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(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

Clarke: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with Colonel Douglas Macgregor in a discussion of his book *Margin of Victory: Five Battles That Changed the Face of Modern War*. I'm your host Ken Clarke, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago, and it's sponsored by the United States Naval Institute. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. In war the margin of victory is slim. Battles are rarely won on luck alone. To secure victory in battle is to know the cultural, geographical, and scientific capability of the enemy and of your own forces in order to create favorable conditions for victory in battle. Spanning from the Battle of Mons in WWI to the Battle of 73 Easting in the Persian Gulf War, Macgregor's book analyzes five battles in detail to reveal the strategies that worked or the institutions that failed in vastly different conflicts.

Emphasizing military strategy, force design, and modernization, Macgregor links each of these seemingly isolated battles thematically. Macgregor recognizes that strategy and geopolitics are ultimately more influential in conflict than ideology, and he stresses that if nation states want to be successful in politics and warfare they must accept the need for and the inevitability of change. Douglas Macgregor is a decorated army combat veteran, the author of five books, and the executive VP of Bert, Macgregor Group, LLC, a defense and foreign policy consulting firm. He was commissioned in the regular army in 1976 and retired as a colonel in 2004. Macgregor is widely known in military circles inside and outside the United States for his leadership in the battle of 73 Easting during the Persian Gulf War, the US Army's largest tank battle since WWII. His fourth book, *Warrior's Rage: The Great Tank Battle of 73 Easting*, describes the 1991 action for which he was awarded a Bronze Star with V device for Valor. In 28 years of military service Macgregor taught in the Department of Social Sciences at West Point, commanded the 1st Squadron 4th Cavalry, and served as the director of Joint Operations Center at Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers of NATO in 1999 during the Kosovo Air Campaign, where he was awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal. Macgregor's other books include *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design For Land Power in the 21st Century*, *The Soviet East German Military Alliance*, and *Transformation Under Fire: Revolutionizing How American Fights*. His books have been translated into Hebrew, Chinese, Russian, and Korean. Macgregor holds a master's in Comparative Politics and a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of Virginia. Please join me in welcoming to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Colonel Douglas Macgregor.

(Applause)

Macgregor: Well first of all, thank everyone for coming out on a chilly Tuesday evening here in Chicago. Of course I guess being chilly in Chicago is almost synonymous, right? So I wore a warm woolen suit as a consequence anticipating precisely that. And I want to thank especially Jennifer Pritzker and the Museum staff for bringing me here this evening and allowing me to talk to you. And I'll try to make this as interesting as possible for you because it's an important subject. War is something that Americans remarkably pay very little attention to. Oh, yes, we have lots of interesting things on the History Channel, we have lots of popular narratives of past battles in wars, but we rarely dig into them to try and understand what really happened. So this evening I'm gonna talk to you

about not just five battles--each one is important in the context in the war--but also about the longer term implications for us in the 21st century. It's very important that we take seriously some of the insights that are in *Margin of Victory* because they need to shape our fore structure in the future. Not every book has its own story, its own destiny. And this one is no exception. This originated, the idea that is for the book, in 1991. And it came late in the evening on 1991 February 26 about 11pm. I had looked out across this battlefield where I could see fires burning for miles in every direction and destroyed equipment, and I waited for the 1st Infantry Division that was behind us to move up through the 2nd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and my squadron, the 2nd Squadron. And it suddenly dawned on me that this had been the contemporary equivalent of a battle of annihilation. We hadn't simply won a battle; we had annihilated the enemy. And I wondered how had this happened. I mean, naturally we all stand back and we want to congratulate ourselves on all the brilliant decisions we made in action that obviously explain the outcome. But ladies and gentleman a lot of decisions were made decades before I showed up on that battlefield that resulted in the organizational structure in which I was serving, decisions about the human capital, the people that would show up and fight with me, decisions about the equipment, and where this organizational construct and its equipment fit in to a much larger picture. And I began thinking then, how did we do it, how had we gotten this right, and what can we learn from it? So I tucked that away for many, many years, and I went to a presentation on another book on the topic of Calvin Coolidge. You know, the man who looked like he'd been weaned on a pickle and was noteworthy for not being one of the more popular presidents. And the author Amity Shlaes was discussing Calvin Coolidge's career and said that Coolidge had received a note from one of his friends in the senate and the senate said he was-- senator said, "I am appalled. One of the other senators had the gall to tell me to go to hell." And so Calvin Coolidge sat there, took out his pen, wrote out a note, and said, "Senator, I looked up the law. You don't have to go." And he sent it back to him. And that was the moment I decided it was time to write *Margin of Victory* because I had seen hell. Fortunately I wasn't necessarily in it. Hell was on the other side of the battlefield, and it was behind me. It was the path of destruction that we had created across the desert in Iraq in 1991. And it became very important for me to write the book because avoiding that hell is to a large extent what *Margin of Victory* is all about. Now the first thing that everyone needs to understand are these two critical observations by Friedrich Nietzsche, the great German philosopher. The first one is important because it applies to everyone I talk about in this book. "War makes the victor stupid." As I go through each of these chapters, the first one, which is about the British Expeditionary Force in 1914, the British had had no serious military confrontation since 1854. And really people would argue that even that, as bad as it was, was still a minor event compared with what they'd been through fighting Napoleon. And the British had fought continuously for decades weak opponents. Colonial opponents, people in what today we refer to as the developing world. And in each of these encounters they were marvelously successful because it wasn't very difficult to mobilize superior firepower and utterly dominate your opponent. This was not just true for the British. This was the experience that the Japanese had later on with the Chinese. It's the experience the Germans had in 1940 against the French and the British, who turned out to be much less challenging than even the Germans had anticipated, and it is also the case with the Israelis in 1973 because the Israelis had fought in '67 and literally swept all of their enemies from the battlefield. And finally I go to 1991 to try and explain that our victory in '91 has really made us rather stupid. And the consequence of that stupidity is something that I discuss at the end. But the point you need to remember is exactly what Nietzsche said: "War makes the victor stupid." when you have a dramatic victory, you congratulate yourself, you walk away

contented, convinced that you have the final solution for anyone else who dares attack you, and you are almost inevitably wrong. The second quote is equally important. Nietzsche said, "The history of mankind is the eternal returning of the same." Now I know people say history is sort of like music or poetry. It doesn't always perfectly rhyme, but it's the same thing over and over again. This is a little more important for our discussion today. And let me give you a quick example. In 1623 a Persian Shiite army invaded what is today Iraq and seized control of Baghdad. They proceeded to expel all of the Sunni, Arabs, Turks, and Kurds that lived in the city and turn it into a Shiite city as part of the greater Persian Empire. In 1643 an Ottoman Turkish/ Sunni, Arab, and Turkish army returned, retook Baghdad, threw out all of the Shiites who were Turks or Persian or Arabs and reinstalled the Sunni government, and made it a part of the Ottoman Empire. Now that's just part of the story. The wars that then proceeded from this particular event went on until the late 1840s. And finally there was a resolution in the conflict between the Turks and the Persians. That resolution is today's border between Iran and Iraq. And that border was fixed by the czar of Russian who was in fact allied with Iran. My point to you is you turn on the television at night, and you listen to various people in the news tell you, "Oh, this is breaking news." Ladies and gentleman, there is no breaking news. It's the same old thing repackaged. And that's very important because to some extent that's war. You see the same kinds of things repeat themselves in new form with new technology. But again and again we fail to learn the really critical lessons. There are five battles. These battles and these wars are different from the kinds of conflicts in which we have been involved over the last fifteen, sixteen years. What do I mean by that? These are really wars of decision. This is what Clausewitz referred to as wars that decide outcomes, that have end states--that either resolve disputes, create new borders, new economic systems, new imperial systems. They have a specific impact that you can trace geographically, culturally, politically, and economically. Each of these wars had a profound impact. Some more than others. We have been involved now for fifteen or sixteen years in what are the equivalent frankly of colonial conflicts. These conflicts have decided effectively nothing because there was never any end state in mind. When we entered these conflicts there was no one at the top who said, "In six months of six years, this is what we will have at the end of our investment, at the end of our commitment." As a result they're open-ended. They decide nothing, but they also don't result in very heavy casualties. And casualties make a difference to liberal democracies. We are no exception. And the casualties we're going to talk about in these battles are profound. The first one, involving the British Expeditionary Force in 1914, that force suffered 15,000 casualties out of 80,000 men in one week. Imagine, imagine the impact here in the United States today of fighting over the period of a week that resulted in 15,000 casualties. I think the president and the congress would have a lot to explain to the American people. The second battle, involving Shanghai, the Japanese sustained 40,000 casualties, the Chinese 270,000 over a period of seventy-five days. Incomprehensible today. The third one, over a period of fifty days the Soviets sustain almost 450,000 casualties, the Germans 240,000. Then the Israelis and the Egyptians in the space of about I would say probably two weeks, the Israelis sustain about 7,000 casualties fighting the Egyptians; the Egyptians sustain over 30,000. And then finally when you get o the battle of 73 Easting, and that's really an even that is spread across six to seven hours on the 26th of February, thee Iraqis who are facing us in this Republican guard brigade of some 2,300, they lose an estimated 1700 killed. Not just casualties, dead. And another four or five hundred survive to surrender. We sustain seven casualties including one killed and the loss of one armored fighting vehicle. So these are different from the kinds of events that we've seen over the last fifteen years, and it's important that you understand that because the argument the book makes is that

we are headed in the future--ten, fifteen, at the most twenty years from now--into another war of decision. A war that really matters, and it's the kind of war you don't want to lose, which will become increasingly obvious as we go through this. Every story has a person behind it. The notion that institutions--large armies, large navies, air forces--somehow or another manage to do things on their own or fix themselves is absurd. Behind every fundamental reform, every fundamental change that matters is a human being. And the men who are depicted on these slides exemplify that. The first one is Sir Richard Haldane. It's an interesting story because he had no military experience, and he ends up being appointed as secretary of state for war, which is the equivalent of being the secretary of the army now, in the aftermath of the Boer War. And he walks in, and he discovers that he has an enormous advantage, despite the absence of military experience, over the generals. He's read some books. The generals haven't. No one at the top of the British army read anything. So Haldane interestingly enough is someone who spent two years of his life studying philosophy in German--Germany, so he is fluent in German. He reads all of the German works. He studies the German army. And he decides that the Germans offer the best model for the British army with the exception of course that he can't have a draft. So he builds a new force between 1905 and 1912. He takes this collection of regiments designed to suppress Zulus, Afghans, Pattans, tribal peoples in various parts of the empire, and tries to reform it into an army capable of continental warfare. Today we call that mid to high intensity warfare. In other words, to land somewhere on the European continent potentially and fight a major opponent. The man next to him is a gentleman named Ugaki. He was a career army officer. He also spent many years of his life in Germany. He returns to Japan convinced that the Germans have the right solution, and he becomes the minister of defense, and he tries very, very hard to reduce the size of this mammoth Japanese army that had fought in the rest of the Japanese war consisting of hundreds of thousands of riflemen and turn them into a modern military force modeled on the German army with the exception that this is now the post war German army with tanks and aircraft and machine guns and artillery. He has some success but not very much. And the reason he doesn't have very much success is that the emperor can't make up his mind. The emperor can't decide if he's right or wrong and ultimately decides to do nothing. And so the Japanese army really doesn't change. They don't reduce and extract the savings that are necessary to fund the scientific industrial base that Japan needs to build a modern army. And then of course they go to China. We'll talk about that. And china creates the illusion of victory, and there is no fundamental change in the Japanese army until it's too late, and that is in 1943, and by then the handwriting is on the wall; it's too late for Japan. The destruction of army group center in June of 1944 is really the product of this Russian colonel. He's an interesting man because, you know, you hear about Bolsheviks and revolutionaries. This man is the son and the grandson of Czarist army officer. She speaks, reads, and writes German quite fluently along with Russian. He takes the time to study the Germans very carefully. When the war begins in 1941 miraculously he escapes the Stalinist purges, and he rapidly advances simply because so many general officers were either being executed by Stalin or captured by the Germans that there were huge vacancies, and upward mobility was dramatically enhanced. He gained a reputation for being what the French call a *roche du blanc*, or *fenzin de brandon* as the Germans say it--the granite in the fire. As someone unshakable nerve. He surfaces in 1943 after the fall of Stalingrad, and our friend Stalin wants desperately to launch massive assaults against the Germans. He wants to follow up. And of course as some of you know in the aftermath of Stalingrad there is a counter-offensive, which results in horrible destruction of Soviet forces. He stands in front of Stalin, who has already executed hundreds of general officers, and makes the argument, "No, we must stand on the defense. We

cannot attack the Germans. The Germans will still outmaneuver and destroy us. We must stand on the defense, and we must allow the Germans to attack us on our terms." On either side are two Soviet marshals, Zhukov and Wosojewski. He is the director of operations and planning. And when Stalin finishes listening to this gentleman, he then turns to the other two marshals, and he says, "What do you think?" And they say, "We agree with him." Of course beads of sweat pouring down off their heads. They're all afraid to contradict Stalin. Ultimately Stalin agrees, and you get Kursk. And exactly what this man planned is what happens at Kursk. The consequence is that after Kursk you can imagine he is a hero, and he has Stalin's absolute confidence. He plans the destruction of army group center. And he has at his disposal an army that was built for total war and it's facing a German army that was really designed for very limited war, limited operations, principally in central and western Europe. Then we have Anwar Sadat. He's enormously important to this story because Anwar Sadat is unlike almost anyone else I think we've ever seen in the Middle East. He's unique among statesmen. He's an experienced soldier. He served in the Anglo Egyptian force before WWII and during the Second World War, although he was obviously extremely anti-British in his orientation. He took the trouble to study the Germans, but instead of trying to emulate the German military, which he admired very much, he concluded that's something that the Egyptian soldier cannot do. And so we see in Anwar Sadat someone who very carefully calculates the limits of his human capital. Remember that in 1973 only about thirty-two percent of his population could read or write. And he understands that you can expect only so much from soldiers that can't read or write. More importantly you can only expect so much from people who are disinclined for cultural reasons to do anything unless they are told to do it. And so he plans an offensive in ways that are very reminiscent of field marshal Montgomery who takes over the 8th army, which is shattered from defeat after defeat after defeat. And he remolds the Egyptian army, and the result is this magnificent and effective crossing of the Suez Canal. And of course at the same time the Israelis, who have grown very overconfident, are surprised. And then we move into the 73 Easting, and we're dealing in the 73 Easting with two very different groups of people. We are dealing with an Arab force that's very similar to the Egyptian force. It's a force that can defend statically. It's not a force that can maneuver. It's a force whose officers unfortunately are never forward--always behind the soldiers. And as a result it's not going to perform up to Saddam Hussein's expectations. But Saddam Hussein had seen his forces in the Iranian Iraq War, and he had seen the Iranians mount mass charges with thousands upon thousands of infantrymen and a handful of tanks, and he watched as his forces were able to destroy them and concluded that he had a force that was second to none, that his force could even take on the United States. And at the same time facing him on the battlefield is an army that just fifteen, sixteen years earlier was virtually in ruins, demoralized, fallen completely apart in the aftermath of Vietnam. And this force is then reorganized, reformed on the old 1942 model but given new equipment and new training regiment--a new culture if you will with soldiers who are not draftees--soldiers, sergeants, lieutenant, and captains who are actually professional soldiers. And this force is a force that Saddam Hussein could never have anticipated, and it's a force that turns out to perform vastly better and beyond the expectations of senior officers who are Vietnam veterans and think exclusively in terms of Vietnam. The BEF in 1914. Today it's hard for us to imagine that there was ever a British army that looked like the BEF of 1914. This was a force that was built to do more with less. This was a force that had to recognize that it was always second or third in line after the Royal Navy. Clearly if you're in Great Britain, you put your money into the navy. You want to make sure that no one can cross the channel. You think very little about the army. But Haldane recognized that he only had so much in terms of--so much in terms of funds that he could invest, so he

would make the most out of it. And he recognized the importance of human capital, developing, educating, cultivating better soldiers that--soldiers that can read and write, soldiers that can think. Officers that have to perform against some sort of standard. He does a pretty good job, but it's not enough because he's still dealing with the senior officer corps that, let's put it bluntly, is where it is for reasons of social position and standing more than anything else. And this hurts the performance of the British expeditionary force of 1914. They go to Mons. There are 80,000 of them in two corps. They have no idea what they're facing because they can't see more than three or four or five miles. They have no idea that there are hundreds of thousands of German troops headed in their direction. And so the standards for British officer culture prevails. All orders have to be written. Verbal orders are out of the question. Everyone has to receive a written order, which of course makes no sense in the fluidity of combat. And then secondly British commanders are very reluctant to specify and give detailed instructions and so General Smith-Dorrien, who's a very fine officer, turns to his officers because they are arrayed along a canal. It's about seven to eight feet deep and twenty to thirty feet wide, and there are bridges over the canal, and he says, "Of course chaps. Do be sure to blow those bridges when you think it right to do so." I mean, incomprehensible. Bridges over a canal? "Oh, just, you make the decision." In the German army an order would have been issued that at precisely this time every bridge will be destroyed and they would all vanish. But not in the British army, and as a result when the Germans attack there are bridges waiting for them that they can use. And so the battle turns out to be a lot tougher than the British anticipated. And here we see the beginning of modern intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and what I call strike, which is the ability to fire artillery or use aircraft beyond the line of sight. The British are excellent marksmen, they're tough infantrymen, they're putting up a great fight, and all of a sudden they look above, and someone in an airplane is dropping various forms of colored smoke and ribbons out of the airplane. And they can't figure out what this is. And a few minutes later enormous quantities of German artillery rain down on them. Well, the Germans were using radios. The Germans are marking targets. And the speed with which the location of the British units is being reported back to the artillery is in minutes. And the British suddenly find that they're being driven out. Well, the British artillery hasn't practiced indirect fire. Their experience in the Boer War and fighting the Fuzzy Wuzzies, as they liked to call them, was in direct fire. You lowered the guns, and you blew away vast quantities of your enemy. Suddenly the Germans don't cooperate. So the British really aren't up to it. They do the best that they can, but they are driven back. And they start out by taking almost 2,000 casualties the first day and by day seven 15,000 have been taken, and whole units are facing annihilation. The good news is that the British sacrifice was not in vain. Their purpose there was fulfilled. They did slow the Germans. Not slow in the sense of completely disrupting the timetable, but they became appealing. They became this appetizing target, and the commander of the German 1st army said, "We've got to crush this British army, so keep up." And he ends up diverting many of his resources and his troops to chase the British 250 miles all the way to the Marne River. This is enormously helpful because the French are also able to put reserves in the center of their line, so in that sense the sacrifice is worthwhile. But the tragedy is that the men in the British Expeditionary Force, 160,000 of them, by October of 1914 are virtually all dead or wounded. And in the words of the historian, "The British army of the old empire passes forever into the history books. There was no one left." The British weren't prepared for that, and they paid a terrible price for not being prepared. And it would take years for before the British could build up their armies. In 1914 all they could do was occupy a front of twenty miles. The French occupied the remaining 380. And that would not change dramatically until 1916. Chapter two, the Battle of Shanghai. This is one of

the most tragic battles that you can imagine. This is one where you begin to study what the soldiers went through, Chinese and Japanese, you actually feel terribly sorry for what they encountered. It's far worse than anything the British faced in 1914. The Chinese are the epitome of a third world army. They have very few highly trained soldiers, well-equipped soldiers. The few that they have sadly are squandered in trying to defend Shanghai. And Shanghai is the key to Nan King, and of course in Nanking there is the capital of the Republic of China, nationalist China. So Shanghai has to be defended. They lose 270,000 Chinese soldiers. We estimate 250 to 400,000 Chinese civilians die in this terrible battle. The Japanese are surprised, but again the Japanese have not fully modernized. But thanks to Ogaki they do have tanks, they do have excellent air forces, new aircraft, but all of the problems that we see in subsequent wars start to manifest themselves at Shanghai. Halfway through the battle to get the air forces and the army and the imperial Japanese navy to cooperate with the ground, the commanding general Matsui of the Japanese force has to sit down with the admirals and negotiate an agreement between the air forces and the ground forces stipulating what the air forces will do for the ground forces and what they get in return for it. Imagine having to negotiate an agreement like that in the middle of a battle. But he does it, and it works. The air forces instantly want to fly inland and bomb cities, bomb airfields, which have absolutely no impact whatsoever on the outcome for the Battle for Shanghai, which is critical. So he's got to bring them back, and they do that. He finally takes the fifteen tanks that he's got, and he puts them literally in the spearheads of his advancing forces, he links them to aircraft, and he executes what we later call some form of blitzkrieg against the Chinese. And he's able to gain a lot of ground remarkably quickly. You would think that this had a profound impact. It doesn't. It wins the battle, it breaks through the Chinese, but the lesson of what has been done on the ground at Shanghai is ignored in the Imperial Japanese Army, and they go back to business as usual. And that's one of the reasons that the battle instead of looking like WWII tends to look a lot like WWI. And the other tragedy of this battle is that Matsui, interestingly enough, was a devout Buddhist who thought he was going to liberate China, not invade it, and he is later hanged for the atrocities in Nanking with which he had no direct contact. And he takes the blame because a member of the Japanese Imperial family is actually the commander on the ground at Nanking, and they can't afford to execute a member of the imperial family. Japan doesn't change anything until '42 and '43. They go back to minister of defense Huguaki, and they begin to implement his reforms from 1929, '30, and '31; it's too late. And ultimately they pay a terrible price in 1945 when the Soviet armies who are fully modernized and released from the west come in and annihilate the Japanese forces in Manchuria and Korea. Army group center is extremely important for us today, those of us who are in uniform because we see things that happen on the Soviet side that are evidence for what will dominate battlefields in the future. The Soviets do an excellent job of integrating intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance from the air once again with their strike assets, their artillery, but this time masses and masses of rockets, masses of guns, masses of aircraft are all organized and used as essentially a sledgehammer at will. And what's impressive about it is the speed with which the Soviets are able to mobilize this striking power and use it at will. And it wasn't until I had finished really all of my research looking at the impact of this operation on the development and commanding control of Soviet forces that I realized how far behind we were in 1944 and '45 when it comes to these things. We had a situation not very different from the German armed forces under Hitler with various commanders and various branches of the service fighting with each other for prominence, for control, for command, and for resources. All of that was completely absent on the Soviet side, and there's a reason for that. They very nearly lost their country completely. And so you get this absolute ironclad

integration of everything from the top to the bottom, and you have one man in command at every level. So when during the course of this battle where you have 1.2 million Soviet soldiers just in the attacking echelon, there are three million, another two million behind them, but 1.2 million--these were tanks, assault guns, and infantry. When they attack they have all of this firepower being marshaled at their disposal. Now having said all of that, what's impressive about the battle is that on the day of the battle in June of 1944 there are only 110,000 German soldiers in the forward positions facing the Soviets. Well, what had happened? Well Adolph Hitler of course had divined that there would be no attack there. He had said repeatedly it will come from the Ukraine even though the Germans from private all the way up through general had repeatedly reported the buildup in front of them in White Russia. Made no difference. Hitler said, "No that's a faint. They're going to attack through Ukraine." The whole deceptive program did not fool anybody except Adolf Hitler. Everyone else knew exactly what was happening. I couldn't prove it, but when I went through the daily journal of the German general staff and especially or army group center--I tried to find evidence for it. I couldn't find it, but I think that the commanders at the time in the field, who normally would have had about 3 to 400,000 troops at the time in army group center, had decided that the disaster was coming, they wouldn't be allowed to reposition, they wouldn't be allowed to move their forces. And so I think they let a lot of people go home on leave knowing full well that if they didn't they were probably going to be killed. But the interesting part is that even though there were only 110,000 German soldiers in these forward defenses, ultimately the Soviets lose 440,000 men trying to break through them. And there you see once again the criticality of this human capital. The German soldier thinks, and when the German soldier sees that it makes no sense to be where he is, that he needs to move, he moves. His officers think. And as communications break down during the battle the Germans actually begin to perform infinitely better. But of course their position is hopeless. They don't have the fuel for it. They can't keep a plane in the air for more than an hour or two. And the Soviets win a dramatic victory that puts them within three hundred miles of Berlin, and in a position to seize Berlin far, far earlier than we could. The 73 War and the Egyptian counter, or the Israeli counter attack across the Suez. I told you earlier about Sadat's achievement, and it is a brilliant achievement that no one should undervalue. He got more out of the Egyptian army than anyone thought was ever possible. And when this battle ends and the Israelis have actually crossed the Suez Canal at multiple points, there are still almost 90,000 Egyptian troops holding fast in their defensive positions on the other side of the Suez. It is a marvelous achievement, but the problem is that the Egyptian can only defend statically. The Egyptian cannot maneuver, and the Egyptian cannot respond to what is unexpected. And the unexpected is exactly what the Israelis are extraordinarily good at, because as you look at--just as the Germans could move and think and act and respond quickly, so too do the Israelis. And the battles that result in the crossing of the Suez are not won by the generals. Indeed the generals do a fine job. They are won by the Israeli soldiers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, majors, and lieutenant colonels, who die in great numbers by the way in massive tank battles--tank battles involving hundreds of tanks on each side, sometimes firing at each other at almost point blank range. But the Israelis prevail because they have this culture of innovation and improvisation. If it doesn't work stop doing it and find another way. And that is the watchword inside the Israeli defense force, and they take terrible losses at the beginning because they were completely unprepared for this air defense umbrella over this enormous defense position on the other side of the Suez. And as a result they lose hundreds of tanks, they lose a lot of aircraft. They stop, they fall back, and they start talking about what has happened, and they begin to put together new tactics, new approaches that will work. And there's a wonderful example. On young

battalion commander, he had about three hundred men in his reconnaissance battalion. His name is Lieutenant Colonel Brohm. Unfortunately he did not survive the war. But once the Egyptians have established themselves he manages to find a seam between two Egyptian armies, he moves down that seam all the way to the Suez Canal and finds a potential crossing site that is completely unoccupied. And he manages to get in and to get out without ever being detected. That turns out to be the game changer. That becomes the crossing site. That is where the Israelis concentrate their effort. The outcome of course is a dramatic crossing and the complete collapse of the Egyptian command structure because the Egyptian command structure finds out twenty-four hours after the Israelis have actually crossed the canal that the Israelis are over the canal. They begin to get reports of tanks and long-range Israeli artillery destroying air defense twenty-four hours after the Israelis have crossed. The lines of communication have completely collapsed. And when the Egyptian air force tries to intervene of course it's shot out of the sky. But the Egyptians make an interesting decision. They make the decision to stand firm, to hold what they've got, and that turns out to be a good decision because once the conflict ends with the intervention of the United States and the Soviet Union, the Egyptians are able to hold on to territory and insist on the return of the Sinai. And the outcome is actually a very good one in the history of warfare because both sides get something they wanted. The Israelis wanted a secure border with Egypt, and the Egyptians wanted the return of the Sinai for reasons of their national honor. So it's a very positive thing. The last battle, the 73 Easting. And I've got to tell you, the 73 Easting is an interesting one because I think it shows the American soldier at his best. Just as we've talked about the brilliant performance of the individual German soldier, the Israeli soldier, the American soldier in the 73 Easting turns in an exceptional performance. And I want to give you a quick insight into the American soldier and his mentality. Shortly before we deployed to the border with Saudi Arabia and then began our invasion if you will of Iraq, we were much deeper inside Saudi Arabia, but we had sent one troop up to the border with Saudi Arabia and Iraq. This was called Ghost Troop, G-Troop. There are some members of Ghost Troop in the audience by the way who were there with me. And ghost troop has the mission to defend this log base and to defend the--along the border. All of a sudden I am awakened. I think I was trying to get some sleep. It was in the evening, about eighth or nine o'clock at night. And one of the NCOs said, "The duty officer wants you to come over to the tactical operation center right away." This is a couple of weeks before we actually went into Iraq. And I walked in there, I said, "What's going on?" "Well, the squadron's on alert. We have information that Ghost Troop is under artillery fire. I alerted regiment." Well, suddenly the entire 2nd Armored Cavalry battle group, which was about almost five thousand in the regiment plus a reinforcing artillery brigade, some seven thousand--everyone is up, everyone's mounted, vehicles are running, and into the headquarters, or this tactical operation center, walks in a noncommissioned officer. He happened to be my master gunner. And he said, "What's going on?" And so the duty officer said, "Sergeant, you know, we have a report here that says Ghost Troop is taking artillery fire up on the border with Saudi Arabian." And he said, "Oh, so we all want to rush right up there and get under it with them? That doesn't make a lot of sense." And of course it didn't make any sense. So I said, "Well, wait a minute. Show me the original report." And the original report came in as follows. I have air to ground bombs at my location. So I thought this is rather odd. I have never heard of bombs that did not fall from the air to the ground. Are there ground-to-air bombs? I've only heard of air-to-ground bombs. Well you can bet what had happened. This poor guy--and this is--remember people are nervous, everyone's green. There's only one man in my 1,100-man battle group that had actually seen action in Vietnam, and he's my operation sergeant major, a tall, distinguished black man named Catchings. None of us

had really seen action before, and so it's natural--he had seen these flares coming out of A-10s as they were flying over Kuwait and Iraq--and Saudi Arabia, and he thought, "Well, these are bombs." And of course they were there to confuse the enemy's air defenses. But that's the sort of thing that inevitably happens in every war. But the key thing here is that when we finally closed with the enemy, the level of training was excellent, the quality of equipment was first-rate, but the intelligence of the individual soldier was decisive. Units in battle have to be self-organizing. They can't be micromanaged. I know you've seen the movies, and you've seen somebody who sort of stands there and drops his sword and everybody attacks. Everything looks controlled. Forget it. Once you issue the order, "Advance", which I did, you're out of control. You have to depend on everyone at every level to think and execute the battle drill, execute the mission. And the one thing I did, once we went into the attack was stop it at about thirty minutes, maybe twenty to thirty minutes into the attack. And the reason I stopped it was that we--I looked up, and there was nothing there anymore to shoot at. And so then I began to worry, "Where are we?" And so I got on, I said, "battle stations, battle stations, this is Cougar Three. Halt. I say again, halt all operations." And so this juggernaut of 1,100 men, forty-two tanks, forty-two Bradleys, eight guns, stopped. Boom. And then I said, "Find out where we are." Because it's a desert. There are no road signs out there. There are no little towns. And it took some time. We--this was the beginnings of global positioning satellites. A scout called in and said, "These are the coordinates." And we discovered that we were about 7.4. Eventually it was 7.38, almost 7.4, this north/south gridline. We at that point were about four kilometers--two and a half to three miles beyond the limit of advance that the regiment had set for us. And subsequently I was told to withdraw, and I became very irate, refused to go back. The deputy regimental commander told me that we could stay; we stayed. So we struck an annihilating blow, and we discovered that this was the republican guard, but ladies and gentlemen it was the rear guard because we had been held back so long for so many days that the main body of the Republican guard corps, a force of over 80,000, had already left. They had escaped over the Euphrates. And instead of allowing us to pursue at that point, we were told, "stand by and wait for the divisions to catch up with you." Of course this was five-thirty in the evening, and the divisions did not begin to reach us until after midnight. And what they shot and what they found was in most cases abandoned equipment and very few troops, because again the one thing that was important in this war, the Republican Guard Corps, the foundation for Saddam Hussein's regime, had largely escaped. And that's why this is called the Lost Victory. That's one reason: because no one in Washington had thought carefully through this business of what's the purpose of the operation, how are we going to execute it, and what do we want it to look like when it ends. And this is the theme through all of these battles; no one bothers to sit down and systematically ask those questions. And when you fail to do that you end up in places like Stalingrad. You look around and say, "Now what? What's the point?" The Japanese ended up mired in China, and we ended up on the Euphrates River watching as the Republican Guard on the other side slaughtered the rebels trying to overthrow Saddam Hussein. The ceasefire comes along, and Norman Schwarzkopf--as I recollect he said he had the IQ of a genius--wrote out the terms that he was going to impose on the enemy and sent them back to Washington. The state department reviewed it; the Pentagon reviewed it, the White House reviewed it. No one changed a word. Nothing. He got no guidance. They said, "That's fine." And of course we know the rest of the story. The republican guard had not been destroyed, Saddam Hussein was not going to be overthrown, and so subsequently President Bush then begins his process of encouraging Shiites and Kurds to openly rebel, and they are slaughtered in great numbers as a result. But the official story is we never meant to change regimes in Iraq.

We never meant to remove Saddam Hussein. But at the end of the process all of us said in twelve years we'll be back. But the bigger picture of what happens in Desert Storm is suddenly this piece that you saw in 1914 with the Germans and the aircraft and the smoke and the conductivity back to the artillery now becomes a machine on a scale that we can't even begin to imagine. And that is what shapes the battle today. That is what shapes warfare today. It is this revolution of intelligence, surveillance, and strike, the marriage of the two, the rapidity with which that strike can be directed with absolute accuracy and precision on the basis of that information, and that changes everything. We have not faced it. We own it, but we are no longer the sole proprietors. That capability now also resides with the Russians, with the Chinese, increasingly with the Iranians, and we are going to see it proliferate in unmanned and manned form. So there we have it in a nutshell. You all made it through this far, so I hope you have lots of questions. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

1: Sir, what was more effective for the Great Army--the artillery or the Katyusha rockets, which the Germans called Stalinorgel?

Macgregor: You know, I don't know that I could distinguish it. The rockets were always effective because they terrorized the troops that were opposing them. If you were caught in the open they did a lot of damage. If you were in a dug-in position or in an armored vehicle, less damage obviously. The artillery was effective with the rockets because they were able to concentrate great numbers and deliver it within a small area. That's one--that was really the essence of the Soviet achievement. By the way the Germans were the ones from whom the Soviets took the inspiration to do that 'cause the Germans had achieved that by the end of WWI.

2: Would a good strategic goal be simply that a lot of these countries should not be used as a base for attack against the United States or any of the western democratic countries as a sanctuary? That's really--should that really be our strategic goal in these wars?

Macgregor: Well, that was allegedly a goal in 2001 in Afghanistan. We have to go in there to prevent this from being used as a base, but what people don't realize is that experienced central intelligence agency operatives who had spent years in Pakistan and Afghanistan advised us that for a good practical amount of gold that the Taliban would help sell Osama bin Laden and his friend set us. We chose not to do that. We chose to essentially do the opposite of what the British did. When the British ruled this empire with very few people, a quarter of the world's land mass and population, they were very successful, but they always practiced economy of enemies. Don't fight anyone you don't have to fight. We did the opposite. Don't you remember, you're with us or against us? No one bothered to consider the possibility of you're with us or you're neutral or you don't matter, because we hadn't very narrowly defined the enemy. Had we done that I think we would have been successful and out of Afghanistan in short order. There is nothing in Afghanistan.

3: You said that the Japanese army didn't really decide to take in the reforms until like '42 and '43, but they did lose pretty badly to the Russians in 1940. So do you think that--what do you think spurs on, like, change to create these reforms? Does it take just a ton of defeats, or is there something greater than spurs on these changes?

Macgregor: You've asked the 90,000-dollar question. If we only had the answer. Normally significant losses, significant defeat is the principle catalyst for change unfortunately. There are exceptions. In the case of the Japanese in 1939 the battle that you're referring to, they lost to the Russians, but the Japanese air force shot the Russian--Soviet air force out of the air. Very few people know that. The problem was that it didn't make any difference how good the Japanese pilots were in their aircraft; the

Japanese army was an infantry-centric army. They had very few tanks, very few large caliber guns, and what they did have was old. It was sort of post-WWI vintage. Nothing new. The Soviets rolled in there with very modern equipment by the standards of the day, and they smashed the army on the ground. They lost the battle in the air. Now after that happened there was the decision--"Well, we'll stop--we'll give up this idea of conquering eastern Siberia for a while," which was really the Japanese agenda, "and we'll move south into the Pacific where we have lots of weak opponents." And so Japan spreads across the Pacific where she does in fact have weak opponents. And this illusion of literary supremacy, the illusion of great power persists. And the consequences for Japan are catastrophic.

Clarke: Thank you very much.

Macgregor: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

Clarke: Thank you to Douglas Macgregor for an outstanding discussion and to the United States Naval Institute for sponsoring this program. The book is *Margin of Victory: Five Battles That Changed the Face of Modern War*, published by the Naval Institute Press. To learn more about our sponsor, visit usni.org. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

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(Theme music)

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