

CHAPTER EIGHT

Cold War

1957-1963



I COMPLETED MY final year on the College faculty in 1957. That winter I was sent to discuss airlift requirements with the newly activated 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Naturally, I lobbied for an assignment to the division. Being the Army's first Pentomic division, the 101st was bound to receive the close scrutiny of Chief of Staff General Maxwell Taylor. This was a double-edged deal. If an officer did well with the unit, his performance would be noted in high places; but if he "ripped his knickers," that might hurt his career.

The division operations officer, or G-3, was Lieutenant Colonel Bill Bond, whom I'd known in the Ranger Training Center during the Korean War and who had later been one of my students at the College. Bill had been in the First Ranger Battalion in World War II, the outfit that had stormed the German battery on Pointe du Hoc, the headland dominating Omaha Beach in Normandy. He was a colorful guy. Before coming to Leavenworth, Bill had left a NATO assignment to drive his personal jeep all the way from Paris to New Delhi, right through the hot spots of the Middle East.

On my temporary duty (TDY) to Fort Campbell that February, Bill told me he was recommending me to be his replacement. I had another good contact on division staff, Lieutenant Colonel Norm Martin, who had gone from the College faculty at Leavenworth to become the division G-4, the assistant chief of staff for logistics.

Their two recommendations, combined with my experience developing the new Airborne doctrine and my hard labor in the airlift-planning vineyards, convinced the commander, General Thomas Sherburne, I was the

guy for the job. He contacted me personally back at Leavenworth with the good news. But Bill Bond's assignment wouldn't be over until later that year, so I got the General's permission to take four months' administrative leave that fall to go back to UCLA. I was a few credits short of my degree requirement because of my wartime call-up.

Returning to a college campus as an undergraduate was a fascinating experience. I took a full course load of eighteen credits, heavy on international relations and diplomatic history, with a focus on the Far East. Several of my professors espoused the standard liberal position: Mao's Chinese Communists were doing well in their agrarian reforms and rooting out the last vestiges of Nationalist corruption.

Now that Mao had consolidated his power and had decreed the Hundred Flowers liberalization—soon followed by the disastrous but superficially attractive Great Leap Forward—my professors were confident peaceful progress would flourish in Asia. But I saw hypocrisy here. Democracy was apparently fine for Westerners, but the benighted races of Asia had to make do with the totalitarian repression in order to make progress.

They also portrayed Ho Chi Minh as a courageous Nationalist who had defeated his country's evil colonial masters. There wasn't much discussion of either Ho's or Mao's background as international Communists. But I did research on both leaders and cited solid documentary evidence to show they were Communist ideologues first and patriots second. Some of my instructors responded by ignoring me, but others joined in the spirit of honest discourse. I respected those who welcomed this debate, even though we were ideological rivals. One history professor in particular enlivened his discussions by often turning to me and announcing to the class, "Now, perhaps Mr. Singlaub has another view on this issue." I always did, and the students seemed to respond well to my alternative and, to my mind, more realistic description of the Communists' true motives and methods.

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My job as the 101st Airborne's assistant chief of staff for operations was another of those demanding but utterly engrossing assignments that test an officer's mettle—and the long-suffering patience of his wife. Twelve-hour days became commonplace again. The 101st was literally writing the book for General Taylor's Pentomic Army. This meant our field-training exercises were closely scrutinized by ubiquitous senior officers from Washington.

The 101st Airborne had proud traditions. The division had jumped at Normandy and had withstood the massive German siege of Bastogne in the Battle of the Bulge. The division's "Screaming Eagle" shoulder patch was one of the proudest insignias in the U.S. Army. Interestingly enough, Pres-

ident Eisenhower had chosen troops from the 101st to guard Central High School in racially troubled Little Rock, Arkansas, the previous fall to demonstrate his support for school desegregation. In so doing, he had shown his confidence in the discipline and professionalism of the 101st.

The division was the first unit to use the new turboprop C-130 Hercules. This aircraft was a quantum improvement over the slow transports of World War II. The Hercules had four powerful engines and could cruise at 350 knots, almost three times the speed of the C-47. The C-130 carried sixty-four fully equipped paratroopers and several tons of their equipment. With its high tail and unique hydraulic cargo ramp, the C-130 could also drop jeeps, artillery, and even light armored vehicles. For the first time, the Army had the means to dispatch troops long distances on short notice, to extinguish "brushfire" conflicts before they spread. Given this capacity, the 101st proudly accepted the designation of the Fire Brigade.

The operations officer was responsible for organizing all troop movements, anything from a training exercise to a parade. And Airborne units had the reputation of presenting spectacular parades. To a civilian, the attention given such ceremonies might seem a waste of resources. But that intangible unit pride known as *esprit de corps* is fostered by such public displays. On the average, we trained twice as hard as ground units—which meant our officers and GIs were away from their families for long periods. And this training was often hazardous.

Therefore, Airborne troops—like other elite units from the Coldstream Guards to the Bengal Lancers—found pleasure in public displays of their military prowess. Soon after arriving at Fort Campbell, I was responsible for organizing General Sherburne's farewell parade. The General, a decorated World War II paratrooper, had been the officer most responsible for bringing the division quickly up to strength after its reactivation, and the men respected him. But this respect didn't necessarily mean the troops wouldn't try to cut up during the parade. Airborne soldiers were notorious for exotic flouting of "straight-leg" Army regulations. And individual units within the division maintained keen rivalries. Therefore, with 10,000 troops preparing for the parade, I could anticipate anything from a formation being led by a mascot goat equipped with his own parachute to an impromptu kazoo band.

But the assistant division commander, Brigadier General Reuben Tucker, let me know he wanted this parade "STRAC," by the book. Tucker was one of the crustiest old paratroopers in the Army, having served with the 504th Parachute Infantry in all of their World War II battles from North Africa to the Rhine. He spoke from the corner of his mouth in clipped phrases, liberally punctuated by epithets. He explained that the "goddamn press" would be watching this parade closely to assess the professional

comportment of General Taylor's expensive new Pentomic division. "Jack, I want you to pull out all the stops, but no rinky-dink," Tucker ordered.

I planned the parade like a combat operation. The troops would pass in review from right to left, the opposite of the normal order, to display the Screaming Eagle patches on their left shoulders. The division's own bald eagle would stand proudly on its perch beside the reviewing stand. Just before the actual march-by, General Sherburne would parachute onto the parade ground from an L-20. Then wave after wave of Air Force transports would fly by, dropping multicolored cargo chutes. Toward the finale, division artillery would stage a mock firing of our Little John battlefield nuclear missile, replete with a simulated mushroom cloud in the distance. It would be a spectacle worthy of Cecil B. deMille.

Still, General Tucker repeatedly cautioned me to be alert for fancy dress and other irregularities among the troops. The day of the parade, I stationed my own men in the assembly area. They confiscated penny whistles, unauthorized scarves, and other offending accoutrements.

The parade passed with surprising precision. Until the end. The division medical battalion was the second-to-last unit. At the reviewing stand they broke into a quick step and chanted "Fire Brigade, Fire Brigade medics!"

I was standing beside General Tucker next to the reviewing stand. "Shit, Jack," he muttered, a mild enough reprimand from him.

I finally began to relax. The last troops in the long column were the parachute rigger company, an outfit particularly known for its unit pride. But just before leaving their position in the formation to pass in review, and without warning, they removed their authorized black helmet liners with by-the-numbers precision. Each man withdrew a bright red riggers' baseball cap and clamped it on his head just before the order "Column left, march."

General Sherburne was amused. But Reuben Tucker realized the men had gotten the best of him. "Damn it, Jack," he said, "how did you let them get away with *that*?"

During another parade on a hot summer afternoon, our division mascot got too much sun and toppled to hang ingloriously from the perch by his talon chain. The new assistant division commander, Brigadier General Andy McAnsch, was beside me. "The eagle just croaked," he muttered. "This time, Jack, you've gone too far."

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GENERAL William Westmoreland took over as division commander from General Sherburne. "Westy" came well recommended by all who had served with him. A graduate of West Point in the 1930s, where he'd been Cadet First Captain, he had served in the field artillery in North Africa and Europe

during World War II, and ended up commanding an infantry regiment. He didn't go through parachute training until after the war. But he quickly became a staunch advocate of the Airborne. In Korea, he had commanded the 187th Airborne Regimental Combat Team during the fierce fighting of the final Chinese offensive in 1953. He was one of the hardest-working and most decisive officers I've ever met.

Those leadership qualities were put to a severe test only a few days after he took command. The division carried out a field training exercise called White Cloud, a mass parachute drop, with units arriving over the Fort Campbell drop zones from air bases in several surrounding states. Again, the press was watching our performance and we wanted to do our best. General Tucker, the most experienced paratrooper in the division, was on the Sukchon drop zone (named for a Korean War battle of the 187th RCT), acting as drop zone safety officer who certified jumping conditions were within safety margins. It was late spring in Kentucky, a period of unstable weather.

I was at Seward Air Force Base in Tennessee, supervising the movement of the multiple air columns. The C-130s carrying the first unit swept in from the north, and General Tucker authorized their drop. Now things suddenly went bad. Although the ground wind had been reported marginal, gusting around ten knots, the conditions were acceptable.

As several planeloads of the 502nd Parachute Infantry neared the ground, however, a freak wind came up, funneling the men toward two gullies at the edge of the drop zone. These gullies were a jumble of bulldozed timber, left over from the original clearing operation. Hundreds of troops were dragged along the ground and smashed into the pile of broken tree trunks. In a few moments, five men were dead and scores lay helpless among the pine logs with broken arms and legs.

I received word directly from General Tucker. There'd been some "injuries," he reported. But the wind conditions were still acceptable. General Westmoreland's element was approaching the drop zone. Tucker requested my advice. Should he release green smoke authorizing the General to drop? I had to make a quick decision. Men had been injured (neither Tucker nor I had yet received reports of deaths). If we canceled Westmoreland's drop, it might appear that the General had ordered men to jump in conditions he himself would not accept. But if the General were injured or killed, the officers authorizing the drop would be blamed. Making such hard decisions was what we were paid to do.

"I recommend we proceed, General," I radioed Tucker. By now, Westmoreland had learned of the earlier accidents. He could have canceled his own drop to prevent further injuries, but this would have looked as if he were willing to risk others in a dangerous situation that he himself refused

to face. Westmoreland jumped and had a rough landing. He was dragged over a hundred yards before he could collapse his parachute, and was shaken up but not seriously injured.¹

In the investigation following the accident, it became obvious that the standard T-10 parachute harness was unsuitable for such conditions. For years, the Airborne had been begging the Army to adopt quick-release shoulder connections that would separate the risers from the harness, allowing an immediate collapse of the canopy. But the Army had resisted this improvement because it was too expensive. General Westmoreland led the fight for the new equipment. Within a year, we were issued the improved harnesses.

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ONLY a few weeks after the White Cloud exercise, the division faced its first operational deployment. Vice President Richard Nixon was on a state visit to Caracas, Venezuela, when a huge anti-American crowd attacked his motorcade. He and Mrs. Nixon narrowly escaped and were barricaded in the U.S. embassy. Other American officials weren't so lucky; two military attachés were almost killed by the mob. The embassy itself was under siege by thousands of rioters, led by a well-organized cadre of Communist agitators.²

President Eisenhower ordered the Marines to dispatch an amphibious landing team to the Caribbean, and told General Maxwell Taylor to place his best unit on alert. Taylor called Westmoreland and asked him how soon he could send a task force from the 101st to Ramey Air Force Base in Puerto Rico, prepared to rescue the Vice President if necessary. The force should not exceed 600 men and should be commanded by an experienced full colonel. Westmoreland called me. He explained the mission.

"How soon can we get aircraft to start moving the alert force, Jack?" he asked.

We always had one battle group on alert with two of its companies ready to depart on four-hour notice. At the present time the alert force was the 502nd Airborne Battle Group, but its commander, Colonel Bill Kuhn, was away on emergency leave, which meant that it was temporarily commanded by a relatively inexperienced lieutenant colonel. I advised against sending them. However, at that very moment we did have the entire 506th Airborne Battle Group lined up with all of its equipment undergoing a command inspection by the assistant division commander, Brigadier General Charlie Rich, and the division staff. We also had six C-130s at the post, conducting parachute training. On Westmoreland's orders, we designated the commander of the 506th Battle Group, Colonel Robert Works, as task force

commander. We had the first company of his task force aboard the refueled C-130s and en route to Puerto Rico less than three hours after the initial call from General Taylor. We established a schedule of one aircraft departure every fifteen minutes. Before the last of the six aircraft we had under our control took off, the Tactical Air Command (TAC) sent in others, so we could maintain our schedule.

I made sure the six C-130s were loaded to full capacity. We'd jammed communications jeeps, weapons carriers, and their drop pallets and cargo chutes aboard the planes. Once the task force landed in Puerto Rico, they could quickly rig the equipment for a drop in Venezuela. We'd even sent a light command helicopter with them.

Meanwhile, at the Pentagon, Taylor asked Air Force Chief of Staff General Curtis LeMay how long before he could divert airlift planes to Fort Campbell. General LeMay was told by the commander of the Military Airlift Command (MAC) that it would take a minimum of forty-eight hours. LeMay was furious. He was later pleased when he learned that we had worked out a local agreement and that six TAC aircraft were already carrying paratroopers south.

The only problem was that none of the staff en route to Puerto Rico had a detailed map of Caracas on which to locate drop zones and a march route to the besieged embassy. I contacted Lieutenant Colonel Bob Brugh, division intelligence officer, who had served in Caracas as Army attaché. "Jack," he told me, "the best damn map of Caracas is issued by the Esso Oil Company." He spent a frantic half hour telephoning Esso executives and finally tracked down the man who had a good supply of Caracas street maps. The Air Force dispatched a T-33 jet, which ferried the bundle of maps to our troops in Puerto Rico. Based upon Bob Brugh's intimate knowledge of Venezuela and its armed forces, I recommended and Colonel Works agreed that Bob Brugh be designated as the deputy task force commander. Within an hour, Lieutenant Colonel Brugh was on one of the aircraft en route to Ramey Air Force Base in Puerto Rico.

That evening, Eisenhower briefed the press on the crisis. The United States, he stated gravely, was strongly considering a military option.

"Where are the Marines?" a reporter asked.

"I don't know where the Marines are tonight," the former Army general replied. "But I can tell you an Airborne task force is already on the way."³

We later received word that the commandant of the Marine Corps had not been particularly amused by the President's comments.

The quick military response helped diffuse the crisis. The mob in Caracas dispersed that night. I suggested to General Westmoreland that we take advantage of the deployed task force to stage a realistic training exercise. The following day, the troops parachuted onto Fort Campbell's drop zones

with a training mission similar to the real one they might have executed in Venezuela. It was one of the most realistic training exercises we had ever had. One offshoot of the Venezuela crisis was that we were able to reduce the reaction time of the readiness force from four to two hours, a standard that has lasted to the present day.

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THAT summer U.S. Marines and paratroopers were dispatched to another trouble spot, Lebanon. For months, the unstable Middle Eastern country had been wracked by fighting between pro-Western Christian forces and their Muslim allies, who backed the elected government, and rebel Muslim army units. The rebels were supported by thousands of infiltrators from neighboring Syria, which had recently joined President Nasser's grandiose United Arab Republic. The UAR was the spearhead of a Soviet-supported pan-Arab movement whose stated goal was to sweep aside Western influence in the region. Blocked by Western Alliances from expanding militarily in Europe and Southwest Asia, the Soviets now supported surrogates to further their policies in the unstable regions of the Third World.

When the UAR-backed rebellion was unable to topple the Beirut government, a bloody stalemate ensued. Each side sought expanded outside support. The situation grew especially tense in midsummer when Secretary of State Dulles proclaimed America would send troops to protect Lebanon's independence. The Soviets countered by offering the rebels the support of Soviet military "volunteers."⁴

Then a Soviet-sponsored coup d'état toppled the pro-Western government in nearby Iraq, and Lebanon's president, Camille Chamoun, appealed directly to President Eisenhower for American military intervention. A battle group of the 11th Airborne Division had already been airlifted from Germany to U.S. bases in Turkey. Within twenty-four hours American paratroopers had secured Beirut's international airport and prepared landing sites for U.S. Marines. Eisenhower had called the bluff of the Soviet Union and its new Egyptian client. Any direct Soviet troop support for the rebels would pit Russian soldiers against the Americans, a risk the Russians wouldn't accept.

That September of 1958 I was ordered on temporary duty to Lebanon as part of a five-officer team representing the XVIII Airborne Corps and Continental Army Command. Our mission was to review the effectiveness of rapid deployment of airlifted troops in areas with no existing U.S. military support structure. After the inspection tour in Lebanon we were to report to concerned U.S. Army and NATO commanders in Europe.

I was surprised by the amount of destruction we encountered around

Beirut. I guess we'd been accustomed to assuming that Arab civil wars were more comic-opera posturing than full-scale battle. But both sides had been well supplied with armor, artillery, and heavy weapons. Beirut's elegant white terraces rising from the blue Mediterranean into the cedar-clad hills were badly pocked with shell holes. The shaded highways of the Corniche were littered with burned-out armored vehicles.

The biggest shock, however, was my encounter with the U.S. Marines. The Airborne guarded the main Damascus-Beirut highway from positions in the foothills behind the city. The Marines held similar positions in the Chouf Mountains to the south. But there was really no comparison between the two services' outposts.

The Army troops were well dug in, with sandbagged bunkers and an excellent network of observation posts. The Marines were bivouacked in a hodgepodge of shallow foxholes and tents, surrounded by barbed wire. They hadn't even dug in their mortars and ammunition or protected them with sandbags. And the Marines themselves looked worse than the ragged units of the local army. For some reason, these Marines equated a slovenly appearance with combat readiness. They'd been ashore for two months, but were still eating C-rations. Their fatigues were greasy; the men looked like they shaved once a week at most. Many of them suffered from diarrhea brought on by poor sanitation. It was as if they were playacting the battle of Guadalcanal.

Worse, they threw the empty ration cans into their barbed wire to become mosquito-breeding grounds and a haven for swarming rats. Some old salt had told them that tin cans in the barbed wire made good intruder alarms. Unfortunately, when the intruders were rats, the Marines kept everybody awake all night firing their rifles and machine guns.

The Marines I had seen in China and Korea had certainly been sharper troops than those in Lebanon. As a professional soldier, I couldn't help but wonder at the caliber of the career officers in the Marine Corps who would allow—or even encourage—their men to perpetuate the type of adolescent macho posturing I'd seen around Beirut.

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AFTER I briefed the NATO staff in Paris on my return trip, I contacted an old French resistance colleague whom I will call "Etienne." He was delighted to hear from me and graciously invited me to attend a dinner that night with another former French resistance leader, "Claude," with whom we'd campaigned in the Cher and Indre. It was great to see them again. Neither man seemed fourteen years older, and we reminisced, driving out the Orleans highway through the splendid autumn countryside. Our host that evening

was a business colleague of Claude's who owned a jewel of a small stone château surrounded by an ancient chestnut grove. When we arrived there were already four or five other men enjoying cocktails in the company of their stylish wives. I noticed several of the men had the short hair and upright bearing of career military officers, although they all wore well-cut civilian suits.

I drank several glasses of wine, chatting with the French ladies. When I looked around for Etienne, I was surprised that all the men were gone. I had another glass of wine. Twenty minutes passed, then another twenty, but no men appeared. The ladies seemed to accept this without comment. Finally, when an hour had passed, one of them told me that the men had a little business to discuss.

This was a period of extreme political tension in France. The war in Algeria had reached a critical point. Three months before, General Charles de Gaulle had been granted almost dictatorial power by the National Assembly and given the responsibility of finding an honorable solution to the war while simultaneously reforming France's unstable political institutions. He had proposed a new constitution, which would be tested by referendum in a few days. If this reform was accepted, de Gaulle would then run for president of the new Fifth Republic. If de Gaulle was defeated, the country might degenerate into civil war.

I was vaguely familiar with all this, of course. But I didn't associate my old colleagues or their friends with the political crisis.

A little after nine that night, the gentlemen drifted back to the drawing room and we all sat down to a late dinner. I was in my hotel in Paris a little after midnight. Twenty-four hours later, I was eating a midnight supper of a cheese sandwich and black coffee at my desk at Fort Campbell. The château, roast venison, and the finer points of French political intrigue were long forgotten.

It wasn't until several years later when I saw Etienne again that I recalled the evening. "What *were* you fellows doing by yourselves for so long?" I asked.

Etienne shrugged with typical Gallic nonchalance. "Oh," he said, "we were planning a coup d'état. Several of those with us at the château were commanders from the parachute regiments. Had de Gaulle been rejected, we planned to seize the government."

I stared at him, absolutely speechless, half suspecting this was one of his elaborate jokes. But he was serious. While I had been sipping burgundy with the bejeweled ladies, the men in the billiard room had been planning a coup. What if the Deuxième Bureau had raided the party? I had been the operations officer of the 101st Airborne Division, America's elite Fire Brigade strike force. I doubt very much that I'd have been able to convince the French authorities that my presence there had been purely social.

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FOLLOWING the crises in Venezuela and Lebanon, we all realized the 101st might be ordered into some distant trouble spot on short notice. General Westmoreland stepped up the already hectic training schedule. He was a commander who always encouraged innovation, which is ironic considering the way he was pilloried in the press during the Vietnam War for supposedly being too inflexible.

We steadily increased the role of helicopters. The 101st Airborne was the Army's first unit to deploy significant numbers of the new UH-1 Huey troop transport chopper. Once they were available, we worked hard to increase their effectiveness. On one huge field exercise at Fort Bragg, we used helicopters to lay miles of field telephone wire, dropping it into the treetops from containers slung beneath the choppers. By doing this we beat our archrivals, the 82nd Airborne, in linking our positions by secure telephone line. Soon, we were using helicopters to resupply outposts and deploy long-range reconnaissance patrols.

Westmoreland also encouraged small-unit proficiency. The division might soon be asked to intervene in Vietnam, where Ho Chi Minh's Communists were stepping up their support for the Vietcong guerrillas in the south. Westmoreland established a special division training course called the RECONDO School (an anagram of "reconnaissance" and "commando"), in which the best young officers and NCOs in the division learned the demanding skills of irregular warfare. I was pleased when he chose Major Lew Millett to run the school. Millett had won a Medal of Honor leading a bayonet charge in Korea and then had gone through Ranger training at Fort Benning. The RECONDO School stressed courage tests, mental flexibility, and physical toughness. Following the Ranger training procedures we'd established, the men were grouped in small patrols, and patrol leadership was rotated to give each man confidence.

Sport parachuting had just been introduced in the States by Jacques Istel, the Frenchman who had pioneered the sport in Europe. Westmoreland asked me to organize a division skydiving team, which, we agreed, would enhance troop morale and give the men greater confidence in their regular jump duties. I sent two sergeants, Dick Fortenberry and Loy Brydon, over to Fort Bragg, where Istel was training Army skydiving instructors. When they returned, they trained me.

I was enthralled by the sport. In Korea, I'd made several free-fall jumps from moderate altitudes, but I hadn't understood the aerodynamic principles of "stable" skydiving. Now I learned to arch my back on exiting the aircraft and slide into a comfortable swimming position, face and chest parallel to the ground. After a few seconds, I reached terminal velocity and lost the

falling sensation. I became a powerful bird, suspended in the sunlit wind, completely free of gravity. But a skydiver couldn't get too carried away and forget to pull his ripcord.

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IN the summer of 1959, I was one of ten Army officers selected to attend the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama. I wasn't overjoyed, although I was certainly honored to have been chosen to represent the Army. The assignment was definitely made more attractive when I got word late that summer that I had been selected for full colonel, a promotion that came well ahead of schedule.

As the first semester at the Air War College advanced, I became more familiar with U.S. Air Force policies and institutions. I was surprised to discover that many of my fellow students had never attended formal Air Force service schools. The Air Force at that time placed little emphasis on a regular system of postgraduate education for its career officers. The paradigm for the Air Force officer in the 1950s was still the hard-drinking, hard-flying stick-and-rudder jet jockey that Tom Wolfe later immortalized in *The Right Stuff*. Men made rank in the Air Force by their prowess as aviators, not managers. And career officers fought hard to avoid duty as "desk weenies."

Above all, I learned, the Air Force was enamored of powerful jet aircraft, be they huge B-52 strategic bombers or tactical fighter-bombers like the F-100. As an Airborne infantry officer I found this troubling. Close air support should have been one of the infantry commander's greatest assets. In World War II, for example, Allied fighter-bombers had practically sealed off the vulnerable Normandy beachhead, protecting the invasion force from German armor and mechanized artillery. But those planes had been "slow movers," prop-driven P-47s and Hurricanes that could loiter over the battlefield and fly low above German Panzer columns.

In Korea, the Air Force had been in transition to an all-jet service. F-80 Shooting Stars and F-84 Thunderjets certainly *sounded* and looked powerful as they swept across the jumbled mountaintops. But the sad fact was that the U.S. Air Force and Navy fighter-bombers simply had not been able to interdict the Chinese lines of communication in Korea. When I pointed out to my colleagues at Maxwell that the Chinese had been able to launch their biggest artillery-supported offensive of the war in June 1953, after almost two straight years of intense aerial bombardment, the Air Force students and instructors practically considered me a heretic.

Air Force doctrine, I discovered, was much more vague than that of the Army. Air superiority was their first goal; so they designed their fighter-

bombers for speed and range, in order to strike enemy airfields. Such aircraft had little value supporting infantry in mountains or jungle. But the massive retaliation mentality still prevailed. The Army was tolerated as an obsolescent service, in every way inferior to the nuclear might of SAC.

Although I couldn't then articulate my apprehension, I had the gut feeling that the Air Force's unrealistic love affair with their powerful, gleaming jets would one day blunt our military efforts in some distant trouble spot.

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I WAS definitely pleased when I was assigned as the commanding officer of the 1st Battle Group, 16th Infantry of the 8th Infantry Division stationed in West Germany. My orders called for me to report to Baumholder in the Rhineland in July 1960. It had been almost seven years since I had actually commanded troops.

Following the doctrine of the Pentomic Army, the 8th Division's five battle groups were dispersed among different base areas between the Rhine and the industrial Saarland. Division headquarters was at Bad Kreuznach, but our main battle areas were much further east. Baumholder was a former Wehrmacht barracks and training area in the pleasant forested countryside of the Rhineland-Pfalz. The nearby towns had been reconstructed in their handsome plaster-and-timber Rhineland style after the destruction of World War II.

When I took over the unit from Colonel David Daly, I found that a generally complacent garrison mentality prevailed among the officers and men. Colonel Daly was a tall, distinguished southerner with patrician manners. He placed considerable emphasis on military ceremony. The battle group participated fully in all the field exercises and was proficient in the mandatory combat skills tests, but there just wasn't much enthusiasm for the mission. Most of the troops and NCOs didn't seem to know why they were in Germany; most of the officers were too young to have served in combat and were generally ignorant of world politics in the previous turbulent decades.

The headquarters staff had been accustomed to straggling into their offices at a comfortable hour each morning and immersing themselves in mundane paperwork. They passed their days indoors, and knocked off in plenty of time for happy hour at the officers' club. There was a real gulf between the five rifle companies and my headquarters. This problem was definitely inherent to the Pentomic structure. Unlike a traditional battalion commanded by a young lieutenant colonel, my battle group suffered from a real generation gap in the command structure. The captains commanding the rifle companies were men in their mid-twenties with only a few years' service.

They saw me as a battle-scarred old veteran of almost forty with whom they shared few common experiences.

I knew from Korea that the personal style of a commanding officer greatly influenced unit spirit and efficiency. So I immediately set about to change the garrison mentality. One of my first orders was that *all* personnel would participate in regular morning runs. Getting the staff officers—myself included—out with the rifle platoons at dawn every day went a long way toward reestablishing command contact.⁵ I also introduced sport parachuting to the unit and encouraged my officers to participate. Within a few months, the outfit became known as the “16th Almost Airborne Infantry.”

One of my greatest challenges, however, was convincing the men that they actually were combat soldiers, that their duties were not simply the military equivalent of a civilian job. The garrison troops in Japan in June 1950 had been sorely unprepared to face combat in Korea. Not wanting my men afflicted with this type of “occupation” mentality, I began conducting unscheduled weekend alert exercises to shake up the troops. If the Soviets were ever going to attack West Germany, I knew they’d do it on a Friday evening, when the *Gasthauses* and service clubs were crowded with GIs, their bellies full of beer and sausage.

Unfortunately, several of my best young platoon officers were on the unit’s football team, the Baumholder Spader Rangers. I told them that they couldn’t play Saturday football and also lead their troops on maneuvers. But Major General Lloyd Moses, the division commander, loved his football. I lost that particular battle.

One battle I didn’t lose, however, involved what was then known as the Command Information Program. I felt it was vital that the soldiers understand the nature of the Soviet threat, that they be educated in the history of the totalitarian Communist system and the brutal repression of Eastern Europe. Student draft deferments were still common then, and most of our enlisted men had no college; some lacked high school diplomas. It was hard to get them motivated to face a potential enemy they knew nothing of beyond vague animosity toward the “Commies.” So I began a regular series of lectures, tracing the history of expansionist Soviet policies and subversion.

This type of education was particularly important then because the Soviets had embarked on a reckless policy of military confrontation. They had achieved parity with the West in nuclear missiles, and were determined to exploit this strength. Following the downing of the American U-2 spy plane flown by Gary Powers, Khrushchev canceled his proposed arms control summit meeting with Eisenhower and the Soviets launched a test program of increasingly larger warheads, a policy intended to intimidate our NATO allies. For the next several years, the Soviets repeatedly used their growing missile force and the dangerous tactic of atmospheric nuclear weapons tests

in an attempt to wrest concessions from the West. They hoped to control our elected leaders by cynically manipulating the natural public revulsion for nuclear weapons tests.⁶

Major General Edwin A. Walker (whom I had known at the Ranger Training Center) was the commander of the 24th Infantry Division south of us in Bavaria. He conducted a similar troop-education series called the "Pro-Blue Program." Unfortunately for Walker, he included a few materials from the far-right John Birch Society in his lectures. Equally unfortunate, Ted Walker ran afoul of the *Overseas Weekly*, a muckraking private newspaper that aimed its sensationalism at lonely and disgruntled GIs. (The paper thrived on sex and scandal; most soldiers called it the "Oversexed Weekly.") After Walker banned one of the paper's reporters from the 24th Infantry Division's base because the man stole confidential court-martial records, the *Weekly* launched a crusade against Walker. They targeted his Pro-Blue Program, which exploded in a controversy led by headline-seeking congressional investigators. President Kennedy responded by relieving Walker—a distinguished soldier and certainly no crypto-fascist—of his command. Only after he was sacked was General Walker impartially investigated. He was found guiltless of actionable wrongdoing, but admonished in a vague manner for being "injudicious" in his comments about prominent Americans. Ted Walker then resigned from the Army in protest against the illegal procedures taken against him by President Kennedy and his secretary of defense, Robert McNamara.⁷

U.S. forces in Germany were closely watched by press vigilantes following the Walker debacle. Word filtered down unofficially from 8th Division headquarters that it might be prudent to suspend our own troop-indoctrination program until the dust settled. I refused to comply. The material I used in my program was a product of honest scholarship, not extremism. I had risked my life fighting fascism in two theaters of World War II. I had also fought the Communist equivalent of fascism in Korea. The mission of the U.S. forces in Europe was to support democracy and oppose totalitarianism. I intended to accomplish my mission.

Despite the recommendation of my staff officers that I back down on this sensitive matter, I refused to be intimidated. The lectures continued and we got no formal complaints from the Army.

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In 1961, the Seventh Army's major field exercise, Winter Shield II, was conducted at the sprawling Graffenwoehr training ground in the empty forests near the East German frontier. I had made a point that fall of preparing the men by conducting night maneuvers at Baumholder, training

they sorely needed. By the time Winter Shield came, they were proficient at night movement.

I was pleased when I read the classified maneuver orders, which pitted our V Corps against the heavy-armor "Aggressors" of VII Corps. To increase realism, we didn't get our alert order until the afternoon of Thursday, February 2, 1961. The battle group was ordered to deploy to a combat bivouac along the Vils River within twenty-four hours. Over 200 miles of German highway lay between Baumholder and the objective.

To make things interesting, it began to snow just as the lead reconnaissance vehicle of our long convoy pulled out of the base. The weather forecast was for intermittent snow and sleet. But the sky looked more threatening than that. I stopped the column where it was and gave the order, "All vehicles will put on chains." Several of my staff officers noted that this would slow down the column, possibly jeopardizing our on-time arrival, which in turn would threaten our overall performance rating on the exercise. They had a point, but so did I. As a compromise, I ordered each commander in the long convoy to add the necessary minutes to his complex march table to compensate for the slower speed, then deduct this from the planned rest stops.

Meanwhile, I set off in my command jeep and sped east in the failing winter twilight to reconnoiter the route. To my chagrin, I discovered most of the roads blocked by skidding German civilian cars that had been caught out in the unexpected blizzard. Other commanders later said this blizzard was not representative of the "real-world" problem we might encounter facing a Soviet offensive. To me, the weather presented *exactly* the conditions the Russians—like the Germans during the Ardennes offensive in 1944—would capitalize on to screen their attack. By mid-afternoon, the main highways had become impassable, so I diverted the columns onto secondary roads, and had each element led by reconnaissance vehicles. But even this precaution was not enough. At one point the next morning, I saw a tank from another unit poised on the crest of an icy hill. A moment later it was sliding sideways down the snowy road completely out of control. As it spun gracefully down the hill, the tank's long 90mm cannon clipped down telephone poles like a scythe.

But somehow the 16th Infantry arrived at its bivouac site on schedule, even though we had traveled the longest distance of any in the V Corps forces.

While the other units straggled in, I took advantage of our early arrival to dispatch reconnaissance patrols through the snowy woods to scout out the positions of our principal opponent, the 2nd Armor Division. Our first operation in the exercise called for the battle group to be the lead unit in a combined infantry-armor task force. We were to spearhead a night crossing

of the Vils River. Luckily, I had rehearsed just such an operation with the unit several times that fall. Even luckier, the snow came again to mask our movement.

By the next morning we had infiltrated the 2nd Armor positions and passed in strength and undetected through their main defense area and into their rear, where we seized all the principal crossroads. As their fuel tanker and ammunition convoys approached, we simply diverted them into makeshift truck parks, and "captured" the truckers. The men now understood the importance of combat-readiness training. As a reward, Lieutenant General Frederick Brown, V Corps commander, excused the 16th Infantry from the Annual Army Training Test for that year. He considered that our maneuver performance had adequately demonstrated our combat proficiency.⁸

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THAT spring and summer I increased the recruitment drive for the battle group sport parachute club and skydiving team. As the jump schedule intensified, we found ourselves running short of equipment, especially parachutes. One of my sergeants devised a method of modifying Air Force chutes for skydiving, which eliminated the cotton canopy sleeve normally used on a sport jump. I felt it was my responsibility to test this new chute.

I jumped from an Army U-1 Otter aircraft at 8,000 feet above the Ranger drop zone at Baumholder. It was a standard twenty-second delay, one of my favorite jumps. I watched the lush green pine forest gently rocking below me as the ground seemed to rise as if on some gigantic, unseen lift. A jump like this was pure pleasure. But when I pulled the ripcord I immediately knew something was wrong. The canopy exploded around my right arm and jerked me wildly to the right. Although the chute had deployed fully, I felt like I'd slammed into a brick wall.

Then I looked down and saw my right arm was not where it should be. It simply wasn't there, and neither was the sleeve of my coveralls. Craning my neck, I looked back to see my arm hanging helplessly behind me, next to the open parachute pack. My shoulder had been completely separated by the runaway canopy.

There was nothing I could do except reach back gingerly with my left hand and place my numb arm atop my reserve chute chest pack. I hooked one of the elastic opening bands over the little finger. It was like handling the limb of a store-window dummy.

This was a Sunday afternoon, and the small clinic at Baumholder had no doctor on duty. I had to be driven to a nearby field hospital. En route, the numbness gave way to searing pain. The doctor on duty at the field hospital took one look at me and grinned. "That's something straight out of the

textbook," he said. "You don't often see such a *dramatic* separation." His casual attitude reminded me of Mary's obstetrician back at Fort Leavenworth.

The doctor had me lie on my left side on the examining table while he cradled my dangling right arm. Then, with a horrendous pop, he jammed the arm back into the shoulder socket. The next thing I knew I was sitting up and medics were applying a full-torso cast. "I don't think you'll be jumping for a while, Colonel," the doctor added.

When I got back to Baumholder later that evening, I called the duty officer, Lieutenant Powell Moore, to check for messages. Moore was an articulate young southerner of a literary bent, whom I had shanghai'd from a rifle company to be my public information officer. I guess I tried too hard to impress the young man that I was still in command when I gruffly summoned him. He assured me that everything was normal.

"Nothing unusual?" I asked.

He paused. "Oh, yes, sir," he added. "There is. The battle group commander dislocated his shoulder while skydiving."

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As in any other large organization, a person who shows talent for a particular field in the Army is often precipitously reassigned to exploit his expertise. I was happily minding my business commanding the battle group that summer when I got orders to become the chief of training in the office of the assistant chief of staff (G-3) of the Seventh Army. This meant moving the family once again. Our new duty station was at Patch Barracks in Stuttgart.

I reluctantly relinquished command of the 16th Infantry and took up my new duties in Stuttgart. I had to admit, however, that this new staff assignment was fascinating. President John Kennedy had been in office for less than a year and had already weathered two crises involving Soviet expansionist policies. The Bay of Pigs fiasco that spring taught Kennedy that military half-measures didn't work against a determined, well-equipped Soviet surrogate like Fidel Castro. And the North Vietnamese attempt to overthrow the pro-Western government of Laos demonstrated the need for strong American conventional forces rather than the unusable nuclear juggernaut of massive retaliation.

Kennedy correctly assumed that our bankrupt policy would embolden the Soviets to take some aggressive action in Europe. In anticipation of this, he authorized the complete modernization of the U.S. Army in West Germany. I arrived as this modernization got under way. For several years the Soviet forces opposing us in East Germany and Czechoslovakia had built up their mechanized infantry and armored units. They now clearly had the potential

to slash through the flatlands of the so-called Fulda Gap and cut our armies in half before NATO could properly react. Such a Blitzkrieg attack could only be repulsed with the wide use of tactical nuclear weapons.

But the Soviets understood well that America and her allies were deeply reluctant to resort to this drastic remedy. The only way to lower the nuclear threshold was to create a viable conventional force that offered a realistic defense against the Red Army. This meant that all U.S. combat ground troops in Germany would become mechanized in order to expand their maneuverability and survivability. When I'd arrived in Europe the year before, American troops moved on wheels. Now the Army decided all of its divisions in Europe would be deployed on tracked, armored personnel carriers and tanks. In effect, we were being transformed from a static occupation garrison army to a modern mechanized army.

This might sound like a straightforward task. In reality, the modernization program presented one of the toughest staff jobs in the peacetime Army. *Every* aspect of battle doctrine, and all the related training and combat proficiency testing, had to be overhauled. Once more, I dug in for a siege of twelve- and fourteen-hour days.

It didn't take the Soviets long to test Kennedy's resolve in Europe. On the night of August 12, 1961, Soviet and East German troops barricaded Communist East Berlin from the western half of the city. Within a week, a prefab concrete-and-block wall was rising as a permanent "anti-fascist" barrier, the notorious Berlin Wall. The purpose of the wall was to stop the hemorrhage of refugees fleeing communism. The Soviets followed this outrage by a general blockade of the city. That October, the Red Army began to restrict NATO and West German road access to West Berlin. They had completely closed the Autobahn to civilian traffic within a week. The next move in the well-orchestrated campaign was a direct military threat against the small U.S. Army garrison in West Berlin. Soviet tanks rolled to the city's East-West sector borders and leveled their cannons at the American barracks.

Kennedy's reaction was forceful. The 18th Infantry Battle Group under Colonel Glover Johns was beefed up with tanks and armored personnel carriers and sent to reinforce our Berlin garrison. When Johns's unit arrived at the western terminus of the auto route, the Soviets and East Germans tried to stall him. He negotiated with them patiently, then called his lead tanks forward. The moment of crisis had arrived. If the Soviets used force, Johns had orders to return fire. The Communists backed down. That night the 18th Infantry, in full combat gear, took up positions facing East Berlin.¹⁰

To underscore the gravity of the crisis, Kennedy began to airlift troops into West Germany, a demonstration of our new quick-response capability. More important, Kennedy called up Army Reserve and National Guard

units. From the European perspective, mobilization was equated with serious resolve. Our augmented forces in West Berlin then confronted the Soviets in a series of dangerous face-offs that succeeded in calling the Russian bluff.¹¹ If Kennedy hadn't taken this politically risky step, the Soviets would probably not have backed down and would have imposed another blockade.

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OVER the next two years, I plugged away at the seemingly endless task of supervising the modernization, training, and testing of the two armored and three mechanized divisions now assigned to Seventh Army. Another, even more serious confrontation with the Soviets, the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, passed with the Russians again backing down in the face of firm American resolve. At the time many civilians did not realize how close to general war with the Soviet Union we actually were. Although American troops in Europe were ordered not to reveal our increased state of readiness, the U.S. Army was prepared to go into battle on a few hours' notice.¹²

The Berlin and Cuban crises blunted Soviet military adventurism in Europe and the Americas. They shifted their attention to a more promising arena, the Far East.

I had been asked by Seventh Army to extend my European assignment for a fourth year. The family was delighted with the prospect of another year in Germany when I received sudden orders back to the States. General Bill Depuy, the officer who, with Dick Stilwell, had recruited me out of the Ranger Training Command and back into the CIA during the Korean War, now wanted me to work for him in the Pentagon. Depuy led a directorate in the relatively new Army General Staff section called ACSFOR, the Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development. Although I didn't know it at the time, the Army was already planning to counter a new aspect of Soviet military aggression.

Just as the situation in Europe seemed to have stabilized, a dangerous new confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States was building in the jungles and rice paddies of Southeast Asia.