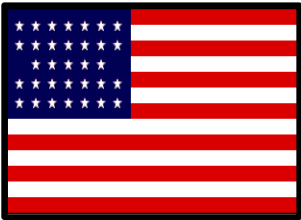
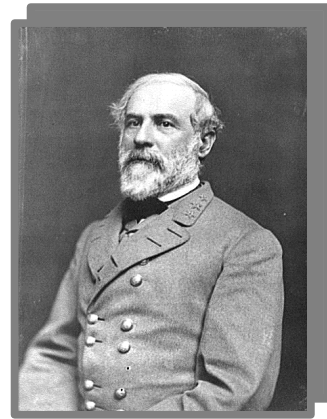
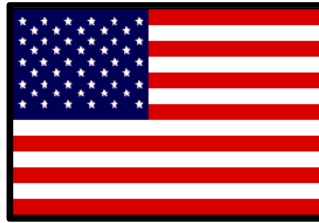
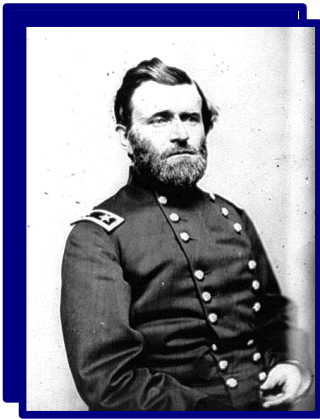


# BATTLES OF THE WILDERNESS AND SPOTSYLVANIA

MAY 1864

**STAFF RIDE**

**UNITED STATES ARMY SPACE  
AND MISSILE DEFENSE COMMAND  
MARCH 1998**



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## INTRODUCTION

The Civil War's causes and beginnings can be traced as far back as the Continental Congress when debates raged about slavery. Naturally, no solution emerged, but, like the Compromise of 1820, Congress managed to avoid conflict and to put off the issue for more time.

The election of 1860, however, became the ultimate snub to Southerners because Abraham Lincoln was elected, a Republican who opposed the spread of slavery. Southern states began to drop from the Union and, by April 1861, all except Kentucky, Missouri, and Maryland had left the Union to form the Confederate States of America.

After some futile attempts by Lincoln's government to reconcile, Confederates in Charleston, South Carolina fired their batteries on a Union garrison housed inside Fort Sumter. The war had begun.

Unfortunately for the Union, leadership became its curse because Lincoln could not find a general to fight the wily rebels in Virginia. Incidentally, in the war, the preponderance of able leadership for the Union lay in the West—U. S. Grant, William T. Sherman, Phil Sheridan, George Thomas, William Rosecrans, and James McPherson all rose from the ranks in battles in Tennessee, Georgia, and Mississippi. Confederate generals in the West, on the other hand, lacked ability. Braxton Bragg, Joseph Johnston, and Albert Sidney Johnston hurt the Confederacy more than they helped it. In the East, on the other hand, the Union lacked ability in leadership (Irvin McDowell, George McClellan, Joe Hooker, Ambrose Burnside, John Pope, and George Meade) while the rebels possessed ability in abundance (Robert E. Lee, James Longstreet, Thomas Jackson, John Bell Hood, J.E.B. Stuart, and John B. Gordon).

In the West, the Union quickly occupied most of Tennessee with victories at Forts Henry and Donelson and Shiloh. They later occupied Nashville and North Alabama by summer 1862. Grant and Sherman, after a drawn out siege, captured the fortress city of Vicksburg, Mississippi in July 1863. The Battle of Chickamauga in northern Georgia was a set-back for the Union; but Grant arrived soon after to lead that defeated army to victory at Chattanooga.

### **November 1860**

Election of Abraham Lincoln to the Presidency of the United States—secession followed.

### **21 July 1861**

Union army under McDowell routed by Confederates under Beauregard at First Battle of Bull Run (Manassas)

### **6-7 April 1862**

Union Army repels Confederate attack at Shiloh led by A.S. Johnston—U.S. Grant's first victory. Union then occupied much of Tennessee.

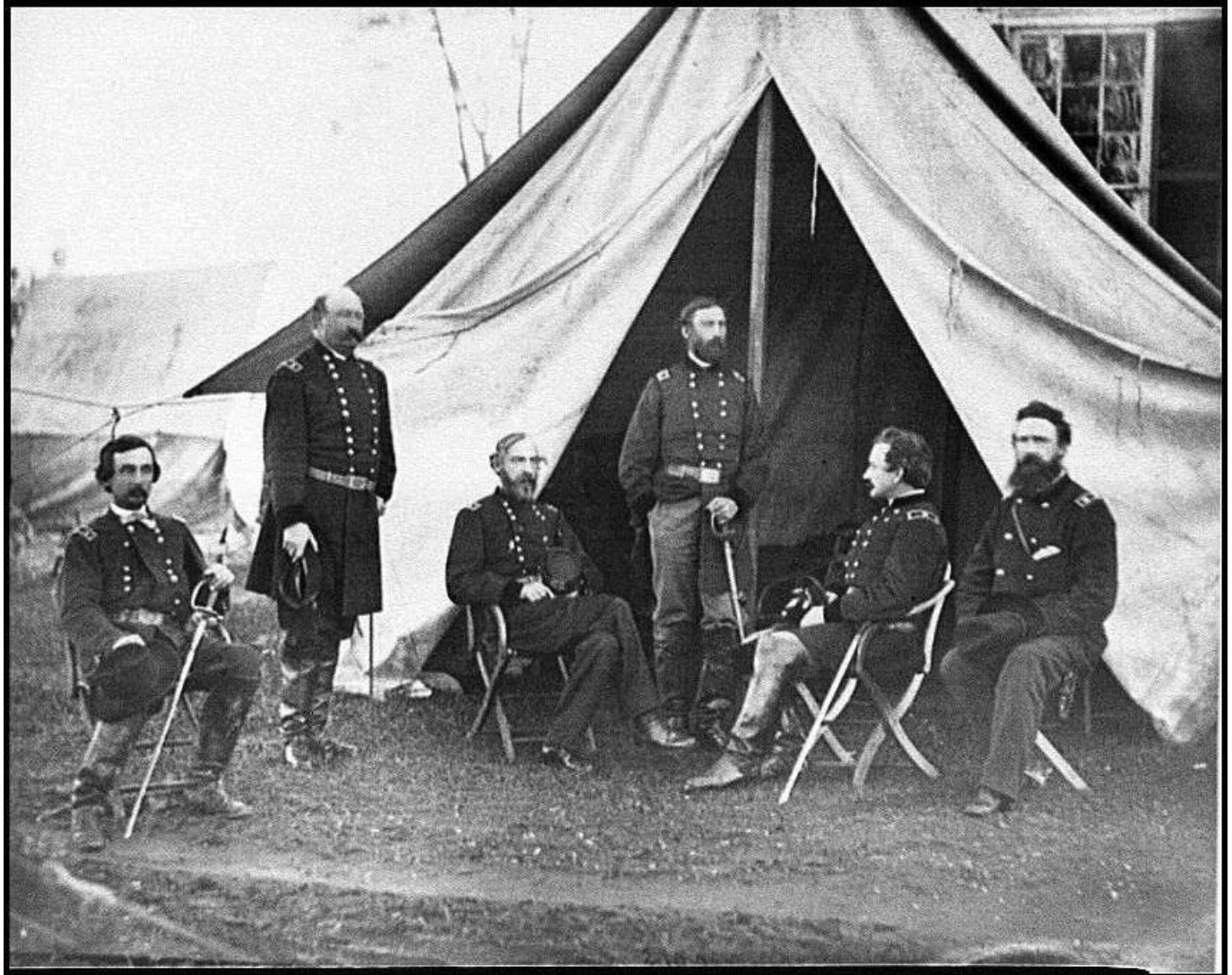
### **30 August 1862**

Second Bull Run (Manassas). Lee whips Pope.

*The Battles of The Wilderness and Spotsylvania*

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From left: Gouverneur K. Warren, William French, George Meade, Henry Hunt, A. J. Humphreys, and John Sedgwick.



In the East, the war went badly for the union. Despite Lincoln's hopes for quick victory, he was denied by the Army of Northern Virginia and the vacillation of his own commanders. Six commanders of the Army of the Potomac had come and gone, all losing face because they balked in the face of the perceived genius of Confederate General Robert E. Lee. Irvin McDowell, George B. McClellan, John Pope, McClellan again, Ambrose Burnside, and Joseph Hooker had all been bested by the wily and aggressive Lee.

McClellan especially found it difficult to engage Lee even when the Union Army more than doubled the number of the Confederate. He sat miles from Richmond at one point until Lincoln, impatient for progress, declared to McClellan, "You must act."

General George Meade managed a crucial victory at Gettysburg in July 1863, but allowed the battered Southerners to escape.

1864 would prove to be crucial because elections were coming in November and unrest began to emerge in the West, Illinois and Indiana especially, where the 'Copperheads,' a group that opposed the continuation of the war, continued to gain favor.

The war had changed in the previous year. After McClellan's strategic victory at the Battle of Antietam in September 1862, Lincoln thought that the climate was ripe for the passing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Delivered by executive order on New Year's Day 1863, it changed the war aim from union to freedom. Perhaps most important, it precluded the chance that Great Britain and France might fight with a Confederacy fighting to preserve the institution of slavery. The South would have to gain independence alone.

But while Lincoln handled the political scene, one general was winning, and doing it consistently. The successes in the West—Donelson, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga—all stemmed from the audacity of Ulysses S. Grant. Lincoln himself commented that, "I can't spare this man—he fights."

Lincoln appointed him General-in-Chief of the Union Army in March 1864. And, as Lee waited in northern Virginia for the first signs of moving armies, Grant and Sherman planned a grand campaign.

**25 June-1 July 1862**

Seven Days Battles, Peninsula Campaign. Lee takes command of the Army of Northern Virginia. McClellan becomes delusional.

**13 December 1862**

Battle of Fredericksburg where Burnside is repulsed

**1-4 May 1863**

At Chancellorsville Lee routs Hooker.

**1-4 July 1863**

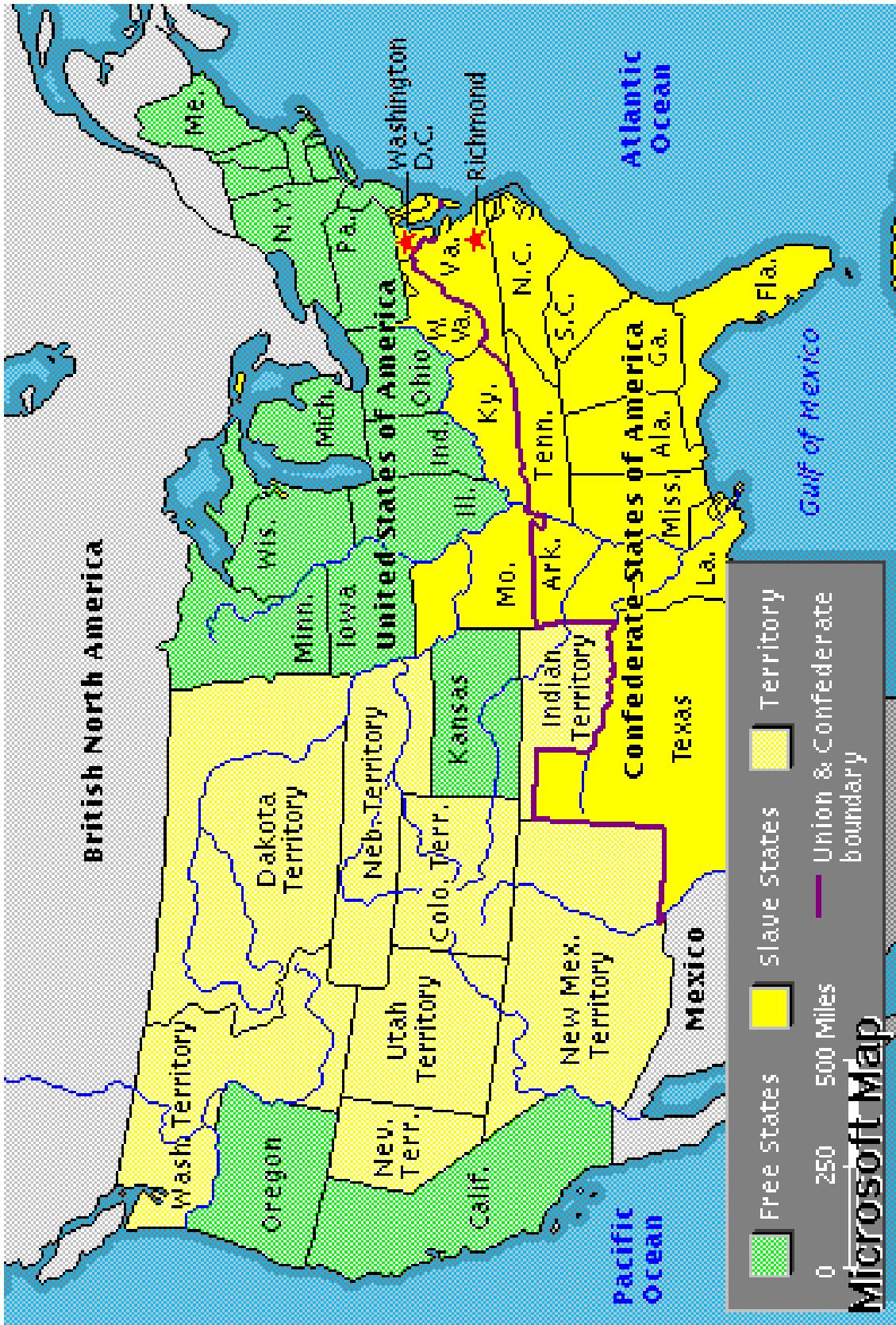
Battle of Gettysburg; Meade repulses Lee. Grant takes Vicksburg.

**May-June 1862**

Thomas Jonathan 'Stonewall' Jackson's Shenandoah Campaign.

**19-20 September 1863**

Bragg routs Rosecrans at Chickamauga.



## **The Countries and Their Leaders**

### **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Lincoln, Abraham

1809-1865

16<sup>th</sup> US President

Born and raised on the edge of the frontier in Kentucky, he grew up with scant formal education and first saw the world during a flatboat trip to New Orleans in 1828.

His forceful character and honesty made him a favorite in the community, and he served in the Illinois state legislature as a Whig. Licensed as a lawyer in 1836, he settled in Springfield, where he married Mary Todd, in 1842. After one term in the US Congress (1847-1849) he was not returned by his constituents and retired from public life.

In opposition to Stephen A. Douglas and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he entered the growing debate of sectionalism and joined the Republican Party in 1856. The famous Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858 ended in Douglas' election to the Senate, but Lincoln emerged as a powerful national figure, and he was nominated on the Republican ticket for President in 1860. He was elected on 6 November. The South saw the election as an end to its power in the Union. When Lincoln ordered the provisioning of Fort Sumter, the Confederacy objected to what it considered a course of coercion, and the Civil War began.

After the battle of Antietam he issued the emancipation proclamation, giving the Northern cause a high moral tone, but the preservation of the Union was still his primary purpose. His enemies mustered strength before the 1864 election, and it looked as though he would be displaced in the White House. But the military successes of Grant and Sherman swung sentiment toward him, and he was re-elected.

Lincoln was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth on 14 April at Ford's Theater. His death put the Radical Republicans in control of the nation, condemning it to a process of reconstruction that left as many scars as did the war.



THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA  
Davis, Jefferson 1808-89

Before graduating from Transylvania University, he was appointed to West Point Military Academy. After graduation, he spent seven years on the Northwest frontier. Eloping with Zachary Taylor's daughter, he resigned as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. In 1835 he settled in Mississippi and became a planter. Unfortunately, his wife died three months after their marriage; but in 1845 he remarried. Elected the same year to the US Congress, he resigned to fight in the Mexican War and served under his former father-in-law.

After the war, he was elected to the US Senate, and in 1853 was appointed Secretary of War by President Franklin Pierce. He served until 1857 and then reentered the Senate, serving until January 1861 when Mississippi seceded. He was chosen provisional president of the Confederate States of America and in November was formally elected to a six-year term.

As the war progressed, Davis kept a close hand upon the management of the Confederate armies. His Secretaries of War served as little more than clerks because of Davis' managerial skills. Only to Lee did Davis appear to concede preeminence.

On the political front his autocratic ways fostered a large, well-organized anti-Davis faction in the Confederate Congress, especially in the Senate. Issues arising from strong states rights sentiment hampered Davis' efforts to run the government. Newspapers, as well, proved to be a constant source of criticism of the government. The *Richmond Examiner*, the *Charleston Mercury*, and others regularly denounced the President. Under these conditions Davis was never able to accumulate wartime powers in the Confederate Presidency such as Lincoln possessed in the North.

Davis fled Richmond on 2 April 1865 and was captured one month later at Irwinsville, GA. He was held for two years at Fortress Monroe, accused of complicity in the Lincoln assassination. He died poverty stricken in New Orleans at the age of 82.





## **The Generals and Their Intent**

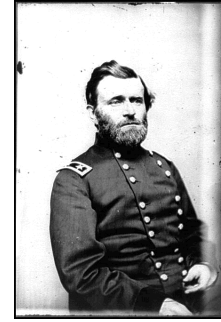
“Direct every military operation toward a clearly defined, decisive, and attainable objective.”

-FM 100-5, Operations, 1993

### **THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

#### **Grant’s Spring 1864 Strategy**

1. Use the greatest number of troops possible against the enemy; prevent him from shifting Corps or divisions between theaters. Second, to hammer the enemy continuously, until by mere attrition, if no other way, there should be nothing left of him to resist the constitutional laws of the land.
2. The enemy has concentrated the bulk of his forces east of the Mississippi into two armies, commanded by General R.E. Lee and J.E. Johnston. These armies, and the cities covered by them, will be the main objective points of the campaign.
  - a. Major General Meade’s objective point will be Lee’s army. Meade’s Army of the Potomac (AOP) will cross the Rapidan above Lee and move by his right flank. The intention is to fight Lee between Culpeper and Richmond, should he make a stand. Should he fall back, Meade’s army will follow and make a junction with Butler’s army on the James River.
  - b. Major General Sigel (Army of West Virginia) will organize his force into two columns, one commanded by himself, to advance to Cedar Creek to threaten the enemy in the Shenandoah Valley. The other column, commanded by Brigadier General George Cook, to take



**U.S. Grant  
1822-1885**

Grant emerged as the premiere military leader of the Union. Undistinguished as a cadet, he finished the Mexican War as a captain with two citations for gallantry and one for meritorious conduct. Unable to bear the futility and monotony of postwar military service on the West Coast, lonely for his wife and children, Grant began drinking heavily and neglecting his duty. He resigned in 1854 to avoid court-martial. When Lincoln called for volunteers in 1861, Grant offered his services. He was eventually given command of the 21st Ill. On 7 Nov. 1861, he gained national attention with his operations at Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, and Vicksburg.

- possession of Lewisburg and move down the Tennessee Railroad doing as much damage as possible.
- c. Major General Benjamin Butler (Army of the James) will collect all forces that can be spared from garrison duty, not less than 20,000 men, to operate on the south side of the James River, Richmond being the objective. The first movement will be to take City Point and entrench. Petersburg will be taken and railroads will be destroyed as far south as possible.
  - d. General William T. Sherman (Division of the Mississippi) will move against Johnston's army, break it up, and go into the interior of the enemy's country as far as possible, inflicting all damage as possible on enemy war resources. If Johnston's army shows any signs of joining Lee's army, Sherman will follow him while the AOP will attempt to prevent the concentration of the two forces.
  - e. Major General Nathaniel Banks (Department of the Gulf), on an expedition up the Red River with a portion of Sherman's troops, will take Shreveport at the earliest moment. If it appears the mission will take more than ten to fifteen days Banks will return Sherman's troops, even if it means abandonment of the Red River expedition. If the expedition appears successful Banks will hold Shreveport with such a force as might deem necessary, and send the remainder to the neighborhood of New Orleans. Any force sent to New Orleans may become part of a spring campaign against Mobile.

Promoted to Lt. Gen. on 9 Mar. 1864 after his victories around Chattanooga, he was made General in Chief of the Armies of the United States on 12 Mar. 1864, and took over the strategic direction of the war. After the war he remained as head of the army, was named Secretary of War in Stanton's place by President Johnson. Elected president by a small popular majority on the Republican ticket in 1868, and re-elected for a second term, Grant's political career, although honest and well meaning, resulted in an administration that was corrupt and badly managed.

THE CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA

Lee, Robert Edward  
1807-1870

Lee's Spring 1864 Strategy

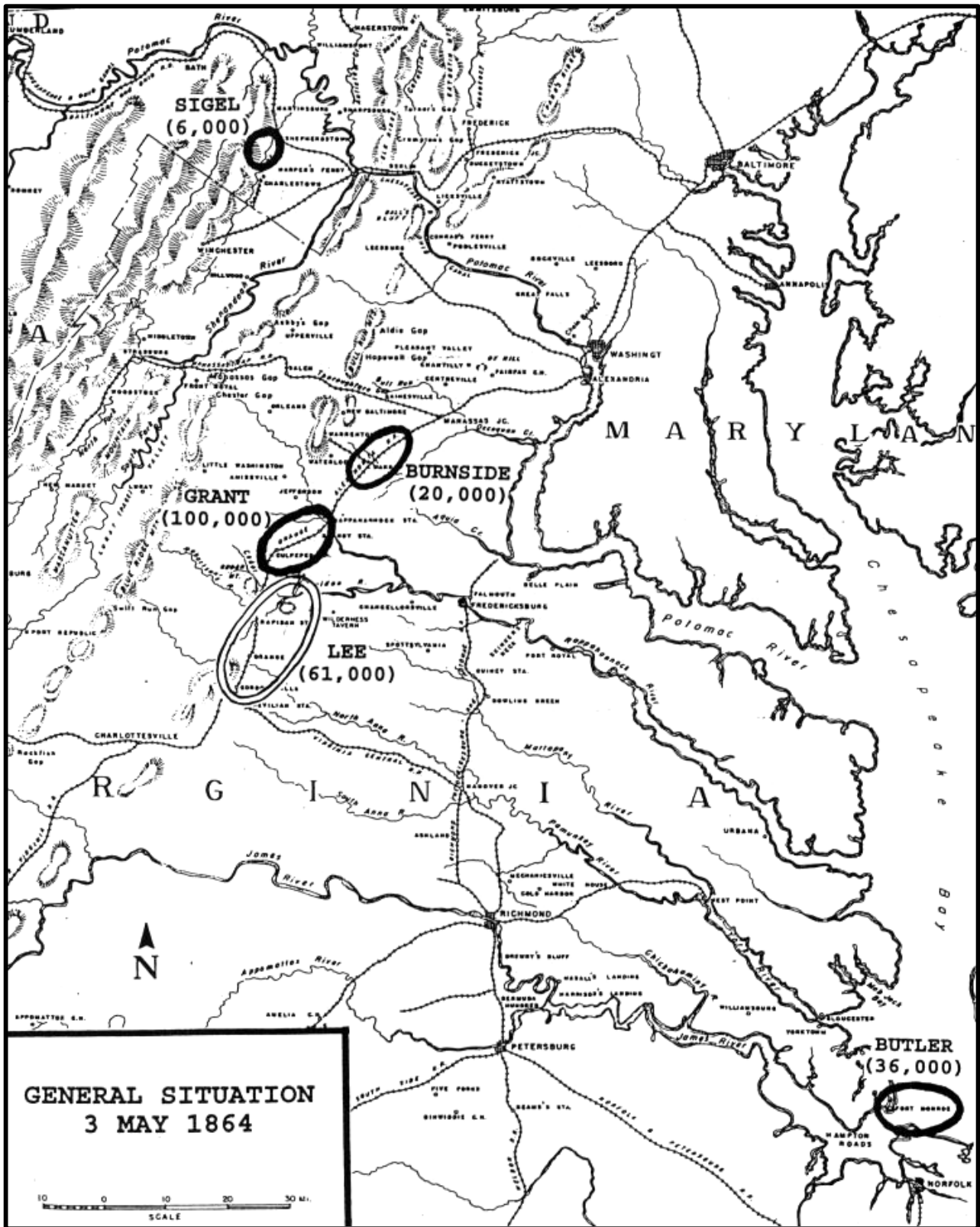
1. The enemy is organizing a large army on the Rappahannock, and another at Annapolis. It is believed the former is intended to move directly toward Richmond, while the latter is intended to take it in flank or rear.
2. The enemy expedition up the Red River has diminished his forces about New Orleans and Mobile. I think no attack upon the latter city need to be apprehended soon. Therefore Johnston might draw something from Mobile during the summer to strengthen him.
3. P.G.T. Beauregard with a portion of his troops might move into North Carolina to oppose Burnside, should he resume his old position in that state, or be ready to advance to the James should that route be taken.
4. If General Simon Buckner is able to advance into Tennessee, reoccupy Knoxville, or unite with General Johnston, great good may be accomplished. If he can hold only Nashville I think he had better be called for a season to Richmond.
5. If Richmond can be secured from attack from the east, I propose that I draw James Longstreet to me and move against the enemy on the Rappahannock. Should God give us crowing glory there, all their plans would be dissipated, and their troops now collecting on the waters of the Chesapeake will be recalled to the defense of Washington.



**Robert E. Lee**  
**1809-1870**

Lee graduated from West Point and distinguished himself in the Mexican War 1846-48. In 1859 he suppressed John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. Ironically, Lee had freed his own slaves long before the war began and he was opposed to secession. However, his devotion to his native Virginia led him to join the Confederacy. At the outbreak of war he declined command of the Union army and became military adviser to Jefferson Davis, and in 1862 commander of the Army of Northern Virginia. Following the war he was paroled and served as president of Washington College (now Washington and Lee University). He died in 1870.

*The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania*



**Lieutenant General William Tecumseh Sherman**  
He proclaimed before his campaign, "I am going to make Georgia howl!"

