

Arthur L. Wagner



the Man Who Wrote the
Book on Intelligence

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At the end of the 19th century, military intelligence was gaining its first real handhold in the U.S. Army educational establishment, thanks to a remarkable Army officer, thinker, writer and early military intelligence leader. Arthur Lockwood Wagner is better remembered, however, for his contributions as an advocate of Army educational reform, professionalism, and a writer of considerable influence on military organization and tactics.

While at the Military Academy, the young man from Ottawa, Illinois, was remembered for spending most of his time reading military history, getting into minor scrapes, and editing two literary magazines, *Weekly Spy Glass* and *Howitzer*, sometimes at the expense of the regular curriculum. This man who would become recognized for his scholarship and impact on educational reform in the U.S. Army ranked fortieth in a class of forty-three.

After his graduation in 1875 he reported to his regiment, the Sixth Infantry, in which he served for six years. Like most young officers of this era, he found himself on the American frontier, sometimes taking care of the routine work like building telegraph lines and escorting recruits to their station. Other times he participated in active campaigning against the Sioux and Nez Perce in the late 1870s, and against the Utes in 1881 at places like Fort Buford, California; Fort Shaw, Montana; Forts Buford and Lincoln, Dakota; Fort Lyon, Colorado; and Fort Thornburgh, Utah. After a short assignment as professor of military science and tactics at Louisiana State University, and four years of teaching at East Florida Seminary, he rejoined his regiment in 1885 at Fort Douglas, Utah.¹

A year later, when his regiment was reassigned to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, he was appointed to the position of assistant instructor in the Department of Military Art at the Infantry and Cavalry School. The school had been opened at Leavenworth in 1881 at the urging of William T. Sherman. His selection to teach there was based upon his literary abilities, his knowledge of history, and an emerging reputation for scholarship. Wagner had won some recognition as a military thinker when an 1884 essay he published, "The Military Necessities of the United States, and the Best Method of Meeting Them," won a gold medal from the Military Service Institution of the United States. Some called it "a powerful statement" which "certainly exercised some influence."²

It was at the school that Wagner would make his mark on the U.S. Army. Allied with a few other progressive officers at the school, like his friend Captain Eben Swift, he would transform that institution from "the kindergarten" it was at first called to the backbone of the Army educational system. Its graduates would become known by the admiring sobriquet of "Leavenworth men."

While on the faculty of the Infantry and Cavalry School, First Lieutenant Arthur Wagner recognized the need for texts on the art and science of war that drew upon the American experience. With the exception of one or two authors like Major John Bigelow, Jr. and Major Matthew Forney Steele, most of the books on war written in the 1890s had a decidedly European point of view. Wagner sought to correct that by selecting "the best established theories of European tactical authorities, illustrate them by a reference to events in our own military history, and to apply to them the touchstone of American practice in war." He felt that the American Civil War was neglected as a source of military lessons in favor of the Franco-Prussian War. He wrote to his West Point classmate Maj. Tasker

Bliss in 1890: “Some enthusiastic Prusso-maniacs would have us draw all our tactical lessons from ’66 or ’70, instead of allowing us to take at least *some* from ’64-65.”³

The lieutenant was also recognized for introducing “applied” military history, that is, the use of historical examples to prompt a response from the student as to what course he would take in a similar situation. He sought to inject realism into the curriculum and institute instructional techniques that would go beyond the traditional methods of lectures and the rote recital of facts. Along with his assistant, Eben Swift, he borrowed some practices from the German army which placed emphasis on doing. Wargames, map maneuvers, and tactical rides relied heavily upon historical examples for their realism.

In using history as illustration, he was careful to avoid easy formulas or maxims of warfare, preferring instead to emphasize the need for the commander to be flexible in meeting unique situations. Wagner chose to let the experience of history teach its own lessons about the intangibles of warfare.

Wagner placed greater weight on professional theory instead of on drill and administration that had been the former points of instruction. He stressed problem-solving rather than routine. His reforms at Leavenworth coupled with his writings brought tactical instruction to a unprecedented level within the U.S. Army. Swift said, “The army became students at once, and Wagner’s books became as familiar as the drill books.”⁴ About Wagner’s literary abilities, a one-time student Gen. George C. Marshall would comment that Wagner was “the first of our military men to write anything readable on tactics.” The professorial Wagner was described by one of his students, George C. Marshall as “a kindly, friendly old man who looked like a farmer dressed up in uniform.”⁵

Wagner is best remembered for two major works, *The Service of Security and Information*⁶ (1893) and *Organization and Tactics* (1895). These were standard texts throughout the Army’s school system for years to come, not surprisingly since no other volumes of the time reflected the American experience.

The first of these was written eight years after the War Department set up its first permanent intelligence organization, the Military Information Division, within the Adjutant General’s Office, and ten years before the MID was made one of the three functional elements of the newly organized General Staff. It was a pivotal work calling attention to the importance of intelligence-gathering to the American military leader. Likewise, in *Organization and Tactics*, he made the case for a military intelligence officer being placed on the staff of all major field headquarters. He would get a chance to become the first MI field officer in the Spanish-American War.

He used copious examples from American military history to make the point that the American Army had largely failed to pay sufficient attention to intelligence. One example was the 1846 War with Mexico, where good maps were nonexistent and little was known about the country in which the U.S. Army would operate. Often during that conflict, the only reliable sources of information were “reconnaissances...under fire.” By marshalling all the past blunders of the U.S. Army, he hoped to bring home the point that a leader cannot be successful without knowing as much as possible about the topography and resources of the operational theater as well as the enemy strength, movements, and morale. He covered a wide spectrum of intelligence topics including the use of both infantry and cavalry patrols, the value of Indian Scouts, and the intimidating nature of the use of observation balloons. He ushered in the dawn of “intelligence preparation of the battlefield.”

He opens his first chapter of *The Service of Security and Informa-*

tion with a quote from Frederick the Great who said, "It is pardonable to be defeated, but never to be taken by surprise." Wagner gives his own thoughts on surprise. He says, "An army taken by surprise may be compared to a sleeping man attacked by a well prepared enemy. Astonishment, confusion, and alarm are opposed to coolness, preparation, and confidence.... The surprised army must possess many elements of superiority over its assailant to be able to overcome the enormous disadvantage at which it is taken; and a surprise generally means a defeat."

Wagner makes the point that security and intelligence are inseparable and says, "Information in regard to the enemy is the indispensable basis of all military plans, and nothing but faulty dispositions for the security of an army can be expected if such information is lacking."⁷ The commander must have at hand two kinds of information, "That relating to the geography, topography, and resources of the theater of operations," and "That which relates to the strength and composition of the enemy's forces, and their position, movements, and *morale*." The first kind should be provided by a bureau of military intelligence at the top levels of the army. The second kind of information is gained in the field from spies, deserters, prisoners, newspapers, and by reconnaissance.⁸

A quote from Jomini begins the section on reconnaissance. "How can any man decide what he should do himself, if he is ignorant of what his enemy is about." Wagner gives advice about prisoner interrogation, patrolling with both infantry and cavalry. He emphasizes the value to be had from the prisoners captured during these patrols. He says, "the object should be to capture those who are likely to possess the most extended information. It is to be remarked, however, that those who possess the most complete information will generally be the ones most skillful in concealing it." Wagner even tells us what kind of information is wanted. Prisoners "should be questioned in regard to their regiments, brigades, and divisions; the length of time they have been in the position; whether their rations are satisfactory; whether certain commanders are popular and have the confidence of their men; whether there are many men on sick report; what news has lately been received in camp, and what the rumors are—in brief, all questions calculated to elicit information in regard to the enemy's position, movements, and morale. If tact be exercised in questioning, much information may be gained; for the prisoner will probably consider the questions as prompted merely by natural curiosity."⁹

Wagner was aware at a time when technology was limited that there were other ways of obtaining valuable information besides HUMINT. He recognized the possibilities of communications intelligence and saw ways of disrupting enemy operations with misinformation. He wrote:

A patrol may be sent out to gain information by "tapping" a telegraph line. In this case, a telegraph operator, using a small pocket instrument, taps the line and learns the messages passing over it. The rest of the men, carefully concealed, look out for the enemy. An expeditionary patrol for the purpose of tapping a telegraph line is generally a cavalry patrol, sent out from the cavalry screen or from a raiding column. In addition to learning the enemy's movements, the operator can often give him false information—order him to concentrate on wrong points, and work mischief to him generally.¹⁰

Wagner devotes a whole chapter to spies and opens with a quote from Marshal Saxe. "Too much attention can not be given to spies and guides. ...They are as necessary to a general as the eyes are to the head." The author breaks spies into two classes: military and civilian. He says,

The first class consists of officers or soldiers who, from

patriotism or a sense of military duty, assume a disguise, and penetrate the enemy's lines to gain information. They are often men of the most exalted character and distinguished courage, and deserve a better fame, and a better fate if captured, than that usually accorded to spies."

The second class consists of men who often deserve all the obloquy so freely cast upon spies in general; and, other things equal, that commander will be victorious who has the best secret service.

Wagner had this to say about women used as spies: "Women are often the best of spies; but their means of gaining information is generally in direct proportion to their lack of character, and accordingly proportionate to their lack of credibility."¹¹

Some rudimentary OPSEC advice was offered by the author of the first U.S. Army textbook on intelligence. He warned, "When the presence of the enemy's spies is suspected, the soldiers should be warned against intimate association with the inhabitants, and should be instructed not to answer any questions relative to the army or its movements asked them by strangers. Strangers caught giving liquor to the soldiers should be at once arrested and subjected to a rigid examination."¹²

With the increasing improvements in communications technology at the turn of the century, newspaper reporters were able to file their stories and have them published within a day or two. Wagner saw that this could have important ramifications for intelligence gathering. He wrote, "In time of war much attention should be given, at the headquarters of an army, to the newspapers of the enemy and to those of neutral countries; for much valuable information may thus be obtained."

But, if newspapers had military value for the friendly army, it had equal potential for the enemy. At the beginning of the 20th century, Wagner considered the dilemma that faced a nation committed to the idea of openness and a free press when engaged in military operations that demanded secrecy. "...With the constantly growing popular demand for late and complete information, the trouble created in military operations by the mischievous energy of newspaper reporters will, more than ever, justify the characterization of such correspondents as "the plague of modern armies." Such is the power of the press in the United States that an attempt to banish newspaper correspondents from an American army would probably do more harm than good: but it does not seem impracticable to place restrictions upon the unavoidable evil, and even, in some cases, to turn it to practical use." He quoted a European counterpart for corroboration. "Complete and unfettered freedom of the press is incompatible with a state of war." [Brousart von Schellendorf]¹³

Calling upon the experience of officers like Thomas Cruse, a veteran commander of Apache Scouts in the campaigns in Arizona and New Mexico against Victorio, Wagner spends an entire chapter on "Indian Scouting." He talks about the security offered by Apache Scouts:

The Apaches show a surprising skill in the selection of positions and in the measures taken for defense. An officer of experience says:

"In the field against Victorio for two years, I never saw one of his camps that did not astonish me with the splendid means of defense against any opponent coming in any direction, and the absolute impossibility of sudden surprise guaranteed by his arrangement of outposts. In his own country the Apache is the ideal scout for an infantry patrol, as he obtains all information without being seen, can conceal himself on a bare plain, and is good for thirty miles a day all the time."¹⁴

Wagner felt that his efforts to raise professional standards were

unrecognized by promotion, having been put down as a “mere theorist” and “damned as an impractical sort of officer” by the anti-intellectual class of officers who were opposed to “book learning.” The charges were unfair and perhaps exaggerated in Wagner’s mind, since he was able to accumulate a great number of outstanding efficiency reports and letters attesting to his abilities.¹⁵ That Wagner was a man of action is attested to by his service in the Indian Wars and the Spanish-American War which bracketed his career.

After 11 years of teaching at Leavenworth, Wagner was promoted to major in 1896 and transferred to the Adjutant General’s Office in the War Department where he became head of the Military Information Division (MID), the embryo intelligence organization of the U.S. Army. For the next two years, as the top MI officer in the Army, he directed the collection of intelligence that would be used in the campaigns of the Spanish American War. Wagner was in charge of eleven staff officers and sixteen attaches, five of whom had been stationed in the capitols of St. Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, London and Berlin since 1889. By the time he took office, the MID had an extensive card file on the armies of the world and had published several voluminous reports.

During his first year, two attaches were added, in Switzerland and Japan, and the division published papers on the Swedish army and the military systems of Greece and Turkey, as well as a study of the organized militia of the United States in 1896. In his annual report for fiscal year 1897, Wagner complained about the inadequate working conditions and said “the usefulness of this division is much impaired for lack of rooms.” At that time the MID occupied four small rooms on the main floor of the State, War, and Navy Building, today the Executive Office Building. Their annual appropriation was \$3,640, about the same amount that was being spent annually to keep the average western fort in repair. A request for an increase to \$6,000 was not approved.¹⁶

In May 1898 Wagner was reassigned to the staff of Nelson A. Miles, the Major General commanding the Army. The year before his departure, the MID output was prodigious, with several special studies and orders of battle being published on the Spanish forces in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines.¹⁷

In progress at the end of his tour were “Military Notes on the Philippines” and “Revised Cuban Notes.” The MID had completed by May 1898 ten maps of what appeared to imminent areas of operations like Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Luzon, Havana City, Centa, and the province of Cavite. Before he left, Wagner had also set up a war map in the White House of President William McKinley.

One of the clandestine HUMINT operations Wagner mounted while at MID was the mission of Lieutenant Albert Rowan of MID to travel to Cuba to learn about Spanish defenses from rebel leader General Calixto Garcia. Anticipating U.S. intelligence requirements, Wagner had written a memo in December 1897 calling for an officer to be sent to Cuba to report on the fighting qualities of the Spanish and Cuban soldiers. Receiving no response, he resurfaced his memo ten days after the sinking of the battleship *Maine*. This time the President approved the covert mission.

The Rowan adventure fired the public imagination after it was romanticized by author Elbert Hubbard in his story “A Message to Garcia.” Rowan, the chief of MID Frontier Section, was a logical choice for this kind of job, having conducted covert tours of Canada for the last seven years. Rowan wrote his own version which was published in 1922. In it he described his selection for the mission:

...Colonel Wagner came to me to ask me to meet him at the Army and Navy club for lunch at 1 o’clock. As we were eating, the colonel—who had, by the way, a reputation for being an inveterate joker—asked me, “When does the next boat leave for Jamaica?”

Thinking he was making an effort to perpetrate one of his pleasantries, and determined to thwart him, if possible, I excused myself for a minute or so and when I had returned informed him that the Adirondack, of the Atlas Line, a British boat, would sail from New York the next day, April 9.

"Can you take the boat?" snapped the colonel. "Young man," he continued, "you have been selected by the President to communicate with—or rather, to carry a message to—General Garcia who will be found somewhere in the eastern part of Cuba. Your problem will be to secure from him information of a military character, bring it down to date and arrange it on a working basis. Your message to him will be in the nature of a series of inquiries from the President. Written communication, further than is necessary to identify you, will be avoided. History has furnished us with the record of too many tragedies to warrant taking risks.... There must be no failure on your part; there must be no errors made in this case." By this time I was fully alive to the fact that Colonel Wagner was not joking.

* * *

..."Providing the United States declares war on Spain, further instructions will be based on cables received from you. Otherwise everything will be silence. You must get to Garcia. ...Goodbye and good luck!" We shook hands. As Colonel Wagner released mine he repeated: "Get that message to Garcia!"¹⁸

A less publicized mission involved Lieutenant H. H. Whitney, another of Wagner's MID officers, who disguised himself as a British seaman and visited Puerto Rico in May 1898 on a merchant ship, bringing back valuable intelligence information.¹⁹ Whitney would become an aide-de-camp to General Miles after the war, serve in the American Expeditionary Force of World War I, and retire a brigadier general.

Another source of information was Frederick Funston who is remembered for his daring raid in 1901 on the secret headquarters of Emilio Aguinaldo, which captured the leader of the Philippine Insurrection and led to negotiations that brought the fighting to an end. In 1896 Funston had volunteered his services to Cuban guerrilla leaders Maximo Gomez and Calixto Garcia. His biographer wrote that he was "Accepted for the artillery service on the strength of having once seen a salute fired to President Rutherford B. Hayes at a county fair in Kansas."²⁰ Captured by the Spanish, he was released after U.S. government protests and sent back to the states where he was thoroughly debriefed by MID personnel.

With the war with Spain imminent, most staff officers and attaches returned to their regiments, interrupting Wagner's plans to increase the attache force to twenty-five. The operation of the MID office was left to Capt. Louis C. Scherer, who would later command the 10th Cavalry and Fort Huachuca as a colonel in 1926, and Second Lieut. Walter C. Babcock, a topographer who also commanded Fort Huachuca as a captain in the 13th Cavalry in 1910.²¹ Only a few young officers were left to carry on the work that Wagner thought so important. One of these was Lieutenant Ralph Van Deman, upon whom Wagner had a great influence.

In February 1898, Wagner was promoted to lieutenant colonel and placed on the Strategic Board, a body created to jointly coordinate army and navy operations and an early attempt at interoperability. While in this position, he wrote a memo to his boss, Army Commanding General Nelson A. Miles, in which he outlined possible courses of action in the worsening crisis with Spain.

In his memo dated 11 April, he made the case for both an early attack on Cuba and for delaying any offensive in favor of a blockade. On the one hand, he argued, anything less than quick action would be interpreted as a sign of weakness, and might even invite foreign in-

tervention. A blockade would be costly and hurt the civilian population more than it would the Spanish Army. And, not one to miss a chance of invoking history, Wagner reminded the General Miles of Britain's success when they invaded Cuba in the early 1800's and took Havana during a summer campaign.

But, his weightiest reasoning was reserved for the second option, that of waiting until the army could be better organized and expanded. His intelligence had placed Spanish forces at 80,000, backed by 183 guns. Green American militia would need to be trained or face heavy casualties. But, to Wagner, the clearest danger was the seasonal presence of yellow fever. Again he turned to history, citing Napoleon's attempt to regain Haiti in the early 1800's during which the French suffered tens of thousands of casualties from the tropical yellow fever.²²

Miles was sold on Wagner's recommended course. He wrote to the Secretary of War Russell A. Alger on 18 April, just a week before war was to be declared: "I think it would be injudicious to put an army on that Island at this season of the year. [Instead] By mobilizing our force and putting it in healthful camps, *and using such force as might be necessary to harass the enemy and doing them the greatest injury with the least possible loss to ourselves*, if our Navy is superior to theirs, in my judgment, we can complete the surrender of the Army on the Island of Cuba with very little loss of life, and possibly avoid the spread of yellow fever over our own country."

President McKinley disagreed. He believed the American people would not stand for inaction. He told an advisor, "God willing...we shall end the war before the General would have us begin operations. He little understands me, no more does he know the temper of our people. I deplore war, but it must be short and quick to the finish."²³

In his memoirs, Ralph Van Deman related an incident that took place about this time.

The blowing up of the battleship *Maine*, 15 February 1898, finally made it evident that the declaration of war against Spain could not be very long delayed and the entire force of the Military Information Division was put to work at adding to the information already on file in the Division concerning Cuba and the other island possessions of Spain. One of the most important subjects to be investigated was the probable health of the northern troops who might be required to serve in Cuba and the Division prepared a carefully documented report based upon all the information obtainable at this time with respect to this problem.

It will be remembered that at this period the cause for Yellow Fever was not known and that northern troops exposed to this disease were particularly susceptible. The then Secretary of War (Russell A. Alger) believed that an army should be raised as soon as possible and sent at once to invest the Cuban capitol of Havana. The report on the probable health of northern troops serving in Cuba during the summer months was presented by the Chief of the Military Information Division, Colonel Wagner, at a meeting at the White House called by the President of the United States at which the President, the Secretary of War, and numerous high ranking officers of the Army and Navy were present. After Colonel Wagner had read this report, the president (McKinley) decided that the plan to send United States troops into Cuba during the summer months would not be carried out. Whereupon, as Colonel Wagner was leaving the room to return to his office, the Secretary of War said to him, "Colonel Wagner, you have made it impossible for my plan of campaign to be carried out. I will see to it that you do not receive any promotions in the Army in the future. The Secretary made his promise good. For, although Colonel Wagner was later appointed a Brigadier General the notice of his appointment reached him on his death bed and

it is very doubtful whether or not he ever realized his life's ambition had been achieved.²⁴

According to Van Deman, Wagner jeopardized his career in order to satisfy a sense of duty, rather than bow to political pressure. Information that indicated that American lives could be saved by avoiding the worst time of the year for yellow fever was more important to him than currying favor with the Secretary of War. There are some holes in the details of Van Deman's story, however. The U.S. forces did land in Cuba in that summer, and Wagner would receive future promotions. His promotion to colonel came on 30 June 1901, two years after Secretary Alger had submitted his resignation at President McKinley's request, the War Department taking the blame for unpreparedness and inefficiency during the war.

In May 1898, he was appointed to the staff of the Army's Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Nelson A. Miles. Wagner sailed for Cuba on the staff of General Shafter where he was present for the battle for El Caney. When Santiago surrendered, he switched back to General Miles' staff in time for operations in Puerto Rico.

Some official correspondence during the war gives us a hint at the kind of secret intelligence work in which Wagner was involved. On 8 June 1898 an unsigned message from the War Department is addressed to Wagner at the Tampa Bay Hotel in Tampa, Florida, General Miles' headquarters, telling him that a Cuban chartered craft has been granted clearance through U.S. customs and is to report to Wagner at Tampa. "Do not have it known she is in secret service," he is instructed. And, "Advise captain that all his orders are strictly confidential."²⁵ A few days later, 11 June, Wagner received these confidential orders from General Miles:

Colonel:—On your arrival at Santiago de Cuba you will, as soon as practicable, call upon General Garcia and consult with him in regard to further operations in the Island of Cuba. You will also inform yourself fully as to the strength, condition and character of his forces. You will present this communication to General Shafter at a suitable time in the course of the operations, who will afford you every facility for carrying out my instructions. I desire that you consult him fully in regard to everything pertaining to your duties. Immediately after the capture of Santiago de Cuba or the termination of the operations in that region, you will report at once by cable, and proceed immediately with the officer, interpreter and clerk with you to join my headquarters.²⁶

Between the opening and close of operations, Wagner was to head up the first Bureau of Military Information to be organized in the field. This was to be assigned to the V Corps commanded by the 300-lb., gout-ridden, self-educated Maj. Gen. William R. Shafter, but Wagner was to be under the direct orders of the Commanding General of the Army. It was charged with the following duties:

1. The collection and collation of all statistical information in regard to the probable theaters of operations of the Army.
2. The collection and preparation for ready reference of the Commanding General of all information relative to the positions and conditions of hostile forces, and the Cuban insurgents.
3. The conduct of such reconnaissance as may be necessary to carry out the above, excepting such reconnaissance as may be ordered by the Corps Commander and other subordinate commanders in accordance with their own functions.
4. The secret service, embracing the employment of spies and special scouts, guides, interpreters, etc.

The Bureau will at all times furnish to Corps Commanders all information that may seem to be of value to them, and they in turn are requested to forward to Lieutenant Colonel Wagner any information which they may deem of value to the Bureau in the exercise of its designated functions.

Making up the small intelligence cell was Colonel Wagner, Captain Edward Anderson, U.S.V. (1st Lieutenant, 7th U.S. Cavalry), Mr. Griffith L. Johnson, stenographer, and Rev. A. J. Diaz, interpreter.

Sailing with General Shafter's V Corps headquarters, Wagner arrived off Guantanamo on 20 June. Wagner went ashore and had his interview with General Garcia. He had this to say about the meeting: "I was received by him with great courtesy, and given full and unreserved information, the essence of which I communicated on the same day by cable to the Major General Commanding. My first impression of the Cuban soldiers was much more favorable than the opinion formed as the result of later and more extended observation. They were better disciplined and better equipped than I had expected them to be, and their ready obedience of their officers, and their manifest good care of their arms more than neutralized the unfavorable impression created by their ragged attire and general tatterdemalion appearance. It was not until a later date that I discovered that whatever their merits as bushwhackers might be, they were practically useless in battle."²⁷

It was an historic moment—the first time an intelligence organization of this kind was set up in the field, clearly a result of Wagner's convincing arguments on the need for such a body. But it was also a crushingly disappointing moment—for no use would be made of the Bureau of Military Information, Shafter choosing to assign reconnaissance duties to his engineering officer, Brig. Gen. William Ludlow, and ignore the offer of services from Wagner's detachment. Wagner turned over to Ludlow all his notes and maps that he had compiled during his reconnaissance of a suitable landing place for the American army.

Sadly, the root cause for Shafter's dismissal of Wagner's intelligence mission may well have been one of personal grudge rather than military judgment. There was pettiness and suspicion between Shafter and Miles. Shafter felt he was being spied upon by men placed on his staff by Miles. He would later write that officers like Joseph C. Breckinridge, the inspector general, and Arthur Wagner were assigned to him "for the sole purpose of taking notes for General Miles."²⁸

Left without a job, Wagner volunteered to be an aide to Brig. Gen. Henry W. Lawton, commanding the Second Division, while his assistant, Captain Anderson, went ashore as a sharpshooter. Wagner was put in charge of the division's reconnaissance by Lawton which he undertook with relish. After some preliminary recons, on the 23d of June Wagner was put in charge of the advance guard and he claimed "the honor of having captured the first Spanish flag that was taken in Cuba" after running across recently abandoned positions of the Talavera battalion.

By the end of the month, Wagner received a message from Tampa reading: "General Miles directs you report by cable latest information obtainable regarding Santiago garrison and Spanish reinforcements."²⁹

On 30 June Wagner embarked upon another reconnaissance behind enemy lines, leading a contingent of twelve Cuban soldiers and accompanied by a Cuban civilian. Wagner wrote, "As a result of this reconnaissance, I was able to give the Division Commander a rough map showing a new trail, until then undiscovered, which was used by General Ludlow in moving up to his position in front of El Caney."³⁰ In a letter after the war, Ludlow would acknowledge the importance of Wagner's work, saying it was "of the greatest value, as it developed the fact that the Spaniards had withdrawn from the vicinity of the Ducrot House. ...Your information enabled me to [move my brigade] with the greater rapidity that I was saved the necessity for skirmishing in my front or extending reconnaissance

for the safety of my flank, and I felt secure in the movement eastward towards Caney, leaving the Ducrot House in my rear.”³¹

Here was a 48-year old lieutenant colonel who not only believed in the value of military intelligence on a theoretical level, but was willing to prove his arguments by voluntarily leading a squad of untested foreign soldiers into enemy-held territory.

In the July 1st attack on San Juan Hill, Wagner described an incident that showed how tentative were the U.S. Army’s first grapplings with aerial platforms. The concentrated troops were crowding down narrow roads approaching the Spanish positions. The clogged and confused advance was aggravated when a detachment with an airborne observation balloon also pushed down the trail, warning the enemy of the American approach and marking their positions. The Spanish opened up a heavy fire, downing the balloon and causing an estimated 60 to 100 casualties. Wagner wrote, “For the first time in military history a balloon was seen practically on the skirmish line, and it will probably be the last time that such an exploit will be witnessed. It is hard to understand what fantastic conception of the art of war could have caused such a reconnaissance to be seriously contemplated in the first place.”³²

On 9 July Wagner is cabling from Cuba to General Miles, now in Washington: “Camp near Santiago, 8. Troops and supplies landed at Guantanamo would not be available for ready reinforcements of commands here, as they would have to embark and again disembark here, or else pass over more than 80 miles of almost impassable roads. Guantanamo is an excellent harbor for Navy, but water is scarce and places for camp not good. Will investigate personally. Intended to go today. Have been prevented by sickness. Anderson will accompany me.”³³

Some 20,000 Spanish troops surrendered to V Corps on 17 July, bringing the fighting in Cuba to an end. Now attention would focus on Puerto Rico where General Miles was in command. Here Wagner also participated in reconnaissances until that sickness that had laid him up in Cuba returned. It caused Wagner’s evacuation back to the United States. He called it “Cuban fever.” It is ironic that the man who had done his best to delay an invasion of these islands until the end of the fever season was himself struck down by disease. His replacement, Captain Scott, wired from Ponce, Puerto Rico, on 9 August to the Assistant Secretary of War in Washington: “Wagner returned to Washington sick. Request I be authorized to expend funds for secret service work and \$5,000 be placed to my credit and funds sent at once.”³⁴ An armistice was signed three days later.

In his postwar analysis of the campaign, Wagner found the plan of battle tactically sound, but laid the blame for faulty execution on the “lack of proper reconnaissance.” Always the advocate for better intelligence work, Wagner wrote: “It was certainly good tactics to combine a front and flank attack, and had these attacks been so timed as to be made simultaneously, there is no doubt that the Spanish position would have been carried without great difficulty and certainly without serious loss. Owing, however, to an ignorance of the location of the Spanish lines, the divisions of Kent and Wheeler were moved forward to await the result of Lawton’s attack in a position where they were under fire not only of artillery, but of infantry.”³⁵

Commenting regretfully on the failure of the field MI concept, due to General Shafter’s reluctance to take advantage of it, Wagner said:

...No use was made of the Bureau of Military Information except by detailing one of its officers as assistant adjutant-general of a brigade and permitting another to serve as a volunteer aid. There was consequently no opportunity for demonstrating the use that can be made of such a bureau. The order creating the Bureau of Military Information in the Field, at the Headquarters of the Army, is in thor-

ough accord with the customs obtaining in European armies. Such a bureau should in no way attempt to monopolize the reconnaissance work, nor should it interfere with duties of that description performed under the direction of corps and division commanders; but it should be required to make such special reconnaissance as might be necessary for the information of the Commanding General, should have control of the secret service, and should be charged with shifting and collating of all information sent in to headquarters. I believe that a bureau organized as set forth in the order quoted in this report would be of great value; but the utilization of such a bureau implies a certain degree of system and intelligent organization in the military force to which it is attached.³⁶

In that paragraph, Wagner sets forth the first real call for a separate military intelligence organization within the U.S. Army that would serve commanders in the field. But Wagner is a visionary. The small American Army of 1898 was not ready to recognize this degree of sophistication and the MID would remain, even through its reorganizations to 1918, little more than a specialized library. In his last sentence, he takes a little swipe at the unappreciative General Shafter. Wagner would be the first to agree with the modern opinion that commanders drive intelligence. Others would be less indirect in their criticism of Shafter. After the war, Theodore Roosevelt opposed the promotion of “broken-down and aged Brig. Generals, men who never commanded three companies before.”³⁷

With the war over, he reported to St. Paul, Minnesota, as the Adjutant General of the Department of Dakota, the country where he had begun his army career with the Sixth Infantry. But his assignment was brief. He was detached for Philippine service from 1899 to 1902 where he held staff positions during the suppression of the Philippine Insurrection in Northern and Southern Luzon.

Returning to the states in 1902, now a full colonel, he worked in Chicago, Department of the Lakes, as Adjutant General, and subsequently spent time as the umpire for a series of maneuvers ranging in location from West Point to Fort Riley, Kansas. In 1903 he was appointed Assistant Commandant of the General Service and Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, a recognition of his qualities as a military educator. This was followed in 1904 by the job of Assistant Director of the Army War College, then Senior Director of the War College and concurrently the Chief of the Third Division of the newly created War Department General Staff, the equivalent of the modern Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations.

Wagner was a believer in the power of history to educate. His approach was didactic and he was convinced that “the experience of the past” could form “a guide for the future.” In his preface to *Organization and Tactics*, he wrote, “If an officer would prepare himself to be of service to his country, he must attentively consider the recorded experience of those who have learned war from the actual reality, and must accumulate by reading and reflection a fund of military knowledge based upon the experience of others.”³⁸

On June 17, 1905, at the age of 52, Colonel Wagner succumbed to the tuberculosis that had plagued him since his Philippines tour. Ironically, on the day he passed away, his promotion to Brigadier General was being processed. His obituary said of him, “Colonel Wagner's charming personality won him lasting friendships among people of all classes. The question of rank never appeared in his intimacies, and his agreeable cordiality was as spontaneous and natural towards the lowest ranking Lieutenant as to the Brigadier General. ...He was always a helpful and willing mentor, and his criticisms of...mistakes were so absolutely just and devoid of pedantry, they were ever received with most appreciative friendliness.”³⁹

If Ralph Van Deman is to be known as the “Father of American Military Intelligence” for his efforts to establish a Military Intelli-

gence Branch within the War College in 1918, then certainly posterity must nominate Arthur Lockwood Wagner, author of the first U.S. Army text on intelligence, a early chief of the MID, and himself an intelligence operative in the 1898 Spanish American War, for the title of “Father of American Military Intelligence Education.”

Notes

1. McCullum, Brevet Maj. Gen. George W., *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York Since Its Establishment in 1802*, multi-volumes, Association of Graduates, U.S. Military Academy, Seeman & Peters Printers, Saginaw, Michigan, 1910.

2. Spiller, Roger, ed., *Dictionary of American Military Biography*, 3 vols, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn, 1984. Article by Timothy K. Nenninger on Arthur Lockwood Wagner, p. 1147.

3. Quoted in Reardon, Carol, *Soldiers and Scholars: The U.S. Army and the Uses of Military History, 1865-1920*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, 1990, pp. 102-4.

4. Spiller, p. 1149.

5. Reardon, p. 37.

6. Before 1918 the term “military information” was used within the U.S. Army to describe data on enemy forces. After American participation in World War I, the Army adopted the term the British used, “military intelligence,” to stand for information collected on enemy capabilities. *Intelligence* had been used since at least 1587 to mean the communications of spies and agents, but that definition is now considered to be rare and even obsolete, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

7. Wagner, *The Service of Security and Information*, Hudson-Kimberly Publishing Company, Kansas City, Missouri, 1895, p. 2.

8. Ibid, pp. 3-5.

9. Ibid., p. 129.

10. Ibid., p. 130.

11. Ibid., pp. 200-6. Here are some further observations on the art of spy-handling, an art that Wagner would himself have a chance to practice in wartime.

A spy should be “intelligent, conscientious, and faithful”—qualities hard to find in a man whose very occupation bespeaks habitual deceit and want of principle—and in proportion to his possession of these characteristics will he be valuable. The motives which induce him to play the part of a spy should be ascertained. Men banished from their country, smarting under a sense of injustice, exasperated by ill-treatment, embittered by jealousy, or influenced, in short, by any strong passion calculated to incite a spirit of hatred and revenge against the enemy, are almost certain to be faithful and energetic spies. Spies should always, when practicable, be tested with unimportant missions before being entrusted with matters of great moment. It is a good plan to require them at first to report upon matters that are already known, as a means of testing their reliability and accuracy. The services of a spy permanently attached to a command are likely to be much more valuable than those of one who is employed only for the single occasion, and whose efforts are not stimulated by a hope of profitable employment in the future.

* * *

A spy should never be allowed to see that he is mistrusted; but should be led to believe that particular confidence is reposed in him, and that his services are regarded as especially valuable. At the same

time, other spies should be employed to cover the same ground, and their reports should be carefully compared.

* * *

...A spy should always, if practicable, be assigned to the same officer, mutual acquaintance being essential to complete mutual understanding. A good spy often acquires a feeling of friendship and devotion for a chief who always sends him out, who always receives his reports, and (above all) who always rewards him.

* * *

Nothing intrusted to a spy should be put in writing, unless it be false information intrusted to a double spy. All other messages should be either verbal or expressed in cipher. The message should be closely written on fine paper and enclosed in a small quill, which could be concealed in the hair or beard, or enclosed in a hollow bullet, which could be fired away if capture seemed unavoidable. A still better plan, perhaps, would be to write the message in lemon juice on the margin of some book, such as a Testament or prayer book, which the spy might carry without exciting suspicion. Exposing the leaf to heat, or passing a hot iron over it, would then bring out the writing. The dispatches carried by Campbell (one of Sheridan's spies) were closely written on tissue paper, rolled up in tin foil, and concealed in a quid of tobacco in his mouth.

12. Ibid, pp. 208-10. More on spycraft at the turn of the century:

Spies sometimes remain in a certain locality, and send information, often through the ordinary channels of communication, in regard to the enemy's movements and preparations. These communications, either telegraphic or by letter, may often be couched in commercial language, and sent to persons in a neutral country, by whom they are transmitted to the officials for whom they are intended. Such is the present perfection of telegraphic communication, that it would be practicable for an American spy in Quebec to send a disguised telegram to Hamburg, and have the information contained therein telegraphed *via* New York to an American army on the St. Lawrence not later than the following day. Spies can, with a small pocket instrument, tap the telegraph wires and gain valuable information by means of the messages passing. This information can then be forwarded to the army by means of mobile spies, or under disguise through neutral territory. Officers or trusted agents should always be posted in a neutral country for the purpose of transmitting promptly to the headquarters of the army such news of importance as they may there learn.

* * *

A spy may often be detected by his obsequious politeness, by his having plenty of money with him, by his liberality in "treating" the soldiers, by his extreme care to observe all the regulations of the camp, by his presence everywhere where military movements are taking place, by his manner of looking and listening while trying to seem not to do so, by his assumed air of extreme frankness, and by his promptness in producing papers to establish his innocent and worthy character.

When a spy is captured, he should be carefully searched, his clothes ripped apart, the soles and heels of his shoes cut open, and his buttons examined. If he is suspected of having about him papers which are not discovered in the search, his clothing should be burned. His hair, beard, and mouth should be searched; and if he is armed when captured, his cartridges and revolver should be carefully examined. If he is suspected of having swallowed a dispatch, he should be given an emetic.

13. Ibid., pp. 211-12.

14. Ibid., pp. 221-3.

15. Nenninger, Timothy K., *The Leavenworth Schools and the Old*

Army, Greenwood Press, Inc., Westport, Connecticut, 1978.

16. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, for fiscal year ended 30 June 1897.

17. Here are some of their publications: No. 15, The Autumn Maneuvers of 1896 in Europe; No. 16, Part 1, Subsistence and Nursing in European Armies...; No. 17, Sources of Information on Military Professional Subjects; No. 18, Selected Professional Papers, translated from European publications; No. 19, The Organized Militia of the United States in 1897; Military Notes on Cuba; Military Notes on Porto [sic] Rico; Notes on Centa; Notes and Tables on Organization and Establishment of the Spanish Army in the Peninsula and Colonies; and List of Battle Ships, Cruisers, and Torpedo Boats of the Spanish Navy.

18. The rest of the story can be found in Diane Hamm's excellent book *Military Intelligence: Its Heroes and Legends*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1987.

19. Powe, Marc B., *The Emergence of the War Department Intelligence Agency: 1885-1918*, Military Affairs, Manhattan, Kansas, 1975, p. 30.

20. Spiller, article on Frederick Funston by Charles R. Schrader, p. 357.

21. *Annual Report of the Secretary of War*, for fiscal year ended 30 June 1898.

22. Memorandum prepared by Col. Wagner, April 11, 1898, Miles Collection, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. (quoted in Wooster, Robert, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1993, p. 212.

23. Wooster, Robert, *Nelson A. Miles and the Twilight of the Frontier Army*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1993, pp. 212-3, 217.

24. Van Deman, Ralph, *Memoirs*, typescript on file at the U.S. Army Intelligence Center and Fort Huachuca library, p. 6.

25. *Correspondence Relating to the War With Spain*, 2 vols., Center of Military History, U.S. Army, Washington, D.C., 1993, Vol. I, p. 32.

26. Wagner, Arthur L, *Report of the Santiago Campaign, 1898*, Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., Kansas City, Missouri, 1908.

27. Wagner, *Report of the Santiago Campaign*, p. 32.

28. Wooster, p. 224.

29. Correspondence—War With Spain, p. 62.

30. Wagner, *Report of the Santiago Campaign*, p. 67.

31. Wagner, *Report on the Santiago Campaign*, p. 155.

32. Wagner, *Report on the Santiago Campaign*, pp. 81-2.

33. Correspondence—War With Spain, p. 114.

34. Correspondence—War With Spain, p. 373.

35. Wagner, *Report on the Santiago Campaign*, p. 105.

36. Wagner, *Report on the Santiago Campaign*, pp. 140-1.

37. Wooster, p. 233.

38. Reardon, p. 105.

39. Obituary of Arthur Lockwood Wagner, appearing in the Annual Association of Graduates U.S.M.A., 1907, signed with the initials C.D.R.