

FICKLE ALLIES: REGULAR AND IRREGULAR
CONFEDERATE FORCES IN MISSOURI DURING THE
AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

A Monograph

by

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ABSTRACT

FICKLE ALLIES: REGULAR AND IRREGULAR CONFEDERATE FORCES IN MISSOURI DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR, by Major Scott D. Welborn, USMC, 62 pages.

Today's operational environment finds irregular warfare alive and well. Irregular forces' organization, size, composition, and depth of support vary greatly on the battlefield. These dynamics correspondingly impact their overall influence and effect on a given conflict, as irregulars may serve as a mere harassment or weigh heavily on the final results. The state of Missouri and the surrounding region were no strangers to guerrilla and irregular warfare during the American Civil War. Pre-existing conflict and competing sentiments for secession or neutrality laid the roots for a violent struggle to determine the fate of Missouri as a Union or Confederate state. Pro-Confederate Missourians formed irregular organizations to fight for a secessionist Missouri. These forces associated with the Confederate government and army to pursue common objectives; however, the relationships between these organizations were largely ill-defined.

Two predominant pro-Confederate organizations, the Missouri State Guard (MSG) and William Quantrill's band of guerrillas, approached irregular warfare in and around Missouri with very different methods and tactics. The operational histories of the MSG and Quantrill's band reveal instances of coordinated operations with the conventional army/ government and unilateral activities alike. Through a detailed study of these forces and the larger operational context for the Confederacy, this monograph finds that there was no consistent, cohesive relationship between regular and irregular forces, and that this lack of structure impaired operational planning and effectiveness. The paper concludes by looking at the relevance to the contemporary operating environment and offers considerations and recommendations for today's operational planner.

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ACRONYMS

MSG Missouri State Guard

No general ever commanded a braver or a better army. It is composed of the best blood and the bravest men of Missouri.¹

— Major General Sterling Price, September 21, 1861

The War Department took Kansas out of my department, and I cannot ask for any part of it. Thank God it is no longer under my command. Let it slide; don't expect anything from it.²

— Major General Henry Halleck to Brigadier General John Schofield, June 21, 1862

INTRODUCTION

It was fall 1861 in Civil War Missouri. Mrs. M. E. Lewis and her Osceola, Missouri neighbors heard reports that General Lane and his Union-affiliated Kansas Jayhawkers were in the area on one of their cross-border incursions into Missouri. The Kansans made their approach on Osceola near midnight one fall evening in October. With her husband away performing medical services, Mrs. Lewis and her daughter peered through the windows of their house and watched the Jayhawkers ride toward town.³ Missouri State Guard (MSG) Captain John Weidemeyer and his two companies near town fired upon the approaching Jayhawkers, in vain, and quickly retreated from Osceola altogether. Confronted by a force of Kansans ten times his size, the skirmish was over almost as soon as it began.⁴

The morning daylight brought two dozen of the Jayhawkers to Mrs. Lewis' front door demanding food and quarter. She served the compulsory breakfast and stood helpless while many of the men took the liberty of sleeping in rooms throughout her house. Well-rested and fed on the

¹*War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, Series I, Vol. 3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1881), 188. Hereinafter cited as *O. R.*

²*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 13, 440.

³M. E. Lewis, "Kansas Jayhawkers Raid Upon Osceola, October, 1861," in *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, ed. Missouri Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy (Jefferson City, MO: Hughes Stephens Printing Co, 1920), 54-55. <https://archive.org/details/womenofmissouri00missrich> (accessed November 18, 2013).

⁴John M. Weidemeyer, "Memoirs of a Confederate Soldier," in *Reminiscences of the Women of Missouri During the Sixties*, Missouri Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy (Jefferson City, MO: Hughes Stephens Printing Co, 1920), 63-64. <https://archive.org/details/womenofmissouri00missrich> (accessed November 18, 2013).

backs of the Osceola townspeople like Mrs. Lewis, General Lane and his Kansas Jayhawkers proceeded to loot the town's stores and homes.⁵ Some Jayhawkers drank stolen barrels of brandy while others commandeered livestock, food and equipment. An impromptu court-martial sentenced nine Osceola men to death. Departing that afternoon with their plunder, Lane ordered the town razed, and his Jayhawkers complied by setting the town on fire and destroying nearly every building and home along the way.⁶ This was the face of war in Missouri and the surrounding region.

Contemporary joint doctrine defines *irregular forces* as “armed individuals or groups who are not members of the regular armed forces, police, or other internal security forces.”⁷ This broad-encompassing definition serves to describe the myriad types of belligerents that we may find on the battlefield who don't fit neatly under the label of regular, or conventional, military. Irregular forces may consist of partisan forces and resistance fighters seeking to wage an irregular war against an established government and/ or stronger military force in a quest for popular support and legitimacy.⁸ Irregular forces may also include guerrilla fighters comprised of “predominantly indigenous personnel organized along military lines to conduct military and paramilitary operations in enemy-held, hostile, or denied territory.”⁹

Irregular forces' organization, size, composition, and depth of support vary greatly on the battlefield. These dynamics correspondingly impact the influence and effect that irregular forces have on a given conflict. Small, unorganized pockets of resistance may serve as mere harassment

⁵Lewis, “Kansas Jayhawkers Raid Upon Osceola,” 54-55.

⁶Jay Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border 1854-1865* (New York, NY: Bonanza Books, 1955), 195-196.

⁷U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05: *Special Operations* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2011), GL-8.

⁸U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 1: *Joint Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2013), I-6.

⁹U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Publication 3-05, GL-8.

to the opposition. Likewise, a well-organized irregular force that synchronizes its operations with conventional units may serve as a force multiplier and dramatically influence a war's outcome.

The American Civil War pitched belligerents against each other in a struggle that involved both conventional and irregular forms of warfare, and the Union and Confederacy alike employed irregular elements in pursuit of their ends. Reflective of our contemporary joint doctrine, a wide diversity of organizations, units, and individuals fell under the classification of irregular forces during the Civil War. In his work, *The Hard Hand of War*, historian Mark Grimsley divides irregular secessionist forces into four categories:

regularly organized Confederate cavalry who happened on occasion to adopt irregular tactics . . . partisan rangers of the sort authorized by the Confederate Congress in April 1862 . . . politicized civilians who fought covertly, masquerading as noncombatants, and simple outlaws for whom the war was mainly an excuse to indulge in mayhem.¹⁰

The first two wore uniforms and followed directions from an established chain of command (state, national government, etc.), whereas, the latter two operated more independently and didn't have uniforms, important distinctions impacting the handling and rights of these fighters as either lawful or unlawful combatants.¹¹ Pro-Union irregular forces fell under the same categories with the only exception being that the Union had no formal partisan ranger legislation like that of the Confederacy, a policy topic explored in detail in a later section of this monograph.¹²

Missouri and the surrounding region were no strangers to the guerrilla aspect of the American Civil War; irregular forces and tactics were a harsh reality and predominant aspect of the war in the west. That region saw examples of the varied irregular actors described by Mark

¹⁰Mark Grimsley, *The Hard Hand of War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 112.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 112.

¹²Margaret Wagner, Gary Gallagher, and Paul Finkelman, eds., *Civil War Desk Reference* (New York, NY: Simon and Shuster, 2002), 448.

Grimsley operating among the population and in the operational areas of conventional units.¹³ Confederate-affiliated irregulars included informal and independent forces, such as the guerrilla band led by William Quantrill, as well as the more-structured and organized MSG chartered by its state government. Additionally, home guard units formed to defend their local communities against threats of any kind.¹⁴ Some home guards were decidedly pro-Union while others formed without allegiance to one side or the other, their goal being to defend their local communities against any threat.¹⁵

What was the relationship of such southern irregulars to the conventional forces operating in the same region? Did the MSG operate alongside Confederate Army units, coordinating and synchronizing their efforts to achieve common objectives? Did pro-secessionist guerrillas act independently with no oversight from the Confederacy? What was the operational impact of such relationships, if any existed?

This monograph seeks to resolve such questions. The relationship between the regular and irregular forces in the Missouri and the surrounding region is worth examination to determine how such relationships (or lack thereof) influenced operational planning, the outcome of battles, and the course of the war. The purpose of this research is to obtain a better understanding of said relationships and to draw conclusions relevant to operational planning for the contemporary battlefield. This monograph argues that there was no consistent, cohesive relationship between regular Confederate and irregular forces in Missouri and the surrounding region during the American Civil War, and that this lack of structure impaired operational planning and

¹³Ibid., 23, 449, 450.

¹⁴Missouri History Museum, "Life of a Home Guard and Enrolled Missouri Militia," <http://civilwarmo.org/educators/resources/info-sheets/life-home-guard-and-enrolled-missouri-militia> (accessed November 25, 2013).

¹⁵William F. Switzler, *History of Boone County, Missouri* (Saint Louis, MO: Western Historical Company, 1882), 401, 805. <https://archive.org/details/historyboonecou00unkngoog> (accessed November 25, 2013).

effectiveness for both sides. Historical research and analysis serve as the foundation for this thesis. A study of every irregular actor operating along the border and surrounding region far exceeds the scope and limitations for this monograph. Instead, this study approaches the research topic by examining, in detail, two predominant irregular organizations: the MSG and Quantrill's band of guerrilla fighters.

The body of research for this monograph includes both primary and secondary sources related to Missouri and the surrounding region during the American Civil War, studying the broad operational context and looking closely at the MSG and Quantrill's band. The voluminous collection, *War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, provides tens of thousands of pages of primary source documents from the Civil War, and this monograph leverages many of those primary source orders and correspondence for researching the subject forces and operational environment.

Additional primary sources, such as M. E. Lewis' "Kansas Jayhawkers Raid Upon Osceola, October, 1861" and personal accounts written by MSG or guerrilla soldiers offer first-hand insight into the daily operations and experiences of Civil War Missouri. Three such accounts are Thomas Snead's *The Fight for Missouri: From the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon*, John McCorkle's *Three Years with Quantrell; A True Story*, and Cole Younger's *The Story of Cole Younger, by Himself*. A review of Francis Lieber's *Guerrilla Parties: Considered with Reference to the Law and Usages of War* lays the foundation for understanding the development of Union policy toward partisan and guerrilla fighters in the Civil War. The 1902 U.S. Record and Pension Office publication of *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops, Union and Confederate, in service during the Civil War*, offers an extensive study of the multiple and varied Missouri organizations that fought in the Civil War.

Secondary sources include the William Switzler's 1882 *History of Boone County, Missouri*, the Library of Congress' *Civil War Desk Reference*, Jay Monaghan's 1955 publication

of *Civil War on the Western Border 1854-1865*, Perry S. Rader's 1927 *History of Missouri*, William Connelley's 1910 *Quantrill and the Border Wars*, James Erwin's *Guerrillas in Civil War Missouri*, Mark Grimsley's *The Hard Hand of War*, Michael Fellman's *Inside War*, Edward Leslie's *The Devil Knows how to Ride: The True Story of William Clarke Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders*, Duane Shultz's *Quantrill's War: The Life and Times of William Clarke Quantrill*, John Westover's *Evolution of the Missouri Militia into the National Guard of Missouri 1804-1919*, and others. These references complement primary research and provide additional context for understanding regional history, the operational setting, and the operations and conduct of the MSG and Quantrill's band. Contemporary U.S. joint publications provide a doctrinal foundation for the role of irregular forces in modern warfare.

As a means of roadmap, the monograph begins with an orientation to the strategic context and operational setting by describing the pre-existing discourse and political tensions within the region, introducing the western theater of operations, and outlining national-level policy regarding guerrilla and partisan warfare. The study proceeds by analyzing the aforementioned organizations, describing their tactics, structure, and interaction with conventional Confederate forces. Examination of key battles or operations those forces participated in, as well as a look at political, military and public reactions, will further refine our understanding of the operational impact that irregular forces had in the region. The study concludes with describing key considerations regarding the potential risks and benefits associated with irregular forces and recommendations for today's operational planners.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGIC SETTING AND OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

A History of Conflict

Violence and political discourse came to Missouri and the surrounding region long before the first shots of the Civil War. The roots of conflict span back as far as four decades with the 1820 passage of the Missouri Compromise and subsequent admittance of Missouri as a new state

the following year. The issue of slavery drew battle lines in Congress as pro and anti-slavery representatives alike postured for advantage, and the entrance of Missouri threatened to upset the relative balance of power in Congress. The resultant 1820 Missouri Compromise admitted Missouri into the United States as a slave state but, in turn, also created the State of Maine as a free state to preserve this balance. As an additional stipulation, the compromise banned slavery in any other territories north of a latitude line corresponding with Missouri's southern boundary while making the obvious exception for Missouri to enter the Union as a slave state.¹⁶ Congressional action thirty-four years later would dramatically change the relative peace.

The 1854 passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act brought the issues of slavery and balance of power again to the forefront. With the Kansas and Nebraska territories moving toward statehood, the Act repealed the Missouri Compromise limitation on slavery north of the designated latitude line each territory to pursue its own determination on whether to become slave-holding or free states. Pro and anti-slavery Americans alike flooded into the region seeking to gain a popular advantage and to vote on the issue of slavery. Settlers clashed along the Missouri-Kansas line and within two years a border war was in full effect over the territory. Punitive raids and cross-border attacks spurred a lasting animosity in the region. This bitter fighting would continue in the following years and fuel hostility throughout the Civil War.¹⁷

Political Turmoil and Two Missouri's

A study of Civil War Missouri offers an intriguing look at a war within the war. A truly divided state, "Missouri produced two governments and two state armies"¹⁸ during the course of the war. As such, Missouri provided forces to both the Union and Confederate armies while also

¹⁶Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *Civil War Desk Reference*, 106-107.

¹⁷Ibid., 111-113.

¹⁸John G. Westover, *Evolution of the Missouri Militia into the National Guard of Missouri 1804-1919* (St. Louis, MO: Messenger Printing & Publishing Company, 2005), 85.

forming and employing irregular forces sympathetic to each cause as well. Pro-Union and pro-Confederate sentiments divided the state on the eve of the Civil War. As Southern states began seceding from the Union in late 1860, Missouri's elected leadership established a policy of 'armed neutrality' in which the state would not choose one side over the other, but would instead simply prepare to respond against any force, Union or Confederate, threatening the state's sovereignty. In February and March 1861, a state convention reinforced Missouri's position by overwhelmingly voting against secession and to remain in the Union despite its southern identity as a slave-holding state.¹⁹ Armed action by federal troops in Saint Louis, Missouri in May 1861 would serve as a watershed event forcing Missouri to take a position and thrust the state into the war.

Sympathetic to the southern cause, Missouri governor Claiborne Jackson began mobilizing state forces in the spring of 1861 as hostilities mounted between the Union and seceded states. The staging of 700 pro-Confederate state troops in a garrison just outside of Saint Louis and reports of the force receiving stolen U.S. weapons and equipment from the south alarmed Union Army leadership who saw this as an emerging threat to security. U.S. Army General Lyon responded by surrounding Camp Jackson with 7,000 Union troops and forcing the state troops to surrender. Marching the prisoners through town, local citizens gathered along the streets, some shouting in protest and throwing rocks at the Union troops. Tensions quickly escalated in the melee and Union troops opened fire, killing 28. The reaction was immediate and resolute. Missouri's legislature authorized the creation of a state militia and allocated funds for its defense.²⁰

¹⁹Perry S. Rader, *The History of Missouri; From the Earliest Times to the Present*, rev. ed. (Columbia, MO: Lucas Brothers, 1927), 117, 122-126.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 128, 130-134.

Following the Camp Jackson affair, negotiations between U.S. Army General Nathaniel Lyon and Governor Jackson failed to reach peaceful ends. In June 1861, Governor Jackson, his newly-formed Missouri State Guard leadership, and elements of the administration fled the state capitol in Jefferson City to become a government in exile appealing to the Confederate cause. July 1861 would see a new state government established in Jefferson City and a provisional governor selected to lead Missouri and support the Union. Missouri entered the Civil War torn between two governments, Gamble's pro-Union administration seated in the capitol and Jackson's pro-Confederate administration representing a Confederate Missouri.²¹

Strategic and Operational Importance

As previously highlighted, Missouri entered the Civil War as a contested territory, and control of Missouri had strategic and operational implications. By the spring of 1861, Missouri was one of only two slave states in the west that had not seceded from the union. The state's population of roughly 1.2 million made it larger than most Confederate states and offered an obvious boost in available manpower and resources for either belligerent. Missouri's waterways provided further economic and military interest. As the state's eastern border, the Mississippi River served as a key line of communication flowing south into Confederate territory and connected with the Ohio and Missouri Rivers in the state, providing a waterway connection to the east and to the west, respectively. The Ohio River in southeastern Missouri, providing a connection to the east, while the Missouri River bisected the state and providing a key river route for personnel, arms, and equipment between the east and west. With fewer roads and rail lines compared to the east, control of these waterways offered incredible advantage to either side.²²

²¹Paul C. Nagel, *Missouri, a History* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1977), 130-132.

²²David Nevin, *The Road to Shiloh, Early Battles in the West*, Vol. 4 of *The Civil War* (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life Books, 1983), 8-9, 11.

What limited rail lines did exist in the west became all the more important upon the commencement of hostilities, and this consideration was no secret to the Union. One such line was the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad that cut across northern Missouri. Describing its importance in 1861, New York Congressman Erastus Corning writes that the Hannibal and Saint Joseph Railroad “furnishes the only accessible and speedy route by which the Government can communicate with Kansas, Nebraska, and Utah, or with its military posts along the Western and Northwestern frontier.”²³ Secessionist turmoil inside Missouri served as a threat to these vital water and rail lines of communication serving the Union.

In his book, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, historian James A. Rawley describes the strategic importance of Missouri by writing, “In Confederate hands, the state could interdict commerce on the middle span of the Mississippi and could become a base for thrusts into southern Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee. A Confederate Missouri would have complicated Union mastery of the Mississippi.”²⁴ Confederate leadership appreciated this perspective, and correspondence from Confederate Secretary of War J. P. Benjamin to Major General Braxton Bragg described Missouri as having “supreme importance” to the Confederacy.²⁵

Missouri and the surrounding region fell within the Trans-Mississippi theater of operation during the Civil War. This theater encompassed lands west of the Mississippi River including Missouri, Kansas, Texas, Arkansas, Louisiana and the Indian Territories (Oklahoma). For the Union, the Army of the Southwest, and later the Army of the Frontier, directed operations in the Trans-Mississippi theater. For the Confederacy, the Trans-Mississippi District changed naming conventions throughout the Civil War including the Trans-Mississippi District/ Department/

²³*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 6, 677.

²⁴James A. Rawley, *Turning Points of the Civil War*, New Bison Book edition (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 14.

²⁵*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 6, 788.

Army and the Southwest Army. Despite this strategic and operational value of Missouri and the surrounding region, both governments and their armies understandably had competing priorities to focus on east of the Mississippi River that influenced force allocation and planning.²⁶ Irregular forces presented the Trans-Mississippi theater Union or Confederate army commander with both an opportunity and a threat. An opposing guerrilla force could threaten security while a sympathetic guerrilla force could serve as additional combat power to complement ongoing operations.

Official Government Policy Regarding Irregular Forces

The Confederate Approach

Confederate policy toward the organization and employment of irregular forces changed throughout the course of the Civil War, an indicator of a government and military struggling with finding the best way to leverage these unconventional forces to benefit Confederate objectives. Guerrilla service served as an attractive option for men looking to support the greater cause while retaining autonomy from a formal chain of command. Guerrilla fighters could defend their local community without the constraints of military oversight and direction.²⁷

Correspondence early in the war shows an initial reluctance by the Confederacy to condone the creation and employment of irregular forces. A July 1861 letter sent to the Confederate secretary of war sought clarification on whether the government would consider “men of undoubted respectability . . . anxious to serve the Government on their own account” as legitimate or illegitimate actors on the battlefield.²⁸ War Bureau Chief A. T. Bledsoe promptly responded ten days later discouraging the formation of such guerrilla bands. He argued that their

²⁶Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *Civil War Desk Reference*, 237-238, 380, 382, 391-392.

²⁷Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1989), 81, 97-98.

²⁸*O. R.*, Series IV, Vol. 1, 505-506.

conduct and independent actions would not conform to the “laws and usages of civilized nations,”²⁹ and thus, such forces would not receive the protections afforded lawful combatants. He instead encouraged such men desiring to support the war effort to enter into proper military service under the organization, funding and control of the Confederate government.³⁰ Six months later Acting Secretary of War J. P. Benjamin reinforced the official policy, writing in March 1862 that, “Guerrilla companies are not recognized as part of the military organization of the Confederate States, and cannot be authorized by this Department.”³¹ One month later, however, the Confederate government would change its narrative on the topic of irregular warfare.

In April 1862 the Confederate Congress enacted the Partisan Ranger Act, which authorized the commissioning of partisan officers and ranger units. The Act subjected partisan rangers to the same laws as conventional forces and entitled them to pay, benefits and reimbursement for captured Union weapons.³²

Though appearing to be a fairly straightforward Act, implementation was disorderly and ill-managed. As expected, the Partisan Ranger Act became a popular option for men seeking to fight but on their own terms and independent of higher military authority.³³ State executives found the Act damaging to their conscription efforts as individuals joined partisan ranger forces, thus avoiding enlistment into regular units. Ranger units formed without proper authority, making national tracking and reporting inaccurate. By 1863, the Confederate Secretary of War James Seddon began questioning the benefit of partisan rangers. In two different reports to Jefferson Davis, he complained of ranger units generally doing more harm than good for the Confederacy.

²⁹Ibid., 532-533.

³⁰Ibid., 532-533.

³¹Ibid., 1008.

³²Ibid., 1094-1095.

³³Fellman, *Inside War*, 98-99.

Regular soldiers saw a double-standard in the enforcement of regulations and conduct of partisan rangers, and this contributed to deteriorating morale across the conventional force. The Secretary noted that some partisan units did contribute positively, but these were the exception and not the rule. Displeased with the negative effects of partisan ranger policy, in November 1863 Secretary Seddon recommended that the Confederate government abandon the policy and instead use that manpower to increase the end strength of conventional units.³⁴ Three months later the Confederate government repealed its Partisan Ranger Act.³⁵

The Union Approach

The United States did employ irregular forces during the Civil War; however, the government had no formal policy or legislation like that of the Confederate Partisan Ranger Act.³⁶ Instead, the Union approached the subject from the perspective of wanting to formally establish definitions of said forces and clarify the rights and handling of such forces under the rule of law. The Union recognized the prevalence of irregular forces and sought to determine their legitimacy in our contemporary terms of lawful and unlawful combatants, because such distinctions had implications for their treatment as prisoners of war.³⁷

U.S. Army General Henry Halleck provided the impetus for policy development by seeking legal opinion on the subject of irregular forces in 1862.³⁸ Francis Lieber's resulting 1862 essay, *Guerrilla Parties: Considered with Reference to the Laws and Usages of War*, did just that by defining the various forms of irregular and exploring historical and legal precedent for the

³⁴*O. R.*, Series IV, Vol. 2, 4-5, 31, 71-72, 289, 1003.

³⁵Wagner, Gallagher, and Finkelman, *Civil War Desk Reference*, 449.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 448.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 448, 450-451; Fellman, *Inside War*, 81-83.

³⁸Fellman, *Inside War*, 31.

treatment of such forces under the law of war.³⁹ Lieber defined guerrilla forces as:

an irregular band of armed men, carrying on an irregular war The irregularity of the guerrilla party consists in its origin, for it is either self-constituted or constituted by the call of a single individual it is irregular as to the permanency of the band, which may be dismissed and called again together at any time.⁴⁰

Lieber also gave renaissance to the term, “partisan”, describing such forces in the context of history as those constituted by government authority “whose object is to injure the enemy by action separate from that of his own main army.”⁴¹ Based upon history and legal precedent, Lieber suggested that partisans could be handled as lawful combatants under the law of war, whereas, self-constituted guerrillas with no formal ties to the government would not.⁴²

The United States codified these distinctions in their 1863 publication of *General Orders No. 100*, “Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field.”⁴³ The Order clearly drew a line between partisans and every other type of irregular. It applied Lieber’s earlier definition of partisan with one additional qualifier – partisans were uniformed soldiers. The Order considered all other individuals and self-constituted groups acting outside of government authority as illegitimate fighters. Confirming Lieber’s earlier essay, the Order decreed that partisans should receive treatment as prisoners of war and all other irregulars should not.⁴⁴

THE MISSOURI STATE GUARD

The MSG is a unique organization born out of the political turmoil of Civil War Missouri

³⁹Francis Lieber, *Guerrilla Parties: Considered with Reference to the Law and Usages of War* (New York, NY: D. Van Nostrand, 1862), 1, 9-11. <https://archive.org/details/guerrillapartie00liebgoog> (accessed November 20, 2013).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 11.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 18-20.

⁴³*O. R.*, Series III, Vol. 3, 148; Fellman, *Inside War*, 83.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 157.

in 1861. Formed and organized by the pro-Confederate state government that fled the capitol and governed in exile, the MSG sought to defeat Union forces and open the door for a Confederate Missouri. Their history shows a progressive evolution in structure, organization, and performance from birth to disestablishment. Drawing back upon Grimsley's four categories of Civil War irregulars, the MSG fits best into the partisan ranger category. It closely resembled conventional forces by organizing into structured formations and fighting with traditional tactics, though a key distinction is that the MSG retained a predominantly state identity until its absorption into the Confederate Army and disbandment in late 1862.⁴⁵

MSG operations consisted of both independent expeditions and joint operations alongside conventional Confederate units. The relationship of the MSG to conventional forces changed over time and may best be described as a partnership of convenience when such relationships benefitted one or the other. This section will look in detail at that relationship and reveal that interpersonal conflicts between senior leaders, operational constraints on conventional operations inside Missouri, and a Confederate pivot in focus east of the Mississippi all impacted the relationship to produce mixed results.

Origin and Creation

The Camp Jackson affair between Missouri militia and Federal forces in May 1861 served as a watershed event to thrust the state into emergency. Pro-southerners saw this as confirmation of Federal aggression toward state sovereignty, and it provided the impetus to accelerate passage of legislation to mobilize a state force. In building a case, the legislature declared that Missouri had been invaded, and they passed legislation authorizing the governor to

⁴⁵Westover, *Evolution of the Missouri Militia*, 92.

take appropriate action to restore stability.⁴⁶ A flurry of legislation continued in the following days and culminated with passage of the State Guard Bill on May 14, 1861 which established and named the Missouri State Guard as the state's organized militia.⁴⁷

The following weeks of May 1861 proved equally tumultuous in Missouri as Union and state leadership attempted to preserve stability and avoid conflict. A May 21, 1861 convention between U.S. Army Brigadier General W. S. Harney, Department of the West commander, and MSG Major General Sterling Price concluded with a joint declaration and common objective of "restoring peace and good order to the people of the State in subordination to the laws of the General and State governments."⁴⁸ Suspicions persisted, however, on both sides. General Harney grew weary of increasing evidence of MSG ties to the Confederacy while General Price expressed alarm at the U.S. Army's mobilization of loyal home guard units.⁴⁹

U.S. Army Brigadier General Lyon assumed command of the Department of the West on May 31, 1861 and took a more adversarial approach to the MSG and state government. He met with Governor Jackson and General Price on June 11, 1861 to readdress the terms of agreement between the two governments. Their failure to reach a settlement placed state and federal forces on a war footing. On June 12, 1861 Governor Jackson called for Missouri to take up arms, General Price mobilized the MSG statewide as the secessionist elements of the state government fled Jefferson City in anticipation of General Lyon's pursuit.⁵⁰ The MSG was at war.

⁴⁶U.S. Record and Pension Office, *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops. Union and Confederate, in service during the Civil War* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1902), 250-251. <https://archive.org/details/organizationstat01unit> (accessed December 29, 2013).

⁴⁷Westover, *Evolution of the Missouri Militia*, 86-87.

⁴⁸*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 375.

⁴⁹U.S. Record and Pension Office, *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops*, 258, 259, 262.

⁵⁰Thomas L. Snead, *The Fight for Missouri: From the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 192-193, 197-208. <https://archive.org/details/fightformissouri00insnea> (accessed December 30, 2013).

Organization

The 1861 State Guard Bill laid the foundation for the structure and organization of the MSG. Framers of the Bill naturally created a military force structure mirroring that of conventional army forces of the era, complete with military rank system, guidance for the commissioning of state officers, terms of enlistment, and unit descriptions for infantry, cavalry and artillery. The Bill established eligibility criteria for MSG service and divided the state into nine military districts.⁵¹

The Bill provided for nine brigadier generals to command each of the nine regional military districts. Each regional district served as an MSG division, and the divisions consisted of subordinate regiments of six to eight companies. The personnel strength of individual companies and batteries ranged from 48 to 100 soldiers. Regiments from multiple districts could combine forces to form an army corps in the field when appropriate. Subsequent legislation authorized the appointment of one major general to command the entire MSG in times of statewide mobilization.⁵²

Leadership

Sterling Price served as the first major general and commander of the MSG. Both a statesman and a soldier, Sterling Price possessed the requisite credentials to accept the challenge of forming, organizing and leading the fledgling MSG. Prior to assuming the post, his political résumé included experience in the Missouri House of Representatives, the U.S. House of Representatives, and as governor of Missouri. His military service included combat as a regiment commander in the Mexican-American War where he also served as the commander of the army of occupation and was promoted to brigadier general. Prior to the May 1861 Camp Jackson affair

⁵¹U.S. Record and Pension Office, *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops*, 251-256.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 252-256.

he opposed secession and served as the president of Missouri's special convention that voted against secession earlier that year.⁵³

Leadership experience in the staff and subordinate units ran the gamut from officers with no military background to West Point graduates and regular U.S. Army officers who resigned their commissions to serve in the MSG. Officers with previous combat experience certainly enhanced the initial creation of a state army; however, the true deficit resided in staff experience.⁵⁴ MSG adjutant general Thomas Snead described the infant army as one with "an abundance of officers fully competent to command a regiment or a brigade," but with a staff of "men who had not been trained to a military life, and who had everything to learn."⁵⁵

Personnel and Material

Upon creation the MSG resembled not much more than hodgepodge of pro-South Missourians. Over time, however, the MSG matured into a more cohesive and formidable force through training, combat experience, and learning from its failures and successes. Many Missourians mobilized to answer Governor Jackson's call to arms and join the MSG, but they lacked initial organization and direction. Recognizing the peril of being caught by Lyon's Union pursuit before he could form and organize an MSG resistance, Price ordered all MSG forces to withdraw to southwestern Missouri where he could assemble the force and personally go to Arkansas and establish coordination with regular Confederate Army leadership.⁵⁶

Arming and training the force was very much a gradual process. Many troops arrived unarmed while others only carried shotguns. Artillery support consisted of stolen Federal cannons

⁵³Missouri Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission, "Sterling Price (1809-1867)," <http://mocivilwar150.com/history/figure/314> (accessed December 31, 2013).

⁵⁴Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 236, 239-240.

⁵⁵Ibid., 240.

⁵⁶Ibid., 207-209, 212-216.

that lacked trained gunners and crews. Most soldiers did not have uniforms, and officers simply attached pieces of red flannel or cotton to their coats as distinctive rank. To their credit, however, many MSG soldiers were either veterans of the Mexican-American War or had fighting experience along the Missouri-Kansas border prior to the Civil War. Leveraging local area lead resources, tools, and ingenuity, the MSG produced their own rifle and artillery ammunition in southwestern Missouri.⁵⁷

Operations

A review of the MSG's major battles and operations provides a primary means through which to study their relationship to conventional Confederate forces operating in the West. Governor Jackson and MSG leadership naturally sought to build a relationship with the Confederate government and army to assist in their own struggle against Union forces in the fight to determine Missouri's fate. This relationship began early in the spring of 1861, matured, and evolved throughout the MSG's active campaign period lasting through the summer of 1862.

May-July 1861

Just weeks after coming into existence, the newly-formed MSG found itself under hot pursuit by Union General Lyon when negotiations between Lyon, Jackson, and Price unraveled in Saint Louis, Missouri. Abandoning the state capitol, secessionist Governor Jackson and the still-forming MSG fled to Boonville, Missouri to consolidate available forces while simultaneously reaching out to the Confederate government for military assistance.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, General Lyon organized a two-pronged offensive to take control of Missouri and defeat the secessionist influence. Departing from Saint Louis, he sent one brigade southwest to block a retreat into

⁵⁷Ibid., 217-218, 225, 238-239, 242.

⁵⁸Kel N. Pickens, "The Battle of Wilson's Creek, Missouri, August 10, 1861," in *Civil War Battles in the West*, ed. LeRoy H. Fischer (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1981), 13-14.

Arkansas while he led a second force secure the state capitol of Jefferson City, Missouri. He quickly occupied Jefferson City, Missouri without opposition on June 15, 1861. Learning of Governor Jackson's retreat, General Lyon continued his pursuit up the Missouri River toward Boonville, where he would give the MSG its first taste of battle.⁵⁹

West Point graduate and ranking on-scene MSG commander, Colonel John Marmaduke, advised against trying to make a stand at Boonville; however, Governor Jackson ignored this counsel. In vain, Colonel Marmaduke arrayed his forces in a hasty defense as General Lyon's regulars approached on June 17, 1861. The skirmish lasted only 20 minutes.⁶⁰ The outmatched and outgunned MSG formations quickly disintegrated into disorder and placed the Jackson administration on the run again. In less than one week, General Lyon successfully cleared the state capitol of pro-secessionist influence, forced the MSG into retreat, and ensured Union control of the Missouri River and the northern half of the state.⁶¹

The defeat at Boonville certainly resonated with General Price and highlighted the need for him to build relations with conventional Confederate forces just across the state border in Arkansas. Learning of Boonville while mustering troops at nearby Lexington, Missouri, Price ordered the entire MSG to withdraw south while he personally travelled to Arkansas to meet Confederate General Benjamin McCulloch, the commander of Confederate forces in northwestern Arkansas.⁶²

While Price made haste toward Arkansas, Governor Jackson and MSG veterans of the Boonville rout would soon take another crack at Union forces in a meeting engagement while withdrawing south. Fortune favored the MSG this time. While reconnoitering areas around

⁵⁹Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border*, 135-136, 139-140.

⁶⁰Ibid., 140-141.

⁶¹Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 213-215.

⁶²Ibid., 215-216.

Springfield, Missouri in June and July 1861, elements of the Union brigade Lyon sent southwest from Saint Louis learned of approaching MSG columns near Carthage, Missouri. Colonel Franz Sigel had a reinforced regiment of approximately 1,500 Union volunteers at Carthage. The approaching MSG columns massed nearly four brigades, though many soldiers in the fledgling army remained unarmed at this time. Facing overwhelming odds against him in manpower, Colonel Sigel chose to fight in place, hoping to delay the MSG long enough to allow Union reinforcements to arrive and defeat the MSG.⁶³

On July 5, 1861, Union volunteers and the MSG fought the Battle of Carthage. Having effected some rudimentary organization of the force during their march south, the MSG formed their lines with armed men in the center, unarmed cavalry on the flanks, and unarmed infantry to the rear. The superior tactics and skill of Union forces proved insufficient against the MSG's overwhelming numerical superiority. Observing an MSG cavalry movement to his flank shortly into the battle, Colonel Sigel became concerned of the threat to his supply trains and ordered a withdrawal. Both armies laid claim to victory at Carthage. For Sigel, his disciplined, tactical retrograde ultimately dissuaded the MSG from continuing their initial pursuit and, thus, prevented his force from being annihilated.⁶⁴ Meanwhile, a confident and inspired MSG occupied the deserted Union encampment overnight and on July 6, 1861 "marched leisurely and in great good spirits" further south to linkup with General Price.⁶⁵

While Jackson and his MSG columns marched south and battled with Union forces at Carthage, Price had indeed established coordination with Confederate Army Brigadier General Ben McCulloch. McCulloch's command included regiments from Arkansas, Texas, and Louisiana, and their express purpose in Arkansas was to defend the adjacent Indian Territory

⁶³Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border*, 149-152.

⁶⁴Ibid., 152-156.

⁶⁵Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 228.

against Union invasion. McCulloch found value in supporting the Missouri secessionists. Correspondence to the Confederate capitol in Richmond, Virginia, in June 1861 confirmed McCulloch's desire to deploy north into Missouri, arguing that such action would offer relief to the beleaguered MSG and allow him to interdict the assembling Union forces who he believed would invade Arkansas if left unchecked.⁶⁶ By the end of the month, McCulloch was on the move toward the Arkansas – Missouri border and sent forces forward into Missouri to establish a linkup with MSG leadership and advise them to “fall back and form a junction with” him.⁶⁷

Relations between the MSG and Confederate Army continued to mature in the early days of July 1861. The first instance of a unified effort between the forces occurred when McCulloch entered Missouri on July 4, 1861 with plans to intervene against Union forces pursuing Governor Jackson's MSG columns. General Price's complement of forces at the time consisted of 1,700 MSG recruits encamped nearby, and he offered to assist General McCulloch in his mission of reinforcing the retreating columns.⁶⁸ Describing this early relationship in a report to Richmond, Virginia, General McCulloch stated that General Price's force “joined my command as we passed his camp on the first day's march.”⁶⁹

On the morning of July 6, 1861, just hours after the Battle of Carthage, the combined force successfully linked up with Governor Jackson and his MSG columns, much to their relief and cheers.⁷⁰ Describing the emotions of this event, MSG Adjutant General Thomas Snead wrote that the MSG soldiers:

looked with delighted eyes on the first Confederate soldiers that we had ever seen, the men all dressed in sober grey, and their officers resplendent with gilded buttons, and

⁶⁶*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 575, 594-595, 600.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 600.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 600, 606.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 606.

⁷⁰Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 237.

golden braid and stars of gold. To look like these gallant soldiers; to be of them; to fight beside them for their homes and for our own, was the one desire of all the Missourians, who, on that summer day, stood on one of their own verdant prairies, gazing southward.⁷¹

General McCulloch's force returned to Arkansas while the MSG setup camp 12 miles to their north, just inside Missouri. The MSG needed time to form and reorganize. Correspondence between General McCulloch and General Price revealed a mutual support agreement of sorts in which General McCulloch pledged to deploy forces into Missouri and reinforce the MSG in the event of a Union attack. General McCulloch reported his linkup with the MSG and operations in Missouri in correspondence to the Confederate government. He also placed a target on Springfield, a Missouri town just 50 miles from the Arkansas border, for follow-on operations to defeat an expanding garrison of Union forces there. Confederate leadership replied with congratulations and an overwhelming endorsement of General McCulloch's actions.⁷²

Though wanting to attack the Union garrison at Springfield as soon as possible, throughout much of July 1861 General McCulloch chose against it due to his lack of confidence in the MSG. Almost triple the size of General McCulloch's own forces, the MSG certainly offered increased manpower for an advance; however, General McCulloch considered the army to be poorly armed, trained and led.⁷³ The MSG needed more time to reorganize, train and equip – tasks that General Price addressed immediately and with focus.⁷⁴

By the end of the month, the Confederate and state forces made their moves toward Springfield. Commanded by General Price, the MSG mustered over 5,000 armed fighters. General McCulloch led a force of 3,200 soldiers. A third force of 2,500 Arkansas militiamen, commanded by West Point graduate and Brigadier General N. B. Pearce, added further combat

⁷¹Ibid., 238.

⁷²*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 606-608, 611, 615.

⁷³Ibid., 611.

⁷⁴Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 239.

power.⁷⁵ United in purpose, these independent Confederate and state commands “agreed upon an order of march, in conformity to which the combined forces began their movement toward Springfield ... on the 31st of July.”⁷⁶

The Battle of Wilson’s Creek, August 10, 1861

The Battle of Wilson’s Creek presented the first significant battle in which MSG and Confederates fought alongside each other against a common foe. At Wilson’s Creek, Generals Pearce, Price and McCulloch clashed with Brigadier General Lyon’s force of 5,000 soldiers.⁷⁷ The result of their combined effort was a victory against General Lyon’s command in southwestern Missouri, but with victory also came strained relations and distrust between Confederate and MSG leaders.

A small skirmish eight days before the battle caused General McCulloch to question the reliability of his allies within the MSG. At Dug Springs, six mounted MSG companies serving as an advance guard clashed with General Lyon’s main body. The Missourians’ disorganized tactics and withdrawal led General McCulloch to lose confidence in the Missourians altogether.⁷⁸

General McCulloch’s opinions of the MSG following the Dug Springs skirmish led him to exercise even further caution in the decision to attack General Lyon. General McCulloch now wanted centralized command and control over the combined force before proceeding further with an offensive. General Price initially balked at this demand, citing his larger force size, experience of his leaders, and even his seniority from when the two men were U.S. officers, as reasons against General McCulloch commanding the combined force. General Price ultimately relented and gave unified command to General McCulloch because Price wanted the additional combat

⁷⁵Ibid., 230, 246.

⁷⁶Ibid., 247.

⁷⁷Pickens, “The Battle of Wilson’s Creek,” 15-16.

⁷⁸Ibid., 15.

power for his attack on Springfield, though he threatened to attack alone if McCulloch didn't agree to a combined offensive the next day. The two officers agreed to such terms and on August 4, 1861, the MSG fell under the command and control of a Confederate officer.⁷⁹

The combined force attacked on August 5, 1861 only to find that General Lyon had withdrawn his army from their encampment outside of Springfield, Missouri less than 24 hours earlier. The combined force attempted to pursue at first but then halted at Wilson's Creek to consolidate and reorganize on August 6, 1861. Throughout the next few days, General McCulloch personally led reconnaissance efforts to determine the disposition of General Lyon's forces while General Price urged for decisive action. Accusing General McCulloch of dragging his feet, the Missourian again threatened to lead a unilateral attack on General Lyon. General McCulloch eventually decided to move forward with a combined attack; however, the Union Army would ultimately make the first move due to the Confederate's delays and indecisiveness.⁸⁰

Union forces took to the offensive on August 10, 1861 by advancing on the combined secessionist force encampment at Wilson's Creek, hoping to achieve surprise through a spoiling attack against the larger enemy force. General Lyon approached near dawn, obtained almost complete surprise, and quickly drove back the initial Confederate defenses on Oak Hill, a key terrain feature overlooking the Confederate positions at Wilson's Creek. Oak Hill rightfully became known as Bloody Hill on August 10, 1861. The elevated position bore witness to some of the most ferocious fighting of the day that included four separate thrusts up the hill by Confederate forces to retake their lost ground.⁸¹ The fight for Bloody Hill was a combined effort that involved the MSG, Confederate regulars, and the Arkansas militia fighting together to repel Union line. General Lyon was killed in the last fight on Bloody Hill, and command of the Union

⁷⁹Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 254-258.

⁸⁰Ibid., 257-265.

⁸¹Pickens, "The Battle of Wilson's Creek," 17-19.

forces fell to Major S. D. Sturgis. Seeing futility in continuing the fight, by 1130 Major Sturgis ordered his Union forces to retreat and withdraw from Wilson's Creek.⁸²

Critics of Major Sturgis' decision to retreat argue that a Union victory was still possible, and probable, had they continued the fight. The battle proved one of the most costly during the entire Civil War with an overall casualty rate greater than 23 percent.⁸³ Observing the Union retreat, General Price recognized the opportunity to destroy that entire Union force and dramatically shift the balance of military power in the fight for Missouri. He urged General McCulloch to continue attacking, but General McCulloch advanced no further than Springfield, perhaps concerned that he had already extended too far into Missouri when it wasn't his primary mission. Additionally, and despite the combined force success, General McCulloch left Wilson's Creek convinced that the MSG was an unreliable force.⁸⁴ His early post-battle reports reflected a complimentary tone of the Missourians and their leadership in battle.⁸⁵ However, later correspondence the same month revealed a different position, and McCulloch described the MSG as "undisciplined and led by men who are mere politicians; not a soldier among them to control and organize this mass of humanity."⁸⁶

The combined force dissolved back into their original formations after Wilson's Creek and took disparate paths. Following a brief respite in Springfield, Missouri, Generals McCulloch and Pearce returned to Arkansas while General Price and the MSG remained in Missouri to continue the fight for state control.⁸⁷ At this period of the Civil War, the Confederate government remained averse to expanding their operations into Union states like Missouri, despite the state's

⁸²Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 283, 288, 291, 311.

⁸³Monaghan, *Civil War on the Western Border*, 181.

⁸⁴Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 293, 296-298.

⁸⁵*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 106.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 672.

⁸⁷Pickens, "The Battle of Wilson's Creek," 22.

disputed status and wealth of resources.⁸⁸ Political constraints, professional judgments, and the lack of a unified effort between Confederate and state forces all negatively impacted the potential for a continued relationship immediately following Wilson's Creek.

The "Army of Liberation"

Concurrent with the Wilson's Creek campaign in southwestern Missouri, a related initiative occurred in southeastern Missouri that ultimately failed to materialize. In late July 1861, Confederate Army Major General Leonidas Polk created an "Army of Liberation" under Confederate Army Brigadier General Gideon Pillow. The plan was for his command to cross the Mississippi River into southeastern Missouri, create a combined force with nearby Confederate Army Brigadier General William Hardee and MSG Brigadier General M. Jeff. Thompson, and open a new front to ultimately advance on Saint Louis.⁸⁹ Ill-defined command relationships, competing priorities, and conflicting guidance all plagued the Army of Liberation.

General Thompson commanded the MSG First Military District in southeast Missouri and operated independently of General Price and the remainder of the MSG further west during this period.⁹⁰ Correspondence to Confederate Army generals such as Polk and Pillow reflect General Thompson's obedience and desire to integrate his efforts with those of the regular forces for the expansion of a campaign in southeastern Missouri. Confederate leadership disagreed on the approach for the Missouri campaign, and this delayed the linkup of forces and pursuit of common objectives.⁹¹

Unfortunately for General Thompson, this friction resulted in him being pulled in

⁸⁸Snead, *The Fight for Missouri*, 297.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 244.

⁹⁰Louis S. Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri: A Military History* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2012), 112; *O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 632-635.

⁹¹*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 632-635.

different directions and even receiving conflicting orders at times. On one such occasion, Confederate General Hardee coordinated with General Thompson to have the MSG support his advance north of Greenville, Missouri. General Thompson mobilized his MSG soldiers pursuant to General Hardee's orders on August 5, 1861. Two days later, Governor Jackson overrode those orders and directed General Thompson to move in support of General Pillow (the same day that Pillow complained to the theater commander that he was not receiving the support of Generals Thompson and Hardee as promised him).⁹²

Interest in a campaign through Missouri to take Saint Louis waned, and by fall 1861, the Confederates shifted their focus to other fronts. Hardee's army returned to Arkansas. Pillow moved to Kentucky. The Army of Liberation would not materialize as originally envisioned. In October 1861, Thompson led his MSG force on a unilateral expedition north toward Saint Louis with the consent of the Confederate government but little support. Thompson battled with Union forces along the way but ultimately retreated back south. Working alone, his force did not possess the resources to pose a significant threat to Saint Louis in the face of superior Union combat power.⁹³

Unilateral Missouri campaigning, August 1861 – February 1862

In the wake of Wilson's Creek, secessionist Governor Jackson and his MSG leadership continued to express their desire to affiliate closer with their Confederate partners. Governor Jackson recognized the inherent challenges of independent state and Confederate commands operating in Missouri. He urged the Confederate government to designate a single major general to take command of the disparate forces, and, contingent upon Confederate President Jefferson Davis' express approval, offered to place the MSG under the subject general's command and

⁹²Ibid., 631-632, 634-636.

⁹³Gerteis, *Civil War in Missouri*, 56-57, 110-116.

control.⁹⁴ An August 16, 1861 letter addressed to Jefferson Davis by one of Governor Jackson's agents read, "It is the wish of Governor Jackson that operations in Missouri should be under control of an experienced or skillful general of the Confederate States, and he will take care that there shall be no conflict between the State and Confederate commanding officers."⁹⁵

While such considerations remained on the table with no decision or decisive action by the Confederacy, Price moved forward with a unilateral Missouri campaign. Moving north from Springfield, Missouri in late August 1861, the MSG skirmished at Dry Wood Creek and pushed Union columns into Kansas. With a force reaching 10,000 in strength, Price set his sights on the Union garrison at Lexington, Missouri.⁹⁶ At Lexington, the MSG outlasted Union defenses through a 52-hour attack resulting in the surrender of 3,500 soldiers and the capture of much-needed arms and equipment.⁹⁷

Inspired by MSG victories, Price continued his recruiting efforts and attained a force of 18,000. As a growing threat within the state, the MSG earned the attention of Union leadership concerned about holding Missouri. Beginning in January 1862, U. S. Army General Henry Halleck, Department of Missouri commander, launched a reorganization of the Union Army's force posture statewide to allow for increased offensive capability against the MSG and Confederates. General Price withdrew to Arkansas to linkup with Confederate forces. The U.S. Army followed, setting the stage for a confrontation at Pea Ridge, Arkansas in March 1862.⁹⁸

The Battle of Pea Ridge, March 1862

Part of General Halleck's reorganization of forces included the creation of the Army of

⁹⁴*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 639.

⁹⁵*Ibid.*, 653.

⁹⁶Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri*, 100-101.

⁹⁷*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 3, 187-188.

⁹⁸Gerteis, *The Civil War in Missouri*, 110, 123-125, 129.

the Southwest under the command of U.S. Army Brigadier General Samuel Curtis. General Halleck tasked General Curtis with destroying or ejecting the MSG from Missouri, and Curtis' 12,000-man army proved to be a convincing threat.⁹⁹ Having successfully cleared Missouri of General Price and the MSG, General Curtis halted his pursuit and established a defensive position near Pea Ridge, Arkansas in late February 1862.¹⁰⁰

Relations between Generals McCulloch and Price continued to deteriorate, and by the winter of 1861-1862, the two men were no longer on speaking terms. General McCulloch had traveled to Virginia to personally discuss his grievances about General Price when General Curtis' Army of the Southwest made its advance through southwest Missouri and into Arkansas. With General McCulloch gone to Virginia, requests from General Price for mutual support and assistance in Missouri went unanswered. As a means of settling the growing dispute, the Confederate government created the Trans-Mississippi District as a two-star command and assigned Major General Earl Van Dorn to command all Confederate operations west of the Mississippi River. Learning of General Curtis' advance into Arkansas, General Van Dorn deployed forward to the Confederate positions near Pea Ridge, Arkansas, assumed local command, and established the Army of the West with General McCulloch's and General Price's forces as subordinate divisions.¹⁰¹

Eager to respond to General Curtis' invasion of Arkansas, General Van Dorn quickly directed planning for a counteroffensive with further ambitions of a launching a campaign to take Saint Louis, Missouri. General Van Dorn's plan was relatively simple: attack quickly and isolate General Curtis' dispersed forces before he can consolidate them into a single defense. General

⁹⁹William L. Shea, *War in the West: Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove* (Fort Worth, TX: Ryan Place Publishers, 1996), 21.

¹⁰⁰Maynard J. Hanson, "The Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, March 6-8, 1862," in *Civil War Battles in the West*, ed. LeRoy H. Fischer (Manhattan, KS: Sunflower University Press, 1981), 40.

¹⁰¹Shea, *War in the West*, 18-19, 26, 34-35.

Van Dorn's 16,000-man army began movement toward Union positions on March 4, 1862. General Curtis learned of the Confederate advance the following day and ordered a consolidation near his position at Elkhorn Tavern. With the element of surprise already lost, a winter storm further complicated General Van Dorn's plans, and General Curtis successfully consolidated his forces before a decisive Confederate attack. Fatigue, a lack of food, frigid weather, and Union-placed obstacles along their route of march all plagued the Army of the West's overnight advance March 6-7, 1862. General Van Dorn split his force, sending General McCulloch one direction and General Price another to attack Union defenses.¹⁰² Resultantly, Pea Ridge became "a divided affair, with two separate engagements fought within two miles of each other on March 7."¹⁰³

Union forces near Leetown, Arkansas held against General McCulloch and prevented his army from attacking their rear and consolidating with General Price near Elkhorn Tavern. General McCulloch sustained a fatal gunshot and Confederate Brigadier General James McIntosh took command of the division. Just one hour later, General McIntosh was killed as well, and the division quickly lost all hope of achieving a decisive victory at Leetown.¹⁰⁴

As was the case at Wilson's Creek, General Price and his MSG endured the fiercest combat action at Pea Ridge as well.¹⁰⁵ With McCulloch killed-in-action and his division halting their attack, the Union stronghold at Elkhorn Tavern became General Van Dorn's primary objective for a concentrated attack.¹⁰⁶ Artillery exchanges, multiple skirmishes, and successive advances to gain terrain characterized the fight. Outnumbered and threatened by expanding MSG

¹⁰²Earl J. Hess, Richard W. Hatcher III, William Garrett Piston, and William L. Shea, *Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, and Prairie Grove: A Battlefield Guide, with a Section on Wire Road* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 83-84

¹⁰³*Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 92-96.

¹⁰⁵*Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁰⁶Hanson, "The Battle of Pea Ridge," 45.

lines, Union forces capitulated late in the day and began a retreat from Elkhorn Tavern. General Van Dorn finally called off the Confederate's pursuit after an unsuccessful twilight attack on secondary Union defenses. As darkness fell on the battleground, the exhausted and poorly-supplied MSG division consolidated their costly gains at Elkhorn Tavern.¹⁰⁷

Despite losing General McCulloch and the fight near Leetown, Generals Van Dorn and Price remained optimistic and planned for a decisive morning attack on March 8, 1862. Much to General Van Dorn's chagrin, however, he learned that his supply trains had withdrawn 15 miles south of the main battle area earlier in the day and took with them the army's entire resupply capability. Consequently, the Confederate's abandoned plans for an offensive and conceded the initiative to General Curtis. The ill-supplied Confederate defenses initially held but ultimately became overwhelmed by Union attacks on March 8, 1862. General Van Dorn issued the order to retreat. He received much of the criticism for the Confederate loss at Pea Ridge because many considered his order to retreat as unnecessary based upon the tactical situation and force ratios that day.¹⁰⁸

Confederate pivot to the east and MSG disbandment

Confederate attention shifted east in April 1862. General Van Dorn's army left Arkansas and crossed the Mississippi River to support operations elsewhere. Describing the conclusion of Pea Ridge and subsequent pivot to the east, Maynard Hanson wrote, "Despite the protests by citizens of both Missouri and Arkansas, the Confederate high command had abandoned their states to Union forces."¹⁰⁹ With the MSG poised to cross the Mississippi River as well, Confederate leadership now looked at the Missourians as a force to employ within their larger

¹⁰⁷Shea, *War in the West*, 58-63.

¹⁰⁸Hanson, "The Battle of Pea Ridge," 45-47.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 47.

operational context rather than as a convenient ally when their combined operations offered mutual benefits.

Command relations and distinctions between the MSG and regular Confederate Army shifted throughout 1862. Official correspondence clearly shows a relationship; however, the same correspondence finds blurred lines as some state forces, including their commanding general, began to officially transfer into regular Confederate service. On April 8, 1862, General Price resigned his state commission to accept a regular Confederate commission. Five thousand MSG soldiers followed suit and joined the regular army. Governor Jackson praised General Price's performance to the state, assigned MSG Brigadier General M. M. Parsons as his successor, and directed Parsons to reorganize the MSG in accordance with state law.¹¹⁰

Governor Jackson's direction calling for a reorganization of the force, at first, invited confusion for Confederate Army leadership. Misunderstanding Jackson's intent, General Van Dorn relinquished command of the MSG to the governor on April 10, 1862. He personally met with Governor Jackson, the two gained a shared understanding of intentions, and General Van Dorn's staff rescinded the relief directive on April 11, 1862. The MSG deployed east of the Mississippi River and remained assigned to General Van Dorn's Army of the West.¹¹¹

By mid-April 1862, General Van Dorn openly advocated for absorbing the MSG into regular Confederate Army structure, directing on April 18 that the MSG "be organized into companies, battalions, and regiments, in conformity to the laws of Congress."¹¹² Correspondence 11 days later suggests perhaps some reluctance, or at least a delay, by Governor Jackson and/or his MSG leadership to completely dissolve the state guard. In a letter to Governor Jackson, General Van Dorn asked for the governor's assistance in quickly reorganizing the MSG to allow

¹¹⁰U.S. Record and Pension Office, *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops*, 273-275.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 274-276.

¹¹²*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 10, Part II, 428.

for its employment in General Van Dorn's future operations.¹¹³ Moving into summer, the MSG continued to support Confederate operations east of the Mississippi River but remained a separate and distinct force. Confederate Army directives show the MSG being detached from with the Army of the West on June 18, 1862 and released from all duty east of the Mississippi River in July 1862 with orders to report back to the Trans-Mississippi District for employment and tasking.¹¹⁴

September 1862 saw the absorption of the MSG into regular Confederate service. Confederate Army leaders saw the MSG as a manpower resource as well as a potential competitor to their own recruiting efforts in Missouri. Meeting with Confederate leadership in mid-September, Governor Jackson "made an order turning over all the State Guards now in Missouri to the Confederate States."¹¹⁵ In his doctoral dissertation on the militia system in Missouri, Dr. John Westover concludes that the MSG effectively dissolved in September 1862, writing that, "None of the Confederate records show the existence of a separate Missouri organization after this date."¹¹⁶ As an independent organization, the MSG's fight for Missouri was over.

QUANTRILL'S GUERRILLAS

A study of William Quantrill's band of guerrillas provides an incredible case to contrast two very different irregular organizations and their relationships to conventional Confederate forces. Like the MSG, Quantrill's band fought on the side of secession and against the Union; however, their style of warfare, tactics, and organization look nothing like that of the MSG.

¹¹³Ibid., 465.

¹¹⁴*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 17, Part II, 610; U.S. Record and Pension Office, *Organization and Status of Missouri Troops*, 276-277.

¹¹⁵*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 13, 880.

¹¹⁶Westover, *Evolution of the Missouri Militia*, 92.

Drawing once more upon Grimsley's categories of irregulars, Quantrill's band possessed some minor characteristics of partisan rangers, but their true form reflects much more of the categories of politicized civilians and, as the war progressed, criminal gangs.

This section will reveal that Quantrill's band operated with only the broadest of official guidance from Confederate authorities and that their day-to-day operations remained largely unilateral in nature and independent of any formal coordination with the Confederate government or military. A study of their operational history will show that on the rare occasions when Quantrill and Confederate forces interests and paths converged, the two would operate alongside each other with mixed results. Their operational history will also expose the tension and debate that existed among Confederate leaders regarding the extent of association the government and military wanted to have with Quantrill due to his brutality and unlawful tactics.

Origin and Creation

Quantrill and his guerrilla band emerged in 1862 due to two primary factors: revenge and the disbanding of the MSG. Pre-war jayhawking and bushwhacking practices along the Missouri-Kansas border created the environment of hostility that the respective camps brought forward into the Civil War. The October 1861 looting and destruction of Osceola, Missouri described by Mrs. Lewis in the introduction, is just one example. Many other western Missouri towns and their citizens suffered similar depredations at the hands of pro-Union Jayhawkers. Not surprisingly, their actions increased local support for the Confederacy and compelled many Missourians to respond in kind.¹¹⁷ Jayhawker raids became so damaging to Union interests that Union General Henry Halleck expelled them from Missouri in January 1862, describing the Kansans as “no better than a band of robbers” who “disgrace the name and uniform of American soldiers and are

¹¹⁷James W. Erwin, *Guerrillas in Civil War Missouri* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012), 30-31, 38.

driving good Union men into the ranks of the secession army.”¹¹⁸

The withdrawal of the MSG from Missouri, defeat at Pea Ridge, and its subsequent disbandment in 1862 left control of Missouri to Union forces. MSG veterans faced the decision of whether to continue service in the regular Confederate Army with General Price or return to Missouri.¹¹⁹ Providing context and describing the situation, historian James Erwin writes:

Price’s retreat from Missouri left the state – particularly its western region – vulnerable to Union raiders such as Jennison and Lane. Returning soldiers from the Missouri State Guard and local civilians began to organize informal groups to protect their homes and families and to retaliate against Jayhawker depredations. The most celebrated of these guerrilla bands was led by William C. Quantrill.¹²⁰

Organization

Quantrill’s band lacked structure and remained very much an informal coalition of fighters. Not being under any formal contract or obligation, men would join forces with Quantrill and break away at their discretion. Following a raid or skirmish, the guerrilla formation would oftentimes break apart, allowing fighters to melt into the population and live in hiding to escape Union pursuit.¹²¹ To accentuate their informal nature, in one of the rare occasions that Quantrill’s band actually fought under the command and control of a regular Confederate force in Arkansas, six of the men arbitrarily decided one day to simply break ranks and “go back to Missouri” on their own.¹²²

Leadership

William Clarke Quantrill was born in 1837 in Dover, Ohio, where he grew up and

¹¹⁸*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 8, 507.

¹¹⁹Erwin, *Guerrillas in Civil War Missouri*, 31.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 38.

¹²¹John McCorkle, *Three Years with Quantrell; A True Story*, ed. Oswald S. Barton (Armstrong, MO: Armstrong Herald Print, 1914), 34, 37, 40, 50-51, 62.
<https://archive.org/details/threeyearswithqu01mcco> (accessed February 2, 2014).

¹²²*Ibid.*, 48.

became a teacher at 16. He moved to Kansas in 1857 after a series of failed ventures in Ohio and surrounding states. Letters written to his mother and friends back in Ohio at the time reflect a pro-Union, abolitionist perspective. Influenced by southerners he worked with on an 1858 expedition to Utah, he returned to Kansas with a new outlook, met some border ruffians who shared in his newfound southern identity, and soon began his own career in bushwhacking.¹²³

In the early months of the Civil War, Quantrill traveled to Texas and Oklahoma. He joined a company of pro-Confederate Cherokee fighters who attached to Ben McCulloch's command for the battle of Wilson's Creek. Following Wilson's Creek, Quantrill stayed in Missouri, enlisted in the MSG, and fought at Lexington in September 1861. He left the MSG shortly thereafter and traveled to Blue Springs, Missouri. He first joined a band of local Missourians defending the county against jayhawker incursions and then formed his own posse by the end of December 1861.¹²⁴

Sources dispute Quantrill's official military status in relation to the Confederate government. Upon conclusion of a successful raid in August 1862, a regular Confederate Army colonel commissioned Quantrill a partisan ranger captain and mustered his band "into the Confederate army as a Confederate partisan ranger company."¹²⁵ Quantrill retained this rank and continued to refer to himself as a captain of partisan rangers even after the Confederacy repealed their Partisan Ranger Act in 1864. For a short period while leading a "regiment" of irregulars to Texas in 1863, he adopted the rank of colonel, and this became an enduring source of controversy and confusion regarding his official rank and status. In his exhaustive research of Quantrill, historian Edward Leslie argues that Quantrill most likely adopted the rank of colonel without any

¹²³Edward E. Leslie, *The Devil Knows How to Ride: The True Story of William Clarke Quantrill and His Confederate Raiders* (New York, NY: Da Capo Press, 1996), 36, 43, 48-49, 50-53, 60, 62-63.

¹²⁴Ibid., 82, 86, 89, 90-91, 94, 96.

¹²⁵Duane Schultz, *Quantrill's War: The Life and Times of William Clarke Quantrill* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 117.

official Confederate promotion authority because it was the commensurate rank for a commander of a regiment-sized force, like the one that Quantrill led to Texas at the time. Whether due to his “regiment” disbanding upon arrival in Texas or due to more specific guidance from skeptical Confederate leadership, Quantrill reverted to using the title of captain after this expedition.¹²⁶

Personnel and Material

As previously mentioned, the disbanding of the MSG actually fueled the growth of guerrilla forces operating in Missouri in 1862. As such, some of Quantrill’s fighters possessed military experience while others had none. Local and regional ties provided the common foundation for many of the fighters. Describing the organizational structure in his study of Quantrill, Duane Schultz writes, “The band never became a disciplined military organization Many of them were old friends from childhood who tended to form their own cliques and units based on those friendships, and all were of a highly independent nature.”¹²⁷

Quantrill’s forces lived off the land and relied upon local support. Family members of the guerrillas and many local citizens sympathetic to the Confederacy implicitly and covertly supported Quantrill’s band by providing subsistence, shelter, and information on nearby Union patrols. The guerrillas acquired arms and ammunition by any means available including simple theft and confiscating Union resources after battles. A common tactic the guerrillas adopted was to wear stolen blue Union Army uniforms as disguises.¹²⁸

Operations

An increase in guerrilla activity along the Missouri-Kansas border coincided with the MSG and Confederate Army’s abandonment of attempts to secure Missouri for the Confederacy

¹²⁶Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 294-295.

¹²⁷Schultz, *Quantrill’s War*, 117-118.

¹²⁸McCorkle, *Three Years with Quantrell*, 23, 48, 51, 56, 61-63, 73, 76-77, 129, 132.

in 1862. Guerrilla raiders such as Quantrill's band filled the void. What followed was a series of hit-and-run ambushes, robberies, and attacks of increasing intensity and violence. The following pages explore Quantrill's coordinated and uncoordinated activities during his active season from 1862-1864.

Recruiters assistance in 1862

Confederate Major General T. C. Hindman assumed command of the Trans-Mississippi Department in May 1862. With a lack of conventional manpower in his department and the desire to increase recruiting efforts in Missouri, General Hindman authorized the establishment and commissioning of guerrilla bands.¹²⁹ In an official report of his operations and experiences in command of the department, he credited the guerrilla bands with performing "important services" like disrupting Union forces by sabotaging supply lines and communications.¹³⁰

Quantrill became a household name in western Missouri by the summer of 1862. Confederate officers came to Missouri that summer to boost recruiting efforts for Confederate Army. While canvassing Jackson County, Missouri in August 1862, Confederate Colonel John Hughes set his sights on a Federal garrison at Independence to attack. To increase his manpower for the assault, he formed a task force with Colonel Upton Hayes' recruits and Quantrill's guerrillas. In his attack plans, Colonel Hughes tasked Quantrill with surrounding the Federal headquarters, which he successfully accomplished early in the assault. Surrounded and overtaken by the larger composite force of Confederate recruits and guerrillas, the Federal commander eventually capitulated and surrendered. The successful attack resulted in the aforementioned commissioning of Quantrill, the mustering of his band as partisan rangers, and also marked one of

¹²⁹*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 13, 29, 33, 835.

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 33.

the first coordinated efforts between Confederate officers and Quantrill.¹³¹

It is worth mentioning that the Federal commander at Independence refused to surrender to Quantrill, and instead, demanded that one of the Confederate officers accept his surrender. Over the previous months' raids and ambushes, Quantrill's band earned a reputation of taking no prisoners. Quantrill attributed this change in his tactics as direct response to a March 1862 Union policy issued by Major General Henry Halleck which directed that guerrillas be given no quarter like that offered to legitimate combatants.¹³²

A few days later, Quantrill's band played a limited role in reinforcing the Confederate recruits during their victory in the Battle of Lone Jack in southeastern Jackson County. Colonel Hays and his recruits withdrew to Arkansas after the battle but turned over a Union prisoner, Lieutenant Levi Copeland, to Quantrill before leaving. Quantrill wanted to coordinate a prisoner exchange for one of his men being held at nearby Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Shortly thereafter, Quantrill learned of his man's execution in a newspaper article. In retaliation, he promptly ordered the murder of Copeland and two other prisoners at a nearby camp, organized his band, and rode across the border into Kansas for further punitive action.¹³³

September and October 1862 saw Quantrill and his band performing unilateral hit-and-run raids into Kansas. At Olathe, he "captured 125 recruits from the Twelfth Kansas Infantry, killed 3 civilians, looted the town and destroyed the local newspaper."¹³⁴ In October 1862 he attacked Shawnee, "killing ten men and looting the town – primarily for clothes – and then burned it to the ground."¹³⁵ Proving to be more than a simple nuisance, Union forces dispatched

¹³¹Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 123, 130-137.

¹³²*Ibid.*, 112-113, 136.

¹³³Schultz, *Quantrill's War*, 118-121.

¹³⁴Erwin, *Guerrillas in Civil War Missouri*, 41.

¹³⁵*Ibid.*

multiple patrols in pursuit of Quantrill's band during these months and skirmished with his men; however, they failed to achieve a decisive victory or capture Quantrill.¹³⁶

Winter in the South, 1862-1863

Quantrill and his band spent the winter of 1862-1863 in Arkansas where they fought alongside regular Confederate forces in the battles of Cane Hill and Prairie Grove. Quantrill departed for Richmond, Virginia to petition Confederate leadership for a colonel's commission and left one of his lieutenants, William Gregg, in charge of the band. Gregg and the guerrillas attached to Confederate General John Marmaduke's command and served as cavalry.¹³⁷ Their contribution and overall effectiveness appear mixed, at best. One account of Prairie Grove notes that, "The guerillas were armed primarily with revolvers, so it is doubtful that they were of much use in the battle."¹³⁸ Offering another perspective, historian James Erwin notes that the guerrillas "fought with distinction" during these battles that he describes as "their only service in the regular army."¹³⁹

Quantrill's trip to Richmond served as an early harbinger of the Confederacy's love loss for guerrilla tactics and their eventual repeal of the Partisan Ranger Act. Sources dispute the results of Quantrill's petition. Some claim that he returned to his band successfully promoted by Confederate authorities, while many others dismiss this altogether and find that the Confederate government had begun distancing themselves from Quantrill.¹⁴⁰ One account goes further, suggesting that although he didn't receive the promotion, Quantrill "simply lied about it, as he

¹³⁶O. R., Series I, Vol. 13, 267, 312-313, 339.

¹³⁷McCorkle, *Three Years with Quantrell*, 42-45.

¹³⁸Hess, Hatcher III, Piston, and Shea, *Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, and Prairie Grove*, 183.

¹³⁹Erwin, *Guerrillas in Civil War Missouri*, 42.

¹⁴⁰McCorkle, *Three Years with Quantrell*, 45; Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 158; Cole Younger, *The Story of Cole Younger, by Himself* (1903, repr., Project Gutenberg, 2008), 47-48. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/24585/24585-pdf.pdf> (accessed February 22, 2014).

had lied about so much in his life, and claimed to his men that the commission had been granted.”¹⁴¹

Conventional army life didn't suit the independent and lawless spirit in many of Quantrill's guerrillas. In his absence, the Confederate Army broke apart elements of his company to serve as scouts or support recruiting efforts, while many other guerrillas simply deserted and returned to Missouri. Quantrill led what was left of his company back to Missouri in May 1863 and found that his influence and authority were not the same as before.¹⁴² Quantrill's lieutenants formed their own groups, and “while they recognized him as being in overall command, they began taking more initiative, operating independently in small bands.”¹⁴³

1863 Summer Campaign, the Lawrence Massacre, and Order Number 11

The summer of 1863 found an increase in frequency and intensity of guerilla fighting along the Missouri-Kansas border devoid of much, if any, coordination with conventional Confederate forces or the Confederate government. General Sterling Price, now a regular Confederate officer, issued Quantrill the broadest of guidance to harass Union forces and keep them occupied in an effort to enable Confederate plans for an advance through southern Missouri. The guerrillas remained a thorn in the side of Federal authorities and proved effective at sabotaging lines of communication and attacking Union patrols.¹⁴⁴ Confederate authorities would find merit in such support were it not for the more brutal and ugly side that accompanied the guerrillas' actions.

Stability on both sides of the Missouri-Kansas border remained poor. Warfare and crime

¹⁴¹Schultz, *Quantrill's War*, 131.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, 132-133.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 133.

¹⁴⁴Richard S. Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts of the Confederacy, Guerrilla Warfare in the West 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1958), 113.

blended together as numerous criminal and guerrilla elements saturated the region and made it difficult to even distinguish who was doing what. Kansas Red-legs robbed Kansans and Missourians alike. Pro-Confederate guerrillas wore Union uniforms to conceal their identities during raids.¹⁴⁵ Ideologues in both camps pointed fingers and laid blame on the other for the endless cycle of violence. Quantrill's guerrillas found many justifications for their vengeful acts. Jayhawker and Red-leg cross-border attacks, robberies, and depredations fueled Quantrill's hatred and desire for revenge. Union Army no-quarter policies for captured guerrillas, suspected outrages by Union-affiliated home guards, and the incarceration of female family members suspected of supporting guerrilla activities further incensed Quantrill and his band. These contributing factors set the stage for Quantrill's most infamous raid of all in August 1863 on Lawrence, Kansas.¹⁴⁶

On August 14, 1863 a building in Kansas City, Missouri temporarily housing female prisoners collapsed, killing five and injuring the others. Among the casualties were sisters, wives and cousins of Quantrill's fighters. The jail's collapse was likely a tragic accident due structural faults. The guerrillas, however, immediately believed this was a deliberate act committed by the local Union Army commander, General Thomas Ewing. Five days later Quantrill, having formed a coalition of nearly 300 guerrillas supported by another 100 Confederate Army recruits, began a two-day ride to Lawrence, the home of Jim Lane and the hated Jayhawkers.¹⁴⁷ Quantrill's guidance was to his posse was simple: "Kill every man big enough to carry a gun."¹⁴⁸ Quantrill's band launched their attack at dawn on August 21, 1863, shooting unarmed men, robbing locals, and setting buildings on fire. Two hours later, over 150 men and boys were dead, and Lawrence

¹⁴⁵Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 169-170.

¹⁴⁶McCorkle, *Three Years with Quantrell*, 4, 10-11, 20, 26, 50, 63, 75-79.

¹⁴⁷Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 118-122.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 123.

was in shambles. It is worth noting that a Confederate Army colonel leading those 100 recruits accompanied Quantrill to Lawrence, but upon realization of the murderous plans did not participate or condone the action.¹⁴⁹

The Federal response to Lawrence was resolute and immediate. General Ewing issued his infamous Order Number 11, the forced depopulation of four Missouri counties bordering Kansas. General Ewing gave the Missourians fifteen days to evacuate, and enforcement took on a particularly cruel and vengeful nature as Union troops and Kansas Red-legs laid waste to the region, robbing houses, murdering citizens, and burning nearly every structure to the ground.¹⁵⁰

Winter in the south, 1863-1864

By early October 1863, Quantrill's band of approximately 250 guerrillas began their winter trek south toward Confederate lines. Along the way they attacked a Union garrison at Fort Baxter, Kansas, ambushed a Union convoy of 125 men (killing all but forty and taking no prisoners), and killed another 150 Union Indians and African Americans caught along their route of march. In a report submitted to Confederate General Sterling Price, Quantrill stated that Confederate Army recruiting officers accompanied him and supported by leading forces during these attacks. The report mentioned nothing about his summer exploits including the Lawrence massacre, only offering a cursory statement that he would provide a summary of the summer operations in later correspondence.¹⁵¹

By fall 1863 Confederate leadership didn't know what to think about their loosely-affiliated Missouri guerrillas. Quantrill's official status and relationship to the Confederate government remained a source of uncertainty and debate. Fellow Missourian and celebrated

¹⁴⁹Ibid., 122-124.

¹⁵⁰Thomas Goodrich, *Black Flag, Guerrilla Warfare on the Western Border, 1861-1865* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), 96-100.

¹⁵¹*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 22, Part I, 700-701.

former MSG leader General Sterling Price was one of Quantrill's biggest advocates in the Confederate Army.¹⁵² Recognizing Quantrill as a colonel in his correspondence, General Price congratulated Quantrill on his efforts, and in writing to Missouri Governor Tom Reynolds (Claiborne Jackson's successor), requested the governor's support in obtaining Confederate recognition and approval to attach Quantrill's band to the general's army as partisan rangers.¹⁵³ Adding further to the confusion, Governor Reynolds responded to General Price by stating that Quantrill was neither a Missouri nor a Confederate officer recognized by government authorities and that his band should enlist and become conventional soldiers if interested in fighting for the Confederacy.¹⁵⁴

Lieutenant General Kirby Smith of the Trans-Mississippi Department expressed mixed feelings regarding Quantrill and his guerrillas. In a June 1863 letter to secessionist Governor Reynolds he complained that partisan warfare in Missouri offered no benefits and caused unnecessary suffering on pro-southern Missourians.¹⁵⁵ By fall 1863, however, his narrative changed, and Smith described Quantrill's band as "bold, fearless men."¹⁵⁶ Smith found them well-suited to apprehend Confederate Army deserters in Texas, placed them under the command of Brigadier General Henry McCulloch for that purpose, and authorized McCulloch to provide them rations.¹⁵⁷

Quantrill's tenure in General Henry McCulloch's district did not go well. Even before General Smith provided the above guidance for employing the guerrillas, General McCulloch sought to determine Quantrill's status when he first entered Texas. General McCulloch openly

¹⁵²Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 131-134.

¹⁵³*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 53, 907-908; Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 132.

¹⁵⁴Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 131-134;

¹⁵⁵*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 22, Part II, 855.

¹⁵⁶*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 26, Part II, 383.

¹⁵⁷*Ibid.*

criticized Quantrill's methods as "savage" and "inhuman," and he recommended that the Confederacy completely end any relationship with Quantrill if he was not, in fact, a recognized Confederate officer.¹⁵⁸

While Confederate officers questioned Quantrill's status and explored ways to best employ the guerrillas, Quantrill faced leadership challenges of his own. Quantrill's authority and control over his guerrillas diminished again during this winter in the south as some joined regular confederate service while others, such as Bill Anderson, broke away and formed their own bands. Later that winter, Bill Anderson's new posse ransacked the town of Sherman, Texas in a drunken stupor and afterward attributed the crimes to Quantrill, further raising General McCulloch's resentment for having Quantrill's band in his area of operations.¹⁵⁹

By February 1864, General McCulloch was completely fed up with the Missouri guerrillas and their undisciplined, lawless ways. Desperately wanting them out of his district, he complained that Quantrill's band was unreliable and disobedient, accused them of robbing local citizens, blamed them for having "nearly ruined" the district, and ordered their arrest.¹⁶⁰ The following month secessionist Governor Reynolds coordinated for the Missouri guerrillas to depart Texas without arrest and return to Missouri, all the while urging Quantrill to join the regular army and put an end to his unlawful tactics. Unmoved, the guerrillas headed back to Missouri in the spring to begin another summer campaign of bushwhacking along the Missouri-Kansas border.¹⁶¹

Summer 1864, Price's Missouri Campaign, and Disbandment

Dissention in the ranks continued to fester upon the guerrillas' return to Missouri in spring 1864. Quantrill's lieutenant, George Todd, overthrew him and took command of what

¹⁵⁸*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 26, Part II, 348.

¹⁵⁹Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 136-140.

¹⁶⁰*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 34, Part II, 942.

¹⁶¹Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 140-141.

remained of Quantrill's band.¹⁶² Throughout the summer, Todd, Anderson, and other breakout guerrilla bands led their separate commands in a series of attacks, disrupted Federal forces, murdered noncombatants, and committed further atrocities across the area. By this time, donning Union uniforms became a common guerrilla tactic. This proved not only troublesome for the Union forces in the area, but also for the local residents who faced murder when they mistook a guerrilla band for a Union patrol and professed their allegiance to the north.¹⁶³

The goal of securing Missouri for the Confederacy once again became a planning effort for the Trans-Mississippi Department in 1864. Selected to command the expedition, Sterling Price called for the guerrillas to serve as a supporting effort by destroying rail lines, increasing their harassing attacks, and diverting Union forces away from his main axis of advance. The guerrillas indeed executed a number of raids and attacks beginning in August 1864. Some proved more successful than others. Quantrill rejoined his comrades Todd and Anderson long enough to hold a council with them and state his objection to attacking a fortified Union position at Fayette, Missouri. Overruled, the guerrillas attacked, the Union defenses held, the repulsed guerrillas withdrew, and Quantrill left his comrades.¹⁶⁴

General Price invaded Missouri with a force of 12,000 soldiers on September 19, 1864.¹⁶⁵ A series of missteps and tactical errors plagued the campaign. General Price suffered multiple defeats along his line of advance, called off his attack on Saint Louis, and retreated back into Arkansas by November 1, 1864.¹⁶⁶ In his official report of the campaign, Price notes that he met with guerrilla Bill Anderson on October 11, 1864 near Boonville, Missouri and issued directives

¹⁶²Schultz, *Quantrill's War*, 281-282.

¹⁶³Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 301, 303-309.

¹⁶⁴Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 208-215.

¹⁶⁵*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 41, Part I, 627.

¹⁶⁶Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 319, 329, 331, 335, 339-340.

for Anderson's and Quantrill's forces to sabotage specific railroads to disrupt Union mobility.¹⁶⁷ Sources dispute whether Quantrill and Todd were also present at the October 11 meeting with Price, whether Quantrill ever received the order, and to what extent the guerrilla leaders even made an attempt to comply with Price's directives.¹⁶⁸ In any case, Price found their efforts subpar and stated that they "totally failed in the main object proposed."¹⁶⁹ With Price's defeat, "The Civil War in Missouri was over. There would be no more Confederate armies marching north out of Texas."¹⁷⁰

By the time that Price's army reached Arkansas, both Anderson and Todd were dead. Anderson died at the hands of pro-Union Missouri militiamen near Richmond, Missouri. Todd died from a sniper shot near Independence, Missouri. With support and confidence for the southern cause in Missouri dwindling, Quantrill attempted to fill the power vacuum and called for men to join his ranks. Only thirty-three answered, and in December 1864, Quantrill led his small band out of Missouri to begin a new chapter of crime and violence in Kentucky. He died after a gunfight in Kentucky in June 1865.¹⁷¹

CONCLUSION

In looking back upon our research question and topic, it is clear that there was no cohesive and consistent approach to coordinating the efforts of irregular and regular Confederate forces within Missouri and surrounding region. This inconsistency started at the top with the Confederate government's own difficulties in trying to harness the potential military advantages

¹⁶⁷*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 41, Part I, 632.

¹⁶⁸Schultz, *Quantrill's War*, 284, 291; Brownlee, *Gray Ghosts*, 223, 225; Leslie, *Devil Knows How to Ride*, 332-334.

¹⁶⁹*O. R.*, Series I, Vol. 41, Part I, 632.

¹⁷⁰Schultz, *Quantrill's War*, 293.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 289, 291-294, 298-300.

of employing irregular forces while some of those forces practiced questionable and unlawful tactics that cast a negative light on both the guerrillas and their associates. The Confederacy's Partisan Ranger Act passage and later repeal examined in the first section of this monograph highlights this tension at the strategic level. With passage of the Act, the Confederate Government inherited culpability for the unlawful deeds committed by guerrillas operating in the name of the Confederacy, however loosely associated they may have actually been. For at least Quantrill's band, the Act's repeal did not dissuade them from continuing to wage their form of warfare.

The contrasts between the methods, organization and tactics of the Missouri State Guard and Quantrill's band are many; however, in both cases, their relationships with conventional forces reveal the lack of a consistent approach to integrating irregular forces with conventional operations. Undoubtedly the more organized and structured of the two, the MSG sought to strengthen ties with Trans-Mississippi forces throughout much of its existence. While a Confederate Missouri was the goal of the MSG, this was but one of many operational focuses for the Trans-Mississippi Department. As such, the two forces joined together for combined operations when it suited both of their goals, and they fought effectively in major battles such as Wilson's Creek and Pea Ridge. Command relations at Wilson's Creek were informal handshakes between commanders and somewhat better at Pea Ridge, but it took a two-star general arriving and taking command over both the MSG and Confederate forces to resolve disputes over who was in charge.

Both before and in-between the aforementioned joint battles, the MSG led their own independent operations with little oversight or guidance from Confederate authorities. After Pea Ridge much of the MSG remained attached to conventional forces, but confusion over command relationships and authorities endured and led to their temporary detachment when secessionist Missouri Governor Jackson attempted to reorganize the force. When Confederate attention shifted

away from the Trans-Mississippi region, the MSG became viewed as a manpower and resource pool. Confederate leadership advocated for mustering MSG forces into regular Confederate service, and this ultimately paved the way for its disbandment in late 1862.

Not all Missourians in the MSG shared a desire to enlist into the Confederate Army. Many did, but some stayed or returned to Missouri after their MSG service. One such man was William Clarke Quantrill, who formed and led one of the most notorious guerrilla bands of the American Civil War. His forces fought in the name of the south, to both the applause and chagrin of Confederate leadership. From an economy-of-force perspective, Quantrill proved useful to the Trans-Mississippi Department, at times, by disrupting and harassing Federal forces and requiring them to maintain a large Army presence along the Missouri-Kansas border. His undisciplined, criminal and vengeful tactics, however, remained a source of controversy for Confederate leaders. Much like the MSG, the Confederate Army's relationship with Quantrill's band was disjointed.

The Confederate Army expressed interest in coordinating the efforts of Quantrill band when their paths crossed and they shared mutual interests, such as in Independence, Missouri or during General Price's 1864 campaign. When the Missouri guerrillas marched south during the winters, Confederate leaders would attempt to incorporate them into operations or find useful jobs for them such as chasing deserters. Quantrill even received a partisan ranger commission along the way. Aside from these rare moments of coordination, however, the guerrillas' exploits along the Missouri-Kansas border remained wildly independent of Confederate oversight and influence as they waged a brutal and vengeful campaign against Union forces and noncombatants alike. Because of their tactics, some Confederate leaders pushed to completely disavow the guerrillas while others remained more ambivalent. During those rare occasions of integrated planning or coordination between Quantrill's guerrillas and conventional forces, the guerrillas proved burdensome by causing havoc in Confederate territory, deserting, or simply failing to accomplish their assigned military objectives. Quantrill's band and the MSG before them reveal that

throughout the American Civil War, the Confederate Army and irregular forces were fickle allies within Missouri and the surrounding region.

Analysis of this relationship between regular and irregular forces in the American Civil War has connections to theory and offers some enduring considerations for operational planners in the contemporary operating environment. Drawing upon Stathis Kalyvas' theoretical study of the violence in civil wars, we find many of the ingredients for a particularly cruel landscape present along the Missouri-Kansas border. In building his case, Kalyvas introduces a theory of irregular warfare in which *sovereignty* (who controls areas and the nature/ extent of their control), *identification* (the ability to distinguish friend from foe), and *support* (the extent and impact of local popular support to one opponent or the other) serve as key factors that influence and shape an environment for irregular warfare.¹⁷²

Kalyvas' three elements all resided in Missouri and particularly along the border with Kansas. While U.S. forces maintained strong garrisons and presence, irregular forces such as Quantrill contested their sovereign control over the region and enjoyed freedom of maneuver and support from southern sympathizers in the more rural areas. Quantrill's band oftentimes wore stolen Union uniforms making identification a problem for both civilians and U.S. forces alike.

In further examining the relationship of control to violence, Kalyvas differentiates between two types of violence, *selective* and *indiscriminate*, and argues that indiscriminate violence is counterproductive.¹⁷³ Kansans and Missourians alike suffered from indiscriminate violence brought by guerrilla bands operating on both sides of the border. Quantrill and his associates committed both selective and indiscriminate violence, and it was their indiscriminate violence that Confederate leaders found despicable and ultimately led to additional suffering for

¹⁷²Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 87-110.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 141-145.

Missourians forced to depopulate their homes and farms in western Missouri counties.

Today's operational planners must be deliberate in their approaches to integrating irregular forces and coordinating their efforts on the battlefield. One need not look much beyond today's headlines or our recent operational history to see the prevalence of irregular fighters whose goals and objectives may be compatible with our operational objectives. U.S. Marines and other coalition forces in Al Anbar Province, Iraq found success in integrating Sunni tribal militias into their operations. In what is known as the "Anbar Awakening," irregular Sunni tribal forces directly contributed to coalition operations to diminish al-Qaeda influence and control in 2007. Some suggest they may be an important force to leverage yet again in confronting the recent al-Qaeda resurgence in that province.¹⁷⁴ Next door in Syria the situation is not so clear because irregular forces fighting there include Free Syrian Army rebels, foreign fighters, and others with links to al-Qaeda. Our integration and coordination with one irregular force might inadvertently equip our enemies.¹⁷⁵

The study of irregular forces in Civil War Missouri, a look at a theoretical approach to civil war violence and irregular forces, and a short glance at today's headlines concerning irregular forces on the battlefield offer some closing implications and recommendations for the operational planner. First, irregular forces in the operational environment must be accounted for and evaluated with regards to their military effectiveness and compatibility with our own goals and objectives. Not all irregular forces are created equal. Some, such as the MSG and Anbar Sunnis may serve as combat multipliers and contribute to one's operations when smartly incorporated into operational plans. In contrast, undisciplined forces such as Quantrill's guerrillas

¹⁷⁴James Kitfield, "Can another 'Anbar Awakening' save Iraq?" *Defense One*, February 3, 2014, http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/02/can-another-anbar-awakening-save-iraq/78053/?oref=search_sunni_awakening (accessed February 27, 2014).

¹⁷⁵Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, "For Obama, Few Options in Syria," *Defense One*, February 24, 2014, <http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2014/02/obama-few-options-syria/79243/?oref=d-channelriver> (accessed February 27, 2014).

may actually do more harm than good when brought into the plan.

Second, once one decides to incorporate the efforts of irregular forces, make every effort to retain a level of oversight on their actions throughout the duration of the relationship. Partnering with an irregular force increases their legitimacy; however, that association also makes the conventional force culpable for the actions, good or bad, of their newfound irregular partners. Referring to Quantrill's commissioning after the Independence, Missouri raid, author William Connelley underscores this point by writing, "From the fifteenth day of August, 1862, the Confederate government was responsible for all the acts of Quantrill and his men."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶William Elsey Connelley, *Quantrill and the Border Wars* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1910), 269. <https://archive.org/stream/quantrillborderw00connuoft#page/268/mode/2up> (accessed February 27, 2014).

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