



Documenting Shock & Awe: Researching Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom

◆ By Hilary Bergen

It is ironic that our most recent military history is at risk of being lost. Changes in decades-old recordkeeping have created gaps in the historical record of 21st century military conflicts. This poses serious problems for policy makers, veterans, and our collective memory. However, utilizing creative historical research strategies and some good detective work, we can piece together the story.

If you searched for World War II records at the National Archives today, you would find thousands of boxes of textual records, all relics of the traditional military recordkeeping system. Although not everything was saved, a surprising variety of records have survived, from operations reports, technical studies, and training manuals to cryptological cables, contract files, and allocation requests. Yet if you expected to find similar records on the wars in Afghanistan or Iraq, you might be sorely disappointed.

Historical research into the first conflicts of the 21st century requires a different set of tools. The war in Afghanistan, a component of the larger Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), began in October 2001, after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Following intelligence information on the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) launched in March 2003. From



U.S. Marines and Georgian Army soldiers during Operation Northern Lion II in Helmand province, Afghanistan, July 3, 2013. (Courtesy of U.S. Marines)

the beginning, politicians, policy makers, journalists, historians, and the public have struggled to construct coherent narratives of these conflicts.¹ Recent criminal investigations, the claims of veterans and other personnel, ongoing political and military repercussions of the conflicts in the Middle East, renewed public interest in contractor logistics support, and the treatment of our veterans have created a growing demand for historical research on OEF and OIF. Yet addressing this demand for answers is complicated.

The landscape of military research has changed. In 1993, the U.S. Army issued Army Regulation 25-400-2, which instituted the Modern Army Recordkeeping

System (MARKS)². MARKS, in part, aimed to regulate the creation and management of electronic records. Over the past 25 years, digital systems have steadily replaced paper records as the primary method of military recordkeeping. However, the difficult transition from paper to computer often resulted in inconsistent recordkeeping.

In the early days of OEF and OIF, rapid war escalation, general disorganization in the invasion's aftermath, and a lack of clear regulation on record procedures led to gaps in the historical record. Sometimes, heightened security concerns prompted military personnel to erase computer hard drives following deployment.

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A Beginning, a Middle, and an End: The Difference between Chronology and History

◆ By Ken Durr

Everyone knows that history is supposed to provide a solid record and perhaps even teach us something. We also know that a compelling history is, above all, a good story. But how to create it?

There is an old saw, "life is one damn thing after another," which occasionally gets sharpened up and applied to history. At History Associates, we

are sometimes asked to enliven a story that was written in the belief that if you collect all of the information and put it all in order, you'll end up with a history. But you don't, you get something closer to a chronology—in modern parlance, a "bullet list" of past events. A chronology is a useful tool but a miserable read.

Contrary to popular opinion, a good story never "writes itself." Writing history is, in fact, a creative act. The historian collects

things, anecdotes, descriptions, details, and facts—lots of facts—but she does not line them up and be done with it. Instead, doing history means being selective: which facts are the telling ones? Which anecdotes ring true (and can be corroborated) and which are themselves a product of imagination? Which statistics drive home a point and which are just numbers?

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about us

For more than thirty years, clients have turned to History Associates to tell their stories, preserve and manage their records and artifacts, and answer their historical questions.

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Books, websites, and oral history projects

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staff highlights

Marlene Worhach

Art and science have always been a part of Marlene's DNA. After graduating with a degree in fine arts, she started working toward a degree in science at the University of California, Davis. But then in a moment of serendipity, a friend asked Marlene to repair a torn photograph. "I had no idea how to help, but started doing some research," Marlene recalls. "I stumbled onto the field of art conservation.

It was perfect - I love art and I love science and this required a foundation in both areas." While completing a biology degree, she was accepted as a volunteer in the conservation lab at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, regularly taking the two-hour trip on the train. "You know it's the right path when the hard work required is a welcomed effort." This eventually led to acceptance into a leading

art conservation program and then work at several museums on the East Coast. Her passion for bringing standardized practices to the museum world helped her transition to work on the commercial side, taking on increasing responsibilities at a series of fine art shipping companies. She was organizing the move of a large museum when she met History Associates. Now she is bringing her energy and

expertise to expanding our collections management services. "I'm looking forward to helping History Associates be successful as the 'go to' firm for collections management services."



Worhach



by Roz Chast (Courtesy of The New Yorker Collection, The Cartoon Bank)

Methods for creating history

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Along with the selections come other decisions— which points to hammer hard on, which to soft pedal?

So how does the historian decide what to use or what to emphasize?

This gets to what is mysterious and challenging about history and what makes it, at least in part, an art: the historian must necessarily create his own special version of the past and make it live in the pages of a book. To give that version of the past unity, impact, and meaning, historians usually employ an overarching approach depending on the time in which they write, the materials at hand, and their own particular convictions.

The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (who thought hard about this, among other things) identified three types of historical

writing: monumental, antiquarian, and critical. Academics often produce critical history—ruthlessly examining past events in light of current knowledge and present values to take long-gone actors and their actions to task. Antiquarians write out of fascination with past conventions and artifacts—what is important to them is just how different things were. The monumental historian works to highlight something or someone which he believes future generations should never forget. Lots of popular works have employed this approach, from heroic company histories of the early-to-mid-20th century to currently ubiquitous tales of "greatest generation" exploits.

While some professional historians fully embrace one or the other of these strategies, most adopt elements of all three. They also employ plenty of other tactics to add reinforcement to their bags of tales:

irony or metaphor, organic or mechanistic explanations, to name a few.

Ultimately, however, a historian who can tell a tale knows the basics of plot: character development (show people and their institutions learning over time); and tension and release (build up escalating problems, recount their resolution, and show how that resolution builds to new problems). The chronologist, for whom one fact is as good as another, will reject all of these methods of employment. The skilled historian will wield them effectively to tell a good story with a dramatic arc: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Ken Durr is executive vice president of History Associates, where he oversees a wide range of history projects including books, online histories, and oral history programs. Contact Ken at 301-279-9697 or by email at kdurr@historyassociates.com

on the web

Mapping History: A Behind the Scenes Look at the Making of Historical Maps

By Jen Giambrone

We recently created a series of maps for the National World War II Museum that vividly illustrate the Allied campaign to reclaim North Africa and Europe in World War II.

How One Company Reduced Off-Site Records Storage Costs

By Laura Starr

An audit of records kept in an off-site storage facility for a large company revealed that they were storing much more than they needed to, resulting in a significant reduction in storage fees.

To read this, previous editions of *hai*points, and more, visit historyassociates.com/blog



congratulations!

Mike Reis has been named a Senior Vice President at History Associates, a new role where he will continue to serve as an expert witness historian in litigation engagements. Mike will also continue to share his extensive historical knowledge with colleagues and clients. Jason Gart has taken on the role of Director of Litigation Research, where he manages day-to-day litigation practice responsibilities. Jason has been a historian with History Associates since 2007, serving most recently as Deputy Director of Litigation Research. These changes further our commitment to providing the top-of-the-line and timely research and analysis services you have come to expect.

Finding the records, missing or classified

from p. 1

Recent media investigations discovered that in some cases field records, intelligence reports, and daily accounts of conditions in war zones were deleted or never even created.³

As conflicts in the region continue, many OEF and OIF records remain under the direct control of government and military agencies. Relevant records are often classified and out of reach to the casual researcher.

So when faced with missing records and classified documents, how do we conduct research?

For historians accustomed to textual archives, the lack of physical records could be viewed as a barrier to research. Yet, by asking the right questions, utilizing our knowledge of government regulation and military organization, and employing a targeted and systematic research strategy, we have successfully accessed and collected records that document these wars.

While some records may be missing, collecting related

documents like DOD guidance and directives, media coverage, and other investigations can help fill in the gaps in the story. Publicly available congressional hearings and government investigations can provide valuable information on specific incidents, military and contractor personnel, and troop actions. With a cleverly named website called "The Wayback Machine," researchers can pull up the State Department website from 2005 or the home page of the U.S. Army's Operation Enduring Freedom website in 2002. The Defense Technical Information Center also maintains a useful online database of DOD scientific and technical publications and releases.

Security classification poses a unique challenge, but understanding the regulatory chain of command and the records custody and release process provides historians with insight into what classified records might tell us. Following an internal review process, government agencies send their classified and unclassified records to

appropriately secure Federal Records Centers. There, researchers can review unclassified SF-135 forms, which describe the contents of different accessions of records. Researchers can use this information to guide their research and write more detailed and direct Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests targeting both classified and unclassified materials. Many government agencies also post logs of all FOIA requests in a given year. By requesting the releases of past successful FOIAs, researchers may be able to get released records more quickly. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has also made significant efforts in order to make the records of OIF and OEF more accessible to researchers. Online resources available via NARA's Access to Archival Databases (AAD) System and Archives Library Information Center (ALIC) provide access to released electronic records and general information on both conflicts.

As historians, we

need to be more creative and flexible to adapt to the ever-changing needs of our clients. Researching the conflicts of the 21st century is unique and challenging, but not impossible. So if you think you have found everything or if you think there is nothing to find, know that with 30 years of experience researching military records, History Associates may be able to uncover records where others could not.

Endnotes

1. Matt Seaton, "Blast from the Past," *The Guardian*, February 19, 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/feb/19/iraq.artsandhumanities>

2. U.S. Department of the Army, *The Modern Army Recordkeeping System (MARKS)*, Army Regulation 25-400-2, February 26, 1993.

3. Peter Sleeth and Hal Bernton, "Lost to History: Missing War Records Complicate Benefit Claims by Iraq, Afghanistan Veterans," *ProPublica*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.propublica.org/article/lost-to-history-missing-war-records-complicate-benefit-claims-by-veterans>.

Hilary Bergen conducts a variety of historical, museum, and litigation research for clients at History Associates. Contact Hilary at 301-279-9697 or at hbergen@historyassociates.com

the best *clients* in history

Carlisle SynTec—began the research and writing of an update to the company's history.

National Archives and Records Administration/Capital City Events—prepared and delivered a presentation on the Presidency and the National Archives for a special event.

Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)—completed the packing, inventorying, and moving of LIUNA's archives and historical artifacts to temporary storage at History Associates during office

renovations.

National Park Service—completed the processing and cataloging of archival collections from the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site (GA), Steamtown National Historic Site (PA), Harpers Ferry Center (WV), and Mary McLeod Bethune Council House (NPS Museum Resource Center, MD).

Gallagher & Associates—various master planning, scriptwriting, and image research and acquisition projects for the Medal of Honor Museum,

National World War II Museum, National Museum of World War II Aviation, and several corporate heritage center exhibits.

International Spy Museum—conducting research for new exhibits at the museum.

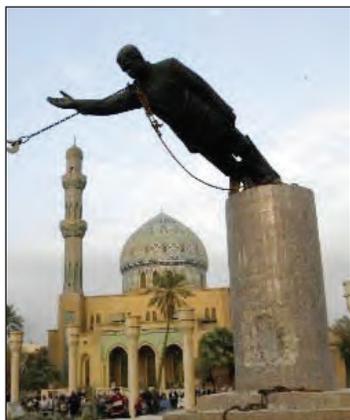
Litigation Research—continued to research and analyze documents in federal, state, and local records repositories in California, Connecticut, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C.

client testimonials

I call this [History Associates book *The Best Made Plans: Robert R. Nathan and 20th Century Liberalism*] the 'real history of economic thought.' . . . It's a splendid look at twentieth century economics as it actually influenced the world, without centering the story on academia.

Tyler Cowen, professor of economics, author

Quiz: Test Your Knowledge of: The Iraq War



The statue of Saddam Hussein was famously toppled from Firdos Square after the Battle of Baghdad in 2003. What is in its place now?

- A. Mansour Mall
- B. An abstract sculpture
- C. Nothing

E-mail your answer along with your contact information to Anne Strong at astrong@historyassociates.com by July 30, 2015. Correct responses will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 Amazon gift card!

For answers to previous quizzes, visit our website at www.historyassociates.com/news/test-your-knowledge-quiz/
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