

General Failure

*What the press doesn't tell you
about America's military leaders*

by Scott Shuger

Like everybody else, I started out the Persian Gulf war head-over-hardware, riveted by direct hit videos, awash in bomb damage assessments, living from one Scud alert to the next. When I wasn't watching Anthony Cordesman wax wondrous over Tomahawk missiles, it's because I had switched to Wolf Blitzer waxing wondrous over Patriot missiles. It got to the point where the hold-up in the line at the Safeway was a heated discussion between two check out clerks about the maximum effective range of a laser-guided bomb.

But gradually it dawned on me that something was missing in all this. Something very central to national defense that is now getting only the feeblest of attention, something that before war was imminent got virtually none at all. Here's a quick fill-in-the-blank quiz: At the height of World War II, General Eisenhower referred to _____ as "indispensable to the war effort, one of the guarantors of our victory." He was speaking of:

- a) the B-17 bomber
- b) the Sherman tank
- c) the P-51 fighter

The answer is "none of the above"—Ike was talking about General George Patton. A country that's now thoroughly obsessed with weapons has forgotten that an essential component of success in war is *generalship* (and *admiralship*). A crafty general is the ultimate smart weapon, and a dull-witted one makes for the biggest possible dud. We've been helped to this state of amnesia by a press that simply makes no real effort to evaluate military commanders by name. Sadly, this is true even of the minority of journalists who cover national defense with reform in mind. You could have read every page of an excellent issue of *The Atlantic* (June 1989) given over mostly to articles on how to fix the Pentagon, without

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picking up the faintest clue about our generals—about how they think about the next war or about what they've done in their commands to win it. Instead, all the while the next war was becoming this war, the press put its focus on metal and overlooked mettle.

Suppose there's enough of a lull in the fighting to allow tomorrow's papers to squeeze in the following story:

WASHINGTON—The Pentagon announced today that it deplored the unauthorized disclosure of information about the highly classified B-3 bomber in yesterday's editions of *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*. Although a senior defense official would not deny the substance of the newspapers' stories, he did announce that "strong corrective measures" would be taken. And within an hour, after consulting with President Bush and other Pentagon officials, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney announced that because the revelations were "contrary to sound practice" and "inappropriate," he was immediately canceling the airplane.

Maybe it'll be an especially slow day and they'll be able to get this one in too:

WASHINGTON—There was a flurry of activity at the Department of Defense today in the wake of yesterday's surprising news that the much ballyhooed M-2 battle tank is considerably slower and has less firepower than the Pentagon had expected. Attempting to limit any political damage, Pentagon spokesman Pete Williams said that Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney would not draw any conclusions about American military readiness from this development, and that no consideration has been given to canceling the M-2.

Absurd, you say? Episodes like these could never happen? Well, actually, with one minor change each, they *did* happen. For the minor change, think of the B-3 as the "Dugan" bomber and the M-2 as the "Waller" tank. Last fall, Secretary of Defense Cheney fired the Air Force's top officer, General Michael Dugan, within hours after *The Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times* published remarks by Dugan about the Pentagon's plans in case of war with Iraq. The quotes attributed to Cheney in the B-3 story above were actually said by him in connection with Dugan. On the other hand, firing wasn't even discussed last December when the deputy commander of Desert Shield, Lt. General Calvin Waller, told reporters that U.S. forces in the Gulf would "not be ready for combat activities" by January 15th, the date that signified the possible beginning of military action against Iraq. The Williams statement about Cheney in the M-2 story above was actually said by him in connection with Waller.

In other words, what strikes us as absurd in the

case of weapons readily passes muster in the case of generals. This means that America doesn't understand a fundamental military fact: *Generals are weapons too*. And like any other weapon, they should be evaluated for what they would bring to a war effort.

The Dugan and Waller cases make it clear that not even the best of the press has taken this task of evaluation seriously enough. In its editorial on Dugan's firing, *The New York Times* said Cheney was right to sack the general primarily because of his remark that when it came to picking Iraqi targets, he didn't "expect to be concerned" about political constraints. The *Times*'s R. W. Apple observed that Dugan had "few defenders . . . at the Pentagon or elsewhere in Washington," and explained that what cost him his job was that he "was unguarded, speaking on the record . . . at a moment when the situation was delicately poised." *The Washington Post* called the firing a "courageous" act required because Dugan's "gross threats" left an impression of an administration anxious to go to war. Richard Cohen, in his *Post* column, declared that Dugan deserved to get sacked because he lacked "decorum." The *Los Angeles Times*'s John Broder—one of the reporters to whom Dugan gave his ill-starred interview—reasoned that Dugan "had forced Cheney and other administration officials to respond" because the general had "squandered the precious quantity of 'deniability'." Broder's paper took the editorial stance that although the firing was "worrisome," it was also "inevitable."

What was missing from the coverage was any sense that there are some important things that generals do besides dealing with the press. (A mistake the Pentagon itself encourages. All those Desert Storm briefings make it clear that you don't get serious stars without mastering the art of the information-free press conference.) So, finding fault with Dugan's press performance, the press jumped straight to the conclusion that he had to go.

If some attention had been paid to a rather well-known historical episode, there could have been a more sophisticated discussion. Within one week in the late summer of 1943, at a time when General George Patton was making dramatic breakthroughs against the Germans in Sicily, the hotheaded general twice struck soldiers suffering from combat fatigue. The incidents came to the attention of Eisenhower and top officials in Washington, including President Roosevelt, and eventually led to an outcry among the general public when it was leaked by Drew Pearson. Although Patton's actions were recognized to be inexcusable by his superiors, he wasn't kicked out of the Army or relieved of his command. Instead, he was reprimanded by Eisenhower and required to apologize to the men he hit and witnesses. After the

successful conclusion of his Sicily campaign, Patton was transferred to England, where he was made to cool his heels (while at the same time put at the head of a phony invasion army that was used quite effectively to divert the German defenses away from the real invasion's target, Normandy). That's where Patton remained until his skills were needed again in the field. He responded by scorching across France and Germany. Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who had risked his own standing to approve all these arrangements, later wrote, "Perhaps no decision of the war was more triumphantly vindicated by events than this one."

What is remarkable about the press's handling of the Dugan case is not that no one in the media defended Dugan, but that *no one asked if he was a good general and if it was a good idea to fire a good general for the mistakes Dugan made*. It occurred to no one to wonder about the wisdom of firing the top air planner in the midst of preparing the largest U.S. air operation since World War II for actions that had nothing to do with his ability to conceive and execute those plans. What if Dugan was just the man to craft an air campaign that would make Saddam surrender without ground fighting? Wouldn't that make it absurd to fire him for speaking on the record, for lacking "decorum"? It would have been different if someone in the press had, by investigating Dugan's record as a commander, argued that Dugan was no Patton. But the need to make that point stick escaped the media completely. (Actually, during the Dugan flap, the distinction between politically astute generals and fighting generals did creep into *The Washington Post* once—in a letter to the editor from a retired Air Force general.)

The press's handling of the Waller case was similarly deficient. Most of the coverage focused on Waller's surprising candor, the impact his comments would have on diplomacy, and on the Pentagon's attempts to put a different spin on them. A number of reports went on to indicate that Waller, like Dugan, was saying on the record what a lot of other senior commanders thought. (Mary McGrory of the *Post* was almost alone in wondering why, in light of this, Waller could stay while Dugan had to go.) But there was scarcely anyone in the press wondering on the basis of Waller's comments if he (and his fellow senior commanders too, if the stories about how Waller

spoke for them as well were true) would be disastrously sluggish in any war against Iraq.

Again, there is a historical precedent that could have enriched the discussion. If there ever was a war that showed generals make a difference, it was the Civil War, in which Abraham Lincoln went through quite a cast of officers before settling on the winning leadership of Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan. Probably the general Lincoln found the most frustrating was George McClellan, whom Lincoln fired twice for lack of aggressiveness. "You remember my speaking to you of what I called your over-cautiousness?" Lincoln once wrote McClellan after yet another occasion when McClellan could have taken Richmond but didn't because he was waiting for reinforcements. "Are you not over-cautious when you assume that you cannot do what the enemy is constantly doing?" Another time, when McClellan put in a request for new horses, Lincoln replied, "Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of

Being in charge of armies or fleets is just not deemed worthy of assessment or even to be of much interest to the public. That kind of coverage should apparently be reserved for politicians, rich people, business executives, rich people, movie stars and moguls, rich people—and presidential pets.

your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?"

In its discussion of Waller, the press was aware of the McClellan analogy, but just barely. The sole exceptions seem to be these: In a "news analysis" piece on the Waller episode in *The New York Times*, Michael Gordon spends most of his time dwelling on press and spin, but in the 13th paragraph he does refer to McClellan. But that's all he does. "Critics of the military are already charging the generals with 'McClellanism,'" Gordon writes. He never says if *he* charges that or tries to evaluate the thesis. In his "news analysis" of the episode, the *Times's* R. W. Apple mentions McClellan in connection with the "caution of commanders down through the ages," but Apple doesn't try to decide if Waller was just being prudent or if he was a McClellanlike disaster. In fact, Apple doesn't even venture an opinion about *McClellan's* ability; he just notes that his tendencies toward delay plagued Lincoln. Even in discussing a war where history's jury is pretty much in, a *Timesman* is loath to discuss a general's military merit—especially if there is a political angle to pursue instead.

The Dugan/Waller coverage is quite typical of the larger media trend. Being in charge of armies or fleets is just not deemed worthy of assessment or even to be of much interest to the public. That kind of coverage

should apparently be reserved for politicians, rich people, business executives, rich people, movie stars and moguls, rich people—and presidential pets. (How many tactical nukes does Asher Edelman control?) In the past decade, there have been no articles on generals or admirals in *The New Yorker* or *Esquire*. During that time, *The New York Times Magazine* has had only five—far fewer than it has run on politicians, athletes, or actresses. During that same period, there have been virtually no analyses of generals by the influential columnists—not even in those by chest-thumping conservatives like George Will or Charles Krauthammer. *Life* magazine's list of the "100 Most Important Americans of the 20th Century" included only two generals—Douglas MacArthur and George Marshall—but somehow found room for Elizabeth Arden, Dale Carnegie, and Emily Post. *Four Stars*, a perceptive book by Mark Perry about the inner workings of the joint chiefs of staff, recently sank from the marketplace without a ripple while the bestseller list is routinely studded with such fare as *Millie's Book*, and the autobiographies of Donald Trump, Kitty Dukakis, Larry Bird, and Barry Switzer.

General anesthesia

Of course with the imminence and then the onset of war, this inattention changed a little. Now, every night you can summon up a general by remote control. There's General George Crist and the banished Dugan on CBS, Admiral William Crowe and Lt. General Bernard Trainor on ABC, and Lt. General William Odom on NBC. Presumably, when they hired these men, the networks were concerned with the quality of their minds and their understanding of the complexities of war. How come the programmers didn't have this same interest when these men were still in uniform, when they were principal determinants of our war-fighting ability rather than sideline observers? General Crist, for example, was, in his last command ("CentCom," which he turned over to the Desert Storm commander, General Norman Schwarzkopf), in charge of all military plans and operations in the Middle East. In that job, Crist was responsible for the basic war plans out of which Desert Shield evolved. Why weren't the networks interested

in him *then*? Now, it's true that the Pentagon can make access to active-duty and field generals difficult, but is there any evidence that, in more peaceful times, anybody in the media tried all that hard?

And even under the pressure of war, the attention given to active-duty senior officers is mostly cosmetic. This is easily verified in the cases of the Gulf war's field commander, General Schwarzkopf, and his boss, General Colin Powell, the chairman of the joint chiefs. Waiting until the day after the war started

to run its profile of Schwarzkopf—this is akin to waiting until the day after a presidential election to profile the candidate who wins—*The Wall Street Journal* tells us that Schwarzkopf's father was a general in the Army and was the head of the New Jersey state police investigation of the Lindbergh kidnapping, that his nicknames are "Stormin' Norman" and

"The Bear" and that he "has the build of a football player, a 170 IQ, and a passion for Tchaikovsky symphonies." That day's *USA Today* observed that Schwarzkopf is "bear-like" and a "big fellow." When a day later, *The Washington Post* decided to run its profile of Schwarzkopf, the newspaper informed readers that the general is nicknamed "Stormin' Norman," goes 6-3 and 240, and referring to the *Journal* as a source, noted that he had a 170 IQ. In a late-breaking bulletin, thirteen days into the war, *The* (yawn) *New York Times* used its first profile of Schwarzkopf to reveal that he is nicknamed "Stormin' Norman," and "The Bear," and that his father was a general in the Army who investigated the Lindbergh baby kidnapping.

After months of unprecedented military build-up, generals finally made the covers of *U.S. News & World Report* (Powell) and *Time* (Schwarzkopf). But even at that late date, there was nothing new on the war's military leadership. Instead, the generals started getting "reviews": *USA Today* rated Schwarzkopf "tough, compassionate, humorous, sincere." "Captivating," said Tom Shales of *The Washington Post*. What's next: "I laughed. I cried. What a poignant general staff!" —Rex Reed? Indeed, *Time*'s cover piece read pretty much like a checklist of every piece on Schwarzkopf ever written: Stormin' Norman? Check. Lindbergh baby kidnapping? Check. IQ 170? Check. 6-3, 240? Check.



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"Many of the [Soviet] intellectuals now in power have little interest in taking up such mundane matters as food distribution and sanitation systems."

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Although all this was fascinating, there were more significant areas that went unexplored. While all the articles cited mentioned that Schwarzkopf had been the deputy commander of the Grenada invasion, none of them reported in detail on his actions and decisions during that operation, and even though it is widely agreed that the invasion was fraught with mistakes in planning and execution, none of these papers bothered to inquire whether Schwarzkopf had a hand in any of them. *The Wall Street Journal* seems to have become exceptionally disoriented on this point. "After the military's inept performance in Grenada," the paper reported, Schwarzkopf "lashed out at the lack of proper planning by the generals and admirals in charge of the operation." Did the *Journal* think that Schwarzkopf was lashing out at *himself* or that he was blaming everything on his boss?

Similarly, numerous articles about Colin Powell—who undoubtedly drew more press attention than any previous chairman of the joint chiefs (quick: name two of his predecessors) because he was the first black named to the job—each tell you that he had Jamaican parents, grew up in Harlem, was a "C" student in college, and likes to repair old cars. But none of them go into any details about his previous command service. There is hardly any "background" or "without attribution" probing of senior officials in his present or past major jobs of the sort the better reporters engage in when writing about planes and tanks and that you get even in hack articles about some third-tier White House aide. You end up knowing more about Powell's relationship with Jesse Jackson than about what he did and how he did in his two previous major commands. By making a single trip to Iowa, a politician with absolutely no chance at being elected president gets subjected to far more scrutiny. And to get a handle on how David Souter thinks, the press dug up his college thesis. Well, as a senior officer on the make at Army staff and command schools, Powell surely must have left behind some kind of evidence about how he thinks about his life's work, too. Why hasn't some reporter tried to follow that lead? And Powell was the secretary of defense's top military aide during Grenada. In that position, isn't it likely that he contributed to the operation's mistakes or

watched them being made but didn't know how to stop them? Unfortunately, you never find out stuff like that from the newspapers—you have to settle for learning that Powell has a working knowledge of Yiddish with which he sometimes stuns Jewish acquaintances (thank you, *Wall Street Journal*).

Just how pathetic is the coverage of generals? Well, last fall, when *The Washington Post* introduced readers to Dugan's successor, General Merrill McPeak, it didn't get into any details about McPeak's previous job commanding all the aircraft in the Pacific theater. Instead, the *Post*

contented itself with sleepwalking through McPeak's resumé and adding that he is "a health-food enthusiast who has produced a fitness video," and has been known to serve "bean soup and dried fruit for lunch." And on the second day of the Gulf war, I picked up *The New York Times* in search of some information about Lt. General Charles Horner, whom I had never heard of before but who I had just learned was in charge of the Desert Storm air war. All I could get

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from the *Times* piece by Robert McFadden was that a longtime friend is "extremely proud" of Horner, and that he is a "tough, popular commander" and a "hard-driving, task-oriented field officer." (Just once I want to read about a senior officer who is weak and hated, lazy and abstract.) Oh yeah, and he was born in Davenport, Iowa, but attended high school in Des Moines, and has three children (I'll spare you their names).

Actually, there was one slightly more significant detail in the story. McFadden refers to how the American experience in Vietnam "heavily influenced the general's perceptions of modern warfare." Since Iraq began heating up, this has been a *de rigueur* reference in stories about our top military men. McFadden quotes Horner saying, "A war in Iraq should not be dragged out in an effort to achieve some political objective." The "lessons of Vietnam" paragraph is a staple of pieces on the current wave of military commanders. But you can tell by the way they're used that not much thought goes into writing them. (McFadden never probes Horner's statement.) I wouldn't be surprised if there's a special key on the Atex terminals of McFadden and his fellow guild members that's marked "LOV." Hit it and you get passages such as: "Like most of his top officers in the Middle

East, Schwarzkopf learned about combat and command in the jungles of Southeast Asia—learned above all what *not* to do.” (*Life*). “‘The three-stars and the four-stars have been left alone to do their jobs,’ a State Department official says.” (*The Wall Street Journal*). “The massive deployment in Saudi Arabia clearly reflects one lesson of Vietnam. ‘When something starts . . . I’m not sure we’d want to deal a lot with measured escalation,’ says Lt. General Thomas Kelly, head of operations for the joint staff at the Pentagon.” (*U.S. News & World Report*). “Once you have a clear political objective, you have to make sure that . . . the nation commits enough resources to do the job. Then we must give the commanders enough flexibility to achieve their goals. In Vietnam, it didn’t work out that way.” (Powell, in *The Washingtonian*). “I can assure you that if we have to go to war, I am going to use every single thing that is available to me to bring as much destruction to the Iraqi forces as rapidly as I possibly can in the hopes of winning victory as quickly as possible.” (Schwarzkopf, in *The New York Times*).

Fact is, lines like these are far too rarely followed by investigations of whether the generals involved are willing to use nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons to accomplish their “objective,” or of how high they think casualty rates can go and still be an acceptable way to do the “job,” or of how they regard civilian casualties. When you get down to it, what’s the difference between this last statement of Schwarzkopf’s and the ones by Dugan that got him fired? (The ones that the *Times* said *should* have gotten Dugan fired.) And what were the lessons of Vietnam that Powell and Schwarzkopf applied or failed to apply to Grenada? You could read reams of press about these two and never get an answer to that one. During the build-up to war in the Gulf, we were treated to piece after piece on planes and tanks, but here’s one that never got written: “The Generals: How will they do?”

The soft machine

So there you have it—the press stinks at covering generals. Why? The explanation is mostly a combination of ignorance, elitism, and lazy journalism.

Ignorance. Most reporters, like most other Americans, have never served in the military, so they have no personal insight into what makes for good or bad performance in military jobs. (A telling indication: Most papers treated General Schwarzkopf’s efforts to get free mail for his troops and his redesign of their boots as quaint little sidebar items—whereas soldiers know that on deployment overseas you live in your boots and mail is your principal form of entertain-

ment, so in fact these actions of Schwarzkopf’s said quite a lot about him as a field commander. While *The New York Times* did once run a front-page story mentioning Schwarzkopf’s attempts to get radios and newspapers for his troops, the more blue-collar *USA Today* was alone among all newspapers in including the mail and boot details in its profile of the general.)

So to most of the press, generals are as indistinguishable as their uniforms. This attitude readily translates into “one general’s as good as another,” an attitude reinforced by a lack of attunement to military history. Maximilian was no Napoleon, Burnside was no Grant, and Von Paulus was no Rommel. And this belief in turn promotes the idea that it’s weapons that are the determinant of victory—another notion refuted so often in history. At Pearl Harbor, the difference wasn’t hardware: the U.S. had radar and air defenses, and could have used antitorpedo netting to protect its capital ships; what’s more, the U.S. was reading the message traffic of the approaching Japanese fleet. No, the official postmortem on the attack attributed the disaster to “the complete inadequacy of command.” Another example: When, in 1986, the U.S. botched the attack against Libya, it wasn’t because it didn’t have weapons capable of doing a better job—our inventory then contained the same stealth fighters and Tomahawk cruise missiles that are now being credited with such spectacular success in the Gulf—it was because the military planners had decided not to use those weapons.

Elitism. Most reporters come from the educated professional class that views the military not as an interesting opportunity for national service but as a dreaded and thoroughly simple-minded occupation. It’s absurd but true that in our culture, being a military man carries considerably less cachet than working at Century 21. H.G. Wells gave voice to what a lot of other journalists think when he wrote, “The professional military mind is by necessity an inferior and unimaginative mind; no man of high intellectual quality would willingly imprison his gifts in such a calling.”

Richard Cohen of *The Washington Post*, in writing about the Dugan affair, referred to the general as a “talkative flyboy airhead.” Could Cohen’s scorn have something to do with his six months’ active-duty experience as an Army clerical worker? Now, even if Cohen disagreed with say, Lee Iacocca or James Baker on some matter, he would never call either man an “airhead”—although managing the Air Force well takes every bit as much brainpower as managing Chrysler or the State Department. Apparently, antimilitary venom runs so deep in Cohen that he wasn’t able to bring himself to notice that, for example, the feat that generals like Dugan and Schwarzkopf accomplished in supervising the setting

up of U.S. forces in the desert is at least the equivalent of moving all of Chrysler's operations to a new location, and within a few months, turning out cars again. In short, reporters' ignorance of what goes into military command is deepened exponentially by their contempt for military commanders.

Laziness. It's just plain easier to cover people in glitzy jobs, people who hold press conferences and have press offices that spoonfeed you prepared handouts, than to ferret out and report on those beneath them—like generals—in the more anonymous government positions, people who often wield as much or more real power. Nine months ago, every defense reporter was writing about Dick Cheney, but who knew from CentCom? That was some obscure command stuck on some jerkwater Florida Air Force base—Jesus, the place probably didn't even have a good restaurant. It's the same on the domestic side: at the agencies and on the Hill, for the most part, the press still can't be bothered with investigating the personal and committee staff members who make things happen and who effectively control their more well-known bosses. And the point can be made even further down into the bowels of government. There are legions of GS-14s and -15s, lieutenant colonels and colonels, in key slots that the press never scrutinizes. Reporters trying to fathom government should be going after power. But there is glamorous power and unglamorous power, and too often journalists go only after the glamor—which is admittedly more fun. In doing so, they miss at least half the story.

The upshot is that once you get away from the core big jobs in government—like the President, his staff, the secretaries of Defense, State, Treasury, the handful of truly high-profile members of Congress—the ardor of reporters dramatically shrivels. It's really to the point where the secretary of agriculture only gets coverage when he tells a racist joke; for the secretary of HUD, it took presiding over a raging scandal. And generals? What do they have to do to draw even minimal notice from the press? Go to war.

Yes, before the shooting starts it's pretty damn hard to write a piece showing that General Blowzit is probably not the man to command the tanks in the Gulf and that General Knowzit is. Of course, once the tanks go into battle under Blowzit and get cut to pieces because of his mistakes, the papers will be glad to write about him and Knowzit because then the reporters have all those ready-to-hand tank hulks to ground the story with. But why wait for disaster before doing journalistic appraisal?

If, prior to the Nazi invasion in 1940, the French people had been informed in their newspapers about their generals' antiquated and inflexible defense plans, perhaps pressure would have built to remove them in

favor of younger officers like De Gaulle and Leclerc who probably wouldn't have squandered the manpower, artillery, and tank advantages the French had over the Germans. If in 1941, reporters had investigated and written about the lax attitudes the local commanders Admiral Husband Kimmel and Lt. General Walter Short had towards alerts and force dispersal (and about the niggardly attitude the service chiefs in Washington had towards sharing intelligence with them), Pearl Harbor probably wouldn't have happened (or at least it wouldn't have been a surprise). Similarly, if there had been press coverage of General Lloyd Fredenhall's lack of familiarity with tank warfare, maybe Patton would have been brought in to replace him *before* the Anglo-American force under Fredenhall got chewed up at the Kasserine Pass—the second-worst U.S. defeat at the hands of the Germans in World War II. Or to take a current example: *The New York Times* waited until eleven days into the Gulf war to tell us that the key generals Dick Cheney appointed two years ago when he took over at Defense were “more open to military intervention” than their predecessors. Wouldn't you have liked to have known that *then*?

Recently, *U.S. News & World Report* made a commendable bid to go beyond the journalistic conventions about military reporting when it ran an essay about generals by history professor and former Marine colonel Allan Millett. But while Millett's piece stood way above the pack with its historical illustrations of how generalship can be decisive, it concluded that good generalship is an “intangible quality,” a “mystique.” This is a dangerous sentiment. Journalists should never presume that something that important to national life is a mystery, resistant to all reporting and analysis. That's giving up the game before it starts. Sure, as hard as it is to figure out whether or not the M-1 is a good tank, it's a hell of a lot harder to figure out if Blowzit is a good tank general. But since when is easiness a criterion for what kind of stories ought to get done?

During his briefing on the first day of the Gulf war, Lt. General Horner said, “It has been in some respects a technology war, although it is fought by men and women.” Despite this, the press always seems too readily lured by the equipment into overlooking the human elements of combat. Now, media people know that having a better computer, more staff, and a bigger office doesn't mean that a reporter will write better stories. So why can't they figure this out about the military? Like any other reasonably complex task, fighting a war has objective and subjective components. And the quality of command is one of those subjective components that is essential to a war's outcome. Isn't it high time reporters covered it just as vigorously as the obvious physical stuff? □



WHO'S WHO

Who are the three individuals in the White House who have gained the most from the Gulf crisis? George Bush is clearly the leading beneficiary. Less obvious are the other two, **John Sununu**, whose involvement in the budget bungle and the William Bennett fiasco were mercifully obscured by the fog of war, and **Richard Haass**, whose climb from a very minor role on the Middle East desk of the National Security Council to the status of key player was fueled by the rapidly escalating importance of the Gulf. . . .

Another minor White House aide, **Ede Holiday's** deputy, **Olin Wethington**, is not enjoying similar success in his effort to play a major role—in his case, in energy policy. Wethington's enterprise is not widely appreciated by other government officials involved in energy issues. . . .

Outside the White House, the administration's biggest gainer from the war has been **Dick Cheney**, who just last summer was reported to be out of the foreign policy loop, fishing in Wyoming while the insiders were preparing for the summit. . . .

Congressional Democrats, whose annual lobbyist-financed retreat at the lavish Greenbrier Hotel has come under criticism recently, have decided to try to avoid unpleasant comment by a change of venue to the Williamsburg Inn, which on a scale of posh probably rates an eight or nine to the Greenbrier's 10, but still abounds in tasteful luxury plus golf and tennis. . . .

Many observers have wondered why there are so few Jews in high positions in the current administration. Perhaps there is a hint of the answer in the fact that **George Bush**, his counsel, **C. (for Clayland) Boyden Gray**, and his chief of protocol, **Joseph D. Reed**, have all been members of the Jupiter Island Club, an exclusive residential community in Hobe Sound, Florida, the bylaws of which have historically barred Jews. . . .

Lamar Alexander seems likely to be more sympathetic to minority scholarships than some of his conservative subordinates at the Department of Education. When he was editor of the student paper at the University of Tennessee, he was a strong advocate of the admission of blacks to what was then an all-white institution. And when he became president of the University of Tennessee, he hired the school's first black vice president. . . .

If you have wondered whether there are any doves in the White House, the answer is not now. But there were some before January 16. They were outside the small circle involved in the decision to go to war and did not speak up because of bureaucratic caution, and because they believed **Saddam Hussein** would cave. . . .

Much of **Charles Keating's** Lincoln Savings and Loan disaster could have been prevented if **Fernand St. Germain**, then the chairman of the House Banking Committee, had heeded an early 1988 memo from his chief investigator, **Gary Bowser**, recommending that hearings be held on Lincoln. . . .

Clayton Yeutter, the new RNC chief, is not acting like the "breath of fresh air" that Rep. **Beryl Anthony** called

him when the former Nixon fundraiser joined the Reagan team in 1987. Despite Yeutter's stale attempt to bring the Gulf war to congressional districts with his vow to ostracize lawmakers who voted against war, the former agriculture secretary is no **Lee Atwater**. It won't work, say GOP operatives, who are less than thrilled with Yeutter's selection. After all, Transportation Secretary **Sam Skinner** and Commerce Secretary **Robert Mosbacher** both turned down the dead-end job. Most decisions will be made by White House chief of staff John Sununu. Sununu, Mosbacher, and **Robert Teeter** are fighting for control of the 1992 campaign. . . .

Despite efforts by some RNC dissidents to oust **Richard Darman**, the OMB director has consolidated his power. He dominated the drafting of the president's State of the Union address, ensuring that the domestic agenda would reflect his imprint. Darman continues to feud with **Roger Porter**, the president's assistant for economic and domestic policy, who has decided to forfeit his tenure at Harvard and remain at the White House. . . .

The White House is hoping to profit from the well-heeled connections of former baseball commissioner **Peter Ueberroth**, who lives in Newport Beach, California, and knows many people with lots of money. Ueberroth has become head of the publicly financed, \$20 million National Tree Trust, Bush's tree-planting initiative. . . .

When **Jason DeParle**, an alumnus of this magazine who is now with *The New York Times*, asked **Jim Pinkerton**, the White House aide who says George Bush is "the first president to govern in the spirit of The New Paradigm," for specific examples of New Paradigm presidential actions, the conversation went like this:

"Civil rights for the disabled," he says.

And what else?

Mr. Pinkerton pauses and hunts down an April speech where the phrase 'New Paradigm' fell from presidential lips.

"I think the president's said enough about this to be properly credited with a significant role in this. . . . I truly mean that.

"Sincerely." . . .

In—Agriculture: Secretary—**Edward Madigan**. *White House:* Staff Secretary—**Phillip D. Brady**. *Agencies and Commissions:* Director, Selective Service System—**Robert William Gambino**.

Out—Agriculture: Secretary—**Clayton K. Yeutter**. *Transportation:* General Counsel—**Phillip D. Brady**. *White House:* Associate Director, Office of Cabinet Affairs—**Barry McBee**, Special Assistant for Agriculture Trade and Food Assistance—**Cooper Evans**, Assistant for Management and Administration—**J. Bonnie Newman**, Deputy to Chief of Staff—**James W. Cicconi**. *Agencies and Commissions:* Administrator, Small Business Administration—**Susan S. Engeleiter**. Director, Selective Service System—**Samuel K. Lessey Jr.**