A Unique Hell in Southwestern Virginia: Confederate Guerrillas and the Defense of the
Virginia and Tennessee Railroad

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ABSTRACT

During the United States Civil War, southwestern Virginia was mired in a bloody
guerrilla conflict that involved Confederate irregular combatants defending the region
from invading or raiding Union Army forces. Simmering for the entirety of the war, this
conflict revolved around the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (V&T), a critical railway
that ran through southwestern Virginia and connected the southwestern Confederacy with
Richmond and the rest of Virginia. As the war progressed, this railway moved
increasingly large amounts of foodstuffs and minerals vital to the Confederate war effort,
and by the later stages of the war it was the most important railway in the South.

Union Army commanders in West Virginia recognized the incredible importance
of the V&T to the Confederacy, and launched a multitude of major and minor invasions
and raids into southwestern Virginia with the intent of crippling the railroad. Confederate
partisan rangers, bushwhackers, and home guards played separate roles in weakening,
distracting, and hampering Union Army operations in southwestern Virginia, thereby
helping to defend the V&T from attacks. Their actions played a crucial role in ensuring
the survival of the railroad until nearly the end of the war, and thus Confederate guerrillas
had a strategic effect on the course of the war in southwestern Virginia.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

During the United States Civil War, Confederate guerrillas in southwestern Virginia played a critical role in the defense of the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (V&T) in southwestern Virginia. The V&T ran from Bristol, Tennessee to Lynchburg, Virginia, and connected the fertile fields and mines of southwestern Virginia and the southwestern Confederacy with the rest of Virginia. The railroad proved to be one of the most critical transportation assets in the entire Confederacy, and thus it attracted the attention of Union armies in West Virginia who consistently tried to attack and cripple the railroad throughout the course of the war. Confederate guerrillas weakened, distracted, and hampered Union Army operations in southwestern Virginia, thereby helping to defend the V&T from assaults and enabling the railroad to survive until almost the very end of the conflict.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family for their constant love, support, and prayers during this project, and the United States Air Force Academy History Department for sponsoring me to come to Virginia Tech's Graduate School.

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The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

Introduction

Driving through southwestern Virginia is a particularly delightful experience for motorists cruising down the region's roads and highways. The area's curving and climbing roads reward motorists with sweeping vistas of lush valley floors, thickly wooded mountain slopes, and hazy distant mountain ranges that seductively invite drivers to turn off onto a dirt road and search for a secluded corner of the Appalachian Mountains. However, the beautiful and peaceful landscape of southwestern Virginia masks a violent Civil War history as important as that of the oft-studied eastern areas of the state. Although Civil War historians have explored most every battle and skirmish that occurred during the bloody conflict, few scholars have written about the Civil War in southwestern Virginia. This is understandable, since no sixty-thousand man armies tramped through this region, engaging in titanic battles that continue to capture the imagination of readers today. Put simply, the Civil War in northern and eastern Virginia outshined the conflict in southwestern Virginia, stealing historians' and popular audiences' attentions.

However, the mountains and valley of southwestern Virginia contained a brutal conflict that proved critical to the survival of Virginia during the Civil War. This was because an absolutely crucial railroad running from Bristol, Tennessee to Lynchburg, Virginia defined the conflict in the area.[1] Named the Virginia and Tennessee Railroad (V&T), this railway proved to be one of the most important transportation assets in the entire Confederacy for two reasons. First, it connected Virginia with the southwestern Confederacy. Although the V&T ended at Bristol, other railroads continued from there

[1] W.W. Blackford, "Map & profile of the Virginia & Tennessee Rail Road," map, Library of Congress, 1856.

farther into Tennessee, linking states like Alabama and Missouri to Virginia.[2] Second, the V&T also connected the productive fields, pastures, and mines of southwestern Virginia with Confederate forces and civilian populations throughout Virginia and the Upper South. Southwestern foodstuffs, livestock, and horses helped keep Confederate forces fed and fighting. The region's productive salt, lead, niter, and coal mines also supplied critical raw materials to factories that kept Confederate armies supplied with ammunition, weapons, and salted rations. These mines depended on the V&T to move their products to customers and factories throughout the South.

Southwestern Virginia's mineral and agricultural wealth meant that the region rivaled the famous Shenandoah Valley, the "Breadbasket of the Confederacy," in importance. As the war progressed, the Confederacy became increasingly dependent on the V&T, and southwestern Virginia's mines. Advancing Union armies captured mines throughout the South, leaving southwestern Virginia as one of the largest producers of lead, salt, and niter in the entire Confederacy. The V&T became an indispensable support element of the Confederate war effort, even as the railroad's materials and operators became increasingly worn-out. It is telling that President Abraham Lincoln himself once called the railroad the "gut of the Confederacy."[3]

However, the ever increasing strategic importance of the V&T to the Confederacy acted as a "pull factor" for Union troops in southern West Virginia, drawing their attention and efforts to southwestern Virginia. Starting as early as 1861, Union commanders in West Virginia sought to push south and destroy the railroad. Although Confederate defenders stymied Union commanders' early plans to invade deep into

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[2] Kenneth Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional* Crisis (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 111.
[3] Ibid., 112.

southwestern Virginia, by 1863, Union officers were launching raids into the region with the goal of tearing-up the V&T's tracks, burning its depots and bridges, and severing this productive region from the rest of the Confederacy.

Unfortunately for Union soldiers, their invasions caused Confederate civilians to take up arms in defense of their homes in southwestern Virginia, creating a large group of disparate guerrillas who operated amidst the region's rough topography. This thesis will argue that many of these guerrillas worked alongside Confederate Army soldiers to defend southwestern Virginia. Groups of partisan rangers, bushwhackers, and home guards harassed Union forces, guarded vulnerable mountain passes and roads, and providing military intelligence for Confederate army commanders. Their actions forced Union commanders to adopt new tactics and objectives and to constantly disperse their forces to fight a never-ending guerrilla war in southwestern Virginia. Moreover, this guerrilla war distracted Union officers from massing their forces and accomplishing their goals of destroying the V&T and the region's mines. Confederate guerrillas' constant harassment degraded, and sometimes severed, Union Army lines of communication and supply, and hampered soldiers' ability to travel safely throughout southern West Virginia and southwestern Virginia.

Along with analyzing guerrillas, this thesis will further argue for the importance of the V&T to the Confederacy by revealing how truly massive was the amount of foodstuffs, livestock, and minerals the V&T transported from southwestern Virginia to Confederate forces elsewhere. Using freight receipts and annual reports from the V&T, this thesis will prove that the V & T was one of the most important railroads in the entire Confederacy. Moreover, context for these railroad statistics will supplement these sources

and reveal how the railroad's tonnages of transported foodstuffs comprised a large percentage of Confederate armies' food requirements.

This thesis will explore multiple questions about the role of guerrillas in southwestern Virginia. First, at a tactical level, how did Confederate guerrillas participate in the defense of southwestern Virginia, and how effective were their military efforts? Second, how did Confederate guerrilla actions affect and shape Union Army operations and objectives in southwestern Virginia? Third, how did Confederate government and army officials view guerillas in the region, and how did they incorporate these warriors into their official plans for defending the region?

Despite southwestern Virginia guerrillas' importance, many historians of the Civil War in the region have discounted their military efficacy and relegated them largely to footnotes. This is a mistake, for Union and Confederate sources reveal that the guerrillas seriously degraded invading Union Army forces' war-making capabilities. Furthermore, studying guerrillas provides historians with insight into Confederate plans for the defense of southwestern Virginia and a better understanding of the challenges and limitations with which Confederate decision makers had to grapple while trying to organize the defense of the Old Dominion State. Focusing on guerrillas in southwestern Virginia also provides historians with a more realistic understanding of how conventional and unconventional warfare easily mixed during the Civil War, and, in contrast to previous historians' scholarship, reveals that Confederate guerrillas and conventional soldiers often operated closely together.

Writing about southwestern Virginia during the Civil War is potentially difficult since the borders of Virginia changed during the course of the war. Although Confederate

citizens did not recognize West Virginia as an independent state, by 1863 West Virginia had formally established its independence from the rest of Virginia in the eyes of the United States Government.[4] However, an exploration of the Civil War in southwestern Virginia which did not include the southern portion of West Virginia would be flawed. Many of the counties in southern West Virginia were politically and military connected to counties in southwestern Virginia, and the Confederate soldiers and guerrillas that fought in this region cared little about the formal borders of a state that they refused to recognize. Thus, this thesis employs the definition of southwestern Virginia that the Virginia Legislature formally adopted in 1860. Kenneth Noe uses this definition of southwestern Virginia in his book, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis*, and it is an effective way of delineating the region.[5] This definition includes the following Virginia counties: Buchanan, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Lee, Montgomery, Pulaski, Russell, Scott, Smyth, Tazewell, Washington, Wise, and Wythe. It also includes some counties that now reside in West Virginia: Boone, Fayette, Greenbrier, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Raleigh, and Wyoming.[6] This definition of southwestern Virginia delineated a region that included the "toe" of Virginia and the southern portion of West Virginia. The counties of this region share similar topography and demographic patterns, and the Civil War in this region was defined by the importance of the V&T.

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[4] Ibid., 130.
[5] Ibid., 10.
[6] Ibid., 10.

Southwestern Virginia is the outlined region

The V&T defined the war in southwestern Virginia by serving as a "pull" factor for Union armies, attracting Yankee forces into the region despite the inherent challenges of living and campaigning in this section of Virginia. The rough terrain and lack of roads strained Union Army logistical efforts and complicated almost every aspect of Union commanders' operations. However, West Virginia Union Army leaders were acutely aware of the V&T's critical importance to the Confederacy. If they could destroy the V&T, they could cut Virginia's link to the southwestern Confederacy, and sever northern and eastern Virginia's connections to the vital mines and fields of the southwestern portion of the state. The V&T proved too important to the Confederacy for Union armies in West Virginia to overlook, and thus a series of Union commanders attempted to invade

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[7] Michael Doran, *Atlas of County Boundary Changes in Virginia, 1634-1895* (Rockville, MD: Borgo Press, 1987), 51. The author added the black outline of southwestern Virginia.

and raid southwestern Virginia with the intent of destroying the V&T. The existence of significant numbers of Union and Confederate soldiers in southwestern Virginia largely resulted from Union Army commanders' desires to destroy the railroad, and thus the war in southwestern Virginia revolved around the V&T.

Before delving into the critical role of guerrillas in this region, it is important to understand what the term guerrilla means.[8] A guerrilla during the Civil War was someone who fought outside the ranks and formal hierarchy of the military. Guerrillas largely traveled and fought wherever they pleased and often stole from civilians in order to support their lifestyle. They rarely wore uniforms or abided by the rules of war, rules that the Union Army leadership formalized partly to help commanders combat guerrillas.

The Union army's establishment of formal rules of war proved significant in its fight against guerrillas, for it provided Union commanders with legal parameters within which they could decide how harshly they wanted to prosecute their battle against irregular combatants. Before the Civil War, eighteenth and nineteenth century armies in the western world largely obeyed unwritten guidelines for war. These wide-ranging rules demanded that combatants treat enemy prisoners humanely, respect civilians' lives and property, abide by truces, and allow defeated enemies to collect their wounded and dead after battles. During the Civil War, Union commanders realized they needed a set of

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[8] The word "guerrillas" will be used throughout this paper to refer to irregular warriors, or anyone who fights in an irregular or unconventional manner. The word originated as the Spanish term for a paramilitary fighter during the Peninsular War (1808-1814) in which Napoléon Bonaparte invaded Spain. In response to the brutal French invasion, many Spaniards rose up in armed revolt. They avoided meeting French troops in conventional battle, and instead chose to employ unconventional tactics such as raids and ambushes. The word "guerrilla" is the diminutive of the Spanish word "guerra," which means war; thus, "guerrilla" literally means "little war," or a war different from the large scale conventional combat of the Napoleonic Wars. The term became common during the nineteenth century, and thus Civil War soldiers and civilians used the term to describe anyone who employed unconventional tactics. Richard Shelly Hartigan*, Lieber's Code and the Law of War* (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, 1983), 31-3; Geoffrey Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe: 1770-1870* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 168-180.

written rules that could provide them guidance on confusing subjects such as what types of soldiers and civilians comprised legitimate and illegitimate targets, and how soldiers should treat the property of Confederate civilians.

Of particular importance to commanders seeking legal guidance was the issue of guerrillas. Although guerrillas cared little about the legality or morality of their operations, Union commanders could not as easily disregard widespread Victorian-era notions of lawful warfighting, and thus commanders such as General Henry Halleck sought legal rules of war for the Union army. One of the most important collections of rules for combat was Lieber's Code. After assuming the position of general-in-chief of Union armies in 1862, Halleck requested that Francis Lieber, a prestigious legal scholar, provide guidance on a variety of complex warfighting subjects, including Union army treatment of escaped slaves and Confederate guerrillas. Lieber responded with a report titled, "Guerilla Parties Considered With Reference to the Laws and Usages of War."[9] Halleck quickly realized the usefulness of this report and convened a board of officers to revise the document and convert it into a military order. Once the board made its changes, President Lincoln signed the new report, titled General Order No. 100, and Halleck disseminated copies throughout the Union army.[10]

General Order No. 100 was a comprehensive set of rules of war for the Union Army that covered everything from martial law to assassinations. However, one of its most important contributions to Union commanders was its guidance on the subject of guerrillas. Lieber provided specific regulations for dealing with different types of guerrillas, and employed the terms, "partisans, armed enemies not belonging to the

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[9] Hartigan, *Lieber's Code*, 1-3, 9.
[10] Ibid., 1.

hostile enemy, scouts, armed prowlers, and war rebels," to delineate the various types of guerrillas[11] He advised, with the exception of partisans, that none were "entitled to the privileges of prisoners of war," and in the cases of scouts and war rebels, should be killed.[12] Thus, General Order No. 100 provided Union commanders with the latitude they needed to tailor harsh policies towards guerrillas.

Lieber chose only four different terms to define the various types of guerrillas, but the term guerrilla is broad and included a number of different types of warriors during the Civil War. Although there are many different types of guerrillas, this thesis will only explore three types of guerrillas.

The first type of guerrillas in this thesis are partisan rangers. Among all guerrillas, they were the most formally organized, and most military-like in their actions. In 1862, the Confederate government passed the Partisan Ranger Act that enabled the Confederate states to raise a limited number of partisan ranger companies.[13] This act enabled partisan ranger companies to operate independently of the Confederate Army, however it did require each company to maintain contact with a unit in the Confederate Army, thus providing the Confederate Army a modicum of formal military control over these partisan rangers. Unfortunately for the Confederate government, some partisan ranger companies reveled in their freedom and maintained no connection with the Confederate Army. However, partisan ranger companies' lack of discipline worried Confederate authorities and in early 1864, the Confederate government repealed the Partisan Ranger

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[11] Ibid., 60-61.
[12] Ibid., 60.
[13] Barton A. Myers, *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community, 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 44.

Act and called for partisan rangers to enlist in the Confederate Army. Most partisan

rangers ignored this order and continued to fight as guerrillas until the end of the war.[14]

Despite some partisan rangers' lack of discipline, most partisan rangers employed

similar tactics and completed like missions. They often operated behind enemy lines,

disrupting enemy lines of communication and supply convoys. They operated on

horseback, and relied on audacity, skillful shooting, and fleet horses to surprise,

overwhelm, and then escape the enemy. Partisans' horses allowed them to travel quickly

and evade Union infantry and rangers' mobility enabled them to execute missions that

Confederate infantry could not effectively complete. For example, Confederate partisan

rangers scouted and supplied intelligence to conventional Confederate forces, and

provided reconnaissance-in-force capabilities. These two missions were different, but

both provided Confederate Army officers with information on the location and strength

of the enemy. Thurmond's Battalion, a partisan ranger unit in southwestern Virginia, was

particularly skilled at providing intelligence for Confederate army units as their

familiarity with local topography enabled them to shadow Union Army columns,

collecting information about troop numbers and movements. [15]

Besides providing intelligence, larger partisan bands could execute

reconnaissance-in-force operations that involved first scouting enemy units, and then

brief probing attacks against the enemy lines. Reconnaissance-in-force operations were

not designed to destroy the enemy, but instead helped partisans understand how an enemy

commander had arranged his units, where the enemy lines were weakest, and how

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[14] Ibid., 122.

[15] Jeffrey C. Weaver, *Thurmond's Partisan Rangers and Swann's Battalion of Virginia Cavalry* (Lynchburg, Virginia: H.E. Howard Inc., 1993), 43.

aggressively the enemy reacted to attacks. The term reconnaissance-in-force is a modern term, however it applies well to partisan rangers' activities and is thus useful for describing their actions.

The second type of guerrillas were the Confederate home guards. These guerrillas occupied dual roles in Confederate communities. First, they served as police who ensured the loyalty of Confederate citizens and hunted runaway slaves. Second, and more importantly for this paper, they served as militiamen who could quickly respond to the threat of a Union attack. Sometimes they fought as conventional infantry and some home guards participated in the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain and the defense of Saltville in 1864. However, since they often lacked the numbers and weapons to resist Union invaders with conventional tactics, sometimes they employed hit-and-run guerrilla warfare tactics. They harassed Union troop columns on roads by shooting at them from behind trees and attacking isolated groups of troops. Once the Union threat passed, they would return to their homes. Although their militia-like nature separated them from other types of irregular fighters, their hit-and-run tactics meant that they were sometimes guerrillas.

The third type of guerrillas were bushwhackers. This term is very loose, and many Confederate and Union civilians and soldiers employed the word as a derogative. It referred to any man who "whacked," or killed, the enemy from the "bush," or the woods. Many bushwhackers were simply civilians who operated as opportunistic sharpshooters. They hid in woods beside roads, took shots at Union troops marching on the road, and then fled into the trees. The term also covers civilians who attacked Union pickets at night, when the cloak of darkness complicated Union soldiers' efforts to respond to a

single rifle shot in the dark. Bushwhackers often operated alone, and sought no greater objective than to kill Union soldiers. The cowardly nature of bushwhackers' tactics meant that Union troops hated them.[16]

Confederate civilians also used the term bushwhackers to refer to all manner of violent and desperate men who lived on the fringes of southern society. These desperate men included bands of Confederate and Union army deserters and criminals who preyed on civilians and lived in hideouts in woods, swamps, or mountains. However, since these bands cared about little more than looting civilians and avoiding Confederate and Union authorities, this paper will not include these men in the definition of bushwhackers. Moreover, many home guards acted very similar to bushwhackers, as both types of guerrillas ambushed Union troops and fled before their enemies could respond. This makes it is very difficult to distinguish between the actions of home guards and bushwhackers, and thus the term home guards will only be used when there is strong evidence that home guards were involved in an attack.

Although partisan rangers, home guards, and bushwhackers all helped to defend the V&T, they did so in different ways. Partisan rangers directly defended the railroad by serving with the Confederate Army, either on detached, semi-independent service or as a formal part of a Confederate commanders' unit roster. Since Confederate Army commanders' main objectives included defending the V&T, partisan rangers' actions were often directly dedicated to defending the railroad. In contrast to partisan rangers, bushwhackers did not work with the Confederate Army and there is little evidence that they explicitly fought to defend the V&T. However, by attacking and harassing Union troops in southwestern Virginia, they weakened Union forces and degraded their ability

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[16] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroads*, 119.

to attack the railroad. Thus, bushwhackers indirectly defended the V&T. Finally, home guards both directly and indirectly defended the railroad. Home guards who defended their homes in counties far from the railroad tracks acted much like bushwhackers in that their actions weakened Union forces and indirectly defended the railroad. However, in other cases, home guard units joined the Confederate Army on the battlefield to halt Union Army raids against the railroad, and thus they sometimes directly defended the V&T.

Few historians have written about guerrillas in southwestern Virginia and this thesis seeks to extend the burgeoning field of guerrilla warfare studies into southwestern Virginia. This paper echoes some of the questions that historians in this field have been asking for over two decades, questions like: How did the Confederate government incorporate guerrillas into their defense plans? How effective could they be against concerted Union Army attacks? How did Confederate guerrillas and Confederate army soldiers interact and could they effectively fight together?

This thesis will also extend the horizons of the field of guerrilla warfare history by connecting the military actions of guerrillas in southwestern Virginia to the defense of the V&T. No historian has explored in sufficient depth how the guerrilla conflict that simmered in this area affected the Union Army's efforts to destroy the V&T. Although scholars have explored hundreds of guerrilla bands that operated throughout the Confederacy, few have analyzed guerrillas who helped defend strategic assets like the V&T.[17] While defending the V&T, many partisan rangers worked closely with the

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[17] Historians who have studied guerrillas and their attacks on railroads include Jeffry Wert in *Mosby's Rangers* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990); James A. Ramage in *Rebel Raider: The Life of General John Hunt Morgan* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1986); and Virgil Carrington Jones in *Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders* (N.p.: Owl Publications Inc., 1956). These authors all focused on

Confederate Army, thus eroding the common idea that guerrillas only operated on the fringes of the Confederate Army. This thesis will prove that guerrillas worked both independently of, and in coordination with, the Confederate Army in southwestern Virginia to defend the region and its railroad from Union invasions and raids.

As this thesis connects the actions of Confederate guerrillas to the defense of the V&T, it is contributing to a field that has expanded quickly in the past four decades. Starting in the 1950s, a handful of historians produced works about irregular combatants in Virginia and Missouri, two hotbeds of guerrilla warfare. These included Virgil Carrington Jones' *Gray Ghosts and Rebel Raiders* and Colonel Carl Grant's article, "Partisan Warfare: Model 1861-1865."[18] Since then the field has steadily grown. The rise of social history in the 1960s and 70s strongly influenced the field as Civil War historians realized that studying guerrillas offered scholars with opportunities to explore civilians and marginalized people who lived and fought away from the oft-studied battles of the Civil War. Albert Castel's *William Clarke Quantrill: His Life and Times* and Stephen Starr's *Jennison's Jayhawkers: A Civil War Cavalry Regiment and its Commander* represent the expanding horizons of the field because both works delve into the lives of guerrilla leaders and seek to understand what societal influences and conditions led men like Quantrill and Jennison to become irregular combatants.[19] Scholarship in previous decades lacked this deep analysis of guerrillas that looked beyond military actions and sought to understand the men behind the public personas.

Confederate partisan rangers and long-range raiders who disrupted Union supply lines by destroying locomotives and tearing up train tracks.

[18] Mark Grant, "Partisan Warfare: Model 1861-186," *Military Review* 38, no. 8 (November 1958).

[19] Albert Castel, *William Clarke Quantrill: His Life and Times* (New York: Frederick Fell Publishers, 1962); Stephen Starr, *Jennison's Jayhawkers: A Civil War Cavalry Regiment and its Commander* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been decades of serious growth and change for the field as historians have studied different types of guerrilla warfare that existed throughout the Confederate States of America. Historians such as Michael Fellman in *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* and Robert R. Mackey in *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Homefront*, advanced the field by focusing attention on the effects of guerrilla warfare on civilians, and employing social history techniques to understand how soldiers, civilians, and guerrillas interacted in war zones. Historians such as Thavolia Glymph are now also studying exciting new topics such as the role that female slaves played in organizing and executing guerrilla actions in the South, while scholars like Stephen Berry explore how guerrilla warfare scholarship can alter Americans' perception of the Civil War as a successful conflict that positively impacted the U.S. [20]

Moreover, historians have revealed that the guerrilla conflict was "not a war within a war, as some historians have suggested, not even a second war, but *the* war."[21] There is a group of guerrilla warfare historians that seek to weave guerrilla warfare history into the battle-centric narrative that dominates much of Civil War history. Historians such as Daniel Sutherland in *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War*, Brian McKnight in *Confederate Outlaw: Champ Ferguson and the Civil War in Appalachia*, and Robert Mackey in *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865*, have revealed that for most southerners, guerrilla warfare was the only kind of war that they were unfortunate enough

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[20] Thavolia Glymph, "Rose's War and the Gendered Politics of a Slave Insurgency in the Civil War," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 3, no. 4 (December 2013): 501-532; Stephen Berry, ed., *Weirding the War: Stories from the Civil War's Ragged Edges* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 2011).
[21] Daniel E Sutherland, "Guerrillas: The Real War in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Association* 52, no. 3 (Autumn, 1993): 257.

to experience. [22] During the long periods of time between armies' pitched battles, guerrillas remained in combat, constantly skirmishing and ambushing and adversely affecting the lives of civilians caught in their crossfire. Moreover, historians of this trend argue that Confederate guerrillas did not just operate on the fringes of armies but often supported and fought with conventional army soldiers. These scholars contend that Civil War historians should not focus exclusively on either conventional or guerrilla warfare, but instead explore the many ways in which these two types of warfare overlapped.

This thesis will add to this trend by revealing the ways in which partisan rangers in southwestern Virginia fought with the Confederate Army, retaining their status as guerrillas yet operating under the command of Confederate Army officers. These guerrillas constantly completed reconnaissance missions and attacked Union soldiers, and they fought on a much more regular basis than the Confederate and Union armies in the area that only occasionally met in battle. Thus, most of the war in southwestern Virginia was comprised of guerrillas' actions, not pitched battles.

Within the above-mentioned group of historians, Daniel Sutherland is the best-known guerrilla warfare historian, and his book *A Savage Conflict* is one of the most comprehensive works available on guerrilla warfare in the Civil War. He examines guerrilla warfare in every theater of the Civil War, and is also able to include detailed analyses of the different guerrillas that operated throughout the South and West. Although he does explore guerrilla warfare in Appalachia, he does not delve into

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[22] Brian McKnight, *Confederate Outlaw: Champ Ferguson and the Civil War in Appalachia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Daniel E Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Brain McKnight, *Confederate Outlaw: Champ Ferguson and the Civil War in Appalachia* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Robert R Mackey, *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

southwestern Virginia and the fight for the V&T. Furthermore, most guerrilla warfare historians overlook southwestern Virginia, and thus at a basic level, this thesis seeks to expand the study of guerrilla warfare into this region.

Along with engaging with historians dedicated to weaving guerrilla warfare into mainstream Civil War history, this thesis will build upon the work of Kenneth Noe, as he is one of the foremost historians of southwestern Virginia during the 1840s through the Civil War era. His book, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad: Modernization and the Sectional Crisis*, explores the importance of the railroad to the Confederacy, and briefly analyzes the roles that guerrillas and bands of deserters in the mountains of southwestern Virginia played in destabilizing communities. Noe explores how the war in the region revolved around the fight for the V&T, and this point forms the basis for this paper's assertion that guerrillas played an important role in defending the railroad. This thesis will delve more deeply into the specifics of how guerrillas influenced the war in southwestern Virginia, and will argue that guerrillas played a more important role in the conflict than Noe and other historians have acknowledged.

This thesis also engages with a group of historians who argue that Confederate guerrillas significantly changed how the Union Army conducted military operations and viewed civilians and irregular combatants. Mark Grimsley in *Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865,* Clay Mountcastle in *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals*, and Michael Fellman in *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War*, argue that Union Army commanders in guerrilla-infested regions of the South frequently had to adopt

unique tactics to combat irregular combatants.[23] Often these tactics involved harsh actions against civilians, such as the Union forces' burning of civilians' houses and barns in western Missouri in order to destroy guerrillas' bases of support. In many cases, Confederate guerrillas so frustrated Union officers that they created unique counter-guerrilla forces and dispersed their forces among blockhouses and guard posts positioned at critical roads, bridges, and railroad depots. These authors argue that guerrillas throughout the South forced Union Army commanders to significantly change their tactics and objectives, and these changes detracted from their ability to pursue and defeat Confederate Army forces.

This scholarly trend is very applicable to the war in southwestern Virginia, and therefore this thesis adds to this historical conversation by exploring how Confederate guerrillas forced Union commanders in southwestern Virginia to take their eyes off the goal of attacking the railroad, and instead dedicate large amounts of men and materiel to counter-guerrilla operations. The measures southwestern Virginia Union Army officers took to counter irregular combatants enabled them to suppress guerrillas, but prevented the Union Army from accomplishing its mission of destroying the V&T. Thus, by shifting towards unconventional, low-intensity combat, the Union Army in southwestern Virginia became less effective in the conventional, high-intensity type of combat for which they had invaded southwestern Virginia.

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[23] Mark Grimsley, *Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy Toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Clay Mountcastle, *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009); Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Finally, Robert Whisonant's recently published book, *Arming the Confederacy: How Virginia's Minerals Forged the Rebel War Machine*, joins Noe in *Southwest Virginia's Railroad* in calling for scholars to refocus on southwestern Virginia. *Arming the Confederacy* explores the importance of southwestern Virginia's lead, niter, salt and other minerals to the Confederacy, and recognizes that the V&T played an absolutely critical role in transporting these materials to factories.[24] *Arming the Confederacy* also demands that readers look beyond the battlefields of southwestern Virginia, and examine how the existence of significant mineral wealth in the region shaped the Civil War in this area. One of the goals of this thesis is to join Noe and Whisonant in creating new scholarship about the Civil War in southwestern Virginia that reveals how crucial this region was to the war in the Upper South. Just as scholars such as Sutherland and McKnight have revealed that Civil War historians must look beyond the large battles and into the countless raids and ambushes that comprised guerrilla warfare, so does this thesis strive to prove that to understand the war in the Upper South, one must study the conflict in southwestern Virginia.

This thesis is comprised of three chapters, with the first chapter demonstrating the importance of the V&T to the Confederacy, and establishing the railroad's role as the defining factor in the conflict for southwestern Virginia. Chapter two reveals how Confederate Army commanders widely employed guerrillas to execute unique missions that conventional forces could not as easily accomplish. Despite their widespread use, guerrillas' effectiveness in southwestern Virginia was largely not recognized by the Confederate government. Chapter three examines the guerrilla war in the region from the

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[24] Robert C. Whisonant, *Arming the Confederacy: How Virginia's Minerals Forged the Rebel War Machine* (New York City: Springer, 2015), 3, 157.

Union Army perspective, and analyzes how the actions of Confederate guerrillas forced Union commanders to alter their tactics and objectives.

This thesis is important to the larger field of Civil War history because it challenges the way both historians and average Americans think about the war in southwestern Virginia. Instead of viewing this region as an isolated area devoid of massive conventional battles and armies, people need to understand that this region experienced constant guerrilla warfare centered around the fight for the V&T. Confederate guerrillas played a crucial role in defending the V&T from Union Army raiders who sought to destroy the railroad and cripple one of the most important transportation assets in the entire Confederacy. The conflict for southwestern Virginia and the railroad had implication far beyond the borders of the region, for tens of thousands of Confederate soldiers and civilians relied upon food and supplies transported on the V&T. The railroad's iron rails tied this region to the rest of the Upper South, and thus Confederate soldiers throughout Virginia unconsciously relied on guerrillas to shed their blood defending the V&T.

Chapter I

The Virginia & Tennessee Railroad: A Confederate Strategic Asset and Pull Factor for the Union Army

Before delving into the guerrilla war that simmered in southwestern Virginia, one must first understand the V&T, the railroad that fueled the conflict in the region. Without the V&T acting as a pull factor for the Union Army, there would have been little reason for the Union Army to dedicate valuable soldiers and supplies to operations in southwestern Virginia. Historians such as Kenneth Noe have already argued for the importance of this railroad, and explained how the railroad moved supplies and men for the Confederacy. Building upon their works, this chapter argues that the railroad increased in importance as the Civil War progressed, moving more tonnage of foodstuffs and resources every year for the Confederacy. Moreover, during 1863-1865, the V&T moved a large percentage of the Confederacy's total production of lead and salt, thus making it an absolutely critical transportation asset to the Confederate war effort.

Although the V&T was clearly a crucial railroad, there were other important railroads in the South that did not attract the attention of Union Army commanders to the same extentV&T. Thus, this chapter will explore the question: what elements increased the railroad's pull factor in the eyes of Union Army commanders?

One of the key features of the railroad that made it uniquely important to Union Army commanders was its ability to continue operating despite the challenges of war. The V&T Company kept its rail lines operating from the very beginning of the war until March of 1865, mere weeks before the Confederacy collapsed. While advancing Union forces captured or destroyed other Confederate railroads, the V&T Company kept

moving crucial foodstuffs and resources to needy Confederate soldiers, civilians, and factories.

The railroad company's ability to continue to operate throughout the duration of the conflict was largely due to the location of the railroad. The V&T was situated in Virginia's Great Valley, a landform that is part of the Great Appalachian Valley.[25] Virginia's Great Valley is a small part of this larger geographical trough, and includes a series of valleys such as the New River and Shenandoah Valleys that run up the western portion of the state. The Appalachian Mountains form the western border of the Great Valley, and during the Civil War, they acted as a geographic shield that helped prevent Union armies from reaching the railroad. Although the relatively short height of the Appalachian Mountains meant that they did not serve as impassable walls to invading Yankees, their rugged nature forced armies to rely upon the crude and limited road network that ran through southwestern Virginia.

During the Civil War, the only major roads in the region were the Valley Road, a turnpike that ran north-to-south up the Great Valley, and the James River and Kanawha Turnpike.[26] The James River and Kanawha Turnpike connected the James River to the Kanawha River near present day Gauley Bridge, West Virginia.[27] Although the western portion of this road lay in southwestern Virginia's Greenbrier and Fayette Counties, the eastern sections of the turnpike lay in the Shenandoah Valley, north of southwestern Virginia. This limited the road's usefulness as an invasion route into southwestern Virginia.

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[25] Henry Francis James, *The Geography of a Portion of the Great Appalachian Valley And Selected Adjacent Regions* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1920), 1-2.
[26] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 66.
[27] The West Virginia Encyclopedia, "James River and Kanawha Turnpike," http://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/978 (accessed 31 July, 2016).

A series of crude antebellum dirt roads connecting southwestern Virginia towns supplemented the Valley Road. However, summer rains turned these paths into muddy morasses that clogged the wheels of wagons and cannon, and slowed armies' progress.[28] In addition to these dirt roads, there existed a small number of well-built roads built to enable tourists to reach the hotels that clustered around the region's many popular hot springs.[29] The arrival of the V&T in southwestern Virginia during the mid-1850s had served as an economic boon for the hot springs industry, and various counties, including Montgomery, had built roads from the various railroad depots in the region to hotels at destinations like Yellow Sulphur Springs.[30] Since many of these hot springs existed in what became West Virginia, these roads served as routes in and out of southwestern Virginia, and Union Army commanders such as George Crook sometimes relied on these roads when Confederate forces blocked other roads in the region.[31]

However, even with these hot spring roads, invading Union armies could only enter southwestern Virginia through a handful of gaps in the mountains.[32] Confederate forces in southwestern Virginia knew that invading armies had to enter and exit the region through these gaps, and this fact always weighed heavily on the minds of Union commanders who feared having their escape route back to West Virginia severed by Confederate defenders. The lack of effective roads, combined with the rough topography

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[28] Martin F. Schmitt, ed., *General George Crook: His Autobiography* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 116, 119. In his after-action report on the Cloyd Mountain campaign, Gen Crook noted that rain had made the roads around Blacksburg nearly impassable, with wagons sinking up to their beds in the mud on the road over Salt Pond Mountain. United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series 1, Vol 37, Part I, 12.

[29] Philip Houlbrooke Nicklin, *Letters Descriptive of the Virginia Springs: The Roads Leading Thereto, and the Doings Thereat* (Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, 1835), 22, 41.

[30] Ibid., 22.

[31] Schmitt, *General George Crook*, 120.

[32] Ibid., 116.

of the region, meant that the V&T was situated in an area that proved easy for

Confederate forces to defend, and difficult for Union Army forces to invade and conquer.

The location of the railroad not only helped protect it from Union Army raids, but

also enabled it to become one of the most important transporters of raw materials in all

the Confederacy. The V&T ran very close to the lead and niter mines and caves,

respectively, of southwestern Virginia, and even had a spur in Saltville that ran to the salt

mines. The railroad's proximity to raw materials was bolstered by the fact that the

railroad's tracks terminated at Lynchburg, and from there other railroads such as the

Alexandria and Orange R.R, and canals such as the James River and Kanawha Canal,

could take the resources to factories in Richmond and civilians and armies throughout the

Upper South.[33] Thus, the V&T was able to connect the raw materials of southwestern

Virginia directly to one of the South's major centers of industry and the home of the

Tredegar Iron Works, an absolutely critical iron and arms manufacturer for the

Confederacy. Few other railroads in the Confederacy were so near to both the sources of

raw materials and the factories that turned those resources into war materials.

Bolstering the V&T's importance was the fact that the mines whose resources it

transported became even more important to the Confederacy as the war progressed. As

Union armies pushed through the South, they captured or destroyed mines and sources of

raw materials, causing the salt, lead, coal, and niter mines and caves in southwestern

Virginia to become absolutely crucial to the Confederacy.[34] For example, salt was a

critical resource that both civilians and soldiers needed in great quantities. Before

refrigeration, it was one of the primary means of preserving food, especially meat.

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[33] W.W. Blackford. "Map & profile of the Virginia & Tennessee Rail Road." Map. Library of Congress. 1856; Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 37.

[34] Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 265-270.

Understanding this, Union Army commanders specifically targeted salt production facilities wherever they found them. Responding to shortages of salt, Confederate civilians established small scale salt production establishments in places like the Gulf Coast. Confederate entrepreneurs built hidden salt production camps all along the coast of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, and Mississippi. In response to this, Union naval officers launched raids on these camps and played a game of cat-and-mouse with sneaky salt harvesters looking to profit from the public demand for the critical mineral.[35] However, even for those small-scale salt producers that managed to keep their camps hidden, they lacked the ready access to a railroad that the salt miners in southwestern Virginia had for the entire war.

Thus, the V&T increased in importance as the war progressed, for the resources it transported to factories helped sustain the Confederacy with the vital raw materials for arms and ammunition. Wythe County's mines became the Confederacy's largest producers of lead, while niter caves throughout the region provided munition factories in Richmond with saltpeter, a critical component of gunpowder.[36] Moreover, the railroad transported foodstuffs and livestock to the starving civilians and Confederate soldiers who continued to fight until the bitter end of the war. Although the V&T was one of the most important railroads earlier in the conflict, it was without a doubt the most important railroad in the Confederacy during the later stages of the war.

In addition to the fact that the raw materials the railroad transported became more scarce, the railroad also increased the total tonnage it moved every year. The "Annual Report of the Presidents and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee

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[35] Ibid., 265-270.
[36] Whisonant, *Arming the Confederacy*, 76-77.

Railroad Co." enables one to track how the railroad's operations changed as the war progressed. The company always published the reports in mid-September or October and the information contained within the reports covers everything the company did in the previous year from July until the end of June. The reports contain a multitude of tables and charts, including many that described what railroad carried.

The Civil War proved to be a financial boon for the V&T, and the 1861 report noted that the railroad was already experiencing significant shifts in its operations that were a result of the start of the Civil War less than six months earlier. The company negotiated an arrangement with the Confederate Government by which the railroad company would transport soldiers and government freight for one half the standard rates, and would receive the highest pay possible from the government for the movement of mail.[37]

Despite the challenges and changes the railroad faced with the outbreak of war, the president and directors believed that the future of the railroad looked bright as war had cut off competition for cotton and other Southern products from New York, Boston, and other ports, and that visitors from the "West and South-west" traveling to Richmond, the new capital, would have to take the V&T. Moreover, complete rail connections had been finished from "Mississippi to Mobile and through Alabama to Pensacola."[38] The report writers' bright predictions about the future importance of the V&T were realized during the war years.
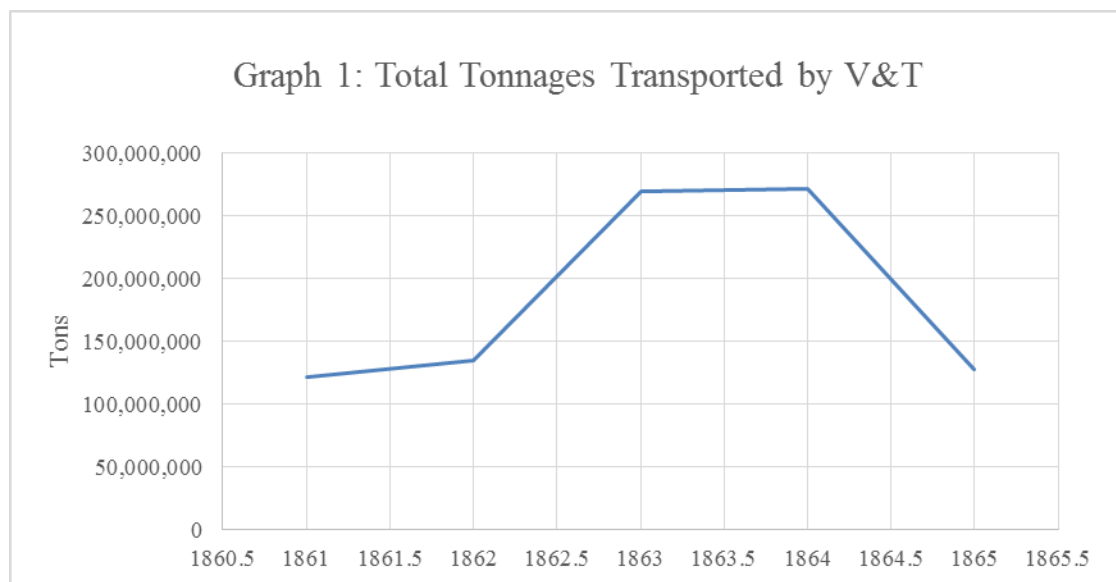
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[37] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Fourteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.*, (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Job Office, 1861), 15.
[38] Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co., *Fourteenth Annual Report*, 13.

In 1861, the railroad moved over 120 million tons of materials both eastward and westward, a significant amount, but one that was dwarfed by the railroad's tonnages later in the war.[39] In 1864, the railroad had it most active year with a total of over 270 million tons being moved by the railroad company. Although the V&T's total tonnage decreased during 1865, the steady increase in tonnage that the railroad moved from 1861 to 1864 reflected the growing importance of the railroad to the Confederacy. Graph 1 reveals how the railroad moved increasingly greater tons of vital raw materials and foodstuffs from 1861 through 1864.

Graph 1: Total Tonnages Transported by V&T

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[39] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.*, (Lynchburg, VA: Virginian Book and Job Office, 1865), 72.
[40] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Sixteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Job Office, 1863), 72-73; Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Book and Job Office, 1865), 64-65.

However, Graph 1 is slightly misleading. Although the V&T Company significantly increased the amount of tonnage it carried, it did not do this by carrying greater amounts of all of its goods. Instead, the railroad transported increasingly enormous amounts of salt, and actually carried less tonnage of many of the products that it had carried at the outbreak of the war. As the conflict progressed, salt became ever more scarce and valuable, and the railroad carried increasingly massive amounts of salt in an effort to meet this demand.

Part of this increasing scarcity of salt was the result of Union Army advances in salt producing regions such as the Kanawha Valley in West Virginia.[41] As Union forces conquered larger swaths of the South, greater demand was placed on Saltville's mines. The Confederate Government, neighboring state governments, and private citizens desperately needed salt from southwestern Virginia to preserve meat and various foods.[42] The salt mines at Saltville struggled to meet the demand for salt, and by the winter of 1862, the outcry among citizens of Virginia became so loud that the governor, John Letcher, became involved in the situation. Letcher called upon the state general assembly to appropriate half-a-million dollars for the purpose of purchasing salt. He then traveled to Saltville in November of 1862 to procure as much salt as he could for his state. However, upon reaching the salt mines, he discovered that after meeting its existing contracts with the Confederate and state governments, the mining company could only guarantee 150,000 bushels of salt to be delivered over the next four months. The governor's contract also stipulated that the salt be transported on the V&T's cars so that

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[41] "By the Governor of Virginia: A Proclamation," *The Abingdon Virginian*, November 21, 1863.
[42] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 51, Part II, 1059.

the bushels of salt could be sold to citizens throughout the state.[43] Graph 2 shows how

from 1861 to 1865, the V&T carried drastically different amounts of salt.

Graph 2: Tonnages of Transported Salt
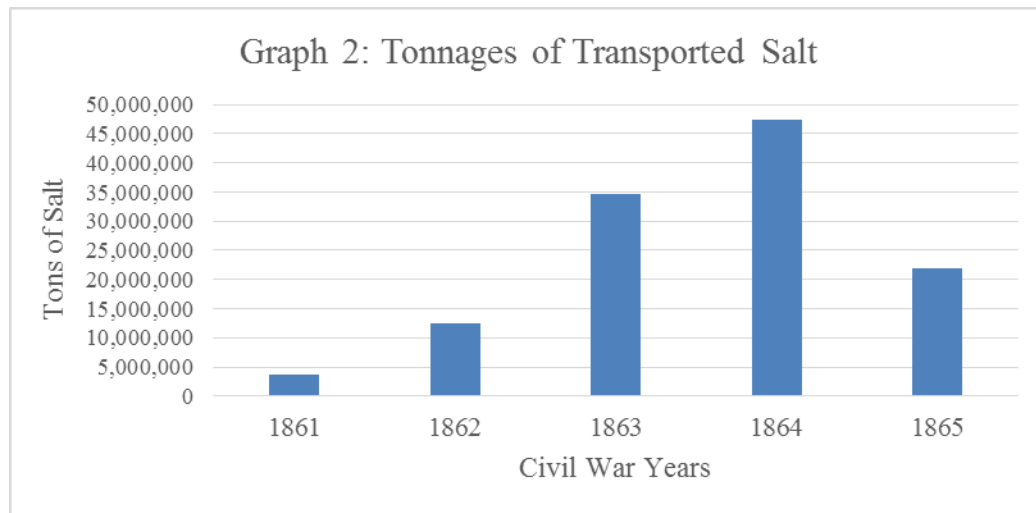
[44]

Although the railroad carried immense amounts of salt, it also carried huge

amounts of other certain resources. Graph 3 reveals that as the war progressed, the

railroad increased the amount of bacon, coal, corn, and lead it carried. All of these

materials proved critical to the Confederate war effort. Bacon and corn were important

foodstuffs that provided the basic subsistence for many Confederate soldiers and

civilians. Coal provided fuel for factory furnaces and lead enabled arms manufactures to

make bullets. The lead that the V&T transported was absolutely critical to the

Confederate war effort, as southwestern Virginia's mines were the largest producers of

lead in the entire Confederacy. In 1863, Josiah Gorgas, commander of the Confederate

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[43]"By the Governor of Virginia: A Proclamation," *The Abingdon Virginian*, November 21, 1863.
[44] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Sixteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Job Office, 1863), 72-73; Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Book and Job Office, 1865), 64-65.

Ordinance Department, noted that Wythe County's mines supplied the lead for almost all of the ammunition for General Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.[45]

Along with these four goods, the railroad also carried increasingly large numbers of soldiers. In 1861, the railroad carried only thirty-four thousand soldiers, yet during the next year, it carried over 103,000 soldiers. This upward trend increased over the next two years, and in fiscal year 1864, the railroad carried 162,091 soldiers. Although in 1865, the railway only transported 72,455 combatants, this number was still greater than the amount the railroad transported in 1861.[46] Thus, as the war progressed, most of the V&T's transport capability was dedicated to moving staple foodstuffs, critical raw materials, and soldiers.

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[45] Whisonant, *Arming the Confederacy*, 76.

[46] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Fourteenth-Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Job Office, 1861-1865).

Graph 3: Tonnage of Articles Transported Eastward on the V&T
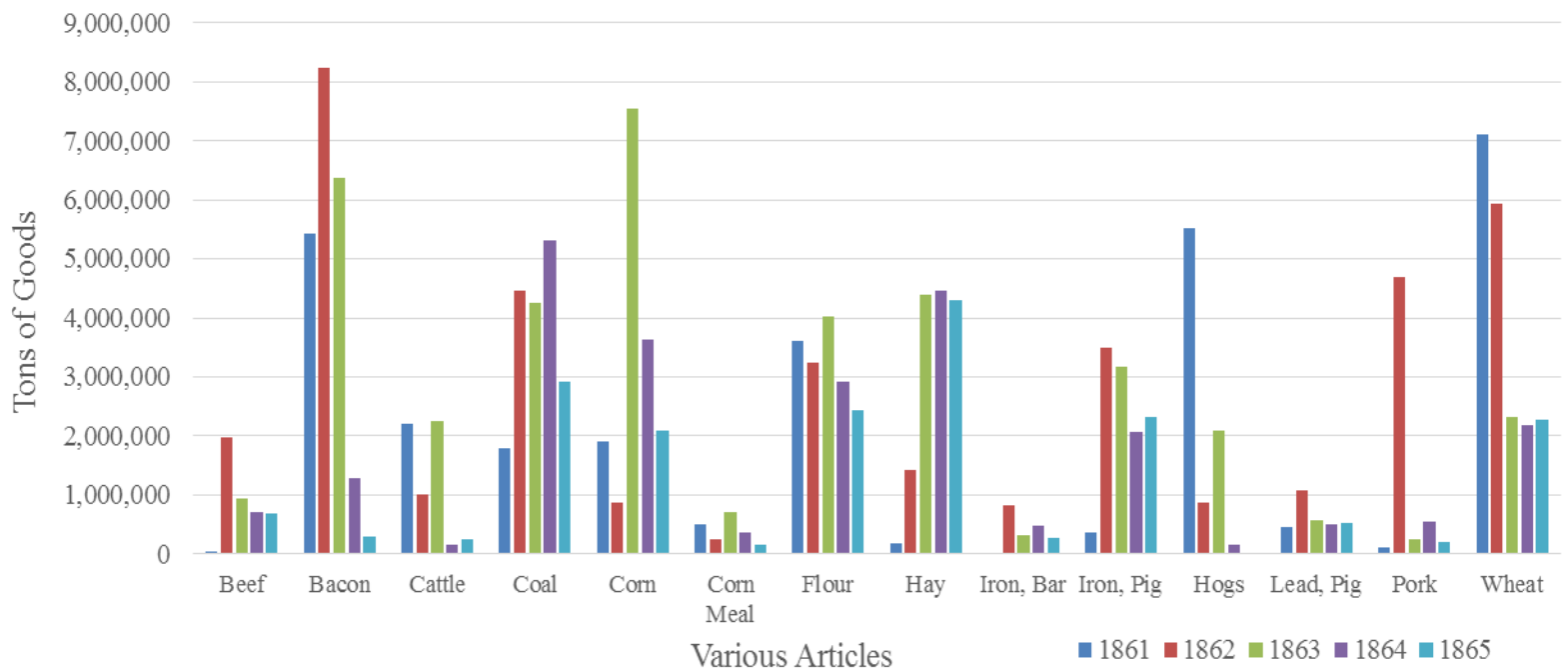
Although the various numbers of transported tonnages are important, it is imperative to have some context for the numbers so as to fully understand how important the railroad was for Confederate military forces. The Confederate Subsistence Department, the department in charge of feeding soldiers, outlined the following as a standard daily ration for soldiers on the march: three-fourths of a pound of salt pork or bacon, or one and one-quarter pounds of fresh or salt beef, eighteen ounces of bread or flour or one pound of hard bread, or one and a quarter pounds of corn meal. For every one-hundred rations, the commissary officer also added eight quarts of peas or beans or

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[47] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Sixteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Job Office, 1863), 68-69; Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Book and Job Office, 1865), 60-61.

ten pounds of rice, six pounds of coffee, twelve pounds of sugar, four quarts of vinegar, one and a half pounds of tallow, four pounds of soap, and two quarts of salt while on the march.[48]

Although food and transportation shortages during the war often prevented the Confederate Subsistence Department from supplying the full daily rations to their soldiers, the ration regulations allow one to estimate how much food an army would have required.[49] Using the rough estimate of two pounds of food per soldier (a pound of meat and a pound of bread) per day, and the figure of 46.5 pounds for the additional rations per hundred men, the Confederate Subsistence Department would have needed 49.3 tons of food and supplies daily to meet the full subsistence requirements of a forty-thousand man army.

This estimate does not include the enormous amount of fodder that Civil War armies' animals required. The daily fodder requirement for armies was incredibly large as armies relied on thousands of horses and mules to pull artillery and wagons. Armies also brought massive herds of cattle on campaign to provide fresh beef later in the campaign. Union Army regulations called for fourteen pounds of hay and twelve pounds of oats, corn, or barley per horse, per day. The fodder requirement for mules was only slightly less than that for horses.[50] Armies' required daily fodder tonnage far outstripped soldiers'

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[48] Confederate States of America War Department, *Regulations for the Subsistence Department of the Confederate States* (Richmond: Ritchie & Dunnavant Printers, 1862), 7, accessed 24 May, 2016, Hathi Trust Digital Library.

[49] Russell F. Weigley, *Quartermaster General of the Union Army: A Biography of M.C. Meigs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 5. Using the rough estimate of two pounds of food per soldier (a pound of meat and a pound of bread) per day, and the figure of 46.5 pounds for the additional rations per hundred men, this simple equation enables one to find the total daily subsistence requirement, in tons, for a Confederate Army receiving its full rations while on campaign (x = number of soldiers):

$$\text{Food Tonnage} = \left[2(x) + \left(\frac{x}{100}\right)46.5\right]/2{,}000$$

[50] Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Crops, 1775-1939* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961), 379.

subsistence tonnage. In the summer of 1863, the fifty-thousand man Army of the Cumberland required twenty-eight and thirteen railroad cars of fodder and rations, respectively, every day.[51] During Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant's campaign against Richmond in 1865, his army's animals required six-hundred tons of grain and hay daily, which amounted to 150 wagonloads. [52]

Armies' incredibly large fodder requirements made railroads like the V&T even more important to Confederate armies, for steam locomotives could quickly transport large quantities of corn, hay, and other foodstuffs from productive farming regions to army depots, thus decreasing the number of horses required to transport supplies. From 1863 through 1865, the V&T moved around five million tons of hay a year. This was an immense amount of fodder, enough to feed the horses and cattle of a force such as the Army of Northern Virginia for months. In a letter from late January of 1865, William Smith, the governor of Virginia, noted that "the other day a single requisition of the Confederate Government called for 400 cars for the transportation of hay alone."[53] Every ton of hay moved by the railroad meant one less draft animal the Confederate Army had to feed, a very serious consideration for the Confederacy late in the war.

The V&T's transportation of over eight million tons of bacon in 1862, or over seven and a half million tons of corn in 1863, were also incredibly vital movements of foodstuffs that literally sustained the Confederate war effort by feeding soldiers and animals. Obviously, the eight million tons of bacon the railroad transported in 1862 went to a variety of sources, with Confederate armies being just one of the destinations.

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[51] Lennette S. Taylor, *"The Supply for Tomorrow Must Not Fail:" The Civil War of Captain Simon Perkins Jr., A Union Quartermaster* (Kent, U.K.: Kent State University Press, 2004), 224.
[52] Ibid., 435; Weigley, *Quartermaster General*, 3
[53] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 51, Part II, 1059.

Regardless of the destinations, eight million tons of bacon would have been enough pork to supply the daily meat ration of an army of forty-thousand men for thousands of years. Without the huge amounts of food and materials the V&T transported, the Confederate Subsistence Department would have been even more hard pressed to feed its soldiers.

Along with transporting huge amounts of food and minerals produced in southwestern Virginia, the V&T also moved products from elsewhere in the Confederacy. The V&T's western terminus lay in Bristol, Virginia, and railroads in North Carolina and Tennessee also ended in Bristol, thereby connecting Virginia with East Tennessee, specifically Knoxville. Knoxville was thus the link between the eastern and western Confederacy, for railroads running from Knoxville transported products north to Bristol and offloaded their freight into the V&T's depot. V&T clerks labeled this freight as coming from Bristol, although much of it actually originated in Tennessee, North Carolina, and other southern states. By analyzing how much tonnage originated in Bristol, one can obtain a rough estimate of how much of the V&T's tonnage was produced outside of Virginia.

During the Civil War, the depot at Bristol was one of twenty depots, yet from 1861-1865, a large percentage of the V&T total transported tonnage originated from the Bristol depot. For example, in 1861 over eighteen percent of the V&T's total transported tonnage came from Bristol, and by the end of fiscal year 1862, the Bristol depot was the starting point for almost twenty-nine percent of the V&T Company's total transported tonnage. In 1863, the V&T Company doubled the amount of tonnage it moved, and thus the percentage of total tonnage originating in Bristol dropped to about ten percent. The Union Army's capture of Knoxville in the fall of 1863 severed southwestern Virginia's

rail connection to East Tennessee, and consequently the percentage of total tonnage moved from Bristol significantly declined after 1863, dropping to about four percent and then less than one percent in 1864 and 1865, respectively.[54]

The V&T Company's ability to connect the bountiful fields and mines of the southwestern states with Virginia was incredibly important to the Confederacy, and constantly attracted the attention of Union forces in West Virginia. However, East Tennessee was also a critically important region to the U.S. Government and Union Army. Beginning early in the war, President Lincoln viewed East Tennessee as a critical strategic objective, both for its potential levy of Union soldiers and because its rails linked eastern Virginia to the Mississippi River. In the President's eyes, recruitment of significant numbers of soldiers from East Tennessee, a region that represented a pocket of Unionism amidst a sea of rebellion, would be an important symbolic victory and would provide a critically important army exactly where it was needed most.[55]

The President's interest in East Tennessee was so strong that in December of 1862, he sent East Tennessee congressman Horace Maynard to provide Major General Henry Halleck, General-in-Chief of the Union Army, with a report on the situation in his home region. Maynard's report largely bemoaned the lack of Union military intervention in the area, and explained how rebels had severely mistreated those East Tennesseans loyal to the U.S. However, Maynard's report included a section about the V&T, which he called the "great arterial communication of the Southern Confederacy."[56] Moreover, he

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[54] Virginia and Tennessee Railroad Co., *Eighteenth Annual Report of the President and Directors to the Stockholders of the Virginia & Tennessee Railroad Co.* (Lynchburg, VA: The Virginian Book and Job Office, 1865), 77; Kenneth W. Noe and Shannon H. Wilson, eds., *The Civil War in Appalachia: Collected Essays* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 2.
[55] Ibid., 2-3.
[56] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part II, 169.

claimed that "men of some pretension and high reputation for military judgement" considered possession of the V&T to be of no less importance than the capture of Richmond.[57]

Maynard reinforced his belief in the importance of destroying the V&T at the end of his report. As a conclusion to his document, he provided seven suggestions for Union Army operations. Every piece of advice concerned East Tennessee, except one, in which he urged that a force of Union soldiers should march up the Kanawha River Valley, rip-up the V&T's tracks, destroy the salt mines in the region, and then retreat into West Virginia through Pound Gap. Clearly, Maynard thought the destruction of the railroad to be of the utmost importance, and since he was an influential congressman who had the ear of President Lincoln, his report would not have gone unnoticed in Washington D.C.

Union generals in the West had their own schemes which were similar to Maynard's plan. Southwestern Virginia's adjacent position to East Tennessee made it an important accessory to the capture of this crucial region. Confederate forces in Tennessee consistently severed the supply lines of invading Union Armies, frustrating Union Army operations in the eastern portion of the state. Amidst this strategic dilemma, southwestern Virginia offered the Union Army a convenient door into Tennessee. Union forces in West Virginia could sweep southward through southwestern Virginia, destroying the V&T's tracks, capturing Knoxville, and severing the Confederacy's lines of railway communication from Virginia to the western states. However, the Union Army's initial invasions deep into southwestern Virginia failed, and it took until the summer of 1863 for

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[57] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part II, 169.

the Union Army to advance eastward through Tennessee and capture Knoxville and eastern portion of the state.[58]

The Confederate Government also recognized that East Tennessee and southwestern Virginia were strategically linked. The Confederate government feared the strong Unionists sentiments that existed in East Tennessee, and leaders such as President Jefferson Davis worried that the loss of the region would give Union forces a base of operations from which they could launch invasions of southwestern Virginia.[59] Thus, in contrast to the U.S. Government, the Confederate Government viewed East Tennessee as an accessory to southwestern Virginia, for southwestern Virginia was more important to the Confederacy than East Tennessee. In the eyes of the Confederate Government, southwestern Virginia was the critical railway link between eastern Virginia and the western Confederate states, and more specifically, between Richmond and middle Tennessee.[60]

Before Union forces could employ southwestern Virginia as a door into East Tennessee, though, they had to invade southwestern Virginia and establish a strong presence in the region. As early as August of 1861, Brigadier General William Rosecrans, commander of Union Army forces in West Virginia, described plans to invade southwestern Virginia in a letter to a staff officer in Washington D.C. He intended to advance into southwestern Virginia and seize Wytheville. He then planned to capture the railroad lines as far south as Abingdon, destroy all the bridges east of Wytheville, build a clear road to the Kanawha River, and turn Wytheville into a fortified depot capable of

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[58] Noe and Wilson, *The Civil War in Appalachia,* 2.
[59] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part II, 726.
[60] *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865*, 58th Cong., 2d sess., 1904, S. Doc. 234, Vol 3, 435.

resisting Confederate counter-attacks.[61] This plan revealed that from a very early point in the Civil War, Gen Rosecrans was interested in invading southwestern Virginia and establishing a foothold there from whence he could launch further campaigns into Virginia.

Gen Rosecrans' successor, Major General John Fremont, shared Rosecrans' goals of invading southwestern Virginia and destroying the railroad, and in a report from June of 1862, complained that the War Department prevented him from carrying out his plans. He wrote that before leaving Washington D.C. in March, he had submitted a plan for invading southwestern Virginia and that President Lincoln had responded by promising him ample reinforcements for his planned campaign.[62] Due to changes in his available forces, in April he submitted to the War Department an updated invasion strategy. He attached a copy of his invasion idea to the report, and it revealed that Fremont had planned to seize Salem, while another portion of his army captured Newbern. His forces would destroy the railroad tracks, and then ride the rails south, towards the Cumberland Gap, attacking Confederate forces guarding the pass and eventually capturing Knoxville.[63] Although his plan was certainly ambitious, and a bit implausible, it does reveal that Fremont had placed much thought and effort into planning an invasion of southwestern Virginia, and that President Lincoln was clearly interested in invading the region.

In 1861 and '62, it seemed as if every Union commander anywhere near southwestern Virginia wanted to invade the region and destroy the railroad. Brigadier General James Garfield, commander of a small army in southern Kentucky, claimed after

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[61] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 5, 552.
[62] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part I, 6.
[63] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part I, 7.

a small victory in the winter of 1862 that he wanted to advance upon Abingdon, Virginia

and strike a blow to the railroad, "the grand lever on which the rebellion hangs."[64] Even a

colonel, Rutherford Hayes, commander of a regiment in southwestern Virginia, proudly

wrote that his unit was involved in "enterprises towards the jugular vein of Rebeldom—

the Southwestern Virginia Railroad."[65] It did not take stars on their epaulets for Union

officers to recognize the incredible target the V&T offered Union forces in West

Virginia.

Although by 1863 Generals Rosecrans, Fremont, and Garfield still had failed to

incapacitate the V&T, Union commanders in West Virginia continued to develop

operations that would enable their forces to permanently disable the railroad. One of the

most important Union officers to launch an assault against the V&T was Brigadier

General George Crook, later recalled meeting with Lieutenant General Ulysses Grant at

Spotsylvania Court House in the late winter of 1864 to plan an operation against the

railroad. By 1864, the V&T was such an important target that Grant transferred Crook

from the Army of the Cumberland in Georgia to the Army of the Kanawha in West

Virginia to lead a campaign against the railroad. Furthermore, Grant, Commanding

General of the Union Army helped design the operation designed to permanently

incapacitate the railroad. [66] Clearly, the V&T represented a critical target in the eyes of

the Union Army's top leadership in Washington.

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[64] James Garfield, *The Wild Life of the Army: Civil War Letters of James A. Garfield*, ed. Frederick D. Williams (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1964), 70. This quote was first found in Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 115.

[65] Rutherford B. Hayes, *Diary and Letters of Rutherford B. Hayes: Nineteenth President of the United States Vol II*, ed. Charles Richard William (Columbus: Ohio State Archeological and Historical Society, 1922), 184.

[66] Schmitt, *General George Crook*, 114.

The high level of interest among politicians and generals regarding the V&T ensured that the Union Army launched many attacks against the railroad. Between July 1863 and March 1865, the Union Army launched six major raids into southwestern Virginia with the intent of destroying the region's mines and crippling the V&T. However, until Major General George Stoneman's raid in 1865, none of these operations permanently halted the operations of the railroad.[67] After every raid, the V&T Company continued to move men and materials, the smoke belching from their tired locomotives' smokestacks representing the Confederacy's defiant refusal to quit. It would take Stoneman and his ten-thousand cavalrymen to permanently silence the proud whistles of the V&T's locomotives. Until then, though, the railroad continued to entice Union forces into southwestern Virginia, fueling the conflict in the region and creating an environment in which Confederate guerrillas could thrive.

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[67] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 124-133.

Chapter II

The Forgotten Defenders: Confederate Guerrillas in Southwestern Virginia

Southwestern Virginia proved to be a tough battleground for both Confederate and Union forces. Combat and travel in the mountains and valleys of the region taxed the bodies of soldiers and livestock alike, making both fighting and supplying armies difficult. In the narrow mountain passes and inadequate roads of the region, small Confederate forces could effectively defend critical geographic points against larger invading Union armies, and thus overwhelming force was often of less importance than information about the enemy's intentions. For if a Confederate commander with a small defensive force could reach a mountain gap or river ferry before the invading Union soldiers did, then the Confederate defenders had a good chance of stopping the Yankees from advancing further into southwestern Virginia.

This meant that southwestern Virginia provided an environment in which Confederate partisan rangers could become vitally important to Confederate Army commanders. Since they were mounted, they could complete quick reconnaissance missions for commanders, discovering both the location, disposition, and probable objectives of enemy forces. Many Confederate generals employed partisan rangers as their eyes and ears, and the information these rangers sent back to army headquarters enabled worried officers to make informed decisions about where to positions their limited forces. Partisan rangers' mobility also enabled them to complete other types of actions such as reconnaissance-in-force missions and delaying actions during retreats,

thus providing Confederate commanders with a range of unique capabilities that normal Confederate Army infantry units struggled to complete.

Moreover, many partisan ranger units maintained strong connections with the Confederate armies in southwestern Virginia, and worked seamlessly with conventional army units to defend this valuable region. Many of them were not ill-disciplined bands of criminals who operated completely independently of the Confederate Army. Instead, many partisan ranger units were valuable members of Confederate officers' commands, and received credit for their good work in after-actions reports. Partisan rangers were so effective that nearly every general who served in southwestern Virginia actively employed them. The reports these generals wrote enables one to track ranger operations in southwestern Virginia, and thus this chapter will focus on how Confederate Army officers used rangers to help defend the V&T from Union Army raids.

Through exploring the strong connections many southwestern Virginia partisan rangers maintained with the Confederate Army, this chapter engages with a group of historians who have argued that scholars need to stop looking at irregular and conventional warfare as separate worlds, but instead explore how guerrillas and Confederate Army soldiers worked together. This is a growing scholarly trend in the guerrilla warfare history community, as exemplified by Brian McKnight's *Confederate Outlaw: Champ Ferguson and the Civil War in Appalachia* and Robert Mackey' *The Uncivil War: Irregular Warfare in the Upper South, 1861-1865*. McKnight's *Confederate Outlaws* reveals that the infamous bushwhackers Champ Ferguson sometimes temporarily abandoned bushwhacking in Appalachia and joined Brigadier General John H. Morgan's cavalry for raids into Kentucky. Mackey's *The Uncivil War* argues that the

Confederate Army in Arkansas lacked the necessary soldiers to defend the state, and thus integrated guerrillas into its formal defense strategy. This decision to formally employ guerrillas as defenders of a Confederate state backfired on rebel authorities and ignited a guerrilla conflict that raged out-of-control for the rest of the war. This chapter will add to this scholarly trend by revealing that just as Ferguson occasionally served within the formal ranks of the Confederate Army, so did many southwestern Virginia partisan ranger units fight in the Confederate Army. Moreover, many rangers maintained close connections to Confederate commanders who recognized them as valuable assets, and thus, like guerrillas in Arkansas, rangers played important roles in Confederate officers' defensive strategies for southwestern Virginia.

Partisan ranger units, though, were caught in a paradoxical situation. For although southwestern Virginia generals believed them to be valuable and effective warriors, they received little attention in the upper reaches of the Confederate Government. As this chapter will reveal, the Confederate Congress largely was not interested in the rangers, and rarely discussed their usefulness to the Confederate war effort. Their role as an important element of Confederate generals' defensive strategies for southwestern Virginia was not recognized by the Confederate Congress or Government, and thus many Confederate policy makers in Richmond maintained negative opinions of partisan rangers that were at odds with the views of southwestern Virginia commanders. When the Confederate government eventually called for the Confederate Army to convert all partisan ranger units into regular cavalry or infantry units, southwestern Virginia's Confederate armies did not listen.

In order to understand how Confederate partisan ranger units factored into the war for southwestern Virginia, it is important to first understand how the region became a battleground. For by late May of 1861, all of modern day West Virginia lay in the Confederacy, and thus southwestern Virginia lay far within the borders of the Confederacy. However, within months of Virginia's secession from the United States, northwest Virginia lay in the hands of the Union Army, and Confederate forces had retreated far into southwestern Virginia. Union Army control of this portion of Virginia enabled Unionists to organize the Wheeling Convention, a set of two meetings that eventually led to the U.S. government recognizing West Virginia as an independent state in 1863.[68] The first two years of war in West Virginia caused Union generals to abandon plans for invasions of southwestern Virginia designed to subjugate the region. Instead, Union commanders established camps in the Kanawha River Valley to serve as bases of operations from which they could launch raids against the V&T in southwestern Virginia from 1863 through 1865. Confederate guerrillas would play an important role in defending southwestern Virginia from these intermittent raids.

In the spring of 1861, General George McClellan's Army of the Ohio invaded northwest Virginia and defeated a Confederate force at the battle of Phillipi, and by mid-July the Army of the Ohio controlled most of northwest Virginia. In late July, McClellan's successor, General William Rosecrans, decided to push south to Wytheville, rip up the V&T tracks in that area, and then advance into East Tennessee.[69] Fresh from its success in northwest Virginia, the Army of the Ohio seemed as if it might push all the way into southwestern Virginia and destroy the V&T's tracks, severing the line of

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[68] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 113.
[69] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 113.

communication between Richmond and the Mississippi River. J.B Jones, a clerk who worked for the Confederate Secretary of War in Richmond and kept a detailed diary, wrote on June 16th 1861, that the Confederate Secretary of War was so nervous about the Union forces advancing towards southwestern Virginia that he sent a telegram to his family in southwestern Virginia telling them to immediately flee the area.[70] Southwestern Virginia seemed on the brink of being invaded.

Three Confederate flag officers, each with a semi-independent command, blocked the Army of the Ohio's advance. Generals Williams Loring, Henry Wise and John Floyd each commanded Confederate forces, and the generals were supposed to support each other. However, Wise and Floyd were bitter political rivals and refused to support each other's armies when Gen Rosecrans's army advanced towards southwestern Virginia. The Confederate Government sent General Robert E. Lee to Loring's headquarters to try to convince the southwestern Virginia generals to work together. Wise and Floyd refused, and the Army of the Ohio forced Floyd's army to retreat all the way back to Dublin. Meanwhile, the Confederate government recalled Wise, and Lee planned a new campaign to regain northwest Virginia. However, a measles epidemic in his ranks and bad weather prevented him from launching his campaign, and instead he established his army in a defensive position and waited for Rosecrans's advance. However, the Army of the Ohio was tired and did not pursue Floyd all the way to Dublin. Instead Rosecrans established winter quarters in Raleigh County and waited for spring.[71]

The spring and summer of 1862 proved no better for the Confederacy. In April, Fremont, the new commander of the Army of the Ohio, ordered Brigadier General Jacob

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[70] J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary: At the Confederate States Capital Vol. I.* ed. Howard Swiggett (New York: Old Hickory, 1935), 52.
[71] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 113-116.

Cox to push his twelve-thousand man army southward into Giles County and join forces with Gen Crook's brigade, which was hunting bushwhackers in Greenbrier County. Confederate Brigadier General Henry Heth's Army of the New River faced the forces of Cox and Crook, however Heth retreated in the face of the overwhelming Union forces, leaving southwestern Virginia completely open to Union forces.[72] However, Major General Thomas Jackson's victory over part of Gen Fremont's army at the Battle of McDowell in Highland County, north of southwestern Virginia, saved southwestern Virginia from invasion, and caused Gen Fremont to adopt a more cautious strategy. Gen Fremont ordered Gen Cox to halt his advance, thus dashing the Union Army's chances of conquering southwestern Virginia in 1862.[73] The confederates were not able to push Crook and Cox out of southwestern Virginia, and Jackson's incredible victory in the Valley Campaign led both Union generals to assume that they were Stonewall Jackson's next target, and they dug-in and then went into winter quarters in almost the exact same position they had the previous year. Thus, the war in southwestern Virginia became stagnant, and Union commanders' dreams of occupying southwestern Virginia slowly evolved into plans to simply raid the V&T.

By the campaigning season of 1863, Union forces camped in the Kanawha River Valley were prepared to invade southwestern Virginia and cripple the railroad by tearing up tracks and destroying bridges and depots. Over the next two years, Union commanders launched raids deep into southwestern Virginia. Although the threat to southwestern Virginia was great, the Confederate Congress did not often talk about southwestern

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[72] Colonel Eliakim Scammon, a Union brigade commander in southwestern Virginia in the spring of 1862, wrote a letter to Gen Cox in which he exclaimed, "There is nothing to stop us this side of railroad except mud and water." *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 97.
[73] Jacob D. Cox*, Military Reminiscences of the Civil War Vol. 1* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 207; Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroad*, 123-125.

Virginia as its attention was drawn to campaigns and battles elsewhere. This changed in

the summer of 1863, when Union forces permanently captured the Cumberland Gap.

Suddenly, southwestern Virginia was, in the words of President Davis, "laid open" to

Union Army operations and the defense of this region took on a sense of urgency.[74]

General Samuel Jones, commanding general of Confederate forces in southwestern

Virginia, now had to monitor not only the mountain gaps of West Virginia that led into

southwestern Virginia, but also his southern flank, since Union soldiers could now cross

into Virginia through the Cumberland Gap.[75]

Unfortunately for Gen Jones and subsequent Confederate commanders in

southwestern Virginia, Confederate policy makers did not provide many soldiers to the

Department of East Tennessee and West Virginia. The Confederate Government's lack of

discussion about southwestern Virginia, coupled with its failure to provide adequate

forces for its defense, revealed a bias towards the region. During the first two years of the

war, the Confederate Government viewed the region as a backwater theater. Although

confederate congressmen recognized the importance of the V&T, they did not appreciate

the vulnerability of the railroad to Union Army attacks, and thus they devoted little time

or men to the defense of the region. The Confederate Congress' lack of interest in

southwestern Virginia created an environment where Confederate Army commanders

required the aid of partisan rangers, for defense forces in the region needed all the men

they could find.

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[74]U.S. Senate, 58th Congress, 2d session, *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861-1865:* Vol 3, 58th Cong., 2d sess., 1904 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904-1905), 435.
[75] *The War of the Rebellion*. Series 1, Volume 29, Part II, 726.

An excellent example of the Confederate Government's lack of interest in southwestern Virginia comes from Jones' diary entry for October 30, 1862, when he recounted that Gen Echols army in southwestern Virginia was in desperate straits. Gen Echols had written a letter to the Secretary of War stating that several hundred of his men had deserted, and that the enemy, with ten to fifteen-thousand men, was pressing him back. He had to retreat and relinquish Charleston and the Kanawha salt works, one of the most important salt mines in the entire Confederacy. Jones concludes this entry with the sentence, "He [Gen Echols] has less than 4,000 men!"[76] Although Jones was amazed at the lack of Confederate soldiers in southwestern Virginia, he seemed to be relatively alone in caring about this fact, for the Confederate Congress continued to take little interest in the region, and was willing to cede the crucial salt mines to the Union Army.

Although Jones was interested in the conflict in southwestern Virginia, there was still a bias against southwestern Virginia evident in his diary entries. Jones wrote in his diary on November 24th that the Confederate Government had ordered General Lee to Western Virginia to prevent the Union Army from threatening the Confederacy's "western communications", the V&T and accompanying telegraphs that connected Richmond to Chattanooga. However, Jones wrote that this command was not adequate for Gen Lee, as he "is one of the most capacious minds we have" and "should have command over the largest army in the service."[77] Even though Union forces in southwestern Virginia were threatening Richmond's lines of communication and supply with states such as Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri, government workers such as

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[76] Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary Vol I,* 177.
[77] Ibid., 95.

Jones, an intelligent and well-informed employee, did not perceive southwestern Virginia to be worthy of the Confederacy's best leaders or resources.

Besides Jones, major Confederate Government leaders made decisions that also reflected their near-negligence towards southwestern Virginia. In November of 1862, Jones bemoaned the fact that Union forces had captured Charleston and the Kanawha salt works, just as Gen Echols had predicted when he retreated from Charleston the previous month. Jones wrote that President Davis should have heeded General Lee's advice and ordered a few thousand more Confederate Army soldiers to the salt works to provide an adequate force for its defense. However, because the President did not provide the forces necessary for Gen Echols to hold Charleston, Davis relinquished to the enemy mines capable of supplying salt for the entire Confederacy. Furthermore, Jones argued, it was just as expensive to supply troops in winter quarters in the Shenandoah Valley as it is would have been to supply them in southwestern Virginia where they might have successfully defended the mines. Referring to the salt works, Jones wrote, "A Caesar, a Napoleon, a Pitt, and a Washington, all great nation-makers, would have deemed this work worthy of their attention.[78] Clearly, the loss of the salt works had changed Jones' opinion of the war in southwestern Virginia, for merely a month before he had written about how southwestern Virginia was not an "adequate field" for Lee and his "capacious" mind.[79]

As noted earlier, however, the loss of the Cumberland Gap convinced the Confederate Government that southwestern Virginia was truly vulnerable to Union Army invasions, and thus they provided more troops for its defense. In September of 1863, Gen

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[78] Ibid., 186.
[79] Ibid., 95.

Jones demanded more reinforcements to southwestern Virginia, for with the loss of the

Cumberland Gap to Union forces, he feared the loss of all of southwestern Virginia,

including Saltville's critical mines. The Confederate Government listened, and

dispatched a brigade to Abingdon the day Gen Jones' letter was received in Richmond.[80]

Later that month, upon receiving an incorrect message that Union forces had occupied

Bristol, the Confederate Secretary of War immediately telegraphed orders that sent a

brigade marching to reinforce Gen Jones.[81] Having lost the Kanawha salt works to Union

forces, the Confederate Government was intent on protecting southwestern Virginia and

its salt mines with adequate army forces.

Although by the summer of 1863 Confederate policy-makers no longer

continually overlooked the defense of southwestern Virginia, the Department of East

Tennessee and West Virginia continually dealt with chronic under-manning. This was

largely a result of the Confederate War Department stripping southwestern Virginia of

much of its defense force. By the time Gen Jones assumed command of Confederate

forces in southwestern Virginia in December of 1862, the War Department had removed

four large regiments and Brigadier General Humphrey Marshall's entire army from the

Department of East Tennessee and West Virginia for reassignment elsewhere.[82] The

Confederate Government's initial lack of interest in southwestern Virginia, combined

with the difficulties of recruiting soldiers in the region, had left the department critically

short of military forces. Even with the newfound support of policy-makers in Richmond,

[80] J.B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary: At the Confederate States Capital Vol. II.* ed. Howard Swiggett (New York: Old Hickory, 1935), 44.
[81] Ibid., 49.
[82] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 33, 1094.

by 1863 southwestern Virginia commanders simply did not have many soldiers with which to fend-off Union Army raids into the region.

After 1863, the Confederate Congress recognized the increasing vulnerability of southwestern Virginia. In mid-October of 1863, Gen Jones wrote a letter to Richmond from Dublin Depot in which he predicted an attack on the salt works. Reacting to this letter, the Confederate Government hastily issues a call for volunteers in Richmond to form a militia unit and march to Saltville. Jones noted in his diary that this was absurd, as any volunteers from Richmond would be too late to save the salt works from attacking Union forces, or the local Confederate troops would have already driven off the attacking Union force by the time the Richmond volunteers arrived.[83]

This diary entry is interesting, however, for it reveals how the Confederate Government's views of southwestern Virginia had shifted from near-negligence towards the region to overreacting to any perceived threat to the area. This entry also reveals how short on soldiers the Confederacy was by this point in the war.[84] Roughly a year before, in December of 1862, Gen Lee had written a letter to Gen Jones in which he had suggested that he should detach some of his troops to aid in operations elsewhere, a

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[83] Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary Vol II,* 73.

[84] James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 611-612, 647, 680. Confederate citizens' resistance to conscription exacerbated the Confederate Army's manpower shortage, and there is an entire group of historians who have written on this topic. These historians also study desertion, which was an especially critical issue for Confederate armies with depleted ranks. Hundreds of thousands of Confederate soldiers deserted for a variety of reasons, and by the spring of 1863, with Union armies in most theaters on the offensive, many soldiers deserted so that they could return home and protect their families from Union soldiers. Some key works in this field include Mark Weitz's *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); Larry J. Daniel's *Soldiering in the Army of Tennessee: A Portrait of Life in a Confederate Army* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Reid Mitchell's *Civil War Soldiers: Their Expectations and Their Experiences* (New York: Viking, 1988). Information about this scholarly trend comes from Lorien Foote, "Soldiers," in Sheehan-Dean, Aaron, ed. *A Companion to the U.S. Civil War Vol. 1.*, (New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 123-124.

suggestion which Gen Jones deemed "inexpedient."[85] By the winter of 1862, Gen Lee was already seeking to shift the Confederacy's limited forces to those fronts where they were most needed, pulling soldiers from one area to fill a hole in another region.

The Confederacy's depleted ranks led to squabbles among Confederate generals desperate for reinforcements. For example, in December of 1863 and January of 1864, Gen Jones engaged in an argument with Lieutenant General James Longstreet about some regiments that Gen Longstreet was holding in East Tennessee. Jones desired Longstreet to transfer those regiments to Dublin so that Jones could use them to defend against an impending raid that he believed Brigadier General William Averell was preparing to launch against southwestern Virginia's salt and lead mines.[86] Faced with different threats, and each believing they needed the troops, Jones and Longstreet were at loggerheads about where the regiments should be stationed. Eventually, Jones wrote a letter to Lee asking that the troops in East Tennessee be restored to his command, for if he was to be "expected to protect this section of country and the important line of railroad passing through it," he must have command of all his soldiers.[87] Jones' effort to elevate this argument to Lee reveals how desperately he needed those soldiers in his command.

In the midst of the shortage of soldiers for southwestern Virginia, an increasing reliance on guerrillas by the Confederate government would have seemed logical. However, in his diary entries about southwestern Virginia and the continual scramble to find troops to defend the area from Union raids, Jones very rarely mentioned Confederate guerrillas. Since he worked directly for the Confederate Secretary of War, becoming almost like an assistant to the Secretary, he read all the mail traffic in and out of the

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[85] Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary Vol I,* 212.
[86] Ibid., 135.
[87] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 31, Part III, 872.

Secretary's office. Thus, in all likelihood, Jones' diary entry topics accurately reflected

the subjects that occupied the attention of upper-level Confederate politicians. The fact

that the topic of guerrillas rarely appeared in Jones' diary reflected the Confederate

government's continual overlooking of irregular combatants. Despite the paucity of

Confederate Army soldiers in southwestern Virginia, Jones' diary revealed little

conversation about guerrillas, and supplementing conventional army forces with irregular

combatants seems to have never been seriously considered by the Confederate Secretary

of War.

In fact, in both volumes of his diary, Jones only mentioned one instance in which

a Confederate politician considered formally employing guerrillas as a defense force.

This instance was in October of 1862, when Jones noted in his journal that President

Davis intended to suspend the Conscription Act in western Virginia so that he could

organize an army of partisan rangers in that region.[88] However, after noting the

President's intention, Jones never again mentioned the idea, and later in the month,

President Davis relied upon the Conscription Act to call all males between eighteen and

forty to enlist in the Confederate Army.[89] President Davis did not exempt western

Virginians from conscription, and thus his supposed plan to create an army of guerrillas

never materialized.

The records of the Confederate War Department reinforce the sense that

Confederate policy makers were simply not interested in Confederate guerrillas.

Throughout the war, all the War Department's orders and circulars were focused only on

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[88]Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary Vol I*, 173.
[89] Ibid., 174. Confederate conscription in 1862 actually only affected men aged eighteen to thirty-five, so it seems likely that Jones simply wrote the wrong age or misunderstood the upper age limit delineated by the Confederate Conscription Act.

partisan rangers and the execution of the Confederate Congress' passage and repeal of the

Partisan Ranger Act of 1862. The War Department disseminated orders restricting who

could join ranger units and outlining rangers' regulations and responsibilities, and also

issued multiple rulings intended to ensure that men would not desert the Confederate

Army to become rangers.[90] The War Department's documents revealed it was far more

interested in ensuring rangers did not weaken the Confederate Army rather than exploring

how the Confederacy might exploit rangers' unique capabilities. Not a single Confederate

War Department order or circular analyzed the potential usefulness of partisan rangers or

addressed how a Confederate Army commander might employ ranger units. Moreover,

the War Department never even addressed the topics of bushwhackers or home guards

fighting as guerrillas, and completely ignored those partisan rangers fighting outside the

hierarchy of the Confederate Army. Even when a Confederate War Department document

did reference "Guerrilla Service," the document focused on rangers, not bushwhackers.[91]

Outside of its order and circulars on rangers, the War Department simply was not

interested in exploring irregular combatant's usefulness to the Confederate war effort.

Although most Confederate politicians and policy-makers overlooked guerrillas,

Jones' diary revealed that he recognized that irregular forces could be useful to the

Confederacy. In one interesting diary entry from November 11, 1861, Jones mused over

the possibility of creating a paramilitary police force. Jones wrote this in reaction to news

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[90] Confederate War Department, *General Orders and Circulars Nos 1-22 (1861) and Nos 1-112 (1862): Orders 30, 43, 53*, Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WD_id6Z1K (accessed July 15, 2016); Confederate War Department, *General Orders and Circulars Nos 1-164 (1863): Orders 47, 82*, Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WTd53zRku (accessed July 15, 2016); Confederate War Department, *General Orders and Circulars, Nos 1-87 (1864): Order 29*, Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WeqA8PBh6 (accessed July 15, 2016).

[91] Confederate War Department, *General Orders and Circulars, Nos 1-112 (1862): Order 30*, Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WD_id6Z1K (accessed July 15, 2016).

that Union spies from western Virginia and East Tennessee burned several railroad

bridges in Tennessee and thus disrupted the movement of large amounts of men, war

material, and provisions for the Confederate Army. In order to protect railroads from

further sabotage, Jones argued that civilians should form a "military police" to prevent

Unionists from hampering the flow of men and material from Richmond to

Chattanooga.[92] Although he did not call these military police "partisan rangers" or

"guerrillas," Jones was essentially arguing for a paramilitary force that could support

Confederate Army forces by protecting rear areas from enemy irregular warriors.

Although Jones had no power to execute changes or make decisions, he was a well-

positioned clerk and his words revealed that there were still members of the Confederate

Government interested in the potential usefulness of para-military/guerrilla forces.

Although there are no records of the Confederate Government discussing the idea

of supplementing southwestern Virginia's defensive forces with partisan rangers, there

were Confederate Army generals who quickly recognized the usefulness of irregular

warriors in southwestern Virginia.[93] For example, Gen Lee recommended that

commanders in southwestern Virginia recruit partisan ranger companies. A.L. Long, a

colonel on Lee's staff, wrote a response to a letter Gen Loring had written to Lee in

which he pleaded for reinforcements. At the time, May of 1862, Gen Loring was in

command of all Confederate forces in southwestern Virginia, and had explained to Gen.

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[92] Ibid., 91.

[93] This thesis relies heavily upon the Journal of the Confederate Congress, however these records provide only fragments of Congress' actions and debates. For example, it is clear that the Committee of Military Affairs heavily debated the idea of enlisting partisan rangers in the Confederate Army in 1862, for they drafted the initial act. Also, there are tantalizing hints that they discussed guerrillas on a fairly regular basis. For example, on Jan 28, 1863, a delegate presented a "memorial of sundry citizens of Newbern, Va., in reference to partisan rangers," however, this document went directly to the Committee on Military Affairs without being read. What did the citizens of Newbern think about partisan rangers? Were they complaining of their lawlessness, or memorializing their defense of Newbern? *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 6, January 28, 1863, 52.

Lee that he needed more soldiers. Col Long responded that Gen Lee had no reinforcements to send, but that Gen Lee recommended that Gen Loring might speedily increase his force by raising partisan ranger units. Recently authorized under the Partisan Ranger Act, Gen Lee advised that Gen Loring should choose competent officers to raise partisan ranger units and then submit those officers' names to Richmond so that President Davis could approve their commissioning. Gen Lee assured Gen Loring that "every exertion shall be made" to find weapons for the partisan rangers.[94]

In this letter, Gen Lee referenced the Partisan Ranger Act of 1862. The Confederate Congress' debate over this act represented the only discussions Congress had on the subject of guerrillas, and Congress did not discuss this act until the spring of 1862. It was not until mid-April of 1862, that Congress began to examine the possibility of incorporating partisan rangers into the Confederate Army. A motion on April 12th 1862, ordered the Committee on Military Affairs to look at authorizing the president to incorporate "irregular troops" into the army for detached service.[95] However, the Committee on Military Affairs recommended the motion be dismissed and no longer considered, a further example of the lack of consideration guerrillas often received in the Confederate Congress. Upon receiving the Committee's suggestion to dismiss the motion, Congress debated and voted for the motion be resubmitted to the Committee on Military Affairs.[96] Eventually, both the House of Representatives and the Senate approved the bill, and President Davis signed "An act to organize bands of partisan rangers" on 21 April, 1862.[97]

[94] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 899.
[95] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 2, April 12, 1862, 156.
[96] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 2, April 15, 1862, 165.
[97] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 2, April 19, 1862, 195.

The Partisan Ranger Act authorized President Davis to commission officers with the authority to raise bands of partisan rangers, organized into companies, regiments, or whatever type of unit the President approved. The rangers were entitled to the same pay, rations, and quarters as soldiers, and were also supposed to be subject to identical regulations and discipline. One of the special aspects of this act was its instruction regarding captured articles of war. If rangers captured any arms or ammunition from the enemy, they could deliver them to a Confederate quartermaster and be paid the captured goods' full value.[98] This act was an attempt by the Confederate Congress to employ guerrillas while also retaining some theoretical control over them. Unfortunately for the Confederate Congress, some partisan ranger bands raised under this act had little desire to maintain their connection to the Confederate Army and be subject to the same regulations as soldiers.

The Confederate Congress was aware of the dangers of recruiting partisan rangers, and after the act was signed into law, Congress debated various parts of the bill. Their debates reveal some of the fears and reservations they harbored about the act. For example, on September 1st of 1862, Congress debated President Davis' motion to strike out a clause from the bill that stated that partisan ranger bands could only be raised in districts which had completely filled their Confederate Army companies or regiments. Congress debated this clause, and after a postponement of debate, ended up voting to support the President's motion to strike this clause from the bill.[99] Congress voted on a number of amendments to the bill, including one that stated that this act should not prevent the Secretary of War from raising bands of partisan rangers composed of men too

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[98] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 4, Vol 1, 1094-1095.
[99] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 2, September 2, 1862, 252.

old to be conscripted.[100] This amendment is interesting, for it revealed that congressmen were already thinking of potential ways of enlisting the support of men who might be interested in serving in the military without enduring all the privations and challenges of enlistment in the Confederate Army. Older men could be enlisted into guerrilla bands later in the war, thus enabling aged men to fight for the Confederate cause without enduring the challenges of campaigning.

However, the continuing debating over the act also reflected the Confederate Congress' uncomfortableness with enlisting partisan rangers in the Confederate Army. The Partisan Ranger Act raised bands of guerrillas who could be detached from the army and operate as semi-independent commands. However, this was an idea foreign to many Americans, especially nineteenth century politicians used to a strict military world in which nations obeyed rules of war. Armies, commanded by officers with clear authority over their soldiers, marched to battle and sought out the enemy army. This thinking was born out of a centuries-long tradition of Western religious and civil theorists' writings about ideas such as "just war." Men like Emrich Von Vattel, a Swiss civil theorist in the eighteenth century, argued that armies should not attack women, children, or the elderly, despite the fact that they were technically the enemy, and that military officers should punish those soldiers who violated this rule. Although the actions of many European nations during the Napoleonic War proved that many politicians and generals did not agree with Vattel, civil theorists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries created the beginnings of international laws that would govern warfare.[101]

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[100] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 2, September 2, 1862, 255.
[101] Hartigan, *Lieber's Code*, 3-4.

Although theorists' writings about rules of war largely did not permeate Western military institutions, by the early nineteenth century military officers had adopted the idea that a commanders' main job was maintaining a disciplined force that could defeat enemy armies.[102] Thus, from both the perspective of civilian and military leaders, guerrillas had no role in an army. Firstly, their success often depended on them operating completely differently from conventional forces, thus preventing them from becoming part of a strictly disciplined army. Moreover, they did not seek out the enemy army on the battlefield, but instead sought to strike enemy camps, patrols, and foraging efforts. They rarely fought to gain and hold ground, but instead used their mobility to flee and survive to fight another day. In other words, they represented a sort of anarchy to politicians and officers focused on putting disciplined armies on the battlefield.

This meant that there was bound to be friction between some partisan rangers and Confederate Army officers. Operating as detached units meant that partisan rangers sometimes operated nowhere near officers who could discipline the guerrillas, or hold them to army regulations. Some partisan rangers in Virginia largely operated when and how they wanted, and often drew the ire of Confederate Army commanders. Prominent Confederate generals such as Braxton Bragg and Lee promoted efforts to disband partisan rangers later in the war, believing rangers to be less effective and disciplined than conventional soldiers.[103] Gen Lee believed most partisan rangers injured the Confederate

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[102] Ibid., 4-5.

[103] Adam Rankin Johnson, *The Partisan Rangers of the Confederate States Army*, ed. William J. Davis (Louisville, Kentucky: Geo. G. Fetter Company, 1904), 131. Johnson mentions that General Bragg attempted to recall all Confederate partisan ranger units in Kentucky in 1862, and force them to join the infantry.
Although many generals throughout the Confederate Army did not believe in employing guerrillas, there were some who believed they could be very useful. One excellent example is Major General Mansfield Lovell, who in a letter to P.G.T. Beauregard dated May 12, 1862, promoted the idea of recruiting partisan rangers. Deprived of the rifles needed to arm Confederate Army regiments, Lovell proposed raising five to

war effort, rather than aid it, and the system of employing rangers "gives license to many deserters and marauder, who…commit depredations on friend and foe alike." Moreover, Lee believed the temptation of serving as a partisan ranger caused men to desert the Confederate Army to join a ranger band[104] Earlier in the war, the Confederate War Department had recognized this potential problem, and had issued a general order in June of 1862 that prohibited men from leaving the Confederate Army to join a partisan ranger unit, and threatened that any ranger officer who accepted deserters into his unit would be subject to a court martial.[105] As a further measure against men leaving the army to serve as partisan rangers, in July of 1863, the War Department passed another general order that stated that any man liable to be conscripted into the Confederate Army could not serve as a partisan ranger, and that those men who did serve as rangers must be over thirty-five years old.[106] In other words, according to the War Department, the only men who could fight as rangers were those who were too old to be conscripted. However, with partisan rangers often operating on detached service away from the Confederate Army, both of these orders were difficult order for Confederate Army officers to enforce among ranger units. Moreover, since many partisan rangers in southwestern Virginia hailed from counties already occupied by the Union Army of the Ohio, the men who joined ranger units were not available for conscription into the Confederate Army, and thus the War Department's orders did not apply to them.

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six-thousand partisan rangers and positioning them outside of New Orleans in order to prevent Union Army forces from sallying out from the city. Few other Confederate generals desired to raise partisan ranger units in such large numbers. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 6, 889.

[104] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 33, 1252.

[105] Confederate War Department, *General Orders and Circulars Nos 1-22 (1861) and Nos 1-112 (1862): Order 43,* Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WD_id6Z1K (accessed July 15, 2016).

[106] Confederate War Department, *General Orders and Circulars Nos 1-22 (1861) and Nos 1-112 (1862): Order 53,* Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WD_id6Z1K (accessed July 15, 2016).

Uneasiness with the partisan ranger bands quickly became apparent in Congress, and as early as January of 1863, Congress agreed that the Committee on Military Affairs needed to look into reducing the number of partisan ranger bands and increasing the efficiency of organization in the remaining units.[107] The next month, the Committee on Military Affairs proposed an amendment to a bill designed to increase the efficiency of cavalry units and punish lawlessness among cavalrymen. This committee's amendment proposed that Congress should repeal all laws authorizing the creation of partisan ranger bands serving as cavalry, and that the existing partisans should be provided the opportunity to volunteer for service in Confederate army cavalry units. If they refused to do this, the Committee proposed forcing them into army infantry units, and impressing their mounts for public use.[108] This heavy handed approach to partisan rangers reveals that the Committee on Military Affairs believed that cavalrymen's' illegal behavior was somehow linked to rangers and the poor example they set.

Confederate generals' pressure on Congress to repeal the Partisan Ranger Act, combined with the legislators' own reservations about guerrillas, led Congress to repeal the Partisan Ranger Act on February 17, 1864. The repeal called upon all partisan rangers to join the Confederate Army as conventional cavalrymen or infantrymen.[109] However, the third section of the bill to repeal the act did authorize the Secretary of War to except

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[107] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 6, 48.

[108] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 6, 802.

[109] *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 3, 791. The Partisan Ranger Act did exempt two specific ranger bands: Colonel John Mosby's and Captain John McNeill's companies. These companies had caught the eye of Gen. Lee, and were apparently more disciplined than the average partisan ranger unit. In January of 1864 Lee even wrote a letter to James Seddon, the Secretary of War, asking for permission to promote Maj. Mosby to lieutenant colonel for being "zealous, bold, and skillful" in attacking Union forces in northern Virginia, and for accomplishing much with the few resources available to him. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 33, 1113; *Journal of the Confederate Congress*, Vol 3, 1252.

companies "serving within the lines of the enemy."[110] This clause revealed that Congress at least believed that those partisan rangers operating behind enemy lines might still be useful to the Confederate cause. Despite the passage of this bill, many Confederate departments, including the Department of East Tennessee and West Virginia, did not disband their partisan ranger units.

Some Confederate generals in southwestern Virginia initially shared the Confederate Congress' distaste for partisan rangers. However, their views of guerrillas quickly changed as they realized partisan rangers' potential usefulness and came to terms with the reality of combat in southwestern Virginia. Lack of conventional forces, poor roads, and difficult terrain hampered military operations, leading almost all Confederate generals in southwestern Virginia to recognize partisan rangers' effectiveness and employ them very often.

In an August 19th, 1862 letter to the Secretary of War, the Honorable George W. Randolph, Gen Marshall provided an example of southwestern Virginia generals' early negative views of guerrillas. Marshall commanded a small Confederate army that served in southwestern Virginia in 1861 and '62, and his force operated close to the Cumberland Gap and the border of Kentucky. He guarded the southern approach to southwestern Virginia, and planned to lead his army into eastern Kentucky in order to recruit men to the Confederate cause. In his letter, Marshall expressed anger at the actions of a band of partisan rangers commanded by a man named Menifee. Menifee was in Kentucky recruiting soldiers to fight in Gen Floyd's command, however, Menifee was also organizing these recruits into a partisan ranger band, robbing civilians and angering the

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[110] Confederate War Department. *General Orders and Circulars, Nos 1-87 (1864): Order 29*, Fold3 Online Database, https://www.fold3.com/browse/249/hhbwWLB9WeqA8PBh6 (accessed July 15, 2016).

people of eastern Kentucky. Since Marshall planned to advance into this region,

Menifee's action infuriated him, for they aroused the prejudices of the people against

Confederate forces. Marshall planned to forcibly arrest and exile Menifee and his men if

they would not retreat back into Virginia. Furthermore, Marshall explained that Gen

Loring permitted Gen Floyd to recruit partisan rangers into his force, and Gen Floyd was

thus accepting into his army any men he could find. [111] Marshall believed that Governor

Letcher must stop this practice, for it was "exceedingly detrimental to the Service of the

Confederacy."[112] Clearly, in the spring of 1862, Marshall did not view partisan rangers as

useful units that could supplement conventional army forces.[113]

However, Marshall's views quickly changed, and in a September 7, 1862 letter to

George Randolph, acting Secretary of War, Marshall explained that he desired to raise

companies of partisan rangers to keep in his rear as he advanced through southern West

Virginia. He envisioned them carrying out duties similar to those that the clerk Jones

believed should be the duty of a military police force. Marshall thought they could

enforce Confederate loyalty in counties with Unionist sympathizers, guard trains, protect

lines of communications, and be called forward to provide reinforcements for battles.

Moreover, he believed that service as partisan rangers would accustom young men to

military life and leaves of absence from their families, until they actually preferred

military service over life as civilians. Randolph did not approve this idea, but this letter

[111] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 16, Part II, 765.
[112] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 16, Part III, 765.
[113] Brigadier General John Williams was another southwestern Virginia Confederate general who not enthusiastic having partisan rangers in his command during the early years of the war was. After assuming command of a disorganized Confederate force at the Narrows in November of 1862, he mentioned that among their ranks was Colonel Dunn's Partisan Rangers, a unit that mustered in Virginia's Provisional Army for the duration of the war. Gen Williams noted that his new army was "little better than a mob," and since drought had destroyed the local hay crop, complained that too large a percentage of his force was mounted. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 21, 1024.

did reveal that Marshall's views of guerrillas had significantly changed in a matter of weeks.[114]

Further evidence of Marshall's change in perspective came from a November 5th, 1862 letter he penned to the Secretary of War. In this letter, Marshall mentioned that a Confederate partisan ranger unit was operating in southwestern Virginia. He reported that a certain individual named Samuel Salyer was in command of a battalion of partisan rangers who were causing trouble for the inhabitants of Wise county.[115] However, Marshall argued that they were also causing the enemy "much positive harm" by frequently raiding Kentucky and hauling their plunder back into Virginia. He did note that if Union forces in Kentucky retaliated against southwestern Virginians because of the depredations caused by Salyer and his men, the rangers would "render but little assistance." Sayler and his rangers were doing almost the exact same thing that Menifee and his men had been doing merely months before, but it seems that the realities of war had quieted some of Marshall's righteous rage toward partisan rangers' lawless behavior, especially in regard to ranger units who caused the enemy harm. Furthermore, the challenges of defending southwestern Virginia with a very limited number of conventional forces changed his views about employing partisan rangers.

Marshall acted upon his new perspective on guerrillas, and actively employed partisan rangers to defend southwestern Virginia. He largely used rangers as scouts, gathering intelligence on the size and location of enemy forces. However, rangers were flexible combatants, and he also loosed them to harass and attack Union troops. Marshall employed his guerrillas as semi-autonomous units that could complete multi-day

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[114] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 52, Part II, 347.
[115] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part II, 391.

independent operations while still remaining under his command. Marshall's choice to use partisan rangers to complete special missions while also using them as a detached independent force became common among southwestern Virginia Confederate generals.

An excellent example of the manner in which Marshall employed guerrillas came during a Union raid on Virginia that occurred on December 29th and 30th, 1862. A partisan ranger commander named Captain William Baldwin provided crucial reconnaissance for Marshall and also harassed the invading Union force. On the night of 29 December, two-thousand Union cavalrymen rode through Big Moccasin Gap in southwestern Virginia. Baldwin and his partisan rangers were in the area and his pickets discovered the Union force rapidly traveling to Bristol. Baldwin sent a rider to inform Marshall of the raid, but since the dispatch rider was captured by the Union invaders, Baldwin was forced to ride to a nearby town and telegraph Marshall the news. Meanwhile, the Union cavalrymen burned a railroad bridge and depot, destroying a large amount of rail cars, stores, weapons, and other material. Marshall collected his infantry and artillery and Bristol and waited for an attack that never arrived. Instead the Union cavalrymen stopped their advance and began to ride back to Kentucky. On the night of the 30th, Marshall gave Baldwin leave to harass the Union force, but ordered him not to lead a large attack on the column until he received further order[116]

Thus, during the night of the 30th and all day on the 31st, Capt Baldwin's partisan rangers attacked the rear of the Union column, while also sending a steady stream of couriers back to Marshall to inform him of the enemy's disposition. Encouraged by information about the Union cavalrymen's retreat, on the evening of the 31st, Marshall gathered his forces and pursued the Union invaders, intent on fighting them. Meanwhile,

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[116] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part 1, 123.

Baldwin's rangers attacked the commander of the Union raiding force, a general who was stopping for a rest near the rear of his column. The Confederate rangers wounded the general's aide-de-camp and stole the general's horse, saber, and all his baggage, along with one of his staff member's horse and baggage. This created "no small excitement" in the rear of the enemy column.[117] However, fearful of driving the Union column into a panic that would cause them to retreat even faster away from Marshall and his chasing forces, Baldwin temporarily ceased attacking the column. After being lulled into a false sense of security due to the sudden lack of harassment, the Union retreating column camped along the road on the night of the 31st. Unfortunately for Baldwin and his men, Marshall proved very cautious in attacking the retreating Union force the next day, and only ordered a small attack on the enemy column's rear. This allowed the Union force to slip back into Kentucky and live to fight another day. However, had Marshall been a more aggressive general, he could have exploited the enemy's fear and disarray caused by Capt Baldwin's partisan rangers and successfully attacked the Union column.[118]

This short operation, minor by Civil War standards, revealed much about Confederate partisan rangers in southwestern Virginia. Capt Baldwin and his men were not ill-disciplined amateurs intent only on killing invading Yankees. Instead, they were mobile scouts, effectively serving as Marshall's eyes and ears, and obeying his orders. During the first operation to defend Bristol, Capt Baldwin's rangers did not recklessly harass the end of the Union column. Instead, they sought to disorganize the enemy column, and panic the Union cavalrymen by doing things like attacking their commanding general. Furthermore, Capt Baldwin understood that Marshall's force could

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[117] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part 1, 123.
[118] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part I, 123.

do more damage than his ranger force, and thus he ordered his men to stop harassing the

Union column in order to manipulate the Union force into thinking they were safe to

camp for the night. This provided Marshall and his infantry the time they needed to

overtake the retreating column, and revealed that Capt Baldwin was a sharp officer who

understand that blind aggressiveness is not always the soundest strategy and displayed an

impressive amount of restraint. His restraint also showed that he was a team player who

understand his units' role in Marshall's army. Capt Baldwin's actions revealed that he

was a partisan ranger who was comfortable working with conventional Confederate

Army units, and one who in return was trusted by the general for whom he worked.

Marshall employed partisan rangers again to stop a Union raid on Bristol that

occurred right after the raid described in the paragraphs above. Immediately after the

two-thousand Union cavalrymen retreated, a larger Union force of four-thousand cavalry

rode into southwestern Virginia, intent on capturing Bristol. Marshall employed three

partisan ranger bands to help stop the Union raiders. Marshall initially learned of the

invasion from a telegraph sent by a partisan ranger commander named Captain S.P.

Larmer, who was in East Tennessee with his band, gathering up deserters. Capt Larmer

telegraphed Marshall a message outlining the enemy's strength and correctly predicting

their destination as Bristol. This information allowed Marshall to immediately devise a

plan to protect Bristol and intercept the invaders, and thus Capt Larmer's unit played an

absolutely critical role in the defense of Bristol by providing initial military intelligence

for Marshall. [119]

The second band of rangers that Marshall employed was Major Witcher's Thirty-

Fourth Virginia mounted battalion, a unit numbering around four hundred men. He

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[119] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part 1, 96.

ordered Witcher's battalion to occupy a guarding position east of Abingdon near Pound and Little Moccasin Gaps, thus enabling them to reconnoiter both areas and provide early warning to Marshall if the invading Union cavalrymen traveled through these gaps.[120] Moreover, Witcher's battalion was stationed within supporting distance of other Confederate units watching nearby roads, and thus if the enemy did appear, Witcher's Battalion could use their mobility to quickly rally nearby Confederate units for an attack on the Union invaders, or they could reinforce nearby Confederate units.

Witcher's Battalion provided Marshall with a flexible force that played important roles as both intelligence gatherers and a quick reaction force. They monitored the gaps and could quickly report any Union troop movements to Marshall. However, their usefulness really shone through as a quick reaction force (QRF). A QRF is a modern term that refers to a small unit of soldiers who are stationed near a potentially dangerous area and can immediately travel to the area to respond to a threat. This term applies to the actions of Witcher's Batallion because their activities were like that of a QRF. Since the partisan rangers stationed themselves near both Pound and Little Moccasin Gap, they could use their horses to quickly ride to either one of these gaps to attack any Union cavalrymen who appeared. Witcher's Battalion's mobility made them more of a useful asset than infantry because infantry would take much longer to march to either one of the gaps, and thus they could not position themselves between the gaps and guard both areas.

Complementing Major Witcher's strong partisan ranger force was Captain Baldwin's smaller partisan ranger band. Marshall sent Capt Baldwin's force on a mission to reconnoiter a critical road that the Union force was expected to travel. After making contact with the enemy, Capt Baldwin's mission was to shadow the enemy force and

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[120] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part 1, 96.

report their movements, which Capt Baldwin and his men faithfully did. Over the next day, Capt Baldwin kept Marshall informed by sending telegraphs with information about the locations of the enemy camps, estimates of enemy numbers, and his thoughts on which routes the enemy force intended to take to reach Bristol.[121] This information provided Marshall with the intelligence he needed to launch his counterattack. Capt Baldwin's information convinced Marshall that the Union force intended to pass through Moccasin Gap, nineteenth miles east of Bristol. Arriving there before the Union invaders, Marshall was able to disperse his force through the various minor gaps in the area, thus blocking almost all the routes the invaders had to travel to reach Bristol. Thus prevented from advancing on Bristol, the Union cavalrymen briefly occupied Jonesville and then retreated back to Kentucky.[122]

Marshall had outmaneuvered his enemy almost without firing a shot, for in southwestern Virginia, poor roads and mountain gaps provided limited invasion routes for Union forces and funneled large raising forces into small mountain passes that were relatively easy for Confederate soldiers to defend. Knowing where the enemy was headed, and getting to the correct gaps and roads first, was more important than having a large army. Marshall understood this, and was able to outmaneuver the Union invaders because his partisan ranger bands provided him accurate information about the enemy's locations and numbers. This enabled him to make the correct decision regarding the enemy's potential travel route, and reach the correct mountain gaps before the Union cavalrymen.

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[121] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part 1, 99-100.
[122] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 20, Part 1, 100-102.

Implicit in this discussion of the importance of partisan rangers to Marshall's army is the fact that they were formally part of his army. Not only did Marshall include much information about partisan ranger's actions in his after-action reports, but partisan rangers were included in the lists of units that comprised his command. For example, in reports from February and March of 1863, lists of units that Marshall commanded were included in the documents.[123] Among the dozen-plus units listed were the 27th Virginia Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H.A. Edmundson, with "Partisan Rangers" in parentheses next to the unit designation, and the Kentucky Partisan Rangers commanded by Captain G.M. Jessee.

The roster from mid-February of 1863 also included a list of units on detached service.[124] Among these units was the 34th Virginia Battalion, commanded by Major V. A. Witcher. Although Witcher's Battalion participated in stopping the Union cavalry raid in December of 1862, it did not appear on the mid-March unit roster, and thus it is likely that the battalion was serving elsewhere in southwestern Virginia when the unit roster was created. Partisan ranger units operated both under commanders' immediate commands, and on detached service. For example, in the February report there were two companies of the 27th Virginia Battalion Partisan Rangers commanded by an officer named Captain Collings, and serving under Marshall's "Immediate Command." However, on the same unit roster, the 27th Virginia Battalion commanded by Lieutenant Colonel H.A. Edmundson was listed as a unit "On Detached Service." Thus, Marshall seems to have divided the 27th Virginia Battalion, leaving two companies under his immediate command and probably camped near his headquarters in Holston Springs,

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[123] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 23, Part III, 712.
[124] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 23, Part III, 639.

Virginia. By having them under his immediate command, he ensured that he could quickly send them on missions. The remaining 27th Virginia companies he left on detached service with their battalion commander, Lt Col. Edmundson, to do things like ride through the mountains, harassing Union forces and serving as the eyes and ears of Marshall.[125]

The level of control Marshall had over the organization and operations of these partisan ranger units contradicts the idea that partisan rangers were ill-disciplined bands who operated independently of Confederate Army officers. Instead, the partisan rangers mixed the quasi-independence of detached service with that of serving in Confederate commanders' immediate chain of command. Marshall's partisan rangers were active members of his army, and they had a well-defined place in the military chain-of-command. However, Marshall could give them orders to act as semi-independent force that operated much like bushwhackers, choosing when and where to attack Union forces.

Marshall's use of partisan rangers as both reconnaissance and attack assets proved typical of Confederate commanders in southwestern Virginia. Ranger's mobility gave them an inherent mission flexibility that Confederate commanders quickly recognized and exploited. Gen Jones, the commander of all Confederate forces in southwestern Virginia from December of 1862 until March of 1864, firmly believed in the usefulness of partisan rangers, and supported his brigade commanders' efforts to effectively employ partisan rangers. Occasionally, he would personally order ranger units on special missions, reaching down into his brigade commanders' immediate commands and giving specific order to certain ranger companies. For example, in a March 12, 1863 letter to one of his subordinates, Colonel John McCausland, he explained that he had ordered Captain

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[125] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 23, Part III, 639.

William Thurmond and his partisan rangers on a reconnoitering mission against Union

forces at Fayetteville, and he expected them to provide accurate information about the

enemy's number and conditions. Gen Jones promised to then disseminate the information

he received from Capt Thurmond to his subordinate commanders, thus enabling his

commanders to make decisions based off the most up-to-date information possible.

Moreover, Gen Jones had ordered Capt Thurmond and his partisan rangers to join Col.

McCausland when they returned from their reconnaissance mission, thus temporarily

removing them from Brigadier General John Echols brigade. Capt Thurmond and his

partisan ranger company was such a critical reconnaissance asset that Gen Jones

personally temporarily transferred them between his subordinates. These rangers were an

important tool that needed to be placed with whatever commander could most effectively

employ them at the time.[126]

Although Gen Jones sometimes temporarily removed partisan rangers from his

command in order to free them for service elsewhere in southwestern Virginia, Echols

often employed guerrillas to help defend southwestern Virginia from Averell and his

cavalry raiders. On December 9th, 1863, Gen Echols ordered Captain Philip J. Thurmond

to take 150 partisan rangers on a nighttime ride towards the Kanawha River in West

Virginia.[127] Echols believed they would meet a Union force along the way that was

preparing to invade southwestern Virginia. Two days later Capt Thurmond and his men

encountered Union soldiers camped about twenty-eight miles west of Lewisburg, West

Virginia, a city in Greenbrier County. Capt Thurmond attacked the encamped soldiers,

killing, wounding, and capturing a considerable number. However, he soon realized that

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[126] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 25, Part II, 662.
[127] *The War of the Rebellion,* Series 1, Vol 29, Part 1, 948.

he had attacked the vanguard of a large Union force consisting of six regiments and an artillery battery. Thurmond immediately sent dispatch riders back to Gen Echols. Although Capt Thurmond's men were vastly outnumbered and forced to retreat, the rangers continually skirmished with the advancing enemy in a "most gallant manner."[128] Capt Thurmond's rangers helped slow the attacking Union force, and also alerted Gen Echols to the fact that Union forces were invading southwestern Virginia. Clearly Gen Echols trusted Capt Thurmond and his rangers because he sent them on a reconnaissance mission into enemy territory, expecting them to find enemy forces. Although he employed them more aggressively than Marshall employed his rangers, he still used them as his eyes and ears. He sent Capt Thurmond's rangers on a "reconnaissance-in-force" mission, which means their job was to find the enemy, briefly fight with them, then retreat when the enemy's forces became overwhelming. This type of operation enabled a commander like Gen Echols to better understand the quality and quantity of enemy troops and understand their likely destination. This information allowed him to make decisions regarding where to position his conventional Confederate Army units in preparation for defending Greenbrier county from the invading Yankees.

Along with Philip Thurmond's partisan rangers, Gen Echols also commanded a partisan ranger unit led by Philip's brother, William.[129] Service rosters for these two partisan ranger companies reveal that each contained around two-hundred men, and most of the members of these bands fought close to home. The majority of the rangers hailed from Greenbrier, Monroe, or Raleigh counties, and since these counties were caught in the middle of the struggle for southwestern Virginia, it is logical that the rangers

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[128] *The War of the Rebellion,* Series 1, Vol 29, Part 1, 948.
[129] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part II, 909; Weaver, *Thurmond's Partisan Rangers*, 13.

understood the topography of the area well.[130] Their knowledge of southwestern

Virginia's landscape no doubt aided their reconnaissance and fighting capabilities. For

example, in March of 1863, the Thurmond brothers had ambushed two companies of

Union cavalry between Raleigh and Fayette, West Virginia, capturing twenty-five horses

and causing the two companies to scatter in all directions into the woods.[131] Later that

year in May, Capt. Philip Thurmond's company coordinated with the 22nd Virginia

Infantry, under the command of Colonel John McCausland, to ambush another unit of

Union cavalry. The 22nd Virginia Infantry charged a Union cavalry company, causing

them to panic and flee in the direction of a bridge crossing a creek. However, Capt

Thurmond and his rangers had removed a plank on the bridge, thus trapping the fleeing

cavalry, and the Confederate managed to kill twenty-five Union soldiers. Since the

Thurmond brothers' partisan rangers intimately knew southern West Virginia and

southwestern Virginia, with all their hidden pathways and ambush points, their partisan

ranger companies became well-known for surprising and attacking Union forces.[132]

General John C. Breckenridge, commander of the Department of East Tennessee

and Southwestern Virginia after Gen. Jones, employed partisan rangers in a slightly

different manner than his predecessors. Although, like Gen Jones, he ordered them on

reconnaissance missions, he also occasionally employed them as if they were

conventional Confederate Army units. For example, while positioning his forces to

defend the V&T and southwestern Virginia's mines in March of 1864, Breckenridge

employed a battalion of partisan rangers to guard a ferry crossing on the Greenbrier

River. Since the ranks of Breckenridge's command were very depleted by this late stage

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[130] Ibid., 78-102.
[131] Ibid., 29.
[132] Ibid., 29-30.

in the war, partisan rangers helped him fill gaps in his long line of defenses.[133] In a letter

to Gen Lee on May 4th 1864, Breckenridge explained he had only four-thousand soldiers

in defensive positions in Monroe County, Narrows of the New River, and Princeton.

Moreover, he had reports that an eight-thousand man Union force in West Virginia was

preparing to raid southwestern Virginia, although Breckenridge believed the report was

"probably exaggerated."[134] Unfortunately, for Breckenridge, the report was quite

accurate, and thus he needed all the Confederate combatants he could find.

When Crook invaded southwestern Virginia in early May of 1864, his command

included over six-thousand infantry and a force of two-thousand cavalry under the

command of Averell. Breckenridge immediately moved his partisan rangers from their

static position, and employed them as scouts. Crook's invasion led to the Battle of

Cloyd's Mountain, the largest and most intense Civil War battle fought in southwestern

Virginia. Before the Battle of Cloyd's Mountain, Breckenridge needed accurate

intelligence on the enemy's movements in order to plan his defenses against Crook and

Averell's formidable forces. Breckenridge had at his disposal the Thurmond brothers'

partisan ranger companies, most likely the same battalion that had guarded the ferry.

Breckenridge also may have had a third partisan ranger company at his disposal, this one

commanded by a man named Captain John Amick. A unit roster from 30 April, 1864

shows Capt Amick's unit attached to Echol's Brigade, however Breckenridge made no

mention of the unit when writing about his plans to defeat Crook's invasion.[135] The

appearance of a new partisan ranger unit this late in the war speaks to the success of

irregular warriors in southwestern Virginia and to the fact that men were willing to join a

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[133] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 33, 1231.
[134] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 37, Part 1, 712.
[135] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 33, 1335.

partisan ranger unit at a time when Confederate Army units struggled to recruit new soldiers. Capt Amick initially served in one of the Thurmond brothers' units, but in late April 1864, organized another partisan ranger unit that served with the Thurmond brothers' bands until the end of the war.[136]

Breckenridge employed his partisan rangers in much the same way as Echols and Marshall had, using them as his eyes and ears to understand where the enemy was located and where they most likely headed. In early May, immediately before Crook's raid, he sent the Thurmond brothers' bands to Greenbrier County to scout in front of the Greenbrier River. In his after-action report, Breckenridge provided few details about their mission or locations, and this vagueness is most likely due to the fact that he ordered both companies on reconnaissance-in-force missions. He knew that Union forces in West Virginia were preparing for, or already executing, an invasion, and he wanted the Thurmond brothers and their partisan rangers to ride through the Union forces' probable invasion routes until they encountered the enemy. Put simply, Breckenridge sent the Thurmond brothers' rangers into West Virginia to find trouble. Moreover, on 5 May, Breckenridge ordered Brigadier General Albert Jenkins to move towards Staunton with infantry, and informed him that the Thurmond brothers' companies would eventually report to him. After making contact with the enemy, the Thurmond brothers were supposed to retreat to Staunton to cover the northern approaches to southwestern Virginia.[137] The Thurmond brothers' rangers thus provided Breckenridge and his subordinate commanders with both excellent reconnaissance capabilities and a potent cavalry attack force, making them a multi-purpose military asset.

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[136] Weaver, *Thurmond's Partisan Rangers*, 41.
[137] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 37, Part 1, 719.

Unfortunately, records about partisan rangers in southwestern Virginia largely disappear after 1864. In late September of 1864, Union Major General Stephen Burbridge led a raid into southwestern Virginia aimed at Saltville. Although he succeeded in driving Confederate soldiers from many of their defensive positions around Saltville, a lack of ammunition forced Burbridge to retreat back to Kentucky, leaving the salt mines untouched.[138] Interestingly, this battle contained one of the last reported actions of Confederate guerrillas in southwestern Virginia. The notorious bushwhacker Champ Ferguson, infamous for killing and murdering Unionists in Kentucky and East Tennessee, had marched to Saltville with Texas cavalry units to help stop Burbridge's raid. Although there are no accounts of his specific actions during the battle, it is clear that Ferguson and his band were positioned on the right flank of the Confederate line, where they fought as conventional Confederate soldiers. Just as Ferguson sometimes rode with the famed Confederate raider John H. Morgan, and fought as a conventional cavalryman, so did Ferguson at Saltville temporarily set aside his guerrilla lifestyle and join Confederate soldiers in the line of battle. Unfortunately, he only set aside his guerrilla warfare instincts for a very short period of time, and multiple witnesses later claimed that Ferguson stalked the battlefield the next day, executing wounded black soldiers.[139] Moreover, four days after the battle, Ferguson and a compatriot strode into a hospital building on the campus of Emory and Henry College in Emory, Virginia, and murdered multiple wounded Union black soldiers and a white officer.[140] The execution of injured soldiers on the battlefield outside Saltville, along with the murder of soldiers in a Confederate hospital, infuriated Burbridge and embarrassed Breckenridge, and helped

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[138] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 39, Part I, 552.
[139] McKnight, *Confederate Outlaw*, 147-149.
[140] Ibid., 150-151; *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 49, Part I, 765.

ensure that Ferguson was judged by a Union military court and hanged in October of

1865.[141] The fact that a series of battlefield executions and pre-meditated murders

constituted one of the last guerrilla actions recorded in a Confederate Army report speaks

to the true brutality of guerrilla warfare in southwestern Virginia. Moreover, Ferguson's

disregard for the conventional rules of war was representative of the guerrilla actions

which had continually fueled the Confederate Congress's uneasiness with irregular

combatants.

Although Burbridge's raid on Saltville failed, in late December of 1864,

Stoneman led a raid into southwestern Virginia that proved very successful. Stoneman's

force destroyed the V&T tracks around Abingdon, and captured Bristol, Wytheville and

Saltville, destroying the stores and supplies in those cities. Even more importantly,

Stoneman's command destroyed the lead and salt mines around Wytheville and Saltville,

respectively. Moreover, the Union force destroyed thirteen railroad locomotives with cars

attached, multiple unattached locomotives, every bridge west of the New River, and all

the railroad depots, storehouses, and factories in southwestern Virginia.[142] A Union Army

report on the raid noted that "Witcher's Command," no doubt referring to Witcher's

partisan ranger battalion, reinforced Breckenridge's army.[143] The inclusion of partisan

rangers in his force did not help Breckenridge stop Stoneman, though, and the

confederates failed to seriously impede the Union raiding force's progress. Stoneman's

personal report on the expedition stated that his command encountered about seven-

hundred home guards defending the salt mines around Saltville, and that his soldiers

easily captured the home guard members or forced them to flee. The home guards in this

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[141] McKnight, *Confederate Outlaw*, 177.
[142] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 45, Part 1, 808.
[143] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 45, Part 1, 44.

instance seem to have been operating as conventional soldiers, instead of fighting as guerrillas.[144]

Although this raid brought southwestern Virginia to her knees, it did not completely incapacitate the region, for laborers managed to repair the railroad and resume mining salt and lead.[145] The final blow that subjugated the region and permanently shut down the V&T did not come until March of 1865.[146] Stoneman led a final cavalry raid through southwestern Virginia that ripped up dozens of miles of track and razed depots, effectively completing the total destruction of the railroad. So thoroughly did the Union force cripple the railroad that it would take until July of 1865 for railroad employees to open the railroad line again to commerce.[147] By March of 1865, there were few Confederate forces left in southwestern Virginia, conventional or irregular, who could offer serious resistance to Stoneman's cavalrymen.[148]

After Gen Crook's raid, Confederate partisan rangers played an increasingly small role in defending southwestern Virginia, for years of hard service had thinned their ranks. However, their years of service in southwestern Virginia, both alongside Confederate Army units and alone on detached service, had played a crucial role in forestalling the destruction of the V&T. Their aggressive reconnoitering efforts had enabled Confederate commanders to block Union raiders' entrance to southwestern Virginia, and their mission

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[144] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 45, Part 1, 807.

[145] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 4, Vol 3, 1175. This letter from Richard Morton to Gen Lee noted that workers had managed to resume work at the Wythe Lead Mines on the 22nd of March, 1865.

[146] Although some historians have written that Gen Stoneman's December 1864 raid shut down the V&T for the remainder of the war, the railroad did continue to run, at least in a limited capacity. In late January of 1865, William Smith, the governor of Virginia, wrote a letter to Zebulon Vance, the governor of North Carolina, in which he noted that the V&T still transported salt for much of the Confederacy. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 51, Part II, 1059.

[147] Chris J. Hartley, *Stoneman's Raid: 1865* (Winston-Salem, NC: John F. Blair Publisher, 2010), 127-128, 389.

[148] Ibid., 385-387.

flexibility had enabled them to complete a wide range of operations for Confederate generals desperately trying to hold a long defensive line in the Appalachian Mountains. Although the Confederate Government often did not view them in a positive manner, they won the trust and respect of their Confederate Army commanders. Their actions proved that in southwestern Virginia, Confederate guerrillas' actions complemented Confederate Army operations, and the worlds of irregular and conventional warfare blended very easily.

Although Confederate records and correspondence about partisan rangers in southwestern Virginia is largely absent after Gen Burbridge's raid, advancing Union officers and enlisted soldiers kept diaries and journals in which they recounted the challenges posed by Confederate guerrillas. The next chapter will examine southwestern Virginia Confederate bushwhackers and home guard units from the perspective of Union soldiers, and will reveal that Confederate guerrillas forced Union Army commanders to change their tactics and objectives in southwestern Virginia, thus significantly degrading their ability to attack the V&T.

Chapter III

A Never-Ending Battle: Guerrilla Warfare from the Union Army's Perspective

American soldiers marched through a labyrinth of mountains, deep valleys, and rugged caves. The hot sun beat down on their packs, loaded with enough provisions and ammunition for a multi-day patrol. Sweat rolled into the eyes of panting soldiers, men exhausted from chasing an enemy they never saw through seemingly unending mountains and valleys. As the troopers marched past the homes of the region's poor inhabitants, women and children silently gazed at the soldiers, their obvious antipathy towards the soldiers causing the troopers to wonder what ambushes waited for them up the road. Although this narrative seems like it describes a twenty-first century U.S. Army patrol hunting the Taliban in Afghanistan, it is in fact describing the guerrilla war in southwestern Virginia. Confederate guerrillas' constant ambushes and attacks prompted Union forces in southwestern Virginia to execute extensive counter-guerrilla operations. Conducted daily, these guerrilla attacks and counter-guerrilla missions represented the real war in the region, for these occupied the attention of the Union Army in southwestern Virginia during the months between conventional pitched battles.

In order to more fully understand the role that Confederate guerrillas played in the war for southwestern Virginia, it is critical to examine the perspective of the Union soldiers and officers who fought Confederate irregulars in the region. Their diaries, journals, memoirs, and reports provided insights into the dangers that Confederate guerrillas posed to the Union army, and Union combatants' frustrations with their irregular foes revealed that guerrillas effectively shaped Union army operations and

limited the effectiveness of raids into southwestern Virginia. Moreover, the large number of Union officers and soldiers who recorded experiences or encounters with Confederate guerrillas provided further evidence of the critical role that Confederate guerrillas played in the defense of the V&T. Union soldiers' perspectives also enable one to better understand bushwhackers and home guards, those guerrillas who Confederate Army officers rarely mentioned in reports.

Union officers' and soldiers' writings revealed that Confederate guerrillas impacted Union forces in southwestern Virginia in three significant ways. First, guerrilla ambushes and attacks weakened Union lines of communication and supply, exacerbating the challenges that poor roads posed to Union commanders. Confederate guerrillas degraded Union forces' combat effectiveness by making it dangerous for soldiers and supply wagons to travel around southwestern Virginia. Second, constant guerrilla attacks forced Union Army commanders to detail large numbers of soldiers to escort supply wagons and trains in order to ensure that guerrillas could not sever crucial Union supply lines into southwestern Virginia. Moreover, Union commanders had to disperse their forces throughout West Virginia and southwestern Virginia in order to defend loyal Unionist civilians from Confederate guerrillas. Dispersing their forces to remote garrisons and wagon escort missions prevented Union commanders from conducting raids into southwestern Virginia and effectively crippled their ability to seize the offensive imitative. Thus, Confederate guerillas indirectly defended the V&T by hampering the movement of men, materiel, and information around southwestern Virginia, and preventing Union commanders from massing their forces, a critical step that any military leader must take before conducting offensive operations.

Third, Confederate guerrilla attacks forced Union commanders to adopt new tactics. Union Army officers realized that their conventional warfare tactics were inadequate for fighting guerrillas, and thus they devised alternative tactics and planned ingenious operations to trap and kill bushwhackers. Moreover, Union officers often shifted from being proactive commanders intent on raiding southwestern Virginia, to reactive leaders who responded to guerrilla attacks and ceded the offensive initiative to their irregular enemies.

By exploring the Union Army's perspective in southwestern Virginia's guerrilla war, this chapter engages with a scholarly trend in the field that focuses on the Union Army's response to Confederate guerrilla attacks. This broad trend includes works such as Clay Mountcastle's *Punitive War: Confederate Guerrillas and Union Reprisals* and Barton Myer's *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community, 1861-1865*. Although many guerrilla warfare books explore Union guerrillas or the countless struggles between Union soldiers and Confederate guerrillas, these two works include explorations of the ways in which guerrillas forced Union commanders to adopt unique tactics and objectives to combat irregular warfare. Mountcastle analyzes how Union commanders in Virginia grew angry with guerrilla harassment and began retaliating by adopting much harsher attitudes towards Confederate civilians and their property by burning houses and stealing foodstuffs. Although he does not analyze tactical changes in the Union military, he does argue that Union commanders' objectives shifted from focusing entirely on fighting the Confederate Army to specifically targeting Confederate civilians' homes and property. Approaching the topic from a very different perspective, Myers examines how the

complex guerrilla conflict in coastal North Carolina led Union officers to recruit former slaves into their units. These former slaves provided Union counter-guerrilla forces with the information and motivation to find and capture Confederate guerrillas, and enabled them to execute effective raids that captured Confederate guerrillas and helped disrupt the Confederacy's influence in the region. Although neither of these books are primarily focused on exploring how the actions of Confederate guerrillas forced change in the Union Army, both books do so inadvertently and represent a growing trend among historians who desire to understand the larger consequences and effects within the Union Army that were a result of its struggle with guerrillas.

Before exploring guerrilla warfare's effect on Union forces in southwestern Virginia, it is important to remember that most early Union soldiers in the region were not prepared for the unique stresses and challenges of guerrilla warfare. Union soldiers often could not see who was attacking them, and even if they did spot their enemies, might have no way of knowing if their ambushers were Confederate home guards or simply bushwhackers. Thus, the term home guards is not used in this chapter unless a letter or report explicitly states that home guards were involved in a specific guerrilla attack.

Furthermore, for many Union soldiers, guerrilla warfare symbolized the savagery and treachery of their secessionist foes, as irregular combat lay outside the bounds of conventional warfare. In his diary, William McKinley reflected a common feeling among Union soldiers that their enemy was dishonorable for fighting from behind trees and ambushing unsuspecting foes. McKinley enlisted as a private in the Union Army in 1861 and served in the 23rd Ohio Infantry. He kept a short diary for the first five months of his

time in the army, and even in his entries from such a brief time, he recounted an incident with guerrillas. In an entry from August 18th, 1861, he noted that while marching through Gilmore County, West Virginia, towards Bullltown, a band of "Rebels" fired at his unit. Five shots rang out amidst the sound of marching feet, and three men in his company fell wounded to the ground. He joined his comrades in immediately pursuing the bushwhackers, but his company was unable to find the ambushers. This was his first jarring experience with guerrillas and he recalled that when he lay down upon the ground that night, he never slept better.[149] Two days earlier, he had recorded in his diary that if he died, he wanted to be remembered as "a soldier for my Country, but also a Soldier of Jesus."[150] Unfortunately for Union soldiers, dying from a bushwhacker's bullet on a dusty road in the middle of West Virginia was not the death that soldiers like McKinley imagined for themselves. It was not a death "at the cannon's mouth…in defense of my country in honor of the glorious stars and stripes," but instead a painful demise brought about by an unseen enemy.[151]

McKinley' sense that guerrilla warfare did not fit into his idealized version of warfare echoed the sense of uneasiness that Confederate congressmen felt towards enlisting partisan rangers in the Confederate Army. In the eyes of McKinley, confederate legislators, and many Americans in general, guerrillas did not conform to their ideas of war being an event in which disciplined soldiers obeyed strict rules on combat. If war was only for disciplined soldiers fighting in organized armies, then guerrillas were not engaging in war but instead in criminal activity. Thus, to McKinley, falling to a guerrilla

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[149]McKinley, William. "A Civil War Diary of William McKinley," ed. H. Wayne Morgan, Ohio History Journal. 283.
[150] Ibid., 283.
[151] Ibid., 285.

bullet meant that one perished outside the parameters of glorious combat and instead died at the hands of a dishonorable criminal.

Although McKinley's view of irregular combat was naive, there were other Union Army officers who were more pragmatic, and recognized that the threat of bushwhackers was simply one of the challenges of serving in southwestern Virginia. For example, Rutherford B. Hayes maintained a more extensive diary than McKinley, and also penned a large number of letters, many of which included mentions of encounters with Confederate guerillas. Instead of enlisting in the army as McKinley did, Hayes was commissioned as a major and eventually rose to the rank of brevet major general. His writings provide excellent information about the effectiveness of Confederate guerrillas during the early years of the war in southwestern Virginia.

For example, on August 17, 1861, the day before McKinley's first experience of guerrilla combat, Maj. Hayes wrote a letter to an uncle in which he summarized the threat from Confederate guerrillas.

> We are kept very busy, hunting up guerrillas, escorting trains, etc., etc. Attacking parties are constantly met on the roads in the mountains, and small stations are surrounded and penned up. We send daily parties of from ten to one hundred on these expeditions, distances of from ten to forty miles… The Secessionists in this region are the wealthy and educated, who do nothing openly, and the vagabonds, criminal, and ignorant barbarians of this country…Persecutions are common, killings not rare, robberies an every-day occurrence.[152]

This quote revealed that for Maj Hayes and his soldiers, the threat of Confederate guerrillas was compounded by the actions of robbers and murderers, thus further

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[152] Hayes, *Diary of Rutherford B. Hayes Vol II*, 68.

complicating their efforts to understand and pacify the region. Later in this letter, Maj Hayes claimed "some bands of Rebels are so strong that we are really in doubt whether they are guerrilla or parts of Wise's army coming in to drive us out."[153] Along with dealing with criminals and bushwhackers, Union soldiers had to contend with bands of guerrillas that appeared strong enough to be part of the Confederate Army. Thus, during the first year of the Civil War in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia, confusion over who the guerrillas, criminals, and Confederate Army soldiers were, and where they operated, must have severely hindered Union operations.

Moreover, the Confederate bushwhacker threat made traveling so dangerous that when half of Maj Hayes regiment became separated from the other half of the regiment, the separated half could not return safely and be reunited with the rest of the unit. Half of the regiment was stationed one-hundred miles south of the rest of the unit, and the half of the regiment stationed south considered themselves too few in number to risk traveling to join the rest of the regiment. Bushwhackers had made the roads between the two halves of the regiment so dangerous that Maj Hayes' regimental halves could not communicate with each other, and all letters and messages had to be taken through Ohio and then back into West Virginia.[154]

In a letter that he wrote after a 10 September, 1861 battle at Gauley Bridge in Fayette County, West Virginia, Maj Hayes mentioned that while marching to a blocking position to prevent Confederate volunteers from joining the commands of Generals Floyd and Wise, a band of guerrillas ambushed some companies from his regiment. He claimed that the ambush was more dangerous than the recent battle, for the guerrillas were

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[153] Ibid., 68.
[154] Ibid., 70.

concealed behind rocks and focused their fire on the mounted officers. This type of combat quickly soured Maj Hayes' view of his enemies, and although he thought upper-class southerners to be decent people, he claimed that the "lower class are cowardly, cunning, and lazy. The height of their ambition is to shoot a Yankee from some place of safety."[155] His condescending view of the enemy was no doubt strengthened by his anger at the deadly effectiveness of their ambushes.

Although Maj Hayes wrote of the dangers that guerrillas presented Union soldiers, he ultimately believed that bushwhackers' ambuscades would not prevent the Union Army's success but simply delayed it. As long as Union citizens continued to pay their taxes and support the war, he felt that the Union soldiers in southwestern Virginia would eventually prevail over their Confederate enemies. He was partially correct, for although guerrillas played an important role in supplementing conventional Confederate Army forces, they could not win large battles on their own or stop the advance of a determined army. Confederate commanders in southwestern Virginia understood this fact, which is why they often employed partisan rangers on specific missions that conventional infantry or cavalry units could not as easily complete. Guerrillas, ranging from bushwhackers to partisan rangers, were niche warriors who could complete specific missions such as intelligence gathering very well, but were not particularly useful in large pitched battles. No matter how effectively Confederate guerrillas challenged Union supply lines or caused Union commanders to disperse their forces across southwestern Virginia, ultimately it still took Confederate Army soldiers fighting on a battlefield to stop the advance of Union armies.

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[155] Ibid., 92.

Regardless of Maj Hayes belief in ultimate victory, many Union officers dedicated the vast majority of their time and soldiers to fighting guerrillas. One of the most effective and famous guerrilla fighters in southwestern Virginia was Major General George Crook. Before he became a general, he was a colonel in command of a regiment named the 36th Ohio Volunteer Infantry.[156] He took command of them in the summer of 1861 at Gauley Bridge, West Virginia in Fayette County at the northern edge of southwestern Virginia, and served as the 36th Ohio's colonel through the summer of 1862. After taking command of his new regiment, he realized that Confederate bushwhackers operated extensively in the region, and in his memoirs he noted "this country was the home of counterfeiters and cut-throats before the war, and it was the headquarters of the bushwhackers."[157] This line is interesting, for Crook was equating bushwhackers' activities with that of the criminals who lived there before the war. This echoes McKinley's and the Confederate Congress' attitude towards guerrillas, one that viewed guerrillas as criminals operating outside the parameters of Western warfare traditions. Clearly, Col Crook did not view the Confederate guerrillas as legitimate military forces that could complement the limited Confederate conventional forces in the region.

Although he did not approve of them, in his memoir Col Crook unwittingly made a strong case for bushwhackers' effectiveness. Speaking about the narrow roads that traversed Fayette County, West Virginia, he noted,

> It was here that the cowardly bushwhackers would waylay the unsuspecting
> traveler, and shoot him down with impunity. Their suppression became military

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[156] Crook, *General George Crook*, 85.
[157] Ibid., 86.

necessity, as they caused us to detach much of our active force for escorts, and even then no one was safe. It was an impossibility for them to be caught after shooting into a body of men, no difference as to its size.[158]

This quote succinctly reveals one of the most important ways that Confederate guerrillas damaged the Union Army. Confederate guerrillas' constant ambushes prevented Union commanders from massing their troops, for they continually had to send soldiers on counter-guerrilla and escort missions. Massing one's troops is important, because in order for a military commander to conduct any offensive missions, they first must bring all their troops together into a group. Just as a hand can only punch effectively when its fingers are clenched together, so must a commander mass his forces into a close-knit army before taking the offensive.

However, for Union commanders in southwestern Virginia, massing one's forces created a dilemma. When they massed their forces, they lost much of their ability to suppress Confederate guerrillas. Forces that are grouped tightly together into an army cannot guard many locations at once, and thus they cannot effectively conduct many escort missions or counter-guerrilla operations. Thus, Union commanders in southwestern Virginia faced a tough choice: disperse their soldiers and suppress Confederate guerrillas, or endure guerrillas' constant attacks and mass their forces in order to be prepared to raid the V&T.

Due to the long periods of time between raids on the railroad, Union commanders most often had their forces scattered across West Virginia and southwestern Virginia, protecting Unionists from bushwhackers, guarding wagon trains, and conducting counter-guerrilla missions. However, these missions often proved fruitless, for actually catching

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[158] Ibid., 87.

guerrillas proved extremely difficult. The thick woods, heavy underbrush, and rocky and broken ground of southwestern Virginia provided excellent cover and concealment for guerrillas, while also complicating efforts to chase fleeing guerrillas.

Frustrated by the challenges of fighting such an elusive enemy, commanders such as Col Crook had to adapt new tactics in order to fight their irregular enemies. Col Crook provided unique examples of counter guerrilla tactics for he employed the lessons he learned fighting Native Americans in the northwestern U.S. in the 1850s to find and eliminate Confederate guerrillas. For example, in 1861 Col Crook selected some of his most effective officers and scattered them throughout Greenbrier and Fayette Counties with the mission of learning the area's nook and crannies, its inhabitants, and the local guerrillas. After gathering intelligence, the officers returned to their regiment and then led bands of soldiers on missions that captured the guerrillas and sent them to Camp Chase, Ohio to be thrown in prison. However, after detaining the guerrillas for short periods of time, the Union Army always released the Confederate bushwhackers, and the cocky irregular combatants consistently returned to southwestern Virginia and their old guerrillas operations. Disgusted by the fact that the Union Army was releasing the very men they had worked so hard to capture, Col Crook's regiment began to kill guerrillas instead of capturing them. The officers in charge of counter-guerrilla operations fabricated excuses for the bushwhackers' deaths, claiming that a captured guerrilla fell and broke his neck on the journey back, or that a soldiers' rifle accidentally discharged and killed the prisoner. Col Crook looked the other way, and happily watched as the

number of Confederate guerrilla attacks decreased through the summer and winter of 1861.[159]

Col Crook also adopted more drastic measures to combat guerillas. For example, during counter-guerrilla operations in Webster County, a West Virginia county that lay just outside the boundaries of southwestern Virginia, Col Crook recounted in his memoir that his regiment had to "burn out the entire county to prevent the people from harboring them [guerrillas]." This means that Col Crook felt the guerrilla threat was dangerous enough that it warranted burning many of the houses and buildings in an entire county.[160] Further operations by Col Crook's 36th Ohio Regiment cowed the local bushwhackers and their civilian supporters into submission. For example, after a group of Confederate guerrillas raided a sutler in Nicholas County, Col Crook positioned companies of soldiers in ambush positions in two passes that led into Greenbrier County, as he expected the bushwhackers to retreat through the passes. The next morning, one of Col Crook's companies ambushed a band of guerrillas, killing three of them instantly in a volley of gunfire. Col Crook recounted that the ambush so terrified the local residents that they let the bodies of the bushwhackers lie on the road for over a month before burying them.[161]

Although Col Crook and his men often fought small bands of guerrillas, such as the ones they ambushed in the pass into Greenbrier County, sometimes guerrillas would mass and attack Union forces. For example, in December of 1861, Col Crook took four companies of soldiers on a mission to find and defeat a force of 135 guerrillas that had attacked a Union cavalry company. Col Crook's force overtook the retreating guerrillas and killed six of them, scattering the rest of them into the mountains. The low death toll

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[159] Ibid., 87-90.
[160] Ibid., 88.
[161] Ibid., 88.

from the skirmish speaks to the difficulty of fighting in the forests and rocky terrain of southwestern Virginia. Exploiting Col Crook's success, a certain Colonel Anisansel marched six companies of infantry and cavalry into Webster County, just north of Greenbrier County. Col Anisansel killed twenty-two people and razed twenty-six houses, all in an effort to destroy the guerrilla's civilian support[162]

While Crook and other Union officers did not approve of Confederate civilians fighting as guerrillas, their actions reveal that they still had to devote considerable effort, and large amounts of men, to destroying the bushwhackers. For example, during most of 1861, Col Crook's entire regiment was dedicated to conducting counter-guerrilla operations. Col Crook had soldiers spread across Greenbrier and Fayette Counties, with some men gathering intelligence on the locations of bushwhackers, and other conducting missions to eliminate guerrillas. Col Crook's regiment was thus not available for immediate use in an invasion of southwestern Virginia. Had Gen Rosecrans wanted Col Crook's regiment to participate in a raid on the V&T, Col Crook would have needed time to regroup all his men and prepare them for conventional combat. Moreover, becoming effective counter- guerrilla fighters required time and large amounts of military intelligence, and thus forcing a unit to switch between conventional and unconventional combat reduced their effectiveness as irregular combatants. Therefore, Union commanders engrossed in guerrilla warfare became distracted from their real mission, which was raiding southwestern Virginia and destroying the railroad. By forcing Union officers to dedicate substantial amounts of time and numbers of men to counter-guerrilla operations, Confederate guerrillas prevented Union commanders from easily gathering the men they needed to launch attacks against the V&T.

[162] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 5, 496.

Although officers such as Col Crook dedicated most of their efforts to guerrilla warfare, it is difficult to ascertain the long term success of their efforts. Col Crook claimed that his regiment's counter guerrilla efforts in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia in 1861 and '62 significantly decreased the bushwhacker population, however this assertion is impossible to prove. Since most bushwhackers operated independently of the Confederate Army, no record is available to estimate the number of bushwhackers who operated in southwestern Virginia. There are records for Confederate home guard and partisan ranger units, however this still leaves a significant gap in the historical records, for home guards and rangers usually were not the ones who committed the daily ambushes and attacks on Union troops and civilians that so frustrated Union commanders.

Confederate records do reveal that there were thousands of home guards in every county of southwestern Virginia not occupied by the Union Army. In March of 1862, Marshall issued Special Order No. 38 which ordered all home guard units in Lee, Scott, Wise, Grayson, Carroll, Buchanan, Russell, Washington, Smythe, Wythe, and Tazewell Counties to rendezvous, fully armed and equipped, at their designated marshalling locations. After being inspected by a surgeon, the home guards were then supposed to be formally mustered into the Confederate Army.[163] However, in contrast to regular Confederate Army soldiers, Virginia state law required that home guards only serve thirty days at a time.[164] While preparing to defend southwestern Virginia in the summer of

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[163] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 10, Part 1, 40.
[164] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 39, Part 1, 568.

1863, Gen Jones's communications with his subordinates reveals that each county could supply about a small regiment of home guards, or roughly three to six hundred men.[165]

Constant guerrilla attacks and ambushes had many effects on the Union Army in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia, however one of the most obvious is the way that Union commanders adopted a range of counter-guerrilla tactics. While leaders like Gen Crook adopted ingenious methods for hunting guerrillas, other Union Army officer espoused different, and often less creative, tactics for suppressing guerrillas. The long-range patrol became a staple Union tactic, for it forced Confederate guerrillas to react to Union soldiers marching into their home areas. These patrols were simple: A Union officer would gather a group of soldiers, generally around one-hundred men, and spend a few days marching them through guerrilla-infested areas, gathering intelligence on bushwhackers and trying to kill or capture any guerrillas they could find.

A Union officer named Lieutenant Colonel Johnathan Hines of the Twelfth Ohio Infantry wrote an after-action report that detailed the dangers and frustrations of leading long patrols through areas dominated by Confederate guerrillas. In late July of 1862, he led a detachment of one-hundred men on a three day, seventy-four mile, counter-guerrilla patrol through Wyoming County. Like most patrols, this mission involved long periods of boring marching, punctuated by exciting moments of action. Lt Col Hines and his men managed to catch a man named Squire Clendennen, a noted rebel, and shot at his son as he fled into the mountains. Lt Col Hines' men also found the empty houses of several known Confederate bushwhackers and Hines noted that most of the inhabitants of the region were bushwhackers and belonged to an infamous company of guerrillas known as

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[165] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part II, 718.

the "Flat Top Copperheads."[166] However, Lt Col Hines and his men did not manage to catch or kill any other guerrillas besides Mr. Clendennen because, in the face of the superior Union force, the irregular combatants had fled in all directions into the mountains. The terrible roads, little more than simple trails through the region, made pursuit of the fleeing men very difficult, and the guerrillas already had a lead on the Union Army pursuers. Lt Col Hines wrote that the poor roads were nearly impassable for horses, and thus pursuing the bushwhackers on horseback in the future would be difficult.[167]

Although the bushwhackers in Wyoming County fled before Lt Col Hines' command, many other Union officers faced heavier resistance on their patrols. For example, while leading a scouting party of one-hundred men through Raleigh County in August of 1862, an officer named Captain Messner detached nineteen men on a mission to burn the stored wheat of a notorious Confederate citizen. However, upon reaching the Confederate citizen's farm, advanced elements of Col Witcher's Battalion of partisan rangers, and a certain Captain Straton's mounted company, surprised the Union soldiers. Witcher's and Straton's vanguard numbered 140 men, and they managed to kill one Union soldier and capture eight more, including the lieutenant in command of the small band. The rest of the surprised Union party fled in the face of such overwhelming numbers. After learning of the fate of the nineteen men he had detailed to burn wheat, Capt Messner immediately marched to intercept Col Witcher and Capt Straton. However, after catching sight of the larger Confederate force, Capt Messner decided discretion was the better part of valor, and quietly retreated back to the nearest town. After

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[166] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part II, 106-107.
[167] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part II, 107.

rendezvousing with another company of Union soldiers on a separate scouting mission in Raleigh County, Capt Messner and his command resumed their pursuit of Col Witcher's rangers and managed to wound Col Witcher and Capt Straton in a short battle. However further pursuit was complicated by a lack of rations, since the roads in the area had proved too rough for Capt Messner's supply wagons. Moreover, while Capt Messner had been engaged in battle, a band of Confederate bushwhackers had surrounded an isolated company of Union soldiers, and thus Capt Messner had to march to the aid of the beleaguered Union soldiers.[168]

This plight of Capt Messner and his command is interesting for it reflected how, at a tactical level, Confederate guerrillas could force Union commanders to react to guerrilla actions and lose the offensive imitative. The first guerrilla unit mentioned in the report is Col Witcher's partisan rangers. The writer of the report does not refer to Col Witcher's unit as partisan rangers, but instead calls them "rebel mounted companies." However, as unit rosters from the previous chapter reveal, Col Witcher commanded the 34th Battalion Virginia Cavalry, a recognized partisan ranger company that served under the command of various Confederate generals in southwestern Virginia. In the operations described above, they directly attacked the Union band of nineteen soldiers and also fought a small battle with Capt Messner's force of infantry. Although most guerrillas would not directly attack a Union force, the large size of Col Witcher's command enabled him to sometimes lead his partisan rangers as if they were conventional cavalry. They directly attacked and routed the nineteen-man Union party, and as a further sign of their semi-formal status as recognized Confederate Army partisan rangers, captured prisoners. Their second attack against Capt Messner's command was less successful,

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[168] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part II, 116-118.

although they did manage to kill a Union major in command of a regiment of infantry and forced Capt Messner to divert his mission from long-range patrolling to pitched combat.

The second band of guerrillas mentioned in this report are labeled "bushwhackers," clearly designating them as different from that of Col Witcher's command. Confederate bushwhackers surrounded a unit of Union infantry, preventing them from reinforcing Capt Messner in his attack against Col Witcher and Capt Straton's forces, and forcing Capt Messner to march his tired force to the rescue of the trapped Union infantry. Thus, although the Confederate bushwhackers did not kill many Union soldiers during this operation, they destroyed the cohesiveness of the Union force by surrounding an isolated Union infantry band. The bushwhacker's actions also forced Capt Messner to cede the offensive initiative to the Confederates, because their actions forced him to abandon any pursuit of the retreating Confederate forces under Col Witcher and Capt Straton, and instead relieve the beleaguered Union infantry. Thus, although the bushwhackers in this battle did not kill many Union soldiers, they effectively weakened the Capt Messner's ability to concentrate his forces and exploit his victory, thus allowing a significant Confederate guerrilla force to live to fight another day.

Besides long-range patrols, Union commanders devised other counter-guerrilla tactics. One key procedure involved using infantry to trap Confederate bushwhackers. For example, in April of 1862, Col Crook wrote a letter to Captain G.M. Bascom, Assistant Adjutant General of the Army of the Ohio, in which he explained his plan for a counter-guerrilla operation designed to trap Confederate guerrillas. Since his infantry lacked the horses needed to outmaneuver the guerrillas, Col Crook instead planned to carefully place his men in ambush positions through which he thought the bushwhackers

would travel. He believed this was the only way to fight guerrillas because of two factors. First, bushwhackers often knew when Union troops were conducting counter-guerrilla missions, due to the fact that locals provided them intelligence on Union forces' movements.[169] Second, Union troops could never force the guerrillas to fight, for if the bushwhackers did not want to engage with Union soldiers, they would simply disperse and hide in the mountains. The guerrillas carried little or no baggage, and could, in Col Crooks' words, "live on little or nothing."[170]

In the face of these challenges, however, Col Crook possessed a vital piece of information. Most of the guerrillas and bushwhackers lived in Greenbrier County and Lewisburg, and would only sally out of their homes to attack Union troops in nearby counties. The Confederate irregulars always used the same road to travel back home after raids, thus making themselves predictable. Therefore, instead of marching directly to Lewisburg to clear out the guerrillas in the area, he proposed quietly sending a portion of his force on the road to ambush guerrillas on the road they always used and block their retreat home. The Union soldiers on the road would then chase any guerrillas that escaped the trap as far east as possible. Furthermore, chasing guerrillas down this road would allow his troops to enter Lewisburg by side-streets and surprise any guerrillas waiting for Col Crook's force on the main road to Lewisburg.[171] Once Union troops were

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[169] Many guerrillas operated in dispersed groups that only massed for attacks on Union troops. By traveling in small groups, they made it tougher for Union troops to track them, while also reducing the chance that pursuing soldiers could ever catch and destroy an entire guerrilla band. *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 120. Although this thesis does not delve into the interactions between Confederate civilians and guerrillas, other historians have examined how civilians both supported, and were abused by, guerrillas. Reference Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Barton A. Myers, *Executing Daniel Bright: Race, Loyalty, and Guerrilla Violence in a Coastal Carolina Community: 1861-1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).
[170] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 84.
[171] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 84-85.

stationed in Lewisburg, Col Crook was convinced that bushwhacking in the immediate area and adjoining counties would seriously decrease. Col Crook believed that the wealthy residents of Lewisburg and Greenbrier County provided material support for bushwhackers throughout the northern portion of southwestern Virginia. With their support base conquered, bushwhackers in towns like Bulltown and Sutton, and counties like Webster and Pocahontas, would suffer from lack of support.[172] Regardless of the eventual success of this operation, mission plans like this reveal that Union commanders such as Col Crook had fully embraced the challenge of adopting new tactics for fixing and killing mobile Confederate guerrillas.

Although Union soldiers conducting counter guerrilla missions sometimes successfully found and engaged Confederate guerrillas, many Union commanders realized that success in this guerrilla war required them to toughen their attitude towards civilians and guerrillas and become more calloused in their treatment of noncombatants. While leading the 36th Ohio in southwestern Virginia, Col Crook realized that his command needed to adopt rough, even cruel, measures to sap the strength of Confederate guerrillas in the region by destroying their civilian support. Therefore, as early as the summer and winter of 1861, he allowed his regiment to burn the homes of civilians who supported guerrillas.[173] He did not underestimate the threat guerrillas posed to his men and communication and supply lines, and other Union officers in Virginia were simultaneously learning how truly dangerous was the Confederate guerilla threat.

For example, in July of 1862, George D. Ruggles, the Chief of Staff for the Army of Virginia, disseminated General Order No. 7. By command of Major General John

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[172] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 84-85.
[173] Crook, *General George Crook*, 87-89.

Pope, this order advised the residents of the Shenandoah Valley and anyone living along the lines of railroads, telegraph lines, and routes of travel in the rear of the U.S. Army, that they would be responsible for any guerrilla attacks. Whenever a Confederate guerrilla damaged railroad tracks, roads or telegraph wires, Union forces would force all the civilians within a five-mile radius of the attack to leave their homes and repair the damage. Furthermore, they would be required to pay the U.S. government, with cash or property, the full amount of pay and subsistence for the soldiers detailed to round up the civilian work force and coerce them to repair the damage. Whenever a guerrillas fired on a soldier or "legitimate follower of the army" from the safety of a house, the residence would be immediately burned and the inhabitants imprisoned. Furthermore, if the U.S. Army caught anyone firing at soldiers or army followers, the Army would shoot them without a trial.[174]

Despite the fact that General Order No. 7 did not apply to the Army of the Ohio in southwestern Virginia, it did reveal the shifting attitudes towards guerrillas that Union officers and soldiers in Virginia were experiencing. Confederate guerrillas represented more than just a nuisance to soldiers on picket duty, and had long since become a serious threat to Union armies' supply and communication lines. Guerrilla attacks constantly drained the strength of soldiers who had to be wary of ambush whenever they traveled. The growing widespread recognition of the seriousness of the Confederate guerrilla threat was reflected in an April 7th, 1862 letter that Major General John C. Fremont, commander of the Union Mountain Department in Southwestern Virginia and West Virginia, sent to the Secretary of War, Edwin Stanton. In this note, Gen Fremont stated that letters found on captured rebels revealed that the Confederate Congress had developed a "systematic

[174] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part II, 51.

plan of guerrilla warfare…arranged and organized for Western Virginia."[175] He correctly believed that Confederate citizens were enlisting into partisan ranger companies, and although he may not have realized it, he was writing about the Partisan Ranger Act of 1862. Gen Fremont argued it was critical that the Union Army provide him with a larger cavalry forces armed with carbines to give them the proper weapons and confidence to fight guerrillas. As evidence of the dangers Confederate guerrillas posed to Union forces, he recounted that on the previous Saturday night, bushwhackers entered Bulltown, West Virginia in Braxton County, cut the telegraph wire, shot the mail carrier, robbed the telegraph operator, and swore him to secrecy. Recognizing that the guerrilla threat was only going to continue, Gen Fremont promised to send Stanton regular updates about guerrillas' attacks.[176]

Recognizing the dangers that Confederate guerrillas posed, however, was much easier for Union commanders than actually stopping them. Union commanders such as Col Crook could adopt new tactics, but to truly protect Union soldiers and civilians from guerrillas, Union officers had to disperse their forces across southwestern Virginia. By dispersing their soldiers to towns and military depots throughout the countryside, they could guard a greater area and protect more people from guerilla depredations. However, in the words of a newspaperman in Wheeling, West Virginia, "If it [the Union Army] details and scatters its drilled soldiers along the frontier to protect non-combatants and their property against irregular warfare, it must, of course, seriously weaken the central armies."[177] This is exactly what happened to Union forces in southwestern Virginia, and

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[175] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 55.
[176] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 55.
[177] "The Guerrillas in Upper Tygart's Valley—The Duty of Union Men There and Elsewhere," *Daily Intelligencer*, May 31, 1862.

Brigadier General Robert Milroy, wrote a letter in April of 1862 in which he complained about this exact problem. Milroy had to parcel-out his forces among various posts in the region and this dispersion of his soldiers "greatly crippled" his command. He argued that the Union governor at Wheeling, West Virginia should organize civil and military authorities to form Union home guard units that could protect their towns and houses, thus freeing Union Army soldiers from their widely scattered garrison duties.[178] Milroy believed this would enable him to regain the offensive initiative in southwestern Virginia.

Many Unionists in West Virginia also believed that they needed to find a more effective way to defend themselves against guerrillas. In a May 1862 article in the *Daily Intelligencer*, a newspaper in Wheeling, West Virginia, a writer argued that the best way for Unionist citizens to defend themselves was to form independent volunteer companies and "exterminate them [bushwhackers] root and branch."[179] By the spring of 1862, loyal Union citizens throughout West Virginia were furious at the constant depredations of Confederate guerrillas. One gentleman in Randolph County, just north of southwestern Virginia, revealed just how desperate Unionists in West Virginia had become when he wrote that in May of 1862 that Confederate guerrillas were so dangerous that "unless something is speedily done for the protection of Union men in Randolph county, they will be obliged to succumb or or [sic] pack up and leave."[180]

While Unionists struggled to defend themselves and their property, the U.S. courts in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia struggled to dispense justice. In April of 1862, a newspaper correspondent summoned to serve as a "Grand Juror for the District

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[178] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 72.

[179] "The Guerrillas in Upper Tygart's Valley—The Duty of Union Men There and Elsewhere," *Daily Intelligencer*, May 31, 1862.

[180] "The Guerrillas in Upper Tygart's Valley—The Duty of Union Men There and Elsewhere," *Daily Intelligencer*, May 31, 1862.

Court of the U.S." in Wheeling, West Virginia, noted that the courts were incapable of handling the immense number of treason cases that occupied much of the district court's docket. "Such an avalanche of business as the bushwhackers, guerrillas and traitors of all degrees in Western Virginia have thrown upon it, is more than it will carry."[181] Along with accounts of treason, West Virginia Unionist newspapers during the war were filled with stories of Confederate guerrilla ambushes, robberies, and kidnappings. Most of these stories involved random acts of terror and violence, such as when bushwhackers rode into Clay County, West Virginia in April of 1863, kidnapped a boy who belonged to the local Union home guard unit, and then executed him in the woods.[182] Other incidents involved bands of bushwhackers attempting to impose their own style of order on an area. An example of this occurred in March of 1864 in Logan County in southwestern Virginia, when a band of bushwhackers captured a lone Union soldier, forced him to undergo a mock trial, and then executed him.[183] Regardless of the type of incident, Confederate guerrillas throughout the duration of the war preyed upon Union citizens in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia, thus further pressuring Union Army commanders to disperse their forces to even more locations.

Fremont understood the plight of Milroy and the needs of Unionist citizens, and in an April 16th, 1862 letter to Edwin Stanton, the Secretary of War, he once again outlined his increasing need for cavalry. He stated that he had twenty-two cavalry companies scattered around West Virginia and southwestern Virginia, however only about seven or eight of those companies could actually take to the field to conduct offensive operations. The majority of his cavalry companies were busy guarding railroad and supply depots,

[181] "The U.S. Court," *Daily Intelligencer*, April 21, 1862.
[182] "From Braxton County," *Daily Intelligencer*, April 3, 1863.
[183] "A Union Soldier Condemned and Shot," *The Weekly Register*, March 23, 1864.

and suppressing the guerrillas that infested the region. Moreover, if Fremont advanced farther into southwestern Virginia, he would have to leave companies of cavalry in his rear to deal with the increasing number of Confederate guerrillas that operated behind his lines. Thus, in order to continue to follow his plan of invading southwestern Virginia, he considered it absolutely vital that the Union Army high command send him at least two regiments of cavalry.[184]

This letter was important, for in it the commanding general of the Army of the Ohio made a very powerful argument for the effectiveness with which Confederate guerrillas disrupted Union Army operations and plans. He stated that the success of his strategy to invade southwestern Virginia hinged upon whether he would have the cavalry necessary to protect his soldiers and supplies from Confederate guerrilla attacks. Without the cavalry he needed, guerrillas would make his rear so dangerous that he could not advance further into Virginia and destroy the V&T. Guerrillas were not just a thorn in the side of Union commanders in southwestern Virginia, but a growing danger that threatened to bring the Army of the Ohio's offensive operations to a grinding halt. This view contrasted with the opinion of Maj Hayes, who earlier in the war had written that guerrillas could only delay eventual Union Army success in southwestern Virginia. Clearly, by mid-1862, the commanding general of all Union forces in the region felt differently.

Those Union commanders who did lead raiding forces deep into southwestern Virginia learned very quickly the dangers that Confederate guerrillas posed to Union raiding parties. Colonel John Toland's raid on Wytheville in July of 1863 is an excellent example of the constant threat guerrilla posed to Union forces that dared to attack the

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[184] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 12, Part III, 84.

V&T. Toland led a force of almost nine-hundred mounted soldiers on an expedition towards Wytheville with the goal of capturing the city and destroying the Mount Airy railroad depot and tracks, which was located about ten miles from the city.[185] His march across West Virginia and into southwestern Virginia faced little Confederate opposition, and guerrillas did not harass Toland's force until they were marching through Tazewell County, Virginia. While marching through the beautiful area of Burke's Garden, the Union soldiers encountered a band of Confederate bushwhackers, however the guerillas quickly retreated in the face of the large Union force. Although the guerrillas soon dispersed, Toland's trouble with irregular combatants had just begun.

Upon reaching Wytheville, Toland's men discovered that the residents of the city had decided to fight like guerrillas, eschewing the open streets for the protection of buildings. City residents firing upon the advancing Union forces from inside buildings, and turning the entire city into a dangerous urban combat zone. In his after-action report, Toland's superior, Brigadier General Eliakim Scammon, angrily wrote "we were fired upon from houses, public and private, by the citizens, even by the women."[186] The Confederate citizens' actions surprised Toland and his soldiers, for less than three hundred Confederate soldiers defended the city, and the Union attackers expected to quickly capture Wytheville. Further adding to the confusion, a Confederate defender felled Toland with a mortal shot through his vitals while he led his soldiers in an attack on the city's heavily-garrisoned courthouse. After pushing the city's civilians and soldiers out of their defensive positions, an angry lieutenant ordered soldiers to burn the

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[185] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 27, Part II, 1001-1002.
[186] *The War of the Rebellion*, Vol 27, Part II, 941. Although he used the word "we," Gen Scammon was not a member of the raiding force.

courthouse and the adjacent private residences since some of the heaviest fire had come from those buildings. [187]

After learning of the large number of Confederate forces gathering to block the Union raiders' routes of retreat, the new commander of the invasion force, Lieutenant Colonel F.E. Franklin, ordered his command to return to West Virginia.[188] After a hard six-day march, largely without food, Lt Col Franklin's force made it back to Camp Piatt in Kanawha County, West Virginia. Toland's invasion failed largely because his soldiers were not prepared for the ferocity of the Confederate defense of Wytheville, nor did they anticipate the enemy employing guerrilla-like tactics to fight the invading Union soldiers. The actions of the Confederate residents of Wytheville angered and horrified the Union attackers, and the city acquired a reputation among Union soldiers as being full of bushwhackers.[189]

Gen Averell also encountered much guerrilla activity during his raid into southwestern Virginia in July of 1863. In his after action report, Averell mentioned that his force initially met little resistance, and his cavalrymen even captured a few guerrillas while traveling through Highland County, Virginia. However, as he traveled farther south he began to encounter more Confederate guerrilla activity. While riding through Pocahontas County, West Virginia, bushwhackers constantly shot at Averell's men from the bushes and trees along the road. Confederate guerrillas continued to harass the Union invasion force during the entirety of their raid.[190] For example, after retreating from

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[187] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 27, Part II, 1002-1103. The term "Confederate defender" is used because the reports are unclear about whether it was a civilian who shot Col Toland, or one of the town's original defense force of three-hundred soldiers.
[188] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 27, Part II, 1002-1103.
[189] Noe, *Southwest Virginia's Railroads*, 124.
[190] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part I, 33-36.

southwestern Virginia in the face of overwhelming conventional Confederate forces, Averell noted that while marching towards Huntersville, guerrillas proved to be a "considerable annoyance," no doubt by providing harassing gunfire that further stressed the already tired and battle-weary Union cavalrymen.[191] Moreover, an enemy scouting party, most likely composed of guerrillas, had ridden ahead of Averell's column and spread false information among the Confederate citizens that a strong Confederate Army force was nearby. Although this attempt at deception did not scare Averell's force, it did speak to the possibility that Confederate guerrillas engaged in some psychological warfare operations. Guerrillas' mobility would have enabled them to travel quickly through the countryside, spreading false information along the intended route of advance of a Union army in the hopes of confusing Union commanders about the strength of their enemy and causing them to make poor decisions.

In another example of guerrilla harassment, while riding near Huntersville, Averell's command came upon a blockade of large felled trees that stretched for half-a-mile down the road. His troopers had to dismount and laboriously cut the heavy logs in order to clear the road. Although Averell did not know who had built the blockade, it seems likely that it was guerrillas, for Union soldiers had noted earlier in the day that "a party of the enemy had entered the road before us for the purpose of blockading it."[192] Guerrillas excelled at this type of activity, and by slowing down Averell's force, they provided conventional Confederate forces with a better chance of trapping the Union Army force in hostile southwestern Virginia.

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[191] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part I, 37.
[192] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part 1, 37.

Although the Union Army's deep raids into southwestern Virginia were dangerous and dramatic, the real conflict in southwestern Virginia lay in the daily challenge of suppressing guerrillas. By 1863, Union commanders were leading raids into southwestern Virginia, yet officers behind Union lines in West Virginia still had to continually detail soldiers for counter-guerrilla patrols, while also leaving troops scattered across towns and settlements in order to defend Unionists from the depredations of bushwhackers.

Brigadier General Benjamin Franklin Kelley, a Union commander in West Virginia, noted in a September 1863 report to a superior that bushwhackers and horse thieves continually harassed his forces, causing him to constantly send out scouts after the fleeing attackers.[193] Although these low-intensity attacks did not threaten the existence of Kelley's command, they still forced him to waste men and material on counter-guerrilla operations and prevented these men from supporting Union Army efforts to destroy the railroad. Although raids against the V&T were important, they happened infrequently, while counter-guerrilla operations, skirmishes, and escort missions occurred every day. Average soldiers in southwestern Virginia were far more accustomed to low-intensity guerrilla warfare than high-intensity conventional combat. Although counter-guerrilla operations detracted from Kelley's ability to focus on his main objective of launching raids against the V&T, for average soldiers stationed throughout southwestern Virginia, the constant conflict with guerrillas was just as important as any raid on the railroad. For them, guerrilla warfare was a deathly serious daily struggle.

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[193] *The War of the Rebellion*, Series 1, Vol 29, Part II, 153.

Reading about guerrilla attacks in sterilized military reports written by upper echelon officers distances one from the horrors of guerrilla warfare. For the enlisted men who had to conduct counter-guerrilla patrols or garrison lonely posts in the middle of hostile territory, guerrilla attacks were frustrating and chilling events that could occur at any time. Their writings reveal that the vast majority of their time and energies were spent suppressing and fighting guerillas rather than Confederate Army soldiers, further reinforcing the fact that the guerrilla war was the main conflict in southwestern Virginia.

For average soldiers, fighting in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia involved long periods of boredom and marching, punctuated by moments of terror and frustration when guerrillas ambushed unsuspecting Union troops. In an article from December of 1863, a newspaper correspondent in Beverly, West Virginia recounted details of a counter-guerrilla mission that Union soldiers had launched into Pocahontas and Greenbrier County. After marching for days and capturing some rebel soldiers and cattle, the Union party, led by Colonel August Moor of the 28th Ohio, began their return journey to Beverly. Observing the rules of war, they carried with them wounded Confederate soldiers who had been left behind by their units after a previous battle at Droop Mountain, and who had recovered enough to travel. However, on their return trip, the Union soldiers encountered formidable blockades comprised of heavy trees felled across the road and multiple ambushes by "those cowards," or bushwhackers. After enduring these obstacles and attacks, and no doubt further angered that they were being fired upon while transporting wounded Confederate soldiers, the "boys got so mad that they burnt Marshall's house…a harbouring [sic] place of guerrillas ever since the

beginning of the war."[194] The frustrations and challenges of guerrilla warfare were simply too much for these soldiers to stoically bear, and incidents like this most likely occurred often among Union forces exasperated by Confederate bushwhackers.

Thousands of young, enlisted Union soldiers dealt with the challenges that Col Moor's men endured and some recorded their experiences in small diaries. Private Hale of the 34th Ohio Zouaves was an example of an average Union soldier who fought in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia from 1861-1864, and kept a small diary in which he sometimes recorded incidents with irregular combatants. For example, in a diary entry from July, 1863, Private Hale wrote that while on picket duty, a comrade came "running into the post and said he was fired at by two Bushwhackers [sic] he said he fired at them but did not hit them [sic] there was a lot of men sent out but could not find them." Unfortunately, Private Hale did not record how these brief moments of violence made him feel, although the fact that many men were sent to find the bushwhackers does reveal that he and his fellow soldiers took the guerrilla threat very seriously.

While on a scouting operation in July of 1863, Private Hale and his comrades encountered a group of bushwhackers who did not just shoot and run, but instead skirmished with the Union soldiers. The guerrillas killed a Union soldiers and wounded four other before retreating.[195] Five casualties in a minor skirmish would have been a significant loss, especially to a scouting expedition that probably included less than one hundred men. This skirmish reveals that even small, unnamed actions in the wilderness of

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[194] "From Beverly," *Daily Intelligencer*, December 23, 1863.
[195] Fayetteville, Camp Piatt, July 13, 1863, Francis G. Hale Civil War Diaries, University of Virginia Library.

southwestern Virginia could be very damaging to Union forces conducting small-unit counter-guerrilla missions.

While on another scout, this one conducted in December of 1863, Private Hale's party again skirmished with a band of guerrillas. In this instance however, favor smiled on the Union force, and the Yankee soldiers came away unscathed and managed to capture a wounded bushwhacker. Later that day, some bushwhackers fired into the rear of the scouting column, wounding one of the soldiers in the thigh. That scouting mission ended up being very eventful for the Union troops as a group of bushwhackers attacked an isolated part of the scouting column and defeated them, killing and wounding a number of Union soldiers and capturing others.[196] Not only had Confederate guerrillas caused Union Army commanders to adopt tactics like long-range scouting missions, but they still managed to defeat Union soldiers conducting counter-guerrilla missions. By 1863, Confederate irregular combatants had largely forced Union Army commanders in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia to react to guerrilla actions, rather than be proactive in destroying Confederate irregular combatants.

Although Private Hale's entries about guerrillas decreased in number towards the end of the diary, which terminated in the summer of 1864, he still recorded occasional guerrilla encounters late in the war. His last entry that mentions guerrillas came from May 18th, 1864, in which he noted that as his unit crossed the Greenbrier River, a band of guerrillas fired on the rear of the marching column, adding to the difficulty the soldiers experienced in crossing the river.[197] Although by this point in the war Union commanders like Crook were leading large raids deep into southwestern Virginia, guerrillas still posed

[196] Camp Poland, December 8th, 1863, Francis G. Hale Civil War Diaries, University of Virginia Library.
[197] May the 18th, 1864, Francis G. Hale Civil War Diaries, University of Virginia Library.

a threat to soldiers and supply lines in areas that had been behind Union Army lines for years. Greenbrier County had been in Union Army hands since 1861, yet Union soldier like Private Hale still had to worry about getting shot in the back. There truly was no safe place in southwestern Virginia for Union Army grunts.

In the eyes of men like Maj Hayes, bushwhackers' ambushes and attacks, conducted without the support of conventional troops, only delayed the eventual success of the Union Army in southwestern Virginia. However, guerrilla ambushes and raids were deadly serious for the Union Army soldiers tasked with fighting and chasing Confederate bushwhackers, and many a Union soldier died a nasty, inglorious death from guerrillas firing from concealment along a road. Although a small guerrilla attack on the Greenbrier River in the summer of 1864 may have gone unnoticed by officers such as Crook who were focused on defeating Breckenridge's conventional forces in southwestern Virginia, it would have been a potentially life-ending experience to the grunts caught in the attack.

Soldiers in southwestern Virginia endured years of ambushes and attacks identical to the one that Private Hale experienced on the Greenbrier River. As officers like Crook and Fremont explained in their memoirs, diaries, letters, and reports, constantly fighting Confederate guerrillas was tiring, frustrating, and dangerous work that was necessary if the Union Army was to maintain a foothold in West Virginia and southwestern Virginia from which they could attack the V&T. Confederate guerrillas' attacks and ambushes weakened the Union Army's ability to supply and maneuver its troops in southwestern Virginia, and forced Union commanders to disperse their soldiers across the region, guarding lonely towns, depots, and wagon trains from Confederate guerrillas. For those

Union commanders who led raids against the V&T, guerrillas were a constant threat to the success of their operations. Confederate guerrillas harassed raiding troops' marching columns and delayed their progress, increasing the chance that a larger Confederate Army force could trap and destroy the Union raiders. Moreover, Union Army commanders throughout southwestern Virginia spent much of their time reacting to Confederate guerrillas and devising tactics and operations designed to catch and kill these elusive foes. However, the frustratingly vast amount of time, men, and material that Union commanders dedicated to combating guerrillas and suppressing irregular combatants' activities truly speaks to the absolutely critical role that guerrillas played in the defense of southwestern Virginia and the V&T.

Conclusion

In the face of the Union Army's invasion of southwestern Virginia, many Confederate civilians took up arms and became guerrillas. Thousands of men joined home guard units, hundreds of others enlisted in partisan ranger units, and unknown hundreds, possibly thousands, embraced bushwhacking. Many of those civilians who joined partisan ranger bands ended up serving in the commands of Confederate Army commanders tasked with defending the V&T and southwestern Virginia's mines. In contrast to rangers, those men who joined home guard units experienced war only when the threat of a Union Army invasion or raid loomed close to their homes. Finally, for those largely anonymous men who became bushwhackers, warfare was a series of opportunities to ambush Union troop columns or attack isolated Unionists' homes or Union Army forces.

Regardless of the type of guerrilla, all had an impact on the war in southwestern Virginia. Partisan rangers played the most visible role in defending the V&T as they often fought alongside conventional forces. They completed reconnaissance missions, serving as commanders' eyes and ears and enabled Confederate officers to defend southwestern Virginia with relatively small numbers of soldiers. Partisan rangers also guarded strategic roads and passes, and sometimes acted like conventional cavalry by attacking small Union forces. Rangers' service alongside the Confederate army meant that they directly defended the V&T, for although their main motivation may have been to defend their homes and families, they fought in the commands of Confederate generals

whose primary objectives were defending the railroad and the mines in southwestern Virginia.

In contrast to partisan rangers, bushwhackers and home guards defended the V&T in a less direct manner. They fought to defend their homes in southwestern Virginia, and their constant attacks on Union troops degraded Union commanders' abilities to mass their troops and focus on invading deep into the region to destroy the railroads and surrounding mines. Moreover, their constant ambushes and harassment weakened Union raiding forces launched into southwestern Virginia, and threatened Union supply and communication lines. Their indirect defense of the railroad caused Union commanders to largely become reactive, instead of proactive, and forced officers to constantly detail large numbers of soldiers to counter-guerrilla patrols, convoy protection missions, and garrison duties in lonely posts across West Virginia and southwestern Virginia. Their ability to force Union Army commanders to adopt new guerrilla-focused tactics and objectives meant that bushwhackers and home guard units' most important role in the defense of the V&T came from the ways in which they affected changes among Union forces, changes that degraded the Union Army's ability to strike the railroad.

Although Confederate guerrillas' actions ultimately did not prevent Union Army forces from destroying the V&T in 1865, studying their actions is important for it changes how people should think about the war in southwestern Virginia. Instead of a backwater conflict that occupied the attention of a relatively small number of Union and Confederate Army soldiers, southwestern Virginia was an active guerrilla warfare battleground. Many of these irregular combatants engaged in countless bloody ambushes and skirmishes that will never be remembered in history books, yet were still important,

for southwestern Virginia was tied by the railroad to the rest of the state. Confederate guerrillas' small, brutal, and dirty fights in nameless hollows and mountain passes worked to delay the Union Army's eventual destruction of the V&T and the critical mines in the region. Although most historians focus on the Confederate Army forces who fought in southwestern Virginia, these soldiers were really only occasional participants in a guerrilla conflict that raged almost continuously from 1861 until mid-1865. It was largely Confederate partisan rangers, bushwhackers, and home guards who continually fought and bled to stop the Union Army's invasions and raids into southwestern Virginia, and ensured that one of the Confederacy's most important logistical assets could continue to operate until almost the end of the war. Thus, when people visit the great battlefields of central and eastern Virginia, and laud the praises of Lee and his soldiers, they need to remember that the corn upon which that army subsisted, and the lead bullets with which they fought, was paid for in blood by humble southwestern Virginia guerrillas who kept the V&T steaming along its tracks.

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