

MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE CROOK'S USE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY
COMPOUND WARFARE DURING THE GREAT SIOUX WAR OF 1876-77

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Military History

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE CROOK'S USE OF COUNTERINSURGENCY
COMPOUND WARFARE DURING THE GREAT SIOUX WAR OF 1876-77 by Major
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This thesis will analyze Major General George Crook's performance during the Sioux War of 1876-77 and attempt to answer whether or not Crook successfully fought the Native Americans by effectively implementing the concept of counterinsurgency compound warfare. Counterinsurgency Compound Warfare is the simultaneous use of a regular or conventional force and an irregular, indigenous force in unison against a common enemy. A highly skilled conventional force fighting an insurgency will often face significant cultural, ethnic, linguistic and physical challenges. An irregular, indigenous force can meet many of these challenges by working in concert with the conventional force. Major General George Crook sought to utilize Indian allies outside their traditional roles as scouts and utilized his forces in mutually supporting roles within each force's means and capabilities. The efficacy of an indigenous, irregular force is not only military in nature but, when used appropriately and honestly, this force serves as a vehicle of influence with native populations. The mutually supporting nature of this relationship enhances the strengths of both forces while limiting their inherent weaknesses. This thesis will attempt to explain how Crook was successful when he faced ethnic divisions, interagency rivalry and political hindrances while displaying adaptability as a leader and the ability to continue to learn while fighting a difficult counterinsurgency war.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

An Introduction to Counterinsurgency Concepts and Major General Crook's Experiences in Counterinsurgency Warfare

Warfare has been described as a continuum that spans the range of conflict from total industrial war on one end of the spectrum to insurgencies and small wars on the other end. An unfortunate byproduct of this manner of thinking is that the physical scale of the conflict is construed to be proportional to its importance or complexity. An example is the U.S. Army's Counterinsurgency Manual (FM 3-24) which opens by stating that "insurgency and counterinsurgency are a complex subset of warfare."¹ These conflicts are complex, but to consign it to a subset of warfare is an underestimation of the difficulty and complexity required to study and successfully win an insurgency or counterinsurgency. It would be better to state as Steven Metz does; "Military thinkers often say that the essence of war does not change. War is and always will be the use of violence for political purposes."²

Insurgencies are complex but for it to be relegated to a subset of warfare is to continue an institutional misconception within the U.S. Army. Andrew J. Birtle points out that, "Throughout its history, the U.S. Army has focused most of its organizational and doctrinal energies preparing for conventional warfare... [but] much of the Army's combat experience prior to World War II was gained not in conventional battles against regular opponents, but in unconventional conflicts against a bewildering array of irregulars."³ Throughout the majority of the U.S. Army's history small wars and counterinsurgencies have not only been the primary mission, but one could argue that

these conflicts were the Army's *raison d'être*.

The United States has historically been more proficient and successful in conventional warfare but has most often has been called upon to fight a more unconventional opponents. These smaller conflicts have been overshadowed by the large scale, conventional conflicts of the last two centuries. Within the less conventional conflicts, the history of the United States has often underemphasizes or forgotten the longest conflict in our history.

The Indian Wars were a series of conflicts that pre-date the founding of the United States and were in fact specifically mentioned as a grievance in the Declaration of Independence. From the first European settlers to set foot on the North American continent, the conflict with Native Americans was a counterinsurgency war that ran parallel to the development and westward expansion of the United States. It was not just a conflict that was defining the American experience; it was a key formative experience for the U.S. Army during the first 115 years of its existence.

This 200 year North American conflict reached its the most pronounced stage in the twenty five years following the close of the Civil War to the end of the Ghost Dance Uprising (1891). The inevitable conflict between the Native Americans and the expanding frontiersmen was temporarily placed on hold during the mid 19th century while the nation fought the most costly and defining conflict of that time, the Civil War. As the Regular Army soldiers and officers returned from this difficult and bloody conflict, they were sent to one of three major duties: garrisons in the East, reconstruction in the South or frontier duty in the West. The primary duty for the Army of the West was

the facilitation of westward expansion and the pacification or defeat of the Indian tribes that actively fought or resisted this expansion.

During this quarter century period, the U.S. Army often faced a numerically inferior foe that evaded direct confrontations, generally attacked only when it was in his favor and continuously practiced better field skills, use of deception and use of unconventional tactics. Despite meeting this asymmetric foe, the officers of the Civil War period, by and large, continued to fight unconventional Indian warriors with conventional 19th century tactics. The lessons learned from the renowned Indian fighters of the 17th and 18th century were either lost in the lessons gained during firsthand experience in the Civil War or replaced with in the new military innovations and thought brought back from Europe by Dennis Hart Mahan and Emory Upton. The use of strictly conventional tactics in the Indian Wars, while at times successful in some sectors, proved to be costly, slow, and frequently brutal.

There were, however, exceptions to the norm. During the Indian Wars Major General George Crook approached the “Indian problem” with the unique application of military innovation to the cavalry and infantry formations, the use of indigenous forces as a main force and intelligence gathering force and the aggressive application of force paired with an acute ability to respond diplomatically when required. Crook was an effective administrator, proven combat leader and effective executioner of counterinsurgency compound warfare in a time when the conventional application of force was the norm.

This thesis will analyze Major General George Crook’s performance during the Sioux War of 1876-77 and attempt to answer whether or not Crook successfully fought

the Native American by effectively implementing a counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign. Counterinsurgency Compound Warfare is the simultaneous use of a regular or conventional force and an irregular, indigenous force in unison against a common enemy. A highly skilled conventional force fighting an insurgency will often face significant cultural, ethnic, linguistic and physical challenges. An irregular, indigenous force can fill the gap and meet many of these challenges by working in concert with the conventional force.

Major General George Crook sought to utilize Indian allies outside their traditional roles as scouts and utilized these forces in mutually supporting roles within each force's means and capabilities. The efficacy of an indigenous, irregular force is not only military in nature but, when used appropriately and honestly, serves as a vehicle of influence with native populations. The mutually supporting nature of this relationship enhances the strengths of both forces while limiting their inherent weaknesses. This thesis will attempt to explain how Crook was successful when he faced ethnic divisions, interagency rivalry and political hindrances while displaying adaptability as a leader and the ability to continue to learn while fighting a difficult counterinsurgency war.

Terms, Terminology, and Doctrine

While this chapter began with an inadequate modern definition of counterinsurgency, a military and etymological foundation for the term can be traced back to Joint Publication 1-02. It defines counterinsurgency as the “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat [an] insurgency.”⁴ This definition for counterinsurgency is predicated upon a sufficient definition of the term insurgency. The U.S. Army and Department of Defense

Joint doctrine define an insurgency as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict.”⁵ This definition fails to include separatist movements that do not desire to overthrow a constituted government but rather desire the establishment a separate government, state or autonomous area. Separatist insurgent movements such as the Kurdish Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK), Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the American Colonial Revolutionaries, and the American Indians all display the required characteristics of an insurgency but do not fall within this limited definition.

A more precise definition is a paraphrase of Clausewitz offered by David Galula in his book *Counterinsurgency Warfare*: “Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means [available].”⁶ It is from this broader definition that counterinsurgency can then be refined. This thesis will also use Andrew J. Birtle’s definition of counterinsurgency: “the term counterinsurgency embraces all of the political, economic, social, and military actions taken by a government for the suppression of insurgent, resistance, and revolutionary movements.”⁷

Within this framework, the concept of compound warfare emerges as a useful construct through which to analyze counterinsurgency. The concept of compound warfare, as espoused by Dr. Thomas M. Huber, is “the simultaneous use of a regular or main force and an irregular or guerrilla force against an enemy.”⁸ Within the study *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*, the case studies provided focused almost solely on historical examples involving a main force and insurgency operating in concert to defeat a common enemy. A key thought by Randall N. Briggs in “Compound Warfare in the Vietnam War” (his essay within *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*) states that “South

Vietnam and its ally, the United States, lost because they were unable or unwilling either to counter this [compound warfare] effort or institute their own version.”⁹

Whilst counterinsurgency does not conform to the majority of historical examples of compound warfare, it is historically plausible that compound warfare has been utilized in a counterinsurgency campaign. It is also intriguing that no examples of counterinsurgency compound warfare qua a counterinsurgency are offered except one, proffered by Jerold E. Brown, Ph.D. Brown points out that the U.S. Army (as an institution) did not fully utilize compound warfare on the western frontier but “On a few rare occasions, the Army contracted with larger groups of Indians to support the Army in the field ... For example, in the 1876 Centennial Campaign.”¹⁰ The specific instance cited was that of Major General George Crook’s use of Native Americans during the Centennial Campaign of 1876.

For the purposes of this discussion, I have defined counterinsurgency compound warfare as a distinct term in order to avoid confusion. Whilst insurgency and counterinsurgency are related concepts, as a construct, compound warfare has generally been utilized as an insurgency model. Therefore, counterinsurgency compound warfare is the simultaneous use of a regular or conventional force and an irregular, indigenous force in unison against a common enemy.

Crook stands out as an anomaly during the post Civil War period and there are divergent popular and historical analyses of Crook. General William T. Sherman “named him the greatest Indian fighter and manager the United States Army ever had.”¹¹ He was lionized by his many of his generation such as Captain John G. Bourke and Charles F. Lummis and has been noted for his “rare insight”¹² by historians like Robert

Utley. Crook has been also been criticized as by the modern historian Charles Robinson for being only an “adequate general officer.”¹³ Regardless of their analysis, most historians agree that Major General George Crook approached the Indian War with a uniqueness of thought and application shared by none of his military contemporaries.

This thesis will analyze Major General George Crook’s performance during the Great Sioux War and attempt to answer a few basic questions. Did Crook effectively implement a counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign during the Sioux War? If so, was Crook’s campaign successful in the Sioux War? In answering these questions, we should identify whether or not Crook’s distinctiveness of thought and action were successful and how these traits may be applicable to the military profession.

¹ U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24 p. 1-1

² Metz, Steven, “Rethinking Insurgency” (<http://StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil/>, 2007), p.1.

³ Birtle, Andrew J. *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Contingency Operations Doctrine 1860-1941*. (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1998), p.3

⁴ Department of Defense Joint Publication 1-02, 128.

⁵ U.S. Army Field Manual 1-02, 1-101.

⁶ Galula, David, *Counter-insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. (New York, Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1968) 3.

⁷ Birtle, 3.

⁸ Huber, Thomas M., eds. *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*. “Compound Warfare: A Conceptual Framework” (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002) 1.

⁹ Huber, Thomas M. eds. *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*. Briggs Randall N. “Compound Warfare in the Vietnam War” (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002) 221.

¹⁰ Huber, Thomas M. eds. *Compound Warfare: That Fatal Knot*. Brown, Jerold E. “Compound Warfare on the Great Plains: A Missed Opportunity” (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2002) 127-28.

¹¹ Crook, George. Edited and annotated by Martin F. Schmitt. *General George Crook: His Autobiography*. (Norman: Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1946) p xv.

¹² Utley, Robert M. *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866-1891*. (Lincoln, Nebraska: 1973) 53.

¹³ Robinson, Charles M. III. *General Crook and the Western Frontier*. (Norman Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press: 2001) xviii.

CHAPTER 2

CROOK'S EXPERIENCE PRIOR TO THE SIOUX WAR OF 1876-77

Crook's Experiences Prior to the Civil War (1828-1861)

George Crook was born in Taylorsville Ohio on the 8th of September 1828 in an age when Ohio was still considered to be on the western frontier. George Crook was the ninth child of a prosperous farmer whose activities focused mainly on his business, civic affairs and Whig politics. While Thomas Crook was relatively wealthy, his small farm of 350 acres would never provide a full inheritance for his nine children and thus economic necessity would require that all the children to find their own way in the world. All seven of the Crook brothers would find useful work as a doctor, dentist, tailor, postmaster, and farmer or in the case of George Crook, a professional soldier.

It was through the elder Crook's political connections that George Crook was summoned to an interview with Congressman Robert C. Schenck. Congressman Schenck, by his recollection, was looking to fill a vacancy at West Point and recalls his interview with young George Crook in an article with the Washington D.C. *Chronicle* in 1883.

I had looked over the district to find a bright lad to nominate to West Point to fill an existing vacancy. I was unsuccessful. I finally remembered that old Squire Crook, a fine old Whig farmer, and a friend of mine has some boys... The boy (George Crook) was exceedingly non-communicative. He hadn't a stupid look, but a quite reticence. He didn't seem to have the slightest interest or anxiety about my proposal... "Do you thing you can conquer all that?" His monosyllabic reply was, "I'll try."¹

This earliest of written recollections of George Crook provides two distinct characteristics that were his trademark. The first was a laconic sense of speech

that bordered on rudeness to the uninitiated. The other characteristic was how Crook unimpressed and underwhelmed others with his first impressions. Despite Congressman Schenk's inability to find a "bright lad," Crook was selected to attend the United States Military Academy beginning in 1846.

In order to meet the prerequisites to attend West Point, Crook attended the Dayton Academy, and upon completion of his tutelage, Crook earned the unenthusiastic recommendation: "[His] application and improvement satisfies me that he has a mind which will sustain him honorably in the required course at West Point."² With his appointment in March of 1846, Crook began his cadet career with fellow Ohioan, Philip H. Sheridan³ and began four years of academic struggle at West Point.

The hallmark of Crook's cadet experience was his seemingly unimpressive academic and military performance. While he rarely received demerits, he was never selected to hold cadet rank and he graduated thirty-eighth out of a class of forty-three. Crook's unimpressive record led to him earning the distinction as "the lowest-ranking cadet ever to rise to the rank of major general."⁴

While Crook was attending West Point, the Academy was experiencing a renaissance in military thought under the instruction of Dennis Hart Mahan. Mahan (instructor at the USMA from 1830-1870) first printed a lithograph on Indian warfare in 1835 and addressed tactics and procedures for *petite guerre* in his seminal work, *An Elementary Treatise on Advance-Guard, Out-Post, and Detachment Service of Troops* (often referred to simply as *Out-Post*, and first published in 1842). *Out-Post* served as the basis of doctrinal instruction for a generation of officers such as George Crook,

William Tecumseh Sherman, Philip H. Sheridan, George G. Meade and Ulysses S. Grant to name a few.⁵

After graduation from West Point, Crook would serve for nine years on the Western frontier prior to the beginning of the Civil War and it would be this service that would form his first professional concepts of the U.S. Army and of warfare. Crook would discover the Army of the West composed of young firebrand officers like himself vying for adventure and a decaying older officer corps commanding without enthusiasm or professionalism. In Crook's description of his experiences he states:

I must say that my first impressions of the army were not favorable. Most of the customs and habits that I witnessed were not calculated to impress one's morals or usefulness. Most of the commanding officers were petty tyrants, styled by some Martinets. They lost no opportunities to snub those under them, and ... most of them had been in command of small posts for so long that their habits and minds had narrowed down to their surroundings...⁶

According to Utley, low pay, slow promotion, disharmony within the officer ranks and a rapidly growing economy created a "frontier army [that] not only attracted mediocrity but impaired the usefulness of all but a select few of the promising."⁷

There are numerous ways by which young officers can learn their craft. The first is through instruction, such as West Point. Another method is through professional reading. Cook would likely have read books such as Captain William J. Hardee's *Infantry Tactics* (1855). *Infantry Tactics* was the most influential infantry manual of its time and the most important source of information for infantry drill published before the Civil War. Another, and more relevant book for use on the frontier, would be *The Prairie Traveler*, by Captain Randolph Marcy.

Marcy's text, published under the authority of the War Department, served not only as a guidebook but as a primer on Indian warfare. Marcy points out that:

“On leaving the Military Academy, a majority of our officers are attached to the line of the army, and forthwith assigned to duty upon our remote and extended frontier, where the restless and warlike habits of the nomadic tribes render the soldier's life almost as unsettled as the savages themselves.”⁸

Marcy covered important topics such as routes, packing horses and mules, treatment of injuries, and hunting for food. More important to the army officer of the West, Marcy described how to march through Indian territory, the use of advance and rear guards, how to handle relationships with the tribes of the plains, and methods for tracking and pursuing Indians. After reading General E. Dumas' *Great Desert* account of the natives of the Sahara and other French writings on the battles in Algeria, Marcy adroitly compares and contrasts these operations to those the U.S. Army faced with the Plains Indians.

While there is no direct evidence that Crook read Marcy's account, it is plausible and probable that he was at least familiar with it. *The Prairie Traveler* was published in 1859 and Crook had spent seven years in the West learning his trade. Crook would have initially learned counterinsurgency warfare in the way that Marcy charged his readers, through “discipline with the individuality, self-reliance, and rapidity of locomotion of the savage.”⁹

Crook's nine years on the frontier with the 4th Infantry Regiment were in the Northwest fighting the tribes in the Department of Oregon. These years were fortunate in that Crook learned his craft against an Indian foe that, while not as sedentary as the tribes of the East, was less nomadic as the Great Plains Indians. These Northwestern tribes

were not easily subdued but they presented a threat that was more complementary to the army's capabilities during this time period.

During the Rogue River Wars (1855-56), Crook took the time to acquire "some considerable knowledge of the Indian language of these Al-a-gnas"¹⁰ and developed a deeper desire to learn and understand the culture of his foes. Crook describes his method of fighting the Indians by:

"Get [ting] his confidence, which mean more than I can tell here. There are few people who can get an Indian's confidence to the extent that he will tell you all his 'bed rock' secrets, especially those of a sacred character. Until you have all of these little secrets of the inner Indian which control his baser part, you need not expect to manipulate him to good actions when his baser passions are aroused."¹¹

Crook began to learn that his "savage" foe was culturally different, he was also complex and his profession required not only careful study and interest, but also patience and understanding.

Crook discovered that these "little secrets of the inner Indian," were instrumental to fighting an insurgent opponent with the maximum efficacy and minimum military effort required. The experiences of the Northwest taught Crook the cruelty that could come at the hands of the Indian but he also saw that these outbreaks of violence were often due to "no unfrequent [sic] occurrence for an Indian, to be shot in cold blood, or a squaw raped by some brute."¹² Crook's ability to see both sides of the issue was instrumental in his ability to apply clear judgments to fighting the Indians and when dealing with difficult settlers.

The psychological and sociological factors notwithstanding, there were also significant physical challenges to fighting on the frontier. The basic skills of tracking, finding, and fighting these enemies on favorable terms were a task that Crook would

learn and become an acknowledged master. He developed the required proficiencies in small unit tactics and learned the value of Indian scouts who knew the physical and sociological terrain of the area better than any white man did.

As an avid outdoorsman, Crook spent his spare time in the wilderness hunting every kind of game available and these excursions were often with the aid and accompaniment of Indian scouts. The skills acquired in hunting provided a deeper understanding of the geographical, environmental, and spatial requirements of fighting Native Americans. It also provided a greater insight into how these factors were integral to the hunter-gatherer culture of the Native American societies.

Crook's initial years in the Army tested him in the numerous battles and skirmishes that were part and parcel for the frontier army. Crook fought various Indian tribes, sustained an arrowhead wound that remained in him for the remainder of his life and developed an admiration for his foes. All of these experiences were ideal for preparing a young officer for positions of greater responsibility in the frontier Army and for developing combat leaders for the looming Civil War.

After nine years of service, Crook had been promoted Captain faster than most officers at this time. He had left West Point as a subpar student and had performed well in a time when the army was under-funded, under-manned and slow to promote officers. West Point had given its "graduates a slight edge in military fundamentals, but it sent them forth to learn Indian fighting by hard experience."¹³ Crook had developed the basic tactical competencies but had moved further than most of his peers in developing an acute ability to understand the psychological and cultural factors that affected his enemy's decisions and judgments. In summary, Crook was as experienced and prepared

as any officer could have been and he would demonstrate his skill during the defining conflict of his generation, the Civil War.

The Making and Unmaking of a General: (1861-1865)

The Civil War expansion of the army and the difficulties the Union found in defeating the South precipitated an unprecedented opportunity for promotion. Crook went from being a newly promoted Captain at the age of 33 years old (young by 19th century standards) to becoming a Major General of Volunteers in less than five years. Charles M. Robinson III is the only modern 20th century historian to conduct a detailed and critical view of Crook's generalship. His assessment of Crook's Civil War service is that his overall performance "was no better or worse than that of many other Union generals."¹⁴ Robinson's criticisms of some of Crook's tactical actions have some validity but he fails to consider the whole record. Crook was successful by every measure of his day. Crook was selected to be a general officer commanding soldiers, he remained in command throughout the entire conflict, and he was key and instrumental in the execution of numerous campaigns, the most important being his defeat of General Jubal Early in the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864.

Crook's rise during the Civil War is interesting because reticent nature and unassuming personality should have been professionally crippling. Crook was unusual in that he always focused on results in a way that was professionally unpretentious. He was uniquely unmilitary in his dress and often did not wear a full dress uniform. Crook displayed a general ambivalence to the pomp that often accompanies the Army. These mannerisms were in line with those of Grant and Sherman and seemed to be instrumental

in winning over a great number of his volunteer officers, to include future President Rutherford B. Hayes.

Crook was also intensely competitive but tended not to overtly display this character trait. The ostentatious character of Nelson H. Miles and George A. Custer accentuated their self-promoting actions but Crook's reticent nature ran against such overt displays. That is not to say that Crook did desire credit for his accomplishments. During later campaigns, Crook was not above having his own court of newspapermen to record his exploits. His laconic demeanor provided a stark juxtaposition to some rising stars within the Army. However, Crook's academic, personal, and professional characteristics placed him squarely within a camp of other non-conformist officers such as William T. Sherman, Ulysses S. Grant, and his roommate at West Point, Philip H. Sheridan. It may be no coincidence that all four of these non-conformists were from Ohio, all attended West Point and all three would rise to the highest ranks within the U.S. Army.

While this may go far in explaining Crook's rise through the ranks, Crook understood his own intellectual limitations and professional capabilities. A lesson once learned tended to remain with him for life and his ability to analyze a tactical situation and react effectively was crucial to his success. His steadfast search for solutions to intractable problems led to significant military results and a corresponding recognition for these achievements.

An often-overlooked historical aspect of Crook's Civil War record was the counterinsurgency operations he carried out against various rebel guerillas, bushwhackers, and outlaws during his service in West Virginia, Northern Alabama,

Maryland and Virginia. Crook's fast rise through the ranks was due, in no small part, to his early demonstrated ability to pacify unruly districts. It was here that "Crook's western experience helped, because the partisans used essentially the same hit and run tactics preferred by the Indians."¹⁵

Crook's first assignment was to the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry posted to Summersville, West Virginia. He was confronted with an undisciplined organization that was still dressed in their civilian clothing. Crook immediately set about providing provisions for his command, and unassuming style of leadership quickly won over his fellow Ohioans. It was in this district that Crook first encountered the partisans and bandits collectively termed as "bushwhackers."

It was in West Virginia that Crook began to hone his counterinsurgency techniques. He took care to choose intelligent officers and "scattered them through the country to learn it and all the people in it, and particularly the bushwhackers, their haunts, etc."¹⁶ He began to use flying columns to drive guerillas toward his troops waiting in ambush, a tactic akin to the "driven hunt" or block-and-drive technique of hunting upland birds, popular since the 18th century. He formed special scouting units, burned out enemy safe havens and tacitly allowed his soldiers to execute captured guerrillas.¹⁷ Early on Crook may have either permitted or condoned a more heavy-handed approach in West Virginia and his forces generally followed this same pattern of fighting against the Bushwhackers in Northern Alabama. It was in Alabama that Crook captured and scattered a guerilla band led by Frank P. Gurley. Gurley had killed General Robert L. McCook in 1862 and Crook's success with his current tactics did not prepare him for the test he would soon encounter in Maryland and Virginia.

Soon afterward Crook was assigned to the Allegheny Mountains and was assigned command of the 3rd Division (also known as the Kanawha Division) of the Department of West Virginia or more commonly known simply as the Army of West Virginia. Crook was also placed in the peculiar position of serving under the command of his former roommate and friend, General Philip H. Sheridan. It was also here in early 1864 that Crook organized and authorized a hundred-man force under the command of Captain Richard Blazer. Named after their commander, Blazer's Scouts (sometimes called the Legion of Honor but this title was never formally utilized) was to be a counter guerilla force whose purposes were to gather intelligence and defeat the guerillas that had so freely attacked Sheridan's supply trains.¹⁸

Blazer's command was a distinct departure from the heavy handed tactics that Crook's forces had employed earlier in the war. Earlier in the war, the Lincoln administration had attempted to institute more conciliatory tactics against guerillas by instituting benevolent pacification. A liberal furlough policy for captured guerillas, weak administration of the conquered military districts, and an underestimation of Southern resolve all led to the demise of benevolent pacification by 1862. As most commanders began to implement a more indiscriminate fight against the guerillas and their communities, Blazer's Scouts were keen to engage the civil population with a more nuanced approach. One rebel guerilla fighter stated that "by his (Blazer's) humane and kindly treatment, in striking contrast with the usual conduct of our enemies, had so disarmed our citizens that instead of fleeing on his approach and notifying all soldiers, thus giving them a chance to escape, little notice was taken of him. Consequently, many of our men were 'gobbled up' before they were aware of his presence."¹⁹

It was in the Shenandoah Valley, the cradle of Confederate Partisan activity, that Crook's counterinsurgency force faced the 43rd Battalion of the Virginia Cavalry, better known as Mosby's Rangers. Blazer's Scouts proved to be more than just an annoyance and Colonel John S. Mosby singled out Blazer's command and trapped and destroyed them in November of 1864. Despite what many might consider as a failure, Blazer's Scouts accomplished two significant missions. Firstly, the Union had proven that it could field a credible deterrent to counter what had been an unchecked partisan enclave. More importantly, Blazer's force had accomplished a larger operational objective of tying up Mosby's forces while freeing up Sheridan's supply lines from harassment. This allowed Sheridan to focus on his strategic objective of defeating General Jubal Early's command and removing the possibility of an attack on Washington while Grant focused on Lee.

Crook's Civil War service would provide him with a wealth of counterinsurgency experience that would serve him well throughout the rest of his career. Crook learned the efficacy of specially selected, highly maneuverable counter-guerilla units. He also saw the juxtaposition of utilizing the most severe and heavy-handed aspects of warfare against guerillas and civilians, compared with Blazer's more nuanced approach. Crook's service in Virginia, Maryland, Northern Alabama and West Virginia provided him the experiences needed to develop an openness to adaptation and change that was a unique skill set that would serve him well in the West.²⁰

Return to Active Duty and to the West (1865-1875)

After his service in the Civil War, Crook reverted from his volunteer rank as a major general of volunteers to his regular army rank of lieutenant colonel. During the war years, he had been promoted twice in the regular army and he was subsequently

assigned command of the new 23rd Infantry Regiment in Idaho under the Division of the Pacific. Crook returned to the West and found Chief Paulina and his Paiute tribe wreaking havoc in the Northwest and it was this return to Indian fighting that was to be his reintroduction to the West and his first order of business.

Governor George L. Woods had utilized the provisions of the Army Bill of 1866 to raise two companies of Indian scouts from the Warm Springs Reservation and when Crook arrived he quickly made use of these scouts and promptly organized a third company of friendly Paiutes. While Crook ensured that these troops were properly armed with new Sharps rifles, he continued to utilize them in the traditional role of scouts as guides and as an advanced or screening force.

Crook's success against the Paiute tribe impressed Major General George Thomas (commander of the Division of the Pacific) and the Territorial Governor of Arizona, Anson P.K. Safford. The Cochise War in Arizona was entering its twentieth year and reciprocal crimes between Indians and whites had increased to unacceptable levels. The events of April 24, 1871, soon to be known as The Camp Grant Massacre, were the proverbial last straw. The attack by local Tucson whites, Hispanics and anti-Apache Papago Indians was targeted against the neighboring Aravaipa Apaches. The killings took place in a camp named after President Grant but it was the rape of the Native American women and selling of the children into slavery that raised the greatest outcry in Washington and pushed the Arizona problem to the forefront of national news. It was this event that triggered a call for action and precipitated Crook's appointment to the Department of Arizona.

It was in Arizona that Crook would refine his counterinsurgency techniques against the Indians and implement three key concepts. Firstly, Crook believed that Indian scouts were successful because they were Indians. While this seems counterintuitive, there were numerous and sometimes successful attempts to utilize Indian troops as conventional infantry or cavalry units. While this was somewhat more successful with the eastern tribes on the conventional battlefields of the Civil War, the use of western nomadic Indian scouts as conventional soldiers was generally a failure²¹. Crook realized that the strength of the Indian scout lay in his highly developed abilities of tracking, observation and intelligence gathering. Frontier officer Captain John Bigelow commented on Crook's approach to Indian troops by saying: "General Crook makes of his Indian auxiliaries, not soldiers, but more formidable Indians."²²

Secondly, Crook chose officers that were skilled in warfare and culturally adaptive. A typical choice was the brave, highly capable Civil War veteran Captain George M. Randall. Randall was an exceptional officer who would later become a brigadier general and command the Department of Luzon in the Philippine War. Another example was Captain Wirt Davis who would rise from the enlisted ranks in 1860 to eventually command the 3rd Cavalry Regiment and retire as a Brigadier General. Crook's care and attention to this task stemmed from lessons learned from the West and from Blazer's Scouts. Carefully selecting the right men would ensure that his loose confederations of Indian Scouts were always held in check by strong, capable leaders.

And lastly, the recruitment of intra-tribal scouts was to become another key strategy in Crook's fight against the Indians. As he explained to Charles F. Loomis of the *Los Angeles Times* in 1886:

To polish a diamond there is nothing like its own dust. It is the same with these fellows. Nothing breaks them up like turning their own people against them. They don't fear the white soldiers whom they easily surpass in the peculiar style of warfare which they force upon us, but put upon their trail an enemy of their own blood, an enemy as tireless, as foxy, and as stealthy and familiar with the country as they themselves, and it breaks them all up. It is not merely a question of catching them better with Indians, but of a broader and more enduring aim-their disintegration.²³

While this may seem Machiavellian in nature, in Crook's mind it was simply a practical approach to a very difficult problem. Using intra-tribal rivalry was a highly effective tool for ensuring capable warriors during the campaign but these scouts also served as keen allies in persuading their fellow tribesmen to surrender peaceably and under acceptable terms.

Crook utilized this three-part strategy against the Apaches in Arizona and ended the nearly twenty-year war with Cochise and the subsequent conflict with Cha-lipun. Lightened Cavalry and mounted Infantry utilized with highly mobile Apache Indian scouts was a formidable force. The leadership of these specially selected officers and the superior intelligence gathering and tracking skills of the Apache scouts tipped the scales in favor of the Army. Crook's unique approach to the Apaches further validated his concepts and created the conditions for peace in Arizona that lasted almost a decade.

Crook's Uses of Counterinsurgency Compound Warfare & Conclusion

Crook's experience fighting Indians and guerillas prior to the Sioux War provided him with the skill base and understanding necessary to fully implement a hybrid form of compound warfare in a counterinsurgency environment. The evolution of Crook's counterinsurgency tactics began with an introduction to the fundamental nature of

campaigning against Native Americans and as a young officer he demonstrated only a limited use of Indian Scouts during his early years in the West.

During the Civil War, Crook observed, practiced, and experimented with different methods of countering guerilla activity. While he may have clearly seen the immediate effects of more heavy-handed methods, the negative ramification would lead him to a more measured and targeted approach to counterinsurgency. It was during these years that Crook was able to draw from his previous Western and Civil War experience and successfully wage a counterinsurgency in the post-Civil War West.

Crook's return to the West saw a resumption of warfare against the Indians and he took on this responsibility by continually learning and applying an open-minded approach to the problems he faced. If Civil War experience seemed to fix the perceptions of some military professionals of this period, Crook was able to continually learn and adapt as conditions changed. This does not mean that he was infallible but instead demonstrates that over time, Crook had a relatively unbiased ability to observe, learn, experiment and refine his approach to counterinsurgency.

Crook would take his lessons from the Civil War and would carry his approach to the next logical step. Indians were the acknowledged experts at their form of guerilla or insurgent warfare and the elusiveness, speed and maneuverability of their fighting forces made the use of conventional Cavalry and Infantry extremely difficult. While numerous commanders utilized Indian scouts, Crook envisioned the optimal solution was using intra-tribal forces and utilizing these scouts as the main force of his operations while simultaneously lightening his cavalry and mobilizing his infantry on mules. This use of

conventional and unconventional forces is within the construct of compound warfare but it is a unique example because of its application in counterinsurgency warfare.

Crook's performance during the Great Sioux War has been characterized as a mixed, at best. The debacle at Powder River, the close call at the Rosebud and the slow war of attrition that led to eventual success of the expedition have all been cited as lapses in Crook's military judgment and capabilities. However, counterinsurgencies are rarely won with decisive battles and are more often won through consistent military, diplomatic and economic engagement.

In 1876, Crook entered the Sioux War with a full understanding of the multiple variations of uses for indigenous and conventional forces qua counterinsurgency compound warfare. He also understood how to optimize these force's complementary capabilities. The three-part case study that follows will analyze Crook's uses of counterinsurgency compound warfare in his campaign during the Great Sioux War. The analysis will focus on the strategic, operational and tactical influences and decisions that affected Crook's campaign and how he adjusted for these factors.

Crook followed a few principles that optimized his scouts within his campaign. Firstly, Crook allowed native scouts to remain native. The skills and traits that made Indian Scouts useful were the explanation to their efficacy. Secondly, Crook wanted to choose good subordinate leaders. Thirdly, he believed intra-tribal scouts were the most effective tactical and psychological tool against warring Indian tribes. Lastly, Crook believed in being honest and just with the Indians. As Red Cloud remarked upon Crook's death, "he, at least, had never lied to us."²⁴ These principles gave Crook's campaign a higher level of interoperability with their Indian allies, increased the effectiveness of the

whole force and made Crook's force a legitimate threat to the Sioux and Cheyenne who left the agencies.

Despite the conventional historical wisdom surrounding Crook's performance during this campaign, the analysis of his actions reveals that Crook fully utilized the assets available and effectively applied the concepts of counterinsurgency compound warfare effectively. While counterinsurgency compound warfare is not a panacea, the case study will demonstrate that Crook employed the most effective means of defeating the Sioux.

The constraint on resources and personnel and the political infighting between the War Department and the Department of the Interior significantly hobbled the initial campaigns of 1876. Prior to Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn, funding was cut to the bone and the regular army had been whittled down to less than 25,000 enlisted soldiers. Despite these hindrances, what is surprising is that Crook faced a Sioux force at the Rosebud that is similar to that faced by General Alfred H. Terry's subordinate Custer at the ill-fated Little Bighorn. Yet Crook survived with his force largely intact and was able to eventually bring the Sioux War to conclusion.

Part of the constrained historical view of Crook's performance during this campaign is tied, in part, to American perceptions of victory. The "victory disease" was outlined by Major Timothy Karcher in his monograph *Understanding the "Victory Disease," From the Little Bighorn to Mogadishu and Beyond* and he describes three major failings that epitomize the victory disease. The first is a sense of arrogance and invincibility that leads to an over estimation perception of one's own capabilities and an under estimation of one's enemy's capabilities. The second is a sense of complacency

that fails to adequately plan and adapt to new and dangerous situations. Lastly, there is the danger “using established patterns to fight future conflict”²⁵ or what has been commonly termed as templating.²⁶ Crook was able to evade all three of these pitfalls during the Sioux War and his campaigns lead to a forced peace rather than a decisive victory.

The definition of what is or is not a victory in counterinsurgency is a difficult question. What victory means when fighting an unconventional opponent could be a general or significant reduction in violence or what may be termed a relative peace. As Azor H. Nickerson described Crook’s Apache campaign prior to the Great Sioux War, “The campaign in Arizona did not owe their ultimate success to any particular Waterloo-like victory, as much as the covering of a great deal of ground by a comparatively small number of men, permitting the Indians no rest, and rendering any and every hiding place insecure.”²⁷

In other words, victory in counterinsurgency may not be a decisive event but a reduction of violence and conflict. As David Galula so aptly described the end of an insurgency; “A few guerillas will still manage to survive...These survivors may give up one day if the insurgency collapse, or they may leave the area for good, or they may hold out.”²⁸ In other words, an insurgency may more likely end “not with a bang, but a whimper.”²⁹

¹ Crook, XVIII.

² Crook, XVIII.

³ Crook, 4. While the South has the reputation as being the military cradle of the United States, Ohio would produce 64 general officers during the Civil War, “including such notables as U.S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Philip Sheridan-and Crook.

⁴ Crook, XIX.

⁵ Birtle, 12.

⁶ Crook, 10.

⁷ Utley, Robert M. *Frontiersmen in Blue: The United States Army and the Indian 1848-1865* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1967) 31

⁸ Marcy, Randolph B. *The Prairie Traveler* (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1968) xi.

⁹ Birtle, 95.

¹⁰ Crook, 69

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Robinson, 18.

¹³ Utley, *Frontiersmen in Blue* 33.

¹⁴ Robinson, 81.

¹⁵ Robinson, 31.

¹⁶ Crook, 87.

¹⁷ Birtle, 3.

¹⁸ Wert, Jeffrey D. *Mosby's Rangers* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990) 202-203.

¹⁹ Birtle, 46.

²⁰ Robinson, 73, 124. While stationed Cumberland, Virginia, Crook met his future wife Mary Daily while living in her father's inn, *Revere House*. It was also well known that Mary's brother James Daily was a Confederate irregular in McNeill's Rangers, a band of Confederate guerillas that captured Crook on 21 February 1865. Crook was held prisoner until 20 March 1865, furloughed and returned to the war. James Daily reappears seven years later in Arizona and serves as a “volunteer” during Crook's first Apache Campaign.

²¹ The exception to the rule may be the Seminole Negro Indian Scouts. Neither fully conventional or wholly native in nature these troops may have come closest to combining the discipline of conventional forces with the nativist skills desired in Indian scouts. While these troops were semi-standardized, their numbers were not known to be more than 30 to 100 scouts at any given time. Their exodus to Mexico, service in the Mexican Army fighting the Comanche and Apache raiders, and return to the U.S. are unique in the annals of American history. In other cases, the diasporas to the West of the Seminole, Creek, Delaware, Cherokee, and other eastern tribes saw their frequent and mixed use as scouts during the Indian Wars.

²² Birtle, 70.

²³ Utley, 54

²⁴ Robinson, 311

²⁵ Karcher, Timoth, “Understanding the “Victory Disease,” From the Little Bighorn to Mogdishu and Beyond” (SAMS diss, Command and General Staff School), 1-2.

²⁶ Within Special Operations Forces, the term *templating* was coined after the analysis of the lessons learned during the raid in Mogadishu. Repeated daylight raids were conducted along similar air corridors and TF RANGER personnel were infiltrated to the objective almost exclusively by rotary wing aircraft. This situation created a “template” for General Mohamed Farah Aideed’s forces to use. Repeated use of very similar tactics, techniques and procedures provided the means for the enemy to use as early warning of an impending raid and thereby opened the force to exploitation at their weak point: infiltration.

²⁷ Robinson, 140

²⁸ Galula, 133

²⁹ Eliot T.S. and eds., *A Treasury of American Literature*. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), p.856

CHAPTER 3

THE BATTLE AT THE POWDER RIVER

Narrative of the Battle at the Powder River

Crook's battle against the Sioux and the Great Plains Indians began on the 27th of February 1876 when Crook accompanied the Big Horn Expedition as they started their journey at Fort Laramie. The expedition consisted of twelve companies: five companies of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, five companies of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment and two companies of 4th Infantry. All totaled, the force included 32 officers and 662 enlisted and Crook had decided to place the expedition under the tactical command of Colonel Joseph J. Reynolds, Commander of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment.

At the time of this expedition, Colonel Reynolds was a professionally respected but aging 54-year-old Civil War veteran who had been relieved of his command of the Department of Texas shortly after Reconstruction. His command ended in a cloud of discredit after allegations arose concerning the impropriety of his attempted candidacy for election to the U.S. Senate from Texas. Attacks in the press vilified Reynolds and his ambition to be a candidate for the Senate. As commander of the Department of Texas in the Reconstruction South, Reynolds had been responsible for establishing and constituting the sitting government of Texas.¹ This conflict of interest between Reynolds' public role in establishing the government of Texas and his private collusion to run for the senate sealed his fate. In Washington D.C., the political tides against Reynolds had turned and, were it not for his Civil War valor and the fact that he was a West Point classmate of President Grant, the actions against him may have been harsher.

Despite Reynolds' history, Crook decided to provide him an opportunity to redeem his reputation and on the 1st of March the expedition began their movement from Fort Fetterman to find and defeat the Sioux who had left the agencies against government orders.

This day began with heavy snow, to which Crook quipped, "the worse it gets, the better; always hunt Indians in bad weather."² Crook accompanied the expedition in his capacity as the Department Commander but he left the tactical command to Colonel Reynolds. Crook wanted to evaluate his troops and provide Reynolds an opportunity to retrieve his reputation. Crook also described his role in his official report of expedition.

[Crook] Accompanied the expedition, not as its immediate commander, but in his [Crook's] capacity of the department commander, for several reasons, chief of which may be mentioned that it had been impressed upon him, and he had almost come to believe, that operations against these Indians were impossible in the rigors of the climate during the winter and early spring, and he wished to demonstrate by personal experience whether this was so or not.³

Crook, it appears, also took this time to evaluate his soldiers and their commanders first hand. Bourke may have known Crook best and it may be true that Crook was giving Reynolds the benefit of the doubt, but in the end Crook's reputation as being "a cold, gray-eyed and somewhat cold-blooded warrior, treating his men perhaps to practically in war time"⁴ was soon to come to the light.

If Crook needed a reason to be disappointed, he would not have to wait long. On the 2nd of March, at the encampment on the South Cheyenne River, lax security of the expedition's herd of feed cattle led to its total loss at the hands of a small party of braves. "Thus by the wave of an Indian blanket, the expedition meat rations were magically

diminished to one-third bacon for thirty-eight days.”⁵ Crook now personally intervened and immediately issued orders to increase security.

The campaign plodded forward until the 6th of March when Crook halted the campaign to reorganize and lighten the cavalry. Crook’s decision to reorganize the campaign may have been an outward symptom of his frustration with Reynolds’ leadership. With the packs lightened and the logistical lines separated from the fighting column, Crook pushed the scouts out further to try to identify where the Indian were encamped. From the 7th to the 15th of March, Frank Grouard guided the expedition forward until he discovered fresh trails leading eastward (35 to 40 miles) towards the Powder River.

Crook stopped again on the 16th of March to order a mobile force forward under the command of Reynolds. Reynolds and his force departed at 1700 hours and followed Grouard slowly as he followed the trail to the Indian camp. Grouard was on foot a great deal of the time and was often on his hands and knees lighting matches to regain and follow the trail. At 0400 on the 17th of March, the troops halted while Grouard moved forward to conduct a reconnaissance. After returning at 0600, Reynolds questioned Grouard and gave instruction for the order of attack. Captain Henry E. Noyes’ battalion would attack from the south and Captain James Egan’s company would charge the camp on horseback and run the Indian’s pony herd upstream and out of reach of the warriors. Captain Alexander Moore’s supporting battalion would dismount on the bluffs overlooking the village and close the escape of any Indians fleeing from the charge while Captain Anson Mills battalion would follow Egan’s company to secure and hold the

village. All of the forces were to remain concealed until the cavalry charge initiated the operation.

Colonel Reynolds' attack appeared to have every advantage possible. His force of 359 men and 15 officers had achieved surprise against a force of approximately 210 Oglala, Cheyenne and Mineconjous braves. Regardless of the numerical advantage, Reynolds' command found the terrain difficult to traverse and the attack began at 0900 instead the planned attack at daybreak. Moore's battalion never made it to their assigned position and the when the Captain James Egan's company cavalry charge began, the ambush blocking force on the bluffs was nowhere to be seen. The Indian braves reorganized quickly and utilized the cover northwest of the village to begin a counter-attack against the soldiers holding the village. Captain Anson Mills' battalion moved to and occupied the village with Egans' cavalry and Captain Moore's battalion finally moved to the left flank but never occupied the tactically important bluffs. The braves counter attack failed, but they were never significantly engaged or ever came close to destruction.

The force now found they were occupying the village but were being viciously attacked while holding precarious positions in the open. At 1330 Colonel Reynolds moved into the village while the command was continuing to fight. Bourke's account of the action tells the tale best:

General Reynolds concluded suddenly to withdraw from the village, and the movement was carried out so precipitately that we practically abandoned the victory to the savages. There were over seven hundred ponies, ... blankets and robes, and a very appreciable addition to our own stock of ammunition in our hands, and the enemy driven into the hills, while we had Crook and his four companies to depend upon as a reserve, and yet we fell back at such a rate that our dead were left in the

hands of the Indians, and, as was whispered among the men, one of our poor soldiers fell alive into enemy hands and was cut limb from limb.

The fiasco grew worse as the ponies were slowly herded to the rear and the soldiers began to simultaneously burn the provisions within the village and scrape some meager provisions for their own use later. The disengagement was a tiresome 20-mile trek to the mouth of Clear Creek. The command made the rendezvous point and virtually collapsed after traveling over 50 miles in a day and a half, in the harsh cold and fighting a battle with little sleep or food.

On the morning of March 18th, the soldiers woke to find that a small group of warriors had re-captured 550 of their pony herd that had been left unguarded during the night. The continued lax security has allowed the Indians to regain their greatest assets, their horses. Despite this fact, Reynolds made the decision to not attempt to recapture the herd but rather to continue the march.

Crook was initially pleased that the force had found and destroyed the village but the unraveling story would soon change his demeanor. Bourke, Crook's Aide de Camp, had accompanied the expedition and had reported his analysis of the situation to Crook. Crook also discovered his officers and men in argument over the bungling of the operation and the decision to burn the needed provisions in the village.

It would now take nine days to make their way back to Fort Fetterman. Partly to supplement their provisions and partly to deny their enemies these important mounts, the soldiers killed more than half of the ponies during the return march. Crook took immediate action when he returned to Fort Fetterman and filed charges against Reynolds, Moore, and Noyes. The specified charges were:

1st A failure on the part of portion of the command (i.e. Noyes and Moore)

to properly support the first attack.

2nd A failure to make a vigorous and persistent attack with the whole command.

3rd A failure to secure the provision that were capture for the use of the troops, instead of destroying them.

4th And the most disastrous of all, a failure to properly secure and take care of the horses and ponies captured, nearly all of which again fell into the hands of the Indians the following morning.⁶

To add to Crook's problems, a significant number of enlisted men deserted after claiming "they would not serve under officers who abandoned their dead and wounded to the Indians."⁷

Crook now faced a demoralized command. Negative reports in the press fueled Eastern opposition to a war that many believed was ill conceived and morally wrong. At the same time, the annual summer council of the Lakota (Sioux) Nation was gathering early to seek collective security after Reynolds attack on the Cheyenne at the Powder River. This annual gathering would gather strength and become the largest known gathering of native warriors and then it would be unleashed on the Army.

Factors Affecting Crook's Application of a Counterinsurgency Compound Warfare Campaign during at the Powder River

The failures at the Powder River are puzzling in light of the fact that Crook had the experience and intelligence to develop and implement effective counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign. In fact, he had applied these techniques previously and would do so later during his campaign against the Apache Indians in the 1880s. The actions at the Powder River however, did not match the construct Crook would painstakingly describe in his later writings.⁸

There are at least two possible explanations for these discrepancies. The first is that Crook had not fully formulated his construct for fighting the Indians. This

explanation lacks validity because it does not coincide with Crook's experience fighting the Apaches in the early 1870s. Crook had utilized bands of mobile intra-tribal Indian scouts to track and harass renegade Apaches and had held conventional Cavalry units in reserve as a striking force. When this phase of his Arizona campaign was over twenty-two Medals of Honor were awarded and ten of those would go to the Apaches under Crook's command. All evidence indicates that Crook fully understood the construct he would later espouse in writing. If this is so, why did he not utilize these techniques against the Sioux on the Powder River?

A more plausible explanation is that Crook understood the need for intra-tribal scouts, within the larger construct of the campaign, but was unable to recruit these assets prior to the initiation of the Sioux War. There are three major reasons why he could not implement an effective counterinsurgency compound warfare model in the opening days of the Sioux War. The first was the deep and bitter divide created between the Sioux Nations and the United States. This political divide was intensified by economic factors rising out of the Panic of 1873 and the discovery of gold in the Black Hills. The last factor was the failure of the U.S. government and Army leaders to effectively police their ranks, and properly man and equip the Army for the role it was fulfilling.

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 created the Great Sioux Reservation from a position of weakness during the U.S. government's implementation of the concentration policy. Prior to the negotiations of the treaty, Red Cloud had established the precondition that Forts Kearney, C.F. Smith and Reno be vacated before he would call off his war with the whites.⁹ The United States' implementation of the concentration policy also led to concessions of an enormous track of land for the creation of the Great Sioux

Reservation and a promise of provision of foodstuffs. In the 1868 treaty with the Sioux Nation (or as the tribe is sometimes referred to as the Seven Council Fires) the boundaries would begin-

commencing on the east bank of the Missouri River where the forty-sixth parallel of north latitude crosses the same, thence ... to a point opposite where the northern line of the State of Nebraska strikes the river, thence west across said river, and along the northern line of Nebraska to the one hundred and fourth degree of longitude west from Greenwich, thence north on said meridian to a point where the forty-sixth parallel of north latitude intercepts the same, thence due east along said parallel to the place of beginning.¹⁰

When the agency was reduced and the vast majority surrendered in the Treaty of 1883, the New York Times described this newly available land as “about 11,500,000 acres, or an area greater than the combined areas of Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Delaware.”¹¹

Historian Lucy E. Textor noted in 1896 that the purpose of the concentration policy was “first, the removal of the causes of war [e.g. territorial disputes]; second, the security of our frontiers and the safe building of our western railroad; third, the inauguration of some plan for the civilization of the Indians,”¹² but “the chief blame of our Indian troubles was laid at the door of our legislation, as being responsible for our wavering, inconsistent, and unjust Indian policy.”¹³ The U.S. government’s policies vacillated between sporadic war on the plains and periodic concessions. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 not only gave the impression of weakness, it reinforced in Red Cloud’s mind, and in the minds of many other Sioux and Cheyenne Indians, that United States had negotiated from a position of weakness. This perception would continue for almost a decade and Crook would later state in his report to the Secretary of War in 1876,

“it was well known that the treaty of 1868 had been regarded by the Indians as an instrument binding on us but not binding on them.”¹⁴

The U.S. government had negotiated from a point of weakness in 1868 and this set the strategic context for the next eight years. The U.S. Army had given up their forts while the U.S. government had sworn to vacate Sioux Land and had promised to feed the Sioux on the reservations. The U.S. government’s policies reinforced the concept that the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty was wholly in the Sioux’s favor.

The gathering troubles on the Great Plains were not the only cause for Crook’s new assignment to the plains. Another reason for Crook’s reassignment may be drawn back to the financial Panic of 1873 and the recession that followed. Jay Cook was a respected financier and had, with Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, devised a successful plan for financing the U.S. government’s Civil War costs. After the Civil War Jay Cook & Company was the financier of the Northern Pacific Railroad and, while \$15 million had been invested into the company, less than 500 miles of track had been laid “through a sparsely populated region, and the two portions of lines were still more than 1,000 miles apart.”¹⁵ The Northern Pacific was the second transcontinental railroad planned for the United States and the economic benefits of the service to the Northwest (from Saint Paul, Minnesota to Seattle, Washington) would be significant.

Unfortunately, Jay Cook & Company had overextended their credit with European investors and filed for bankruptcy in September of 1873. Jay Cook & Company was a bellwether stock in its era and its collapse sent tremors throughout the U.S. economy. The second and third order effects forced the New York Stock Exchange to close for ten days and set off a panic in selling. In a cascading effect over the next

three years, the national economy would suffer significantly during this economic downturn. By 1876, unemployment was at 14%, and the depression that would continue until 1879.

Economic hardship had led to greater westward migration. The economic pressures led to the miner's invasion of the Black Hills after the discovery of gold and it would take a presidential misstep to make conditions worse. On December 7th 1875, President Ulysses S. Grant acceded to the advice of the Secretary of the Interior and, by doing so, created the final impetus for the Sioux War of 1876-77.

“The discovery of gold in the Black Hills, a portion of the Sioux Reservation, has had the effect to induce a large emigration of miners to that point. Thus far the effort to protect the treaty rights of the Indians to that section has been successful, but the next year will certainly witness a large increase of such emigration. The negotiations for the relinquishment of the gold fields having failed, it will be necessary for Congress to adopt some measures to relieve the embarrassment growing out of the causes named. Then Secretary of the Interior suggests that the supplies now appropriated for the sustenance of that people, being no longer obligatory under the treaty of 1868, but simply a gratuity, may be issued or withheld at his discretion.”¹⁶

In his report in 1875, Crook warned that the situation on the agencies would worsen if food was not provided. The Sioux would be forced to leave the reservation to hunt and conflict between these Indians and white settlers would become more prevalent. Once war was inevitable, Crook's strategy of recruiting intra-tribal scouts (e.g. Sioux or Cheyenne) became impossible due to the hostile actions of the government and the long history of inconsistent policies.

Lastly, Crook was forced to contend with Colonel Reynolds and the numerous personal and professional problems that accompanied him. To conduct these operations, Crook was careful to select “young men of ambition, dedication, sensitivity, and above

all rapport with their men” and he desired these officers to be “less ‘Indian-fighters’ than ‘Indian-thinkers’”¹⁷. One could argue that these traits are desirable in all officers but it is particularly important for officers conducting counterinsurgency warfare. Reynolds displayed none of these traits and his best days appear to have been behind him. The Army had pushed their political problem on Crook. Crook was therefore forced, by duty and political exigencies, to give Reynolds an opportunity to redeem his reputation.

As President Grant’s administration struggled to stop a spiraling economy, tensions on the Sioux Reservation and the territory surrounding it had worsened. The U.S. government had neglected its Army and the stresses of continual Western duty were showing. It is a poignant note that Secretary of War, William W. Belknap stated with pride in his report to Congress in 1875 that “The Army is now reduced to twenty-five thousand men.”¹⁸ Despite the statements of the Secretary of War, the ceiling of 25,000 men was rarely met and a number between 10% and 25% less than that ceiling was the more accurate count of the number of soldiers actually in the Army.¹⁹ The Army was struggling to maintain order in the West while facing significant fiscal and manpower restrictions imposed as cost saving measures for the federal government.

It would be rash to vilify Reynolds but his actions bear much of the blame for what went wrong at the Powder River. Crook’s decision to refer charges for court-martial did not come easily. Reynolds, despite his political baggage, was commended for bravery during the Civil War and, except for the fiasco in Texas, his service to the nation had been excellent.

It is also apparent that Crook had no ill will towards Reynolds. Bourke reports “Crook was very kindly disposed towards General Reynolds, and wanted to give him

every chance to make a brilliant reputation for himself and retrieve the past”²⁰ and Crook’s own memoirs simply state “upon my return I preferred charges against Col. Reynolds and Captains Noyes and Moore for misbehavior before the enemy.”²¹ Regardless, Crook did refer charges, and Reynolds was found guilty and was suspended from rank and command for a year.

Crook’s reasons for referral of charges were grounded in Reynolds’ disobedience but even this omission may have been forgiven if other factors were not involved. The failure to follow Crook’s direct orders to secure the village provisions and secure the pony herd was a slight that may have been ignored. Crook could have quietly moved Reynolds from the direct command of operations and continue with his campaign.

Crook’s deeper reason for referring charges may have been centered on the need to maintain the morale, good order and discipline of his soldiers. During Reynolds confused retreat, Bourke states that “one of our poor soldiers fell alive into the enemy’s hands and was cut limb from limb. I cannot state this fact of my own knowledge, and I can only say that I believe it to be true.”²² It was common among the tribes of the Trans-Mississippi West to torture and slaughter captured enemy combatants. With this fact in mind, it was an apostasy for Reynolds to abandon the attack with the possibility of wounded soldiers left in the village. In order to maintain the morale of the command and continue the war, Crook was forced to make examples of Colonel Reynolds, Captains Alexander Moore and Henry E. Noyes.

Crook knew what would be required to successfully prosecute this campaign and he also knew that the current operational environment was stacked against him. The tenets that Crook knew to be successful in campaign planning were not implemented at

the Powder River due to factors beyond his control. Crook faced three key factors that he could not alter but with which he must contend with during the campaign. The lack of a consistent national strategy with the Sioux Nation created an environment that negated his ability to recruit intra-tribal allies. The economic and social ramifications of the financial Panic of 1873 and ensuing depression that lasted until 1879 would trigger a Gold Rush into the Black Hills. The government's inability to uphold its side of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 also significantly undermined Crook's credibility and ability to recruit intra-tribal allies. Lastly, Crook was hamstrung by the Reynolds' appointment to his command and he made a misjudgment by providing him a chance to redeem his reputation. These factors were initial hindrances to Crook's ability to fully apply an effective counterinsurgency compound warfare strategy and were key factors to his commands initial failures at the Powder River.

¹ Self, Zenobia. "The Court-Martial of J.J. Reynolds". *Military Affairs*, Vol. 37, No. 2. (April 1973). 52

² Gray. 48

³ Crook, George *Report to the Assistant Adjutant General, U.S.A. Report of the Secretary of War, Subreport 6A (May 7, 1876)*. 503

⁴ Robinson, 171.

⁵ Gray, 49.

⁶ Crook, George *Report to the Assistant Adjutant General, U.S.A. Report of the Secretary of War, Subreport 6A (May 7, 1876)* 503

⁷ Robinson. 171

⁸ Specifically, Crook's writing in "The Apache Problem" published in *Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States* in 1883 and his report to the Secretary of War Annual Report of 1883.

⁹ Robinson, Doane, *A History of the Dakota or Sioux Indians* (Aberdeen, S.D., New Printing Co, 1904). 383

¹⁰ Fort Laramie Treaty of 1869 Article 2.

¹¹ New York Times February 9th 1883.

¹² Lucy Elizabeth Textor 29.

¹³ Textor 30.

¹⁴ Crook, George *Report to the Assistant Adjutant General, U.S.A. Report of the Secretary of War, (May 7, 1876)*. 498

¹⁵ Fels, *American Business Cycles, 1865-79*. 337

¹⁶ *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1902 Volume VII: Ulysses S. Grant March 4, 1869, to March 4, 1877* by James D. Richardson. Published by the Bureau of National Literature and Art 1907. 352

¹⁷ Utley 54

¹⁸ Belknap, William W. Secretary of War. *Report of the Secretary of War* November 22, 1875. 380

¹⁹ Utley p. 16

²⁰ Bourke. 270

²¹ Crook. 192

²² Bourke. 278-278

CHAPTER 4

THE ROSEBUD

Narrative of the Battle at the Rosebud

The failure of Colonel Reynolds on the Powder River served not only to end his career but also drove a deeper divide between the native plains tribes and the U.S. government. Crook knew the efficacy of a native scout contingent but the failure of U.S. forces to win decisively in the field had sent a powerful message to the native “fence sitters” trying to decide the fate of their tribe. The Army had attempted a winter campaign to force the Sioux back to the reservation during the time of the year when their limited resources increased the Army’s probability of success. Crook’s failure and the arrival of spring worsened the Indian’s perceptions of the government’s position, emboldened the Sioux, and alienated those tribes that may have been in a position to provide assistance.

Crook’s requirement for able scouts also became his most difficult task in the preparations for the coming campaign. Of the 32 original scouts hired for the Big Horn Expedition, most were not Indians. After the dismal performance of most of these scouts, Crook released all but three when he formed the Powder River Expedition. The three individuals chosen were Frank Gouard, Big Bat Pourier, and Louis Richard. Frank Grouard had proven indispensable during the previous campaign and had demonstrated his skills as an interpreter, scout and able analyst of native intelligence. While Grouard’s ethnicity and background have remained in question¹, his tested abilities were well worth the \$125 (\$25 higher than the average scout pay²) he earned per month.

Crook had also warned Sheridan that late or inadequate government rations would set the conditions for many Sioux to leave the reservations. In early May between eight hundred and one thousand warriors and their families had left the Red Cloud Agency and were moving west to join Sitting Bull. Despite his warnings, the inefficient control of rations remained with the Interior Department while the Army was forced observe this looming disaster and contend with the outcome of Bureau of Indian Affairs mismanagement.

On the 14th of May 1876, Crook left his headquarters and traveled to the Red Cloud Agency to meet with Chief Red Cloud and Interior Department Agent James S. Hastings but both were not available on the first day. Crook traveled with Bourke, Grouard, Richard, and a security contingent and attempted to recruit 300 Sioux (Oglala) allies. But when Chief Red Cloud and Agent Hastings returned they both opposed his request. Red Cloud bluntly stated that his people were fighting no more and they would not help the Army fight their kinsmen. Agent Hastings openly stated that he would permit the Oglala Sioux to volunteer but would also encouraged them not to fight. Crook departed on May 16th empty handed while smoke signals rose from the reservation. During their noontime rest, a mail carrier passed Crook's party on the same route. It was later discovered that a Sioux war party, believing this to be Crook's party, ambushed killed the men on the wagon train³.

Crook returned to his headquarters empty handed and his efforts undercut by a convoluted national policy and inter-agency rivalry. As he assembled his force at Fort Fetterman in late May, the prospect of beginning another expedition without Indian allies caused Crook to seek allies that were neither Sioux nor Cheyenne. On May 16th, he

wired Camp Brown adjacent to the Shoshone reservation (in western Wyoming) and Fort Ellis one hundred miles west of the Crow reservation. With time running out, Crook had only three scouts and no Indian allies available to augment his force.

On May 28th 1876, Crook assumed command of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition at Fort Fetterman and completed the preparations needed to take to the field. Sheridan had planned to send three columns after the Sioux, and he had expressed to General Alfred H. Terry that each column would be “equal to all the Sioux which can be brought against it.”⁴ Sheridan’s campaign plan was to fan out and engage the Sioux with whatever force found them first.

General Terry will drive the Indians toward the Big Horn Valley, and General Crook will drive them backward toward Terry, Colonel Gibbon moving down on the north side of the Yellowstone to intercept ... The result of the movement of the three columns may force many hostiles back to the agencies.⁵

Conflicting views arose concerning the coordination needed between the columns.

General Terry, whose contingent under Lieutenant Colonel Custer would be annihilated at the Little Big Horn, seemed to have believed that there would be more coordination between the columns. Crook, who had known Sheridan since their days together at West Point, appears to have interpreted the order as three independent columns and took steps to augment his force with additional Indian allies and he wires Sheridan to request the addition of the 5th Cavalry.

The 5th Cavalry was dispatched on the 2nd of June but Crook took the field on the 29th of May without native scouts or the additional cavalrymen. Seeing few other options in the short term, Crook took to the field, moved from his forward staging base at Fort

Fetterman, and planned to send for the Crows and link up with an unknown number of Shoshone allies.

For this expedition, Colonel William B. Royall was in command of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment but his force was comprised of 15 companies, 10 from 3rd Cavalry Regiment and 5 from 2nd Cavalry Regiment. Colonel Alexander Chambers commanded the 4th Infantry Regiment and it was comprised of 5 companies, 3 from 9th Infantry Regiment and 2 from 4th Infantry Regiment. The total force, including the staff, totaled 51 officers and over 1,000 men. Additional personnel include Thomas Moore, who ran the 250 mules with 81 men and Charles Russell controlled the wagon train with 116 men and 106 wagons. Captain George M. Randall of the 23rd Infantry Regiment would command the scouts, if and when they arrived, but in the interim his force consisted of only three lone scouts: Frank Grouard, Bat Pourier, and Louis Richard.

On the 21st of May (prior to the outset of the expedition) Crook sent his most capable scout, Frank Grouard, and a nine man squad from A Company, 2nd Cavalry as an advance element to scout out the Powder River. Numerous sources identify this as the primary mission but Grouard remembers his mission was to find and link up with the Crow allies. It appears that Crook was deliberately waiting to begin the expedition in order to ensure that he had Indian scouts. After receiving reports of more Oglala Sioux departing the reservations and after delaying as long as possible, Crook marched out of Fort Fetterman on May 29th 1876.

Believing that his Crow allies were on the way, on the 30th of May Crook sent Grouard and Captain Meinhold with two Companies of the 3rd Cavalry to link up and maintain contact with these allies. With the main body in trail, Crook's forces faced a

small Sioux contingent that stampeded the cattle herd. The warm spring weather abruptly changed on the 1st of June, as hard snow storm and sleet fell on the expedition. The force continued to drive forward and reached Old Fort Reno on the 2nd of June, 90 miles from their starting point at Fort Fetterman. Captain Van Vliet was awaiting the main body and reported that none of the Shoshone had made the rendezvous.

At Fort Reno, Crook made a drastic decision to attempt to secure native allies. He charged Grouard, Poirier and Richard to undertake a risky mission to the Crow Agency in order to induce the Crows to fight for the Army. The mission would take a week or more and Crook was hesitant to proceed further in the expedition without native scouts to lead the way. The three scouts advised that the command should move forward to the forks of the Goose Creek where adequate provisions for mounts were available and where the terrain was easily defensible. Upon leaving, Grouard quipped to General Crook “I would be back in 14 day, if I lived.”⁶

The command proceeded north without scouts and passed the ill-fated location of the Fetterman Massacre. Captain Noyes Company had proceeded ahead of the main body only to find that Crook and the rest of the command did not appear as planned on the evening of June 6th. Crook had led his command in the wrong direction and had spent the remainder of the 7th of June traveling to the Tongue River. The wandering about deep in unknown territory had led to the Cheyenne discovering the whereabouts of Crook’s expedition and the hunting party under Wooden Leg quickly returning to camp to sound the alarm.

Crook’s force faced sporadic harassing fire from the Cheyenne hunting parties and by the 11th of June, the roughly 1,900 horses and mules had exhausted the grass

around the Tongue River.⁷ Camp was broke and the command moved 17 miles to the designated rendezvous point at Goose Creek. On the 13th of June, Crook dispatched Lieutenant Samuel M. Swigert of the 2nd Cavalry back to the ruins of Fort Phil Kearny to search for the expected Shoshones but they returned that evening empty handed.

On the 14th of June, Grouard and Richard returned to camp with 175 Crow volunteers. Shortly thereafter, the Shoshones arrived with 86 warriors under the command of the renowned Chief Washakie. After a hastily arranged pass and review by the soldiers and the Indians, the leaders of both tribes sat down to air their grievances against the Sioux and Cheyenne and solidify their relationships within the command. The scouts expressed their long-term friendship with the whites but stipulated, “they would scout in their own customary fashion without hindrance by the troops.”⁸

Crook readily agreed to the terms and issued orders for movement on the morning of the 16th of June. Crook had hastily decided to mount his infantry on mules; ordered his quartermaster to leave his wagon trains and pack trains at Goose Creek; and issued orders that soldiers carry 4 days rations, one blanket, no spare clothing and 100 rounds of ammunition. The Crow allies had informed Crook that the Sioux were “as numerous as the grass”⁹ and Grouard believed that the Sioux were camped nearby on the Rosebud Creek.

On the 16th of June, the Crow scouts under Plenty Coups made contact with a Sioux hunting party (under Magpie Eagle) that had startled a nearby buffalo herd. The Sioux had already begun moving their main village into the valley of the Little Big Horn and this contact ensured that the Sioux knew and were prepared for the coming battle. Having scared away the hostile hunters, the Crow and Shoshone warriors preceded, much

to Crook's chagrin, to hunt the buffalo and fire their weapons at will. That night, convinced of the proximity of Sioux, the Indian allies were reluctant to scout at night and the command settled in to prepare for movement early the next day.

On the morning of the 17th of June, reveille sounded at 0300 and the march began at 0600. An hour later, the scouts signaled that they had found enemy signs and the scouts ask Crook to halt his command "in the narrow valley, bordered north and south by rolling bluffs"¹⁰ while they scouted forward. The valley was a lush meadow where the mounts could be fed and the small Rosebud Creek divided the valley and Crook's force.

The scouts remained to the north of the makeshift encampment and it was from here that the main body in the valley heard the first shots. Initially, it was assumed that the scouts had found another herd of buffalo but some of the scouts rushed back to warn that the Sioux were closing in from the north. The Crow and Shoshone scouts formed a loose picket or skirmish line on the northern edge of the encampment and fought the battle alone until the command could form up. It was in these opening moments that the Crow warriors might have saved the soldiers from an impending disaster. Frank Grouard recounted that:

The troops were not ready to meet the attack, so the Crows met the first charge of the Indians, and I believe if it had not been for the Crows, the Sioux would have killed half of our command before the soldiers were in a position to meet the attack.¹¹

Chambers' infantrymen from the 4th and 9th Infantry Regiments (Companies D and F from the 4th Infantry and C, G and H from the 9th Infantry) formed alongside the scouts and then proceeded to attack uphill to the north-northwest to seize the high ground. Simultaneously, a cavalry battalion under Royall (3rd Cavalry, Companies B, D,

F, and L) charged on the left to secure the western flank along a parallel ridge to support the scouts and infantrymen who were charging against the Sioux. Two more battalions of cavalry (under Noyes 2nd Cavalry and Mills 3rd Cavalry) protected the exposed right or eastern flank of the charge. Van Vliet's battalion (C and G Companies of the 3rd Cavalry Regiment) was sent to secure the high ground to the south of the Rosebud Creek and his force narrowly averted disaster by stemming an attack in the main body's rear.

Crook now had his forces on the high ground and the seizure of this key terrain gave him time to consider his next move. The Army's counter attacks were proving ineffective against the swarming tactics of the Sioux. The Sioux would attack quickly on their faster ponies and retreat in varying waves that negated the organizational advantage of the Army's tactics. As the Sioux gave way under every counter attack, they would then rapidly exploit the small openings or weak points between the Army's forces.

Crook was faced a combined Sioux and Cheyenne force of up to 1,300 warriors, charging him from every side with equal measures of violent attacks and speedy retreats. The veracity of the Sioux attack convinced Crook that he was in close proximity to the Sioux village and that to win this conflict decisively required him to capture this village. Before noon, Crook disengaged Mill's battalion and Noye's battalion and gave them orders to head south then follow the Rosebud Creek (flowing it to the east and then north) to find the village and secure it. Grouard was assigned to guide Mills' battalion into the valley while Crook remained with the main body and kept the enemy warriors on the battlefield at bay.

Soon after sending Mills' into the valley, Crook realized that his casualties were mounting and he would not continue to treat his wounded and support Mill's efforts. The

intensity of the battle also increased at a pace that caused Crook to rethink his orders. He sent for Mills to return and soon after Crook consolidated his forces, the battle had ended by the early afternoon.

With the Sioux in retreat, Crook now wanted to pursue the attack that Mills had followed into the valley but Grouard, who had seen the terrain first hand, knew

“They [the Sioux] wanted to draw the entire command down into this canyon and massacre every soul in it. I had not been in the canyon twenty minutes before I knew what was going on.”¹²

After Crook saw the terrain for himself and heard the reactions of Grouard and his Crow and Shoshone allies, he broke off the engagement and stopped to tend to the wounded and dead.

Crook now had few options. His earlier decision to leave his wagon trains meant that he was low on ammunition and supplies. His wounded required treatment and he could not divide his force and expect to defeat the numerically superior Sioux. With no other options available, Crook retreated to his wagon trains at the Goose Creek.

On the 20th of June, the Crows left en masse to return to their families and all but a few of the Shoshones departed to their reservation. The desire to celebrate the battle and return to protect their families both played into their decisions. With the battle over, the Indians saw no need to stay and desired return to their lives on the agency and protect their families from possible reprisals.

In retrospect, attempting to pursue one of the largest gathering of native plains warriors in history, with wounded soldiers on travois and without sufficient provisions would have been suicidal. Charles M. Robinson III stated that:

Crook had learned a valuable lesson-the Indians were far more unified and in far greater numbers than the military believed, and were willing and able to fight large units of soldiers. This instilled in him greater caution, perhaps even too much caution.¹³

Within eight days, the same Sioux warriors would cut down Custer and his 7th Cavalry at the Little Big Horn. Crook wrote in his annual report in 1876, “Subsequent events proved beyond dispute what would have been the fate of the command had the pursuit been continued beyond what judgment dictated.”¹⁴

Crook’s Application of a Counterinsurgency Compound Warfare Campaign at the Rosebud

Crook would receive a great deal of criticism and second-guessing in the press for his actions at the Rosebud. Crook had faced an Indian enemy of unprecedented strength and had survived to fight another day. While Crook had misread the intelligence concerning the location of a Sioux village, it is a testament to his judgment that he was prudent enough to listen to his scouts and understand his forces limitations.

Prior to the initiation of the campaign, Crook knew that his success would rely, in large part, to his ability to recruit able scouts. Intra-tribal scouts had been and would continue to prove a successful means of finding, fixing and defeating Indians. From the outset he specifically wanted to recruit Oglala Sioux from the Red Cloud Agency.

Crook set out to recruit Sioux scouts after receiving reports of the friendliness of the Oglala Sioux towards the United States and the general peace at the Red Cloud Agency. When he arrived there were no Indian Bureau personnel to meet him but Crook spoke with leaders within the tribe. According to Bourke’s account, Crook had convinced Sitting Bull of the South, Rocky Bear and Three Bears to enlist scouts for the

expedition. Bourke also reports that, “when Agent Hastings returned there seemed to be a great change in the feelings of the Indians, and it was evident that he had done his best to set them against the idea of helping in the campaign.”¹⁵

The bad blood between Crook and Hastings went back to a seizure of weapons and ammunition that his troops had conducted earlier that year. Crook reminded Agent Hastings that he had attended the meeting in October of 1875 when President Grant had decided, with Secretary of the Interior Zachariah Chandler, to attack the Sioux who had not returned to their respective agencies. Agent Hastings seemed to view the Oglala Sioux at the Red Cloud Agency as peaceable, even when the facts would appear to prove otherwise. Evidence points to Hastings accepting Red Cloud’s statements that the Sioux leaving the reservation were merely conducting their summer hunting. Hastings would also be quoted on the 6th of June 1876 in the New York Times as saying

From the best information, I can get not more than four hundred Cheyennes (sic) and four hundred Sioux have left the agency, including women and children. They belong to that part of my people who have been in the habit of going north every summer. The agency Indians are all quiet and show no hostile feeling. There is no foundation for the outrageous and false reports in circulation.

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While there is no conclusive evidence, it is highly probable that Crook faced some of these Sioux and Cheyenne warriors at the Rosebud and Custer faced them at the Little Big Horn.

The merits of Hastings actions to keep the Sioux and Cheyenne out of the war are debatable, but the key issue was the failure of government agencies to work together towards a common purpose. The failure of the government to establish an overarching plan for the conduct of the Sioux War highlights one the government’s central failings.

Coordination between military and non-military departments of the government has been historically parochial. This example is not an exception to the rule. Due to inter-agency rivalry, Crook's efforts to gain intra-tribal scouts were halted and "summer roamers" were ignored due to Hastings wishful thinking.

Crook was now faced with implementing his second option, recruiting rival Indian scouts. He resorted to recruiting Crow and Shoshone allies, but Reynolds' failure at the Powder River had made recruiting difficult. Crook would resort to a last minute appeal by Frank Grouard to convince the Crow Indians to support his cause. The Crow had refused to scout for Colonel John Gibbon two months before but Grouard now used his native talents to brandish, cajole, taunt and threaten the Crow. His success ensured Crook the native troops he required and a significant augmentation to his force.

Crook also required talented leaders to shepherd his scouts and serve as his intermediary. To lead in this task, he chose a very talented and seasoned young officer to command the scout contingent, Captain George M. Randall. Randall was 34 years old and had served in the West as an officer of the 23rd Infantry Regiment. Randall had accompanied Crook when he left the Department of Arizona in 1875 and he had successfully led troops and scouts during his tenure in the Southwest.

Randall was an extraordinary soldier who did not fit the mold of the officers of his time. He was not a West Point officer, but had earned his commission through demonstrated bravery during the Civil War. In the fall of 1861, he enlisted as a private in the 4th Pennsylvania Volunteer Infantry and, through demonstrated valor and sheer determination, he rose through the ranks. His actions at the Second Bull Run, The Wilderness, Gettysburg and Antietam led to his eventual rise to the rank of Brevet

Colonel. Shortly after the war, he served as an Indian Agent on the Upper Missouri from 1869 to 1870 before returning to the Army. This service may have given him a better understanding of the sociological situation in the northern plains and his service within the Army was exemplary. Randall steadily rose through the ranks, was promoted to Brigadier General (one of only fourteen Brigadier Generals in the Army at the time) and served as the commander of the Department of the Luzon in the Philippines before retiring.

Randall was the model for the kind of leaders Crook wanted to lead indigenous scouts. Randall was brave, intellectually flexible and had demonstrated a keen understanding of the requirements of leading Indians as an Indian Agent and as an officer. The bravery and actions of the Crow and Shoshones are not only a testament to the scouts' bravery, but also to the adept leadership of George M. Randall.

Another key leader was Frank Grouard.¹⁷ He was a man that displayed immense talents in his dealings with Native peoples. While working as a freight transporter, Grouard was captured by the Sioux and lived for many years with Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. He spoke fluent Sioux and Crook's decision to retain his services proved prescient. Bourke's commentary on Grouard is also enlightening:

Grouard was one of the most remarkable woodsmen I have ever met; no Indian could surpass him in his intimate acquaintance with all that pertained to topography, animal life, and other particulars of the region...His bravery and fidelity were never questioned; he never flinched under fire, and never growled at privation.¹⁸

Crook was clearly disappointed in the scouts selected prior to the Powder River battle but retaining Grouard proved to be crucial to convincing the Crow to join the fight. The addition of the Crow gave the force the guides and intelligence they needed throughout

the campaign but, at the Rosebud, these warriors proved to be decisive to ensuring the conventional force could react to the threat.

Crook was also adroit in his handling of his Indian allies during the campaign. Upon their arrival at Crook's Camp, the Crow and Shoshone scouts were keen to negotiate the specifics of their tactical roles. Specifically, "they asked however, the privilege of scouting in their own way, a privilege General Crook very willingly conceded, confident that nothing would be lost by doing so."¹⁹ Crook not only saw the benefits the Crow and Shoshone scouts would bring to the expedition as a fighting force but it was also apparent that Crook believed that the Indian allies would only be effective by practicing their own forms of maneuver. The fact that Crook was willing to allow this large force of warriors to operate outside of the normal bounds of military discipline demonstrates his unique understanding of their capabilities and limitations.

Crook also faced the dilemma of having his scouts serve at their own whim. When a buffalo herd was discovered on the 16th of June, Crook's scouts believed the animals were being hunted by the Sioux. Even with this knowledge, the Crow and Shoshone scouts began to hunt the buffalo, in doing so, signaled their presence along the Rosebud, and thus allowed the hunting party to get away.

Crook also had to contend with his scouts all but evaporating after the fight at the Rosebud. This decision by the Crow and Shoshone is typical of the trans-Mississippi warrior culture. Typically, the Plains Indian tribes would return to their village when the battle was over for two reasons. Culturally, in warfare was limited in nature and somewhat ritualistic in its practice. Additionally, the warriors needed to ensure the safety

of their village and long campaigns placed the village in danger while the warriors were away.

It is a testament to Crook's patience that he understood these actions to be fully within the character of his allies. He did not desire to turn the scouts into full fledged soldiers, for to do so would run counter to their culture and would remove the traits that made them such assets. Crook knew and understood his Indian scouts to be fully capable of supporting him in battle, but not capable of operating outside of their own social norms and customs.

True to his word, Crook did not attempt to keep his Indian allies from leaving after the battle and bore them no ill will for doing so. Crook negotiated with his allies concerning their use and commitment to the campaign and fully held up his end of the bargain. While it may seem a small thing, Crook kept his word to his allies and his personal honesty ensured he maintained these allies. Crook also maintained a personal loyalty to his allies. It was through Crook's personal involvement and recommendations that Chief Washakie (of the Shoshone tribe) was honored for his service to the United States, a fort was named after him and a pension provided in later life. Crook's integrity and honesty served him personally and operationally throughout his life and it was instrumental in his ability to negotiate effectively with native peoples, whether they were allies or enemies.

During this phase of the war, Crook's use of compound counterinsurgency warfare was limited by numerous factors, but he applied these principles as best he could. Departmental rivalries within the government inhibited the government's ability to decide and act on political and military matters in unison. Unable to secure Sioux allies, Crook

turned to the next best thing and made due with the tribes available. While the Crow and Shoshone may not have been ideal, they proved to be excellent scouts and proved decisive in providing intelligence on the battlefield. Randall and Grouard were excellent choices as leaders and tacticians during the course of the campaign and their skills and abilities augmented those of the Indian scouts.

The perfect circumstances for implementing a counterinsurgency compound warfare may only exist in theory. If this is true, Crook made the best decisions he could in the difficult circumstances he faced and he executed his mission with the best possible force structure he could muster. John S. Gray, in *The Centennial Campaign: The Sioux War of 1876*, stated that the Rosebud was a tactical draw and a strategic failure. By 19th century standards, Gray would also be in agreement with Sheridan when he stated, “The victory [at the Rosebud] was barren of results, as... General Crook was unable to pursue the enemy.”²⁰ These perceptions avoid the inevitable reality that counterinsurgencies are not won in a day on the field of battle.

There is significant room for criticism of Crook’s inability to analyze the intelligence available and his selection of terrain on the day of battle. To his credit, Crook had faced a capable, peer-like opponent and had not fallen into the deadly trap in the gorge of Rosebud Creek. While he had not vanquished his enemy, he had faced an unprecedented threat. Crook now had a greater understanding of his foes’ strengths and he could now work to negate their advantage. While the tactical victory may not have been decisive, with only nine soldiers killed and twenty-three wounded, it was no pyrrhic victory. As Crook points out, pushing the fight further may have brought the same disastrous consequence that befell Custer’s force. In final analysis: Crook’s force

remained intact and he maintained a small strategic advantage in his logistical and operational capabilities to pursue the Sioux in the future. In this particular war, time was on the side of the counterinsurgency forces and the war against the Sioux was soon to become a war of attrition.

¹ Frank Grouard info

² Robinson. 165

³ Gray. 92-93

⁴ Gray. 90

⁵ Gray. 95

⁶ De Barthe, Joseph. *The Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard: Chief of Scouts, USA* (St. Joseph, Mo. Combe Printing Company, 1894), 214

⁷ Robinson, 177

⁸ Robinson 179

⁹ Gray. 118

¹⁰ Gray. 121

¹¹ DeBarthe, 96

¹² De Barthe. 229

¹³ Robinson, 185

¹⁴ Crook, George *Report to the Assistant Adjutant General, U.S.A. Report of the Secretary of War, Subreport 6A.* (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1876.), 500

¹⁵ Bourke. 286-87

¹⁶ “Indian Affairs; The Cheyennes and Sioux leaving Red Clous Agency—Reports of Hostilities Denied-A Collision Feard.” *New York Times*, 9 June 1876

¹⁷ Frank Grouard reported that he was a native of the Sandwich Islands and was the son of a Mormon missionary and an island noblewoman. More likely, he was the son

of John Brazeau, a French Creole, and a Native American woman named Black Lodge Pole. A Mrs. Nettie Elizabeth Goings (whose Indian name was Money) claimed to have been Grouard's half sister (by the same father) and reported he had run away from home after being involved in a killing at the age of 14. She states that Grouard had told her that he had lived with a family in Salt Lake (hence the Mormon connection) and that his real name was Walter Brazeau.

Ricker, Eli Seavey. *The Indian Interviews of Eli S. Ricker: 1903-1919* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2005) 369-70.

¹⁸ Bourke, John G. *On the Border with Crook*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891) 255.

¹⁹ Vaughn, J.W. *With Crook at the Rosebud* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1956), 24-25.

²⁰ Gray. 124

CHAPTER 5

THE CAMPAIGN OF ATTRITION

Narrative of the Campaign of Attrition

Crook's less than decisive results at the Rosebud were now the least of his concerns. On the 19th of June 1876, he was forced to move his command to Goose Creek and the wounded were evacuated to Fort Fetterman. Crook's command was short of supplies and ammunition and almost all of his Indian allies decided to return to their tribes.

While this may seem odd, there are numerous reasons why the Crow and Shoshone scouts left the command. The first is that, from a Native American perspective, the battle was over and therefore the warriors should return to their tribes. The other reason was that this action made their tribes vulnerable to reprisals from roving bands of Sioux warriors. Lastly, Crook's command was in no condition to continue the fight and, from the Indians' perception on the 19th of June, the scout's role in this campaign was over.

Crook was in a position where his command needed to remove the wounded and re-supply prior to continuing the campaign. Crook had also fought an Indian foe at the Rosebud that had massed in numbers that were unparalleled in scale. Without adequate intelligence, Crook was left to contemplate his next move against this unusually strong adversary. Due to the nature of 19th century warfare, the manner in which he proceeded opened him to a great deal of criticism.

The command settled in at Goose Creek and began what would best be described as a two-week hunting and fishing excursion. While time was needed to rearm and refit

the unit, Crook's command would remain at Goose Creek from the 19th until the 30th of June. On the 30th of June, some mixed race travelers arrived and told the story of a battle that resulted in the death of every American soldier. As it turned out, this tale was the fate of the 7th Cavalry Regiment at the Little Big Horn. The death and defeat of 263 soldiers at the Little Big Horn was a traumatic. The defeat of U.S. Army soldiers at the hands of Indians was unfathomable, and this event served to focus the American public and the government on the Sioux War.

Crook quickly decided to send Frank Grouard and Big Bat to the Crow Agency to recall his scouts but the party was turned back when they encountered a larger, hostile Indian band. Chief Washakie returned on July 10th with 220 Shoshone and "half breeds" but the command was still in no condition to take to the field. With the arrival of Colonel Wesley Merrit's 5th Cavalry Regiment, the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition finally returned to the field on August 5th 1876. When Crook's forces crossed into Terry's Department, Terry assumed overall command and the massive and ponderous forces began a fruitless march to find their more mobile enemy.

Additional Ute and Crow scouts would join the expedition only to find their pace slowed as the more nimble Sioux made their escape. Chief Washakie "bluntly informed Crook that the Shoshones were tired of being held back by Terry's inefficient transportation"¹ and by the 20th of August the Shoshones, Utes and Crows departed the campaign again.

Between the 20th of August and the 13th of September, Crook's command began a twenty-three day campaign that failed to decisively engage the Sioux on what became known as the Horse Meat March. Crook's was in an untenable situation. He did not

have native scouts to provide him with intelligence, but he could not temporarily halt his campaign due to the political pressure after the defeat at the Little Big Horn. Without native scouts, Crook's command wandered somewhat aimlessly attempting to force a decisive engagement with the Sioux.

While the Horse Meat March had denied the Sioux the ability to hunt and lay supplies for the winter, the physical toll on Crook and his soldiers was significant. Regardless, the Horse Meat March had served to drive the Sioux from their encampments and had denied them the ability to gather and store supplies for the winter. Constant movement had ensured that the Sioux could not send out large hunting parties and the large Indian force could not logistically support itself. The Sioux and Cheyenne were reduced to choosing between starvation, returning to the agency or fleeing to Canada.

While Crook had been in the field on August 15th 1876, President Grant signed a rider to the annual Sioux appropriation bill requiring forfeiture of the Black Hills and the surrender of unceded lands in Montana and Wyoming.² This also laid the foundation for the military assuming more responsibility for Indian Bureau agencies in the Great Sioux Reservation.

This area included the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies in Nebraska and during the late summer, Red Cloud and Red Leaf left the reservation against the orders of the Army. At a conference on 21 September, Sheridan ordered Terry to demand Red Cloud and his followers return to the reservation. It was believed that Red Cloud would refuse, and plans were made for Terry to seal off the reservation while Crook would surround him and his followers, disarm them, take their horses and return them to the reservation. This operation worked as planned and on October 23rd Colonel Ranald S.

Mackenzie surrounded the camps of Red Cloud and Red Leaf and removed them to the Red Cloud Agency.

The tactical plan worked but Crook chose to follow a more nuanced approach to Sheridan's orders concerning the disarming of Indians. Crook chose to only disarm and dismount those Indians on the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies who had defied government orders. Sheridan disagreed with Crook's actions and believed that all the Sioux on the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies must be disarmed and dismounted. Crook attempted to make Sheridan see the fallacy of this corporate punishment and, in the end, the division between the two old West Point roommates continued to widen.

On the 24th of October, Crook removed Red Cloud from the position of supreme chief of the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies and replaced him with the Brulé leader, Red Tail. To Crook's credit, his nuanced approach to corporate governance and punishment gave him a greater credibility within the native communities and set the foundation for his recruitment of two new companies of Sioux scouts.

On the same day that he deposed Red Cloud, Crook ended the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition and began planning for the Powder River Expedition. In a preparing for the winter campaign, Crook revealed to Anson Mills:

“The Indians cannot stand a continuous campaign. I cannot tell whether we can go on yet. That depends on our getting the things we want. The best time to strike them is in the winter.”³

With this concept in mind, Crook began to organize his forces at Fort Laramie on the 4th of November.

At Fort Laramie, Crook called his Indian scouts together and gathered the various Sioux, Pawnee, Arapahos, Crows, Cheyenne and Bannocks⁴ scouts to a council. In

preparing for this expedition, Crook explained that he would permit the Indians to utilize their own methods of scouting and that their loyal service would ensure that, they would retain his friendship and support. In keeping with his sense of integrity, Crook also warned that their traditional way of life was coming to an end and the future would require the Indians to be self sufficient. This bluntness may seem cold hearted but the Plains Indians in attendance may not have liked what they heard but they knew Crook's words would be true.

The expedition departed Fort Fetterman in route to Cantonment Reno on the 14th of November. Colonel Mackenzie commanded a Brigade of Cavalry consisting of 13 companies and divided into 3 battalions. Lieutenant Colonel Richard Irving Dodge commanding the 23rd Infantry Regiment, consisting of 11 companies of infantry and a battalion of artillery, comprised of 4 companies of artillery. Captain George M. Randall served again as the Chief of Scouts with almost 400 Indian scouts; a force comprising more than 20% of Crook's fighting force.

While Crook's prize was the elusive Crazy Horse, the objective was to deny the Sioux a winter solace to regain their strength and morale. On the 22nd of November, a young Cheyenne boy named Many Beaver Dams was captured and was interrogated. It was discovered that he knew the whereabouts of Dull Knife (also known by his Cheyenne name Morning Star) and his village. Additionally, a Cheyenne spy named Sitting Bear had provided additional information confirming the story Many Beaver Dams provided. When Crook's command left their cantonment and headed North, Dull Knife's scouts probably believed that the Army was moving to find Crazy Horse and this may explain why Dull Knife's village did not move when Crook's force resumed the campaign.⁵

With this new intelligence, Crook ordered Mackenzie with ten cavalry troops and all the Indian scouts to attack the Dull Knife Camp located in the canyon of the Red Fork of the Powder River. Mackenzie's forces moved at dusk on the 24th of November and linked up with the Sioux scout Jackass. Jackass confirmed the location of the village and stated that he could lead the command into the village by midnight. The Indian scouts led the charge in order of loyalty; with the Pawnees in the lead followed by the Shoshones, the Arapahos, Lakotas and lastly the new Cheyenne scouts.⁶

The tried and true tactic utilized on the 25th of November was, a charge by the lead force (in this case the Indian scouts), the driving the pony herd away from the village, follow by a force that attacked the village. This tactic had proven effective and generally led to either: a forced surrender or, if the Indians fought back, the soldiers would kill or drive them out while they burned the village and all its provisions. The Dull Knife Fight against the Cheyenne proved to be a hard won victory. The Cheyenne were known to display bravery in battle and they hastily retreated from the village into a rocky defensive position where the women and children were secured. In this easily defendable position, Mackenzie was forced into a protracted duel with the Cheyenne.

At about midday, a white flag was raised by Dull Knife and a parley was held in which he stated that, while the other chiefs (Little Wolf, Old Bear, Roman Nose, and Gray Head) would not give up, he was prepared to surrender. In an act that supports Crook's desire to use intra-tribal allies, the four Cheyenne scouts accompanying the group were told by Dull Knife: "Go home-you have no business here; we can whip the white soldiers alone, but can't fight you too."⁷ Amid the tricks and deceptions that took place in the conference, Mackenzie decided to burn the village and hold the attack. As

the sun set, the fighting subsided while the Cheyenne ammunition exploded in the burning camp. The Cheyenne slowly pulled as many people as they could from the defended rocks and began to make their way to the North.

Mackenzie now faced a decision of either splitting his force and continuing the pursuit or taking his twenty-six wounded back to Cantonment Reno. While leaving some of the Indian scouts as a rear guard, Mackenzie and the soldiers returned to Crook as the remnants of the great Cheyenne fought starvation and exposure on their trek to link up with Crazy Horse. After a brief respite, the expedition continued to press the advance for three weeks but the Indian scouts could find no trace of Crazy Horse's village and Crook ended the expedition on the 21st of December 1876.

Despite the criticisms from Sheridan and Sherman, Crook's campaign of attrition had begun to bear fruit. The constant harassment and campaigning had weakened the Sioux who had remained off the reservation. It was now only a matter of time before they must either surrender or face the long journey to Canada. By the 24th of February 1877, the Cheyenne Chief Little Wolf (who reportedly refused to surrender at the Dull Knife Fight) surrendered to Crook's forces at Camp Robinson. Additionally, negotiations for surrender began between Spotted Tail, Crook's appointee as Chief of the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies, and his nephew Crazy Horse. On April 14th, the Sioux Sans Arcs and Minneconjous surrendered at Camp Sheridan and shortly thereafter Dull Knife and 524 Cheyenne also surrendered. Through protracted negotiations, Crazy Horse sent word that he was going to surrender and troops were sent to meet his people with rations and a herd of cattle. On the 6th of May, Crazy Horse surrendered at Camp Robinson.

In September of 1877, Crook accompanied Red Cloud, Spotted Tail to meet President Rutherford B. Hayes in Washington. President Hayes, one of Crook's officers during the Civil War, was swayed by Crook's analysis of the Sioux situation and shortly thereafter, he initiated a commission to negotiate a treaty. Crook's advocacy helped to ensure the Lakota Sioux would remain in a remnant of their native homeland and ensured a relative peace on the northern plains. Sioux War was concluded without a clear watershed moment or a decisive victory on the field of battle, instead the native insurgency had ended without a great singular victory.

Factors Affecting Crook's Application of a Counterinsurgency Compound Warfare Campaign during the Campaign of Attrition

Late in the Centennial Campaign, Crook finally had the pieces required to establish a solid counterinsurgency campaign against the Sioux. The historical criticism of Crook's campaign generally centers on his inability to decisively engage the enemy in a set piece battle. While this line of thought is understandable in its 19th century context, decisive engagement in a counterinsurgency is elusive and may in fact be counterproductive to well designed counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign.

Crook had a well-defined concept of counterinsurgency compound warfare and the tragedy at the Little Big Horn provided the impetus for the resources and authority he needed. On July 31st 1876, a joint resolution passed both Houses of Congress authorizing an increased authorized strength of one thousand Indian Scouts. This was a significantly higher number than the three hundred authorized by a bill earlier that year and the growing the size of cavalry companies to one hundred men⁸ permitted Crook to fully implement a counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign plan.

The significant increase of appropriations for new equipment, new soldiers (coined “Custer’s Avengers”) and Native American scouts alleviated some of the demands on the force fighting the war. While all war is attritional, to effectively and efficiently fight the Sioux required more than just resources. Crook now needed to change the political landscape of the Sioux tribe and recruit intra-tribal scouts to aid in the prosecution of the campaign.

Another key to success was the consolidation of power by the Department of War on the Great Sioux Reservation. On the 22nd of July, Sherman telegraphed Sheridan and stated:

[Secretary of the Interior] Mr. Chandler says that you may at once assume control over all the agencies in the Sioux country. He wants for a good reason both of the agents at Red Cloud and Spotted Tail [agencies] removed and their duties performed by the commanding officers of the garrisons.⁹

Crook was now able to shape the tribal political landscape at the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail Agencies. The removal of the agencies as hostile sanctuaries also provided Crook the ability to prove his trustworthiness and recruit Sioux and Cheyenne allies. Crook summarily deposed the troublesome Red Cloud, and appointed Spotted Tail as chief of all the Platte River tribes.¹⁰

With Red Cloud deposed and no Bureau of Indian Affairs agents to hinder his recruitment efforts, Crook was now able to recruit a significant number of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors and fully apply intra-tribal allies to his advantage. The gathering of native scouts is one of the greatest feats of the campaign. The diversity of tribes and the lengths that Crook goes to in order to retain his scouts is impressive. On two separate occasions, Crook personally sits down with the leading elders of the scouts in order to

hear and adjudicate their issues. Some of these tribes were the mortal enemies and others were unknown to each other. The coalition of Sioux, Pawnees, Arapahos, Crow, Cheyennes, and Bannocks and the various “half-breeds” like Frank Grouard, Louis Richaud and Baptiste “Big Bat” Pourier was a feat in and of itself. Robinson stated that “Crook’s achievement in getting the various tribes together as scouts cannot be overstated. Old Hatreds were deep, particularly between the Pawnees and various Sioux groups.”¹¹

While the scouts were essential to Crook’s campaign, some in the command were unimpressed with Crook’s performance and demeanor. Colonel Richard Irving Dodge laments that

“The Cav[alry] & Inf[antry] are nobodies. The Indians and pack mules have all the good places [in camp]. He scarcely treats Mckenzie and I decently, but he will spend hours chatting pleasantly with an Indian, or a dirty scout.”¹²

Despite the grumblings of some subordinates, Crook was astutely aware that his Indian scouts were crucial to developing actionable intelligence and intra-tribal scouts were key to reducing the morale and resolve of the renegade Sioux and Cheyenne.

Lastly, the use of conventional and unconventional forces in tandem proved to be the decisive and attritional blow that ended insurgency. The Indian scouts were effective at finding and fixing the Cheyenne at the Dull Knife Fight, but it was the follow up by the cavalry that proved decisive in that battle. The Indian scouts were generally evenly matched with their opponents and fully capable of maintaining contact with like forces. Crook astutely employed the conventional infantry and, more often, the cavalry (depending on the terrain) to bring accurate firepower to bear against the Indians.

The culmination of the campaign was the surrender or flight of the remaining

Sioux and Cheyenne tribes that resisted the U.S. government's control. The subjugation of the Sioux and Cheyenne was the ultimate goal of the Centennial Campaign but the desire for revenge by the U.S. Army was never fully quenched. Despite Sheridan's shortsighted order to disarm all the Indians and remove the all ponies from the Red Cloud and Spotted Tail agencies, Crook's repudiation of this mass punishment gave him credibility among the tribes.

Crook and Miles saw that a decisive battle was improbable and that the remaining tribes were in such a destitute position that they must either flee to Canada or surrender. Crook and Miles also desired credit for the close of the Sioux campaign and they each vied for the surrender of the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes. Crook now exercised his advantage by dispatching his Sioux scouts to negotiate the surrender. The prize catch was Crazy Horse and Crook sent Crazy Horse's uncle Spotted Tail, whom Crook had appointed Chief when he deposed Red Cloud, to negotiate the surrender. Had Crook not dealt fairly with his Indian scouts and the tribes at the agencies, his ability to negotiate an effective surrender would have been severely hindered.

Crook accepted the surrender of the Cheyennes on February 24th, 1877 the Sans Arcs and Miniconjous on April 14th, a second group of Cheyennes on May 1st, and Crazy Horse and his Oglala surrendered on May 6th. Soon after their surrender, Crook incorporated many of these recent converts to Indian scouts under Lieutenant W. Philo. Among the first sergeants of this battalion of Indian scouts were Crook's most recent foes, Red Cloud and Crazy Horse.

Crook fought successfully to keep his word with the Lakota Sioux and he worked feverishly during his trip to Washington to allow them to remain within the new limited

boundaries of the old Great Sioux Reservation. Crook's legacy would be that he that of a tenacious Indian fighter who would simultaneously work to ensure the government fulfilled its promises to the Indians. It was in this untenable position that Crook worked and as the reporter Thomas Henry Tibbles revealed in his interview with Crook:

Then, as now, we had an Indian war on our hands. I remarked that it was a hard thing for the Army to be constantly called upon to sacrifice their lives settling quarrels brought about by thieving contractors and agents of the Indian Department. I will never forget how his eyes flashed as he replied: "I will tell you a harder thing Mr. Tribbles. It is to be forced to fight and kill the Indians when I know that they are clearly in the right."¹³

¹ Robinson. 191

² Robinson. 200

³ Robinson. 202

⁴ Robinson. 203

⁵ Greene, Jerome A. *Morning Star Dawn: The Powder River Expedition and the Northern Cheyennes, 1876*. (Norman, OK, University of Oklahoma Press, 2003). 90.

⁶ Greene. 103

⁷ Bourke. 393

⁸ Gray. 257

⁹ Gray. 259

¹⁰ Gray. 266

¹¹ Robinson. 203

¹² Robinson. 205

¹³ Robinson. 231

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The overarching questions concerning Major General George Crook's record during the Great Sioux War are two-fold. The first question is did Crook effectively implement a counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign during the Sioux War and, if the first question is true, was Crook successful in the Sioux War?

It is worth repeating that the definition of compound warfare is “the simultaneous use of a regular or main force and an irregular or guerilla force against an enemy” thereby increasing “his military leverage by applying both conventional and unconventional forces at the same time.”¹ The definition of counterinsurgency compound warfare is the counterinsurgency compound warfare is the simultaneous use of a regular or conventional force and an irregular, indigenous force in unison against a common enemy.

While the definitions seem identical, the subtle differences are important. These terms are similar and inter-related, but must remain distinct and distinguishable. The true strength of counterinsurgency compound warfare lies not just in the simultaneous use of conventional and unconventional forces but in the inherent strengths and capabilities of the indigenous forces.

These indigenous forces brought a higher level of cultural understanding, language capability, geographical expertise and intelligence gathering skills. Additionally, when utilized correctly and treated honestly, these indigenous forces served as a vehicle of influence with the native populations. Counterinsurgency compound warfare also attempts to fully utilize a conventional force's superior firepower, discipline

and combined arms skills. The desired endstate is two forces that augment each other's strengths and negate each other's weakness.

Crook entered the Sioux War with a full understanding of the effectiveness of using indigenous, irregular forces, and conventional forces in complementary roles. His use of Indian scouts in the Sioux War is a valid example of his desire to use regular and irregular forces together.

While the preponderance of Crook's writing and speeches concerning the use of Indian scouts are recorded during the 1880s, his actions in the Sioux War demonstrate an understanding of the principle of counterinsurgency compound warfare that he espoused afterward. Before the campaigns of the Sioux War of 1876-77, Crook sees the need to recruit Sioux and Cheyenne allies and he repeatedly attempts to do so. While his early efforts are unsuccessful, his continued efforts throughout the campaign eventually lead to a multi-tribal force composed of intra- and inter-tribal allies. In the *Army and Navy Journal* published in October of 1876, Crook describes the earlier expeditions in the Sioux War by stating, "we were almost without guides or scouts... If we had had Indian scouts with us from the Yellowstone here, we should not have had such trouble crossing the country. I always try to get Indian scouts, because with them scouting is the business of their lives."²

The use of these two forces together was instrumental to concluding the Sioux War in the Department of the Platte. During the Powder River Expedition, Crook's forces were inadequately led by Reynolds and failed to have the additional strength or intelligence gathering capabilities found in Indian scouts. The failures of this expedition can be contrasted to the manner in which the campaign progressively matures and finds

success. The Big Horn and Yellowstone Expedition never fulfills Crook's desire for a large intra-tribal force, but the less than ideal inter-tribal allies ensured Crook's forces effectively met the Sioux threat and did not suffer the same fate as Custer's 7th Cavalry Regiment.

Many contemporaries of Crook and historians have argued that Crook's forces were defeated at the Rosebud or that his campaign was ineffectual. Defeating an insurgency is not a matter of winning a single battle or even winning a series of battles. History is replete with examples of armies losing the battles and winning the war or winning the battles and losing the war. Clausewitz warns in his chapter "The People in Arms" in *On War*, that an insurrection (or insurgency) "By its very nature, such scattered resistance will not lend itself to major actions, closely compressed in time and space."³ Ergo, the measure of Crook's campaign was not whether the *Sioux* were decisively defeated on the battlefield but whether or not the *Sioux insurgency* was defeated.

Annihilation and destruction of the Sioux was not the desired endstate. Instead, the government's desired endstate was, as Secretary of War Belknap described, "to compel these Indians to return to and remain upon their reservation."⁴ Unfortunately, the 19th century concept of warfare was predicated on decisive victory on the battlefield. By these standards, Crook believed that he had won the Battle of the Rosebud because he had met the enemy on the battlefield and had held the field of battle at the conclusion of hostilities.

In a larger perspective, that standard of measure is immaterial. Crook had won a skirmish in the long counterinsurgency campaign that would end not with a single decisive victory on the battlefield. Instead, the campaign would end with piecemeal

surrenders, defections, and flight.

One of the questions that have arisen from this study is whether Crook's record during the Sioux War was much better than previously thought. There are legitimate criticisms of Crook's performance. His selection of Reynolds was nearly disastrous and the decision to stop in the valley at the Battle of the Rosebud placed his force at a geographical disadvantage. But Crook faced a numerical parity (and was possibly outnumbered) at the Rosebud and his enemies "the Sioux and Cheyennes fought with a wholly unexpected unity and tenacity."⁵ Robert Utley described the battle in terms that Crook had been "badly worsted"⁶ and John Grey describes it as a "tactical draw [but also] a clear strategic defeat."⁷ By 19th century terms of warfare, they are correct but to view the same events as a counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign puts them in a different light.

As a counterinsurgency compound warfare campaign, my analysis is that, given the political, economic, and cultural conditions, Crook and his forces performed extremely well. The use of the irregular, indigenous force not only performed the functions needed for at Rosebud, but saved the conventional force from being caught totally off guard and destroyed. Gray's observations concerning the Rosebud are that the "Crow and Shoshonis had performed embarrassingly well and more than once had saved the troops from being overrun."⁸ As the campaign continued, the quality of the scouts increased and the final multi-tribal force conveyed superior intelligence, successfully augmented the main force during the battle and served as a conduit for successful peace negotiations.

As a counterinsurgency campaign, Crook's performance also demonstrated the

requirement for patience. Sun Tzu stated that “to fight and conquer in all your battles is not the supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy’s resistance without fighting.”⁹ Crook faced a native force of with excellent leadership and unparalleled size. At the Rosebud, Crook’s recall of Mills from the valley and discernment of the situation ensured that he did not fall for the trap and split his forces. Searching for and attacking the village was a tried and true tactic of the frontier Army, but the disastrous consequences of following this tactic blindly was the template that, in part, would lead Custer to disaster at the Little Big Horn. Crook’s patience ensured that he retained the required proof of success by remaining on the field of battle but he also retained a force capable of continuing the campaign.

A significant criticism of Crook was that while he had

Learned a valuable lesson—the Indians were far more unified and in far greater numbers than the military believed, and were willing and able to fight large units of soldiers. This instilled in him a greater caution, perhaps even too much caution.¹⁰

Crook’s immediate reaction after the Rosebud was to stop and wait for reinforcements and the two week hiatus at the Goose Creek ensured that Sitting Bull could consolidate his forces and annihilate Custer’s 7th Cavalry. In the meantime, Crook lost his Crow and Shoshone allies, thereby losing his ability to gather intelligence and thus lost the any tactical advantage.

Crook continued the campaign but only after a significant operational pause and without ensuring his adjacent commander Terry was fully informed of the threat they were facing. The two weeks spent in camp after the Rosebud were unproductive and failed to meet the intent of driving the Sioux back to the reservation. It also does not

appear that Crook desired to continue the campaign until after the defeat at the Little Big Horn. Crook's desire to wait for the 5th Cavalry Regiment and his lack of Indian allies explains some of his reasons for stalling the campaign. In his defense, Crook's force was incapable of returning the wounded to Fort Fetterman and pursuing a Sioux force of equal size. These factors, compounded by the fact that the Sioux force he faced was larger than any previously experienced, all proved to be good reason for waiting to return to the campaign.

The significance of studying Major General George Crook's Sioux War campaigns is tied not only to the current battles facing the U.S. Army, but also to the enduring nature of warfare. Counterinsurgency is not a new phenomenon nor is it an aberration. Crook provides a case study in counterinsurgency compound warfare and how commanders should learn, adapt, and persevere.

Counterinsurgency requires officers to continue to learn, regardless of the source. Colonel Dodge complained of Crook's pandering to the scouts and Indians but Crook understood that these men were crucial to his campaign. Crook did not allow his 19th Century mindset and mores to undermine the logical decision to employ Indian scouts to the greatest extent possible. The Indian scouts not only provided valuable intelligence about the terrain, his adversaries leadership capabilities, and force structure but also provided him the ability to gain the confidence and trust of his allies. This would be crucial to Crook's ability to understand his foe and conclude the Sioux War peacefully.

Crook was also adaptive in his methods and tactics. Learning without adaptation is a fruitless endeavor. At the Rosebud, Crook was willing to take a chance and search for the Sioux village but, when the tactical situation appeared to be critical, he recalled

Mills force immediately. Crook was willing to adapt his infantrymen to mules in order to enhance his conventional forces. By mobilizing his infantrymen, Crook's force was larger in strength and the infantryman's rifle provided an additional range and accuracy that the cavalry weapons could not. Crook was also able to utilize his Indian scouts as part of the main effort at the Dull Knife Fight and the use of Sioux and Cheyenne scouts proved decisive in deflating the moral and setting the stage for peace negotiations during the late winter and spring of 1877. Crook's adaptability to the enemy's capabilities proved crucial to the full utilization of counterinsurgency compound warfare.

Lastly, Crook always dealt with the Indians truthfully and advised his officers "to be patient, to be just, and to fear not."¹¹ This advice is as pertinent and valid today as it was when it was written. The ethical dilemmas that are produced in a counterinsurgency are numerous and difficult and, as noted in his early experience in the Civil War, Crook did not always get it right. In spite of this, his innate sense of right and wrong served to guide his decisions and enhance his relationships with the Native Americans. His truthfulness with the Native Americans and his perseverance greatly enhanced his ability to implement counterinsurgency compound warfare. Crook was an outspoken advocate of Indian Rights and an ardent fighter for honest and forthright dealings between the United States government and the Native Americans. The unfortunate fact is that the United States continually dealt with the Native Americans in an unjust and inconsistent manner. Whilst Crook could not always change the decisions made by his superiors, he was fully aware not only of the moral implications of his decisions, but also the second and third order effects his decisions had on his relationship with the tribes.

The lesson of counterinsurgency compound warfare is that the interdependence of

conventional forces and irregular indigenous forces may provide one of the best means to a peaceful end to an insurgency. Clausewitz states, “War is thus an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will.”¹² The elemental nature of warfare has not changed. The application of the most efficient and effective ways and means in order to achieve a successful political end remains the greatest expression of the military art. Counterinsurgency compound warfare seeks to employ two very different types of forces in a way that is interdependent and harmonious. While its application is no guarantee of success, the failure to study and apply counterinsurgency compound warfare may significantly increase the likelihood of failure in the future.

¹ Huber. 1

² Schmitt. 213.

³ Von Clausewitz, Carl. Edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. *On War*. (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1976), 579

⁴ Gray. 34

⁵ Utley. 255-56

⁶ Utley. 256

⁷ Gray. 124

⁸ Gray. 255

⁹ Phillips T.R. and eds., *Roots of Strategy*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1940), 26.

¹⁰ Robinson, 185

¹¹ Utley, 55

¹² Von Clausewitz. 83

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