

# ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

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## Supplying the Armies

By Michael A. Martorelli

### Introduction

Historians refute the suggestion that Confederate Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest ever said that he aimed to “*git thar fustest with the mostest*” or that he defined the subject of supply as “*gittin stuff*.” Nonetheless, both sentiments seem to reflect part of any military leader’s intention when preparing for combat. In the Civil War, both the United States of America and the Confederate States of America were confronted with the almost unimaginable challenge of supplying enormous armies with enough food, clothing, ammunition, transportation, and other impedimenta to prosecute the war. Quartermaster Departments (QMDs) were economic giants tasked with procuring, transporting, and distributing everything the soldiers needed except weapons, food, and medicine. Both armies had specialized departments to procure and distribute those items. Ordnance Departments handled weapons of all types. The Union Army’s Medical Corps also had an Ambulance Corps. The Commissary Department (Subsistence Department in the Confederate Army) handled foodstuffs of all types. The Union’s QMD spent more than \$1.2 billion during the war, about one-third of total government expenditure. It spent more than \$350 million on uniforms, knapsacks, tents, and related field equipment, about twice what the Ordnance Department spent on weapons.<sup>1</sup> This essay summarizes the efforts of the Quartermaster Departments on both sides in accomplishing only the most basic of their many tasks, i.e., supplying the armies with items such as uniforms, shoes, blankets, ponchos, field equipment, and tentage.

### Overview

In early 1861, more than 13,000 of the United States Army’s 16,000 men were stationed in more than one hundred forts and depots located west of the Mississippi River. Throughout the prior decade, the federal departments providing those men with their physical needs had developed effective procedures for procuring and delivering food, weapons, and supplies. The nature of their missions changed dramatically with the attack on Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861. The size of the Union Army would eventually surpass 2,600,000; those soldiers would serve in almost three dozen Field Armies operating in separate Eastern, Western and Trans-Mississippi theaters. They would fight in more than 10,000 battles in almost two dozen states, and man forts and depots in many others where no fighting occurred.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mark R. Wilson, *The Business of Civil War: Mobilization and the State, 1861-1865* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006), 91.

<sup>2</sup> Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775-1939* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1989), 301.

As many as 1,200,000 men fought for various Confederate armies in those battles, most of which occurred within the 750,000 square miles of the states that seceded from the Union. They too had to be supplied with food, clothing, ammunition, etc. But because the Confederacy had to establish the infrastructure and procedures of its procurement, transportation, and distribution activities from scratch, that challenge was much more difficult than the one the Union faced. The relative lack of manufacturing facilities and railroad lines made the tasks of the supply bureaus such as the Quartermaster, Subsistence, and Medical Departments even more difficult.

While not the main subject of this essay, the Union Army demonstrated the ability to use wagon trains, railroads, and river steamboats to transport both men and equipment to any targeted location with an appropriate military objective. For the most part, commanders in the field were able to pursue their strategic and tactical objectives with little concern over the ability of the army's supply departments to deliver the right products to the right location at the right time. There were indeed scattered instances of a temporary failure of those agencies to provide that timely logistical support. But the record shows very few instances in which unethical procurement behaviors, inefficient transportation undertakings, or poorly organized distribution practices led to serious product shortages that meaningfully hampered the activities of any particular combat operation.

In the CSA, poor tactical decision-making by the leaders of the better organized, equipped, and fed forces of the Union Army permitted the similarly inexperienced but more intrepidly led Confederate soldiers to prevail in the first battle of the Civil War near Manassas Junction, Virginia. However, severe deficiencies of ordnance, supplies, and battlefield organization limited those commanders' tactical options for a follow-up attack on the Union capital of Washington, D.C. It would be the first of many instances in which the Confederate supply agencies' inability to meet the material needs of a field army impacted the ability of field commanders to pursue the most appropriate military objective.

### **Gearing Up for And Making War: The Union**

As efficient as it was, the antebellum QMD of the Union Army was not prepared for the expanded need for its services that followed the attack on Fort Sumter. Fortunately, throughout the 1850s, Quartermaster officers learned a variety of lessons that would come in handy during the upcoming fighting against the Armies of the CSA. Two particularly important ones were the advantages of contracting with civilian companies to provide a variety of goods and doing the same for transportation services over railroads and waterways. In late April 1861, the already short-handed staff of thirty-five officers and eleven clerks declined further as Quartermaster General (QG) Joseph Eggleston Johnston and four other officers resigned from the Army to fight for the Confederacy. The Federal supply depots had barely enough supplies to meet the demands of the existing army. So before resigning, Johnston directed one of his assistants to purchase enough clothing, canteens, knapsacks, and other camp equipment to supply the 75,000 soldiers President Abraham Lincoln had just asked the states to supply. Congress helped by raising the department's authorized strength from 37 to 64.

During the next month, more than 91,000 men joined the Union army or their state militias. By August, the new QG Montgomery Cunningham Meigs was trying to equip an army estimated

at more than 300,000. Throughout the spring and summer, there was much confusion over which entity (the states or the federal government) had the authority and responsibility to supply those troops with their needs. The surge in the size of the army placed incredible stress on the existing uniform production facility at the Schuylkill Arsenal in Philadelphia. The government soon opened new ones in New York and Cincinnati and began purchasing ready-made clothing from contractors. Secretary of War Simon Cameron ordered the QMD to produce uniforms for many state militias. But he also told several governors they would have to furnish all the uniform and equipment needs of their new soldiers.

Many Northern states were capable of manufacturing some of the required uniforms, shoes, and other supplies. Some expanded the use of their prison-based manufactories. Most still found it necessary to contract with outside suppliers to obtain such items as uniforms, canteens, rubber blankets, and headwear. Of course, in doing so they were competing with each other and with War Department officials trying to procure the same products for the Regular Army. In the frenzied environment of product acquisition, it came as no surprise to see those competitive efforts hampered by many examples of fraud and war profiteering. The worst abuses involved contractors using inferior materials and charging outrageous prices, and procurement officers acting out of inexperience, naivete, or with malicious intent. Political interference was another problem as Cabinet officers and state officials often chose to usurp the authority of responsible military commanders and QMD personnel.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, in the early months of the fighting, the nation's mills produced large quantities of uniforms by using low-quality materials and by making them in colors other than the standard light and dark blue. With soldiers from both sides wearing similarly colored uniforms there were more than a few instances of friendly fire casualties. In the fall, a representative from the QMD went to England to order 1.2 million yards of the correctly colored kersey material. The Boston Board of Trade was one of many organizations that voiced its objection to the use of foreign imports. The QMD and the states also had a difficult time procuring the right type of grey all-wool Army blankets. In this case, they were forced by circumstances to depend on products made in England, not only in mid-1861, but also throughout the next several years.

By the end of 1861, it became obvious that the war would be a long one. States recognized their inability to keep supplying troops that were federalized then sent hundreds of miles from their home states. QG Meigs became convinced that domestic textile firms would be able to ramp up their production and produce enough uniforms to outfit the current army and also provide items for storage and distribution in the future. The Commanding General of the Army George Brinton McClellan helped Meigs' efforts by ordering the states to turn over acquired but unissued materials to U.S. Quartermaster Department.<sup>4</sup> Also beginning around that time, the use of strict controls and

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<sup>3</sup> James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics 1775-1953* (Washington, D.D.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1997), 164.

<sup>4</sup> Ellen Lippman, and Martin McMahan "Professionalism and Politics in the Procurement Process: United States Civil War Early Years" in *The Accounting Historians Journal*, 44, no. 1 (June 2017): 68.

processes by QG Meigs and new rules by Congress helped overcome the initial problems of producing large quantities of high-quality uniforms.

In January 1862, President Abraham Lincoln appointed Edwin McMasters Stanton Secretary of War. He immediately began to reorganize and reinvigorate what had been a rather haphazard operation under Simon Cameron. Doing so helped the QMD operate a more effective and efficient centralized supply system. QG Meigs refined the procedures for seeking bids from contractors to make dozens of assorted products from leather, metal, and rubber. The passage in that same month of the Legal Tender Act gave the department a standard form of currency to offer those contractors. In March, congress passed another act authorizing the Treasury to issue “certificates of indebtedness” to use as another vehicle for paying contractors. (During the next three years, the Treasury would issue \$507 million worth of those certificates, roughly twice the number of federal “greenbacks” it issued during that same time.)<sup>5</sup>

Throughout 1862, the government expanded its own clothing production facilities in Philadelphia and New York and added others in several cities. Goods of all types began to flow more quickly. In the summer, President Lincoln called for 600,000 additional troops. States including New Jersey, Missouri, and Kentucky that had ceased producing clothing and equipment for their own troops re-entered the supply business. Quartermaster depots such as the one in St. Louis ramped up their production of uniforms to such a degree that by the end of that year, the warehouses were actually overflowing with garments. Both government facilities and private clothing manufacturers in places such as Steubenville, OH and Quincy, IL benefitted from being in areas that saw little if any combat.

### **Gearing Up for And Making War: The Confederacy**

The CSA created its QMD in February 1861, even before the Provisional Confederate Congress created a provisional volunteer army. Within a month Congress appointed Abraham Charles Myers as Acting QG of the CSA. He acquired warehouse space in Richmond and several other cities and appointed staff to take control of those sites. With no organic facilities to manufacture uniforms or any other field equipment, he and his assistants immediately began seeking bids to manufacture uniforms, blankets, shoes, tents, and other equipment from contractors across the South. That task was made more difficult by the inability of the CSA to entice the border states of Missouri, Kentucky, and Maryland to secede. That region produced 60% of the South’s textiles and 90% of its iron products.<sup>6</sup>

Myers created the specifications for a standard uniform to be supplied by the states for their volunteers and by the CSA for its regular army troops. But after seeing the variety of clothing worn by the volunteers who signed up after the successful taking of Fort Sumter, he realized the QMD would need to be the main supplier of uniforms for all. But he also knew Southern contractors could not produce enough of them. Unfortunately, Secretary of War Leroy Pope Walker did not act on Myers’ recommendation to purchase uniforms from European sources. The QG was also

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<sup>5</sup> Wilson, *The Business of Civil War*, 114.

<sup>6</sup> Richard D. Goff, *Confederate Supply*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1969), 5.

hindered in his ability to find sufficient uniforms and equipment by the self-serving actions of many Southern state officials. North Carolina Governor Zebulon Baird Vance refused to allow Myers to take surplus uniforms in his state's warehouses, preferring to keep them in reserve for his own troops.<sup>7</sup> Myers accepted whatever quantities of supplies he received from contractors and stored them at quartermaster depots in several key locations until they could be requested by field army commanders.<sup>8</sup>

The first major battle of the Civil War occurred July 21, 1861. Confederate troops were positioned along a line near Manassas Junction about thirty miles southwest of Washington. After they were reinforced by troops coming from the west, they successfully rebuffed an attack by Union forces moving southwest and planning to attack Richmond. The 18,000 Confederate soldiers who participated in the battle were inadequately equipped. The CSA's Ordnance, **Commissary**, and Quartermaster Departments each failed to provide the right amounts of arms, food, clothing, and equipment. Field commanders and their embedded quartermasters were similarly inept at distributing the supplies and provisions that were available.

In the aftermath of that experience, Confederate officials and QG Myers were forced to adjust their procurement and distribution policies in order to adequately supply an army with an authorized strength of 400,000. Megs told the field quartermasters in Texas they would hereafter have to find their own supplies, and to consider buying or trading for them with Mexican sources. He recognized the new responsibility of providing uniforms and equipment for the so-called refugee volunteer troops from the three border states whose governments could not or would not supply them. While seeking formal contracts with private manufacturing sources, he also sent purchasing agents around the South to purchase odd-lots of various types of clothing and equipment in local markets.<sup>9</sup>

Myers altered the distribution of warehousing and distribution depots. He organized larger depots in the CSA's various military commands and authorized their superintendents to not only purchase or contract for supplies but also manufacture them on their own when feasible. Supplies could still be issued only upon the request of the field quartermasters. Based on the location of the CSA's largest armies, the QG designated Richmond and Nashville as main depots and gave their commanders permission to draw on the resources of other depots as necessary.

As the Confederate armies went into winter quarters in 1861-1862, their supply situation improved somewhat as various state and local authorities and citizens who believed in the righteousness of the Confederate cause came forth with many contributions. Nevertheless, the shortages remained. Secretary of War Judah Philip Benjamin initiated a few new semi-successful programs aimed at sustaining the military supply chain. He gave both the QG and the Commissary General the controversial power of impressment, i.e., the right to acquire for payment food or supplies from local citizens. Both the army and the Navy sent agents to Europe to purchase supplies

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<sup>7</sup>Fred Seth, "Gittin' Stuff: Equipping Confederate Armies at the Onset of the Civil War (1861-1862)," in *Property Professional*, 16, No. 3 (2004): 20.

<sup>8</sup>Goff, *Confederate Supply*, 16.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 33.

to be delivered via steamers to Bermuda, Nassau, or Havana, then repacked on smaller vessels capable of avoiding the Union's coastal blockade. Further, the CSA agreed to purchase from private blockade runners any merchandise of military value that they could ship into various Southern ports.<sup>10</sup>

The quickening pace of combat operations throughout 1862 forced QG Myers to take additional actions to improve the army's supply chain. He took full advantage of a provision in the Conscription Act to grant exemptions from military service to employees of factories and mills, especially those making clothing and shoes. In aggressively contracting with such firms, he effectively commanded a significant percentage of the CSA's manufacturing capacity.

The results of combat between the Union and Confederate armies heavily impacted the ability of the QMD to supply its soldiers. In the west, the army lost Fort Henry and Fort Donelson and with them access to important regions that produced iron and cattle. Losing the railroad link between Memphis and Chattanooga disrupted that vital transportation link and forced the abandonment of valuable caches of supplies. The Federal capture of New Orleans not only took away an important center of manufacturing but also resulted in the closing of a network of channels for blockade runners to supply the Confederacy. In these and other examples, the losses of manpower were exacerbated by the concurrent losses of stores of ammunition, food, and supplies from warehouses and supply depots.

In the East, General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia, commanded in the field by General Thomas Jonathan "Stonewall" Jackson, rebuffed Union General George McClellan's attempt to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond. He also achieved victories at Harper's Ferry, Cedar Mountain, and Second Manassas. His men fought those battles while suffering critical shortages of shoes, clothing, blankets, and other supplies. In another chronic problem for the CSA, Lee's field quartermasters were not following the proper procedures for requisitioning those supplies from available storehouses. The general himself, as well as the field quartermasters in other armies, was communicating the troops' needs directly with Secretary of War George Wythe Randolph and Confederate President Jefferson Davis, thus causing prolonged delays in the distribution of the proper materials. Moreover, the Civil War soldiers' habits of lightening their loads while on the march by throwing away what seemed to be unneeded boots, overcoats, canteens, mess equipment, and more became particularly problematic in the chronically-short-of-supplies Confederate armies.

After pushing the Union forces out of Virginia, General Lee took his army of 55,000 on a daring northward thrust into the rich agricultural region of Central Maryland and Pennsylvania. They fought battles at Harper's Ferry, South Mountain, and Antietam Creek. Successful raids on Fredericksburg, Martinsburg, and Harper's Ferry yielded some supplies of food, shoes, and clothing. But as many as 10,000 stressed, worn out, and/or inadequately clothed, fed, and equipped

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

men fell by the wayside in that long multi-day march, and severely hurt the combat efficiency of an otherwise brave and capable contingent of soldiers.<sup>11</sup>

### **Sustaining Operations: The Union**

As the war progressed into its third year, the lack of many meaningful combat operations in most of the northern states was a great benefit to the production facilities operated by the QMD and hundreds of private contractors. The QMD began establishing additional supply depots throughout the Eastern and Western theaters. It hired both assistant quartermasters and civilian employees to continue overseeing the production and delivery of goods of all types. Tactical units of regiment size and larger had their own field quartermasters embedded in them. In order to bring even more order to quartermaster procedures, in 1863 QG Meigs began designating senior or supervisory quartermasters in geographic areas. They helped streamline the requisition and the delivery of supplies as the various Union armies spread further into the territory of the Confederacy. It took a bit longer, but Meigs was able to give these men, as well as most assistant quartermasters, a military rank that was at least somewhat commensurate with the scope of their authorities and responsibilities.<sup>12</sup>

Over time, the QMD created particularly large regional operations in places such as St. Louis, MO, Chattanooga, TN, and City Point, VA. QG Meigs found it prudent to centralize the production and contracting processes. The QMD itself produced roughly 25% of all the Union army's uniforms and tentage. But Meigs realized the advantages of concentrating the purchases of various other products with a relatively small number of manufacturers. Individual firms could achieve almost a monopoly position when making specialty products such as rubber blankets and ponchos or machine-pegged shoes and boots. While dozens of suppliers made most products, during the course of the war only four sets of suppliers received between 28% and 32% of the army's contracts to produce clothing, boots and shoes, and blankets.<sup>13</sup> Using greenbacks, certificates, and procurement officers' vouchers might have been adequate for the largest contractors that had the ability to live on government credit. But even those firms had periodic problems with a labor force whose members needed cash to sustain their own families' finances. Some of those smaller producers eventually decided to act as subcontractors to a larger firm so they could accept more military contracts.

To get a more complete picture of the problems and controversies associated with contracting, it is useful to examine some efforts to deal with allegedly large amounts of waste, extravagance, or corruption in the procurement process. After all, as noted earlier, the QMD's expenditures throughout the 1861-1865 period totaled more than \$1.2 billion, or 36% of the Union's overall spending level of \$3.3 billion.

That effort began in July 1861 with the formation of the Van Wyck Committee by the House of Representatives. It identified many instances of chicanery in several reports issued from

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<sup>11</sup> James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 100.

<sup>12</sup> Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army*, 391.

<sup>13</sup> Wilson, *The Business of Civil War*, 233-5.

December 1861 to March 1863. More notably, it recommended changes in the procedures for soliciting and executing contracts that promised to eliminate the role of politically connected middlemen who had been able to extract illegitimate profits from their work. In July 1862, Congress responded to the committee's work by passing legislation requiring the Secretaries of War and the Navy, as well as their responsible subordinates, to sign written contracts directly with contractors and to include in them specific penalties for violations.

In March 1862, two War Department commissions published reports based on their audits of certain government purchasing activities. The Davis-Holt Commission judged more than 1,000 contractors' claims for additional payment of \$9.0 of them as including unjustifiably high mark-ups; it reduced the payments to \$7.6 million. The Holt-Owen Commission criticized the practice of issuing contracts based on private proposals, not competitive bidding, and eliminated thirty-two of thirty-six contracts for rifles.

In July 1862, Congress created the office of the Judge Advocate General. During the next few years, Judge Advocate General Joseph Hold and his team of lawyers prosecuted thousands of men, including unscrupulous quartermaster officials and contractors.

And finally, in March 1863, Congress passed the False Claims Act to combat forgery, embezzlement, and conspiracy to defraud the government. It authorized private citizens to bring charges of fraud against the government and imposed financial penalties on persons found to have submitted false claims.

Throughout the war years, the Union was able to finance the excessive costs related to the investigations into these instances of waste and fraud, and to take the actions noted above with minimal disruption to its combat operations.

### **Sustaining Operations: The Confederacy**

In early 1863, CSA officials responded to General Lee's supply problems by reinforcing the need for all field commanders and quartermasters to follow the prescribed policies and procedures for requisitioning equipment. In the spring, QG Myers reorganized his department. He established thirteen purchasing districts throughout the Confederate states and assigned a principal officer to each of them. They had the sole authority to negotiate contracts with manufacturers and regulate the prices the army would pay. They were to store all purchased supplies in a network of depots near the various armies' fields of operation in nine states. Field quartermasters were no longer authorized to make their own purchasing decisions but were required to funnel their requisitions through the QG's office. Centralizing the requisitioning process helped ensure the more effective use of the chronically insufficient stores of supplies.

It is worth noting here that Commissary General Lucius Bellinger Northrop implemented a similar reorganization that also removed some authority from field commanders. Congress also



helped the chronic food shortage among the field armies by passing a tax-in-kind bill that required farmers to deliver a certain percentage of their crops or livestock to Quartermaster Depots in their area. Superintending quartermasters would then distribute those products as needed. Despite these new policies, many Confederate armies continued to experience problems in obtaining enough food. Field commanders continued to depend on local impressments to obtain fresh meat and vegetables, particularly when operating in remote areas far away from a supply depot.<sup>14</sup>

This action by Northrop epitomized a feature of the Confederate Army's supply problem that would continue throughout the war. The heads of the army's administrative bureaus were willing to take the initiative and try a new policy they hoped would improve the problem of a particular element of the overall supply chain. However, the civilian authorities of the government spent little if any time developing their own proposals to improve the procurement, transportation, or distribution of supplies to the soldiers in the field. Moreover, President Davis, various Secretaries of War, and the occasional Special Military Advisor rarely anticipated that problems in one supply category would often occur in another. By mid-1863, they had to know that the Confederacy's odds of prevailing against the Union were not improving with the passage of time. Yet, they continued to deal with each individual logistical problem without developing any comprehensive program to coordinate various bureau's activities and optimize the use of all the Confederacy's resources.

Over time, and like other administrative agencies, the QMD found the need to create separate sub-units to oversee specific activities; many new administrators and more than eighty clerks were headquartered in Richmond. These new levels of oversight and bureaucracy often resulted in even further delays in delivering supplies to the troops. Quartermasters in the field became the subject of frequent criticisms by the men and their field commanders for not meeting their needs. Newspapers wrote about some incompetent, dishonest, unfaithful, or otherwise unfit man who held those positions. But formal investigations found very few instances of theft, corruption, or bribery.

By the summer of 1863, it was apparent that even the most competent and diligent quartermasters could not ensure the timely delivery of everything the troops in the field needed. Continuous fighting in all theaters not only cost lives but also depleted the various armies' supplies and transportation networks that provided replacements. In August, and to the surprise of many, President Davis removed QG Myers from his post and replaced him with Alexander Robert Lawton, a former brigade commander under General Lee. His work was made more difficult almost immediately. In September and October, the Union Navy prevented much needed supplies from Europe from reaching the CSA when it sank the *Hebe* and the *Venus*, private vessels the QMD had rented that were carrying large quantities of clothing and shoes from their base in Nassau. Fortunately, another rented vessel, the *Dee*, and several successful blockade runners provided the Confederate armies with decent quantities of shoes, blankets, flannel shirts, and overcoats as they prepared to go into winter quarters.

In early 1864, the lack of combat power was as important a problem as the lack of supplies. Another Conscription Act made matters worse by drafting men from quartermaster depots and

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<sup>14</sup> Goff, *Confederate Supply*, 88.

production facilities and thus damaging the already fragile supply train. Financial difficulties were also becoming more serious. Manufacturers with government contracts presented QG Lawton with unpaid invoices totaling more than \$47 million; and an investigation found that his office could not account for \$70 million in authorized but not allocated funds. The new QG was determined to make some fundamental changes in the army's supply system. He wanted to exert governmental control over the South's manufacturing resources. But he needed accurate data on the capabilities of its production facilities. He enlisted George Cunningham, QG of the Army of Tennessee, to survey mills, depots, and factories across the Lower South. Lawton then used Cunningham's report to organize the manufacturing resources of the region more tightly. He imposed new contractual terms upon suppliers, established standardized patterns for uniforms, shoes, and leather goods, acquired larger percentages of many factories' outputs, and better coordinated the supply needs of all military departments. The result was a meaningful increase in the amount of clothing, shoes, blankets and tentage **sent to** Confederate armies operating in the East and the West.

As useful as Lawton's improvements were, by the autumn of 1864 it was apparent that the South just could not become self-sufficient in these areas of production. In the opening months of 1865, the captures of Fort Fisher and Wilmington, North Carolina and subsequent closing of the most viable ports for blockade runners eliminated its European/Caribbean supply sources and put a serious damper on the CSA's military forces' ability to operate. The beleaguered and inadequately supplied Confederate armies were forced to leave the field within a few months.

### **A Note on Moving the Armies**

While this essay has focused on only one element of the QMDs responsibilities, it is worthwhile to take at least a limited look at another—providing transportation for the armies as they moved across the land. The exact numbers vary according to time and place. But the typical army of 125,000 effective fighting men would be transported by 4,200 wagons, eight hundred ambulances, 34,000 horses, and 22,000 mules. While marching in regulation columns and intervals it would extend over thirty-five miles. Moving those troops on trains, steamboats, or ocean-going vessels brought an additional level of complexity to the job of the quartermaster officers responsible for providing that transportation.<sup>15</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In fighting the Civil War, both the USA and the CSA had to develop meaningfully new systems for procuring and distributing a wide range of supplies to their troops. The fact that the fighting lasted for four long years is a testament to their success. While both armies won and lost specific engagements, neither was ever forced to leave the field of battle due to the lack of supplies. In the long run, the CSA was unable to overcome its limitations in manufacturing capacity, the effectiveness of the Union blockade, and the steady deterioration in the South's transportation network.

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<sup>15</sup> Earl J. Hess, *Civil War Logistics: A Study of Military Transportation* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017), 135-56.

Since most of the fighting occurred in the states of the Confederacy, the Union did not suffer the loss of any of its manufacturing facilities or important supply depots. The CSA was not so lucky; it lost much of its limited industrial infrastructure to the federal armies that successfully prosecuted the war throughout its territory. Nevertheless, officials from the Quartermaster Department and other administrative bureaus were generally able to adjust their procurement and distribution policies to maintain a reasonable if not totally predictable flow of supplies. Union Quartermaster officials had access to a continual flow of supplies from government facilities and independent contractors. Some of their most significant challenges involved dealing with the large amounts of waste, extravagance, or corruption in the procurement and distribution processes.

In early 1865, Union victories along the Atlantic coast closed several ports previously used by blockade runners to bring the Confederate army meaningful quantities of supplies from European sources. Losing that aspect of its supply chain finally impeded the activities of the army to the point where it could not sustain operations in the field for more than a few months.

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