



*Leadership Lessons From The
Battlefield*

Christopher L. Kolakowski

Director

Warmup Case Study: Eighth Army

- Non-verbal communication
- You control the weather





Five Leadership Case Studies from the Battle of the Bulge, 1944



Ardennes Offensive

- 16 Dec 1944 – 28 Jan 1945
- Largest battle in history of U.S. Army
- 33 U.S. divisions with Ardennes streamer
- 1/3+ of total (90) U.S. divisions in WWII
- ½ of all U.S. divisions in ETO/MTO

Case Study I: The Perils of Groupthink

- Test assumptions
- Conventional wisdom isn't always right

Situation Eve of Offensive



Allied Intelligence Assessments

- Strategic (common) assumptions about German weakness & capability
- Focus on Roer and Saar as future battle zones
- Assumptions about detected movements opposite VIII Corps
- Assumptions about 2 missing panzer armies
- German radio silence & deception
- One exception: Third Army

Allied Mentality Eve of Battle

- Allies lulled into sense of security
- First Army G-2 goes on leave to Paris
- General Bradley away from his HQ
- VIII Corps reports all quiet on 15 December
- *“We felt that we were far removed from the action of the war.”* – Sgt Goldie Campbell of WI, 110th Infantry, 28th Division
- German offensive achieves surprise

Lessons

- Don't fit the facts to your assumptions
- Test the assumptions with facts
- Assess what the enemy (threat) is capable of, not what you think they might or might not do
- Don't get cocky
- Don't "blow through stop signs"
- Analogy: crash of 2008

Case Study II: Meet the Crisis

- Leadership makes the difference
- Do what you can with what you have

28th Infantry Division, 16 Dec 1944

- Holding between 106th and 9th Armored/4th Divs
- Regiments deployed N-S: 112, 110, 109
- Troop condition (lots of recent replacements)
- Spread thin along Our River
- Attacked by bulk of Fifth Panzer and Seventh Armies (3 panzer and 2 infantry divisions against 110th alone)
- Cota orders division to hold on as long as possible

28th Division Commander



Major General Norman "Dutch" Cota

110th Infantry Leaders









Colonel Hurley Fuller, CO

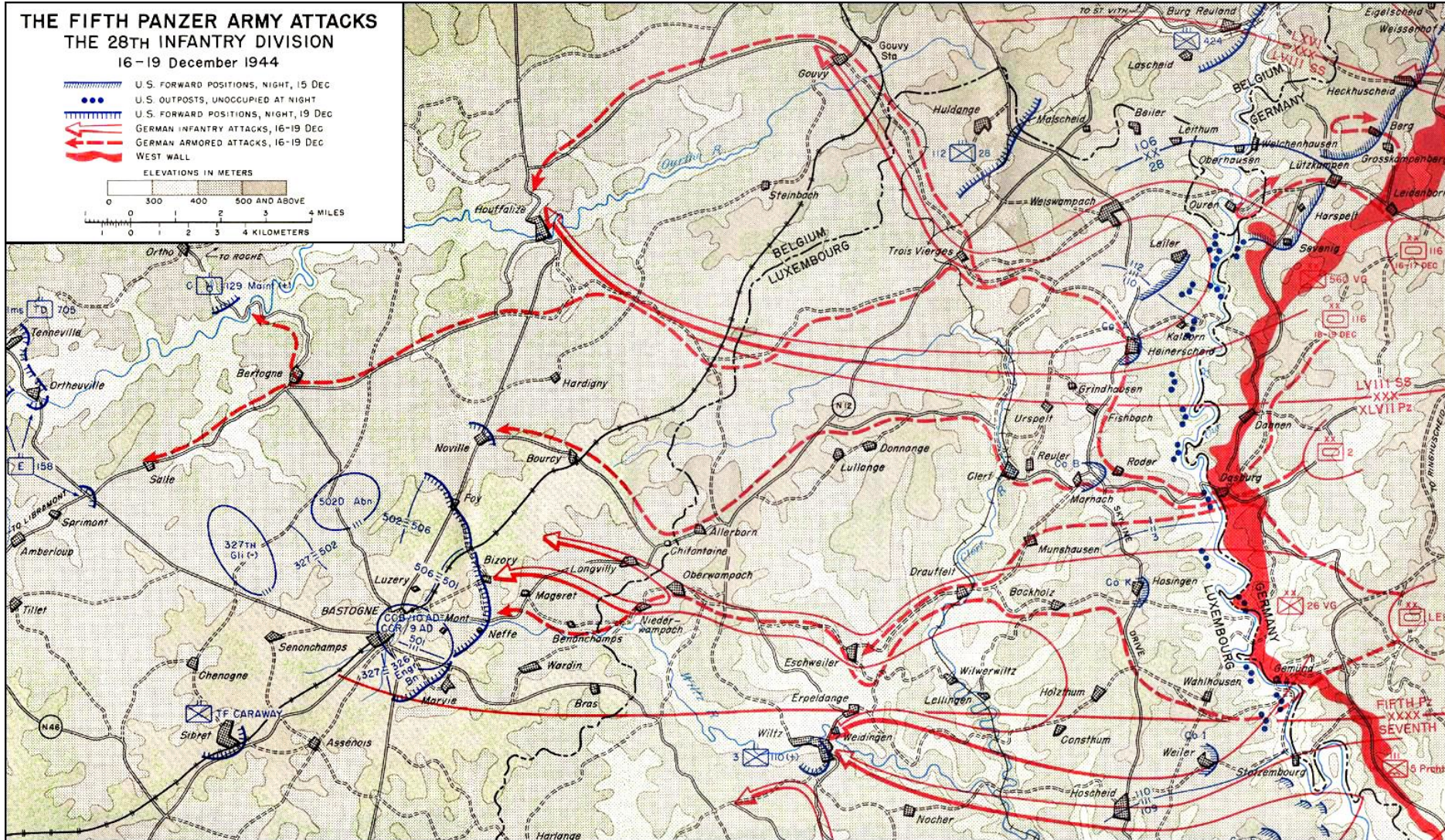
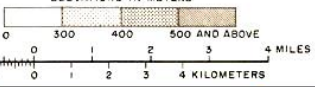


Lieutenant Colonel Daniel Strickler, XO

Storm on the 110th

THE FIFTH PANZER ARMY ATTACKS THE 28TH INFANTRY DIVISION 16-19 December 1944

-  U.S. FORWARD POSITIONS, NIGHT, 15 DEC
-  U.S. OUTPOSTS, UNOCCUPIED AT NIGHT
-  U.S. FORWARD POSITIONS, NIGHT, 19 DEC
-  GERMAN INFANTRY ATTACKS, 16-19 DEC
-  GERMAN ARMORED ATTACKS, 16-19 DEC
-  WEST WALL



Quote

“There was no great panic in our little town. We just kept on fighting.”

- Sergeant Wayne V. Erickson
(Cumberland WI)

Clervaux (Clerf)



Wiltz



WVM Exhibit



Quote

The men of the 28th Division had taken the full brunt of Von Rundstedt's mighty offensive in Luxembourg. They fought gallantly and desperately in hundreds of scattered battles. There were days and nights of incredible heroism. The 110th Infantry was in the center of the division, direct in the path of the enemy in its advance to WILTZ and BASTOGNE. Five enemy divisions drove through the 110th's sector, but the units of the regiment held so firmly at all costs that the Germans' plan was disrupted and their schedule thrown off balance. It was one of the epic stands of World War II and the 110th was responsible for stopping the enemy long enough for the 101st Airborne Division to get into BASTOGNE to make its stand until help came from the North and South.

- Lt. Col. Daniel B. Strickler

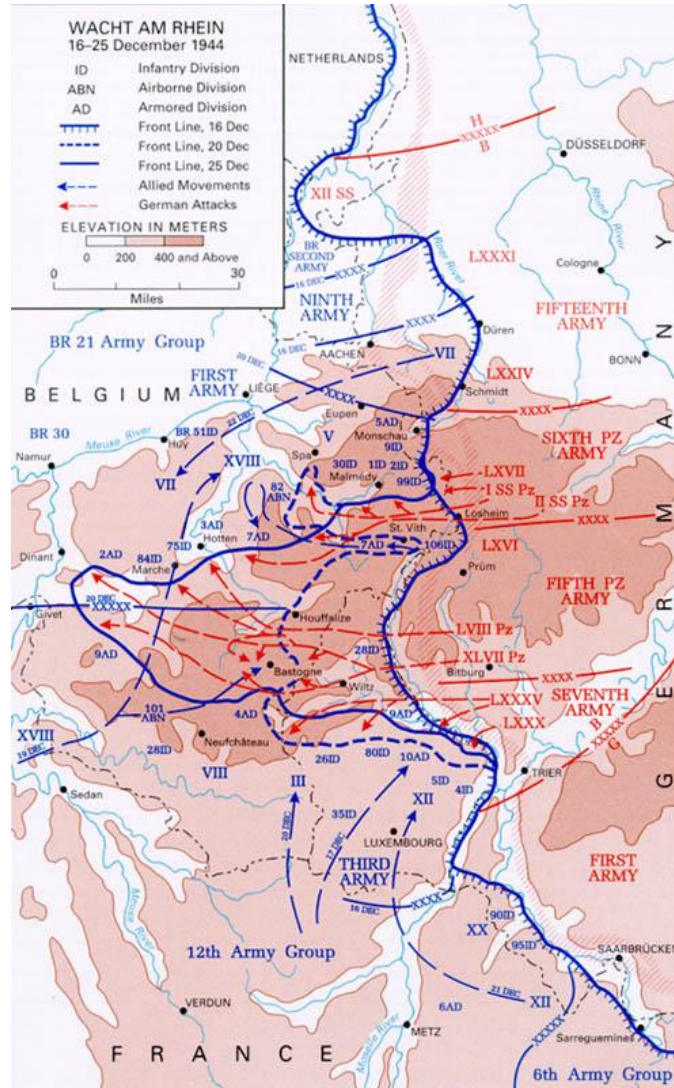
Case Study III: Focus on Essentials

- Sift for the key facts and elements
- When in doubt, fall back on the fundamentals

MG Troy Middleton, VIII Corps



Situation, 18-19 Dec 1944



Key German Limitations

- Terrain
- Weather
- Sparse road network
- Jammed salient shoulders north and south
- Limited routes westward; towns with road junctions are key places

Middleton's Plan

- Hold the key road junctions: St. Vith, Houffalize, Bastogne
- Hold the southern shoulder
- Delaying actions on roads E of Bastogne
- HQ XVIII Abn Corps and 82d Abn Division to Houffalize, diverted to St. Vith/Vielsalm
- No available forces for Houffalize
- 101st Abn Division to Bastogne

Quote

“Hold Bastogne.”

- standing order from Middleton to Brigadier General Anthony McAuliffe, Acting Commander 101st Airborne Division, 19 December 1944

Case Study IV: Setting the Vision

- Senior leaders and team thinking
 - You control the weather

Key Points

- Stockdale Paradox: Confront the brutal facts, but never lose hope you will prevail in the end
- Set the vision and plan for victory
- Meet immediate targets, but keep larger picture in mind as you set priorities
- Do what must be done, but don't hobble yourself in the long term
- Leadership makes the difference

Verdun Conference, 19 December

- HQ SHAEF: Eisenhower, Tedder, Smith
- 21 Army Group: de Guingand
- 12 Army Group: Bradley
- 6 Army Group: Devers
- Third Army: Patton
- Assorted staff officers for all commands

Ike Sets the Vision

“The present situation is to be regarded as one of opportunity for us and not of disaster. There will be only cheerful faces at this conference table.”

Collective Decisions

- Postpone all Allied offensives
- Hold the current front line in all other sectors
- Concentrate on stopping the German push
- No Germans beyond the Meuse
- Counterattack, led by Patton supervised by Bradley

Case Study V: Planning Ahead

- Leader vision in all directions
- Contingency planning

Third Army before 19 December 1944

- Major offensive into Saar planned for 19 Dec
- Based on his intelligence, Patton orders contingency plans for an Ardennes battle
- *“We’ll be in a position to meet whatever happens.”* – GSP
- 10th Armored sent north 16-17 Dec
- 17-18 Dec Patton ordered staff to refine planning for move north
- Final staff meeting before Verdun 19 Dec

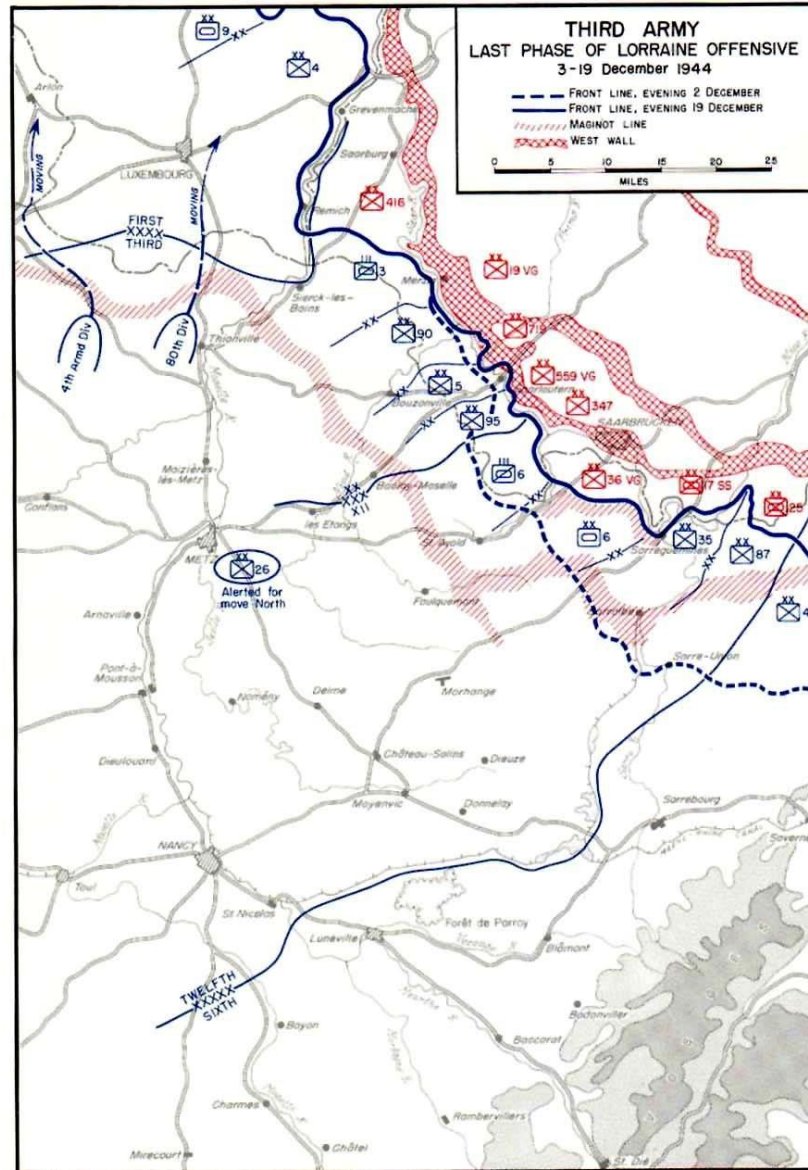
Patton's Plans

- A: Diekirch due north
- B: Arlon to Bastogne
- C: Neufchateau toward NE
- Force: HQ III Corps and 4th Armored, 26th *Yankee* Infantry, and 80th *Blue Ridge* Infantry Divisions
- XII Corps to follow with 2-3 divisions
- Patton: "I can attack . . . in 48 hours."

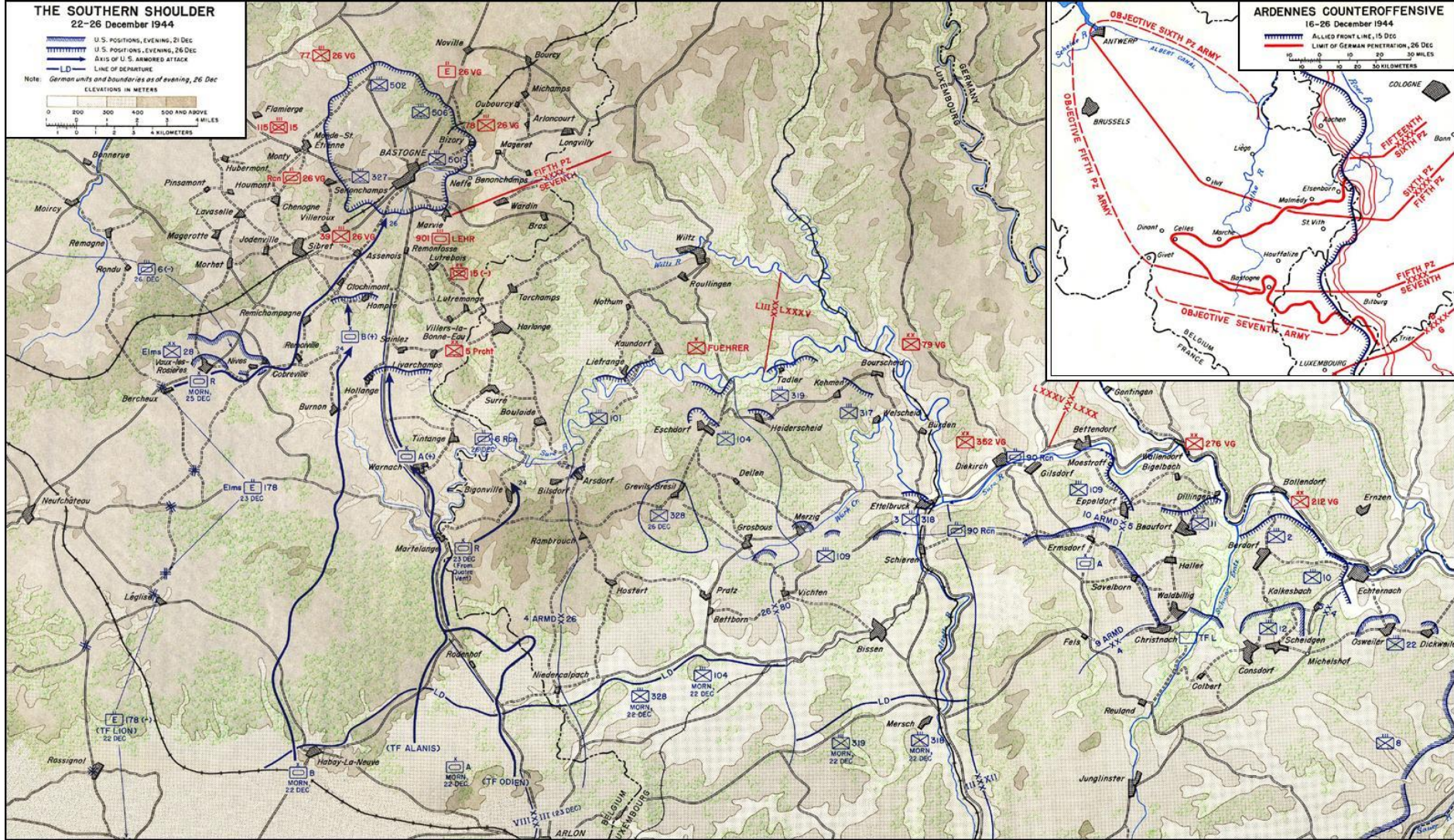
Reaction

- Energizes the room
- Ike is unbelieving
- Patton explains planning has been underway for days
- Ike says go AM 22 December (60 hours)
- After the meeting, Patton calls his chief of staff and gives code letter (B), then heads to the field to supervise movement

The Turn North



Relief of Bastogne



Final Thought

“Leadership makes the difference.”

- Colonel Danny R. McKnight, USA

“I don’t learn from experience, I prefer to learn from other people’s experiences.”

- Otto von Bismarck

Wisconsin Veterans Museum

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- Virtual programs & resources
- **www.wisvetmuseum.com**
- **www.facebook.com/wisvetmuseum**

*Questions
and
Discussion*