THE BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

BATTLE ANALYSIS BRIEFING

By

CPT LA DARYL D. FRANKLIN
BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

OUTLINE

• INTRODUCTION
• ESTABLISH SETTING / GEOGRAPHIC ORIENTATION
• PERST
• OCOKA
• PHASES ONE THROUGH THREE
• OUTCOME OF BATTLE
• KEY EVENTS
• SUMMARY / LESSONS LEARNED
INTRODUCTION

WHO FOUGHT?
CONFEDERATES
UNION

WHEN?
CIVIL WAR OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
7 NOVEMBER 13 DECEMBER 1862

WHERE?
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA
ALONG THE RAPPAHANNOCK RIVER
COUNTY OF SPOTSYLVANIA
THEATER OF OPERATIONS

BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONFEDERATES</th>
<th>UNION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MG AMBROSE BURNSIDE</td>
<td>GEN ROBERT E. LEE</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDR ARMY OF THE POTOMAC</td>
<td>CDR ARMY OF VIRGINIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>MG EDWIN V. SUMNER</td>
<td>LTG JAMES LONGSTREET</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDR RIGHT GRAND DIVISION 31,659</td>
<td>CDR FIRST CORPS 41,294</td>
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<tr>
<td>MG JOSEPH HOOKER</td>
<td>LTG THOMAS J. JACKSON</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDR CENTER GRAND DIVISION 40,396</td>
<td>CDR SECOND CORPS 38,931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MG WILLIAM B. FRANKLIN</td>
<td>MG J.E.B. STUART</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDR LEFT GRAND DIVISION 46,897</td>
<td>CDR OF CAVALRY DIV 10,701</td>
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</tbody>
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ENGINEER CORPS 1,329
RESERVE ARTILLERY 1,121

RESERVE ARTILLERY 793
OCOKA

OBSERVATION FIELDS OF FIRE
COVER AND CONCEALMENT
OBSTACLES
KEY TERRAIN
AVENUES OF APPROACH

NOTE: ALL FAVOR THE CONFEDERATE FORCES
STATEGIC SETTING

CAUSES:

UNION

- PRESSURE FROM PRESIDENT LINCOLN TO ASSUME THE OFFENSE
- TAKE RICHMOND, VIRGINIA
- NEW COMMANDER’S IMMEDIATE IMPACT

CONFEDERATES

- PRESERVE THE CITY OF RICHMOND
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF A NEW CDR
- GAIN MOMENTUM INTO THE SPRING MONTHS
BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG

PERST

POLITICAL
- NEW PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
- STRAIN ON THE UNION FORCES TO WIN A DECISIVE BATTLE

SOCIAL
- CONFEDERATES RECONSOLIDATE AND TRAIN NEW SOLDIERS WITH ESPRIT DE CORP
- DISSARRY AT THE HIGHEST FIELD CDR’S LEVEL: CAUSED SOLDIERS TO BE UNCLEAR ON CDR’S INTENT

RELIGION
- THIS BATTLE WAS FOUGHT OVER THE THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON

BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG
EVENTS THAT LED UP TO THE BATTLE

• LTG Jackson begins Shenandoah Valley Campaign

• Battle of Bull Run and Battle of Antietam last major conflict for both armies

• MG Mc Clellan moves his forces in March 1862 into Virginia intent was to position forces to take Richmond

• The replacing of MG Mc Clellan, George B.

• GEN Johnston counters MG Mc Clellan’s move by placing his soldiers near Richmond

• Confederates and Union forces are racing to building combat power
PHASE 1 BUILDING COMBAT POWER

• Union attempts to transport bridging equipment and pontoons (36)

• MG Halleck (Gen-in-Chief) orders the move of engineer assets

• Poor communication from Washington to the Rail Marshaling Area

• MAJ Spaulding could not keep the timeline given by MG Halleck
  Spaulding failed to report movt of equipment

• Severe rain and mud slowed the rail cars movement

• Union was attempting to get the bridges placed before Confederates
  could move in position

• Longstreet and Jackson both arrive before the first bridge appears
PHASE 2 UNION ARMY CROSSES THE RIVER

• First attempt to cross by Union fails

• MG Burnside's staff conducts mission analysis and develops new plan

• GEN Hunt, Chief of Artillery (Confederates), places 147 of 312 guns along Strafford Heights

• MG Mc Law’s is given the mission to take Fredericksburg; COL Barksdale’s brigade executes

• Finally, new crossing points were disseminated by Union Forces

• Burnside new orders were issued and all Div Cdrs were confused
PHASE 3 EXECUTION OF THE ATTACK

- Union places bridges under heavy enemy fire
- Bridges were established at three different points simultaneously
- GEN Lee was confident in his defensive posture
- MG Burnside hesitates giving the order to attack after units made it cross
- GEN Lee was given two nights and one free day to prepare for the Union attack
- MG Burnside issued unclear orders; all DIV CDRs were confused
KEY EVENT NUMBER 1

ENGINEER PONTOONS ARRIVE TOO LATE BY UNION

**CAUSES:**
- POOR CO-ORDINATION WITH MG BURNSIDE’S AND MG HALLECK’S STAFFS
- GENERAL WOODBURY, CDR OF ENGINEERS, MADE NO ATTEMPT TO PLACE AN ENGINEER AT THE POINT OF EMBARKATION

**EFFECTS:**
- UNION LOST THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE
- MG BURNSIDE BRINGS DISCREDIT UPON HIMSELF
KEY EVENT NUMBER 2

MG BURNSIDE FINALLY DETERMINES NEW CROSSING POINTS AND ISSUES MVT ORDER

**CAUSES:**
- MG BURNSIDE FAILS TO COMMUNICATE HIS CDR’S INTENT CLEARLY
- MVT ORDER WAS ISSUED WITH NO FOLLOW-ON ATTACK PLANS

**EFFECTS:**
- UNION COULD NOT TACTICALLY POSITION FORCES TO EXECUTE AN ASSAULT
- CONFEDERATES ARE VERY PREPARED AND WELL DUG IN
KEY EVENT NUMBER 3

MG BURNSIDE HESITATES ON ISSUING ATTACK ORDERS ON 12 DECEMBER

CAUSES:
- MGs FRANKLIN, REYNOLDS, AND SMITH DEVELOP THEIR OWN ATTACK PLAN; CDR APPROVES
- ATTACK IN TWO ASSAULT COLUMNS ON RICHMOND ROAD (DELIBERATE ATTACK)

EFFECTS:
- DELAY GAVE LEE’S TROOPS TIME TO RECONSIDERATE AND REORGANIZE
- MG BURNSIDE ISSUES THE ATTACK ORDERS BUT IT WAS NOT THE SAME PLAN
## Outcome of Battle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confederate Casualties</th>
<th>Union Casualties</th>
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<td>5,588</td>
<td>12,660</td>
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**Wounded Soldiers (Both Sides)**

18,000

- Wounded soldiers laid on battlefield for two days before receiving medical care
- Cold weather hindered post battle operations for both forces
- Union lost massive amounts of soldiers
- Union Leadership received political heat form our nation’s capital
- Confederates gain momentum and wins this major battle
LESSONS LEARNED

• The positioning of logistical tools are vital to the execution of any mission.
• Commander’s headquarters must be aggressive in providing command and control factors that will increase the ability to relay accurate information.
• Unit commanders should have had tentative crossing points that were established in the planning phase prior to movement orders being issued.
• Commanders must issue clear and concise orders so their junior leaders can understand the exact intent and what the endstate must be
“...possibly ruined the chances for a Union victory which would have been achieved under more able leadership”

COL WILLIAM BARKSDALE
CDR MISSISSIPPI BRIGADE

ANY UNION COMMANDER ATTACKING LEE’S DEFENSIVE POSITION AT FREDERICKSBURG WAS ALMOST GUARANTEED DEFEAT!
REFERENCES


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