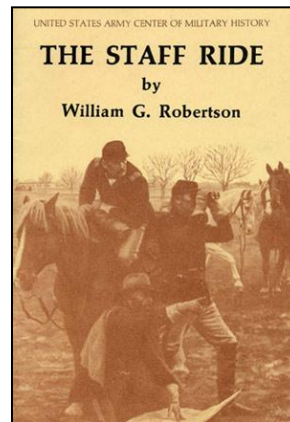# Contents

- Introduction
- Why Conduct a Virtual Staff Ride?
- The Virtual Staff Ride (VSR)
- Supporting VSR References
- Available VSRs
- Exportable Package
- Classroom Set-up
- Conclusion

Introduction

- A *staff ride* is a historical study of a campaign or battle that envisions a systematic **preliminary study phase**, an extensive **field study phase** on the actual historic site, and an **integration phase** to capture the lessons derived from each (for an overview of the staff ride concept and how to plan and execute a staff ride, see the CSI Staff Ride Team web site at http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/historical-support_sr.asp).

- A *virtual staff ride* (VSR) **follows the same methodology as a field staff ride**, but because restrictions preclude a trip to battlefield sites, the terrain is **replicated in a virtual environment in the classroom**.
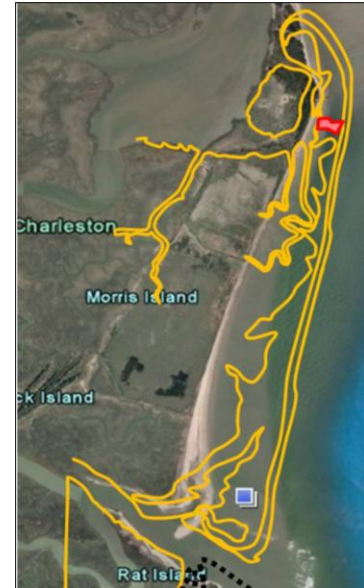

At the Bloody Angle at Gettysburg

THE STAFF RIDE
by
William G. Robertson

In the Waygal Valley, Afghanistan

Why Conduct a VSR?

- Getting there is difficult
  - Funding
  - Distance
  - Time
- Inaccessibility to the actual ground (private property or foreign travel issues)
- Terrain overcome by modern urban sprawl
- The terrain simply no longer exists

Coastal erosion in South Carolina

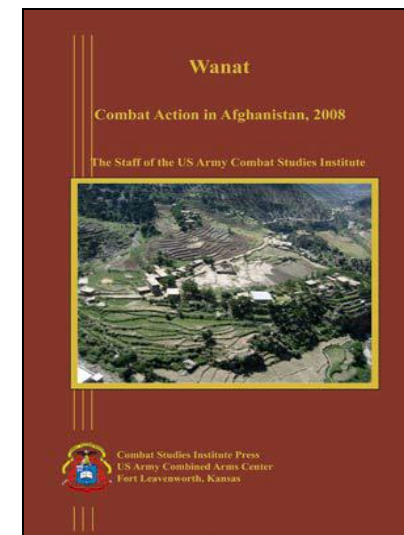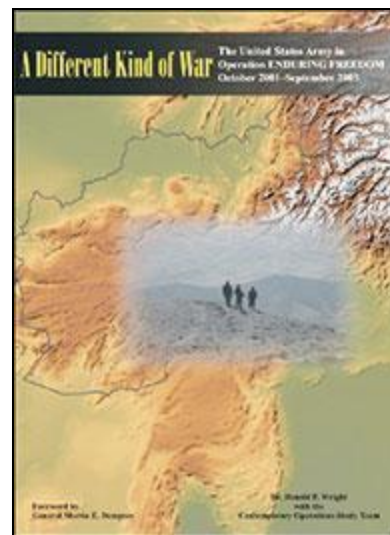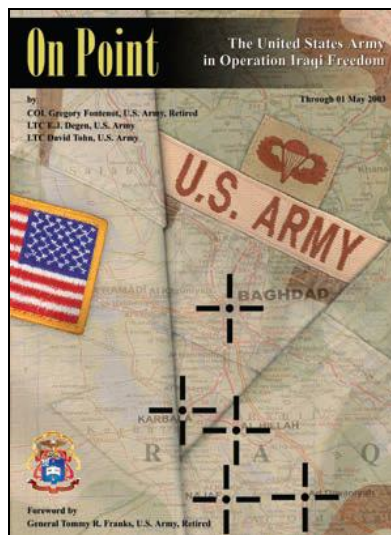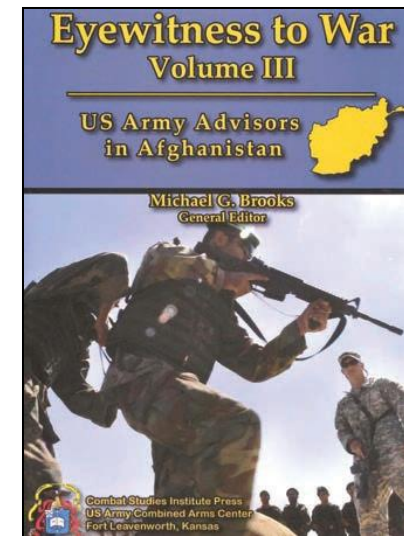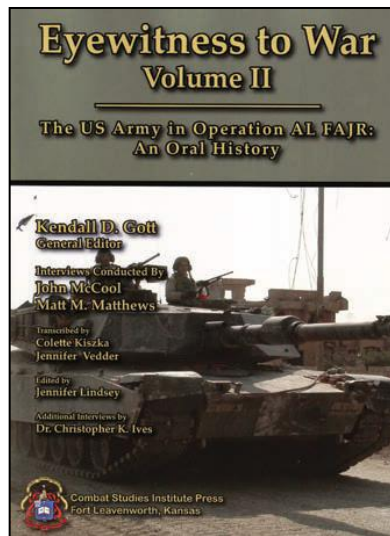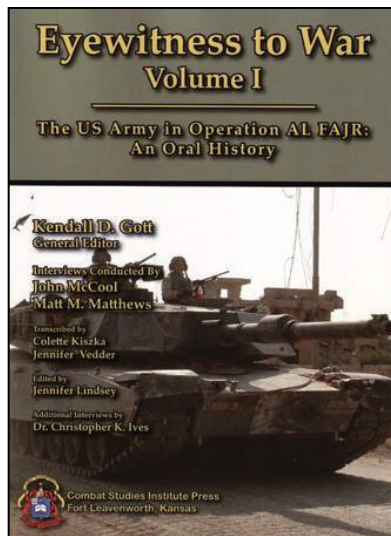Urban sprawl in Westport, Missouri

Observation post in Afghanistan

The Virtual Staff Ride

- Technology is leveraged to achieve the same degree of leader development and education as seen with a field staff ride.

- Since 2005, the CSI VSR concept envisions a detailed replication of terrain based upon satellite imagery, maps, photos, video, sketches, first-hand accounts of participants, etc., and construction of a three dimensional environment to immerse the student in the virtual terrain; providing the most realistic vision of the battlefield possible without leaving the classroom.

- Current VSRs are set in Afghanistan and Iraq and based upon CSI-published materials provided to the Force since 2001 that are available upon request or download from the CSI Military History Support website (http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/historical-support.asp).

- The development of historic VSRs from the American Civil War through the First World War is currently underway.

- CSI provides quality instruction and technical support (two personnel), funded by the unit or by CSI-contracted funding as required.

Supporting VSR References
CSI Publishing Available by Request or On Line

Eyewitness to War Volume I
The US Army in Operation AL FAJR: An Oral History
Kendall D. Gott, General Editor
Interviews Conducted By John McCool, Matt M. Matthews
Transcribed by Colette Kiszka, Jennifer Vedder
Edited by Jennifer Lindsey
Additional Interviews by Dr. Christopher K. Ives
Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Eyewitness to War Volume II
The US Army in Operation AL FAJR: An Oral History
Kendall D. Gott, General Editor
Interviews Conducted By John McCool, Matt M. Matthews
Transcribed by Colette Kiszka, Jennifer Vedder
Edited by Jennifer Lindsey
Additional Interviews by Dr. Christopher K. Ives
Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Eyewitness to War Volume III
US Army Advisors in Afghanistan
Michael G. Brooks, General Editor
Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

On Point — The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom
Through 01 May 2003
by COL Gregory Fontenot, U.S. Army, Retired; LTC E.J. Degen, U.S. Army; LTC David Tohn, U.S. Army
Foreword by General Tommy R. Franks, U.S. Army, Retired

A Different Kind of War — The United States Army in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM October 2001–September 2005

Wanat
Combat Action in Afghanistan, 2008
The Staff of the US Army Combat Studies Institute
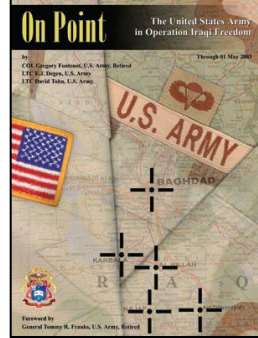Combat Studies Institute Press, US Army Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Available Virtual Staff Rides

- **Operation Iraqi Freedom Virtual Staff Ride (March 2003-March 05)**
  - This staff ride provides approximately 16 hours of material that examines the major facets of the planning and execution of Phase III combat operations from JAN-MAY 2003 and the transition to Phase IV operations, to including the Shia Uprising in Najaf, Operation Phantom Fury in Fallujah, and operations in Tal Afar through 2005. The length of the virtual staff ride can be tailored to run from one to three days, subject to the unit's schedule and training objectives.

- **Operation Anaconda (February – March 2002)**
  - A day long staff ride (or partial day staff ride) that examines the coalition attack into the Shahi Kowt Valley in 2002. The study encompasses conventional operations (3/101 ABN Div), coalition operations (Afghan Military Forces), joint operations (CFACC), and special operations.

- **Wanat (13 July 2008)**
  - A 4-hour staff ride that examines a coalition Task Force conducting COIN operations in the Waygal valley of Afghanistan, 2007-2008, focusing primarily on an insurgent attack on a small COP occupied by 2nd PLT, Chosen Co, 2nd/503rd Airborne Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

Operation Iraqi Freedom
Shorter Scenarios

- **Fallujah, 2004**: This 4-hour staff ride represents the latest CSI release, examining the US-led coalition operation to secure the insurgent stronghold of Fallujah in November 2004. It provides the first true Unified Land Operations-oriented staff ride well-suited to the development and education of leaders at the Brigade and Division level.

- **The March to Baghdad:** An abbreviated version of the overall OIF VSR, this 6-hour staff ride focuses on Phase III Combat Operations during March-April 2003, culminating with the fall of Baghdad.

- **The Ambush of the 507th Maintenance Company:** This 2-hour staff ride looks at the ambush and destruction of the 507th Maintenance Company on 23 March 2003 during V Corps advance on Baghdad.

- **Check Point 541:** This 2-hour staff ride highlights an escalation of force incident at US blocking position in Baghdad on 4 March 2005, resulting in the accidental death of an Italian Major General.

- **The Palm Sunday Ambush:** This 2-hour staff ride focuses on the insurgent ambush of two supply convoys on ASR Detroit and US actions on contact on 20 March, 2005.
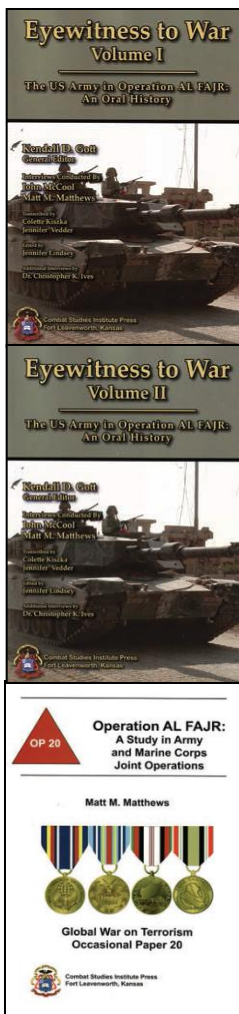
The Combat Studies Institute's newest Virtual Staff Ride
Available Now!

- The 1st VSR focusing on Unified Land Operations (ULO) doctrine as outlined in ADRP 3-0
- An Urban Operations environment
- Brigade and Division-level tactical operations focus
- Emphasis on the principles of joint planning and operations

The Battle for Fallujah, 2004

(4 hour duration)

The March to Baghdad

- **Leadership and Mission Command**
- **Combined Joint planning and execution**
- **Unified Land Operations doctrine**
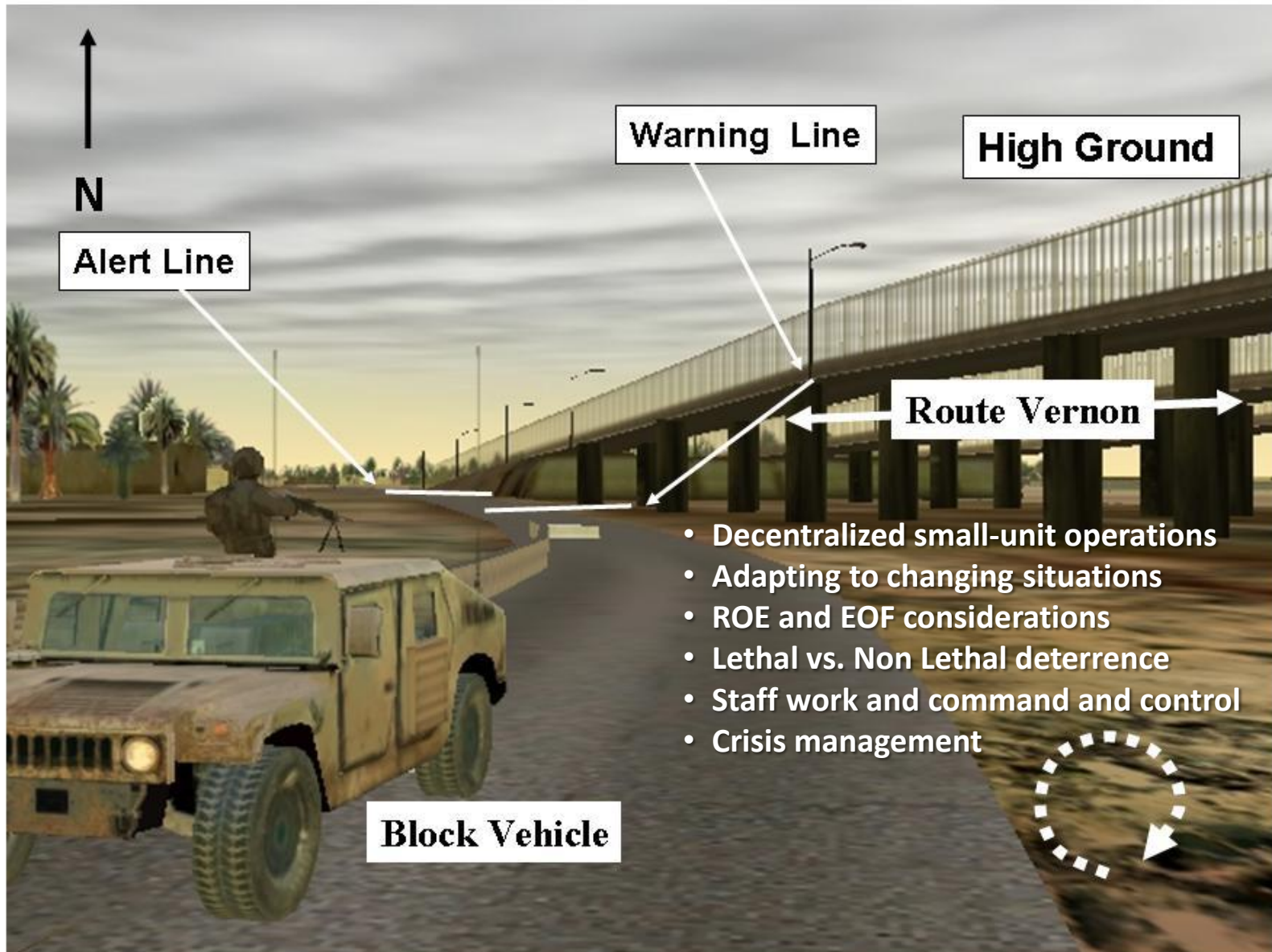- **Employment of emerging technology**
- **Urban operations environment**

The Ambush of the 507th Maintenance Company

Text visible on image:

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- Small-unit operations in a non-linear environment
- Knowledge of the enemy situation/intelligence
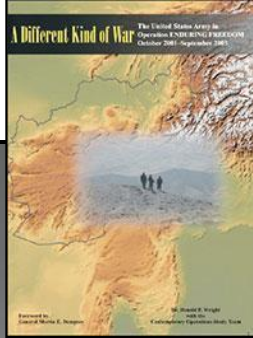- Effective command and control

Check Point 541

Virtual view from block vehicle position looking north toward RTE Vernon

Labels within image:

N

Warning Line

High Ground

Alert Line

Route Vernon

- Decentralized small-unit operations
- Adapting to changing situations
- ROE and EOF considerations
- Lethal vs. Non Lethal deterrence
- Staff work and command and control
- Crisis management

Block Vehicle

The Palm Sunday Ambush

- Compliments the 507th Maintenance Co VSR
- Combat Logistics Patrol operations in a non-linear environment
- Knowledge of the enemy situation/intelligence
- Actions on contact and QRF operations

Operation Anaconda

A one-day (or partial day) staff ride that examines the coalition attack into the Shahi Kowt Valley in 2002. The study encompasses conventional operations (3/101 ABN Div), multinational operations (Afghan Military Forces), joint operations (CFACC), and special operations.
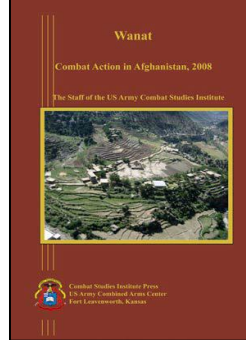
Takur Ghar

- Leadership and Mission Command
- Mission analysis
- Joint planning and operations
- Multinational Operations
- SOF-Conventional force integration

The village of Babol Kheyl

Robert's Ridge at the top of Takur Ghar

Wanat - 13 July 2008

Examines a coalition Task Force conducting COIN operations in the Waygal valley of Afghanistan, 2007-2008, focusing primarily on an insurgent attack on a small COP occupied by 2nd PLT, Chosen Co, 2nd/503rd Airborne Infantry, 173rd Airborne Brigade.

OP Topside

Executed in approximately 4 hours

- Appeals to ROTC and higher in all types of units
- Primarily Battalion-level audiences
- Small-unit leadership from the Squad to Battalion level
- Captures specific OEF lessons from the small-unit level
- COIN-centric
- Afghan pre-deployment leader development tool

Vehicle Patrol Base Kahler

Rebuilding History
Battery Wagner, South Carolina

In 2013 CSI began a transition to balance its contemporary VSRs with historic examples. An initial requirement in this process was to rebuild sites and terrain from historical events that were lost to nature and bring them back to life in the classroom.

The pilot VSR for this initiative is the recreation of Battery Wagner, a key position in the defense of Civil War Charleston, SC, made famous in the 1989 film, *Glory*. In the 150 years since the Union assaults, Battery Wagner and its adjacent terrain were lost to Atlantic Ocean erosion. Now, resurrected, it is an interactive piece of CSI's Charleston Campaign, 1861-65, field staff ride and is also available as a 2-hour VSR for units and organizations across the Army and its Sister Services.

BATTERY WAGNER

Charleston

Morris Island

ck Island

Rat Island

- The roots of joint campaign planning and operations
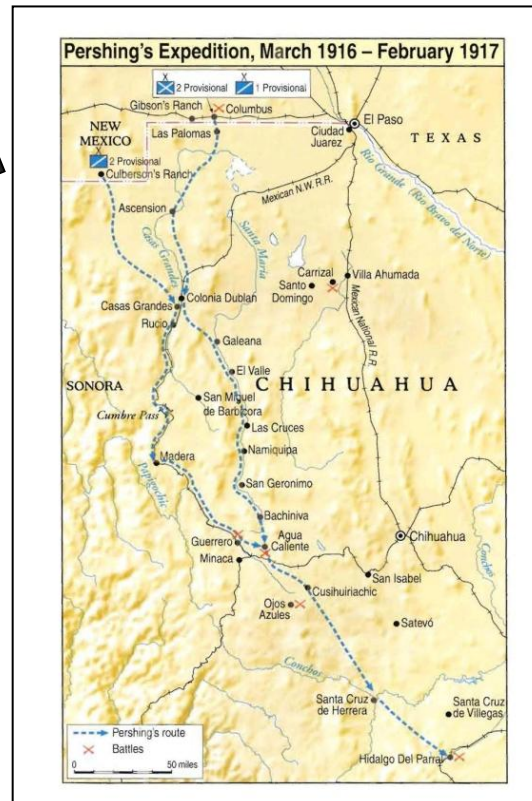- The impact of evolving technology on doctrine

- An examination of leadership and Mission Command
- A study in pre-20th century expeditionary operations
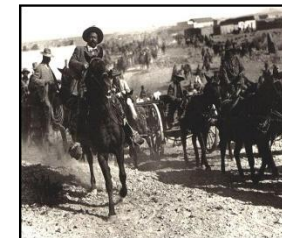
Homeland Security and Intervention
Pancho Villa's Raid on Columbus and the Punitive Expedition, 1916-17

The Combat Studies Institute continues to move forward in it development of VSRs to support the Army's priority of developing and educating its leaders.

One of CSI's next projects will be Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, NM, and the ensuing Punitive Expedition, 1916-17, complimenting and expanding on its currently available Columbus Raid field staff ride. The complete VSR package will be ready by the close of FY14.

San Francisco Chronicle — PRESIDENT ORDERS PERSHING TO INVADE MEXICO

Pershing's Expedition, March 1916 – February 1917

DAILY GAZETTE. — DARING MEXICAN RAID ON COLUMBUS, N. M.

- Homeland security
- Intelligence operations
- US policy in the Americas
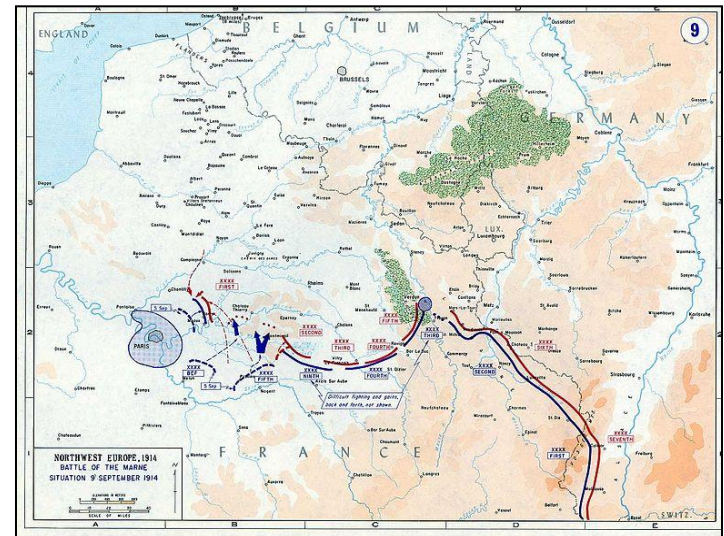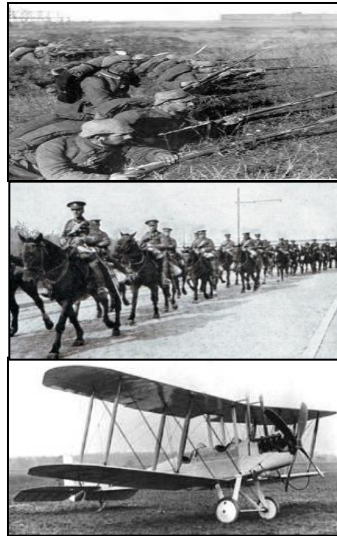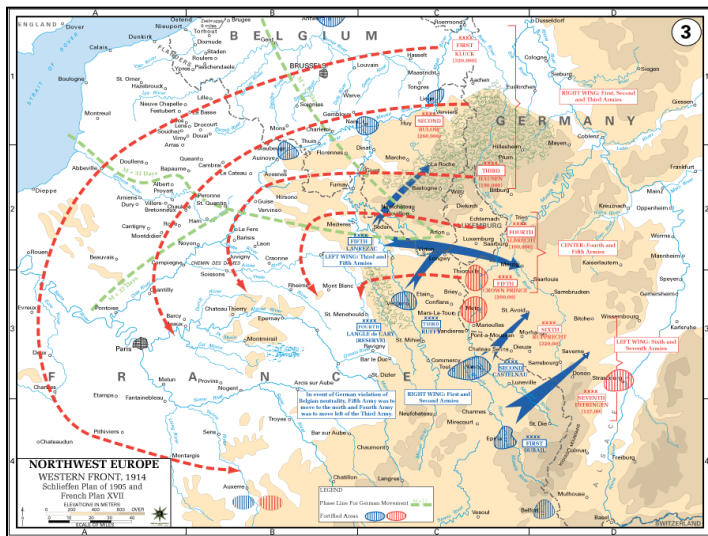- Combating non-state actors
- Strategy of intervention

- Personality-based targeting
- Sustainment operations
- The Army in transition
- Last major US cavalry operation
- Rehearsal exercise for WWI

Operational and Strategic Coalition Warfighting
The Campaign of the Marne
1914

In observance of the Centennial of the First World War, the Combat Studies Institute will develop its first virtual staff ride focusing on the operational and strategic levels of warfare without ignoring the critical influence of events at the tactical. Scheduled to be available in SEP 2014, it will also available as a field staff ride for EUCOM and major NATO operational Commands in early FY15.

- Issues in modern multinational coalition warfighting
- Strategic and operational planning and execution
- Impact of new technology on doctrine
- Influence of personality upon warfare

OIF VSR "Exportable" Package

- "Staff ride in a box" concept in a R/CD format
- Includes all materials required to conduct a VSR without direct support from CSI
    - Virtual terrain (VBS2 required to run program)
    - Instructor support package
    - Student support package
- Provides three separate 2-hour OIF VSR scenarios
    - **The Ambush of the 507th Maintenance Company**
    - **Check Point 541**
    - **The Palm Sunday Ambush**
- Packages will be mailed directly to the organization via US mail
- Requests for exportable packages can be submitted through the "Request a Staff Ride" tab located at the bottom of the CSI Military History Support page at http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/historical-support_sr.asp.

Classroom Requirements

Typical classroom set up and orientation

Facility Types
- Organization classroom/conference rooms
- Education Center classrooms
- Simulation Center classrooms

Audience Size
- Standard audience cap is 35-40 personnel
- Quality of the facility allows for increases up to a maximum of 50-60 personnel

CSI Requirements
- Two laptops
  - VSR software
  - Power Point visuals
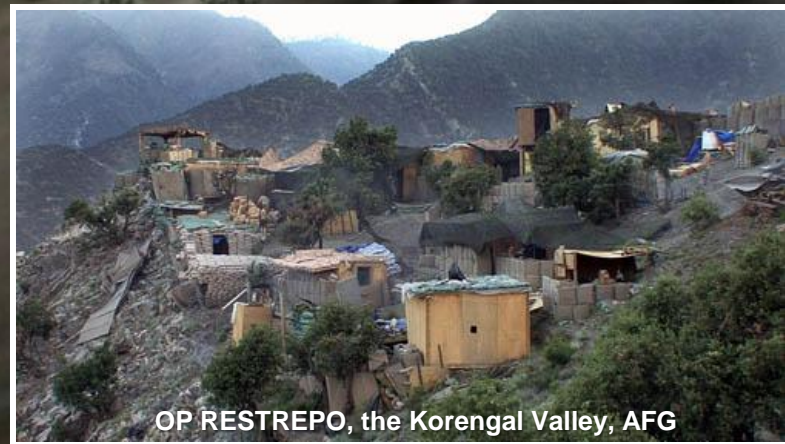
Unit/Organization Requirements
- Adequate classroom facility with adjustable lighting
- Two projectors w/ UGA cables
- Two projection screens
- Podium
- 1-set of speakers

Conclusion
The Benefits of a VSR

- Ability to transition from the 2D to the 3D in 360 degrees

- Flexibility to move rapidly and sequentially over terrain

- Illustrates the difficulty of mission command and leadership challenges relative to terrain
  - Terrain and weather analysis
  - Analysis of mobility corridors and avenues of approach
  - Advantages & disadvantages of available cover
  - Line of sight & fields of fire
  - Movement and maneuver
  - Fires coordination and integration
  - Air ground integration

- For more information on the Combat Studies Institute's offering in support of leader development and education, go to our Military History Support website at: http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/historical-support.asp.

The past is prologue!

OP RESTREPO, the Korengal Valley, AFG