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DAILY ENTERPRISE



(U) HISTORY TODAY - 24 November 2014

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(U) The Battle of Lookout Mountain on November 24, 1863, near Chattanooga, was a turning point in the Union's military campaigns in Tennessee.

(U) Part of the Union strategy in the battle was based on an intercepted Confederate message.

(U) The Union Army of the Cumberland had been defeated at the Battle of Chickamauga and retreated to Chattanooga. They were besieged by General Braxton Bragg's Army of the Tennessee. Bragg's forces held positions on Missionary Ridge and Lookout Mountain, where they could observe Union movements and prevent supplies from reaching Chattanooga via the Tennessee River. (U) Lookout Mountain seemed formidable, but its size and configuration made it difficult to defend.

(U) On October 17, MG Ulysses Grant was given command of Union armies in the west. He replaced some key commanders and began offensive operations to change the situation in Chattanooga.

(U) When MG William Tecumseh Sherman arrived with Union reinforcements, Grant planned offensives against Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge and beyond, hoping to cut off Confederate retreat southward. The original plan called for an attack on Lookout Mountain by Joseph Hooker's corps. This plan changed, with Grant ordering Sherman's forces to lead the attack.

(U) An intercepted message caused Grant to revise the plan again.

(U) MG Carter Stevenson, who had been placed in command on Lookout Mountain on November 12, sent an encrypted message via flag signals to his commander, reporting on what he had seen from his perch on the mountain. At 5:00 p.m. Stevenson noted enemy (Union) movements and that the troops he could see were "formed from center to left... If they intend to attack, my opinion is it will be upon our left."

(U) Shortly after midnight, General Hooker received new orders. "Intercepted Rebel dispatch is to the effect that Rebels expect us to attack them on their left in the morning. General commanding desires that you make demonstrations as early as possible after daybreak on point of Lookout Mountain. General Grant still hopes [delayed reinforcements will reach Sherman], in which case your demonstration will aid Sherman's crossing. If [this doesn't happen] you can take the point of Lookout if your demonstration develops its practicality."



(U) A demonstration in this context was an advance in sufficient numbers to make the enemy assume that it was the main attack. This would cause them to reinforce that area or, at least, not take troops from that line when other units attacked them from a different direction.

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(U) The Confederate leadership apparently ignored Stevenson's warning of the evening before. They did not reinforce their left flank.

(U) Attacking in strength, stretching his orders, Hooker eventually succeeded in capturing the Confederate positions on Lookout Mountain. His unit then was able to assist the next day in the Battle of Missionary Ridge.

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