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-President Abraham Lincoln, after the Battle of Chancellorsville, 1863

Battle of Chancellorsville:

The American Civil War Battle of Chancellorsville, fought May 1-3, 1863 in Virginia's Piedmont region, pitted the 130,000 man Army of the Potomac under its newly appointed commander, **Maj. Gen. Joseph Hooker**, against the 60,000 man Army of Northern Virginia under **Gen. Robert E. Lee**.



Battle of Chancellorsville, General Sickles' Division converging the retreat, by John R. Chapin, Chancellorsville, Virginia.

Hooker developed a plan to hold Lee's Confederates at Fredericksburg with a small part of the Army of the Potomac and march most of his troops in a wide flanking maneuver to the west to attack Lee's flank and rear. Hooker hoped this move would either crush Lee's Army of Northern Virginia or force it to flee. Hooker anticipated a glorious victory. Instead, Lee and

Maj. Gen. Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson achieved their greatest victory.

Hooker executed his plan and initially took Lee by surprise; however, the resilient and adaptable Confederate leaders regrouped, seized the initiative, made several risky tactical moves and drove the Federals from the field after three days of intense fighting. Both armies suffered more than 30,000 casualties, including "Stonewall" Jackson.

-Battle information taken from conversations with Dr. Christian B. Keller and The Chancellorsville Campaign January – May 1863 by Bradford A. Wineman (part of the U.S. Army Center of Military History's collection).

Why it still matters:

Today is the start of the 150th anniversary of Chancellorsville. To commemorate the anniversary, Dr. Christian B. Keller, Army War College professor, author and historian, discusses the battle and why it's important for today's leaders to understand and contemplate.

Chancellorsville is a contingency point in the Civil War, said Keller. "It is a laboratory of understanding good command and control and command relationships -- what makes them work well -- what doesn't make them work well," he said.

Remains of unburied Soldiers in the woods on south side of "Plank road."

Command Teams:

Lee had built and cultured a command team consisting of Jackson, **James Longstreet** and **J.E.B. Stuart** who he relied upon during moments of crisis, said Keller. "When you have built a team like that, when the moment of crisis comes, when resiliency is necessary, that command team can be relied upon to execute your wishes to the best result of the force," said

Keller. "Lee was able to utilize it very effectively at Chancellorsville, outnumbered as he was."

Resiliency:

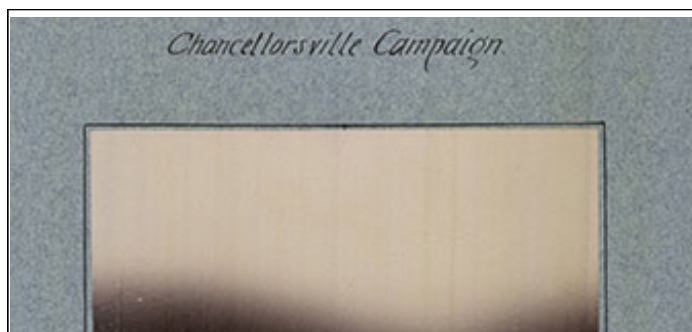
"When he finds that his plan on the 1st of May, 1863, has been disrupted by what the enemy did to it -- by Jackson's and Lee's quick reaction to the operational out-flanking of their army and their aggressiveness in meeting Hooker's flanking force head-on -- Hooker loses his nerve and retreats back into the Wilderness," said Keller.

"We want to avoid moments like that today for our strategic leaders and leaders at all levels of command," Keller said.

"We hope to be able to build a sense of self-confidence but also a sense of reflection. The ability to think carefully when a moment of crisis has arrived, within the allotted time, realizing that you do have a chain of command that you can turn to for advice during that moment of emergency and that you can take a few minutes, however fleeting they may be, to reflect, to think critically, to think creatively."

"Joe Hooker did not do any of that."

Lee and Jackson were resilient and Hooker was less so, allowing the Confederate leaders to adapt to the situation, explained Keller.



View on "Plank road" at point at which "Stonewall" Jackson was killed.

Adaptability:

"The greatest example of adaptation in the Chancellorsville Campaign has to be Robert E. Lee's and 'Stonewall' Jackson's



realization of the operational dilemma that they found themselves in with Hooker's flanking movement," said Keller. "Instead of spending much time lamenting what had happened, gnashing their teeth and wringing their hands, they jumped into action – realizing the reality of the problem, assessing it, looking at it head-on and making a decision."

Multinational Command:

During the battle, Jackson flanked Hooker's army, attacking the XI Corps, which was one half to 60 percent German-American," said Keller. "You have a natural disjoint looming here with this half-German corps that has a language of command that is foreign, i.e. German," said Keller.

This wasn't addressed adequately beforehand and became a crucial mistake by the leaders of the Army of the Potomac, said Keller. "Finding a way to overcome the language barrier, finding a way to integrate the command and control systems, which will naturally be different among nations and cultures, needs to be done ahead of time. It can't be an afterthought."

When you're dealing with a multinational force, you can learn from Chancellorsville on multiple levels, Keller said.

-The photos are from the Army Heritage and Education Center's Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States Massachusetts Commandary (MOLLUS-MASS) Civil War Photographs Collection. This part of the collection features photos that are a mix of Civil War Soldiers, both during the war and after at Chancellorsville, Va.

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