



Essential Histories

The French-Indian War 1754–1760

Daniel Marston

OSPREY
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Dedication

To Nancy

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Introduction

The French-Indian War is the name commonly given to the conflict which arose in North America in 1754-55, between the British Thirteen Colonies (and Nova Scotia) and New France (comprising Louisiana, the Ohio River Valley, Quebec [known as Canada], and Cape Breton and St. Jean Islands). Following the War of the Austrian Succession, which was officially concluded by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, Great Britain and France continued their disputes over land boundaries in North America. The fighting chiefly took place along the frontier regions of the northern Thirteen Colonies and in the Quebec and Cape Breton regions of New France. New France was at a numerical disadvantage due to a disparity in population:

New France had 75,000 settlers, while the Thirteen Colonies had 1.5 million people.

The frontier skirmishes of 1754 propelled both France and Great Britain to seek Continental allies. With Europe firmly divided into two camps - France, Austria and Russia on one side and Prussia and Great Britain on the other - conflict was inevitable. By 1756, the frontier skirmishes had developed into a fully-fledged war in North America and spilled over into conflict in Europe itself. While it was connected to the larger, worldwide campaign known as the Seven Years' War, the French-Indian War anticipated that conflict by a year and served as one of the spurs to the eventual outbreak of hostilities in Europe and on the Indian





George II, King of Great Britain. (Ann Ronan Picture Library)

subcontinent. (For more detail on the war in the rest of the world, please see the Essential Histories *The Seven Years' War*.)

The French-Indian War was fought in the forests, open plains, and forts of the North American frontier. The French Army, supported by allied Indian tribes and local colonial forces, initially benefited from a superior understanding of how to operate in the forests of North America, although throughout the conflict it was numerically inferior to the British Army. The British Army

was also bolstered by colonial forces and allied Indian tribes, but in the early days of the war suffered from lack of experience and tactical knowledge of fighting in forest terrain. The British learned the lessons of their early defeats, however, and their subsequent tactical and training reforms ultimately enabled them to outperform French forces, both in skirmishes in the forests of the frontier and in continental-style battles at Louisbourg and Quebec.

Great Britain was to emerge from the French-Indian War as the dominant European power on the eastern seaboard of North America. As with the War of Austrian



Louis XV, King of France, (Ann Ronan Picture Library)

Succession, however, the French-Indian War did not signal the end of conflict in the region. Within 13 years of its conclusion, Great Britain was at war with the colonists she had sought to protect in North America.

The war strained relations between the mother country and her colonial subjects. France, seeking to reverse the misfortunes of the French-Indian War, was only too happy to undermine British superiority in the region, and threw her support behind the fledgling United States in 1778.

Chronology

- 1754** **27 March** Skirmish at Great Meadows
3 July Battle at Fort Necessity
- 1755** **June** British siege and capture of Fort Beausejour
6-9 July Braddock's Defeat
17 August British force arrives at Oswego
8 September Battle of Lake George
- 1756** **17 May** Formal Declaration of War between France and Britain
14 August British Fort Ontario, Fort Pepperell, and Fort George at Oswego capitulate
- 1757** **9 August** British Fort William Henry capitulates
- 1758** **8 July** Battle at Fort Carillon (Ticonderoga)
1 August French port of Louisbourg capitulates
27 August French Fort Frontenac is sacked
14 September Grant's Battle outside Fort Duquesne
12 October French repelled at Fort Ligonier
24 November French Fort Duquesne is abandoned
- 1759** **24 July** Battle of La Belle Famille
26 July French Fort Niagara capitulates
- 26 July** French Fort Carillon is abandoned
31 July French Fort St. Frederic (Crown Point) is abandoned
31 July British attack on Montmorency Falls
August Countryside around Quebec laid waste by British forces
13 September First battle of the Plains of Abraham
17 September Surrender of Quebec
- 1760** **28 April** Second battle of the Plains of Abraham (Sainte-Foy)
Early September Montreal surrounded by three British columns
8/9 September Montreal surrenders
- 1761-62** War continues in the Caribbean, India, and Europe
- 1763** **10 February** Treaty of Paris
15 February Treaty of Hubertusburg
10 May-15 October Indian siege of Fort Detroit
End of June All British forts in the west captured except for Forts Detroit, Niagara, and Pitt
31 July Battle of Bloody Run
5/6 August Battle of Bushy Run
10 August Fort Pitt relieved by British forces.
7 October Royal Proclamation of 1763
- 1764** **December** End of the Indian Uprising

Tension in the Ohio River valley

The conflict in North America had its formal beginnings in 1754. Following the end of the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48), French and British colonists, motivated by desire to expand their domains into the rich Ohio River valley, edged closer to armed conflict. The area along the Ohio River was considered to be uncharted, and thus formally unclaimed by either side. The British contended that the area should be open to both sides for trade, and followed this claim with the establishment of the Ohio Company. The French, however, viewed this as a British attempt to claim the entire area, and responded by sending both militia and regular troops into the region to build forts and eject any British settlers or traders found there.

Tensions had also risen in Acadian Nova Scotia, particularly along the Bay of Fundy. The French had established several new forts whose locations the British colonial governments considered to be in violation of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle (1748). Both sides claimed large areas of present day New Brunswick, and considered the other the transgressor. The insult offered by these encroachments was compounded by the French government's relations with the Acadians, a French-speaking population who, as a result of treaty agreements, had become subjects of the British Crown. The French authorities deliberately stirred the Acadians' aspirations to independence, incensing the British governors. The establishment of Fort Beausejour in the disputed area was the last straw, as this made it apparent to the British colonists that the French had them surrounded. They were not being paranoid; the French did in fact intend to construct a series of forts from Louisbourg to New Orleans, enclosing the British colonies. The

hostility between the two countries was near to breaking point.

Governor Robert Dinwiddie of Virginia decided to make a move against the French in the Ohio River valley, while Governor William Shirley of the Massachusetts Bay Colony was to organize a move against the French in the Bay of Fundy. (This second campaign will be discussed later, as it took place in 1755.)

The British had begun to build a fort at the forks of the Ohio River in 1754. A Virginia militia officer, Lieutenant Colonel George Washington, then 23 years old, was ordered to march into the Ohio River valley with 200 men, to assist with and protect the



George Washington as an officer in the Virginian Provincials. (Ann Ronan Picture Library)

fort's construction. Washington and his men left on 2 April. News arrived on 20 April that the French had already moved against the British at the forks of the Ohio and forced them from the area. The French seized the fort and renamed it Fort Duquesne, after the Governor of New France, Marquis Duquesne. After a council of war at Wills Creek, Washington decided to continue to move towards the region, after establishing Fort Cumberland at Wills Creek.

Various other colonies decided to send reinforcements to the region. A Regular Independent Company from South Carolina moved into Virginia. Militia troops from North Carolina marched north to provide support, while Pennsylvania decided to grant money towards the cost of the expedition. These were helpful gestures, but the reinforcements were small and inadequate to the task that they potentially faced: undertaking the defense of the frontier. Washington continued marching towards an enemy that vastly outnumbered him, when he should have remained at Wills Creek and waited for reinforcements.

On 7 May Washington and his small force reached Little Meadows. Ten days later, on 17 May, the force reached the Great Crossing of the Youghiogheny. By 24 May, Washington reached an area named Great Meadows where, after receiving intelligence that a party of French troops was moving against him, he began to build fortifications, naming the structure Fort Necessity. On 27 May, Washington and 40 militia soldiers moved 9 km (six miles) distant to ambush the French detachment. Washington hoped to surprise the French camp, but the alarm was sounded. The battle was short but brisk. The French commander, Ensign Coulon de Jumonville, was killed, along with nine French soldiers, and 21 French soldiers were taken prisoner. One French soldier escaped and reported back to Fort Duquesne. The Virginia troops lost one killed and three wounded. This skirmish signified the opening of armed hostilities.

Washington decided to remain in the area, to build up the defenses of the fort and

the road towards Fort Duquesne. On 9 June, a further reinforcement of 200 Virginia militiamen arrived, followed by reinforcements from the Independent Companies of South Carolina on 12 June. Welcome as fresh troops were, their arrival sparked an immediate tussle over the politics of command. The Independent Companies were on the British Establishment, which meant that their commander, Captain James MacKay, was senior to Washington. While MacKay did not attempt to assume command, he refused any orders from Washington for his men.

On 16 June, Washington moved out towards Fort Duquesne with his Virginia troops, while the Independent Companies remained at Fort Necessity. Reports from scouts claimed that the French garrison was reinforced by more than a thousand men, and that the Shawnee and Delaware Indians had sided with the French. Less than 32 km (20 miles) from Fort Duquesne, Washington stopped to hold a war council with the Delawares and Shawnees, hoping to convince them to switch their allegiance. On 28 June reports arrived that the French, with their Indian allies, were moving towards him.

The Independent Companies caught up with Washington on 29 June, and MacKay and Washington agreed to withdraw towards Wills Creek and then on to Fort Necessity. The withdrawal to Fort Necessity was hard going, due to the number of horses and wagons that had to be left behind. The exhausted troops arrived at Fort Necessity on 1 July and began to prepare the area for battle.

A French detachment of 500 soldiers and allied Indian warriors, led by Captain Coulon de Villiers, brother of Jumonville, marched on the heels of Washington's force. The French came upon the Great Meadows area on the morning of 3 July. Villiers decided to fan out his troops to draw fire and locate the enemy forces. The French and Indian forces immediately drew heavy fire, so Villiers kept the majority of his men in the forests to the west and south of the British positions. Villiers advanced cautiously as the British troops withdrew into the

entrenchment surrounding the fort. The French and Indian troops fired into the British positions from the edge of the woods. The fighting lasted for nine hours, and the British suffered not only losses under fire but also from a considerable number of desertions. The rainy weather also played a significant role in the outcome of the battle. The British trenches became waterlogged and, as one British observer noted: 'by the continued Rains and Water in the trenches, the most of our Arms were out of order' (Gipson, VI, p. 39). At around 8.00 pm on 3 July, Villiers called for a possible negotiated settlement. Villiers emphasized that he had carried out his attack not because a state of war existed, but to avenge the death of his brother. He also promised that he would allow the British troops to march back to Virginia without harassment from the Indians. Two British officers, Captains Van Braam and Stobo, were to serve as hostages in return for the French prisoners taken on 27 May.

The terms were agreed and on the morning of 4 July, the French marched in to

take possession of Fort Necessity. During this transition, the Indians decided to attack the British troops, scalping and killing several men. The French officers and men did little to stop them. While this incident was minor compared to the outrages that were to follow at Fort William Henry in 1757, it clearly demonstrated the problems inherent in promising protection from the Indians following surrender.

The British force marched slowly but in good order towards Wills Creek. The French had effectively forced them out of the Ohio River valley, and Villiers finished the job by destroying Fort Necessity and withdrawing to Fort Duquesne. This defeat galvanized the British government, prompting the decision to deploy British Regular regiments to the Ohio River area. Regular regiments were already stationed in Nova Scotia, and the Fort Duquesne incident convinced British leaders that their presence was required elsewhere. As a result, this engagement was one of the last waged against the French without a sizable British Regular Army presence.

The French and British armies in North America

Warfare in the mid- to late-18th century was characterized by two dissimilar fighting styles, commonly known as linear warfare and irregular or frontier-style warfare. The first was the traditional style in which battles were fought in Europe, whilst the second arose in response to the particular demands of fighting on the North American frontier.

Soldiers of all armies were armed with the flintlock musket, but how they were used differed depending on the style of warfare employed. In any situation, the weapon's range was only 200-300 paces, so no style was developed that was based on the need for accurate fire. Extending the usefulness of the musket during this period was the development of the socket bayonet, which permitted firing with the bayonet already fixed on the musket barrel. The socket bayonet could be attached before troops went into battle, permitting troops to go directly from short-range firing to hand-to-hand combat.

Linear warfare

Given the relative inaccuracy of the flintlock musket, the linear or continental style was designed to maximize its effectiveness. Troops were intended to deploy in a line and deliver a synchronized volley of fire against the opposing line of enemy troops. By training soldiers to fire simultaneously, leaders hoped to offset the musket's inaccuracy with sheer volume of coordinated fire. To accomplish this quickly and effectively required intensive training, not only in firing techniques, but also to enable troops to march overland in column formation, and then rapidly deploy into lines using a series of complicated maneuvers.

The deployment of the front line of troops, or frontage, was determined by the terrain of the battlefield and the position of the enemy. As armies came within sight of one another, each side attempted to maneuver to flank the enemy's position, enabling them to deliver a devastating fire on the enemy, either when they were already in line or attempting to deploy. The battalion deployed in either two, three, or four lines, depending upon the army. The idea was that the forward line fired, then moved back to reload their muskets. They would be replaced by the second line, which would repeat the process and then be followed by the third line and so on.

The French Army deployed its battalions into four lines, with a frontage of 162 men. French battalions were drawn up into 10 companies, consisting of eight fusilier, one grenadier, and one light company. The British Army deployed its battalions into three lines, also with 10 companies of soldiers. The British deployed nine line companies and one grenadier company. As the war progressed they switched to eight line companies, one grenadier company, and one light infantry company. The British frontage was 260 men; some experts argue that this gave the British an advantage by providing a bigger volley, while others claim that the French system was more compact and more maneuverable, and thus superior. In 1758, the British expanded their frontage even further by deploying their battalions in only two lines.

The line of fire was also varied, depending on the situation. The officers would assess the battle situation and order the men either to fire one synchronized volley from the entire line, or a series of volleys from the end of the wings to the center (or vice versa), known as platoon firing. The British Army, for example, divided the men into



This image of the Battle of the Plains of Abraham shows the two different styles of warfare. (National Army Museum, Chelsea)

companies that would fire as one unit. The men in each company were then divided into two platoons, which could fire either as two individual units or one larger one. As described above, battalion firing would begin either in the center or on the wings, hitting the enemy at different locations. It was common for both sides to fire at least one or two coordinated volleys before the battle deteriorated into men firing at will. This was partly due to the fact that the powder and noise of battle often made the soldiers deaf. Fire commands were normally communicated by the battalion drummers, but the escalation of battle made the drums difficult to hear.

The ability to deliver a coordinated heavy volley, and preferably more than one, on the main body of the enemy line was paramount to an army's successful performance. The main intention of this tactic was to create havoc and disorder within the enemy's ranks. A successful volley could break enemy lines, and the firing side would attempt to capitalize on the confusion by advancing on

the enemy position. The infantry advance would force the other side to attempt to withdraw, while the advancing side closed in with bayonets to engage in hand to hand fighting. Often units failed to hold the line in the face of a bayonet charge, escalating the disorder and confusion in the ranks of the side under attack.

Troop discipline was critical. Soldiers were drilled exhaustively in the complex procedures involved in deployment, firing, and reloading. In addition to mastering the various techniques, discipline also required troops to stand to attention under enemy fire, retaining a cohesive line while being shot at close range, and returning fire only when ordered to do so. The opposing sides viewed one another as single, massive targets, and soldiers were expected to behave accordingly, functioning as parts of a whole. It was common for a soldier to require 18 months of training to perform the various drills required, and most generals felt it took five years to create a well-trained soldier capable of withstanding the rigors of battle. Contrary to popular perception, the regular soldier of the 18th century was highly trained and proficient; in fact, some rulers' tactics to avoid battle when they were



Rogers' Rangers Officer by Gerry Embleton.

outnumbered or outmaneuvered was due to their unwillingness to risk losing costly and valued regular soldiers.

Artillery was also used in linear warfare of this period, principally as siege weaponry, although smaller pieces were used in infantry battles. These were employed as fire support and also served as markers to indicate divisions between battalions drawing up in linear formation. During the French-Indian War, artillery was used during the small number of linear-style battles, but not to the same extent as in Europe. It was more likely to be used in a conventional manner during sieges of the forts in the North American interior, as these engagements operated in more traditional Continental fashion.

The terrain where most of the North American engagements were fought

prohibited the use of cavalry. If there had been engagements in the south, cavalry might have been required, but the heavily forested frontier made operating on horseback both difficult and dangerous. Some senior officers rode to battle on horseback, but tended to dismount before leading a charge.

Irregular warfare

The French-Indian War was instrumental in the further development of a new style of fighting, known as irregular warfare. This approach was characterized by the use of lightly armed troops who could march easily in heavily wooded terrain and fight in small, flexible units. This system was not an entirely North American phenomenon; the Austrians, British, French and Prussians had employed light troops in the European theater of the Seven Years' War. However, the majority of the fighting in North America took place in woodlands, and this necessitated the development and deployment of light troops and other specialists, such as bateaux men (pilots of whale boats and canoes) and Indian scouts, in much greater numbers than had ever been used before.

The Indians of North America were excellent woodsmen; their warriors were skilled not only in fighting one another in forested terrain, but also in hunting in the same woodlands. The frontier populations of both the French and British colonies had also grown adept at maneuvering and fighting in the woods; frontiersmen had extensive contact, both positive and negative, with local Indian populations. In addition, many men were traders or hunters, used to marching overland into harsh territory. Not everyone was an expert however; in fact, a large proportion of people in North America, both recently-arrived Europeans and colonists living in the more developed areas, were utterly unfamiliar with woodland operations.

The North American terrain and conditions dictated not only the strategies of the war but also its progress. Roads and tracks were minimal and poorly developed, and the armies had to take the time (and possess the capability) to build roads as they progressed, as well as forts to protect the roads once completed. Given these conditions, lakes and rivers were ready-made conduits for the movement of men and supplies, and both sides made use of them whenever possible. The ability to move troops and re-supply forward units efficiently was critical to success in the field. The French forces were able to rely on a supply network that operated largely over waterways. The British more often had to build new roads and forts to secure their supply lines, and over time their skills increased through repeated employment. Despite limited opportunity, the British military also performed well in moving both troops and supplies over waterways.

While both France and England had a core of woodland expertise among their fighting men, each side perceived that the war was not going to be won solely on familiarity with the ways of the woods and the Indians. Strategy for both sides involved deploying large numbers of regular troops from Europe who would be able to wage a traditional linear-style battle when terrain permitted. The senior commanders of both armies recognized, to varying degrees, the usefulness of the irregular troops, but preferred linear-style engagements to provide a decisive conclusion to the conflict. In the end, however, the ways in which each side attempted to reform its army to adapt to new conditions in North America proved to be the critical factor in determining a victor.

The following section is an examination of the two military forces involved in the French and Indian War. This will include consideration of the regular forces: their assets, weaknesses, and attempts to reform. The local colonial, militia, and provincial forces will also be discussed. Finally, the fighting capabilities of the Indian



Light Infantryman, 1759 by Gerry Embleton.

participants, as well as their alliances with both sides, will be assessed.

Great Britain

The British Army had four different Commanders-in-Chief over the course of the war in North America. Some, such as Major General Jeffrey Amherst, were successful in battle, while others, such as Lieutenant General John Campbell, Earl Loudon, made a less obvious but more profound organizational impact upon the army. Loudon, while not as successful as Amherst, deserves credit for laying the foundations that gave the Army victory in the campaigns of 1758-60. Although he was only in command during 1756-57, his tenure was marked by significant reforms in methods of supply and tactical development of the regular army.

Loudon centralized the system of supplies for British regular and provincial soldiers to a degree previously unheard of in the Thirteen Colonies. As a result of his restructuring efforts, soldiers reporting for duty in North America were consistently able to receive adequate uniforms and arms - the minimum required for undertaking active service. Main storehouses were created at Halifax, New York, and Albany.

Loudon also recognized that transportation of supplies to troops in the field was a necessary element of successful performance, and set out to reform the army's systems accordingly. The army had previously relied upon local wagoners to move supplies forward. This system was generally unsatisfactory, as it was unreliable and forced the army to rely upon civilians who were often unwilling to venture very far into the woods. Loudon replaced this system with a corps of army wagons, and undertook a road improvement program at the same time. He also appreciated the potential advantages of using waterways for transportation, and delegated John Bradstreet, a leader of armed boatmen, to investigate alternative plans of moving material. This led to an initiative to build a fleet of standardized supply boats piloted by armed and experienced boatmen. A program of creating portages was undertaken to complement the boat-building initiative, to facilitate the forward movement of supplies. The army and navy also built sloops to move supplies from coastal cities upriver to the Army's major staging areas.

Following the defeats of 1755 and 1756, British Army leaders realized that the troops, in their present state of training and equipment, were not capable of effective operation in the forests of North America. It would be necessary to train and equip men specifically for these conditions; troops would be so equipped as to enable them to maneuver more efficiently in difficult terrain, and would be trained to move in formations other than the large columns used in the linear-style of warfare. Soldiers trained in these unconventional methods were commonly known as rangers.

The concept of rangers did not originate with the onset of the Seven Years' War; ranger troops are recorded as being raised as early as 1744, when a unit named Gorham's Rangers (after its founder, John Gorham), was raised in Nova Scotia. When war broke out in North America in 1754, the number of rangers in Nova Scotia was increased, at the expense of the British government. The following year, a second group of rangers was organized, consisting of men from the frontiers of New York and New England. This group was raised and commanded by Major Robert Rogers, and again took their name, Rogers' Rangers, from him. The ranger corps quickly demonstrated their value in both skirmishes and scouting expeditions on the frontier, but some members of the military establishment remained skeptical, considering the ranger units too expensive to justify their continued existence.

During his tenure as Commander-in-Chief, Loudon, in response to this assessment, encouraged regular soldiers and officers to attach themselves to the ranger corps to learn methods of forest fighting. He set up a training cadre of 50 rangers at Fort Edward to support this suggestion. Despite attempts such as this to curb the numbers of rangers by creating 'regular' light infantry, the numbers of Rogers' Rangers continued to rise. By 1759 there were six companies of rangers, comprising more than 1,000 men, all financed by the British government.

Loudon decided to create units that would be made up of regulars who would receive special ranger-type training as well as instruction in traditional linear methods. He expected, with this initiative, to manage cost and discipline issues simultaneously: the first by training the same men for different types of warfare, and the second by instilling the 'regular' discipline that was thought to be lacking in rangers. In the event, Loudon's scheme took shape in two different forms. The 60th Regiment of Foot was raised initially from the frontier peoples of Pennsylvania and Virginia, with the intent that the regiment would embody the spirit and abilities of the frontiersman, tempered

by the discipline of the regular soldier. Four battalions of the 60th were raised; the 1st and 4th were deployed more often in frontier fighting situations, and fought in successful engagements in Pennsylvania and New York. The 2nd and 3rd battalions served most of their time as regular linear soldiers, and saw action at Louisbourg and Quebec.

Two other regiments were raised under a different interpretation of Loudon's initiative, and these were to have a greater influence on the army as a whole. The 55th and 80th Regiments of Foot were raised specifically as light infantry. They were trained in the tactics used by the ranger corps, but were also subjected to the discipline imposed upon regular troops. (Rangers were not expected to conform to the same standards of discipline as other Army units.) As a result of this successful development, by 1759 all regular British Army regiments, including the 60th, had adopted a light infantry company. These could be deployed as needed in specific situations; their uniforms, weaponry, and tactical training were adapted for marching in the woods, fighting skirmishing actions, and carrying out ambushes in the manner of Indians and rangers.

Three contemporary accounts demonstrate the range and effects of these reforms. The first is a manual, published in Philadelphia in 1759, which discusses the specifics involved in waging war in North America, including operating in the forest:

[I]n passing through close or wooded country ...I would have the regiment march two deep, in four columns ... having small parties of light infantry advanced [one] hundred paces in their front; but the main party of the light infantry should be on the flanks ... [I]f the front should be attacked, the grenadiers and light infantry will be sufficient to keep the enemy in play till the regiment is formed (Military Treatise, pp. 66-67).

In the second, a ranger named John Goodenough describes the differences between the British regular soldier of 1758 and his previous experience of only one year earlier:

The British soldiers were by this time made serviceable for forest warfare, since the officers and men had been forced to rid themselves of their useless encumbrances and had cut off the tails of their long coats till they scarcely reached below their middles - they had also left their women at the fort, browned their gun barrels and carried their provisions on their backs, each man enough for himself, as was our ranger custom (Goodenough, p. 9).

Finally, William Amherst, brother of Jeffrey, notes in his journal a typical training day for two regiments in 1758, including a detailed description of a newly developed firing sequence to be used by British columns if they were attacked on the march in the woods:

the advanced party if attacked, the two platoons marching abreast, the left platoon fires singly, every man, the right platoon keeps recovered, both platoons moving on very slowly and inclining to the right (William Amherst, pp. 40-41;.

The aim of such exercises was to accustom the soldiers to wooded conditions, and so neutralize the fear instilled by stories of Indian tactics.

The innovations made in training and equipment improved British performance in the forest but it did not make them invincible. On several occasions during both the French-Indian War and the subsequent Indian uprising of 1763-64, British troops were ambushed and suffered accordingly. The British regular soldier became the equal in the forest of his French equivalent, although the Indian remained, for the most part, the master of forest operation. This expertise, however, was offset by a lack of discipline and coordinated command and control expertise, which benefited the regulars on both sides. Most important, the average British soldier had, by 1759, largely lost his fear of operating in the forest, having received the training required to cope with most situations.

The average British battalion numbered from 500-900 men. Numbers fluctuated due

to battle casualties, illness, and desertion. In 1754 there were no British line regiments stationed in the Thirteen Colonies, only in Nova Scotia and the Caribbean. The Thirteen Colonies had seven regular units named Independent Companies, which were posted along areas of the South Carolina and New York frontiers. By 1757, more than 14,000 regulars had been deployed to the Thirteen Colonies as a result of the conflict in North America. By 1759, the peak of regular establishment in North America, nearly 24,000 men were under arms. The British Army included mostly regular line regiments with 10 companies (eight line, one grenadier and one light infantry). There were also dedicated ad hoc light infantry and grenadier battalions.

British military officials had an additional reserve force to draw upon for the French-Indian War: the colonial provincials. These were units whom the Colonies were requested to raise, to serve alongside the regular forces. Some military officials considered them more of a burden than an asset, principally because, unlike regular soldiers, provincial soldiers were only called for one campaign season at a time, and then returned to their homes. This created the impression that because provincial soldiers were not professionals, they were not subjected to the same harsh discipline and rules that the regulars endured, and that they were not, therefore, true soldiers. The provincials, on their side, considered regular soldiers ignorant of how to operate in the forest and the conditions of the frontier. Such beliefs created a rivalry that persisted throughout the war period, each side regarding the other as unfit to fight in various combat situations.

During the first years of the war, relations between provincials and regulars were further strained. The first article of the Rules and Articles of War of the British Army of this period stated that 'a provincial soldier serving with regulars ceased to be governed by colonial disciplinary measures but became subject to the mutiny act' (Pargellis, p.84). This stipulation was created by British military

authorities who envisioned no more than a few provincial companies serving with the regulars. It meant, in theory, that provincial soldiers serving alongside regulars were subject to the same strict regulations and discipline. In practice, however, there were likely to be discrepancies in treatment. Loudon reported one instance where 'a private of the 60th found guilty of mutiny received 1,000 lashes whereas a private of a Massachusetts [provincial] regiment got 500 for the same offence' (Loudon, 3 September 1757). Braddock's defeat in 1755 changed the situation considerably by demonstrating the immediate need for a large number of soldiers. As a result, the number of provincial soldiers required also increased dramatically.

The increased need for provincial troops brought about one beneficial change in their situation. Previously, commissioned officers in the provincial forces, even as high as the rank of General, were degraded to the level of senior captain when serving alongside regular forces in the field. This was a major source of resentment for the provincial forces. Loudon was uninterested in resolving this issue with the colonial governments, and no changes were made until after he was removed from command. William Pitt, Secretary of State (with control of the war and foreign affairs and later the leader of the British government), amended the ruling so that provincial officers retained their rank, but were junior to regular officers of equivalent and higher rank. Pitt considered this necessary to appease the colonial governments and convince them to recruit more men for the campaigns. Even though the British government ultimately funded colonial units, they had to rely on the colonial governments' efforts to fill the ranks. In the event, his tactic was successful; the colonial governments provided more soldiers in 1758 and 1759, after the ruling was changed, than they had previously.

Despite this initiative and the rising number of provincial troops, regular soldiers continued to distrust their fighting abilities, and only grudgingly would they concede that provincials made a contribution. It was true

that provincials were unlikely to have the stamina to sustain the rigors of a linear-style battle, since they did not have the same level of training or discipline as regular troops. There was the occasional compliment; as noted by a regular officer in 1759 :

the provincial regiments, under arms today, to be perfected in the manoeuvres contained in the regulations of the 20th of June ... [T]hey [provincials] made a good performance, performed well, and gave great satisfaction (Knox, p. 486).

Major General Amherst gave a reluctant-sounding compliment when speaking of the provincials in 1759 at Fort Edward:

[they] began to grow sickly and lose some men; they are growing homesick but much less so than ever they have been on any other campaigns (Amherst, 22 September 1759).

France

On the other side of the conflict, the French were spending comparable time arguing over strategy and the abilities of their regulars to wage war along the frontier. Major General Louis-Joseph Montcalm, who commanded the French regular forces from 1756 until his death in 1759, disagreed firmly with the governor-general of New France, Pierre Francois de Rigaud Vaudreuil on issues of strategy. There was often considerable antagonism between colonial-born (such as Vaudreuil) and French-born officials (such as Montcalm); the colonials perceived visitors as high-handed interlopers who did not understand the issues particular to the colonial setting. The French government had clearly established the lines of command - Vaudreuil was unquestionably senior to Montcalm - but in practice this had no effect on mitigating tensions or resolving proposals of conflicting strategies. Unlike Loudon in the British Colonies, neither man was removed from service when tensions flared, and the situation escalated. Each man

accused the other of interfering in issues of strategy. Marquis de Vaudreuil favored a guerilla campaign along the frontier, and dismissed the ability of the French regulars to adapt to the necessities of waging war in the forest. Montcalm recognized the value of militia and Indians in forest operations, but still believed that the war would ultimately be decided by regular troops.

Montcalm did understand the issues of supply and scouting involved in fighting in the woods. A master strategist, he recognized early that the British were going to outnumber his forces, and decided upon a defensive strategy that would allow him to launch pre-emptive strikes whenever opportunity permitted. Having decided on this plan of action, he implemented it early in the campaign with surprise attacks on the British forts at Oswego and Fort William Henry in 1756 and 1757. He succeeded in overwhelming the troops guarding all the forts, and forced them to surrender. He did not stay put, but destroyed the forts and moved. It was



Marquis de Vaudreuil. (Public Archives of Canada)



Louis-Joseph Montcalm. (Ann Ronan Picture Library)

a bold strategy, and effectively knocked the British off balance for a time early on. In 1758, however, the situation changed dramatically. The British had begun to learn the art of war in the forest and had created a supply network that could carry their armies over difficult terrain. On the other side, the

French forces received no reinforcements after 1757, thanks to the Royal Navy blockade. Montcalm was forced to guard a vast frontier with less than one-third of the regular troops that the British had at their disposal. He continued to take gambles; some of them paid dividends, such as the decision to deploy most of his regulars to Fort Carillon in 1758 as described below. But from 1758, Montcalm



Fusilier, Compagnies Franches de la Marine by Michael Roffe. (Osprey Publishing)

was constantly on the defensive, attempting to stem the rising tide of British attacks.

The French and British forces were organized along similar lines - a mixture of regulars, militia, and Indian allies. The first group of regulars that served in New France was the *troupes de la marine* or marines. When war broke out between France and Britain in 1754, no French regular line infantry units were initially deployed to North America. The marines had been serving under the command of the French Navy in New France for many



Grenadier, Regiment de Languedoc by Michael Roffe (Osprey Publishing)

years before the outbreak of hostilities. The men and officers were recruited in France for colonial service, and encouraged to remain in North America after their terms of enlistment ended. The marines served along the frontiers of New France, as well as in the trading centers, and were organized along

lines similar to those of the British Independent Companies; their detachments were organized into company sized units. Numbers within companies fluctuated from 50-75 men, and as of 1750, there were 30 companies deployed in New France. By 1757, 64 companies had been deployed in Quebec and Cape Breton, with another 30 companies stationed in the Louisiana territory. Companies from Louisiana were involved in fighting in the Ohio River area during the course of the war. Marines, while commonly considered regular soldiers in the colonial administration, also had considerable experience of operating in the woods based upon years of deployment on the frontier.

By 1757, only 12 battalions of French regulars, known as the *troupes de terre* and numbering just over 6,000 men, had been shipped to North America. Eight of the battalions saw service with Montcalm in the Canada and Western theaters, and four were sent to Louisbourg to bolster its defenses. French regular soldiers were generally willing to learn some of the bush fighting tactics used by the Canadian militia and Indians and, like their British counterparts, often attached themselves to small raiding parties to learn the tactics of the woods.

During the first years of the war, the French regulars performed very well in battle. Discipline was very good; Montcalm cited only two courts martial during the period from 1756-58. Montcalm also commended the condition and performance of his troops, describing the Royal-Roussillon regiment as 'well supplied and well disciplined' (Sautai, p. 23). However, as French strategy changed in the wake of the effective British naval blockade and troops were increasingly left to fend for themselves in New France, discipline and desertion became greater problems. The performance of the French regulars at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham indicated that fire discipline had deteriorated noticeably from previous standards. To their credit, the French regulars continued to perform very well, particularly considering that they were

vastly outnumbered by the British, suffered from unreliable provision of supplies, and became increasingly aware that grand strategy in the larger conflict had shifted attention and resources away from them. In light of these obstacles, American historian Francis Parkman commended the French Army in North America 'for enduring gallantry, officers and men alike deserve nothing but praise' (Parkman, p. 215).

The Canadian militia was a major asset to the French commanders. Unlike provincial troops in the Thirteen Colonies, the Canadian militia was geared for war. Montcalm, apparently recognizing their value, described Canadians as

born soldiers, from the age of 16 ... on the rolls of militia. Boatmen and good shots, hunters ... [T]hey excelled in forest war and ambushes (Sautai, p. 16).

This idea of a citizenry geared for war was not unique to New France and occurred often in Europe; notably similar to the Canadians were the Croat populations along the Austrian/Turkish borderlands. While militiamen were not sufficiently trained to rebuff a full-scale linear-style attack, they were more than proficient in wilderness fighting and scouting. Militiamen in New France were generally assigned to protect forts and remote outposts, a practice that was also common in the Thirteen Colonies. They were also assigned flank and scouting activities, either performed alone or as part of a larger regular column.

The number of militiamen raised in New France throughout the war period never exceeded 15,000 men per year. Similar to British provincials, they returned home after each campaigning season; many men returned to the militia year after year, as the threat to New France increased. The Thirteen Colonies provided a larger number of provincial soldiers, but they were not of the same quality as Canadian militiamen. Montcalm claimed that relations between his regulars and the militia and Indians were very cordial; in 1757 he declared that 'our

troops ... live in perfect union with the Canadians and savages' (Sautai, p. 26). Some of his junior officers disagreed with this assessment; one officer noted in 1758 that:

when the French had won the battle, confidence returned ... [T]hey regained their Canadian spirits and busied themselves only in ways of taking away from the French [Regular] troops the glory of an action which it appeared difficult to attribute to anyone else (Bougainville, p. 239).

There was tension between French and Canadian officers, principally on questions of tactics. Some French officers preferred to use linear-style tactics, and believed that the Canadian soldiers and officers were no better than the Indians. The Canadian officers, for their part, felt on more than one occasion that French troops were not suited for frontier warfare. This caused friction, as it did within the British forces.

Indians

Both Great Britain and France sought the allegiance of the numerous Indian tribes living along the frontiers of the European colonies in North America. Indian warriors were expert forest fighters, unsurpassed in their skill at both ambushing and scouting. Their reputation as warriors struck fear into the hearts of civilians and soldiers alike. A British grenadier reported outside Quebec in 1759 that 'all the grenadiers crossed over to the island of Orleans ... [T]he Indians attacked us very smartly' (*Journal of the Expedition to the River St. Lawrence*, 21 July 1759). This was only intensified by their willingness to shift their alliances from one side to the other as the fortunes of each waxed and waned. Many Indian warriors would disappear from a campaign if they felt their side was losing or there was a chance of plunder in another part of the frontier. They were considered untrustworthy by European troops, and criticized for their opportunistic decisions to side with the strongest power.

Of course, both Britain and France also tried to use such opportunism to their own advantage, trying more than once to undermine existing treaties between the enemy side and its Indian allies. In battle, Indians excelled in gaining intelligence for their European commanders, as well as setting ambushes. However, when faced with continental-style fighting in the open they tended to break very easily. They also lacked the stamina and planning skills to carry out a siege of a small post. The Indian Uprising of 1763-64 is an example.

The French tended to be more successful in winning the allegiance of Indians. This is partly due to the fact that the French



Colonel William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian affairs for the British Crown. (Albany Institute of History and Art)



Huron by Michael Roffe. (Osprey Publishing)

presence in North America was smaller than the British presence. Many Indians only came in contact with Canadian traders, who they did not consider to be encroaching upon their territory. British colonists, however, were a larger population, seeking land as well as trading opportunities in the

Indian lands along the frontier. Tension was thus correspondingly greater. The French formed alliances with five major Indian tribes: the Hurons, Ottawas, Wyandots, Miamis, and Algonquins. The principal British-Indian alliance was with the members of the Five (later Six) Nations of the Iroquois. The original five nations were the Oneidas, Mohawks, Senecas, Onondagas, and Cayugas, and were subsequently joined by the Tuscaroras. The French repeatedly attempted to win over one of the Iroquois nations to their cause throughout the course of the war, but were consistently thwarted by the efforts of Lieutenant Colonel William Johnson, chief Indian agent for the British Crown. The Senecas did later become dissatisfied with the British alliance, but this was later and for other reasons; the dispute will be covered in the Indian Uprising section.

On the whole both sides tended to accept their Indian allies as a necessity, and tried to regulate their behavior by imposing harsh penalties for failure to follow orders. One characteristic situation happened in 1757, when the French-allied Indians killed a number of the British civilians who had surrendered at Fort William Henry. French regulars had to restrain their allies with the threat of violence if they did not stop the killing. Some senior British commanders loathed using Indian allies against European soldiers or civilians. In the end, warfare increasingly utilized more conventional methods, and both sides relied less upon the services of Indians. Equally significant, following the French defeat at Quebec in 1759, many Indians decided to leave French service, fearing British reprisals upon their villages.

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