

General Walton H. Walker: A Talent for Training

**A Monograph
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Abstract

GENERAL WALTON H. WALKER: A TALENT FOR TRAINING, by MAJ Adam W. Hilburgh, United States Army, 51 pages.

A study of General Walton H. Walker's career offers a lens through which to view the evolution of Army training doctrine, revealing its strengths and weaknesses over a period of nearly four decades. However, an understanding of the skills necessary to train units for combat cannot consist solely of a review of training doctrine. General Walker's career provides valuable insights into the real-world challenges a leader experienced training an Army unit, both in war and in peacetime. The resource constraints, political realities, and physical hardships that make Army training so difficult to accomplish with skill and foresight cannot be gleaned from classroom lectures or the pages of a journal or doctrinal publication. Further, an analysis of the breakout and pursuit Walker's XX Corps executed in Normandy, and later the performance of the Eighth Army during the first weeks of combat in Korea, reveal how General Walker applied contemporary training principles to develop combat formations that performed exceptionally well in combat. Finally, a review of current training principles demonstrates that Walker emphasized the same principles throughout his career that retain primacy in today's Army. This reveals Walker's lasting legacy: in addition to performing among the best of the Army's commanders in combat, Walker set himself apart as one of the leading trainers in U.S. Army history.

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Effective training is the cornerstone of operational success.

– *FM 7-0*, December 2008

Introduction

The current U.S. Army *Field Manual (FM) 7-0: Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations*, February 2011, provides the framework within which leaders train their units for full spectrum operations in an era of persistent conflict.¹ While *FM 7-0* provides Commanders eleven principles of training, tailored to today's operational environment, the use of those principles remains fundamentally unchanged from previous versions of the field manual. One U.S. Army officer whose career aptly demonstrates this continuity in the fundamentals of training is General Walton H. Walker. During his years in command, Walker established a reputation as a master trainer, amassing a wealth of training experience unequaled in the U.S. Army.² His emphasis on realistic training under combat conditions, with leaders involved throughout the process, resulted in the development of combat formations that performed successfully in combat, and training methods that served as a precursor to the doctrine we use today.

Few outside military circles know General Walker's name or recognize his contributions to our nation's defense. He spent thirty-eight years in active service with his career cut short by a vehicle accident in Korea on December 23, 1950.³ Throughout his long career, Walker made

¹ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 7-0, Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2011), iii. The epigraph taken from the 2008 version of the doctrine no longer appears in the newest doctrine.

² Thomas E. Hanson, *Combat Ready?: The Eighth U.S. Army on the Eve of the Korean War* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010), 20.

³ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog: The Life and Service of General Walton H. Walker* (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 2001), 314. Heefner's biography serves as the only comprehensive source of biographical information on Walton H. Walker. While other publications contain biographical information, they draw from mostly secondary sources and focus on specific periods within Walker's life. Heefner's biography utilizes expansive analysis and research of primary sources spanning the life and

training his primary responsibility. He commanded the Desert Training Center from September 1942 to March 1943, the Army's largest training center during World War II, and upon appointment to corps command on September 5, 1942, he trained his unit for twenty-three months prior to its deployment to Europe.⁴ His XX Corps, widely known as the "Ghost Corps," spearheaded Third Army's drive across France, into Germany and Austria.⁵ With his reputation established as one of the Army's premier trainers, the War Department appointed Walker to command Eighth Army in September 1948 as it began the transition from an occupation force to a combat unit. As the Eighth Army commander during the Korean War, Walker led a brilliant and generally unacknowledged defense of the Pusan Perimeter, followed by a highly successful breakout operation. General Walker's success as a senior commander in two major wars rested on a foundation of high quality, demanding training. His emphasis on training and the results it helped him achieve remain as relevant to the leaders of today's Army as those of the past.

The current FM 7-0 spells out the need to conduct tough, realistic, standard-based, performance-oriented training whether a unit is at home station, deployed, or at a maneuver training center.⁶ The field manual provides eleven overarching training principles: commanders and other leaders are responsible for training; noncommissioned officers train individuals, crews, and small teams; train as you will fight; train while operating; train fundamentals first; train to develop operational adaptability; understand the operational environment; train to sustain; train to maintain; and conduct multiechelon and concurrent training.⁷ Each of these principles contains

career of Walker. He graciously provided all of his research material to the Marshall library, now called the Heefner Collection.

⁴ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps: Its History and Service in World War II* (Osaka, Japan: Mainichi Publishing Company, n.d.), 4.

⁵ XX Corps, *The Ghost Corps through Hell and High Water: A Short History of the XX Corps* (n.p.: XX Corps, [1945?]), 9.

⁶ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 7-0, Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations*, 2-1.

⁷ Ibid.

associated tenets to guide the commander's planning, preparation, execution, and assessment of training.⁸

The principles of training current in 2011 are rooted in the Army's earliest doctrine, *Training Regulations (TR) No. 10-5, Doctrines, Principles, and Methods*, 23 December 1921. Although published almost ninety years ago, this document provides a foundation just as relevant to the training modern leaders conduct as the training General Walker both led and participated in early in his career. However, analysis of the evolution of U.S. Army training cannot consist solely of a review of doctrine. General Walker's career provides valuable insights into the challenges a leader experienced training an Army unit, both in war and in peacetime.

The 1921 manual evolved in keeping with the professional discourse by veterans of World War I; however, various challenges - fiscal, personnel, and equipment in particular - plagued the Army. These issues significantly degraded training quality when the Army did not benefit from wartime manning and budgets.⁹ Wars forged leaders like Walker, who possessed the expertise to prepare soldiers and units for combat. However, in war, unlike in peacetime, time constraints served as the limiting factor. Doctrine provided a starting point, but as in all armies, leadership served as the primary catalyst for focused training that led to wartime success.

Walton Walker experienced a typical early career that revealed no hint he would develop into a master trainer and expert tactician.¹⁰ Born in Belton, Texas in December 1889, he began his military education at the Virginia Military Institute in 1908, and graduated from West Point in 1912 as an infantry officer.¹¹ In 1914, Lieutenant Walker served for almost seven months with the 19th Infantry, attached to Brigadier General Frederick Funston's 5th Reinforced Brigade for

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ William O. Odom, *After the Trenches: The Transformation of U.S. Army Doctrine, 1918-1939* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 1999), 96.

¹⁰ "Old Pro," *Time*, July 31, 1950, 19.

¹¹ "Walker Began Career on Banks of Nolan," *Temple Daily Telegraph*, December 28, 1950, 2.

occupation duty in Veracruz.¹² In 1916, he served as a regimental adjutant for General Pershing during the Punitive Expedition in Mexico.¹³ After earning promotion to captain, Walker began World War I as company commander in the 13th Machine Gun Battalion assigned to the 5th Infantry Division. He finished the war as a lieutenant colonel and battalion commander while earning two silver stars for personal courage and exceptional devotion to duty while participating in the St. Mihiel and the Meuse-Argonne offensives.¹⁴

Walker spent the interwar years like many of his peers, rotating through unit assignments, schooling, and teaching. He attended the Field Artillery School in 1920, the Advanced Officers Class at the Infantry School in 1922, the Command and General Staff College in 1926, and the Army War College in 1936. He also benefited from diverse experiences as an instructor. He served as a machine gun tactics instructor at the Infantry School of Arms in 1919, headed the Infantry Weapons Section at the Infantry School from the end of 1919 to 1922, and instructed both the Organized Reserve Camp and the Citizen's Military Training Camp training current and future reserve commissioned officers during the summer of 1923. He spent his next two years as a tactical Officer at West Point. One cadet remarked, "We admired and respected him very much. You couldn't put anything over on him...he had high standards and he was firm and fair and played no favorites."¹⁵ His final instructor billet and his longest duty assignment was as the infantry representative to the Coast Artillery School at Fort Monroe, Virginia lasted from 1926 to

¹² Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 13-14.

¹³ McNair, Lesley J. "The Struggle is for Survival." *Vital Speeches of the Day IX* (November 1942): 111-114.

¹⁴ Military Record of Major Walton H. Walker, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 2, Folder 6; Walton H. Walker, *The Operations of the 5th Division during the 3rd Phase of the Meuse-Argonne* (The Infantry School, Department of General Studies, Military History Section, 1923), 32.

¹⁵ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 34.

1930. Between 1919 and 1936, Walker served as a student or an instructor for a total of twelve years – a significant percentage of the interwar years.¹⁶

When not a student or instructor, Walton Walker spent the years leading up to his corps command serving as a staff officer or battalion commander. After commanding the 2nd Battalion, 15th Infantry in Tientsin, China from 1930 to 1933, he returned to the United States and assumed command of an infantry battalion from the 34th Infantry Regiment, 8th Infantry Division at Fort Meade while simultaneously commanding the post Civilian Conservation Corps camp. Prior to his attendance at the U.S. Army War College, Lieutenant Colonel Walker acted as an inspector general for the III Corps Area based in Baltimore, Maryland. After graduation from the War College in 1936, he served as executive officer in Brigadier General George C. Marshall's 5th Infantry Brigade at Vancouver Barracks, Washington. After this assignment, in 1937, now Colonel Walker joined the war plans division of the War Department General Staff.¹⁷

Like many of his peers, Walker earned promotions quickly and he changed positions often as the Army began in 1940 to prepare for possible involvement in World War II. In the less than two years it took to transform America's small peacetime Army to a nationally mobilized one, he commanded the 36th Infantry Regiment (Armored), the 3rd Armored Brigade, the 3rd Armored Division, and finally in September 1942, the Desert Training Center and the IV Armored Corps, later redesignated the XX Corps. Patton, Walker's Army Commander in Europe, said approvingly as Walker passed by, "There goes a fighting son-of-a-bitch."¹⁸ After World War II, he continued to move into positions of increased responsibility, commanding the Eighth

¹⁶ Military Record of Major Walton H. Walker, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 2, Folder 6.

¹⁷ Current Biography, September 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 2, Folder 6.

¹⁸ "Old Pro," 18.

Service Command and later the Fifth Army in Chicago, before assuming command of the Eighth Army in Japan, his final duty position, in September 1948.¹⁹

A study of General Walker's career offers a lens through which to view the evolution of Army training doctrine, revealing its strengths and weaknesses over a period of nearly four decades. Further, an analysis of the breakout and pursuit Walker's XX Corps executed in Normandy, and later the performance of the Eighth Army during the first weeks of combat in Korea, reveal how General Walker applied contemporary training principles to develop combat formations that performed exceptionally well in combat. Finally, a review of current training principles demonstrates that Walker emphasized the same principles throughout his career that retain primacy in today's Army. This reveals Walker's lasting legacy: in addition to performing among the best of the Army's commanders in combat, Walker set himself apart as one of the leading trainers in U.S. Army history.

Early Career and the Interwar Years

A young Major Walker returned home from Europe after World War I in battalion command and confident in his ability to lead soldiers in modern combat. Like many of his peers, the war changed how he perceived war and his duties. However, widespread pacifism and desire to cut government expenditures dashed any hope that the interwar Army would remain a modern force capable of rapidly facing a national emergency in the future.²⁰ Within a year of the Armistice, the Army demobilized almost 200,000 officers and 3.4 million men, and scattered the remaining force across the United States in units short on personnel and equipment, and relegated to routine garrison duties.²¹ In accordance with the National Defense Act of 1920, Walker and his

¹⁹ Current Biography.

²⁰ Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow: Army Planning for Global War, 1934-1940* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2003), 3.

²¹ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars: The American Army, 1898-1941* (Cambridge, NY: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 223.

fellow Army officers found themselves spending the interwar period in a Regular Army that served merely as a “preparatory force,” intended only to enable rapid national mobilization and expansion in the event of war.²² Instead of serving in a combat-ready force focused on training to fight the nation’s wars, Walker and the rest of the officer corps spent most of the interwar years as instructors and students in academic settings like branch schools, the Leavenworth Schools, and the War College.

Nevertheless, Walker benefited from the lessons the American Expeditionary Forces learned during World War I, and the doctrine the Army wrote based on those lessons. In one of his initial instructor positions as the head of the Infantry Weapons Section at the Infantry School, he served on a post-war board that evaluated machine gun units’ performance during World War I, leading to recommendations for both doctrinal and organizational changes to infantry units.²³ This and other boards studied Army organization and tactics in detail, generating professional discourse that resulted in publication of the *Field Service Regulations (FSR) 1923*. The 1923 FSR served as the “up-to-date guide for the government of the Army of the United States in the theater of operations, and an authoritative basis for the instruction of the combined arms for war service.”²⁴

A series of regulations, including *Training Regulation No. 10-5 (TR 10-5), Doctrines, Principles, and Methods, 1921* served as the foundation for the overarching framework provided by the 1923 FSR. *TR 10-5* codified the U.S. Army’s training doctrine almost two years prior to the approval and distribution of the *1923 FSR*. Furthermore, the first page of *Training Regulation No. 10-5* foreshadowed the training methodology Walker so skillfully employed throughout the

²² Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War: Fort Leavenworth, Officer Education, and Victory in World War II* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 17.

²³ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 33.

²⁴ 1923-1924, G-3 Annual Report of the Operations and Training Division, NARA II, RG 165, Box 213.

later years of his career. It states, “The primary objective will be the destruction of [the enemy’s] armed forces, and this demands that the strategical and tactical offensive be taken and maintained until a decision is reached. The strategical and tactical defensive is authorized only as a temporary measure to meet the requirements of the principle of economy of force.”²⁵ The seventeen-page pamphlet signed by General Pershing, then the Army Chief of Staff, “governed military training in the Army” but also included the principles of war, methods of war, a list of specific training tasks by branch, principles and methods of training, a general system of training, and a system of troop training.²⁶

The new training regulations provided a mix of specific and general guidance, rather than a systematic methodology for training like that found in today’s *Field Manual (FM) 7-0: Training Units and Developing Leaders for Full Spectrum Operations*. The most specific guidance within the 1921 regulations consists of the tasks identified as required competencies for each branch. For example, the manual mandated the air service to maintain competency in seven training tasks, including marksmanship with machine guns, cannon, and bombs; attainment of the greatest possible skill in all phases of flying; and cooperation with other branches and with the Navy.²⁷ Section VI, Principles of Training, provides general guidance but differs from the principles of today by focusing on the individual soldier. It directs, “all training will be founded upon the principle of stimulating and developing the national individual characteristics of initiative, self-reliance, and tenacity of purpose, and so molding those characteristics that they will at all times be responsive to the lawful direction of a superior.”²⁸ The principle Walker most stridently enforced in his senior commands, found in Section IX, System of Troop Training, states, “The

²⁵ United States War Department, *Training Regulations: Doctrines, Principles, and Methods TR No. 10-5 1921* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 1.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 5.

²⁸ Ibid, 6.

responsibility of a commander for the training of his command extends to every individual and unit thereof.”²⁹ Although the 1921 regulation addressed issues beyond just training, it provided the Army with one overarching document on preparing for combat throughout the interwar period, with rewrites in 1928, 1935 and elevation to field manual status in 1941.³⁰

The 1928 and 1935 rewrites of *TR 10-5* incorporated concepts familiar to contemporary leaders and moved non-training related directives to the *Field Service Regulations 1923* or removed them from doctrine entirely. Specifically, the principles of war featured in the 1921 training regulation did not appear in the 1928 version of *TR 10-5*, or any other American military regulation, until the post-World War II, 1949 edition, of *Field Manual 100-5, Operations*.³¹ Additionally, the later editions of *TR 10-5* removed specified training tasks by branch, replacing them with a branch breakdown by mission, characteristic, principle weapon, and adding a caveat that “Advantage will be taken of every practicable opportunity to obtain training in the combined operation of two or more arms or services.”³² This updated language represented a general shift in focus from the individual soldier in the 1921 regulation, to the broader concept of training, specifically as combined arms, in later editions.

Training principles in 1935 consisted of three fundamentals: decentralization, progressive training, and the applicatory system.³³ Significantly, the applicatory system consisted of “causing the individual or unit under instruction to *apply* the principle or methods being taught, to an assumed or outlined situation simulating actual war conditions,” an obvious precursor to the

²⁹ United States War Department, *Training Regulations 1921*, 12.

³⁰ United States War Department, *Field Service Regulations: Military Training FM 21-5*, 1941 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1941), 1.

³¹ Walter E. Piatt, *Do the Principles of War Still Apply?* (SAMS Monograph, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1999), 24.

³² United States War Department, *Training Regulations: Doctrines, Principles, and Methods TR No. 10-5 1935* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1935), 4.

³³ *Ibid*, 6.

current principle of “Train as you will fight.”³⁴ The updated regulations also included modern components of a comprehensive training management system, including training plans, training schedules, and applicatory exercises ranging from map problems and staff rides to field maneuvers and joint exercises.³⁵ Doctrine may not have served as the sole influence on Walker’s professional development, but it did provide a foundation on which to add to the expertise gained in his personal experience of combat.

Walker’s attendance at the Command and General Staff School in 1925-26 and the Army War College in 1935-1936 also influenced his professional development as a leader and trainer. The Command and General Staff College provided Walker with the opportunity to plan and conduct simulated combined arms operations at the division and corps level, something almost impossible to accomplish in actual units due to personnel shortages, lack of equipment, and an austere budget.³⁶ Division and corps level for officers found the Army schools’ applicatory method critical to their development, because opportunities for duty with troops during the interwar period remained rare and mostly limited to the brigade level and below.

For example, the Command and General Staff School included a fourteen-hour course on methods of training that included detailed and expanded instruction later codified within the 1928 and 1935 *Training Regulation No. 10-5*.³⁷ The 1925 student text titled *Methods of Training* included chapters on the principles of training, corps and division training orders, methods of imparting instruction, problems and exercises, and the preparation and conduct of map

³⁴ United States War Department, *Training Regulations* 1935, 7 (emphasis added); U.S. Army, *Field Manual* 7-0, 2-1.

³⁵ Ibid, 9-13.

³⁶ Peter J. Schifferle, *America's School for War*, 35.

³⁷ The Command and General Staff School, Schedule for 1925-1926, Command and General Staff College Records, Combined Arms Research Library (CARL), Archives 1917 through 1940, Box: Program of Instruction, Folder: 1925-1926 Academic Year.

maneuvers, field exercises, and field maneuvers.³⁸ One can discern the influence of the 1920 National Defense Act in the chapter on the principles of training where it states, “The immediate object of training is the development of an efficient fighting force, capable of great and rapid expansion in war.”³⁹ Walker found his experience at the Command and General Staff School professionally and personally rewarding, as he not only gained a world-class staff officer’s education, but also graduated with two of his closest friends, Major Dwight D. Eisenhower and Major Leonard T. “Gee” Gerow.⁴⁰

Walker attended the Army War College from 1935 to 1936, shifting his focus away from the division and corps level planning he conducted at the Command and General Staff School and the tactical experiences of battalion commander by immersing him within national strategy and policy. In these later years of the interwar period, the War College increased its involvement in the real world issues facing the War Department General Staff.⁴¹ The faculty organized the class of 1936 to work on three of the strategic defense plans (identified by color); Green (Mexico), Orange (Japan), and Red (Britain).⁴² Additionally, the class worked on a plan referred to as “Participation with Allies” that pitted the United States with France, Britain, Greece, and Turkey against a German-led coalition of Germany, Italy, Austria, and Hungary.⁴³ Walker also worked on reviewing and analyzing the maneuvers and command post exercises held in the 1935 academic year, allowing him focus on the conduct of large exercises. This provided invaluable

³⁸ U.S. Army, Command and General Staff School, *Methods of Training (Provisional)*, (Fort Leavenworth, KS: The General Service School Press, 1925), Table of Contents.

³⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁴⁰ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 35.

⁴¹ Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command: A History of the U.S. Army War College* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: The Alumni Association of the United States Army War College, 1983), 238.

⁴² Henry G. Gole, *The Road to Rainbow*, 59.

⁴³ Ibid.

insight for his later duties as a corps and army commander.⁴⁴ Walker's graduation from the Army War College distinguished him within the Army establishments as a competent leader "that could prepare the Army for war and fight the war successfully if it came."⁴⁵ More importantly, Walker's interwar attendance at various Army schools provided him the opportunity to reflect on his previous experiences, immerse himself in the current doctrine and professional discourse, and prepare for future assignments.

Walker spent five years in tactical units between his combat experience and the Army expansion in 1940. He served four of those five years as a battalion commander, and one as a brigade executive officer. He benefited most from the first of these commands – his first since the Great War– a battalion of the 15th Infantry Regiment stationed in T'ientsin, China. Walker held this command from 1930 to 1933, and benefited from the added emphasis on training that resulted from the real-world threat his unit faced – something lacking at most American postings around the world.⁴⁶ The regiment operated under two annual training cycles; garrison, which normally lasted from December through March, and field, which lasted from summer through November.⁴⁷ As one of the two battalion commanders within the regiment, Walker's responsibilities included required garrison training events like long marches, map reading, rifle assembly, and other individual skills required of an infantryman.⁴⁸ More importantly, Walker led the battalion in maneuvers in and around T'ientsin and local training areas during the field training cycle, which consisted not only of long marches, but also included force on force

⁴⁴ Harry P. Ball, *Of Responsible Command*, 238.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 253.

⁴⁶ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 36-42; Alfred E. Cornebise, *The United States 15th Infantry Regiment in China, 1912-1938* (London: McFarland & Company, 2004), 2. In 1931 Japan took over Manchuria and numerous conflicts arose with various local warlords where the 15th was dispatched as a show of force.

⁴⁷ Dennis L. Noble, *The Eagle and the Dragon: The United States Military in China, 1901-1937* (Westport, CN: Greenwood, 1990), 134.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

operations and the establishment of the defense.⁴⁹ Walker's service in China allowed him to put into action the experience he had gained while an instructor and student, in an environment where he could practice the art of training soldiers from the individual to battalion level on a daily basis, and in preparation for the possibility of facing a real-world threat.

Walker's next opportunity to command an organization with a dedicated training mission occurred as the nation scrambled to transform America's small peacetime Army into deployable fighting force. His assumption of command of the 36th Infantry Regiment (Armored) at Camp Polk, Louisiana on April 15, 1941 began nine years of continuous command, culminating with his appointment as an army commander in Korea.⁵⁰ Within eight months of assuming command of the newly activated 36th Infantry Regiment (Armored), he moved up to command the 3rd Armored Brigade, and then the 3rd Armored Division. Like all newly activated units, these organizations received a large influx of untrained soldiers, and had to overcome equipment shortages in developing these untrained recruits into a trained, combat-ready unit.⁵¹ Starting with cadre and basic training, the unit implemented a progressive training schedule that culminated in field maneuvers with the I Armored Corps and combined arms exercises with elements of the Army Air Corps.⁵² Walker experienced the challenges and requirements he would later see as a corps and army commander, providing him a solid foundation of experience to serve as a basis for action and decision-making later in his career. While serving as the 3rd Armored Brigade commander, Walker wrote a memorandum to his men complimenting them on their demonstrated

⁴⁹ Alfred E. Cornebise, *The United States 15th Infantry Regiment in China, 1912-1938*, 147.

⁵⁰ Current Biography.

⁵¹ History of 3rd Armored Division, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 4, Folder 10.

⁵² History of 3rd Armored Division.

ability: “All of you have opened the intake valve of knowledge wider than at any other period of equal length in your lives, “ and “even greater things are expected of you.”⁵³

During the interwar years, America’s Army atrophied into one smaller than that of Belgium or Portugal, despite fighting for the budget and resources necessary to meet its obligations set forth by the National Defense Act of 1920.⁵⁴ During the 1920s and 1930s, officers faced numerous adversities, such as slow promotions, low pay, and a poor public image. For example, Walker stalled at the rank of major for fifteen years, and suffered a 15 percent pay cut and one unpaid month a year from 1928 to 1935 as part of Roosevelt’s New Deal.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, he endured the years of hardship with aplomb, emerging as a leader who, shaped by interwar doctrine, discourse, and experience, could successfully lead and train soldiers at the corps and army level.

World War II

General Walker put the experience of his early career to use during the second World War, training units for combat and serving as a corps commander in Europe. During this command, he demonstrated a level of proficiency that highlights his excellence as a trainer and serves as an early example of his long-term effect on the Army's views regarding training. Exploiting contemporary doctrine, lessons learned from units in training and combat, and guidance from higher headquarters, Walker foreshadowed today’s Army doctrine and training philosophy. He demanded tough, realistic, commander-led training in combined arms combat, emphasizing air-ground coordination and integration of both logistical and operational efforts.

⁵³ Walton H. Walker to “Officers and Men of this Brigade,” Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 4, Folder 10.

⁵⁴ Edward M. Coffman, *The Regulars*, 234.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 242.

Ultimately, he molded his corps and the subordinate units he trained into exceptionally competent units that fought and consistently defeated opposing German forces.

Training for Combat

The training doctrine contained in *Field Manual 21-5, Military Training*, July 16, 1941, provided some structure, but only superficial guidance, for leaders preparing their units for combat. The manual, with minimal updates from preceding publications provided basic procedural training guidelines, but not enough detail to serve as the sole source of training guidance for commanders preparing their units for combat.

The 1941 doctrine identifies the predecessors to today's seven principles of training. For example, the modern principle "train as you will fight" in the 2011 *FM 7-0* holds much in common with the concept of "realism" described in the 1941 *FM 21-5*: "Officers and men must be trained to expect...the physical phenomena of battle."⁵⁶ Regarding non-commissioned officer training, *FM 21-5* states, "Noncommissioned officers are given responsibility appropriate to their grade and required to conduct the instruction of their units."⁵⁷ The *FM 7-0* principle of "multiechelon training" falls under the heading of "combined training," where *FM 21-5* states, "It is only by combined training that the maximum effectiveness of tactical groups of all arms and services can be assured."⁵⁸

Lieutenant General Leslie McNair, commander of General Headquarters recognized the need to update both training doctrine and develop realistic training methods to ensure the Army was ready to enter combat. This recognition and in response to the continuous lessons learned from training inspections and from the front, McNair directed the branches to develop branch

⁵⁶ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 7-0*, 2-1; United States War Department, *Field Service Regulations*, 1941, 53.

⁵⁷ United States War Department, *Field Service Regulations*, 1941, 17.

⁵⁸ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 7-0*, 2-1; United States War Department, *Field Service Regulations*, 1941, 20.

specific training doctrine and provided regular guidance to the field on expectations, procedures, and standards to train in preparation for combat.⁵⁹ On November 11, 1942, McNair addressed the troops of Army Ground Forces via the radio network on the importance of training and personnel. The Armistice Day address served to harden the public's, and more importantly the soldiers' perception of war. Famously, McNair demanded, "Our soldiers must have the fighting spirit. If you call that hating our enemies, then we must do so with every fiber of our being...All of you must not only expect to fight, but must be determined to fight and kill."⁶⁰

General Walker's thirty years of combat and peacetime experience provided him the tools to facilitate the tough, realistic training McNair expected. While in command of IV Armored Corps and the Desert Training Center, Walker told his men, "It is our job to rehearse for war, to bring these units to a state of perfection that will be demanded of them by actual warfare, the perfection necessary to win battles."⁶¹ In a memorandum to the commanders of XX Corps, dated 2 December 1943, Walker concluded fourteen pages of specific guidance by admonishing his subordinates to "remember that battles are won by team work - aggressive action by highly disciplined troops and thorough knowledge by commanders of the capabilities and tactics of their own and supporting units."⁶² Walker used training as his means to build the teamwork, aggressiveness, discipline, and knowledge he required. Reminiscing years later, a colleague explained, "His idea was to make training so damned hard that combat would seem easy."⁶³

⁵⁹ Supplement to GHQ Training Directive dated November 1, 1943, NARA II, Record Group 337, Drawer 353, Box 690.

⁶⁰ Lesley J. McNair, "The Struggle is for Survival," *Vital Speeches of the Day IX* (November 1942): 113.

⁶¹ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 7.

⁶² Robert L. Schmidt, *XX Corps Operations, 1 August – 22 November 1944: A Study in Combat Power* (Master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1985), A-11.

⁶³ "Old Pro," 20.

General Walker first attracted attention within the Army as a tough, competent trainer during his command of the Desert Training Center in California. The desert was ideal for training a corps for combat covering over 30,000 square miles composed of sandy stretches, dry salt lake beds, regions of rocks and crag, and mountain ranges reaching more than 7,000 feet.⁶⁴ As expected in a desert that reached 130 degrees in the shade during the summer, large population centers did not exist.⁶⁵ Patton described the center as “probably the largest and best training ground in the United States.”⁶⁶ The center played a dual role, serving as “the schools in which higher commanders learned to handle complex forces under tactical conditions, and in which individual units practiced their responsibilities to other units and in turn received their support.”⁶⁷

Walker reached the pinnacle of tactical leadership upon his selection for corps command. Not burdened with supply or maintenance responsibility, a WWII corps commander enjoyed the freedom to focus on tactical operations and directing the corps as a combined arms team.⁶⁸ Units typically assigned to a corps included artillery, cavalry squadrons, engineers, and additional non-divisional combat units; however, the corps lacked permanently assigned divisions, which rotated in and out of various corps as required by the situation.⁶⁹ General Ridgeway provides an apt description of a World War II corps commander:

He is responsible for a large sector of a battle area, and all he must worry about in that zone is fighting. He must be a man of great flexibility of mind, for he may be

⁶⁴ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15: The Desert Training Center and C-AM*. (Washington, DC: Historical Section-Army Ground Forces, 1946), 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Robert R. Palmer, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 9: Organization and Training of New Ground Combat Elements*. (Washington, DC: Historical Section-Army Ground Forces, 1946), 23.

⁶⁸ Shelby L. Stanton, *World War II Order of Battle* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2006), 5. To facilitate the corps focus on the tactical fight, the army assumed command and administrative agency.

⁶⁹ Kent Roberts Greenfield, Robert R. Palmer, and Bell I. Wiley, *The Organization of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army Historical Division, 1947), 365. Within XX Corps, organic units included XX Corps Artillery, 3rd Cavalry Group, 8th Armored Group, and the 4th Tank Destroyer Group.

fighting with six divisions one day and one division the next as the higher commanders transfer divisions to and from his corps. He must be of tremendous physical stamina, too, for his battle zone may cover a front of one hundred miles or more, with a depth of fifty to sixty miles, and by plane and jeep he must cover this area, day and night, anticipating where the hardest fighting is to come, and being there in person, ready to help his division commanders in any way he can.⁷⁰

Not all senior officers were fit to serve as corps commanders, many units failed to conduct training to standard prior to and after Walker's assumption of command of the Desert Training Center on September 5, 1942. Prior to his arrival, army observers reported, "deficiencies indicated that the training program was not exploiting full of advantage of the area."⁷¹ After his command, McNair's staff noted, "There has been a noticeable tendency at the Center as a whole to drift away from the original and proper conception of tough and realistic conditions toward the luxurious and artificial conditions."⁷²

Walker's command of the center served as a high water mark for training. He relied on personal experience, guidance from higher headquarters, and reports from observers on tactical lessons from the fighting fronts to ensure units received relevant training at the Desert Training Center.⁷³ For example, observers of Operation Torch reported witnessing "soldiers so terrified when first they encountered the tumult and confusion of battle that they refused to leave the transports...and resisted entreaties of their officers to move forward."⁷⁴ In response, Walker "set the theater going in the spirit desired by Headquarters, Army Ground Forces."⁷⁵ His focus resulted in the development of specific themes throughout the seven months of training in the

⁷⁰ Nathan Prefer, *Patton's Ghost Corps: Cracking the Siegfried Line* (Novato, CA: Presidio, 1998), 15.

⁷¹ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15*, 33.

⁷² Ibid, 52.

⁷³ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 16.

⁷⁴ Bell I. Wiley, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 11: Training in the Ground Army, 1942-1945*. (Washington, D.C.: Historical Section-Army Ground Forces, 1948), 39.

⁷⁵ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15*, 50.

desert; realism, conditioning, combined arms warfare, integration of both logistical and operational efforts, and ground and air operations.⁷⁶

The first and foundational theme entailed the continuous emphasis on realism and conditioning.⁷⁷ General Walker expected his corps headquarters to train as hard as any combat unit assigned to it did. With an initial focus on the individual soldier and team building, corps troops participated in long, grueling hikes, rugged obstacle courses, and infiltration courses that included trip wires, land mines, and hidden explosives in all weather conditions, and during both day and night.⁷⁸ The Commander himself participated in the training, and he ensured no “excused list” existed for corps personnel.⁷⁹ He emphasized the importance of leaders at training in a letter to all division commanders stating, “Unauthorized absence from training of experienced senior officers constitutes a failure on their part to fulfill their duties of command.”⁸⁰ In their official history, XX Corps personnel remember their training as “their first taste of the hardest and toughest warfare in the world under conditions that closely paralleled those faced by their comrades overseas.”⁸¹

An expansion of the training center’s organization enabled the realism Walker strived for in training. The center established a communications zone, transforming it into the first simulated theater of operations in the United States. Prior to this expansion, “little or no thought had been given the military reorganization required to operate the fixed establishments of the

⁷⁶ Robert L. Schmidt, *XX Corps Operations*, 17-18.

⁷⁷ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 9.

⁸⁰ Layton C. Tyner, *General George S. Patton, Jr. and General Walton H. Walker* (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 1956), C-1.

⁸¹ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 9.

communications zone.”⁸² The expansion of the Desert Training Center facilitated “maximum training of combat troops, service units and staffs under conditions similar to those which might be encountered overseas.”⁸³ General Walker now commanded all combat, service and air troops residing in the simulated theater allowing all involved to conduct “post graduate training under a play of influences bearing the closest possible resemblance to combat conditions.”⁸⁴

Once corps personnel improved their individual competency, leaders shifted focus to collective training in January 1943 and began to train as McNair envisioned, “as a balanced force with a variable number of divisions ... supported by appropriate portions of field artillery, mechanized cavalry, combat engineers, tanks, tank destroyers, and antiaircraft units, all organized flexibly in battalions and groups.”⁸⁵ General Walker’s first maneuvers at the center occurred from 18 February to 6 March 1943 and included the 4th Armored Division, 6th Armored Division, 6th Motorized Division, 3rd Tank Group, 4th Mechanized Cavalry, 606th and 704th Tank Destroyer Battalions, and the 404th Coast Artillery Battalion (Antiaircraft).⁸⁶ Additionally, the IV Air Support Command provided invaluable air-ground integration training by bombing tanks with flour bags and providing realistic strafing runs on troops.⁸⁷ The number of troops participating and the scope of the training enabled Walker to stress several high-priority training themes simultaneously: combined arms warfare, integration of both logistical and operational efforts, and air-ground coordination.

⁸² Memorandum on Joint Training Facilities, dated 15 Oct 1943, NARA II, Record Group 337, Drawer 353, Box 690.

⁸³ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15*, 38.

⁸⁴ Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army Historical Division, 1948), 450.

⁸⁵ Robert R. Palmer, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 9*, 24.

⁸⁶ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15*, 39; Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 39.

⁸⁷ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 16.

Implementing lessons learned from the front, the maneuvers entailed “moving the corps over long distances and conducting supply and evacuation operations under desert conditions; organizing and constructing a defensive position in depth and defending against a combined arms attack; and advancing with long lines of supply and communications against a delaying force of composite enemy forces.”⁸⁸ 6th Armored Division remembers the training fondly with an “accent on offensive action based on the experience of armored units operating in North Africa.”⁸⁹ “The exercises were rigorous,” recalls the 4th Armored Division, “where tanks in competing companies used their .30 caliber machine guns to fire live rounds at each other.”⁹⁰ Walker emphasized speed and surprise in all facets of the training by drilling in unexpected dislocation and movement over long distances of combat and service units.⁹¹ The long distance moves required the execution and planning of extended reconnaissance and intelligence and served to hone unit skills in the use of tactical formations, air-ground cooperation, and coordination across the many participating units.⁹² Additionally, the training ensured “the supply agencies learned to keep the corps supplied for longer periods and to keep the vehicles rolling.”⁹³

General Walker relinquished command of the Desert Training Center to the IX Corps, commanded by Major General Charles H. White on 29 March 1943.⁹⁴ He later observed, “higher commanders and their staffs and all officers and troops had benefited from their training in the center, but . . . the top command had benefited most, gaining confidence and perspective from the

⁸⁸ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 56.

⁸⁹ George F. Hofmann, *The Super Sixth: History of the 6th Armored Division in World War II and its Post-War Association* (Louisville: Sixth Armored Division Association, 1975), 25.

⁹⁰ Don M. Fox, *Patton's Vanguard: The United States Army Fourth Armored Division* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 19.

⁹¹ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 14.

⁹² Ibid

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15*, 41.

direction of large operations in the desert.”⁹⁵ His men agreed with his assessment, claiming they “were new at the art of war when they began their period of preparation in the desert, but they were on their way of becoming ‘vets’ at the end of it.”⁹⁶ The corps headquarters next headed to Camp Campbell and the Tennessee Maneuvers for additional training prior to their shipment overseas.

Upon his arrival at Camp Campbell in April 1943, Walker continued to build on the foundation of experience developed in the desert through regular field exercises, night marches, and fighting house-to-house and street-to-street in “Nazi” Villages.⁹⁷ After six months of training, the IV Armored Corps found itself well prepared to participate in the Tennessee Maneuvers – an eight-week long exercise involving units from the Second Army facing each other in simulated combat from September to October 1943.⁹⁸ Recently returned from a visit to North Africa, General Walker distributed a memorandum to all soldiers and leaders in preparation for the maneuvers. He wrote, “Soldiers in combat zones are paying with their lives for the dilatory training which they have received in this country. I believe that in nearly every instance this can be traced to ineffectual leadership...I will not allow any unit to leave the corps unprepared for war. I will hold the senior officer personally responsible to the end that units will be efficiently officered and carefully trained.”⁹⁹ Walker commanded seven divisions during the maneuvers, five infantry (the 26th, 30th, 75th, 83rd, and 98th) and two armored (the 12th and 20th).¹⁰⁰ The maneuvers consisted of a specific operation each week to facilitate the training, including movement to

⁹⁵ Sidney L. Meller, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 15*, 44.

⁹⁶ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 25.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 29.

⁹⁸ Jean R. Moenk, *A History of Large-Scale Army Maneuvers in the United States, 1935-1964* (Fort Monroe: HQ, United States Continental Army Command, 1969), 89.

⁹⁹ Robert L. Schmidt, *XX Corps Operations*, 23.

¹⁰⁰ Jean R. Moenk, *A History of Large-Scale Army Maneuvers in the United States, 1935-1964*, 85.

contact, meeting engagements, attack and defense of a river line, coordinated attack of a prepared position, delaying actions, and breakthrough then withdrawal over a considerable distance.¹⁰¹

The corps and subordinate units exhibited skills and tactics that would later prove successful during combat operations. The corps staff and organic units, such as the engineers and service units, benefited from the numerous river and stream crossings conducted during the maneuvers.¹⁰² Unseen at the maneuvers before, Walker capitalized on “the frequent use of task forces which made wide, flanking sweeps to attack the “enemy” from the rear and disrupt his line of communication.”¹⁰³ The terrain also provided the staff with the opportunity to practice pincer movements on the numerous towns and cities along the extensive road nets within the training area.¹⁰⁴ Observers attributed much of IV Armored Corps success to surprise thrusts of armor into areas where the enemy least expected them to appear.¹⁰⁵ The Infantry divisions also benefited from Walker’s aggressive leadership. According to the unit history, the 34th Division realized “that the best defense was to attack” and although the soldiers were “dusty and tired,” they followed orders and “fought the enemy.”¹⁰⁶ The 26th Division history explains similarly but in more detail that “they were cold, tired, wet, hungry but constantly developing into a physical striking force of no mean proportions.”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the “policy was rough on the men...and undoubtedly saved a mother’s son in combat.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Bell I. Wiley and William P. Govan, *Army Ground Forces Study No. 16: History of the Second Army*. (Washington, DC: Historical Section-Army Ground Forces, 1946), 132.

¹⁰² XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 34.

¹⁰³ XX Corps, *The Ghost Corps through Hell and High Water*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 60.

¹⁰⁵ XX Corps, *The Ghost Corps through Hell and High Water*, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Laszlo Bod, Ernie Hayhow, and C.D. Philos, *The Thunderbolt across Europe* (Munich: F.Bruckmann KG, 1945), 16.

¹⁰⁷ Yankee Division Veterans Association, *The History of the 26th Yankee Division, 1917-1919 [and] 1941-1945* (Salem, MA: Deschamps Bros., 1955), 25.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

At the conclusion of the maneuvers, IV Armored Corps, redesignated as the XX Corps, spent their last few months at Camp Campbell reorganizing and preparing for overseas movement.¹⁰⁹ Upon arrival in England, Walker once again developed a rigorous training schedule for his soldiers, units, and staffs. Without advance notice, he ordered the corps headquarters out of garrison at least once a week to establish a command post in the field under battle conditions, stressing camouflage and dispersion.¹¹⁰ The 4th Armored Division, once again subordinate to XX Corps and Third Army, set up firing ranges along the coast to fire at targets floating in the water while continuing to “utilize the cramped English countryside to fine-tune its performance.”¹¹¹ Walker and his staff used their time in England to focus on its “primary mission” and to “prefect itself for battle.”¹¹²

General Walker trained the XX Corps for twenty-three months prior to its introduction to combat in August 1944. His combat experience in World War I and thirty years of service prior to deployment contributed to his relentless focus on realistic training. Only a few of the more than twenty divisions he trained at the Desert Training Center, the Tennessee Maneuvers, and in England served in his corps during combat, but all received accolades while serving in Europe.¹¹³ The themes he emphasized in training - leaders in the front, realism, conditioning, combined arms warfare, air-ground coordination, and integration of both logistical and operational efforts - directly attributed to the corps and divisions success upon their first experience of combat.

¹⁰⁹ XX Corps, *The Ghost Corps through Hell and High Water*, 4-5.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 7.

¹¹¹ Don M. Fox, *Patton's Vanguard*, 30.

¹¹² XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 50.

¹¹³ XX Corps, *The Ghost Corps through Hell and High Water*, pull out.

XX Corps: Breakout and Pursuit

XX Corps arrived in France on July 24, 1944 and entered combat on August 5, 1944 commanding the 5th and 35th Infantry Divisions and the 2nd French Armored Division while assigned to Third Army.¹¹⁴ The successes of XX Corps in its first weeks in combat reflect the high level of training Walker required of his corps. Third Army, selected to exploit the breakthrough of the German lines by First Army, gave XX Corps the task to “move its three divisions approximately 120 miles south into position and secure the southern end of an approximately 60-mile line of departure... to hold open the corridor en route and be prepared to fend off anticipated enemy counterattacks.”¹¹⁵ As part of the mission, XX Corps crossed the Selune River on a double Bailey bridge that the corps engineers built in a single day, and protected by corps anti-aircraft units who shot down 30 enemy aircraft protecting it.¹¹⁶ Additionally, Walker diverted the 35th Infantry Division to halt a major German counter attack at Mortain while simultaneously continuing the attack by 5th Infantry Division on Angers and Nantes.¹¹⁷ “Thus in its first major action,” the corps history notes, “XX Corps was creating military history by fighting on two fronts separated by some 75 miles.”¹¹⁸

XX Corps’ explosive drive east ended on September 1, 1944, at Verdun due to almost a complete absence of gasoline available.¹¹⁹ In less than a month, the corps dashed across France commanding six different divisions while fighting thru Angers, Nantes, Chartres, Fontainebleau, Reims, and Verdun. Notably, Walker excelled at using rivers to his advantage-very different from

¹¹⁴ Martin Blumenson, *Breakout and Pursuit. United States Army in World War II: European Theater of Operations* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), 345.

¹¹⁵ XX Corps, *Campaigns of Normandy and France, XX Corps Operational Report, 1 August- 1 September 1944* (XX Corps, 1945), 1.

¹¹⁶ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 70.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 73.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹¹⁹ XX Corps, *Campaigns of Normandy and France*, 14.

his experience in WWI.¹²⁰ He aggressively executed six major river crossings using speed and momentum to force combat power over in any way possible routinely surprising German forces.¹²¹ The corps earned its nickname the “Ghost Corps” during the drive due to its bold tactics of encirclement and the speed and aggressiveness of its attacks that prevented the German Army “from recovering sufficiently to form a cohesive line of defense.”¹²² It fought as it had trained, with long distance marches, well-executed river crossings, advances in multiple columns, wide flanking attacks, and appearing where least expected were traits learned during their time at the Desert Training Center, Camp Campbell, the Tennessee Maneuvers and in England.

Walker’s skill as a trainer not only made him successful in the European Theater, but also set him apart among his peers, leading to his critical role during the Korean War. Patton was a firm believer in Walker’s ability, once saying, “He will apparently fight anytime, anywhere, and with anything that I will give him.”¹²³ Lieutenant General George S. Patton, the Third Army Commander, was not alone in his assessment, Eisenhower in a letter to Marshall in February 1945 ranked Walker with Ridgeway, Collins, and Haislip, describing him as a “Top flight Corps C.G., fighter, cool”¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Walton H. Walker, *The Operations of the 5th Division during the 3rd Phase of the Meuse-Argonne*, 27.

¹²¹ Robert L. Schmidt, *XX Corps Operations*, 97.

¹²² XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 100. The designation of XX Corps was not released to the media until several weeks after it began combat operations. The media referred to Walker’s unit as the “ghost” corps leading Patton’s Third Army across France.

¹²³ Robert S. Allen, *Lucky Forward: The History of Patton's Third U.S. Army* (New York, NY: Vanguard Press, 1947), 17.

¹²⁴ Cable to Marshall from Eisenhower, February 1, 1945, Eisenhower Library, Butcher Diary, Box 137, Folder 4.

Eighth Army

The North Korean attack into the Republic of Korea (ROK) on June 25, 1950 surprised the South Koreans and Americans alike.¹²⁵ Since the Korean War, many have viewed the initial American response through the lens of Task Force Smith as a case study in military unpreparedness.¹²⁶ T.R. Fehrenbach helped promulgate the myth of the ill-trained soldier with his widely read book *This Kind of War*. In it, Fehrenbach used many cleverly crafted phrases like “Discipline had galled them...they had grown fat...and figured the world was no sweat,” and most condemning, “It was not their fault that no one told them that the real function of an army is to fight.”¹²⁷ The resulting disdain for Eighth Army and the American soldier rests on a simplistic interpretation of the events leading up to the North Korean attack and the strategic victory U.S. forces eventually achieved. Walker’s leadership of Eighth Army in Japan prior to the North Korean attack created a large pool of soldiers organized in units well trained in the tactics and doctrine of the U.S. Army through his progressive, focused collective training process. Walker’s experience, coupled with his skill as a trainer and leader, provided America the capability to mobilize quickly a force sufficient to defeat the North Korean Army and prevent the communists from unifying Korea.

¹²⁵ Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1961), 21.

¹²⁶ Charles E. Heller and William A. Stoffts, *America’s First Battles, 1776-1965* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 266. Task Force Smith consisted of 400 infantry supported by an artillery battery from the 24th Infantry Division and routed by advancing North Korean forces while attempting to delay them for as long as possible while more U.S. forces arrived in the country to support them.

¹²⁷ T. R. Fehrenbach, *This Kind of War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1963), 66.

Training in Japan

Wilson Heefner, Walker's Biographer, described Walker's appointment as the Eighth Army commander on September 15, 1948 as "a logical choice...since he was, at the time, one of the army's most experienced trainers."¹²⁸ Layton Tyner, Walker's aide, stated plainly, "when General Walker came over, his express mission was get this lethargic army, Eighth Army, who was resting on their laurels, coming up through the Pacific with MacArthur into a combat type unit."¹²⁹ Walker's arrival coincided with the Japanese government's recovery from the war and its assumption of responsibility for a larger portion of the civilian administration. This allowed many combat troops to transition their focus from occupation duty-related commitments to combat training.¹³⁰ MacArthur ordered Walker to initiate a training program that would improve training readiness and transform Eighth Army "into a combat effective force."¹³¹ Although he found himself in a new duty position, Walker faced similar challenges to those of the interwar years; primarily shortage of funds, personnel, equipment, and training areas.

The Eighth Army in 1949, like the rest of the Army, exhibited the negative effects of rapid demobilization after World War II, doubts regarding the relevance of a ground army on the atomic battlefield, and the administration's resolve to cut military spending.¹³² President Truman focused defense spending on nations threatened by the Soviets, hoping to contain the spread of communism.¹³³ By June 1950, the active Army dropped to pre-war personnel strengths and now consisted of only 591,000 personnel in ten combat divisions. Eighth Army – low priority in terms

¹²⁸ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 150.

¹²⁹ Layton C. Tyner interview by Wilson A. Heefner, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 2, Folder 1.

¹³⁰ James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction the First Year* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, Chief of Military History, 1961), 55.

¹³¹ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 150-151.

¹³² Peter G. Tsouras, *Changing Orders: The Evolution of the World's Armies, 1945 to the Present* (New York, NY: Arms and Armour, 1994), 12.

¹³³ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1991), 71.

of Truman's anti-communist spending policies – consisted of a mere 45,561 of the 87,215 soldiers authorized, and possessed a combat strength of only 26,494.¹³⁴ In response, General Douglas MacArthur, Commander of Far East Command (FEC), Eighth Army senior headquarters, modified the Far East Command Tables of Organization in late 1949, reorganizing many of its units and removing the two remaining corps headquarters to maintain the existing four-division structure of Eighth Army.¹³⁵ He accomplished this by establishing authorized division strength at 12,500 men, far short of the 18,900 specified in the division Table of Organization.¹³⁶ The 7,000-man shortage per infantry division resulted in one tank company and one infantry battalion stripped from each regiment, a firing battery stripped from each divisional artillery battalion, and the replacement of the divisional tank battalion and antiaircraft battalion with a tank company and antiaircraft battery.¹³⁷ Additionally, Eighth Army lacked both their required service troops and the corps headquarters with its supporting special troops.¹³⁸

High turnover rates and low soldier quality exacerbated the problems caused by FEC personnel policies. The headquarters in Tokyo kept the best of the newly arrived officer replacements in Tokyo “sitting up at GHQ [General Headquarters] four-deep,” while Eighth Army received the “rejects.”¹³⁹ Of the replacements that did arrive, many were very young, with low aptitude scores and minimal training.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, the prohibition against family accompaniment provided little incentive for officers to volunteer for duty in Japan, resulting in

¹³⁴ Eighth Army G-3 Historical Report dated 31 Jan 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹³⁵ James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction the First Year*, 53.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 54.

¹³⁷ Eighth Army G-3 Historical Report dated 31 Jan 1950.

¹³⁸ James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction the First Year*, 97.

¹³⁹ Stanley Weintraub, *MacArthur's War: Korea and the Undoing of an American Hero* (New York, NY: Free Press, 2000), 13.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas E. Hanson, *Combat Ready?*, 21. Enlisted replacements attended an eight-week basic training course and did not receive any specialty training before reporting to their units.

assignment of a disproportionately high percentage of the lower-performing graduates from service schools.¹⁴¹

The austere budget and lack of material and equipment procurement since the war degraded the training capacity of Eighth Army by significantly reducing equipment availability and serviceability. A shortage of recoilless rifles, radios, mortars, and spare machinegun barrels, exacerbated by the unserviceable condition of thousands of jeeps and trucks, required Walker and his subordinate commanders to accomplish training by overcoming adversity with leadership and ingenuity.¹⁴² Due to the cumulative effect of these personnel and equipment challenges, even at peak training capability the Eighth Army's infantry divisions could "lay down only 62 percent of their infantry firepower, 69 percent of their antiaircraft artillery firepower, and 14 percent of their tank firepower."¹⁴³

The Eighth Army also experienced a shortage of suitable training areas. Although he spent a majority of his career in the United States, training in expansive maneuver areas, Walker's tour in China prepared him for the restrictive terrain he faced in Japan. His need of a more space led him to utilize a new training area near Mount Fuji, enabling him to conduct limited division exercises.¹⁴⁴ This new training area allowed units to train at a higher level than previously possible, as confirmed by observations like that of Lieutenant Posy L. Starkey of the 27th Infantry Regiment, who recollected, "We had our first real tactical training and field firing at Fuji... We didn't talk about 'grazing fire,' we actually did it. We walked final protective lines and drew range based on real terrain."¹⁴⁵ An August 1949 *Pacific Stars and Stripes* article reported

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink: Defense of the Pusan Perimeter* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1996), 10.

¹⁴³ James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction the First Year*, 54.

¹⁴⁴ James F. Schnabel, *Policy and Direction the First Year*, 55.

¹⁴⁵ Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, 11.

that units conducted “transition firing, practice with demolitions, hand grenades, recoilless rifles, bazookas, mortars and machine guns” at the Mount Fuji Training area.¹⁴⁶

Walker fully understood the shortcomings of Eighth Army and the challenges they presented him when he assumed command. Lieutenant General Eichelberger, his predecessor, described Eighth Army as “nothing but a supply organization with no combat soldiers, just a cadre.”¹⁴⁷ During Walker’s first two weeks in command, he visited many units throughout Japan and found “depleted units” that would “prevent the development of any satisfactory degree of combat effectiveness.”¹⁴⁸ This convinced him that his “most important task was to change the mental attitude of complacency,” and create “with the limited strength available, sound, thoroughly disciplined, and well trained combat units.”¹⁴⁹ To accomplish this, Walker published a series of training directives detailing his training philosophy, and ordered his division and corps commanders to reduce or eliminate their personnel commitments to occupation duties, thereby increasing their ability to train replacements, conduct command post exercises, and reach training proficiency standards within a reasonable timeline.¹⁵⁰

Walker did not rely on memorandums and training directives alone to ensure the soldiers of Eighth Army knew their responsibility. In an interview in the *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, published on June 10, 1949, the fifth anniversary of Eighth Army’s activation, he stressed the “importance of attaining the highest degree of combat readiness.” He pointed out, “it is our duty to overcome all obstacles and train an army that is as capable in combat as it is in its occupation

¹⁴⁶ “Cav Continues Training at Fuji,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, August 1, 1949, Tokyo Edition.

¹⁴⁷ David Halberstam, *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* (New York, NY: Hyperion, 2007), 142.

¹⁴⁸ Statement by Walker to Staff of Supreme CDR, 5 Jul 49, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁴⁹ Statement by Walker to Staff of Supreme CDR.

¹⁵⁰ I Corps Training Directive Number 2, 15 May 1949, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 7; Eighth Army Training Directive 5, 3 April 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6. A command post exercise is an exercise in which the forces are simulated, involving the commander, the staff, and communications within and between headquarters

pursuits.”¹⁵¹ A year later via the same paper, Walker made more decisive comments regarding training, stating, “Our mission now is to achieve a degree of combat readiness that will not only discourage any aggressor but will crush any who attempt to encroach upon those principles of justice and government we stand ready to defend.”¹⁵² He reserved his most pointed remarks for the Eighth Army staff, emphasizing, “a passive attitude is doomed to defeat and I will have no patience with anyone who fails to take aggressive and offensive action whenever and wherever possible.”¹⁵³ Walker’s training philosophy from World War II carried forward into his leadership during the Korean War, as reflected in his I Corps commander’s training guidance: “All training must stress that each soldier, regardless of assignment, has as his primary duty the obligation to fight or support the fight.”¹⁵⁴

Subordinate commanders and the Eighth Army staff immediately instituted Walker’s guidance, resulting in a dramatic improvement in training readiness. Walker’s scrutiny of occupation duties resulted in the release of “hundreds of officers and enlisted men for return to military duties and enabled the command to give increased attention to the development of both administrative and combat efficiency.”¹⁵⁵ For example, cumulative daily tactical guard duty requirements dropped from 750 soldiers a day in January 1949, to 200 a day in December 1949. By March 1950, American tactical troops no longer performed guard duty at service installations.¹⁵⁶ Eighth Army responded to the poor training of replacements by developing a program to establish a uniform level of proficiency upon their arrival in theater. Screened to

¹⁵¹ “Eighth Celebrates on Activation Day,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 10, 1949.

¹⁵² “Walker’s Denunciation,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 10, 1950.

¹⁵³ Commentary on Eighth Army CPX, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁵⁴ I Corps Training Directive Number 2, Emphasis in the original.

¹⁵⁵ 1949 Eighth Army Historical Report, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁵⁶ Eighth Army G-3 Historical Report dated 31 Jan 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

determine the number of weeks spent in basic training, soldiers completed up to fourteen weeks of additional training upon assignment to Eighth Army to ensure they achieved the standards Walker prescribed in his mobilization-training program.¹⁵⁷ This training program made great strides in mitigating the high annual turnover of trained personnel in Eighth Army.¹⁵⁸

Walker also established a phased training plan similar to the one he utilized for XX Corps at the Desert Training Center. This included a series of deadlines that coincided with the phases: individual, small unit, and company level training completed by December 15, 1949, battalion level training completed by May 15, 1950, regimental combat training (including combined field exercises) completed by July 31, 1950, and amphibious training completed by October 31, 1950.¹⁵⁹ Finally, Walker instituted a quarterly report that required all tactical units down to battalions and separate companies to provide a quantitative metric of their combat effectiveness, enabling him to track the training level of his forces.¹⁶⁰

Walker instituted monthly command post exercises for regimental combat team level units and below, starting on 21 December 1949 and continuing through May 1950.¹⁶¹ As a baseline, Eighth Army, its subordinate four divisions, Yokohama Command, Kobe Base, and the 40th Antiaircraft Artillery Brigade exercised their command posts between March 1950 and May 1950.¹⁶² In April, Walker conducted a joint command post exercise focused on the defense of Japan. This exercise included the aforementioned Eighth Army units plus General Headquarters,

¹⁵⁷ I Corps Training Directive Number 2, 15 May 1949, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 7.

¹⁵⁸ HQ, Eighth Army G3 Command report, June 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁵⁹ Wilson A. Heefner, *Patton's Bulldog*, 152.

¹⁶⁰ 1949 Eighth Army Historical Report, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² HQ, Eighth Army G3 Command report, June 1950.

FEC, U.S. Naval Forces, Far East, Far East Air Forces, and Far East Command Control Group.¹⁶³

The exercise also consisted of limited field maneuver training by the 2nd Battalion Combat Team, 19th Infantry Regiment and its headquarters.¹⁶⁴ At the after action review for the May training event, Walker assessed the staff as “able to operate successfully if the occasion should arrive,” and asserted, “the time has now arrived for us to give more important consideration to the tactical and strategic aspects of our problem.”¹⁶⁵

The rigor and quality of training conducted by Eighth Army garnered attention in numerous newspaper reports, most notably *The Pacific Stars and Stripes*, and appears repeatedly in soldier and leader commentary from this period. A June 17, 1949 article describes training that combines infantrymen and tankers throwing “everything from .30 caliber machinegun bullets to 75mm. shells against the enemy positions,” prior to M-24 tanks attacking at dawn, “closely followed by strategically placed infantrymen.”¹⁶⁶ An August 23, 1949 article highlights training where “for the first time since the end of the war, an artillery battalion is lending support to an Infantry battalion on a maneuver problem.”¹⁶⁷ A later article details training by the Seventh Cavalry Regiment, which consisted of 50 percent new arrivals to Japan, and “began on a squad level and has progressed through platoon and company tactics...under actual combat conditions and with live ammunition being used.”¹⁶⁸ These three articles are just a few selected from an almost daily journal of the demanding training occurring within Eighth Army.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Eighth Army Training Directive 5, 3 April 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁶⁶ “1st Cavalry Starting Maneuvers,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, June 17, 1949.

¹⁶⁷ “Training Stepped up for Seventh Cavalry,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, August 10, 1949, Tokyo Edition.

¹⁶⁸ “Artillery to Join Infantrymen in Field,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, August 23, 1949, Tokyo Edition.

Oral histories and soldier interviews also reflect the new attitude that spread throughout Eighth Army under Walker. Ralph Leighton, operations officer of the 31st Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division remarked that his regiment in 1949 had “passed the boundary marker. No longer is it a group of individuals wearing as part of their uniforms the crest of a regiment. It is a team. The change has been slow in coming; now that it is here, we are prepared and are ready for any tactical mission that may come.”¹⁶⁹ Robert Kendrick, a World War II veteran and an S-3 in the 17th Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, pointed out that, “This fine training served us well in all combat operations-we knew how to fight and our training got us out of some tight spots in Korea – we knew how to use our own supporting weapons and artillery and close air support and use them at every opportunity.”¹⁷⁰ Unfortunately, not all units experienced the same level of training emphasis. Joseph Terman, commander of Battery B in the 31st FAB, 7th Infantry Division and also a veteran of World War II wrote in a letter to his parents, “We have a very real problem in welding together a good, efficient military team over here...The quality of men we have, with some outstanding exceptions, is so terribly inferior to the men we had then [in 1941 and 1942], the procuring of supplies and equipment erratic and inadequate, and ...the voluminous paper administration is time consuming to the extreme.”¹⁷¹

The quarterly Eighth Army combat effectiveness reports reflected the improved training described in the newspapers and soldier testimonies. At the end of 1949, The Eighth Army G3, responsible for operations and training, reported “as of 31 March, Eighth Army’s overall Combat Effectiveness was twenty-two percent; as of 31 December, this figure had been raised to seventy

¹⁶⁹ Thomas E. Hanson, *Combat Ready?*, 59.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Kendrick letter to Wilson A. Heefner, June 1997, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 1.

¹⁷¹ Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, 11.

percent.”¹⁷² In the second quarter 1950, combat readiness continued to improve. The 25th Infantry Division reported an overall effectiveness of 82.5 percent while the 7th Infantry Division reported theirs as 80.2 percent as of June 20, 1950.¹⁷³ A 24th Infantry Division report dated April 8, 1950 did not reflect an overall effectiveness percentage, but did project that its regimental combat teams would complete their training as directed by Eighth Army by 23 June 1950.¹⁷⁴ Additionally, according to a May 25, 1950 G-3 report, “Approximately 75% of all tactical battalions in Eighth Army have completed battalion level training and have been tested.”¹⁷⁵ These and many other combat effectiveness reports provided Walker and his staff a barometer by which they could gauge the efficacy of their training program.

Eighth Army established teams of inspectors to evaluate training, while external organizations also made frequent inspections to evaluate training and combat effectiveness. Robert Kendrick stated, “the knowledge that an inspection team from Eighth Army would visit us to determine if we were combat ready - was responsible for our being ready.”¹⁷⁶ In September-October 1949, a Department of the Army training inspection team evaluated the status of training of all Eighth Army units.¹⁷⁷ It “reported that conduct of training in Eighth Army was considered excellent” and they were “impressed by the sincerity, energy and enthusiasm, on the part of both the officers and enlisted men, with the present intensive training that is being conducted.”¹⁷⁸ General J. Lawton Collins, Army Chief of Staff, stated in November 1949 that he “inspected

¹⁷² Eighth Army G-3 Historical Report dated 31 Jan 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁷³ Eighth Army G-3 Historical Report from 1 Jan 50 to 30 Jun 50, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁷⁴ 24th ID Combat Effectiveness Report, 8 Apr 50, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 8.

¹⁷⁵ G3 historical summary for 1950, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 6.

¹⁷⁶ Robert Kendrick letter to Wilson A. Heefner, June 1997.

¹⁷⁷ 1949 Eighth Army Historic Report.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

troops in the field and was delighted with what [he] saw,” and the training was a “well-conceived program excellently executed.”¹⁷⁹ Major General Ned Almond, MacArthur’s Chief of Staff, wrote in a letter dated March 9, 1950 how he projected by November 1950 that the combined maneuvers by Eighth Army would “overshadow those in Germany and at present going on as PORTEX in Puerto Rico.”¹⁸⁰ Collins later testified to Congress on the “strenuous training program” Eighth Army was conducting and “in a few months more they will be ready.”¹⁸¹

Similar to his method in corps command, Walker did not rely merely on reports to gain a sense of his subordinate commands’ combat effectiveness. He required the primary staff to get out of the headquarters and frequently visit troops in the field to follow up on the phases of training.¹⁸² Additionally, Walker himself “just stayed on the road” visiting tactical units from company to division level.¹⁸³ Joseph Bedford, Headquarters Commandant of Eighth Army and one of the men responsible for coordinating the general’s travel, remember that the commander was “very concerned” about the welfare, morale, and state of training of his troops and made frequent inspections.¹⁸⁴

Walker enforced the use of doctrine in his training guidance although it had changed very little since World War II. *Field Manual 21-5, Military Training*, July 16, 1941 remained the primary training document for Eighth Army in Japan as it had while he prepared his corps for Europe. Coincidentally, the Office, Chief of Army Field Forces published a large amount of new doctrine almost immediately after the employment of Eighth Army in Korea. In September 1950,

¹⁷⁹ “Collins Lauds Army for Fitness Training,” *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, November 5, 1949.

¹⁸⁰ Letter from Edward Almond to Ward Maris, 9 March 50, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5.

¹⁸¹ “Collins Lauds Army for Fitness Training”

¹⁸² Layton C. Tyner interview by Wilson A. Heefner.

¹⁸³ Layton C. Tyner interview by Wilson A. Heefner.

¹⁸⁴ Joseph S. Bedford letter to Wilson A. Heefner, 1996, Marshall Library, Heefner Collection, RG 266, Box 5, Folder 8.

an updated version of *FM 21-5, Military Training* implemented some minor lessons of training the Army for World War II, but placed a greater emphasis on the need to develop soldiers of good character. The updated field manual emphasized citizenship training as “one of the most important military subjects,” as was the troop information and education program.¹⁸⁵ Doctrine that better captured the lessons of the recent war may have had an impact on the training of Eighth Army; however, Walker’s personal training philosophy, experience, and leadership provided the foundation for his organization’s success in Korea.

Combat and Withdrawal

Task Force Smith formed the vanguard of Eighth Army and the United States ground combat forces when North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950. Lieutenant Colonel Charles B. Smith’s force dug in along an Osan ridgeline “to stop the North Koreans as far north of Pusan as possible” on July 5, 1950, just two weeks after North Korea’s surprise attack.¹⁸⁶ In contrast, the 1st Infantry Division’s attack on Cantigny occurred on May 28, 1918, more than a year after the United States declaration of war on Germany and almost four years after the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, the rout of Fredendall’s II Corps at Kasserine Pass began on January 30, 1943, also more than a year after the United States declared war on the Axis, and four years after the war began in Europe on September 1, 1939.¹⁸⁸ The Army’s traditional lack of military preparedness over its prior 175 years provides the context to view Eighth Army’s rapid deployment and ultimate success in its first three months of battle.

¹⁸⁵ U.S. Army, *Field Manual 21-5, Military Training* (Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 1950), 9.

¹⁸⁶ Charles E. Heller and William A. Stoffts, *America’s First Battles, 1776-1965*, 276.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, 156. America declared war on Germany on 6 April 1917

¹⁸⁸ Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York, NY: Henry Holt, 2002), 5, 311.

Major General William Dean found his 24th Infantry Division committed to battle in Korea piecemeal, a regiment at a time during its first week in combat. The division and later Eighth Army as a whole faced a North Korea People's Army consisting of ten infantry divisions, mostly "hardened veterans who had fought with the Chinese Communist and Soviet Armies in World War II."¹⁸⁹ Supplied, equipped, and trained by the Soviets, the NKPA possessed approximately 150 T-34 tanks and an abundance of howitzers, self-propelled guns, mortars, small arms, ammunition, and grenades. Due to the strength of the North Korean invasion, MacArthur incorrectly radioed to the Joint Chiefs that the opposing force consisted of "a combination of Soviet leadership and technical guidance with Chinese Communist ground elements. It can no longer be considered an indigenous North Korean effort."¹⁹⁰ In contrast, not only did the Eighth Army suffer from significant material and personnel shortages; the allied ROK Army could provide little support. Sun Yup Paik, the ROK 1st Infantry Division commander, stated during the retreat, "Weakened by the loss of manpower and equipment from main-force units, ROK Army reached the limits of its ability to resist."¹⁹¹

In an attempt to fill the shortages of the 24th Infantry Division, Walker transferred more than 4,500 officers, NCOs, and soldiers from the 7th and 25th Infantry Divisions and the 1st Cavalry Division.¹⁹² The addition of these men helped the 24th Infantry Division delay the North Korean onslaught, but the limited time available to integrate these new forces degraded its combat effectiveness. Additionally, the transfer of the men hindered the deployment of the divisions sent to reinforce allied formations in South Korea by dismantling trained teams and

¹⁸⁹ Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Nakdong, North to the Yalu*, 8.

¹⁹⁰ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat*, 89-90.

¹⁹¹ Sun Yaip Paik, *From Pusan to Panmunjom* (Washington D.C.: Brassey's, 1992), 23. General Paik later served as a Corps Commander under Walker and was the ROK's first four star general and chief of staff.

¹⁹² Uzal W. Ent, *Fighting on the Brink*, 42.

units – an eerily similar flaw as that seen in the U.S. Army’s World War II replacement system.¹⁹³

The lack of a third maneuver battalion per regiment and the shortages in artillery and armor in divisions deploying from Japan further degraded their fighting capacity upon arrival in South Korea. Ironically, these two-battalion regiments still operated under tactical doctrine based on World War II “triangular” organization further hindering American efforts during those first weeks in Korea.

Nevertheless, Walker’s experience and leadership came to the fore early in the fight. In a discussion with Dean during the first week of combat, Walker explained how he fought most of World War II with limited reserves, forcing him to establish “hard points in depth, and using integrated firepower to cover areas between them.”¹⁹⁴ He further explained that “commanders at every level had to exercise extreme care when assigning missions, selecting positions, developing fire support plans, planning withdrawal routes and issuing withdrawal orders” so that units would not become decisively engaged.¹⁹⁵ This guidance helped all units, not just the 24th Infantry Division, in developing tactics to delay the North Korean Army. On July 23, 1950, the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 8th Cavalry Regiment came under attack while separated by seven miles with no friendly units between them. Rather than suffering defeat in detail as one might expect, particularly given the “Task Force Smith” stereotype view of the war, these battalions withdrew to secondary defensive lines to continue the delaying operations.¹⁹⁶ As one of the 1st Cavalry Division’s first engagements in Korea, their success far exceeded that of the divisions employed

¹⁹³ Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 196.

¹⁹⁴ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat*, 89.

¹⁹⁵ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat*, 89.

¹⁹⁶ First Cavalry Division, *1st Cavalry Division, Korea June 1950 to January 1952* (Atlanta, GA: Albert Love Enterprises, n.d.), 10.

weeks earlier in the fight, despite the fact that by this point in the war the 1st Cavalry Division suffered “under the overwhelming smashes of the enemy.”¹⁹⁷

Considering the abysmal personnel situation and shortage of equipment in the Eighth Army when war broke out in Korea, Walker’s aggressive and effective training program provides the only explanation how the Eighth Army managed to fight a series of bitter delaying battles against a well-trained and aggressive enemy, in extremely difficult terrain and weather conditions. By the time Walker’s units withdrew to the Pusan Perimeter, the North Korean Army had culminated; the Eighth Army had sapped its fighting strength and turned the tide of the war. Major General Hobart R. Gay, Commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, remembered that American troops “were better trained going in there [Korea] than they were in the early months of World War II” and they “were pretty damn well trained.”¹⁹⁸ The performance of the soldiers during the first months of combat in Korea refutes Fehrenbach’s myth of the ill-trained soldier in Korea, which grew from the example of Task Force Smith into a stereotype of all American forces in the Pacific Theater. Walker’s leadership and tactical expertise certainly contributed to the success of Eighth Army in combat, but his skill as a trainer while in Japan ensured he had the aggressive, spirited officers and soldiers necessary to exercise his leadership and expertise to its maximum potential, eventually preventing the communists from unifying Korea.

Conclusion

Eisenhower, MacArthur, Patton, and many of the other World War II generals he fought side-by side with overshadowed General Walker’s service during the war, but all of them knew and respected him. During the war, Eisenhower described Walker as “a fighter in every sense of

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 12.

¹⁹⁸ The Hobart R. Gay Papers.

the word,” and said he “has constantly led his corps with an exemplary boldness and success.”¹⁹⁹ Several years later MacArthur, not noted for praising his subordinates, stated that after the first Chinese offensive in Korea, “only the timely and skillful maneuvering” by Walker of his Eighth Army had enabled the Americans to avoid the trap “surreptitiously laid calculated to encompass the destruction of the United Nations Forces.”²⁰⁰ Of the many remarks by Patton regarding Walker, one stands out: “Of all the Corps I have commanded, yours has always been the most eager to attack and the most reasonable and cooperative.”²⁰¹ Ironically, these same generals contributed to the nation’s limited appreciation of General Walker’s skill as a leader and trainer of troops. Walker served two of the most egotistical generals in America’s history, MacArthur and Patton. Ridgeway once wrote of MacArthur that his hunger for praise “led him on some occasions to claim or accept responsibility for deeds he had not performed, or to disclaim responsibility for mistakes that were clearly his own.”²⁰²

Walker’s early death has also contributed to his relative obscurity. The General died on December 23, 1950 in a vehicle accident on his way to visit his soldiers in the field as he had done every day while in command. The timing of his death is relevant as it occurred just as Eighth Army established a delay line south of Seoul to slow the Chinese onslaught, another low-point for the Army during the Korean War. This led most historians to see Walker through the lens of Task Force Smith and the retreat from North Korea. Additionally, his death did not allow him to make his own case or tell his own story, therefore relying on the discourse of others to determine his legacy.

¹⁹⁹ Document No. 2406, Message from Eisenhower to Marshall, Eisenhower Library, Papers, Pre-Presidential, 1916-1951, Box 133.

²⁰⁰ Roy E. Appleman, *South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, 771.

²⁰¹ XX Corps Association, *The XX Corps*, 408.

²⁰² John Toland, *In Mortal Combat*, 373.

Walker's career spanned three wars and almost forty years. His experiences during World War I and the interwar years provided him the opportunity to immerse himself in doctrine and discourse that enabled him to grow into a leader confident in his ability to train soldiers and lead them in combat. His participation in the 1914 and 1916 campaigns in Mexico and his service as a battalion commander in World War I early in his career ensured he viewed subsequent duty positions through a lens steeped in the reality and harshness of combat. This is apparent in his analysis of the 5th Division's operations during the American Meuse-Argonne offensive, in which his most critical personal observation considers the human dimension of battle, "It would seem that many lives would have been saved had the attempt been made in the French sector or that of the Ninetieth Division."²⁰³

This reality-based lens ensured Walker took full advantage of the opportunities afforded to him during the interwar period. His guidance and actions as a corps and army commander reflect his professional education from the Command and General Staff College and Army War College, and his knowledge of the doctrine of his day. The advent of *Training Regulation No. 10-5* in 1921, and its subsequent editions, provided Walker and the Army comprehensive doctrine on how to train, but mostly reflected principles Walker already understood. Later Army doctrine shifted focus from training the individual soldier to a methodology of training units, but the training Walker conducted as Commander throughout his career made even the later training regulations seem rudimentary. The inclusion of a course on training methodology within the Command and General Staff College also reflects the growing influence of training within the Army. Consequently, Walker entered World War II knowledgeable of the current doctrine, but with his own training philosophy, emphasizing realistic training under combat conditions and stressing leader involvement throughout the process.

²⁰³ Walton H. Walker, *The Operations of the 5th Division during the 3rd Phase of the Meuse-Argonne*, 27. Later in the paper, he analyses the planning, tactics, fires, and command and control of the campaign.

Walker spent a combined forty-five months training the XX Corps for World War II and Eighth Army prior to the Korean War. While the conditions in which they trained varied based on resource availability and national priority, Walker utilized a similar training method in each case. This consisted of a phased training plan initially focused on the individual soldier, and sequentially moving to collective training first as small units and ultimately at the division, corps and army level. Furthermore, the training Walker implemented among his units that fought in World War II and the Korean War emphasized similar themes of realism, physical conditioning, leader involvement, combined arms, and air-ground integration. Critical analysis of Army training doctrine in effect during Walker's corps and army level commands reflects concepts similar to those he employed. However, Walker's tenacity, deliberateness, and personal involvement in conducting this training resulted in his units achieving instant success in combat during World War II, and proving remarkably resilient during the first months of the Korean War, probably saving the Americans and their South Korean allies from disaster.

Historians have failed to acknowledge the criticality of Walker's training expertise as the main factor in his decades of exceptional performance. His success as a battalion, regiment, brigade, and division commander stemmed primarily from his ability to train soldiers, and this success ultimately gave the unassuming Walker the opportunity to utilize his skills in command of a corps, and eventually an army. XX Corps' success in accomplishing its first mission during the breakout and pursuit from Normandy and Eighth Army's ability to withstand the North Korean onslaught during the first months of battle in Korea equally merit recognition and praise, and these successes resulted from Walker's reliance as a senior commander on a foundation of high quality, demanding training.

Likewise, Walker consistently viewed training among his top priorities. Even in combat, he took the time to train at every opportunity. Major General Dean remembers witnessing Walker during the first weeks in Korea calmly explaining to an armored platoon leader the tactics necessary to delay the North Korean forces while only kilometers from the front lines. Dean later

wrote it was “as fine a lecture on tank tactics as you could hear in any military classroom.”²⁰⁴

Lieutenant Jack Dillender, a platoon leader in 610th Tank Destroyer Battalion during World War II, remembers Walker showing up at his stalled unit on the front line while under German fire.

Walker quickly assessed the situation and explained “Lieutenant, I want you to take your platoon and lead us to the Seine at Melun. I want you to run your destroyers as fast as you can, and don’t deploy the column unless you run into armor and lots of it.”²⁰⁵ Walker’s personal leadership in preparation for and during combat ensured the ultimate success of the units he commanded.

Walker’s emphasis on training and the results it helped him achieve remain as relevant to the leaders of today’s Army as those of the past. Today’s seven principles of training differ little from those of Walker’s day. However, an understanding of the skills necessary to train units for combat cannot consist solely of a review of training doctrine. General Walker’s career provides valuable insights into the real-world challenges a leader experienced training an Army unit, both in war and in peacetime. The resource constraints, political realities, and physical hardships that make Army training so difficult to accomplish with skill and foresight cannot be gleaned from classroom lectures or the pages of a journal or doctrinal publication. Today’s leaders should pay heed to Walker’s training methods, employed effectively whether he enjoyed the benefit of the plentiful resources available during World War II, or faced the constraints of the post-war resource situation in Japan and the crisis of the early stages of the Korean war. Forms of warfare and enemy techniques may change, but as Walker demonstrated over his long career, sound training can prepare a unit to face a variety of threats, and win even when at a significant material disadvantage. Walker deserves a place in America’s historical memory among the best of the

²⁰⁴ John Toland, *In Mortal Combat*, 88.

²⁰⁵ Harry Yeide, *The Tank Killers: A History of America's World War II Tank Destroyer Force* (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2004), 156.

Army's combat commanders, due primarily to his exemplary achievements as one of the leading trainers in U.S. Army history.

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