Lessons Learned

Tactical:
1) Custer's Tactical Mistake – In Terry's written order, Custer was given wide discretion to conduct tactical actions. Custer's plan to divide his forces, which involved the “betrayer” and the “initiative”, may have been appropriate against a smaller foe. But the opposing force was not as significant as Custer believed. He underestimated the Indian's strength and coordination of their forces. As a result, Custer and his 7th Cavalry did not have a clear tactical advantage. While Custer successfully fought and killed many Indians, only the Indian forces were fighting for their survival. In contrast, the Indians were fighting as tribes and not as individuals. The Indian's mobility and fighting tactics were their inherent strengths.

2) Mission Command – Terry's failure to inform Custer in accordance with the order that the supported force was a separate command, which Custer did not understand. Custer believed that he was operating as a part of the larger force and did not understand the significance of the order. This misunderstanding undermined Custer's ability to effectively coordinate his forces with those of Terry's and Gibbon's command.

3) Overreliance on Surprise – Custer's plan to attack the Indians without waiting for Terry's and Gibbon's forces to join up, which turned out to be a significant strategic mistake. Additionally, Custer's failure to account for the enemy's mobility and coordination resulted in a significant tactical weakness. Custer's plan was designed to take the Indians by surprise, but the Indians were able to respond quickly and effectively. Custer's failure to account for the enemy's mobility and coordination resulted in a significant tactical weakness.

Strategic/Operational:
1) Strategy – Although Terry's overall campaign strategy was sound, moving three mutually supporting columns of force to converge on the collection sites and their “village” – a decision to evacuate Terry's plan stood on two questionable assumptions: one being a smaller number of Indians, the other that the fighting would take up a determined line. To complicate the situation, Terry never had the advantage of Custer's assessment of the enemy after his night fight at Brooks Creek on the 17th, some adjutants were ready. Then, of course, there was Custer's decision to attack, without support from the larger force, imperiled Terry of any chance at victory. If Custer and/or the 7th Cavalry had waited and fell into supporting column was in place, or that Terry's campaign strategy would have succeeded.

2) Mission – Operationally, Terry's biggest failures was his inability to synchronize his three columns to effectively mass his forces against the enemy. He subordinated command (Gen) to a local that allowed the Indians to maneuver that superior numbers against a smaller portion of his force. The judgment of history has placed much of this blame on Custer, but senior commanders succeeded by maneuvering their forces in such a way that allowed them to strongly against enemy resistance. In the final assessment, Terry failed to do this.

3) Intelligence Failure – The Army relied heavily on its Indian scouts leading up to Little Bighorn. These Crow, Arapaho, and Panun – with their knowledge of the terrain, the habits and movements of the Indians, Cheyennes, and Arapahos – were critical to the development of strategy in the field. Official Army estimates placed Indian numbers around 300. This came to the number that both Terry and Custer had estimated, but the official estimates failed to account for over 1,000 men who had come into the reservation due to the reconquest of the 7th Battalion. Taking into account for this large increase in enemy force was an equally significant that individually affected the outcome. To complicate the problem, an information redundant Terry about the GIs. Gen. Crook failed with an unexpectedly strong force of Indians just 30 miles southwest of Little Bighorn on the 17th. Either of these important pieces of information might have altered the plan.

Owning the lessons of history, this issue of BattleDigest™ was written by military historian and author, Michael Haskew.

These were the names of their commandants, and with their pony footprint, their transportation. Instead of using horses, warriors would strike these targets of gravity with surrounding soldiers as he had done previously.

Reno, Lt. Gen. Alfred Terry, the commander of the Department of Dakota, was placed in charge of this operation in the spring of 1876. Terry's orders would command the operations with a total of 1,500 men.

Four companies of the 2nd Cavalry, but he declined. “The 7th can escape. However, it is also important to note that Custer was given the two forces working in mutual support to prevent the Indians’ previous engagements. With these assumptions, Terry used were, and that they would probably try to retreat as they had done before. He would be in place until 26 June. Terry’s plan appeared to rest prevent their escape. Gibbon, with slower moving infantry forces, the attacking force to drive the Indians into Gibbon’s forces, which would not be in place until 26 June. Terry issued his orders the following day. Thinking he had found initiative by quickly attacking his Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho–he changed his plan. Because he had relied heavily on scouts had seen smoke rising in the south from the Little Bighorn large force and even able to push him back. But up north, Terry’s at Rosebud Creek. Crook found these tribes unafraid to attack his day fight would end in complete disaster and defeat for Custer and the Battle of Little Bighorn was Custer’s attempt to seize the tactics of the battle. Unfortunately, Custer initially planned a second night march to close the gap for the high ground above the river. Reno gathered the remnants of his command and formed a hasty defensive position. Meanwhile, to the north, Custer’s force rode along the edge of a deep ravine called Medicine Tail Coulee to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete his trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northward advance was influenced by the sudden movement of a band of Indians under Gray Horse attempting to execute an ambush against Terry’s command and formed a hasty defensive position. Meanwhile, to the north, Custer’s force rode along the edge of a deep ravine called Medicine Tail Coulee to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete his trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northward advance was influenced by the sudden movement of a band of Indians under Gray Horse attempting to execute an ambush against Terry’s command and formed a hasty defensive position. Meanwhile, to the north, Custer’s force rode along the edge of a deep ravine called Medicine Tail Coulee to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete his trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northward advance was influenced by the sudden movement of a band of Indians under Gray Horse attempting to execute an ambush against Terry’s command and formed a hasty defensive position. Meanwhile, to the north, Custer’s force rode along the edge of a deep ravine called Medicine Tail Coulee to get into position to strike theIndian village from the north and complete his trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northward advance was influenced by the sudden movement of a band of Indians under Gray Horse attempting to execute an ambush against Terry’s command and formed a hasty defensive position. Meanwhile, to the north, Custer’s force rode along the edge of a deep ravine called Medicine Tail Coulee to get into position to strike the.
handle anything it meets,” was his reply. He also refused the Gatling gun detachment of the 20th Infantry Regiment which would have vastly increased his firepower. Custer’s decision to act was based on his own assessment of the situation and his trust in the abilities of his men.

Prior to his departure from the main force, Custer was offered wide discretion to act as the situation unfolded. Terry issued his orders the following day. Thinking he had found a dawn attack on the 26th which would have better aligned with his orders, Custer changed his plan. Because he had relied heavily on his orders, he learned later that night, Custer moved his force toward the Wolf Mountains, about 100 miles away from the Indian village. Although Custer initially planned to attack the Indian village that day, he realized that his men were too fatigued to undertake the mission.

The Battle of Little Bighorn was Custer’s attempt to seize the initiative by quickly attacking the Indians. However, his decision to act without adequate reconnaissance and his overestimation of the enemy’s strength led to a tactical disaster.

With their plan in place, Custer, Benteen, and Reno moved toward the Indian village. It was just before 1500 hrs., when Reno spotted a huge column of smoke rising from the Indian village. He ordered a withdrawal to a cluster of packed willows, which would have better aligned with his orders.

Benteen and Reno then formed a horseshoe perimeter and desperately defended their ground.

Meanwhile, Reno and Benteen continued to hold their defensive position until dusk the following day (26 June). As the Indian village cleared, the surviving cavalrymen could see the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap. Evidence suggests, however, that Custer’s northern advance was unnecessary. The sudden movement of a band of Indians under Crazy Horse to get into position to strike the Indian village from the north and complete its trap.
The Battle of Little Bighorn was Custer's attempt to seize the initiative by quickly striking his Indian adversaries before they could act or retreat. Terry, however, was more cautious, and his actions were slower. By the evening of 24 June, he had converged on the Indian village. He was not on the move, as Custer had believed, and he was already trying to locate Custer.

By the evening of the 24th, Custer was 25 miles east of the Indian village. He was not on the move, as Custer had believed, and he was already trying to locate Custer. The next day, he learned that the Indians were probably aware of his presence. Suddenly fearing he would lose the initiative and be attacked by the Indians, he chose to attack the village in order to execute a classic “hammer and anvil” tactic that had proven effective in the past. From Terry's written order, it's clear that he envisioned a two-day fight that would end in complete disaster and defeat for Custer and his men. He would be hemmed in against the stream if the enemy numbers were greater than he had thought, and that they would probably try to retreat as they had done before swinging north up the Little Bighorn River. He would be caught in a two-day fight that would end in complete disaster and defeat for Custer and his men.

The Battle of Little Bighorn was Custer's attempt to seize the initiative by quickly striking his Indian adversaries before they could act or retreat. Terry, however, was more cautious, and his actions were slower. By the evening of 24 June, he had converged on the Indian village. He was not on the move, as Custer had believed, and he was already trying to locate Custer. By the evening of the 24th, Custer was 25 miles east of the Indian village. He was not on the move, as Custer had believed, and he was already trying to locate Custer. The next day, he learned that the Indians were probably aware of his presence.
Strategic/Operational:

1) **Strategy** – Although Terry’s overall campaign strategy was sound – moving three mutually supporting columns of force to converge on the concentration sites and their “village” — it failed to execution. Terry planned on two questionable assumptions: one being a minimal number of Indians; the other that he was facing a less determined foe. To complicate the situation, Terry never had the advantage of Custer’s assessment of the enemy after his light fight at Bзд wards Creek on the 17th; some adjutants were noted. Thus, at best, Terry’s plans were at best a mythic, without support from the larger force, improved Tory of any chance of victory. If Custer added, the 7th Cavalry had not only waited until Borden supporting column was in place, in which Terry’s campaign strategy would have succeeded.

2) **Mass** – Operationally, Terry’s biggest failures was his inability to exploit the time three columns to effectively move his forces against the enemy. His subordinate commander (Gibbon) failed to follow that allowed the Indians to maneuver their superior numbers against a smaller portion of his force. The judgment at last hand has placed much of this blame on Custer, but senior commanders failed by engineering their forces in such a way to allow Custer to only against enemy resistance. In the final assessment, Terry failed to this.

3) **Intelligence Failure** – The Army relied heavily on an Indian scout leading up to Little Bighorn. These Crow, Arapahos, and Cheyennes – with their knowledge of the terrain, the habits and traditions of the Sioux, Cheyennes, and Arapahoes – were critical to the development of strategy in the field. Official Army estimates placed Indian numbers around 1,200. The enemy to be the number that both Terry and Custer had been noted at the official estimates failed to account for over 1,000 men who had not of the reservation and were probably going to the summer’s buffalo hunt. Failing to account for this large increase in enemy force was a significant oversight that undoubtedly affected the outcome. To compound the problem, an information reached Terry only nothing. Even an extremely strong force of 5,000 Indian and 1,500 soldiers westward of Little Bighorn on the 17th. Either of these important pieces of information might have altered the plans.

The Battle of Little Bighorn, despite its relatively small size, was the worst defeat for the U.S. Army in the Indian Wars. And although it was not a clear tactical victory for the Plains Indians, it was a significant strategic setback for their cause. The strategic success by the Indian victory only undermined efforts by the U.S. Some saved efforts of the Western states and Native Americans who opposed their movement, including the war movements of the Plains Indians were silenced in the other 1876.

Tactically:

1) Custer’s Tactcal Plan – In Terry’s written order, Custer was given wide discretion to conduct his tactical actions. Custer’s plan to achieve his war, which would later be known as the “surprise” and on the “masses” that the Army, not from any desire for a victory, but for the strategic significance of the victory. This took the form of converging columns, which would strike the enemy’s rear, front, and center, and thus destroy the enemy force in a single blow. Custer failed to execute his plan, as the enemy force was not engaged in a single blow, but rather in several separate engagements. The failure of Custer’s plan was due to a number of factors, but the primary reason was the failure of the supporting columns to move to a position in such a way to support Custer’s attack.

2) Mission Command – When Custer failed to achieve his strategic goals, it was because the enemy force was not engaged in a single blow, but rather in several separate engagements. Custer failed to execute his plan, as the enemy force was not engaged in a single blow, but rather in several separate engagements. The failure of Custer’s plan was due to a number of factors, but the primary reason was the failure of the supporting columns to move to a position in such a way to support Custer’s attack.

3) Overconfidence – When Custer believed that the element of surprise was critical. However, focusing on one advantage can blind missing others. In the final assessment, Custer’s fixation on gaining surprise blinded him to other factors that could have affected the outcome of the battle. In the end, Custer’s overconfidence led to his downfall.

OPPOSING FORCES

U.S. Army: 7th Cavalry Regiment (740 cavalry and scouts) under the command of Gen. Custer. Terry’s Column under the command of Gen. Gibbon. The Indian forces were comprised of the Northern Cheyenne, Arapaho, and Sioux.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Battle of Little Bighorn, despite its relatively small size, was the worst defeat for the U.S. Army in the Indian Wars. And although it was not a clear tactical victory for the Plains Indians, it was a significant strategic setback for their cause. The strategic success by the Indian victory only undermined efforts by the U.S. Some saved efforts of the Western states and Native Americans who opposed their movement, including the war movements of the Plains Indians were silenced in the other 1876.
Strategic/Operational:

1) Strategy – Although Terry's overall campaign strategy was sound – moving into territory supporting columns of force to converge on the Lakota-Arapaho villages abroad the Yellowstone River – it failed in execution. Terry placed his operation on two questionable assumptions; one being a smaller number of Indians, the other that he was facing a less determined foe. To complicate the situation, Terry never had the advantage of Crook's assessment of the enemy after his tough engagement at Rosebud Creek on the 17th, some two hours later. Thus, of course, there was no chance to correct, even counter-attack, without support from the larger force, improved Terry of any chance of victory. If Crook and the 7th Cavalry had scaled and 6th Cavalry supporting column was in place, in which Terry's campaign strategy would have succeeded.

2) Mass – Operationally, Terry's biggest failure was his inability to reconcile his three columns to effectively move his forces against the enemy. His subordinate commanders (Gibbon) forced him that allowed the Indians to maneuver that superior numbers against a smaller portion of his force. The judgment of history has placed much of this blame on Custer, but senior commanders surely failed in maintaining their forces in each case to allow them to utilize swift elements against mounted warriors.

3) Intelligence Failure – The Army relied heavily on its Indian scouts leading up to Little Bighorn. These Crow, Arapaho, and Pawnee – with their knowledge of the terrain, the habits and traditions of the Indian tribes, and Indians – were critical to the development of strategy in the field. Official Army estimates placed Indian numbers around 4,000. The force to be met by both Terry and Custer had been rated at 10,000, yet the force actually fielded was much larger. For example, the last minute Indian scouts on the 17th estimated the Indian force at 4,000 soldiers, 2,000 warriors, and 500-1,500 women and children. The larger force was made up of Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahos.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn

On 17 June, 1876, Gen. George Crook was ordered to the Yellowstone for an operation against the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapahos. The Indians were known to be in the area of the Big Medicine, Powder, Gall, and Yellowtail rivers. Crook was ordered to destroy the Indian villages and send the Indians back to their reservations.

Crook had three columns, each led by a different officer: Col. Reno, Col. Gibbon, and Col. Custer. Each column was supposed to converge on the enemy. However, due to poor planning and execution, the columns did not meet as anticipated, allowing the Indians to gain a tactical advantage.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn was a major victory for the Indians, who successfully resisted the U.S. Army's efforts to suppress the Lakota, Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes. The loss of life was significant, with the 7th Cavalry Regiment suffering heavy casualties.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn has become a symbol of the U.S. Army's struggle against the indigenous peoples of the Great Plains. It highlighted the limitations of military strategy and tactics, as well as the importance of intelligence and coordination in warfare. The battle also sparked a series of events that ultimately led to the end of the Indian Wars and the establishment of the reservation system.