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FM 1-20

Military History Operations

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MILITARY HISTORY OPERATIONS

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PREFACE

Field Manual (FM) 1–20, *Military History Operations*, is applicable to all Army military history offices, military history units, and military history operations of major tactical and support commands generally at corps level and below. FM 1–20 provides basic doctrine describing the roles, relationships, organizations, and responsibilities of Army component command historians, historians, unit historical officers, and military history detachment (MHD) members in the United States Army. It describes, but does not extensively cover, historians and historical offices of units at echelons above corps and at the joint level. It is designed to provide historians, unit historical officers, commanders, and staffs the methods to preserve and document the history of the U.S. Army. It explains how the Army conducts military history operations during wartime, for both deployed forces in the combat theater and those units supporting the operation. The Army has responded to numerous contingencies or military operations other than war in recent years, and this FM provides doctrine on conducting military history operations during such contingencies. It also provides commanders doctrinal guidance on the employment of organic military history assets as well as separate military history units.

The primary users of this manual are force commanders, military history professionals, soldiers assigned the additional duty of unit historical officer, and soldiers assigned to MHDs. The manual provides guidance derived from regulations and other sources and gives techniques for the execution of military history operations. It reflects lessons learned in past operations and theories tested at the combat training centers.

The proponent of this manual is the Chief of Military History. Send comments and recommendations on DA Form 2028 directly to the U.S. Army Center of Military History, ATTN: DAMH-FPF, Fort McNair, DC 20319–5058.

Chapter 1

Concepts and Principles

USE OF MILITARY HISTORY

General

Military history is the collective memory of a unit or an entire armed force. Its use by units and individuals can teach valuable lessons from their recent past or provide unique insight into more distant times. This enhances unit performance and increases esprit de corps. The statement by philosopher George Santayana, "Those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it," has haunting implications in the profession of arms. General George S. Patton, Jr., stated, "To be a successful soldier, you must know history." A wise soldier learns from the past, both the successes and the failures. Military history is that link.

Commanders and Staff

Commanders and staff members can judge the effectiveness of current or planned operations by the study of related past actions. Although each combat action is unique, a review of actions against a similar enemy or a comparably organized and equipped opponent can provide useful insight. When planning future operations the commander and staff can compare operations in like terrain, weather, and environment to determine appropriate planning factors. In a related aspect, historical data is used in field manuals that provide statistical analyses to estimate logistical and personnel requirements in operations.

Training

Military history should be integrated into unit training for combat. Such use of history aids the soldier by showing practical applications and promoting confidence in solving problems. Most obstacles that face a novice in combat have been experienced before by other soldiers. The presentation of these historical analogies can bolster a new soldier to face the challenges of war. Training on sites of previous battles can provide vivid examples of how units and individuals met their responsibilities in the turmoil of combat. This tool broadens the outlook of today's soldiers and helps equalize the imbalances in personal experience.

Morale and Esprit

Military history inspires soldiers and adds to their pride in the military profession. An understanding of the qualities and successful actions of their unit and of individuals can help the members of the organization understand what can be achieved. Military history provides useful examples of outstanding leadership and its effects upon the organizational esprit. This knowledge helps to build great soldiers.

Public and Command Information

Military history is frequently used in public and command information activities. For the public, it reveals institutional experience that fosters confidence in the military. For the unit commander, it provides examples of individual and organizational successes that build and maintain pride and spirit. Recruiting themes frequently use military history as a centerpiece.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE U.S. ARMY HISTORICAL PROGRAM

Early Years of the United States

Military history has been used in the U.S. Army since the American Revolution. Those early sources were often produced abroad, primarily by civilian historians for the general reader. The information was adapted for the military's use through individual study and, later, through the professional military education process. It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that the U.S. Army began a formal collection of its historical experiences.

Post-Civil War Era

During and after the American Civil War, the War Department undertook a major effort to compile the official records of all units. The result, promoted by a congressional resolution in early 1864, was a set of 128 volumes of primary documents entitled *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, published between 1878 and 1901. Although these volumes continue to be a great source of facts for the soldier and civilian studying this period of U.S. military history, they present only the bare facts as reported by the commanders and do not attempt to analyze the actions of the antagonists. This crucial analytical step in the use of military history has been left to the novice and professional alike, since it was not part of the government project.

Spanish-American War

In 1902 the War Department published a two-volume account of the Spanish-American War, including the Philippine Insurrection and the China Relief Expedition. These volumes mirrored the Civil War *Official Records* in style and content. As with the Civil War records, this account was a reprinting of reports rather than an analytical study.

World War I

The 1903 order establishing the General Staff Corps in the U.S. Army also charged the corps with "the preparation of technical histories of military operations of the United States." In 1918 the War Department formed the Historical Branch under the control of the War Plans Division of the General Staff. This branch had the mission to write the history of the active participation of the U.S. Army in World War I. The War Department assigned additional sections to the headquarters of General John J. Pershing and the Services of Supply in France. Due to the rapid demobilization at the end of the war, these agencies were able only to collect, index, and preserve the official records prior to their inactivation. The government did not publish the official records of the American Expeditionary Forces until 1948. Again, this was a publication of raw data and not a historical analysis.

World War II

Less than three months into World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt directed that eleven executive departments and agencies of the federal government preserve their records and capture their administrative experiences of the war. The Army expanded this mission to include its operational experience. In August 1943, the Army reestablished a historical branch, this time within the G-2, Intelligence, General Staff Section. The Army leadership realized the need for a narrative analytical history of the Army in this war. To begin this undertaking, a committee met and established guidelines and missions.

The first mission was to perform a series of studies on specific military operations. The Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, wanted these studies circulated within commands engaged in combat as well as those preparing for or supporting the war. He wanted the individual soldier, especially those who had been wounded, to understand their part of the battles. To accomplish this, the Historical Branch activated and deployed a number of Information and Historical Service Teams to the theaters of operation. These units were the forerunners of today's Military History Detachments (MHD). Higher level commands also created history staff sections using assigned soldiers with a history background or, in some cases, personnel who were external to the command. This collection of historical information and its narrative writing of the operations became the American Forces in Action series. Between 1943 and 1947, the government published fourteen studies in this project.

A second mission was to write a comprehensive history of the war. This later became the United States Army in World War II series, frequently called the Green Books. To write this series, the Army established a separate Historical Division in November 1945, redesignating this agency as the Office, Chief of Military History (OCMH), in 1950. The U.S. Army in World War II series was ranked among the best scholarly works covering the war. The authors received open access to all documents. They had instructions to prepare their works without bias and to present both the successes and failures of the Army in a fair and unbiased way. As with the Civil War's *Official Records*, the government did not publish some of these volumes until almost a half-century after the war ended. But this time, the resulting coverage was analytical.

Korean War

The major commitment of U.S. Army forces into the Korean peninsula in 1950 expanded the mission of OCMH. The organization received the directive to produce a narrative history of the conflict, to include the joint command in the Far East. Historians were assigned to combat headquarters, and historical teams deployed to the theater. MHDs were particularly active in collecting historical material. OCMH prepared two narrative-pictorial histories and two volumes on small unit actions, as well as a five-volume historical account comparable to the World War II series.

Vietnam War

In 1965 the United States began sending large numbers of troops to the Republic of Vietnam. By this time, OCMH was the Army's focal point for military history, and the agency created a special section to cover the conflict. MHDs deployed to support the divisions and separate brigades in the field. These actions helped the various staffs preserve the records needed to prepare a narrative history of the war.

Post-Vietnam War Era

The 1970s and 1980s brought major changes to the U.S. Army, and history played an important part in the upgraded professional education program. Soldier-oriented activities such as the staff ride brought history into the everyday life of the troop leaders. An awareness of the use of military history began to make a greater impact on the production of training-and-doctrine publications.

There were two major rapid deployment operations in the 1980s. It should be noted that in both instances, although they were predominantly Army operations, both were joint operations in every sense of the word.

In 1983 Army Rangers and a portion of the 82d Airborne Division conducted an assault on the small Caribbean nation of Grenada. During the operation, planned in great secrecy and carried out within a matter of days, historical support was limited to unit historical officers. Other historians supported the effort after the fact.

Under similar circumstances, the historical community had very limited knowledge of the assault on Panama in 1989 by elements of the XVIII Airborne Corps and other continental United States (CONUS) and forward-deployed units. The corps historian participated in the action, but other Army historians had to be content with conducting postoperation historical activities.

Persian Gulf War

In 1990 Iraq invaded Kuwait, and as part of the world response, U.S. combat forces made their most rapid large-scale deployment to that time. The initial response of the historical community was with MHDs. By early 1991, individual historians had also deployed to fill unit historian positions at the army, corps, and major support headquarters. The field historians primarily focused on collecting documents and creating primary source material for subsequent written works. Unit histories were written by deployed field historians and unit historical officers. The analytical, operational histories will be written by CMH and other historians.

Outlook for the Twenty-first Century

The Army Historical Program (AHP) for the twenty-first century will demand the coordinated efforts of all soldiers and civilians involved in the program, from the Army chief of staff to the battalion historical officers. Recording and preserving the history of the Army in an era of rapid developments in information technology gives the AHP team an unparalleled opportunity to produce accessible, interactive sources of historical information. The increase in the availability of historical programs, products, and near-real-time data links demands that Army historians seek out innovative methods to anticipate and respond to the needs of Army decision-makers. Soldiers at all levels must be trained to study and use military history to their advantage. All soldiers and civilians involved in military history operations must work in concert to preserve the heritage of the past and serve the soldiers of the twenty-first century.

MILITARY HISTORY MISSIONS

Execute Command Historical Program

The tactical Army executes military history operations. The most important military history operations mission is the planning and execution of a command historical program. This occurs throughout all levels/echelons of the Army. At the highest level, the chief of military history plans and executes the AHP for the secretary of the Army and the Army chief of staff. An example at the intermediate level is a full-time civilian in the position of command historian executing a Major Army Command (MACOM) commander's program. An illustration at the lower echelons is a soldier in a battalion with the additional duty, as unit historical officer, of preparing the annual historical summary. Each level of command down to separate brigades and armored cavalry regiments, as well as Ranger regiments and Special Forces groups, has a historical program, be it a formally written plan or merely the acknowledged need to preserve the record of the unit.

In wartime, the historical program is absolutely essential. Accounts of battle are studied afterwards for decades, sometimes centuries, to find doctrinal applications, to refine lead-

ership principles, and to write unit histories. Units must have a systematic plan to collect and record history, lest their important lessons learned go uncirculated or their accomplishments fall into obscurity.

Collect Historical Material

In addition to documents and records, many items are of vital importance to historians. These items include maps, map overlays, newspapers, and other items not covered in the Modern Army Recordkeeping System (MARKS). Additionally, oral history interviews and a command chronology should be collected. Military history operations focus on the collection, cataloging, transportation, and storage of significant historical material. By keeping good notes on how and why these historical materials were collected, the historian will provide insights useful for later review and publication.

Advise on Historical Matters

This mission has two parts. Historians on warfighting staffs must provide historical information to commanders and various staff agencies. They must also advise commanders on how to improve the historical programs of their subordinate units. This may include, but is not limited to, the historian conducting staff assistance visits at these units.

Advise on Preparing Historical Records

By regulation, units and staff sections keep records of their activities. Some of these records have special historical significance. An important aspect of the military history mission is to ensure that these records are as accurate and comprehensive as possible. At various periods in the history of our nation, the Army has collectively performed this task very well. At other times the Army has received adverse publicity because vital records were not collected, forwarded, or properly catalogued and maintained.

Coordinate Matters Relating to Historical Artifacts

An important military history operations mission is to collect historical artifacts and to maintain control of these artifacts until they are properly accessioned into the Army Museum System (AMS) or the unit's historical holding. Historical artifacts are to be used for training, research and development, and interpretation of the Army's military and cultural heritage.