



Battle Command in the Storm: Lieutenant General Franks and VII Corps

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This book examines the concept of battle command from a modern historical perspective. It analyzes the decision making and leadership displayed by Lieutenant General Franks during the planning, preparation and execution of Operation Desert Storm to determine if General Franks exhibited the principles of battle command. Decision making and leadership are the two major components of battle command, a concept championed by Franks following Desert Storm, and, as such serve to frame the discussion. As the commander of the U.S. VII Corps during Operation Desert Storm, General Franks made decisions that had tactical, operational, and strategic implications. These decisions directly affected the lives and actions of the over 142,000 U.S. and British service-members assigned to his command. The results were overwhelmingly successful but many criticized him for being too cautious and conservative. This book investigates if the criticism founded in fact or whether General Franks was merely striking the best balance possible between decision making and leadership on the battlefield.. To accomplish this, the book is divided into four parts. The first part briefly describes why the Army made a doctrinal shift from the previous term, "command and control," to the current concept of "battle command." The next section recounts how General Franks set the stage for VII Corps' later actions during the planning and preparations for the ground offensive. Third, is an outline of the major events involving VII Corps during the conduct of the ground war and an analysis of the key decisions General Franks made during each of the four days. The discussion focuses on the complexity of decision making at the senior tactical level and uses the aspects of decision making and leadership as points of analysis. The final section draws conclusions about General Franks' performance as a battle commander during Operation Desert Storm. It reviews the decisions General Franks made and assesses if a decision was required, when the decision was required and what decision General Franks made. Further, the conclusions address the leadership attributes demonstrated by General Franks in carrying out his decisions. It evaluates how well he directed the forces under his command and the moral character he demonstrated while leading VII Corps. The book closes with the conclusion that General Franks did measure up to the paradigm of battle command. The decisions he made, although not perfect, were the most prudent choices among a list of imperfect options.

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