ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

Military Intelligence

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Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	*Title*. City: Publisher, Year.
Fishel, Edwin C.	*The Secret War for the Union: The Untold Story of Military Intelligence in the Civil War*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

Books and Articles

Author	*Title*. City: Publisher, Year. | "Title," in *Journal ##*, no. # (Date): #.
Beymer, William Gilmore.	*Scouts and Spies of the Civil War.* Edited by William B. Feis. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003.
Central Intelligence Agency	*Intelligence in the Civil War.* Washington, DC: Public Affairs, Central Intelligence Agency, 2012.
Feis, William B.	*Grant's Secret Service: The Intelligence War from Belmont to Appomattox.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002.
————.	"'There is a Bad Enemy in this City': Colonel William Truesdail's Army Police and the Occupation of Nashville, 1862-1863," in *North & South* 8, no. 2 (March 2005): 34-45.
————.	"'Developed By Circumstances': Grant, Intelligence, and the Vicksburg Campaign," in Steven E. Woodworth and Charles D. Grear, eds. *The Vicksburg Campaign, March 29-May 18, 1863*. Carbondale: Southern

	Illinois University Press, 2013.
Fishel, Edwin C.	"The Mythology of Civil War Intelligence," in *Civil War History* 10, no.4 (December 1964): 344-67.
————.	"Myths That Never Die," in *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 27-58.
————.	"Pinkerton and McClellan: Who Deceived Whom?," in *Civil War History* 34, no. 2 (June 1988): 115-42.
Gaddy, David W.	"William Norris and the Confederate Signal and Secret Service," in *Maryland Historical Magazine* 70, no. 2 (Summer 1975): 167-88.
Leonard, Elizabeth D.	*All the Daring of the Soldier: Women of the Civil War Armies.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1999.
Maslowski, Peter.	"Military Intelligence Sources During the Civil War: A Case Study," in Lt. Col. Walter T. Hitchcock, ed., *The Intelligence Revolution: A Historical Perspective*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1991.
Ryan, Thomas J.	*Spies, Scouts, and Secrets in the Gettysburg Campaign*. El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2015.
Tidwell, William A., James O. Hall, and David W. Gaddy	*Come Retribution: The Confederate Secret Service and the Assassination of Lincoln.* Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1988.
Tsouras, Peter G., ed.	*Scouting for Grant and Meade: The Reminiscences of Judson Knight, Chief of Scouts, Army of the Potoma*c. New York: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014.
Tsouras, Peter	*Major General George H. Sharpe and The Creation of American Military Intelligence in the Civil War*. Philadelphia: Casemate, 2018.
Varon, Elizabeth R.	*Southern Lady, Yankee Spy: The True Story of Elizabeth Van Lew, a Union Agent in the Heart of the Confederacy.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Organizations

Web Resources

URL	Name and description
http://www.civilwarsignals.org/index.html	Signal Corps Association is an organization dedicated to preserving the history of the Civil War Signal Corps.
https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/csi-publications/books-and-monographs/black-dispatches/index.html#ft1	P.K. Rose, "Black Dispatches: Black American Contributions to Union Intelligence," Central Intelligence Agency, Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2007.

Other Sources

Scholars

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Topic Précis

Until Edwin C. Fishel's *The Secret War for the Union* was published in1996 the history of Civil War military intelligence was mostly a collection of uncorroborated cloak and dagger tall tales featuring daring spies and dangerous missions packaged in flowery Victorian prose. In these spy thrillers, however, the truth rarely survived first contact with the enemy. To understand the true nature of Civil War military intelligence requires an examination of its three most challenging characteristics. First, military intelligence operations (called "secret service" during the war) were often ad hoc affairs carried on without much direction or oversight from higher authorities. The second challenging characteristic centers on the types of intelligence sources available in nineteenth-century warfare. These included spies, army scouts, regular cavalry units, and balloonists. In addition, the use of visual signaling systems and the telegraph both provided intelligence to commanders and offered an opportunity for the enemy to obtain intelligence by

intercepting signals and decrypting those that were encrypted. A final very important source of intelligence came from the interrogation of enemy prisoners of war and deserters and from local civilians and refugees. Correctly assessing the accuracy and value of that information—the third and final challenging characteristic of Civil War military intelligence—probably caused the most headaches because the line separating the truth, the half-truth, and everything but the truth was often unclear or non-existent. Enthusiastic but untrained officers and civilians made this process less effective. To successfully overcome or at least neutralize the challenging characteristics described above, both sides—to varying degrees—experimented with ways of systematizing information collection and analysis and professionalizing intelligence personnel in the hopes of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of intelligence operations. McClellan famously used the Pinkerton Detective Agency to manage his intelligence operations. General William Rosecrans was an organizational wizard when it came to military intelligence operations. Rosecrans systematized the collection, reporting, and analysis of information gleaned from scouts, spies, newspapers, signal intercepts, deserters, prisoners, and civilian refugees. This information trove then went to Rosecrans' staff who condensed the reports into a daily digest called Summaries of the News. Rosecrans also benefited from the services of Colonel William Truesdail's Army of the Cumberland Police operating in occupied Nashville, Tennessee. Truesdail's Army Police oversaw spying, scouting, and counterintelligence missions, conducted criminal investigations, apprehended Union deserters, infiltrated Confederate smuggling rings, and seized contraband. In October 1862, Grant tasked General Grenville M. Dodge with creating an intelligence organization for the upcoming campaign against Vicksburg, Mississippi. By mid-1863, Dodge had over 130 scouts and spies at work in Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia. The most proficient military intelligence organization of the war, however, was the Army of the Potomac's Bureau of Military Information (BMI). Created by Major General Joseph Hooker after McClellan's departure in 1862, the BMI became the war's first all-source intelligence service, which collected information from spies, scouts, cavalry reconnaissance missions, balloon and signal tower observations, captured correspondence, signal intercepts, enemy newspapers, and interrogations of enemy prisoners, deserters, refugees, local civilians, and slaves. In Confederate armies, officials left intelligence matters to individual field commanders. Foremost among them was Robert E. Lee, who functioned as a one-man intelligence staff for the Army of Northern Virginia. He employed scouts and spies for specific missions, though he never completely trusted them, orchestrated counterintelligence operations, initiated covert actions, and even tapped into the Signal and Secret Service Bureau's Secret Line before the Gettysburg campaign. Many of Lee's officers emulated his approach. One final characteristic makes the study of military intelligence during the Civil War difficult. The secrecy and discretion required of those who produced or managed military intelligence created a shroud of secrecy, and most operatives scrupulously avoided leaving paper trails, denying the enemy—and historians—the means of unmasking them.

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