



# Strategic Challenges in American Military History

“This struggle is to save the Union”:  
Two Approaches to Executing President  
Lincoln’s Wartime Strategy



# THE UNITED STATES ARMY WAR COLLEGE

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“He [Lincoln] could think strategically,...Lincoln possessed one of the greatest qualities in leadership: the ability to learn. Able rhetorically to soar above all others in his vision and evocation of the Union, he was also a ruthless pragmatist when it came to measures related to winning the war. He once said in 1862 that he ‘*was pretty well cured of any objection to any measure except want of adaptedness to putting down the rebellion.*’ His record bears out his words.”

**Donald Stoker, *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War***



## Questions for Consideration

What do you think Donald Stoker means when he says that “He [Lincoln] could think strategically”?

How is this different from thinking at the operational or tactical levels?

Why is it so important to have a national leader that can think strategically as opposed to delving in to operational or tactical issues?



## REFERENCES

- Glatthaar, Joseph T. *Partners in Command: The Relationships Between Leaders in the Civil War*. New York: Free Press, 1994.
- Hsieh, Wayne. “The Strategy of Lincoln and Grant,” in ed. Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnerich, *Successful Strategies: Triumphant in War and Peace from Antiquity to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Stoker, Donald. *The Grand Design: Strategy and the U.S. Civil War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

### Supplementary:

- Blair, Jayne. *The Essential Civil War: A Handbook to the Battles, Armies, Navies and Commanders*. Jefferson: McFarland and Company, 2006.



# Levels of War

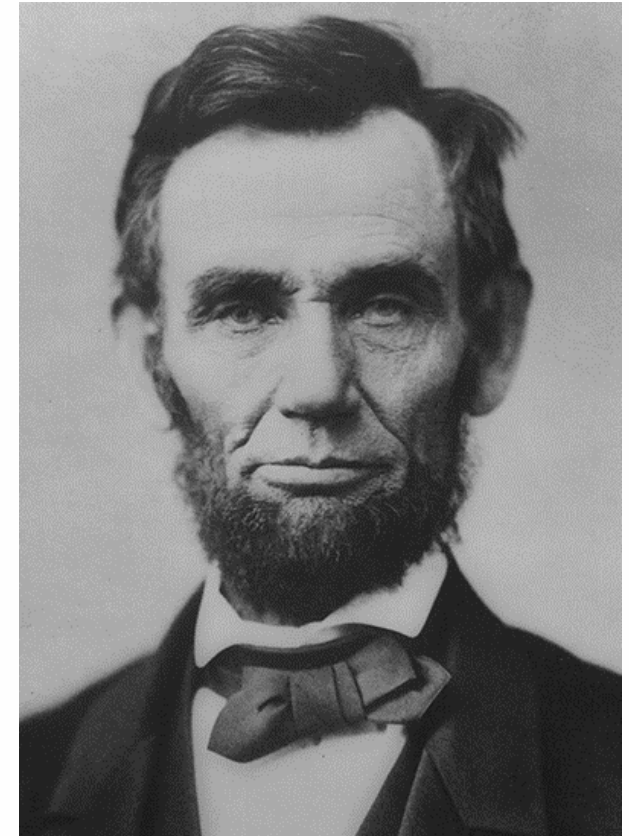
- Strategic
  - Defined By Policy
  - Civilian Leadership
  - Desired Endstate
- Operational
  - How military forces are used to achieve desired endstate
  - Generally developed and executed by military
- Tactical
  - Techniques for using military forces
  - “Battlefield” activities



# STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

“My paramount object  
in this struggle is to  
save the Union”

*President Lincoln*



# CENTER OF GRAVITY DEFINED



“One must keep *the dominant characteristics* of both belligerents in mind. Out of these characteristics a certain *center of gravity develops, the hub of all power and movement* on which everything depends. That is the point against which all of our energies must be directed.”

Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*



# LINCOLN'S OPERATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

- “ I state my general idea of this war to be that we have the *greater* numbers and the enemy has the *greater* facility of concentrating forces upon points of collision; that we must fail unless we can find some way of making *our* advantage and overmatch for *his*; and this can only be done by menacing him with superior forces at *different* points, at the *same* time; so that we can safely attack, one, or both, if he makes no change; and if he *weakens* one to *strengthen* the other, forbear to attack the strengthened one, but seize and hold the weakened one, gaining so much.”





# STRATEGIC QUADCHART

## WAYS:

- Peninsula Campaign (1862)
- Grant's Operational Plan (1864-65)

## MEANS:

- U.S. Army
- Civilian Population/Immigrants
- Industry
- Fiscal

## ENDS:

“My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union”

--President Lincoln

## RISKS:

- Public Support
- Political Support (Election of 1864)
- ~~• European Intervention~~

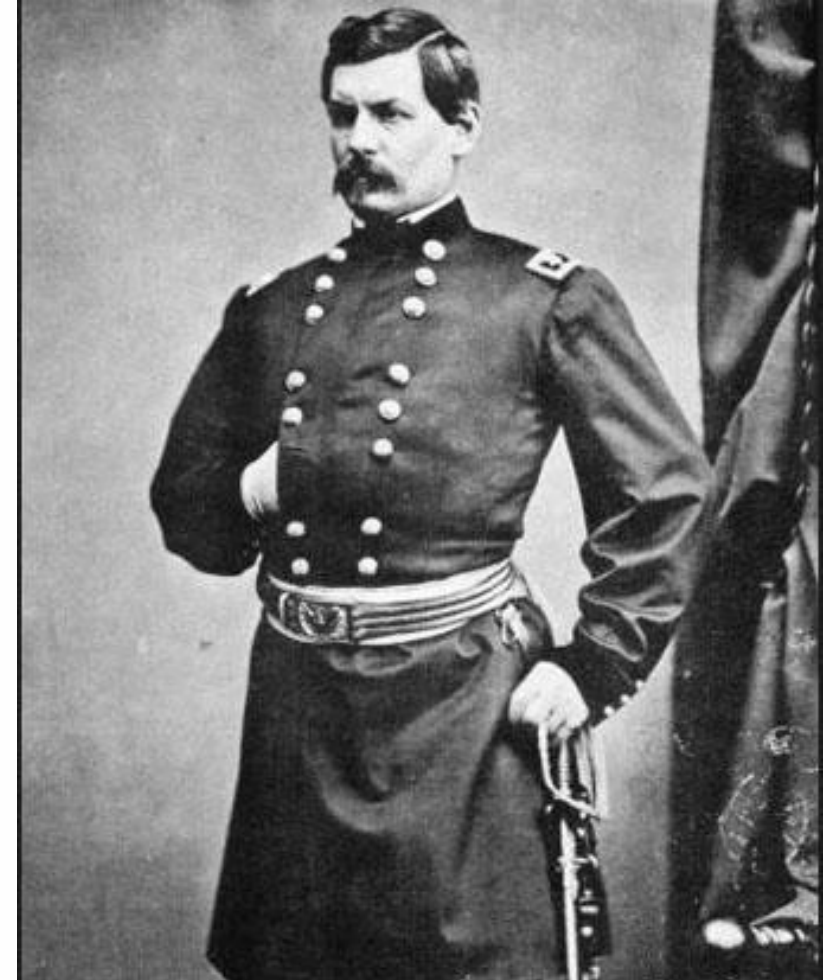
# “YOUNG NAPOLEON”



- Engineer; second in his class at USMA
  - Service during Mexican-American War
  - Army General-in-Chief, age: 34
  - Superb organizer and trainer
  - Egotistical and difficult with superiors
- 
- Capture political capital and limit the damage to civilian populations
  - “I have ever regarded our true policy [strategy] as being that of fully preparing ourselves & then seeking for the most decisive results;--I do not wish to waste life in useless battles, but prefer to strike at the heart.”



“It should not be at all a war upon population, but against armed forces and political organization...In prosecuting the war all private property and unarmed persons should be strictly protected, subject only to the necessity of military operations.”

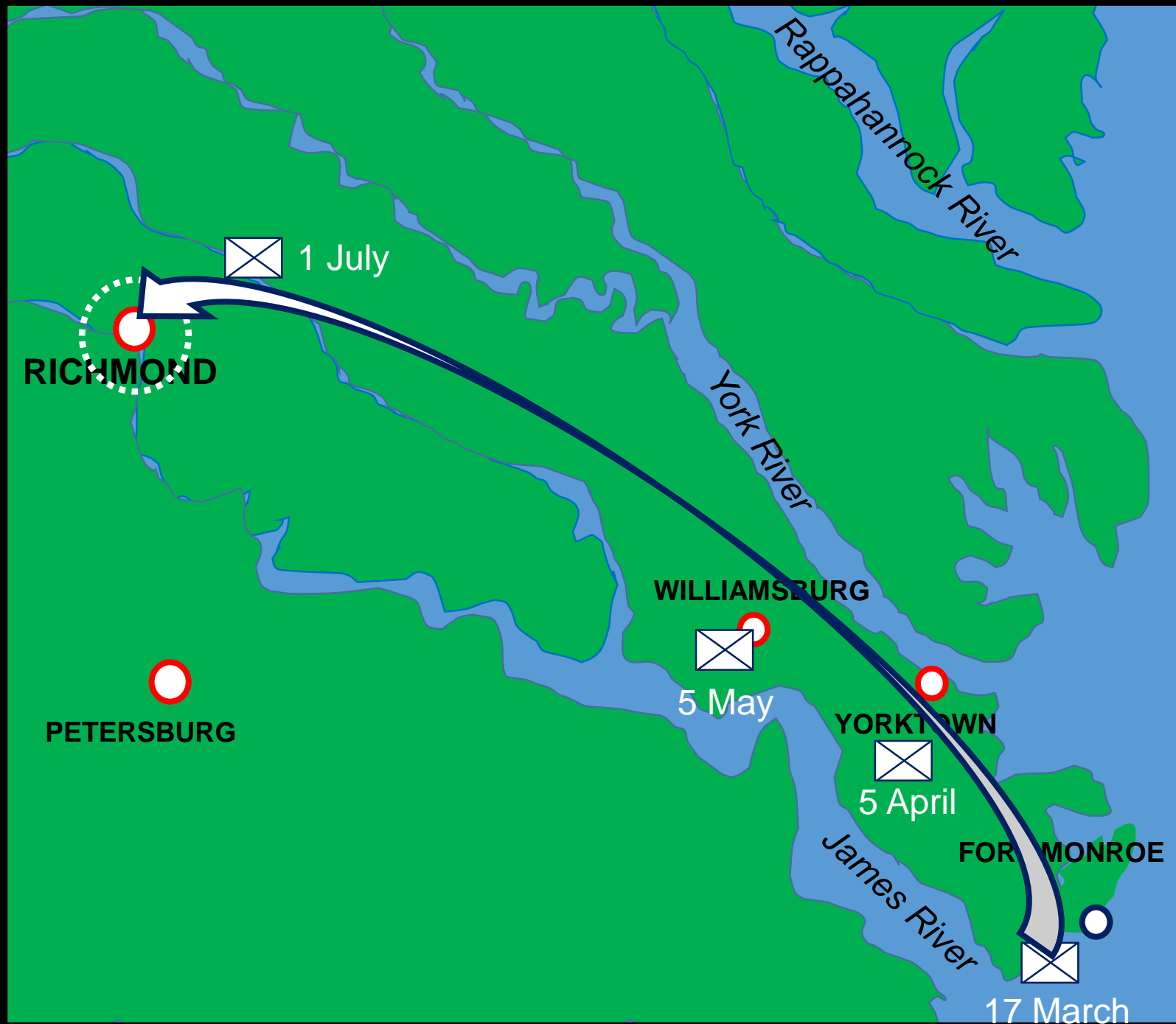


# Peninsula Campaign- 1862

**OBJECTIVE:** Capture of Richmond

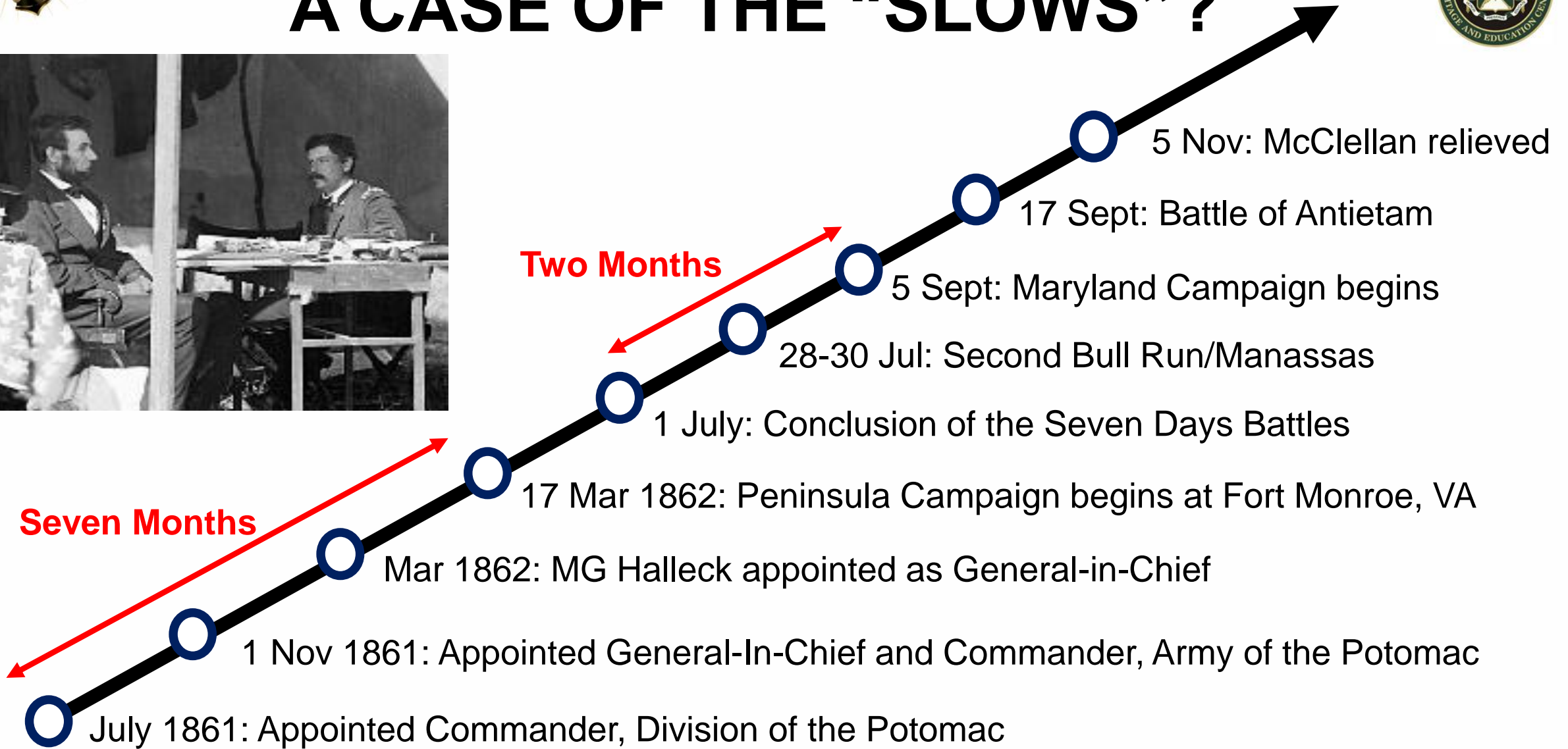
**MEANS:** 121,500 troops

**RESULT:** Army of the Potomac forced from outskirts of Richmond following the Seven Days Battles (25 June- 1 July)



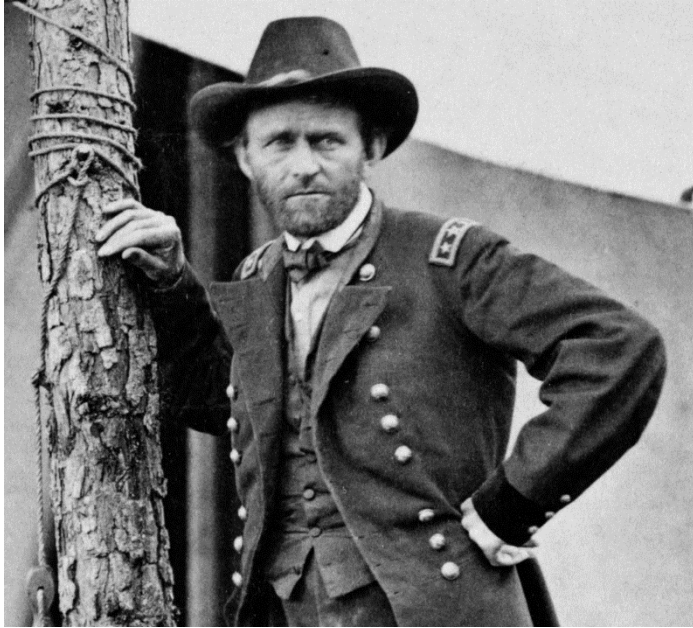


# A CASE OF THE "SLOWS"?





## U.S. GRANT



- Graduated 21<sup>st</sup> out of 39 from USMA
- Service during Mexican-American War
- Captures Vicksburg, 4 July 1863
- Promoted to LTG in March, 1864

“...first, to *use the greatest number of troops practicable against the armed force of the enemy*, preventing him from using the same force at different seasons against first one and then another of our armies...; second, to *hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources* until...there should be nothing left to him”

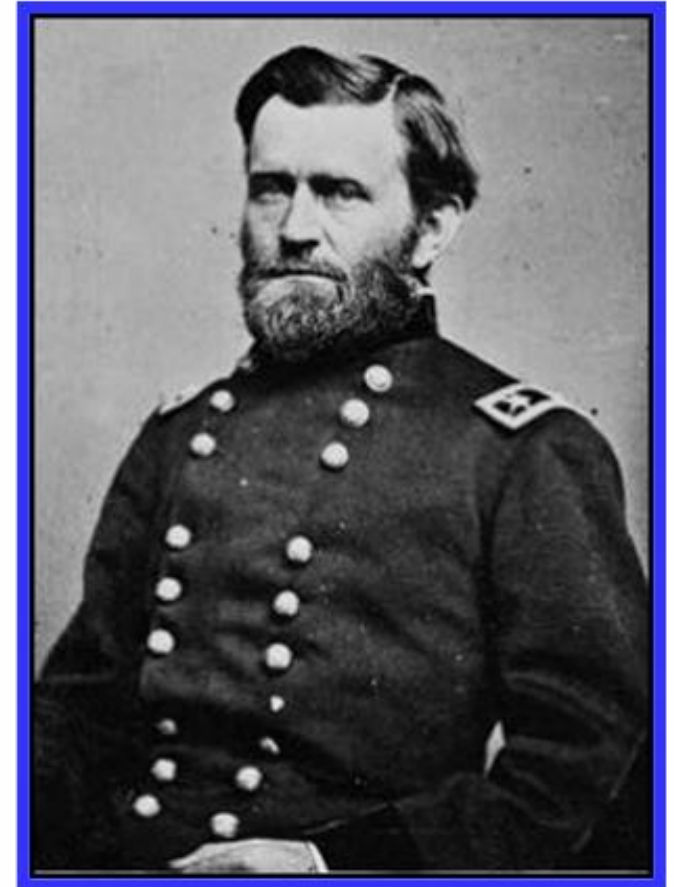


# U.S. GRANT

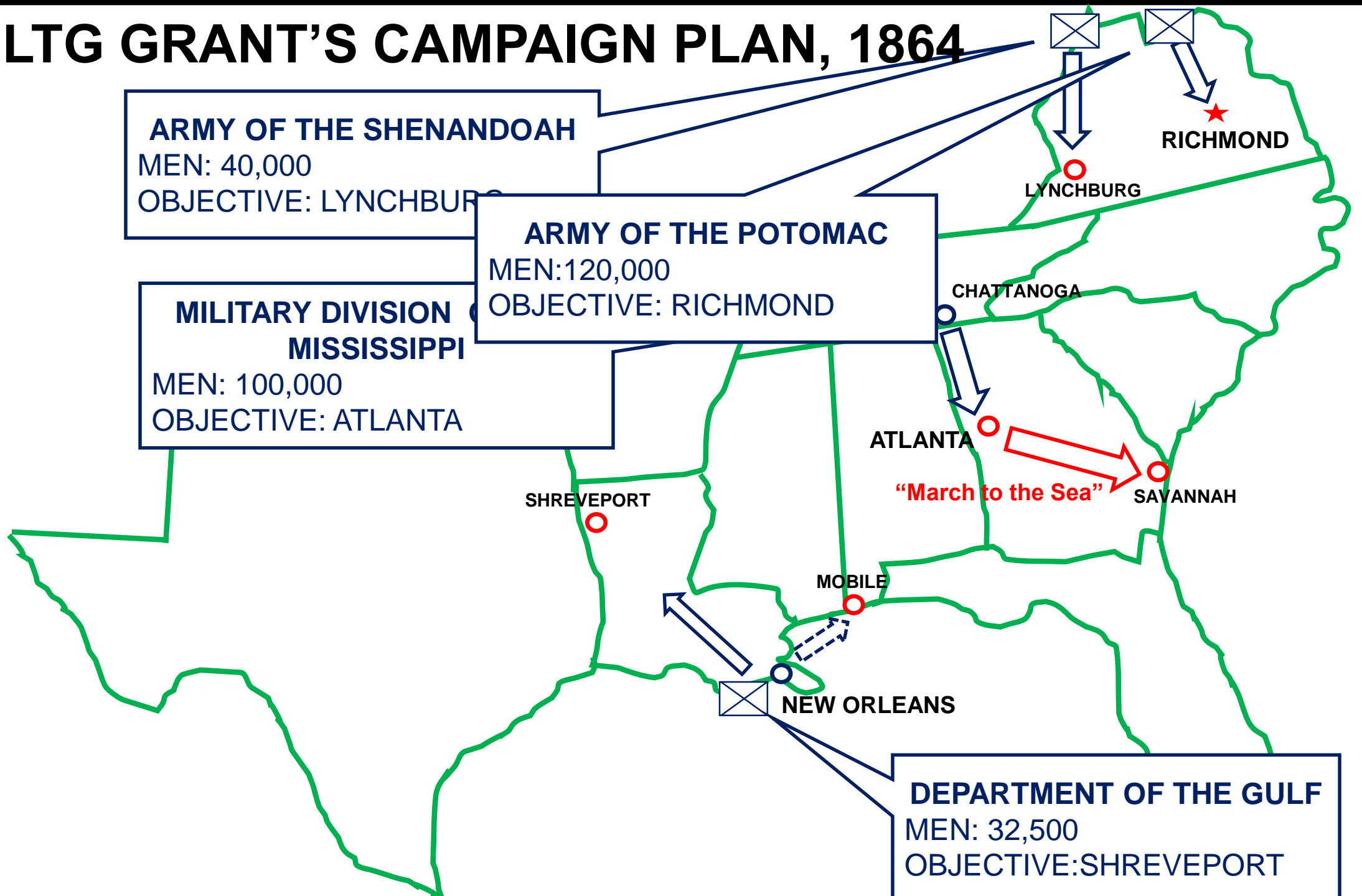
“The art of war is simple enough. Find out where your enemy is. Get at him as soon as you can. Strike him as hard as you can, and keep moving.”

MEADE: “Lee’s army will be your objective point. Wherever Lee goes, you will go also.”

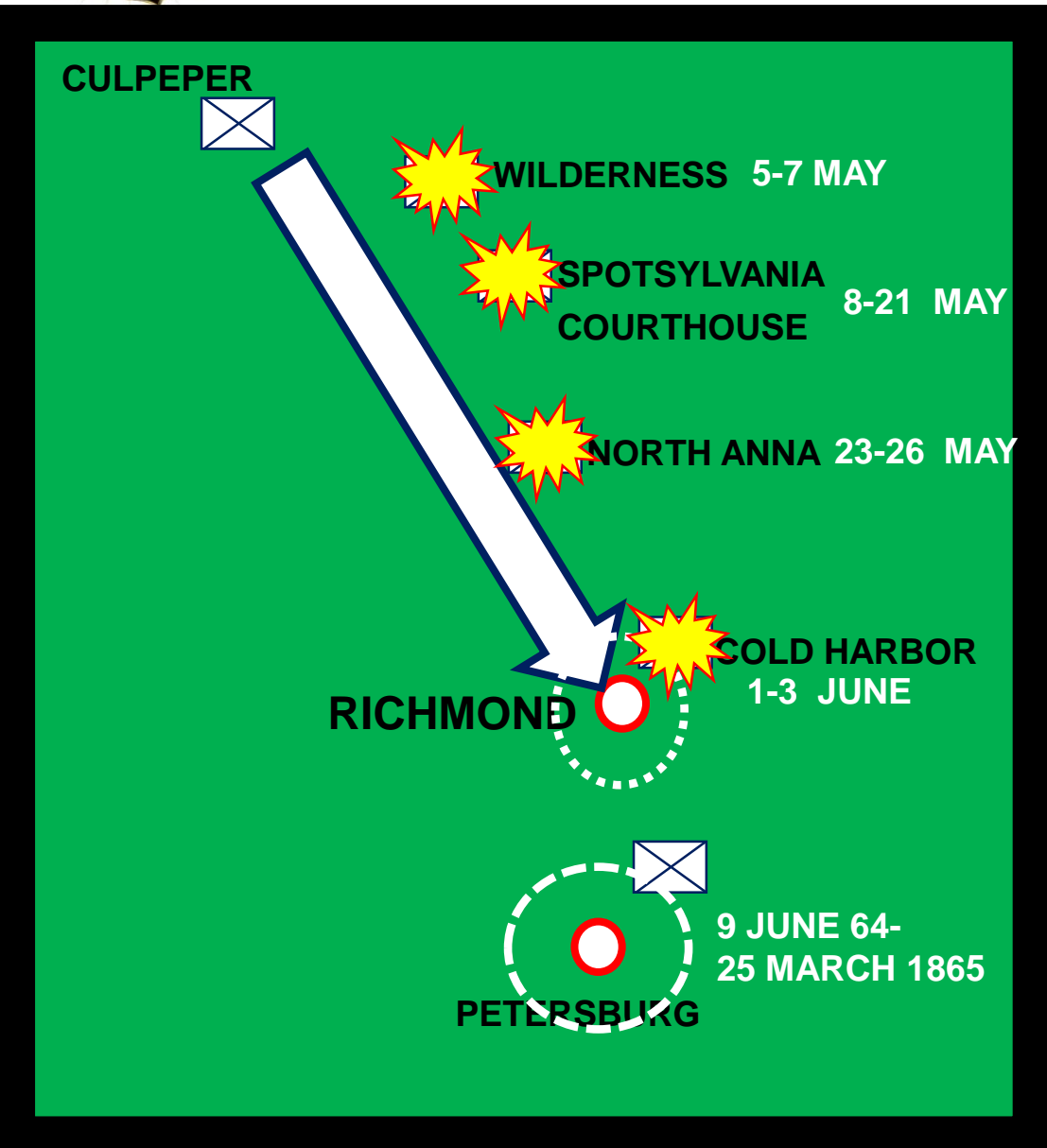
Sherman: “...move against Johnston’s army to break it up and to get into the interior of the enemy’s country as far as you can, inflicting all the damage you can against their war resources.”



# LTG GRANT'S CAMPAIGN PLAN, 1864







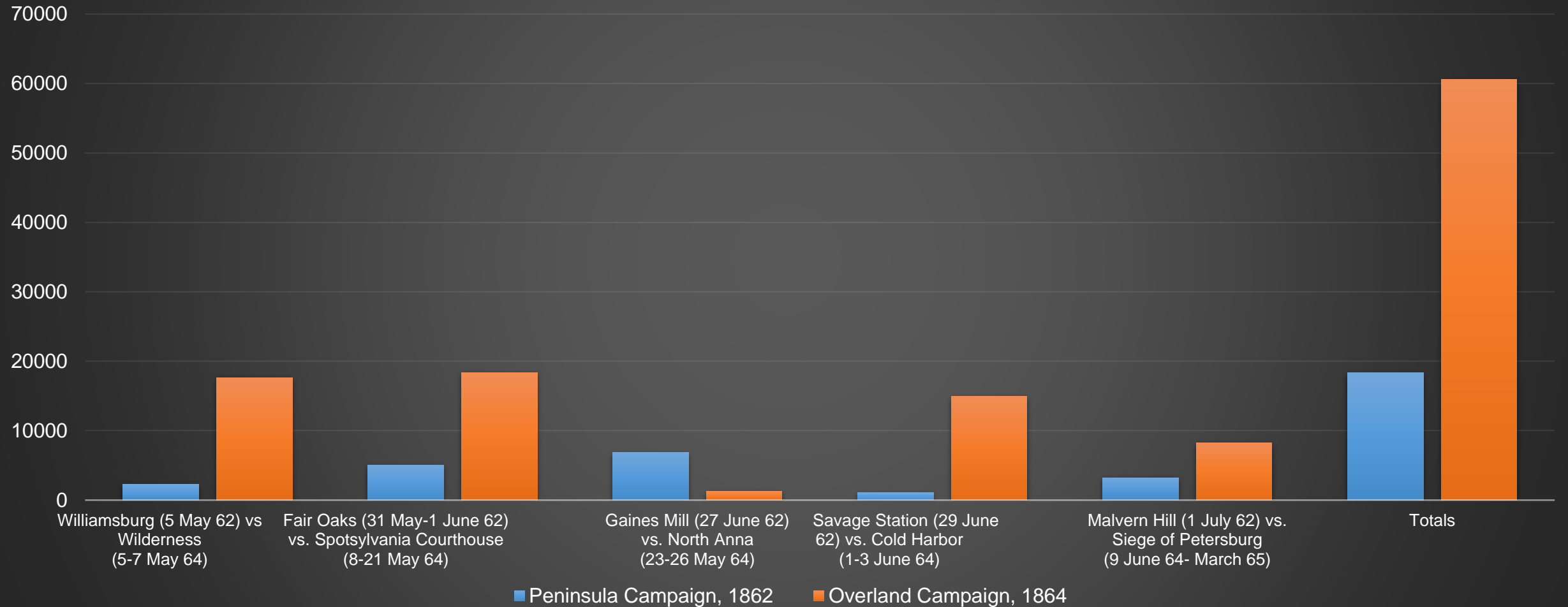
## LTG GRANT'S OPERATIONAL APPROACH

“to hammer continuously against the armed force of the enemy and his resources until...there should be nothing left to him”



# THE PRICE OF VICTORY

## Casualty Comparison: The Peninsula Campaign versus the Overland Campaign





# APPLICATION

- After this lesson, do you consider President Lincoln a competent strategic leader in terms of managing the war (i.e. providing guidance, means, etc.) and his commanders and ultimately accomplishing his strategic goal?
- Would the operational philosophy of LTG Grant’s “to hammer continuously” and the costs associated with it (over 55,000 casualties—including the siege of Petersburg) in just over a month during the Overland Campaign) be acceptable to the American Government and people in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?
- Discuss the ethical dilemma associated with the concept of “to hammer...his [the enemy’s] resources until...there should be nothing left of him.” and how it impacts warfare in the future? (i.e. strategic bombing, atomic bombs, civilian casualties, etc.)