STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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THE BATTLE OF FORT FISHER: CIVIL WAR JOINTNESS

BY

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ABSTRACT

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This paper will analyze one of the most exciting but least known chapters of the Civil War. Fort Fisher was the Confederate's largest coastal fortification and protector at the mouth of the Cape Fear waterway leading to Wilmington, North Carolina. The Union's mission was to secure Fort Fisher from its Confederate defenders to allow for the follow-on attack on Wilmington, the last remaining Confederate seaport. The Battle for Fort Fisher, a bloody battle fought during the period December 1864 through January 1865, was notably a joint operation conducted with Union Naval, Marine and Army forces. The loss of Fort Fisher cut off the final resupply line to the Army of Northern Virginia and sealed the final fate for the Confederacy.

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THE BATTLE OF FORT FISHER

> We all know very well that a fort on shore, unless attacked by troops at the same time ships are bombarding, will always hold out against the ships, that is, the enemy will leave the works (and let the ships fire away) and enter again when the ships have gone.[1]
>
> — Rear Admiral David D. Porter

The Civil War battles of Gettysburg, Antietam, Shiloh and Fredericksburg are familiar to most American military officers. Few, however, are familiar with the little known battle fought January 15, 1865 on the coast of North Carolina.

This paper will demonstrate the significance of the dramatic struggle fought at Fort Fisher, North Carolina. It will describe and analyze the battles of Fort Fisher, focusing primarily on the second battle. Part of the analysis will apply the fundamentals of joint warfare. These fundamentals will show the second assault against Fort Fisher to be a highly successful and significant Union joint operation, even by today's principles of joint operations. Although this battle was certainly not the only nor first Civil War joint operation, it was the largest of the joint battles. Fort Fisher could be considered the earliest American battle to effectively employ not only the army and navy, but the marines as well.

In a larger context, this paper will show why the Union victory at Fort Fisher was strategically significant to the

Confederate's "last ray of hope." Finally, this paper will highlight various warriors of this battle, whose demonstrated herculean efforts deserve more than their obscure placement in Civil War history.[2]

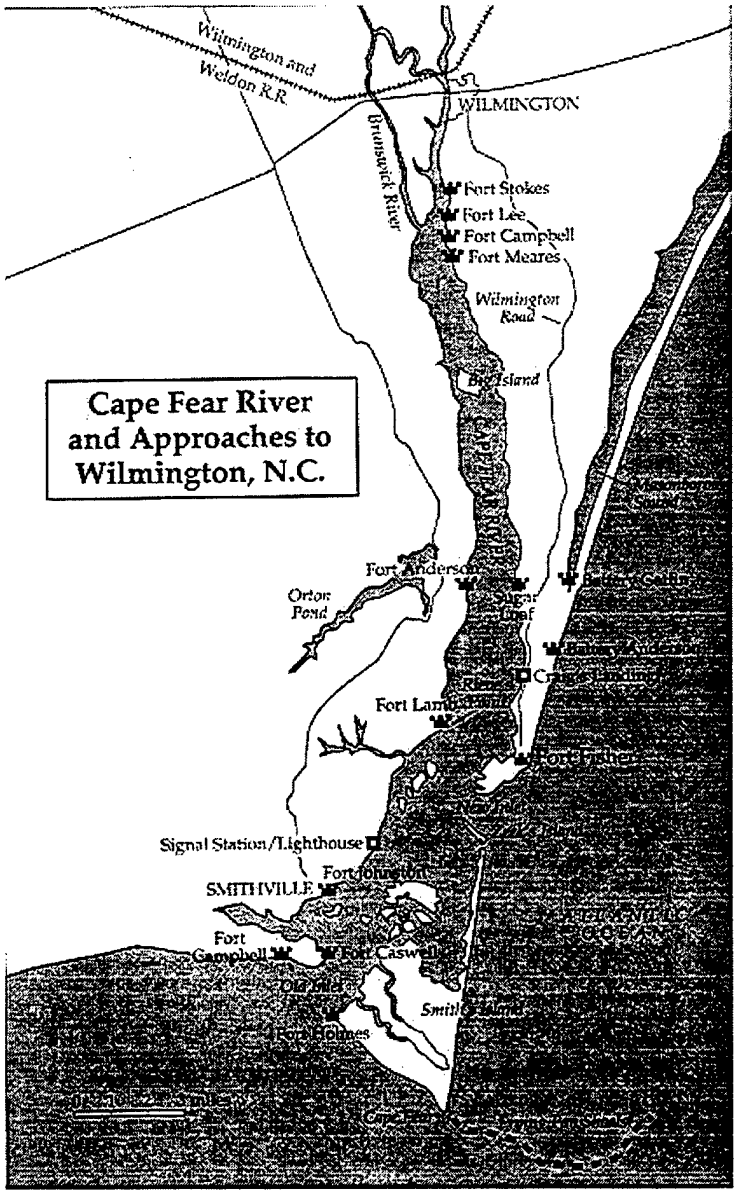

Figure 1[3]

BACKGROUND

Eighteen miles south of Wilmington, North Carolina, along the peninsula between the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean, the Confederates built their most fortified coastal fortress to guard against Union entry into the Cape Fear River. Wilmington quickly became the South's major seaport during the Civil War through which blockade-runners provided vital war supplies to the Confederacy.

Initially derived from a component of General Winfield Scott's 'Anaconda' plan, the strangling of the South through a naval blockade was only partially successful in preventing the flow of supplies to the South. As the other southern ports were gradually closed off through either effective blockading or combined operations, Wilmington became the last remaining port open to the southern commerce by the summer of 1864. Not only was the port important to the Confederacy, the three railroads that connected Wilmington to the areas of the South were also significant for strategic sustainment. The most critical was the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad, the lifeline to Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.[4]

Fort Fisher's firepower, location and defenses allowed the blockade-runners to continue their run of the thin Union blockade.

DESCRIPTION OF FORT FISHER

Although initial work started on Fort Fisher in 1861, it was not until Colonel William Lamb, of the 36th North Carolina Regiment, took command in July of 1862 that the fort became known as the most fortified Confederate post. Upon taking command Lamb was determined to build a fort which "could withstand the heaviest fire of any guns in the American Navy."[5]

What made the works of Fort Fisher able to withstand the heaviest of artillery fire was that it was constructed entirely from sand rather than brick or wood.[6] The Confederates learned from the 11-hour Union bombardment of Fort Macon in April 1862 that masonry-built fortifications could not withstand fires from the latest rifled cannons.

Fort Fisher was shaped like an inverted 'L'. The length of the 'L', the "seaface," extended for a mile along the Atlantic side while the base "landface" ran across the between the Cape Fear River and the Ocean for almost a half a mile.[7]

The landface section, running from river to sea, was a bumpy line of 15 huge earthen mounds, called "traverses." Each was approximately 30 feet high, about 25 feet thick and was "bombproofed" with a hollow interior to shelter the garrison during a bombardment. Between the traverses, heavy artillery was mounted in elevated "gun chambers" surrounded by sandbags. By late 1864, the fort's landface was armed with 20 heavy seacoast

artillery pieces—mostly large Columbiads—and was supported by three mortars and several field pieces. The landface gun chambers were accessible from the rear by wooden stairs, and a long interior passageway connected all the bombproofs. For almost a half-mile north of the landface, the peninsula had been cleared of trees and foliage to provide a clear field of fire. Running parallel to the landface from the river to the ocean was a newly erected palisade fence made of nine-foot-high sharpened pine logs. Halfway down the landface, a tunnellike "sally port" cut through the earthen wall so field artillery could be rushed to an elevated sally-port gun battery during an enemy attack. On the river side of the landface, where a narrow wooden bridge spanned a patch of marsh, the sandy road from Wilmington entered the fort through the gate in the palisade. The gate had no doors; instead it was barricaded with sandbags and guarded by artillery.[8]

The area where the landface and seaface intersection was called the Northeast Bastion. It was a massive structure of sloping, sodded walls towering forty-five feet above the beach and armed with a 8-inch columbiad and 8-inch Blakely Rifle. Lamb used the Northeast Bastion as his headquarters since it provided an expansive field of view for early indications of the Union fleet. From his headquarters he could see both lengths of

the fort to include Battery Buchanan down at the southern tip of the peninsula.[9]

The fort's seaface, made up of another line of sodded traverses and a series of eight self-contained batteries, ran along the beach for about a mile and was armed with twenty-four heavy guns, primarily 8-inch columbiads and 8-inch Brooke rifles. Halfway down was the Armstrong Battery armed the huge Armstrong Rifled Cannon 150-pounder, quite effective at keeping blockade ships at a distance. At the far end of the seaface was a sixty-foot high artillery emplacement known as 'Mound Battery' armed with two seacoast guns, a 10-inch columbiad and 6.4-inch rifled 32-pounder. From Mound Battery the Confederates could easily reach the deck of any ship entering the New Inlet. The Confederates also used this domineering location for signaling the blockade-runners with lights. Also protecting the New Inlet was Battery Buchanan, an elliptically shaped earthwork located at the tip of peninsula armed with two 11-inch Brooke smoothbores and two 10-inch columbiads.[10]

Although the fort was heavily armed and built to survive the heaviest of bombardments, its weakness like other Confederate fortresses was the shortages of soldiers. Lamb was quite concerned that his garrison was less than six hundred men, all whom had yet to experience battle.[11]

THE FIRST BATTLE

As the winter of 1864 approached, Sherman's campaign in the South was pausing for reconstitution and resupply. Grant finally decided on 6 December, despite some reluctance, to detail ten thousand veteran soldiers to proceed with a campaign against the coast of North Carolina and close the port of Wilmington.[12] Earlier in the year, Grant had in fact sent a letter to Sherman indicating his desire for a Spring offensive for securing coastal bridgeheads. However, Grant was unable to free up sufficient resources to conduct these operations. The Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Wells, supported this mission and had requested troops since earlier in the year. The 'uncovering' of Washington, especially during an election year, was a factor Grant had to contend with in freeing up resources for his coastal campaign.[13] General Halleck was also concerned and urged Grant not to support the campaign in order to keep the Army of the Potomac in place against Lee near Petersburg, until Sherman's army would break the deadlock. Some of Grant's major concerns were eased by the appointment of Admiral David Porter to command the naval forces soon after Admiral Farragut had expressed no desire to participate in the operation.[14] Grant initially saw the importance of Wilmington as the remaining Confederate port through which critical supplies were made available.[15]

For the first Fort Fisher battle the army fell under MG Benjamin F. Butler, whose department included North Carolina. Admiral David D. Porter would lead the naval force armada in this combined army and navy operation. Grant was quite comfortable with Porter since he and Porter had fought together on the Mississippi River. Butler, however, was another matter. Grant became quite perturbed when he learned Butler was assuming personal charge of the ground expedition. Grant knew quite well his reputation as a highly political leader with no military training and had expected Butler to delegate the command to a more experienced ground commander.

An interesting highlight to this battle was the 'powder boat' initiative. Conceived by one of the Union's most imaginative generals, Butler's initiative was approved by Grant, supported by Porter and called for a navy steamer filled with 300 tons of powder towed to explode within 450 yards of Fort Fisher. The desired effect was to significantly reduce the capabilities of the fort in preparation for the Union army attack. Unfortunately for Butler, the boat was filled with only 215 tons of powder, placed 700 yards from the fort and barely produced a noticeable explosion.[16]

The results of the first battle conducted on 25 December 1864 reflected a lack in unity of effort between the navy and the army. Although historians widely debate the significance of

Porter and Butler's conflicting personalities as the cause for the defeat, other factors also led to failure. These include the lack of a focused effort, an insufficient sustainment package, inability to concentrate forces and the lack of a reserve force. Typically, Butler and Porter blamed each other in their official reports immediately after the failed attack.[17]

This first battle also revealed that little was learned from the lessons of the battles of Charleston, where the combined forces lacked a combined assault doctrine, prior planning and flexibility in the plan. What the Union leaders learned from Charleston in 1863 but failed to implement at Fort Fisher's first battle was that a successful assault against a strong enemy position required a synergistic disposition of available resources. They also learned that the battle would not be won with limitations on ammunition supplies.[18]

THE SECOND BATTLE

Immediately after learning the results of the first battle Grant promptly had Butler relieved and quickly appointed Alfred H. Terry, commander of X Corps as the new commander of the army forces for the second battle. After the first battle Grant saw the greater importance of Wilmington as a linkup and resupply point for Sherman's army moving north across the Carolinas.[19]

The fall of Fort Fisher and march to Wilmington had now become a strategic necessity for Grant in order to end the war quickly. In order to avoid a repeat of the personality difficulties of the first battle and ensure interservice cooperation, Grant issued specific instructions to Terry on January 3rd regarding relations with Porter:

> It is exceedingly desirable that the most complete understanding should exist between yourself and the naval commander. I suggest, therefore, that you consult with Admiral Porter freely, and get from him the part to be performed by each branch of the public service, so that there may be unity of action…I would therefore, defer to him as much as is consistent with your own responsibilities.[20]

The concept of operation for the second battle changed very little from the first, but the detail of the preparations was significantly improved. The naval preparation of the fort would be followed with the ground attack from a divisional force on the northwest sector. Naval bombardment would continue to support the attack. Added to the plan was the additional assault of 2000 sailors and marines.

In an effort to follow Grant's guidance in dealing with Porter, Terry decided to use what he thought a precarious attack by sailors as a diversion to his advantage. Both attacks would begin simultaneously to help divert Lamb's attention from the Union main attack, Terry's forces at the northwest.

On the evening of 12 January Porter's resupplied armada of 59 warships and Terry's 22 army transport vessels arrived off Federal Point to begin preparations for the second attack.[21] In all, over six hundred guns of the naval fleet would participate in the bombardment. At 0800 the following morning Terry's force of 8000 soldiers began landings on the beach near Myrtle Sound. Two hundred of Porter's boats disembarked the men and their provisions, equipment and ammunition from the army vessels. Also in support of this landing were Porter's five ironclads (*Monadnock*, *Saugus*, *Canonicus*, *Mahopac* and *New Ironsides*), anchored between 700-1000 yards from the fort to begin a bombardment campaign against the guns of the Fisher's land front.[22] While the ironclads were pounding the Fort, a division of wooden gunboats covered Terry's shore landing. By 1500 nearly 8,000 men and their equipment had safely landed on the beach. Terry describes the landing:

> The surf on the beach was still quite high, notwithstanding that the weather had become very pleasant and owing to it some the men had their rations and ammunition ruined by water. With this exception, no accident of any kind occurred.[23]

The Union army forces landing on the beach included the Second Division of the XXIV Army Corps under BG Adelbert Ames along with the Third Division of the XXV Army Corps under BG Charles J. Paine. Additional forces provided for the second attack were the 2nd Brigade, First Division of the XXIV Army

Corps under Colonel Joseph C. Abbott, three batteries of artillery and two companies of engineers. Grant wanted to ensure Fort Fisher was taken this time, even if by siege.[24]

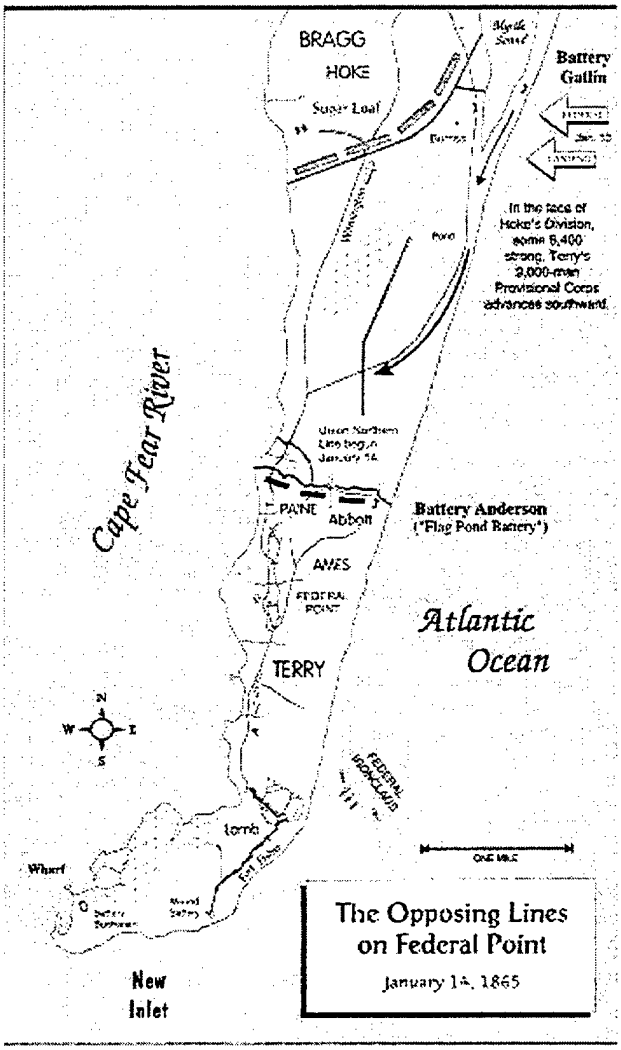

Figure 2[25]

Immediately after establishing the beachhead, Terry ordered Abbott's Brigade to dig entrenchments to establish a defensive line across the peninsula to protect the Union rear from any attack from the north. As the landing was taking place Terry

soon came to realize that the Confederate forces of Robert F. Hoke's Division, under the control of General Braxton Bragg, commander of the Department of North Carolina, were well within striking distance at Sugar Loaf capable of thwarting the beach landing. However, Hoke decided not to attack and maintained his defenses thinking the Union forces might bypass Fort Fisher this time to attack directly to the north toward Wilmington.[26]

While Terry's forces were moving into their positions on the 14th, Colonel Lamb was desperately requesting additional men for his defenses. Since detecting Union landing forces, Lamb sent numerous messages to General Bragg requesting reinforcements. During the two days prior to the attack only 700 additional men arrived by steamer from Wilmington to give him a full strength of only 1500 men to defend the fort.[27] However, this addition was offset by the more than two hundred casualties caused by bombardments. Bragg finally dispatched an additional brigade of 1000 South Carolinians the afternoon just prior to the attack. All but 350 were turned around after the transport steamers received shells from the Union fleet firing across the peninsula.[28]

On the afternoon of the 14th Terry conducted a leaders reconnaissance with Colonel N. Martin Curtis and Colonel Cyrus B. Comstock within 500 yards of the fort's landface. Curtis was

the commander of the First Brigade in Ames' Division who selected by Terry to lead the attack.[29]

A towering six-foot-seven twenty-nine year old New Yorker, Curtis was fearless and aggressive on the battlefield. He had been a school teacher, a law student and a local postmaster after his education at a seminary. After being severely wounded during the Peninsula campaign in Virginia, Curtis was eager to return to combat.[30]

Comstock was General Grant's aide-de-camp on loan to Terry to serve as an adviser on engineer matters and observer. During the reconnaissance they could see substantial damage to the fort. Seven of the sixteen artillery pieces had been knocked down or destroyed, the traverses were full of small craters and the palisade fencing to the front was blown full of gaps.[31] This reconnaissance also provided Terry with the various avenues of approach available for his forces. He decided on the route closer to the river which provided less exposure to fire. Although this route would force a march through a patch of marsh, Terry believed it still the best route. The reconnaissance also convinced Terry that the navy must inflict more damage to the Confederate artillery and palisade fencing. Now confident an attack would be successful, Terry directed the attack commence at 1500 the following day with the three brigades from General Ames' division. He would leave Paine's

Division in their defensive line to prevent Confederate reinforcements from the north.

That evening Terry met with Porter onboard the *Malvern* to discuss the needs for naval bombardment. Porter assured Terry his support. At 1500 Terry would signal the Fleet and the warships would simultaneously blow their steam whistles to launch the naval and army attacks. With agreed upon codes, the signal corpsmen would direct naval fire from the shore to any point at Terry's direction or call for a cease-fire.[32]

Porter's naval bombardment from 13-15 January was significantly more effective than that of first battle due to the experience his crews gained from the first and the relatively calm sea condition for the firing vessels.[33] From Lamb's perspective the naval gunfire was quite effective:

> All day and night on the 13th and 14th of January the fleet kept up a ceaseless and terrific bombardment. It was impossible for us to repair damage on the land-face at night, for the ironsides and monitors bowled eleven and fifteen-inch shells along the parapet, scattering shrapnel in the darkness. No meals could be prepared for the exhausted garrison; we could scarcely bury our dead without fresh casualties.[34]

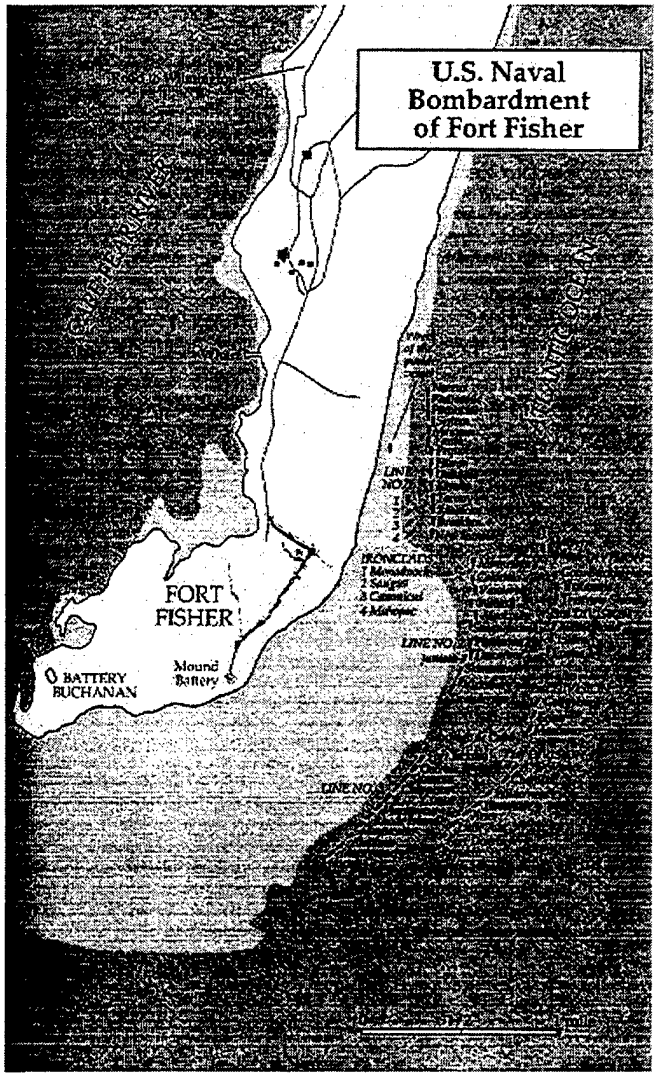

Figure 3[35]

As the sun rose on a clear and calm morning of the 15th General Terry was continuing his planning for the afternoon attack ensuring his division commanders understood his plans and intent. Curtis's brigade was ready in their initial attack positions about 500 yards from the fort. Curtis would be followed by the Second Brigade of Colonel Galashua Pennypacker and the Third Brigade under Colonel Louis Bell. Both brigades were moved up within supporting distance to Curtis's position.[36]

At the moment Galashua Pennypacker readied his brigade for the attack he was the youngest brigade commander in the army. Only twenty years old Pennypacker had ably earned his rank and position. A natural leader and combat veteran, he wore the scars of thirteen wounds while in action at Fort Wagner, Drewry's Bluff, Cold Harbor, Petersburg and elsewhere. During many of these battles he was known to carry his unit colors into battle and followed a family tradition of warfighters. His grandfather fought in the Revolution and his father in the Mexican War. At the age of only sixteen Pennypacker volunteered in 1861 for service. Shortly after his twentieth birthday he was promoted to colonel.[37]

Terry also ordered Abbott's brigade forward from their defensive position at the landing site to supplement Paine's entrenchment line and act as a reserve. Terry placed the artillery units close to the river side to keep Confederate vessels from supporting the fort. The engineers also came forward in the event a siege would be necessary.[38]

The morning of the 15th also found the fleet in position to provide their most massive bombardment yet in preparation for the attack. One division of warships was in support of the defensive positions toward the north, while the remaining ships were positioned against the fort. By noon of the 15th, as Terry had requested, Porter's naval gunfire had either destroyed or

disabled every gun on the landface except for one located in the Northeast salient.[39] During the two naval attacks over 40,000 shells were fired by the Union fleet, about half in each battle.[40]

A few days before the attack Admiral Porter had issued his intent in the following order for the navy's ground assault role:

> Before going into action, the Commander of each vessel will detail as many of his men as he can spare from the guns as a landing party. That we may have a share in the assault when it takes place, the boats will be kept ready… The sailors will be armed with cutlasses, well sharpened, and with revolvers… the boats will pull around the stern of the monitors land right abreast, and board the fort on the run in a seamanlike way. The marines will form in the rear and cover the sailors. While the soldiers are going over the parapets in front, the sailors will take the sea-face of Fort Fisher. We can land two thousand active men from the fleet and not feel it. Two thousand active men from the fleet will carry the day.[41]

At noon the 1600 sailors and 400 marines designated to make the attack, led by Lieutenant Commander K. Randolf Breese, were transported from thirty-five of the ships to a point along the beach about a mile an a half north of the fort. Breese, a thirty-three year old combat veteran of service in the Mexican War and the campaigns at New Orleans and Vicksburg, was faced with quite a challenge. Lieutenant Commander Thomas O. Selfridge, one of Breese's three subordinate commanders quite accurately describes the difficulty facing the naval assault:

> They had been for months confined on shipboard, had never drilled together, and their arms, the old-fashioned cutlass and pistol(Colt Revolver), were hardly the weapons to cope with the rifles and bayonets of the enemy.[42]

Once on shore Breese formed the sailors into three divisions which corresponded to their fleet divisions and into a division of the marines under the command of Captain L.L. Dawson. Breese sent a detail to prepare breastworks 600 yards from the fort for

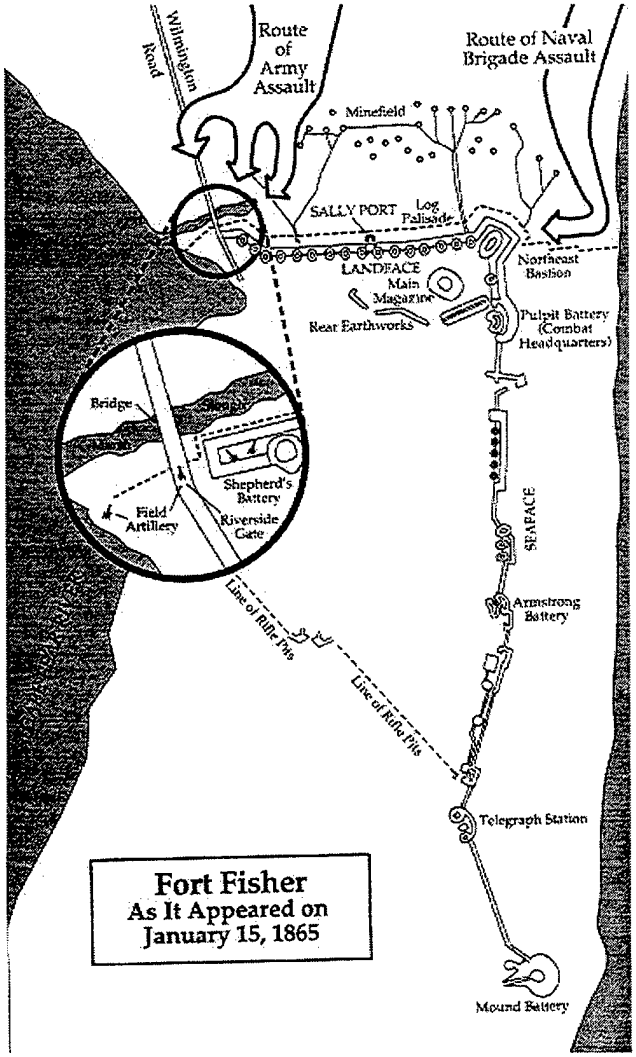

Figure 4[43]

the initial attack position in addition to preparing lines of rifle pits for the marines. Once Breese brought his force to their attack positions he realized he needed to reposition further to the left flank, closer to the ocean to allow for better protection from the sloped beach.

Time was running out for Breese to form a coordinated attack. By 1500 the marines' new position was now unable to effectively provide cover for the ensuing assault and failed to keep the Confederate riflemen off the fort's parapet. As 1500 passed, the sailors quickly became restless for the army's attack signal. Finally, at 1525 Terry signaled the fleet to lift fires. Not waiting for visual confirmation of the army's attack as directed, Breese launched his sailors at the temporary silence of the naval guns. The three carefully organized divisions quickly merged into one large mass of running men. With officers dressed with their gold braided, knee-length overcoats and unfurled colors from each ship, the naval charge across the beach must been a 'sight' for Lamb's soldiers awaiting the assault. With ineffective cover from the marines for the 1600 sailors running across an open beach, the naval attack very quickly became a rout. The sailors with only their pistols and cutlasses were no match for the Confederate riflemen, canister and grape. After only 20 minutes the assault was repulsed, with the men retreating in droves, leaving over

three hundred dead or wounded sailors and marines. Many of the wounded were left to drown in the rising tide. This was not the outcome Admiral Porter's had envisioned.[44]

One of the sailors in the assault was the fearless Ensign Robley D. Evans. Assigned to the *Powhataw*, Evans was an eighteen year old graduate of the Naval Academy. He was the son of a physician from Virginia and had brother serving in the Confederate Army. Prior to his arrival at the Academy, Evans had traveled alone to and from Utah, lived with the Shoshone Indians and been shot twice by arrows. During the assault Evans was shot three separate times in his attempt to reach the fort. Evans continued the assault close enough to the fort to recognize Colonel Lamb on the parapet, while realizing most of the sailors had turned around in retreat. The last bullet was a wound in the knee that finally forced him down. With both legs and his chest shot up he was finally carried back to the ships. During his medical treatment back in Norfolk Robley Evans, with his loaded Colt pistol in his firm grasp, refused to allow the doctor to amputate his legs. Later know as "Fighting Bob" Evans, he continued serving in the Navy with distinction, rose to the rank of rear admiral and became one of the Navy's great heroes.[45]

Colonel Lamb provides a detailed description of the naval assault on his northeast bastion:

> …the steam-whistles of the vast fleet sounded a charge. It was a soul stirring signal both to the besiegers and besieged…I rallied there the larger portion of the garrison of the main work, putting 300 men on top of the bastion and adjoining batteries…The assaulting line on the right was directed at the angle or point of the L, consisted of two thousand sailors and marines…Ordering the two Napoleons at the sally port to join the Columbiad in pouring grape and canister into their ranks…The sailors and marines reached the berme and sprang up the slope but a murderous fire greeted them and swept them down…in half an hour several hundred dead and wounded lay at the foot of the bastion. The heroic bravery of their officers…could not restrain the men from panic and retreat, and with small loss to ourselves, we witnessed…was a Phyrhic victory. That magnificent charge of the American navy upon the centre of our works, enabled the army to effect a lodgement on our left with comparatively small loss. As our shouts of triumph went up at the retreat of the naval forces; I turned to look at our left and saw to my amazement several Federal flags upon our ramparts.[46]

Selfridge provides a concise summary of the naval assault from his perspective on the battlefield:

> As a diversion the charge of the sailors was a success; as an exhibition of courage it was magnificent; but the material of which the column was composed, and the arms with which it was furnished, left no reasonable hope after the first onslaught had been checked that it could have succeeded.[47]

Once Terry saw the naval assault failing he sent his aide to direct the remaining naval forces relieve Abbott's brigade and man the defensive entrenchments along the northern line with Paine's division.[48]

Both Lamb and Selfridge conclude that the premature naval assault kept Lamb and his Confederates focused at the northeast corner of the fort on the 2000 man naval force. Before Lamb realized the army was attacking, the colors of Curtis' Brigade had entered the fort.

The army's attack went as planned. Curtis's brigade led the charge followed by Pennypacker and Bell. Abbott's brigade was held as a reserve. The 3300 black soldiers of Paine's division would hold in defense of the Federal rear and only be used if necessary.

Prior to Curtis's attack, one hundred sharpshooters from the 30th Indiana were positioned 175 yards from the fort to provide cover fire in preparation for the assault. Once the 30th was in place, Curtis launched his brigade after receiving the signal from Ames with the cover of the Spencer rifles and the naval bombardment. As Curtis advanced, Pennypacker moved his troops up to the position vacated by Curtis just behind the sharpshooters. Bell in-turn assumed Pennypacker's vacated position.[49]

In support of Curtis in the attack were pioneers equipped with axes to clear the obstacles. They performed quite effectively, quickly widening gaps in the palisades and thus preventing major stalls in the attack. With his saber and colors in hand Curtis led the final assault. His brigade

attempted to attack on line angling toward the western end of the fort's landface. The brigade soon began massing near the first battery but quickly scaled the Shepherd's Battery, the fort's riverside battery. The Confederates had placed an intricate system of torpedoes, underground explosive extending across the peninsula 500-600 feet from the landface, but were unable to detonate them as the Federals approached. The naval bombardment had severed the underground ignition lines connecting the minefield.[50]

Once Curtis gained a foothold on the parapet of the first battery, Terry ordered Pennypacker's brigade into the fight. Pennypacker also angled on line for the fort's riverside entrance. In the assault Pennypacker's brigade received a heavy barrage of gunfire and canister. Finally realizing the main attack was coming from the army on the northwest, Lamb quickly repositioned his forces closer to the attack that provided more manning along the parapet facing Pennypacker's troops.[51] Despite heavy casualties Pennypacker moved quickly forward and overlapped Curtis' right rear, pushing across the bridge toward the riverside gate. After overcoming the riverside artillery, Pennypacker charged the slope of Shepherds Battery with Curtis' men and drove the Confederates further down the landface.[52]

The fight for the western end of the landface soon became an intense battle that at times included hand to hand combat and

point-blank firing.[53] As the Federals kept pushing from one gun emplacement to the next, Pennypacker was the first to reach the third traverse still holding the colors of the 97th Pennsylvania. As he planted the regimental colors he received a severe wound from a shot through the right hip and was quickly evacuated from the battlefield.[54]

A significant factor for the Federal advance across the landface against the stubborn Confederate defense was the effectiveness of the naval gunfire. Porter's gunners were quite effective in support of the army's advance over the traverses. They laid down protective bombardment just ahead of the advancing soldiers as they worked their way down the parapet. According to Charles Gibson, this effectiveness was the result of the training Porter's men received in the Army's method of flag signaling while at Fort Monroe. With this training both the Navy and Army flagmen were able to communicate, and as a result the ships could aim their covering fire very close to the line of the advancing soldiers.[55]

Noticing the momentum slowing, Terry called up Bell's brigade to reinforce the attack. The intense fighting continued from traverse to traverse as darkness approached. Terry's forces were now fighting along the landface and inside the fort. Decidedly outnumbered, Lamb orchestrated counterattacks, bayonet charges and close range gunfire with his few remaining artillery

pieces. Desiring to maintain enough momentum in the attack Terry called up Abbott's Brigade and the black soldiers of the 27th Regiment of Paine's Division. Although this meant a weaker defense posture, Terry at this point was more concerned with quickly finishing the battle.[56]

Finally around 2200, after seeing that the Union forces had taken the final traverse of the landface and were cut off from external support, the Confederates surrendered. A wounded Colonel Lamb officially surrendered Fort Fisher from his stretcher at Battery Buchanan where he had been evacuated.[57]

During the second battle Confederate dead and wounded were estimated at about 500, more than 25 percent of the total reported strength. Historians of this battle concluded that between 670 and 955 Federal troops were killed or wounded.[58]

On the 16th of January, the day following the battle, Acting Ensign Francis Sands of the *Gettysburg* retraced some of the previous days fighting and reflects "On the traverses were the bodies of the fallen, showing how desperately but vainly the gallant Confederates under Lamb had defended the works."[59]

For his heroic actions at Fort Fisher, twenty-year old Galashua Pennypacker was appointed brigadier general of volunteers. General Ames writes of Pennypacker's actions: "It would be difficult to overestimate the value of his example to the brigade."[60] He later received the Congressional Medal of

Honor. Dubbed the "boy general" by the newspapers, he later recovered from his fourteenth wound and spent the next seventeen years in the Army. Pennypacker turned down offers to run for Pennsylvania governor and died in 1916.[61]

N. Martin Curtis was also severely wounded during the battle and promoted to brigadier general. He chose the life of a politician as a Congressman from New York and became quite active in veteran organizations.[62]

AFTERMATH OF FORT FISHER

The fall of Fort Fisher signaled the collapse of the Confederate Army. With the mouth of the Cape Fear River securely in Union hands the blockade runners were now denied access to Wilmington. The following month Wilmington fell, making way for MG John M. Schofield's XXIII Corps advance to Goldsboro for a link-up with General Sherman's forces. The capture of the Wilmington & Weldon Railroad Line now severed Lee's final supply line to the South. Sherman was no longer be vulnerable to any focused efforts from the Confederates and once again could be provisioned from the sea. His revitalized army would march through North Carolina for the final push against Lee in Virginia.

ANALYSIS OF THE CAMPAIGN

Although written 130 years later, the fundamentals of joint warfare enumerated in our current Joint Pub 1 explain why the second battle of Fort Fisher succeeded as a joint operation:[63]

UNITY OF EFFORT

Unlike the first battle, the second had all of its effort clearly articulated toward clearly articulated common aims and objectives. Grant reluctantly agreed to the basic concept of the first battle, but did not fully concentrate his attention and energy to the operation until the second battle. Cognizant of the importance of Wilmington as a focal point for Sherman's successful to move through the Carolinas in support of the grand strategy, Grant provided the full focus needed to achieve success. As part of his emphasis Grant provided additional resources for the second campaign. Grant also put one of Sheridan's divisions on orders and transferred Schofield's XXIII Corps to Baltimore as contingency reinforcements if needed to secure Fort Fisher and Wilmington.[64]

The naval role was also much more focused in its effort. Porter wanted to ensure any problem with the operation was not due to naval forces. Improving upon experience from the first battle, he made certain that ammunition and fuel would be plentiful. Although the operation did not have a single joint force commander to ensure unity of command and control, Terry and Porter's efforts were both focused toward achieving a common goal.

CONCENTRATION OF MILITARY POWER

The Union force of two divisions and 58 warships provided the overwhelming firepower required to defeat the heavily fortified enemy. The Federals were also able to successfully concentrate power at decisive points and time. Porter's ability to concentrate precise gunfire to support the ground attack along the landface proved quite effective. Porter's overpowering naval fire was able to effectively isolate Lamb's fortification not only from the oceanside but from the riverside as well. Even without the physical presence of warships along the river, Porter could affect gunfire on the river traffic attempting to support the Fort from Wilmington.

INITIATIVE

Although the naval assault demonstrated various weaknesses, it did represent an effort to exploit the full leverage of

versatile joint forces, temporarily confusing the Confederates and providing valuable time for the Army on the west flank. The naval assault also represented an action quite offensive in spirit. Finally, Terry's decision to use his reserve forces, in order to maintain the initiative in the offensive, was a calculated risk he quickly turned into victory.

AGILITY

The joint forces employed for the second battle were packaged for sustainment even to the extent of siege capability. The Navy would have been able to sustain bombardment of Fort Fisher for days after the victory. The force package provided a variety of capabilities to the campaign to include naval gunfire from both ironclads and wooden gunships, engineers (pioneers), ground artillery, sharpshooters, marines and effective communications. The expedition was well equipped and prepared for unpredictable situations as they arose.[65] Terry's decision to reconstitute the naval brigade after the disastrous assault as replacements for Abbott's defensive position was one of the many visible examples of the ability to integrate and exploit the various capabilities of the joint force.

EXTENSION OF OPERATIONS

The joint sea and land forces were completely effective in denying sanctuary to the Confederate forces within the confines

Fort Fisher by extending their operations to their fullest breath and depth of capabilities. This joint operation was also quite capable in practically eliminating all external support.

FREEDOM OF ACTION

The force structure provided the joint force the needed flexibility against unanticipated developments. In addition to the force structure, less the Naval assault, the advanced planning and extensive preparation, vastly increased the joint force's flexibility to succeed. Porter used his organizational skills in forming each squadron to match unique roles. Each ship was assigned to specific targets during the various phases of the campaign. He also ensured each vessel was effectively used to maximum capacity, whatever the service. Terry ensured each unit knew its role and position in the line of battle. He also provided written instructions down to the regimental level and copies to the Porter's fleet. Without this degree of planning and preparation the two forces would not have been able to mutually support each other during the periods of confusion, difficulty and changes.[66]

SUSTAINING OPERATIONS

The sustainment package planned for and executed upon by both Terry and Porter upheld the campaign's agility, extension

of operations and freedom of action. It no doubt impacted greatly on the success to the joint operation.

CLARITY OF EXPRESSION

For the most part, the plans and operations achieved a high degree of clarity throughout the operation. The model coordination between the navy and army in effectively controlling naval gunfire also represents clarity achieved through common techniques and procedures. What was not an effective degree of clarity was the lack of guidance and perhaps planning time given the sailors and marines to conduct their assault.

KNOWLEDGE OF SELF AND ENEMY

Both the army and navy had finally learned not to expect performances from the other service beyond their capability. In this battle the fleet's fire was used to maximum advantage because of this appreciation of the navy's capabilities. The Army also understood the limitations associated with naval artillery and the difficulties in sustaining an effective naval force. The Navy recognized need for continuous fire when supporting an infantry assault.[67]

Again, the naval assault failure stems from the failure of Porter to best integrate their unique capabilities to support the overall plan. Terry's concern went unvoiced due to his

conscience effort to get along with Porter. Had both the army and naval assault actually gone off simultaneously rather than ten minutes apart the assault might have reached the parapet. Nevertheless, the role eventually assumed by the sailors and marines in relief of Abbott's brigade proved to be an innovative and effective method of integration.

Through effective reconnaissance and interrogations, Terry and Porter were able to accurately assess the Confederates. Terry quickly ensured his northern flank would remain secure throughout the operation. His focus, however, had to remain on the defeat of the fort. At the strategic level, Grant knew that the defeat of Fort Fisher was one of the key hurdles necessary to quickly bring the war to an end.

CONCLUSION

The Union's remarkable victory at Fort Fisher was the result of key cooperation between the services and synergistic employment of joint forces, even by modern standards. The Union success at the second battle highlighted the progress both the army and navy had made throughout the Civil War in the fundamentals of joint operations. Numerous elements of this battle, from the naval assault to the naval gunfire signaling procedures, make Fort Fisher quite a unique episode in Civil War history. In addition to the many unique aspects of this battle are the many heroic contributions of the soldiers and sailors that helped signal the eventual collapse of the Confederate army.

WORD COUNT = 6627

ENDNOTES

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[3] Rod Gragg, Confederate Goliath: The Battle of Fort Fisher(New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1991), 10.

[4] Fonvielle, 22.

[5] William Lamb, Colonel Lamb's Story of Fort Fisher(Carolina Beach, N.C.: Blockade Runner Museum, 1966), 2.

[6] William Lamb, "The Defense of Fort Fisher." In Johnson and Buel, Battles and Leaders of the Civil War,4 Vols.1887-88. Reprint(New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), 643.

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[17] Ibid., vol 42, p.1049-89.

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[21] Ibid., vol. 46, pt. I, p. 396-95.

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[23] O.R.A., vol. 46, pt. I, p. 396-95.

[24] Gragg, 109.

[25] Fonvielle, 220.

[26] O.R.A., vol. 46, pt. II, p.1048.

[27] Lamb,Colonel Lamb's Story of Fort Fisher,23.

[28] Ibid., 26.

[29] O.R.A., vol. 46, pt I, p.407-95.
[30] Fonvielle, 145, 147-48.
[31] O.R.A.
[32] Gragg, 133.
[33] Alexander T. McLean, III., The Fort Fisher and Wilmington Campaign,(Master's Thesis, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1969), 49.
[34] Lamb, 23.
[35] Gragg, 113.
[36] O.R.A., vol.46, pt.I, p.398-95.
[37] Gragg, 183.
[38] O.R.A., vol.46, pt.I, p.398,419-21.
[39] Lamb, 25.
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[41] Northern Atlantic Squadron, General Order No. 81, January 4, 1865;quoted in Charles M. Robinson, Hurricane of Fire: The Union Assault on Fort Fisher(Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 148.
[42] Selfridge, 659.
[43] Gragg, 20.
[44] Fonvielle, 307.
[45] Robley D. Evans, A Sailor's Log: Recollection of Forty Years of Naval Life(New York: D. Appleton, 1901), 87-101; Gragg, 162-63.
[46] Lamb, 27.
[47] Selfridge, 661.
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[49] O.R.A., vol.46, pt.I, p.398-95.
[50] Lamb, The Defense of Fort Fisher, 643.
[51] O.R.A., vol 46, p.419.
[52] Ibid., 403,420.
[53] Gragg, 186.
[54] Ibid., 187.
[55] Charles D. Gibson, The Army's Navy Series, Volume II: Assault and Logistics, Union and River Operations 1861-1866(Camden, Mass.: Ensign Press, 1995), 465.
[56] O.R.A., 399.
[57] Fonvielle, 296.
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[59] Robinson, 183.
[60] General Adelbert Ames, Capture of Fort Fisher, North Carolina, Jan.15,1865(n.p., 1897), 13.
[61] Gragg, 264.

[62] Ibid., 268.

[63] Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Pub 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Officer, 1995), III-1.

[64] Reed, 358-9.

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

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