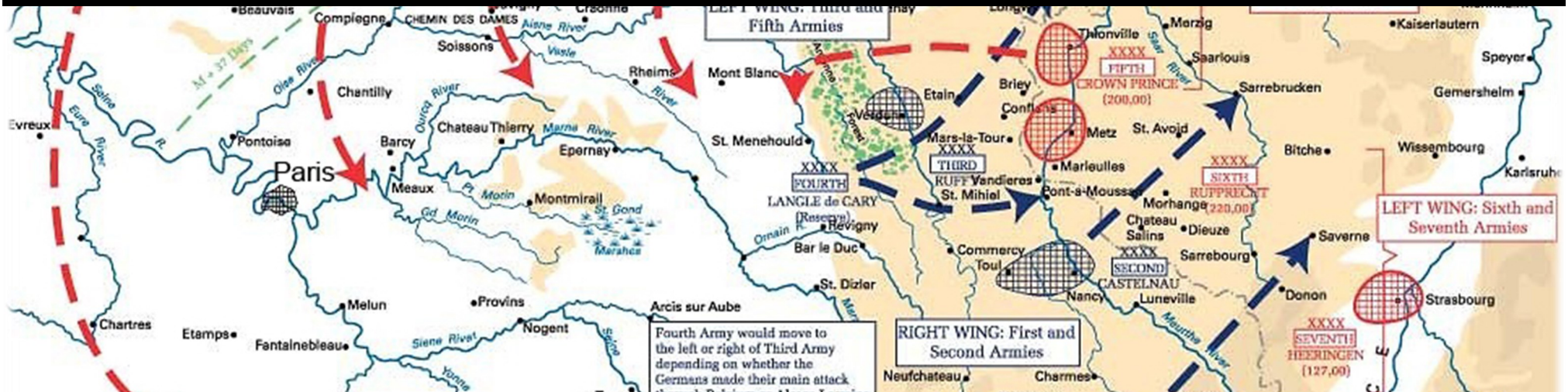




# THE ASC HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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## Planning Gone Typical: The Schlieffen Plan

### FROM THE ARCHIVES



**Shop L (BDLG 250) The only time RIA manufactured Ammunition.**

Throughout the First World War, it became more apparent the necessity of massive amounts of artillery on the battlefield. Shop L was constructed during WWI to facilitate the manufacture of artillery shells. The “temporary” building was only in ammunition operation for one year. The building contained large amounts of glass windows to provide interior lighting and to provide blow out points without damaging the main structure in case of an explosion. At least one explosion occurred in 1918. BLDG 250 is now home to the JMTCA Advanced and Additive Manufacturing Center of Excellence and home to the worlds largest metal 3D printer.

We have all heard the saying before: “No plan ever survives the first contact.” Sometimes that plan goes so awry that it no longer maintains its operational integrity. Unfortunately—or fortunately—for the German forces invading France in 1914, their operational plans worked only in theory. Much like the American Rainbow Plans of the interwar, the Schlieffen Plan was an operational plan that was created by Count Alfred von Schlieffen for the invasion of France. It was first conceived in 1905 but saw multiple revisions up to the date of Germany’s first aggressive movement towards its neighbor.

The plan was straightforward enough, consisting of multiple prongs of effort designed to ensnare and wrap around the enemy to quickly cut off supply and logistics from their rear. However, the plan was deafened to its own logistical shortcomings as well. These prongs of effort consisted of breaching the Northern French border through Belgium and Germany in a southeast sweeping motion, cutting off forces at the front and pinching available supply routes through Northern France. The westernmost prong was to cut off Paris from the rest of the French Army, while splitting off east and north. Force regeneration could then be concentrated towards an eastern front if needed—and it indeed would be during World War I. However, the plan failed to account for several key factors which proved fatal to its integrity.

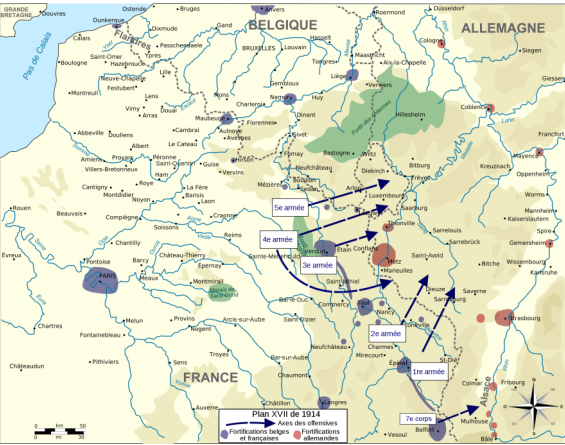
First, the plan required a decisive battle with Allied Armies in Southern Belgium and Northern France. While France was significantly battered from its failed offensive against the Germans early in the war, Germany failed to force the French into a battle that would break them. Instead, the French and other Allied armies went into a tactical retreat, which drew the Germans into pursuit. Before long, the advancement of these forces overshot the range of their own logistics and caused the German army to stall well short of their intended target. By the time the Germans closed on Paris, they were 19 miles east of the city—well short of the 30 estimated miles west intended.

Second, it relied on assumptions based only on previous wars and engagements and failed to account for coordinated Allied response. Britain’s participation in the war was not included in Schlieffen’s original plan. The inclusion of British forces in the French offensive plan as well as subsequent defensive operations deferred most attempts to draw the Allies into a decisive battle. It also made the cutting off logistics much more complex, as additional supplies could be filtered into France by the British. Likewise, it assumed a slow mobilization of Russian forces and assumed a small number of German forces would be sufficient to sustain operations on the Eastern Front until the main flank of German forces could be redeployed.

Third, it failed to properly prepare the Germans for the war of logistics that was required. Early in the plan, the primary prong to the west outran its logistics train. Meanwhile, when it moved more tightly inward to compensate for this, it failed to cut off the enemy’s logistics in the process. This allowed the French and British to dig in, while slowing the German advancement. Therefore, the Germans could not make their eastward push to support and sustain the eastern front when the Russians fully mobilized. Failure to prepare for proper rail gauge changes also hampered forward progress of any operations in the theater.

The Schlieffen Plan was an ambitious plan that was fully dependent on all the right conditions being met and required those conditions to be sustained. Because of the lack of foresight for changes to the operational environment, the plan was doomed to never succeed, instead being designated a “mishmashed armchair warrior’s dream” according to World War I historian Terence Zuber. With the main thrust of German support stalled east of Paris and north of the Marne, they were now engaged in a war of attrition that would only promise to move once the full force of the combined British, French, and American forces was realized.

In the years since, the Schlieffen Plan has been the subject of numerous studies, particularly its role in the overarching plan of the German General Staff. Nevertheless, it presents itself as an example of a plan failing to deliver in practice.



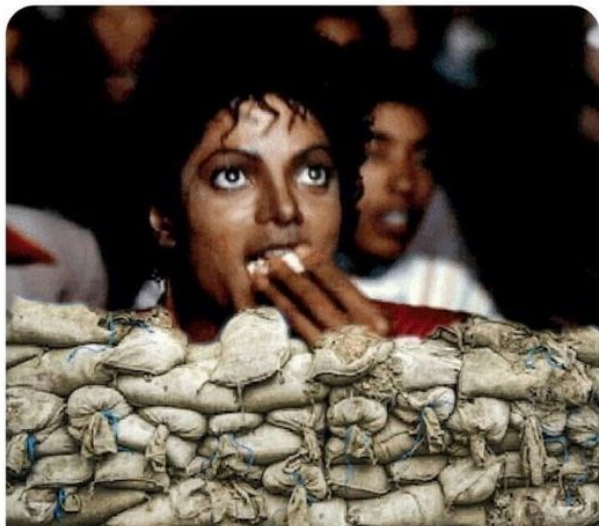
## MONTHLY TRIVIA

- 1 What war served as inspiration for Schlieffen’s plan?
- 2 How old was Schlieffen in 1905?
- 3 How many contingency plans did Schlieffen work into his plan?

### ANSWERS FOR JULY 2023 QUESTIONS

- 1 What was the approximate cost (in dollars) of the Berlin Airlift for the British and Americans?  
➤ **\$224 million (2.75 billion in 2023)**
- 2 Who was the pilot known as “Uncle Wiggly Wings” that would drop candy during the Berlin Airlift?  
➤ **COL Gail Halvorsen**
- 3 What was the structure that the Soviets constructed to prevent people from defecting?  
➤ **The Berlin Wall**

## Switzerland during both World Wars



## Women’s Equality Day 26 AUG 2023

On Women’s Equality Day, we honor the movement for universal suffrage that led to the 19th Amendment. We celebrate the progress of women over the years and renew our commitment to advancing gender equity. The amendment changed federal law and the face of the American electorate forever. Congress granted women the right to “serve as permanent, regular members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force” under the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act in 1948. On Jan. 24, 2013, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta removed the military’s ban on women serving in combat. Over a hundred years later, women continue to open doors into areas where they were previously denied access or participation. Today, women leaders continue to strive for and inspire change for all. We are reminded we all have the opportunity and the responsibility to create a society that gives both men and women an equal voice.