



P. 34
**SPY
GADGETS
+ GEAR**



P. 68
**RED ARMY'S
STALINGRAD
STAND**



P. 30
**GREAT
WARRIORS
ZULU!**



P. 92 + P. 94
**BEST
EAST FRONT
BOOKS + DVDs!**

ARMCHAIR GENERAL

**GERMANY'S
GREATEST
PANZER
LEADER**
P. 26



*"For the very reason that it appeared impossible,
an attack ... might well be the key to success."*
—ERICH VON MANSTEIN IN RUSSIA, 1941

HITLER'S BEST GENERAL

If Hitler had listened to Prussian aristocrat Erich von Manstein, could Germany have won the East Front war?

**Ralph Peters
on Decisive
Islamic Defeats**

PLUS

Napoleon at Waterloo P. 38

French Foreign Legion P. 28

First Sioux Indian Medal of Honor P. 14

ARMCHAIR GENERAL

FIELD MARSHAL ERICH VON MANSTEIN

VOLUME V NO. 4

SEPTEMBER 2008 | DISPLAY UNTIL SEPTEMBER 30
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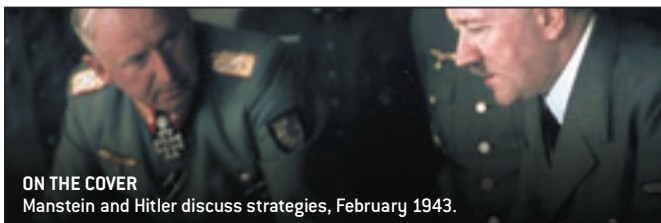
- 42 Hitler's Best General**
Prussian aristocrat Erich von Manstein was perhaps the Nazi dictator's best commander. Was he the one man who could have won Germany's East Front war? *By Frederick Baillergeon*

FEATURES

- 48 Crescent Descending!**
To complement last issue's *Special Feature*, "Crescent Triumphant," we examine three decisive jihadi defeats that checked Islam's thousand-year rise. *By Ralph Peters*
- 58 The Commander's Right Arm: The Evolution of the Military Chief of Staff**
Virtually every successful commander within the last 200 years has been supported by an indispensable staff. *By David T. Zabecki*

INTERACTIVE

- COMBAT!**
- 65 Desert Storm Tank Attack, 1991**
Choose the correct course of action as a U.S. tank platoon attacks dug-in Iraqi defenders in the Gulf War's toughest armored encounter.
- YOU COMMAND**
- 68 Stalingrad, 1942**
Test your combat decision-making skills as a Red Army tactical commander leading Soviet soldiers in the Eastern Front's turning-point battle.
- YOU COMMAND SOLUTION**
- 74 The Battle of Surigao Strait, 1944**
Historical outcome and winning Reader Solutions to CDG #26, May 2008 issue.
- WHAT NEXT, GENERAL?**
- 78 Manstein's East Front Gambit, 1943**
Control the outcome of battle as Hitler orders Field Marshal Erich von Manstein's hard-pressed troops to halt Stalin's resurgent Red Army in Ukraine. *By Richard N. Armstrong*



ON THE COVER
Manstein and Hitler discuss strategies, February 1943.

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DEPARTMENTS

- 4 PUBLISHER'S NOTE**
- 6 EDITOR'S LETTER**
- 8 MAILBAG**
- 10 CRISIS WATCH**
Great Expectations
How unrealistic goals cripple war efforts. *By Ralph Peters*
- 12 DEFENSE 21***
Quivering Arrows
Is technology outstripping our military's ability to control it? *By Caspar Weinberger Jr.*
- 14 DISPATCHES**
Real heroes, destinations, significant events in history, cool gear and more!
- 22 10 QUESTIONS**
Theodore P. Savas
An interview with Ted Savas, leader of Savas Beatie Publishers.
- 26 FORGOTTEN HISTORY**
Unsung Panzer Hero
Although not well known, Erhard Raus may have been Germany's most skilled panzer leader.
- 28 LEGENDARY COMBAT UNITS**
The French Foreign Legion
A profile of France's most famous fighting force.
- 30 GREAT WARRIORS**
Zulu Warriors
These "Spartans" of Africa turned tribal warfare into a science – and thrashed a European army.
- 32 BADGES OF HONOR**
Croix de Guerre
France's "Cross of War" recognizes acts of bravery by French and Allied forces.
- 34 SPY WARS**
Tools of the Trade
A peek at some of the cool gadgets and gear "spooks" get to use!
- 36 TIPPING POINTS**
The Prussian General Staff
The "secret weapon" that revo-

lutionized how wars were planned and fought.

38 HARD CHOICES
Napoleon at Waterloo
An analysis of the critical decisions that led to Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo.

40 LEADERSHIP
Alfred Thayer Mahan
Leadership lessons from the U.S. Navy's prophet of sea power.

96 PARTING SHOT
Dogs of War

REVIEWS

86 GAME BUZZ
Fall Wargame "Kickoff"
Forget football – the real action is on gamers' computers this fall!

88 VIDEO GAME REVIEW
Frontlines: Fuel of War, Army of Two, and Conflict: Denied Ops

90 WARGAME REVIEW
Danube Front '85 and Close Combat: Modern Tactics

92 BOOKSHELF
East Front Cities at War
A dozen chilling accounts of nightmarish combat.

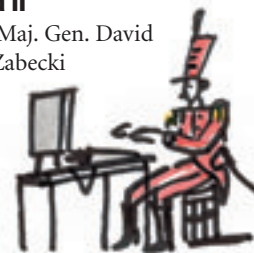
94 DVD LIBRARY
The Eastern Front on Film
Movies that depict the brutality of World War II's East Front fighting.

ON THE WEB

MORE AT
ARMCHAIRGENERAL.COM

Alphabet Soup!
The British Army Staff System of World Wars I and II

by Maj. Gen. David T. Zabecki



* FORMERLY THE PRESIDIO WALL

EDITOR'S LETTER

Looking Eastward

East Front combat, jihadi defeats, revealing historical perspective and much more!

The September 2008 issue of *Armchair General*® is filled with articles about the brutal combat of World War II's Eastern Front, with several stories devoted to Hitler's war against Stalin. While this is a real feast for East Front fans, all readers can learn more about the decisive battles that led to the Nazis' defeat.

Our *Cover Story* examines the battlefield leadership of Erich von Manstein, the



A German shell explodes near a Russian machine-gun position in North Caucasus. This issue of ACG takes an in-depth look at the Eastern Front and some of its most brilliant commanders.

Prussian aristocrat who may have been Hitler's best general – and who *might* have won Germany's East Front war had he been given the chance – while *What Next, General?* challenges readers to test their mettle against the surging Red Army in one of Manstein's most famous battles.

Furthering the East Front theme, *Forgotten History* profiles Germany's unsung panzer genius, Erhard Raus; *You Command* places readers in the rubble of Stalingrad's factory district as a Red Army tactical commander; and *Bookshelf* and *DVD Library* present our picks for the best East Front books and films.

Acclaimed strategist, globe-trotting author and ACG advisory board member Ralph Peters also looks "eastward" in his feature story, "Crescent Descending," a reveal-

ing companion piece to his outstanding "Crescent Triumphant!" (July 2008, ACG) in which he examined five landmark jihadi victories in the thousand-year struggle between the cross and the crescent. This issue, Peters analyzes three jihadi defeats that checked the rise of Islam. Both works are "must-reads" that place today's conflict with militant Islam in historical perspective.

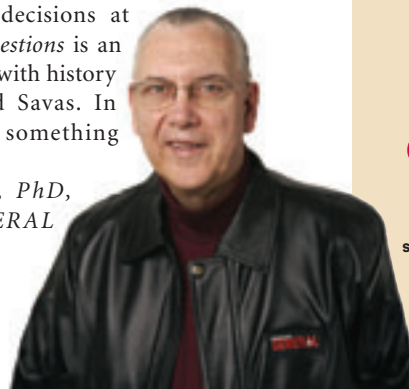
Historical perspective is also at the forefront of retired Major General David Zabecki's article, "The Commander's Right Arm."

Based on Zabecki's exceptional new two-volume study, *Chief of Staff: The Principal Staff Officer Behind History's Greatest Commanders*, it gives readers the essential history behind the modern military staff and the key position of chief of staff.

This month's *Tipping Points* complements Zabecki's article by tracing the rise and fall of the Prussian/German General Staff, a system that continues to influence modern military organizations.

But wait – there's more! We've also packed the magazine with exciting articles on a wide range of subjects and historical eras: *Great Warriors* features Zulu fighters; *Legendary Combat Units* highlights the French Foreign Legion; *Spy Wars* discusses cool spy gadgets; *Leadership* shares lessons from naval icon Alfred Thayer Mahan; *Badges of Honor* looks at the history of France's Croix de Guerre; *Hard Choices* examines Napoleon's decisions at Waterloo; and *10 Questions* is an interesting interview with history book publisher Ted Savas. In short, this issue has something for everyone! ★

Jerry Morelock, PhD,
ARMCHAIR GENERAL
Editor in Chief.



FOUNDER/PUBLISHER
ERIC WEIDER

EDITORIAL

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EXECUTIVE EDITOR
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JoHanna Gratz
CONTRIBUTORS
Bevin Alexander, John Antal
Richard Armstrong, Steven Clay
Ralph Peters, Douglas Scott
Brian Sobel, Peter Tsouras
Caspar Weinberger Jr.

ART

ART DIRECTOR
Kenneth Kleppert
IMAGE EDITOR
Zachary Bathon
CARTOGRAPHER
Jason Petho
ILLUSTRATOR
Gregory Proch

INTERNET

**DIRECTOR OF
INTERNET OPERATIONS**
Brian King
SENIOR ONLINE EDITOR
Gerald Swick

ADVERTISING

PUBLISHING DIRECTOR
Julie Roberts
(310) 922-2159
fax (310) 388-0389
julie@armchairgeneral.com

CIRCULATION

SUBSCRIPTION DIRECTOR
Norma Clousner
RETAIL SALES CONSULTANT
George Clark

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
Karen G. Johnson
PRODUCTION MANAGER
Karen M. Bailey

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Thousand Oaks, CA 91362
fax (805) 372-7454
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NATIONAL ARCHIVES

UNCOMMON VALOR - REAL HEROES

Korean War Medal of Honor Awarded



On March 3, 2008 – nearly 60 years after his heroic exploits in October 1951 – Master Sergeant Woodrow Wilson Keeble was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President George W. Bush in a White House ceremony. Keeble, who died in 1982, was the first Sioux Indian to receive the nation’s highest valor award.

Keeble was born in 1917 on the Sisseton-Wahpeton Reservation that spans parts of North and South Dakota. In 1942, he enlisted in the North Dakota National Guard and became a member of the first U.S. Army unit to join the Marines fighting on Guadalcanal in October of that year. In recognition of his World War II actions, he received the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart (the first of four Purple Heart medals he would earn in his lifetime).

In 1951, during the Korean War, Keeble was acting platoon leader in G Company, 19th Infantry Regiment, 24th Infantry Division. On October 15, according to eyewitness 1st Sergeant Kosumo Sagami, “All the officers of the company had received disabling wounds or were killed in action, except one platoon leader [Keeble] who assumed command of the company.”

The company’s mission was to seize a steep, rocky hill near the Kumsong River. Three pillboxes with machine guns and several trenches filled with Chi-



Master Sgt. Woodrow Wilson Keeble was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor by President George W. Bush in a White House ceremony on March 3, 2008. He was the first Sioux Indian to receive this prestigious award.

nese soldiers surrounded the heavily fortified hill. Keeble led three platoons in three successive assaults against the enemy position, but each charge was repulsed with heavy casualties.

Not wishing to sacrifice any more of his Soldiers, Keeble launched a one-man attack against the Chinese pillboxes. He later told relatives that “on the fourth attempt he was either going to take out [the pillboxes] or die trying,” and that “he was more concerned about losing his men than about losing his own life.”

Despite suffering five

wounds, Keeble used grenades and a Browning automatic rifle to single-handedly knock out all the pillboxes, waiting until he had eliminated the Chinese resistance before summoning his men forward. Sagami recalled that Keeble did not complain of his many injuries and that “only after the unit was in defensive positions for the night did he allow himself to be evacuated.”

For his courageous actions in Korea, Keeble received the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, the Bronze Star, and the Purple Heart. However,

a recommendation for the Medal of Honor for his October 15, 1951, heroism somehow was lost. But in 2007, a law was passed allowing military officials to waive the statute of limitations on Medal of Honor recommendations, and Keeble’s long-delayed medal was approved.

Story by Carrie McLeroy, Army News Service

First Silver Star for a Woman Soldier in Afghanistan



On March 20, 2008, Army Specialist Monica Lin Brown, a 19-year-old medic, became the first woman in Afghanistan and only the second female Soldier since World War II to receive the Silver Star, the nation’s third-highest valor medal.



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Unsung Panzer Hero

Although Rommel and Guderian were the most famous World War II German panzer leaders, Erhard Raus may have been the greatest.



German panzers fire on a farmhouse on the outskirts of Moscow as they drive on the Soviet capital in 1941.

Erhard Raus was born in 1889 in Bohemia, then part of Austria-Hungary. Commissioned in the Austrian army in 1912, he served on World War I's Russian and Italian fronts, where he commanded mountain troops. His service, like that of Erwin Rommel, who also led mountain troops, demanded exceptional independence, innovation, initiative and leadership – the quick-thinking, aggressive boldness of a junior leader. Later, Raus gained extensive experience as an instructor, which developed his noted ability as teacher and trainer.

A professional officer, Raus simply changed uniforms when Hitler's Germany annexed Austria in the 1938 *Anschluss*. In July 1940, Raus assumed command of the 4th Motorized Infantry Regiment in the 1st Light Division (which became the 6th Panzer

Division), fighting in the 1940 Campaign in the West during the drive on Dunkirk.

In 1941, Raus took command of the division's 6th Motorized Rifle Brigade, leading it in the drive on Leningrad during the invasion of the Soviet Union. Raus quickly demonstrated extraordinary tactical ability and daring as his brigade outfought Soviet forces many times its size. A promotion to general followed in September. Because of Raus' actions, the 6th Panzer Division broke through enemy defenses and had Leningrad at its mercy. Then Hitler suddenly sent the division south to play an important role in trapping 600,000 Soviets

in the Vyazma Pocket.

On November 25, 1941, Raus assumed command of the 6th Panzer Division during the drive on Moscow. As the force approached the city's suburbs, the temperature plunged to minus 40 degrees, stopping the advance in its tracks. Raus' innovative defensive methods and special care of his men, which dramatically reduced the frostbite rate, saved the 6th Panzer in the face of a great Soviet counteroffensive in December. Then in early 1942, Raus led counterattacks that helped to stabilize the front and snatch the initiative from the Red Army.

In April 1942, the 6th Panzer was transferred to France, where

FAST FACTS

Name: Erhard Raus

Catch Phrase:

"Raus zieht heraus"
("Raus pulls you through")

Born: January 8, 1889,

Wolframitz, Bohemia

Died: April 13, 1956,

Bad Gastein, Germany

Notable Commands: Division, corps and four panzer armies

Accomplishments: Nearly rescued besieged 6th Army in Stalingrad; conducted epic defense of Kharkov, 1943; brilliantly defended against massed Soviet armies, 1943-44

Zulu Warriors

These “Spartans” of Africa turned tribal warfare into a science – and thrashed a modern European army at Isandlwana.

A deadly clash took place in southern Africa on January 22, 1879, in the shadow of the Sphinx-shaped hill at Isandlwana, 10 miles east of the Tugela River. The battle pitted Europeans armed with the latest modern weapons against indigenous warriors carrying little more than shields and spears. The Zulu warriors won decisively. Behind them on the battlefield, they left the lifeless bodies of over 1,300 regular British troops and colonial auxiliaries. It was the greatest defeat of British arms by a native force in Britain’s long colonial history.

Although massed British firepower finally overcame the Zulu host at the culminating Battle of Ulundi six months later, the British at Isandlwana had received a taste of what other African tribes had been experiencing for half a century: the shocking power of thousands of superbly disciplined warriors whose entire existence was devoted to preparing for and waging war. Of all of history’s Great Warriors, none has surpassed the Zulus.

Around 1817, a remarkable leader named Shaka (born circa 1787) united the scattered Zulu subtribes and created an empire that dominated southern Africa for the next 60 years. A ruthless chieftain who used assassination and mass executions to consolidate and retain his power, Shaka instituted military reforms that made Zulu armies virtually invincible in wars of conquest against other tribes. His innovations included assembling the classic Zulu ensemble of weapons – large cowhide shield, short stab-



ZULU WARRIOR FAST FACTS

Name: *Ibutho* (Zulu warrior, member of a regiment); plural, *amabutho*
Era: 1817-1879

Uniform: Animal skin tunic, cowhide shield, bare feet

Favorite Weapons: *Iklwa* (short stabbing spear), *assegai* (long throwing spear), *knobkerrie* (club)

Best-Known Tactic: “Buffalo” formation: chest (main body), loins (reserve), and horns (encircling force)

Notable Battles: Blood River (December 16, 1838), Isandlwana (January 22, 1879), Rorke’s Drift (January 22-23, 1879), Ulundi (July 4, 1879)
Films: *Zulu* (1964), *Zulu Dawn* (1979)

Books: *Washing of the Spears* by Donald R. Morris, *Like Lions They Fought* by Robert B. Edgerton, *The Zulus* by Ian Knight (Osprey)

Zulu warriors carried large cowhide shields (the shield’s color signified the regiment) and were armed with short, deadly stabbing spears and long throwing spears.



bing spear, long throwing spear, and club – and changing warfighting tactics from relatively bloodless, long-range spear-throwing rituals to deadly, close-range, hand-to-hand battles in which the Zulu short spear (*iklwa*) proved as grimly effective as the famous short swords of antiquity (the Roman *gladius* and the Spartan *xithos*).

Shaka, however, went beyond merely improving Zulu weapons and tactics. He capitalized on traditional clan-based cultural ties to establish age-group regiments (*impis*, numbering 400 to 4,000 warriors) that quartered together in military villages (*kraals*), building unit cohesion and loyalty. Boys younger than military age carried rations and equipment, often driving cattle (“rations on the hoof”) to support military operations with an efficient logistical system.

Shaka instituted a rigorous, nearly con-

like Guderian, Manstein was sacked by the dictator.

FIELD MARSHAL VON MANSTEIN

As operations in Sevastopol wound down in early July 1942, Manstein received the following wire:

In grateful appreciation of your exceptionally meritorious services in the victorious battles of the Crimea, culminating in the annihilation of the enemy at Kerch and the conquest of the mighty fortress of Sevastopol, I hereby promote you Field Marshal. By your promotion and the creation of a commemorative shield to be worn by all ranks who took part in the Crimean campaign, I pay tribute before the whole German people to the heroic achievements of the troops fighting under your command.

Adolf Hitler

This promotion brought new opportunities to test Manstein's abilities as a battlefield leader and strategist. Those challenges would come at some of the Eastern Front's greatest battles: Leningrad, Stalingrad, Kharkov and Kursk. Eventually, Hitler was forced to tap Manstein's operational brilliance in bitter defensive battles as the Red Army surged ever westward on the road to Berlin – a torrent that Manstein could slow but not stop.

Inevitably, Hitler and Manstein clashed over defensive strategy. The führer obstinately issued increasingly futile “hold at all costs” ultimatums, while Manstein advocated a sensible mobile defense that yielded territory but sought to create opportunities for deadly counterattacks on exposed Soviet flanks and isolated enemy units. Like Guderian before him (and unlike Rommel), Manstein argued bitterly with Hitler. Also like Guderian, Manstein was sacked by the dictator (March 1944).

After Germany's defeat, Manstein was tried and convicted of war crimes. However, he was released from prison in 1953. The retired field marshal became a longtime adviser to West Germany's Bundeswehr but succumbed to a stroke and died in 1973. His 1955 book, *Lost Victories*, became one of the most widely read of all of the postwar memoirs written by German commanders. The book's thesis – that had Hitler listened to his military commanders, the East Front war's “lost victories” could have been won – is impossible to prove. Yet of all the commanders to whom Hitler might have turned to lead a winning effort in the East, Erich von Manstein was the one who best embodied the combination of tactician, strategist and battlefield leader. ★

Frederick Baillergeon is a retired U.S. Army infantry officer who commanded during Operation Desert Storm and trained Army leaders at the National Training Center in California. He has taught tactics at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College for several years and is co-author of the popular “ACG” web series “Tactics 101.”



HERO CITY. In recognition of the 250-day siege of Sevastopol, the Soviet government bestowed upon the city the honor of “Hero City,” which is equivalent to an individual receiving the Hero of the Soviet Union gold star medal.

LOST VICTORIES?

NOT EVERYONE IS – OR WAS – A MANSTEIN FAN.

Much like those of his famous contemporary, German commander Heinz Guderian (see “Heinz Guderian: Hitler's Troublesome Panzer Genius,” January 2008 ACG), the wartime exploits of Erich von Manstein have been challenged by recent historians. Some critics claim that Manstein's book *Lost Victories* egregiously overstates his accomplishments, and they take him to task for his book's thesis that, essentially, “If only Hitler had listened to me, I could have saved Germany.”

Certainly, the book's title implies that Hitler's war on the Eastern Front could have had a different, *successful* outcome, and Manstein clearly states his claim that *he* was the commander who could have achieved those “lost victories,” if only the führer had listened to him. Surprisingly, the critics – most of whom have also questioned Heinz Guderian's postwar memoirs, *Panzer Leader*, and his reputation as a blitzkrieg master and panzer genius – have used the supposedly discredited Guderian to, in turn, discredit Manstein by claiming that the phenomenal success of Manstein's idea to attack France

Hitler gave this commemorative shield to Manstein and his men as a reward for their capture of the Crimea and the Sevastopol fortress. It was to be worn by all ranks who took part in the Crimean campaign.

through the Ardennes in 1940 was actually the result of Guderian's genius in implementing the plan. Manstein, whose aristocratic Prussian pedigree apparently came with a heavy dose of egotism, did not lack for contemporary critics, either. In 1936, chief of the German General Staff, Ludwig Beck remarked that Manstein

was “not a man of bad character, but a man of no character at all.” Hitler, who despised the German officer corps in general, thought Manstein was too arrogant and aloof. In the wake of Manstein's February 1940 presentation of the “Ardennes attack” plan, Hitler stated, “Certainly [Manstein is] an exceptionally clever fellow, with great operational gifts; but I don't trust him.” Franz Halder, chief of the German General Staff during the invasion of France, disliked Manstein enough to have him transferred to a backwater corps that would play no part – and thus receive no glory – in the 1940 blitzkrieg victory.

Although recent critics of Manstein grudgingly give him credit for his brilliant 1943 counterstroke that captured Kharkov, they question his generalship in other key battles such as the Crimea, Stalingrad and Kursk. They claim that he was an arrogant, amoral careerist too inclined to let subordinates shoulder the blame for failure while always overeager to grab all the laurels for successes.

ACG readers are advised to closely examine the evidence on both sides, and then judge for themselves if Manstein's “lost victories” claim rings true.



Choose the correct course of action as a U.S. tank platoon attacks dug-in Iraqi Republican Guard defenders in the Gulf War's toughest armored battle.

You are Lieutenant Mark Reynolds, a tank platoon leader with the 2d Brigade, U.S. 1st Armored Division. It is the third day of the ground war phase of Operation Desert Storm, and your division is sweeping across the desert as part of the American-led coalition's military offensive to eject Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's occupying army from Kuwait.

Traveling at a top speed of almost 40 mph, the four M-1A1 Abrams tanks in your platoon rapidly approach Medina Ridge, a 7-mile-long slice of key terrain whose low rise dominates the otherwise featureless landscape. American artillery pummels the ridge and the enemy targets on its opposite side. Meanwhile, U.S. Air Force A-10 "tank buster" jets swoop low to engage the Iraqi units as Apache attack helicopters launch deadly missiles from the flanks.

DATE: February 27, 1991
LOCATION: Medina Ridge, near Basra, Iraq
MISSION: Attack and defeat dug-in enemy tanks and infantrymen
UNIT: Tank platoon, 2d Brigade, U.S. 1st Armored Division
ENEMY: Elements of Iraqi Republican Guard Medina Luminous Division

Although the rise blocks your view, you're certain that Iraq's elite Republican Guard units are waiting beyond the ridge with their standard triangular-shaped defensive fortifications arranged to provide interlocking fires. Each excavated position likely consists of a platoon of Iraqi T-72 tanks supported by infantrymen with machine guns and rocket propelled grenades.

There is no American infantry support in your sector, so your platoon must attack without the help of "grunts." Yet each of your M-1A1 Abrams possesses formidable firepower – a 120 mm main gun that can penetrate the Iraqis' Russian-built tanks, a .50-caliber machine gun and two 7.62 mm machine guns. With their superior armor, outstanding shoot-on-the-move capability and unmatched fire control equipment, your tanks are ready to take on whatever awaits them.

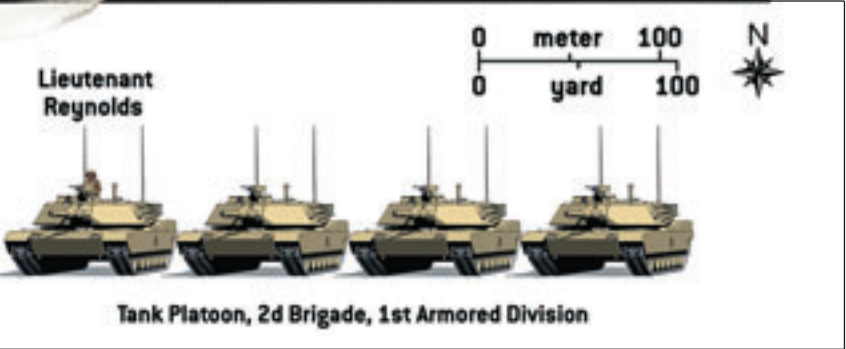
Suddenly, your radio crackles with your platoon sergeant's voice. "LT, what's our battle plan?"



What is your plan, Lieutenant Reynolds?

Turn the page and listen in as Reynolds issues his orders.

Desert Storm Tank Attack 1991



The ghastly combat that has raged inside Stalingrad since September has produced massive numbers of casualties, reducing units to mere skeleton organizations.

attention fixed on that location – and away from the rest of our thin, vulnerable defensive line – by counterattacking there with several storm groups of handpicked men. By carefully managing the assets we commit to a continuing fight for the Kommissarhaus, we can tie up the Germans in a struggle for that single position and divert them from launching a general assault on our entire line.”

Major Pechenyuk immediately responds to your proposal. “Colonel Lyudnikov, it appears that you wish to turn this strongpoint into a miniature version of the Great War’s Battle of Verdun – an attempt to bleed the enemy white. That action, however, proved a double-edged sword, as both sides suffered appalling casualties. I’m afraid we can’t possibly win a battle of attrition with the fascists.”

Taking a different stance, Major Glinyaga retorts, “We’re *already* losing the battle of attrition, in case you haven’t noticed. If the Germans decide to push us all along our front, we’ll end up treading water in the Volga soon enough. If this plan can keep the en-

emy fixated on a single point, then it has to be better than swimming for our lives!”

Course of Action Two: HOLD OUT

Raising your hand, you attempt to calm your men’s frayed nerves. “Wait a moment, gentlemen. Listen to this next course of action. Rather than risking our remaining force in a focused counterattack, we could conserve our combat strength by holding out where we are now. We wouldn’t have to seize territory to win; we’d only need to survive and maintain our current positions. The Germans lost at least 100 men capturing the Kommissarhaus, and they will surely lose many hundreds more if they continue to attack all along our line. If we fight from our present positions, we can make them pay a heavy price.”

Captain Konovalenko quickly offers his support of this option. “I believe we would expend less ammunition under this plan – an attack burns it up at an incredible rate.

We can kill more Germans with the bullets we have left if we stay in place and let the *fascists* attack *us*. Let them play the role of ‘shooting target’ for a change.”

Unconvinced, Major Glinyaga warns, “And when the bullets are all gone, how then do you propose to engage these ‘targets’? If we simply hold out, then we give the tactical initiative over to the enemy. We’d be dancing to *his* tune, just sitting here waiting for him to mount a massive attack that will finish us off.”

Course of Action Three: BREAKOUT

“There’s still one more course of action to consider,” you remind the men. “Our biggest problem is that we’re cut off from reinforcements and resupply. The longer we remain in this isolated position, the weaker we become. Eventually we’ll run out of bullets and men, and when that happens we’ll be finished and won’t be any good to anybody. My third proposal, therefore, is to break out and re-establish contact with other 62d Army units so we

ARMCHAIR GENERAL

You Command!

COMBAT DECISION GAME (CDG) #28 Stalingrad, 1942

READER SOLUTION

Commander, you have various options to consider for this mission. Check the box next to the course of action you choose and draw your solution on the map. Explain your solution in the space provided (200 words max). You can also download a PDF of the CDG map at www.armchairgeneral.com/cdg.

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- COA 1: COUNTERATTACK**
Launch storm groups against the Kommissarhaus, a key German defensive position.
- COA 2: HOLD OUT**
Conserve combat strength by consolidating your position and defending in place.
- COA 3: BREAKOUT**
Break through enemy defenses to re-establish contact with friendly units.
- Other COA:** You have an alternative course of action in mind.



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