

BREVET BRIGADIER GENERAL GEORGE H. SHARPE US Army (Deceased)



In February 1863, MG Joseph Hooker, commander of the Union's Army of the Potomac, established the Bureau of Military Information (BMI) under the direction of COL George Sharpe. Sharpe, who would become a Brevet Brigadier General by the end of the war, was perhaps the most effective intelligence officer of the American Civil War.

Upon assuming leadership of the BMI, Sharpe built an All-Source Intelligence service that collected information from a wide array of sources and then provided timely analysis of it to the commander. Unlike other ad hoc information-gathering groups of the era, Sharpe's organization was a permanent part of the Army of the Potomac commander's staff. Sharpe's bureau consisted of 70-80 men, mostly scouts, who provided the basis of Sharpe's knowledge of the location and movements of

the enemy. Sharpe also knew the importance of specialization in an intelligence agency. He hired Mr. John Babcock, a civilian, as his Chief Interrogator. Babcock kept the BMI records, sketched maps, and compiled the Order of Battle charts. CPT John McEntee organized the scouting operations, assisted with interrogations, and established, when necessary, "branch offices" for the BMI.

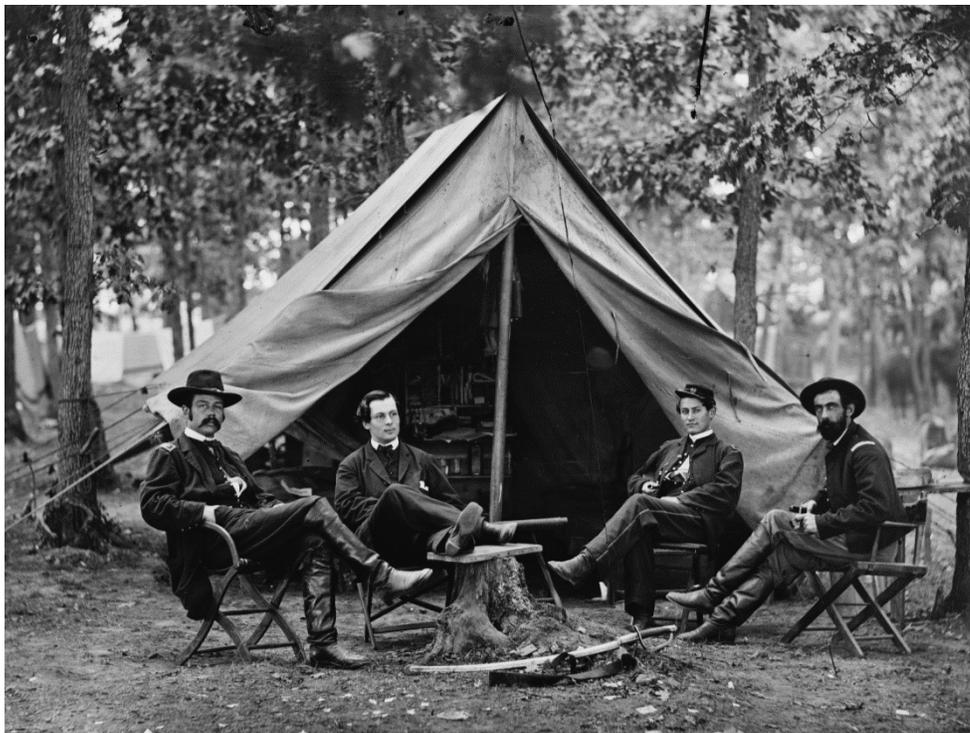
Sharpe obtained valuable information from a number of methods and sources, including systematic interrogations of enemy prisoners and deserters, reports from cavalry reconnaissance, Signal Corps observation posts, captured correspondence, communication interceptions, and newspapers. In short, Sharpe developed an All-Source collection effort, one of the first in American military intelligence. When Sharpe reported to his army commander, he did not present raw data, but a careful and thoughtful analysis of the enemy and terrain situation. The mass of information was collated, analyzed, and presented in daily written reports to the commanders of the Army of the Potomac, and later, to GEN U.S. Grant, Commander-in-Chief of all Union forces. One historian noted, the commanders received "not an assemblage of undigested bits of news seemingly of equal weight, but true intelligence, the finished product of systematic information analysis."

Sharpe's BMI had several notable intelligence successes, although they did not all translate into battlefield successes. In the Chancellorsville campaign, his section provided an extraordinarily accurate estimate of the location and strength of the Confederate army, an advantage that was lost when Union tactical reconnaissance

failed to detect the Confederate flanking movement. Sharpe's intelligence proved to be a major factor in the Union Army's timely pursuit of the enemy during the Gettysburg campaign and its remaining on the battlefield until victory was won. Finally, in 1864 and 1865, Sharpe supplied critical intelligence to Union leadership on the enemy's movements, strengths, and intentions culminating in the Union victory at Petersburg, Virginia.

From his appointment as the BMI chief to the end of the war, Brevet BG Sharpe demonstrated effective leadership of an intelligence service that provided the Army's senior commanders with accurate and timely information about the enemy. Through his efforts, Sharpe can be credited for establishing and directing the first modern intelligence service in the history of Army Intelligence.

Brevet BG George Sharpe was chosen for induction into the Hall of Fame in 2013.



George Sharpe and his Bureau of Military Information (BMI) during the Civil War. Sharpe is sitting on the far left, with John Babcock beside him. On the far right is CPT John McEntee.