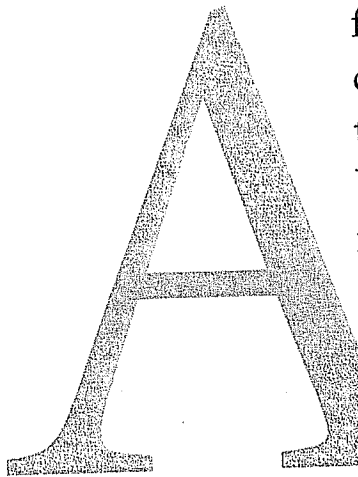


Charge At Bayonet Point!

Test your combat decision-making skills as "Mad" Anthony Wayne at the Battle of Stony Point, 1779.



fter four years of war with their rebellious American colonies, Britain seems no closer to defeating the Revolution than when it erupted in April 1775. However, the new United States shows no sign of being able to win their independence outright, either. Hence, in 1779 the British and Patriot armies are at a standoff. Sir Henry Clinton's

entrenched army, the largest British force in North America, is firmly entrenched in New York City and the Royal Navy commands the sea. Yet British troops cannot permanently control any territory that is more than 15 miles from a navigable waterway, and the ubiquitous Patriot militia rules the countryside. Moreover, the Continental Army commander in chief, General George Washington, has the bulk of his forces deployed within 60 miles of New York City. He is waiting to take advantage of a British mistake or – with the help of the United States' French allies – possibly assault the city itself.

Clinton, however, cannot wait indefinitely. His marching orders from London have directed him to "bring Mr. Washington to a general and decisive action." Clinton intends to achieve this goal by controlling the crucial Hudson River Valley, which he hopes will divide the Patriot forces in the northeastern colonies from those farther south. His plan to seize control of the valley turns on occupying several decisive points along the Hudson River: Stony Point, Kings Ferry, Verplanck Point, and especially West Point – the real prize among these locations and the key to controlling the river.

In response to Clinton's earlier move in which British

troops supported by warships seized Stony Point, Washington began moving troops from New Jersey to New York in order to reinforce the defenses of the strategically important Hudson River Valley. The American commander, however, did not intend to rely solely on building up his defenses. Washington sought *offensive* action to undermine Clinton's plan and decided that the place to undertake such an attack was the British garrison at Stony Point. Moreover, Washington thought he had just the right commander to make his scheme work.

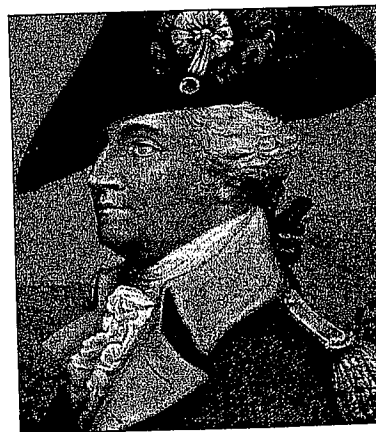
Armchair General now takes you back to this historical battle in which you will play the role of American Revolutionary War commander, General "Mad" Anthony Wayne. People will live or die based on your command decisions in this virtual battle. With sketchy information about the enemy, you

must make decisions quickly in order to take advantage of the fleeting opportunities on the battlefield. Make the right decisions and you will defeat your opponent. Make the wrong ones, however, and your forces will be vanquished.

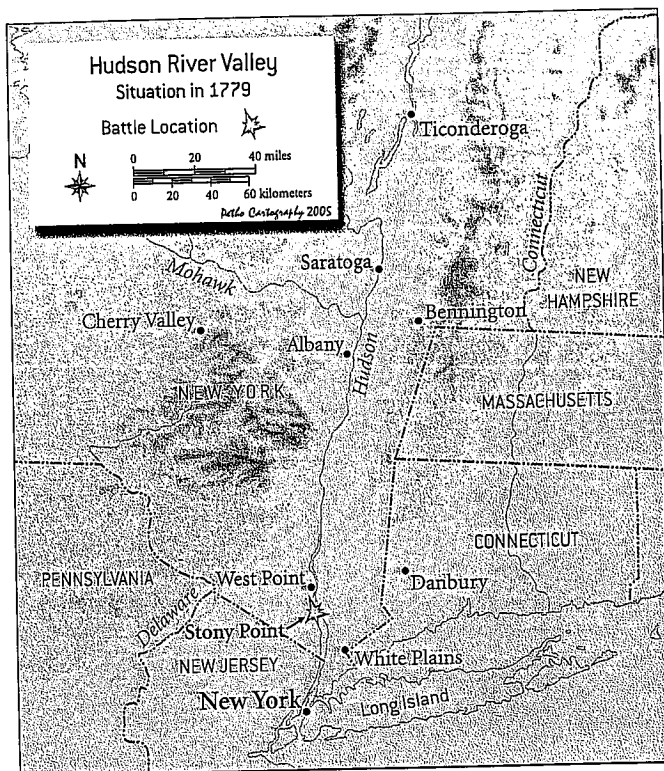
Perhaps you already know the outcome of this story, but what if you could change it? Read the background material carefully and examine the battle maps. Develop your own solution that you feel bet-

OPPOSITE: Gen. Washington knew that passage of the Hudson River was essential to the transport of men between New England and the middle colonies. He devised a plan for removing the British threat at Stony Point.

RIGHT: Known as "Mad" Anthony Wayne for his tempestuous character, Gen. Wayne served with distinction throughout the American colonies during the war. He led his regiment to Canada, fought at Brandywine in 1777, encamped at Valley Forge, contributed to British defeat during the Yorktown campaign, and marched to Georgia and South Carolina to drive the British from the South.



Getty Images



The fortifications on Stony Point made this peninsula jutting into the strategically important Hudson River a vital location for both the British and the Americans. Control of the Hudson River Valley was a key objective for the success of British plans to split the rebellious colonies and for Patriot efforts to preserve their new nation.

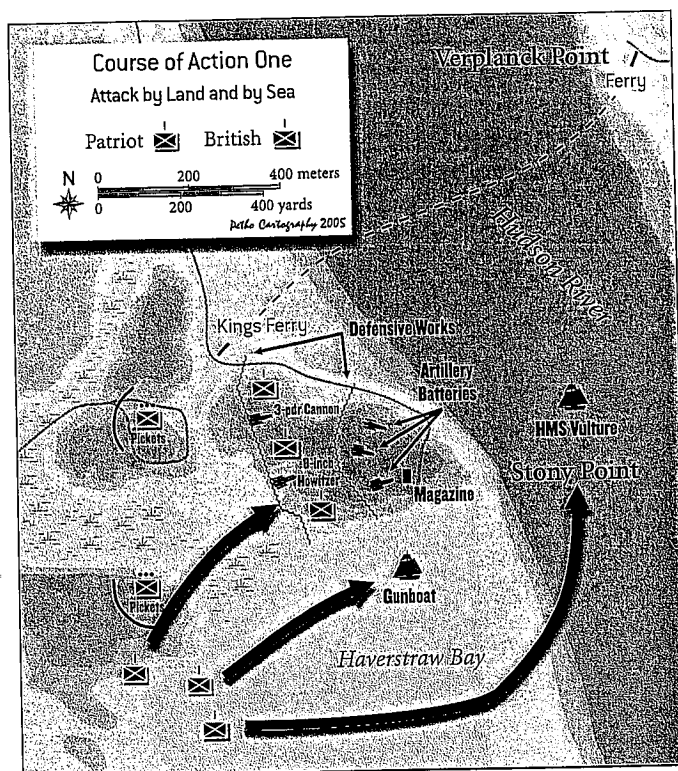
ter addresses the tactical dilemma faced by your historical counterpart. Use the pullout form between pages 48 and 49 to illustrate your solution and return it to *Armchair General* by August 26, 2005. Winning Reader Solutions will be printed in the January 2006 issue. You can also discuss this CDG with other readers in the Forums at www.armchair-general.com and join our growing community of savvy tacticians matching wits online.

Commander, prepare your men for battle!

"MAD" ANTHONY WAYNE

Fort Montgomery, New York, July 14, 1779. The man Washington had in mind to lead the Patriot attack on the British garrison at Stony Point was at that moment supervising the training of the approximately 1,300 men in his Continental Army unit encamped about midway between the British-held fort at Stony Point and the Patriot stronghold at West Point.

You, Brigadier General Anthony Wayne of Pennsylvania, are a former tanner and member of your state's legislature who has already seen much combat since the Revolution began. Although there are several stories about how you received your famous nickname of "Mad" Anthony, you have proven yourself in the heat of battle to be bold, aggressive, charismatic and absolutely fearless. Consequently, Washington believes you are just "mad" enough to succeed in a daring assault



A surprise attack to seize the British warships supporting the garrison at Stony Point provides critical fire support for the assault on the fortifications.

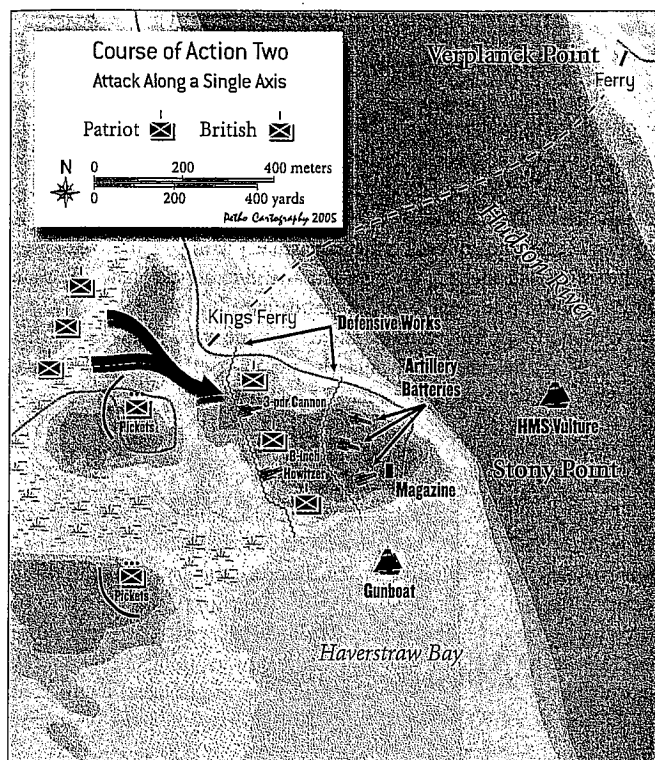
against a strong British position protected by naval gunfire.

"It is damned hot!" you think as you watch your men being drilled by your adjutant, Major Murpree. Murpree is one of the protégés of Washington's Prussian drillmaster, von Steuben. Von Steuben is in the process of training select officers who will return to their units to spread "Prussian" drill and discipline throughout the army. Murpree has been drilling the troops for three hours on this sweltering July day, causing them to sweat through their wool uniforms. While it may be hard on the men, their survival depends on this training and discipline – and if it helps them avoid being skewered on the end of a British bayonet, it is worth the effort.

In general, the men under your command are very dedicated, but they are also very young. Most are still in their teens, the sons of farmers or farm laborers. You have heard that the Tories – fellow Americans who remain loyal to the king – claim the Continental Army's ranks are filled with nothing but jobless scum, the dregs of American society who enlisted only for the cash bounty. Perhaps there is a kernel of truth to the charge, but that does not explain why they have stayed and endured the hardship to which, as Tom Paine wrote, no "summer soldier or sunshine patriot" would submit. Anyone who saw these Soldiers' bloody footprints in the snow at Valley Forge as you did in the terrible winter of 1776-77 knows that these men are sweating here today for more than money – they are fighting to win the Revolution.

The gallop of an approaching horse interrupts your thoughts. As it comes to a stop, a courier quickly dismounts and addresses you.

Clinton intends to achieve this goal by controlling the crucial Hudson River Valley, which he hopes will divide the Patriot forces in the northeastern colonies from those farther south.



Concentrating the full force of the Patriot attack against a single section of the British defensive line avoids the garrison's most formidable weapons.

"General Wayne, sir, I bring you a summons from General Washington. The commanding general respectfully requests that you join him at his headquarters at once."

You note a sense of urgency in the courier's voice. This is likely not a routine mission since a written order would suffice in such a case. Washington must be planning an operation! A successful attack would buoy the spirits of the men – something they sorely need.

You shout for your orderly to bring your horse. As you mount, you give him instructions. "Pass the word to have the men prepare for movement. We may be in battle soon!" You gallop toward Washington's headquarters, calling out over your shoulder, "Major Murpree is in charge in my absence!"

STONY POINT

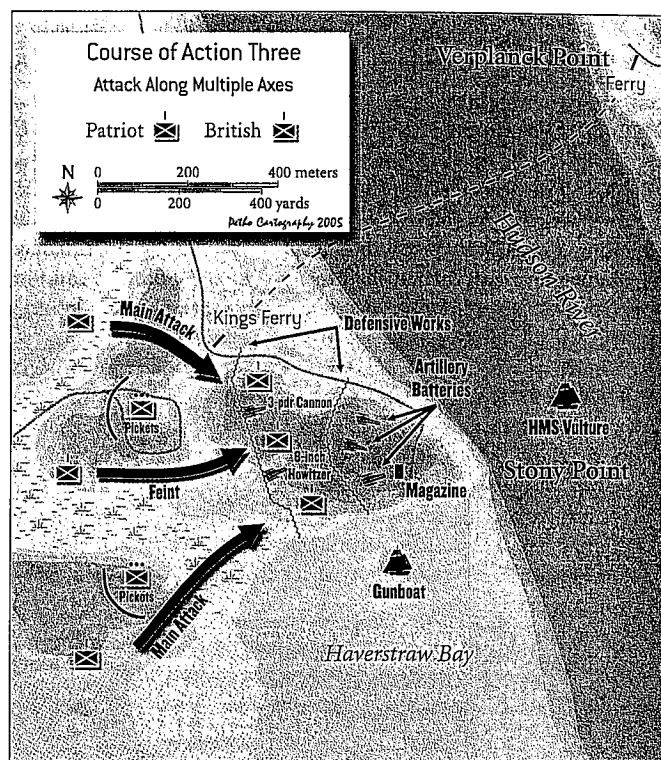
Washington's Headquarters, near Bucksberg Mountain. It is near dusk when you arrive at the commanding general's tent. Washington's back is to you as you enter, and he is scrutinizing a map. Beside him stands a cartographer.

"Good evening, your Excellency"

"Good evening, General Wayne. Thank you for your attendance at this late hour."

General Washington displays his usual look of relaxed earnestness. Unflappable in battle, that same characteristic seems to pervade every part of his life. You wonder about the pressure he must be experiencing as a result of his challenging position.

Handing you his telescope, Washington says, "General Wayne, look



Assaulting the British defensive works at more than one location forces the garrison to spread their efforts all along their front.

through this glass and observe the enemy's location on that peninsula to our west."

"Yes, your Excellency," you reply, "Stony Point is a strong position. I see that the enemy is making the most of it with fortifications."

"The British have begun movement north in an attempt to take control of the Hudson River Valley," Washington explains. "By controlling the Stony Point peninsula, their forces dominate Kings Ferry and thus the lower valley. If the British extend their control north to West Point and beyond, they will effectively split our country in two. We cannot permit them a single foothold along this river lest we risk losing the entire Hudson River Valley. Your mission is to storm the peninsula and capture the enemy fort. Since time is of the essence, your assault shall take place tomorrow night."

Washington continues, "The British have used the natural obstacles of the peninsula very effectively in preparing the defense of Stony Point. They are surrounded by water on three sides, with Haverstraw Bay to the south and Kings Ferry to the north. These waterways are guarded by two enemy ships. The sloop of war *HMS Vulture* with its several naval guns is positioned off the eastern point of the peninsula, and a small single-gun gunboat is located at the southern side of Stony Point in Haverstraw Bay. Since the enemy controls much of the territory on the east bank of the Hudson, Verplanck could be used to bring reinforcements across to Kings Ferry. The combination of British army troops and Royal Navy warships could present you with a daunting problem."

"To the west and south of the point are marshy areas that appear trafficable by foot. The enemy is guarding these areas with two for-

ward picket locations with approximately 15 men in each picket. Neither location appears to have artillery or any other support that would present an obstacle.

"About halfway across the peninsula, the enemy has placed his first line of defense. A second line consisting of 6-foot-high abatis and fleches support these outer works. The abatis start at the water's northern edge and run all the way across the peninsula, extending roughly 50 yards into Haverstraw Bay. Approximately 500 soldiers are entrenched in these works. A 3-pounder cannon supports the troops in the north, and an 8-inch howitzer supports those in the south. The last part of the enemy's defense is located near the tip of the peninsula where he has placed batteries of ship guns and the fort's magazine. The guns are very large – intended for long range – and appear to have little utility for protecting the nearest approaches to the peninsula."

General Washington turns from the map and says, "We don't have much time. Each second we delay gives the enemy more opportunity to organize his defenses. Return to Fort Montgomery and prepare your troops for tomorrow night's attack. At first light, I will join you and you can brief me on your plan of attack."

"Yes sir, you can count on me and my men," you reply. You salute sharply before mounting your horse and racing back to Fort Montgomery. You think about your options the entire trip back.

TIME TO PLAN

It is nearly 3 a.m. when you reach your headquarters. You immediately summon Major Murpree to join you in your tent. He appears after only a few moments to find you sitting at your field desk eyeing a map of the Stony Point peninsula.

"Major Murpree, we have our mission. Once I brief you on the specifics, I would like your candid feedback on my ideas for possible courses of action."

After repeating all you have learned from General Washington's briefing, you retrieve your parchment and quill to sketch your first course of action.

COURSE OF ACTION ONE: ATTACK BY LAND AND BY SEA

"The enemy has a strong position protected by Royal Navy ships. If we do not address the threat posed by the guns of the British ships surrounding the peninsula, we might not be able to hold onto Stony Point once we seize it. The combined assault of naval bombardment and possible reinforcements from Verplanck Point might defeat us and force our withdrawal.

"In this first plan, we will divide our force. (See map on page 46.) During the hours of darkness preceding our main attack, two groups of 50 men each will mount small rowboats and attack the *HMS Vulture* and the gunboat in Haverstraw Bay. Once secured, the two boats can be used to shell the British defenses as well as prevent reinforcements from Verplanck Point. This will effectively isolate Stony Point and protect the remainder of our force – about 1,200 men – as it attacks and seizes control of the peninsula. Once we are certain that the ships are under our control, we will launch our attack on the British positions. Our troops will approach from the south; that way, they can be observed from the

bay, thereby preventing the shelling of our own men."

Murpree studies the map for a moment and says, "Sir, you had mentioned that at least one of the batteries on the tip of the peninsula is aimed at the river. My first concern is that the British may quickly discover the ships are no longer under their control and use the time between the two phases of our attack to shell the ships and possibly destroy them – so we might not have the support from the river as you predict. My second concern is that the artillery along the outer defenses in the south is located right where you intend to attack. Hence, we may be attacking into the enemy's strongest defense."

"Very good points, Major. There is some risk involved in this course of action, yet its advantages might offset them. Still, I have another plan we should consider."

COURSE OF ACTION TWO: ATTACK ALONG A SINGLE AXIS

"This course of action seeks to gain control of the artillery pieces supporting the infantry companies arrayed along the outer works," you explain. (See map on page 47.) "Because the artillery behind the inner works is only effective against the waterborne approaches or at long distances, we really don't have to worry very much about those – at least early in the fight. If we mass our forces along a single attack axis on one side of the enemy's defenses, we might overwhelm them before they have a chance to reposition. Moreover, since the enemy has placed his powerful 8-inch howitzer to the south in an embrasure in the outer line, that positioning will prevent him from quickly turning the weapon on us as we advance. The northernmost artillery piece, the 3-pounder, is not limited by an embrasure. It therefore appears to be the most dangerous and the one we want to seize first."

"Excellent point, sir," Major Murpree concludes. "You have made a good case for this course of action."

"Finally," you explain, "after we have advanced past the outer works, our troops can seize the ship guns within the inner works. Once these are in our possession we will effectively control the river as well, thus preventing the enemy from moving reinforcements from the ships or Verplanck Point to the west bank!"

Major Murpree considers this and then says, "Sir, that is an excellent plan, but I fear we are putting all our eggs – 1,300 men, that is – in one basket. Like you, I believe that the key to our success is in capturing the 3-pounder early in our assault; however, I fear that we are trying to put too many of our forces in too confined an area."

"Yes," you reply, "that is also a risk that I will carefully consider when making the final decision." Then, taking the quill once more, you say, "Now I will explain our third possible course of action."

COURSE OF ACTION THREE: ATTACK ALONG MULTIPLE AXES

"This option will likely reinforce the enemy's suspicions by appearing to do just what he probably expects us to do – attack right down the middle, both for speed and to avoid getting tangled in the marshy areas to the north and south of the defensive positions. (See map on page 47.) We will reinforce this belief by ordering a reduced-strength company of no more than 200 men to attack directly into the enemy's main defenses while making lots of noise. Once the enemy is fixated on that feint force,

Washington sought *offensive* action to undermine Clinton's plan and decided that the place to undertake such an attack was the British garrison at Stony Point.



Richard T. Nowitz/Corbis

Do your Continental Army Soldiers have the training, skill and discipline to capture the British fortifications at Stony Point with the bayonet alone?

we will launch strong attacks along the north and south axes. Each of these reinforced companies will have about 500 men. This avoids placing all our forces along the same constricted area where they would run the risk of being trapped. When the first assault has successfully breached the outer works, a code word will indicate our men are moving to the inner works to seize control of the ship artillery there. Once that is completed, we will have an all-around perimeter from which we can repel any further attacks."

Major Murpree is silent while he evaluates the plan. "Sir," he says at last, "while this third course of action does have advantages, it also has potential disadvantages and risks as well. If we attack as the enemy expects, we run the danger of attacking into his strength. By splitting our forces along two separate axes of attack, we will in effect create a general frontal assault against his entire line."

Murpree concludes with some savvy advice, "Whichever course we adopt, I recommend that we have the southern and northern companies attack with unloaded weapons in order to avoid

an accidental discharge that might give away our plan. We will need all the help we can get to keep this attack a secret!"

Major Murpree's idea is radical and seems to fly in the face of conventional military doctrine, but he is correct that you need all the help you can get. Still, there are many questions: Can your men attack and seize Stony Point with unloaded weapons? Do they have the stomach to back

up their Revolutionary ardor? Has your training instilled the discipline necessary for them to overwhelm the enemy by bayonet alone? One thing is for sure – you'll soon have your answers.

Your sentries inform you that General Washington approaches! It is time to make a decision, but you wonder whether you have considered all possible options. Commander, what are your orders? ★

Lieutenant Colonel Doug Henry is currently a brigade senior advisor in Saudi Arabia. He served in Operations Enduring Freedom, Desert Shield and Desert Storm. Henry also served as Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Politics and International Relations at the U.S. Military Academy.

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