instructions, but would assist. He preferred to await my arrival. A very loose state of things; no shape or connection. After Rogers got to the Wabash a note was sent me from Du Pont, saying he was "rejoiced" and would send for me at 10. . . In the afternoon I went over to Hilton Head to see General Gillmore. He said that his project must now be tried, or

it would be too late in a few days, so I had no alternative but to grant the aid asked for.²⁷

The following day, Admiral Dahlgren and General Gillmore devised a plan for capture of Morris Island and the port city. "It was proposed that the Army and the Navy should cooperate. Gillmore's task was to take Morris Island and render Sumter powerless for offensive work. This having been done, the Navy relying on the ironclads especially, was to enter the harbor, remove the channel obstructions and pass up to the city."²⁸

The plan of operations was then as follows:

- 1st. The descent upon the south end of Morris Island, and capture of the enemy's fortified position there. This was effected July 10, 1863, and included two co-operative feigned attacks elsewhere.
- 2d. To besiege and reduce Fort Wagner, a heavy armed earthwork near the north end of Morris Island, distance 2600 yards from Sumter.
- 3d. From the position thus secured to demolish Sumter, and afterwards cooperate with the Navy, when they were ready to move in, by heavy artillery fire.
- 4th. The monitors and ironclads to enter, remove the channel obstructions, run by the batteries on James and Sullivan's islands and reach the city.²⁹

This plan had the full support of both the Army and the Navy Departments and was looked upon with great anticipation by the President. It was especially liked by Fox because in the end the Navy would be the force taking Charleston. The attack began on the morning of 10 July. The initial assault made by Gillmore's

forces on Morris Island was successful, and most of the island was in Union hands. However, the attackers failed to build on their initial gains and failed to continue the assault on Fort Wagner. This was to be the beginning of the end for the joint venture.

From the 11th to the 18th, the forces under Gillmore attacked Wagner with little to show for it but growing frustration and loss of life. The Navy under Dahlgren provided all the fire support they could but were not capable of breaking the backs of the defenders. Due to Gillmore's frustration at not being able to take Wagner and Dahlgren's inability to do more in his support role, the spirit of cooperation between these two men began to wane.

It was in a report to Halleck in August 1863, that Gillmore complained of the timidity of the admiral in moving on the city. After his failure to take Wagner, Gillmore positioned his guns and for seven days blasted the walls of Sumter. Gillmore claimed to have effectively destroyed the fort and that Dahlgren should have immediately made his move.

With the Navy not moving, all that was left for the joint force to do was renew their attacks on Wagner. On the 5th of September, all the firepower that could be mustered, both Army and Navy, was unleashed on the earthen fort. For 42 hours, the Union forces pounded the defenders. This was the telling blow, and Wagner ceased to function.

On the 8th of September Admiral Dahlgren notified General Gillmore that he was preparing to assault Sumter. The general informed the admiral that he had ordered the same thing. Each commander, upon learning of the other's plan to take the same objective on the same night failed to coordinate or join their forces under a single commander. In fact, Gillmore made that very suggestion, but the admiral would only consent if the joint commander were a naval officer.

Gillmore reminded the admiral that the object of the campaign was more important than professional pride and that their success thus far was due to a selfless spirit of cooperation. The most they could arrange was a set of signals to prevent the two expeditions from running into each other.³⁰

As to be expected, the expedition by the Navy to take Sumter failed. The Army expedition, having arrived too late to be of any help, only stood by and watched Dahlgren's forces cut down in the attempt.

General Gillmore had done all he could and considered his work finished. He requested to be given a new mission, perhaps a campaign against Wilmington. On the other hand, Dahlgren refused any advice from the Army. Much to Gillmore's dismay, he insisted that the obstructions could not be removed without the Army physically occupying the ruins of Sumter.

When Gillmore offered on 27 September to remove the obstructions him-

self in lieu of expending more ammunition in fruitless bombardments. Dahlgren was greatly offended. He reminded the general that the capture of Morris Island and the destruction of Sumter, for which the Army took full credit in the press, would have been impossible without the fleet, remarking that, if the Navy no longer functioned efficiently, it was the Army's fault.³¹

In October, the rift between the two commanders was irreparable. Gillmore was pressing for another assignment, and Dahlgren was on his own. The Navy Department was having second thoughts on the situation and attempted to dismiss the whole campaign. Halleck, for his part, was happy with the Army's actions in Charleston. In the end, the Navy continued its blockade, and, late in the war, Charleston fell to the Union Army.

In analyzing the Union's joint campaign against Charleston, it becomes readily apparent why the whole campaign was programed for failure and that there are some lessons to be learned. To begin with, the Union failed from the outset to establish one single commander for the operation. The operation was to be carried out under a spirit of mutual cooperation between commanders. The closest the Army and the Navy came to cooperating was when Dahlgren and Gillmore were commanding the forces. Their cooperative spirit was eventually eroded by their lack of understanding of each other's concerns.

The need for a single commander for joint operations has been learned, but there still is a lack of understanding between the services in how they operate and in what their individual concerns are. A good example of this is the lack of understanding between the Navy and the Army in the use of an amphibious task force. An even better example is the Air Force's views on who really owns the airplanes and the crews assigned to a joint task force. Is it the joint task force commander or is it the Air Force?

Personal and professional rivalries, not only at the commander level, but at the service level, prevented the Union commanders at Charleston from being able to mount any real joint attack. This lesson is one that we have continually failed to realize. The jointness for jointness' sake has helped to create more problems than it has solved. The need for all the services to participate in an operation in order to justify their existence is questionable. The use, for example, of Air Force helicopter pilots, unfamiliar with flying assault profiles, rather than Marine pilots for the Mayaguez operation resulted in many needless casualties.

The inability of Lincoln and his advisors to stand up to the pressure of the press forced the Charleston issue. The President is first a politician and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Services somewhere below that in the order of his priorities. Military officers must be aware of that and do what they can to

prevent the indiscriminate use of military force as a quick fix to political problems. More importantly, they must inform the President of the possible consequences of taking military action.

The appropriateness of Charleston as an objective was another problem. The Navy had been fairly successful in stopping the shipping traffic in and out of the port of Charleston. What more could be gained militarily? Even Halleck thought the expedition was a frivolous enterprise. The lesson to be learned here is perhaps the most perplexing one for the military mind. Those decisions we as military officers make are normally the result of common sense reasoning. The decisions that our political bosses make, at times, have no appearance of any common sense. A good example of this is in how the government portions out its military assistance program funds to those countries in the Third World. Why does Israel get so much and the majority of countries in South and Central America get so little? When you take a common sense approach to analyzing the different situations, it only makes sense that Israel should be getting a smaller percentage of the available funds.

Another problem was the self-serving interests of Fox and Welles. In coercing Du Pont to attack, they hoped to gain publicity for the Navy and to feather their own political caps. This game has been and is still being played. Pressure is applied by politicians on the military in the area of procurement in order

to maintain their constituency. For example, there is the publicized purchasing requirements levied by Congress on the military of items that they did not want to buy, but were told to buy. The only purpose for the expenditures was to support the politician's political future at home.

The failure of the Navy's civilian leaders to take into account the advice of Du Pont posed another problem. The most recent example of this type of problem is the Marines being sent to Beirut against the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The result is well known.

Throughout the campaign in Charleston, there existed a continual interference and micro management by the Department of the Navy. The Mayaguez operation is a good recent example of this happening. The company commander of the Marine assault force that landed on Kotang Island was getting tactical direction from civilians in the Oval Office. One of our guest speakers, when asked how he dealt with this problem during the Grenada operation, stated that he used information overload. He provided so much information up the chain that his seniors would be too busy to micro manage his staff.

Another hindrance was the Navy Department's (more precisely Fox's) love affair with the new technology of the day, the monitors. They were unable to comprehend the ironclads' operational deficiencies. This has long been a problem within and

without the military and the Department of Defense. We tend to have a great infatuation with technology, and once sold on a particular system, we tend to ignore real deficiencies. For example, all the services are guilty of buying some new piece of equipment that has limited operational utility for the express purpose of starting a money account in order to develop its capabilities in the future. The other side of the coin is that the services are guilty of delaying the fielding of some very good systems because there is some future improvement that will make the system do more or work better.

There are many lessons that can be learned about joint warfighting from the Union's campaign against Charleston. However, the factors which contributed to the failure of that joint operation still exist today. All one has to do is to listen to the constant debates here at the college to see this. There is debate over such subjects as the percentage of the military budget, loss in force structure, and individual service missions. This all perpetuates a continual rivalry among the services and a lack of unification. Until that is overcome, the true success of any joint operation is in question.

ENDNOTES

1 Rawena Reed, Combined Operations in the Civil War (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1978), p. 261.

2 Ibid., p. 264.

3 "Operations on the Atlantic Coast 1891-1865," Papers of the Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, Vol. IX (Boston: Military Historical Society of Massachusetts, 1912), p. 161-162.

4 Reed, p. 267.

5 Ibid., p. 268.

6 Ibid., p. 274.

7 Ibid., p. 276.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., p. 279.

11 Ibid., pp. 280-281.

12 Ibid., p. 281.

13 Ibid., p. 282.

14 Ibid., p. 284.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p. 285.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 287.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p. 288.

21 "Operations," p. 167.

22 Daniel Ammen. The Atlantic Coast (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1883). pp. 101-102.

23 Ibid., p. 104.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid., p. 107.

26 Ibid., p. 110.

27 Ibid., p. 127.

28 "Operations," p. 167.

29 Ibid., pp. 167-168.

30 Reed, p. 313.