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Serial	1
Page	6

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Contents Lecture - The Preparation of War Plans for the Establishment and
Defense of a Naval Advance Base.

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THE PREPARATION OF WAR PLANS
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THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEFENSE OF A NAVAL ADVANCE BASE.

The necessity of preparing for war, in time of peace, dates back to the days of Hannibal, who, long before his first campaign against the Romans, succeeded in obtaining information regarding the resources of the country in which he intended to operate and made his plans accordingly.

The Great General Staff of the Prussian Army was organized in 1816 as a result of the German reading of the Napoleonic Campaigns and its usefulness was strikingly illustrated by its correct solution of Campaign Problems prior to the Austro-Prussian and Franco-Prussian Wars.

In more recent years we are all more or less personally familiar with the completeness and thoroughness with which the Japanese General Staff worked out, before the Russo-Japanese War, the details of the Manchurian Campaign.

Diplomatic relations were severed on February 6, 1904, and two days afterwards, on February 8th, the advance guard of the First Japanese Army Corps landed at Chemulpo and marched on the Korean capital, Seoul.

Every detail of the expedition had been worked out before hand and the transfer of troops from ship to shore, in localities where the natural facilities were limited, was executed with the same precision and despatch as if the debarkation had taken place in some great port.

There can be no question but that a plan of campaign, prepared in time of peace, after exhaustive research and study, should be better than one hurriedly thought out by the commander on the field of action where his information is meagre, inexact, or even false, and where he must, of necessity, be harassed by the interior details of the expedition.

By the term "War Plan for the Establishment and Defense of a Naval Advance Base" is meant a plan covering the attack or de-

fense of a specified port or harbor.

Our Navy Regulations place the duty of the preparation of these plans upon the General Board of the Navy and the Naval War College and Office of Naval Intelligence, whose work is co-ordinated with that of the General Board.

Such plans when passed upon and issued to the service by the General Board, form a part of the War Portfolio, copies being in the possession of the General Board, the President of the War College and the Commander^S-in-Chief of our fleets.

The completion of the plan does not mean that it remains untouched for ever after, for, on the contrary, such plans are being constantly changed and emanated as new information comes in from the office of Naval Intelligence or other sources.

The necessity for Naval Advance Bases is, to us, obvious. In order that our fleet, when operating at a distance from our permanently fortified Naval Bases, may be sustained, it is necessary that it should carry in its train a sufficient force and material for seizing and defending a port or harbor in the theatre of operations. The limited radius of action of torpedo boats, destroyers and submarines, makes the possession of such a base essential and in the case of a fleet blockading a port, or containing a force, it is imperative that there should be some haven of refuge - some secure port where vessels can take on coal, supplies and ammunition, with facility and despatch, and, if crippled, retire for temporary or minor repairs.

The strategical conditions of the late Russo-Japanese War were such, at the very outset of hostilities, as to cause Japan to seize the Elliott Islands and make use of them as a Naval Advance Base. Again the seizure of Guantanamo Bay during the Spanish-American War, although it was not fortified and secured, exemplifies the necessity for a base at the front. Key West was less than 700 miles away but it was imperative that a base for our fleet should be established in the immediate vicinity of the operations and the necessity for fortifying it would have been equally apparent had Spain been a

powerful and aggressive nation.

A study of suitable harbors, in theatres of possible operations, and of the size of our fleet and attendant train, makes it questionable whether one advance base would be sufficient.

Again it may become necessary to seize and defend certain points in order to prevent an aggressive enemy from making use of them, or to strengthen weak points in our line of communication.

If the supremacy of the sea in the vicinity of an advance base is lost by the defender and his vessels driven from the scene of operations then the necessity for the Naval Base ceases to exist and it will eventually fall. It may, therefore, be safely asserted that the first defense of a Naval Advance Base is the Defender's own fleet.

(I do not believe however that the B. M. C. should be worried about the security of his base to the extent of having him to keep the fleet in the vicinity, but his mission may be in the high seas. (Hess' signature)

Keeping in mind the general principle that the Navy's objective is the enemy's fleet it may be assumed that no Nation will risk her heavily armored ships in a perhaps ineffectual bombardment of a port until she has obtained supremacy of the sea. Neither side can chance the loss of a battleship unless in return it can disable one of the enemy's. History furnishes abundant proof of the futility of ships bombarding shore batteries and with the introduction of the submarine boat and offensive mines it would be perilous to run the attendant risks with a ship of the first class. Temporary local sea supremacy might permit of a blockade and land attack against an Advance Base, or the planting of offensive mines, or obstacles, outside the harbor entrance, but no Nation, until she has a decided superiority at sea, could afford to send ships of the first class, which take years to replace, against shore batteries, no matter how inferior they may be. The risk run from mines and submarine boats in order to get within range of the shore, is too great, while the damage inflicted from sea bombardments has always been small.

It is therefore obvious that the defense of a Naval Advance Base need only be such as will resist a cruiser raid.

It will readily be seen that guns of an intermediate calibre are capable of refusing the harbor to ships of the cruiser class

and especially so when they are well placed and masked.

The guns selected by the General Board of the Navy to withstand such a raid are our 5" Q.F. guns which, besides having the necessary striking velocity and range, are, it is thought, of the largest calibre it is expedient to handle on shore.

In the preparation of War Plans for the defense of a base the maker is limited to the Advance Base Outfit of ships, men, and material. These outfits consist of as much ordnance and equipment as can be utilized, under average conditions, by two regiments of Marines in the fortification and protection of a harbor.

It is intended that the personnel and equipment necessary for the establishment of Naval Advance Bases should be maintained at suitable points in the Atlantic and Pacific where they would be ready for instant use.

In the Pacific, Pearl Harbor is unquestionably one point where an outfit should be held in readiness.

Some years ago it was suggested that the Army and Navy co-operate in Advance Base work, the Navy establishing the base to be relieved later by the Army; identical outfits being used by both services.

After the most careful consideration it has, however, been definitely decided that such an arrangement was impracticable and that "for many reasons the Navy should own and control all Advance Base material and proceed independently to the determination and establishment of everything connected with the seizure, fortification and equipment of advance bases".

The study of a port or harbor, for the preparation of a plan for its seizure and defense, may be divided into five parts - 1st - Strategical - 2nd - Tactical - 3rd - The compilation of the Memoir 4th - An estimate of the situation - 5th - The Plan.

As a rule part one, embracing a strategical study of the theatre of operations in question, has been made in the problems worked out at the War College and the General Strategical principles then evolved must serve as a guide in formulating a plan of defense or seizure.

There are many tactical considerations governing the selection of a harbor for a Naval Advance Base among the most important of which are the following:-

(a) The outline of the harbor should be such as to permit at least some of the main battery guns being well advanced from the entrance.

(b) If possible there should be only one channel entrance, as this greatly simplifies the defense.

(c) A harbor where the entrance is formed by one or two narrow peninsulas ■ is to be avoided as an enemy might be able to maintain a cross fire on them.

(d) The entrance should lead or open directly into the sea and vessels bound for it should not be forced to pass up an unprotected river, bay, or sound, or over channel shoals, or through straits unless the latter are well guarded. The greater the depth of water outside the entrance the better.

These considerations are necessary in order to prevent an enemy from planting offensive mines, beyond gun range and outside the entrance to the harbor.

(e) The entrance must not be so broad that it cannot be effectively covered by the guns of the main battery of the advance base.

(f) The tidal current in the entrance should not be so great as to prohibit the use of mines; or the depth such as to make their planting an arduous and long task.

(g) The entrance to the harbor should not be so situated as regards the prevailing winds as to make the port unsuitable as a base during certain seasons of the year.

(h) A slight current, or set, outside the mouth of a harbor is beneficial, rather than otherwise, to the defense, as it precludes the use of offensive mines, unless anchored.

(i) If possible there should be high, solid ground at the entrance to a harbor to permit of batteries placed there delivering a plunging fire.

(k) The harbor, while apparently sufficiently large in size, may be too deep; or contain many shoals, and thus give very little anchorage room, or again the bottom may be such as to make poor holding ground.

(l) The surrounding country should admit of a strong defense by land.

(m) There should be no possibility of over land bombardment of the harbor, at easy ranges, from the sea.

(o) The surrounding hills may command the harbor and be impracticable to defend.

(p) The resources available in a port or harbor would also play an important part in its selection as a base.

It is well to remember, however, that tactical considerations, while playing an important part in the selection of a base, may be entirely outweighed by strategic motives.

The Memoir, constituting the third part of the study of the defense of a harbor, consists of all available information regarding the country to be operated in, and the proper collection and digestion of this information becomes a task of some moment.

It has prefixed to it, in the order named, an index, a list of authorities consulted in the preparation of the plan, a list of maps, charts, photographs and sketches, accompanying and bound in the plan, and a list of ships, men and material, used in its execution.

The Memoir covers the following sub-divisions - General - 2-Climate - 3 Topography - 4 Hydrography - 5 Resources on Shore - 6 Resources Afloat - 7 Population - 8 Defenses existing ashore and afloat.

Under the first sub-head should be stated the general strategic principles which form the reason for the occupation of the port as a naval base. The distances from other strategic points. The nearest sources of coal supply. The nearest naval bases of possible enemies, and all nearby points that might be occupied by an enemy.

Information regarding the other sub-heads of Climate, Topography, Resources, Population and Existing Defenses, forming the Memoir, is obtained from books of geography and travel, charts of the Hydrographic Office, Coast Survey and British Admiralty, papers from the office of the Naval Intelligence, Consular Reports, Year books, and in the case of South and Central American States, reports of the Bureau of American Republics.

As false information may readily lead to false conclusions and an incorrect solution of the problem the utmost care should be exercised to sift out all extraneous and unsubstantiated facts. Important points should be described in great detail while those of less importance do not require such accuracy. "In nothing more than in war, knowledge is power."

Having now collated all the available information regarding the port or harbor, we are prepared to undertake the study of the situation. It must be well understood that the mere compilation of the data available does not, of itself, qualify us to undertake the formulation of a plan of defense.

The Memoir, in connection with the chart and map of the theatre of operations must be so thoroughly studied that one can accurately see, in one's own mind, the entire country, then and not until then, is one ready to deal with the problem.

Familiarity with the country to be operated in having been acquired the points to be constantly kept in mind are the military and naval resources of a possible enemy.

For example, one country may be capable of carrying many more men in a single transport than another. The Japanese carry a man for each 2-3 gross tons, while we take our tons per man as 5; or again one probable enemy might be notorious for its excellent use of field artillery and a study of the theatre of operations in question might especially favor the use of that arm in land operations.

The strength of the force allowed in the preparation of a War Plan for the Defense of a Base is very small and consequently every advantage should be taken of the terrain. Further, the sub-divi-

sion of such a force into smaller and widely separated detachments permits of its being beaten in detail and therefore in the defense of a Naval Base the principle of concentration for mutual support should be adhered to.

It must be admitted, however, that there are many cases where the tendency not to concentrate is strong but the failure to do so will invariably constitute a grave error.

Take for example, the extreme case of an island. It will unless it is very small, be found almost impossible to defend the entire island with the means at hand, in fact such is not desired usually the defense of only one port, or harbor, in the island being required, and this defense can be much better undertaken by concentrating the forces at hand around the harbor to be defended rather than by distributing them at various bays and bights of the island thus permitting them to offer only a weak resistance to an attacking force.

For the mainland the same reasoning would hold good only in a lesser degree, the favorable points of landing being probably fewer.

It is a very simple matter to place a gun here and there on a chart, whether it be on top of a mountain peak or contemplate a long haul over bad or no roads, but it is quite a different proposition to transport a gun ashore and place it on a hill. In a similar way it is easy to sprinkle submarine mines at every port, or bight, in the vicinity of the harbor to be defended, regardless of all facilities for handling them, when as an actual fact the handling of mines with the facilities at hand would be no easy task.

Again, in preparing plans, it must be remembered that the final object of attack, in Naval warfare, is the enemy's fleet and to this end all the floating resources of a nation should be employed.

Therefore any war plan that provides for the reduction in the armament of a fighting ship, by transferring guns ashore, is per-

icious and strikes a blow at the foundation of the general principle governing Naval Campaigns.

The maker of a plan should always bear in mind that he, himself, someday may be called upon to use it.

Having thought out a plan of defense, or attack, the detailed work of distribution of men and material is next in order.

Remember it is not necessary in every case to use all available material when half of it will do as well and make the plan simpler, and consequently quicker of execution, and give a larger mobile force.

In this connection another factor that enters into the plan is the one of time. As the importance of a base increases, other things being equal, the time allowed for the preparation of the base for defense decreases. For important and far distant bases the question of time should be most carefully considered.

A study of the lessons of war teach us that land operations are generally necessary in order to wrest a Naval Base from the hands of an enemy, no matter how insignificant the defense may be, and therefore in the selection of a base the greatest consideration should be given to the feasibility of defending it against a land attack.

An efficient harbor defense, with an advance base outfit, should fulfill the following conditions -

(a) The effective obstruction of all water approaches against an enemy, leaving free ingress and egress for our own vessels.

(b) It should provide for the protection of such obstruction.

(c) It should admit of a heavy fire from main battery guns over all water approaches, batteries being so arranged as to mutually support each other.

(d) The dispersion of batteries is necessary in order to obtain a converging fire and force an enemy to deliver a diverging one.

(e) Security, by use of field guns, field fortifications and mobile forces, against land attacks and bombardment of the harbor from surrounding hills.

The greatest care should be exercised in selecting the positions for the guns of the main batteries and in choosing sites for them the following conditions should be borne in mind -

(a)" The field of fire should be unrestricted, to allow the gun the maximum scope for its power.

(b) The site should be such as to adapt itself to the construction of emplacements, both as regards protection and invisibility. Heights confer distinct advantages. If possible there should be no dead angles.

(c) Convenience of command and of the general supervision of fire should be secured."

It is of the utmost importance to obtain, if possible, a position that while allowing great range of fire affords natural protection and is quite invisible.

It is considered desirable that the main batteries be placed at least 100 or 200 feet above the sea level. This is necessary not so much for the purpose of obtaining a plunging fire as to cause vessels to attack at long range or high angles of elevation.

As a rule guns are mounted singly or in groups of two or three. If mounted in the latter way, the individual guns should be placed sufficiently far apart, and separated by traverses, so as not to permit two adjacent guns and their crews being disabled by a single exploding shell.

The number of guns in a group must be largely determined by the terrain, the means of communication and the number of guns available, but, under ordinary conditions two guns to a group are considered the most satisfactory.

Guns of small calibre, used to protect the mine field, or prevent a raid by torpedo boats, or destroyers, should be placed on a low site on the flank of the obstruction, or channel, they are intended to cover thus increasing the dangerous zone and obtaining an enfilading fire upon an enemy engaged in countermining or trying to force the channel.

Care should be taken in locating the guns of the main batteries

to see that no dead areas exist, or if the conditions are such that a dead area for a battery cannot be avoided, it should be covered by the guns from another battery close at hand.

In selecting the position of the mine fields it is well to remember that their principle object is to delay the advance of an enemy³⁰ as to detain him for the longest possible time under the fire of the guns of the main batteries, therefore the mine field should be so placed that it is within easy range of the fire of the main battery guns of the defense.

An excellent position for the automobile torpedo battery, which is included in the advance base outfit, would be behind cover on a flank of the narrowest part of the channel and having, at the point of launching, a depth of water of at least five fathoms.

The extent and kind of field fortifications required to afford protection against a land attack will depend on the topography of the country, but here again the principle of concentration must be maintained.

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into the details of field fortifications but in general it may be said that too much stress cannot be laid on the advantages to be derived from invisibility and the proper construction and use of cover.

A formidable trench for a defensive position should be bomb-proof, have head protection and elbow rest; traverses, natural or artificial, about every 20 yards; be of the standing type, with vertical walls and exceedingly narrow; be well drained, permit of men not firing sitting against the back of the front wall, have ammunition recesses at regular intervals for ready ammunition, a clear field of fire to the front and flanks, no dead angles, opening at certain points for the making of counter attacks, lookout stations and good communication with the rear.

Obstacles in land defense should be freely employed but they must always permit of offensive movements. Barbed wire, which forms a part of the Naval Advance Base Outfit, has, when used as an entanglement, proved the most effective of all obstacles, being almost insurmountable and withstanding artillery fire exceedingly

well.

Having now marked out a rough plan of defense it should be tried out by assuming a strong cruiser raid by a probable enemy and imagining one's self in the position of the enemy making an attack. It will thus be possible to test the plan of defense and if weak points develop they can be corrected.

In the smooth plan an estimate of the situation would inform anyone reading the plan of the line of reasoning pursued in its making, and when it is remembered that the person whose duty it becomes to put a plan in execution may have had nothing to do with its making, or be familiar with the country dealt with in the plan, it is apparent that an analysis, or study, of the situation is essential.

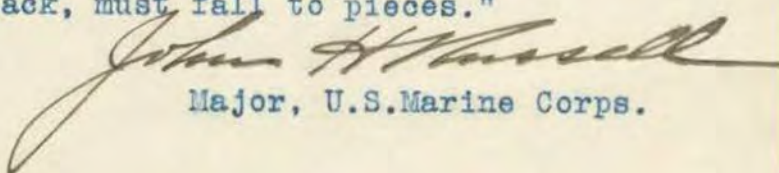
In conclusion I desire to lay stress upon the fact that the Advance Base Outfit is suitable for the protection of advance or temporary bases only and should not be employed for the permanent defense of bases such as Guam or Samoa.

To-day the Nation which in 1904 loaded, by means of lighters and sampans, 100,000 troops on transports in four days, is better prepared than any other World Power to wage amphibious warfare, its army being organized and equipped for over sea expeditions.

Ujina, the Japanese port of embarkation in the Inland Sea, is nearer to Guam than is Manila, and it is therefore self evident that if it is our intention to defend Guam, for strategic or other reasons, such defense must partake of a permanent nature and does not come within the province of Advance Base work.

It is pithily summed up by Callwell in these words -

" A scattered empire, if its distant colonies and dependencies be not well knit to the Mother country and to each other by communications enabling its military strength to be concentrated at any point where the realm is threatened, whether by internal disorder or by external attack, must fall to pieces."


Major, U.S. Marine Corps.

May 23, 1910.