

10 Ridiculously Small Armies That Destroyed Huge Empires

By: Turx



Why would anyone ever want to go to war? Other than for oil, I mean. Actually, there are many reasons.

The first, of course, is oil.

Here is a list of reasons (updated through 2012) why you might want to invade another country. It could be because of its:

- Weapons of mass destruction
- Lack of weapons of mass destruction
- Election year
- Reelection year
- Religion
- Atheism
- Media outlets speaking the truth

- Media outlets concealing the truth
- Assassinations
- Failed assassination attempts
- Too little government control
- Too much government control
- Love of war
- Love of peace

- Good guys trying to depose an evil tyrant
 - Evil tyrant trying to depose good guys
 - Good guys and evil tyrant trying to get rid of an even bigger evil tyrant
 - Any word ending in “ism”
- Ok. Once you have made a choice closest to your personal ideology, and to the

ideology of your constituency, you are free to attack without guilt.

There are a lot of bad reasons to go to war. Surprisingly, though, one of the worst ones is because you are much bigger, badder and stronger. Throughout history there have been many wars with outrageously shocking results where small armies, sometimes with just a few men, gained victories over large armies—sometimes even winning over entire empires!

Nobody goes to war expecting to lose, of course. And why do they lose? Here are some reasons:

- Corruption
- Wikileaks
- The evil tyrant was more evil than you thought
- Your uniforms were colorful (especially pre-1915)
- They had more oil than you
- They had better weapons than you
- They were luckier than you
- Accidental waving of white flag
- Accidental waving of weapons in wrong direction
- Declaring war against every other country at the same time
- The other guys cheated
- You invaded Russia in middle of the winter
- You're French

Whatever the reason—and, of course, it always comes down to *Hashem*—there



"Morning of the Battle of Agincourt, 25th October 1415", painted by Sir John Gilbert.

have been plenty of times when ridiculously small armies have successfully defeated the military might of history's largest empires. Let us go over a few of these events.

The French, Fried

The Favorite: France
The Underdog: Britain
The Year: October 25, 1415
The Era: Right in middle of the Hundred Years' War

What the experts were predicting

Notice the favorites here are the French. Now, given their historical knack for military defeat, no one today would ever consider picking the French as military favorites. [SIDEBAR] Yet, believe it or not, there was a time when that was not so. In 1415, the French were the clear favorites. This was the moment in history where the French were expected to put their national shame aside and win something.

At that time, the French and British were engaged in their Hundred Years' War, a war which saw England occupy almost all of France for over a century. When the French would liberate a city, the British would easily take it back a short while later. The French kings were physically weak and constantly on the run. If only the French could get a lucky break and turn the war in their favor...

The break came (and went) at a place called Agincourt. The Battle of Agincourt was the best chance the French ever stood to overpower the British and liberate France once and for all. Every conceivable thing was in their favor until they hit upon a tremendous obstacle... the very fact that they were indeed *French*.

Here is how it happened. The British

siege against the French city of Harfleur took much longer than expected and by the time it was over, Britain's King Henry V couldn't wait to get out of France with his weary troops. His plan at the time was to get back to England, rest, assemble an even greater army and deal a crushing blow to France.

Alas, the plan was not to be. As Henry V was retreating up a hill with his exhausted archers, the main French army found him, gave chase and was prepared to vanquish the tired British army along with their king. The French army was five times larger than the British, better armed and better fed. A heavy downpour made it even harder for the British soldiers who were traveling on foot. Furthermore, the weary British longbow men were horribly mismatched against the French heavy cavalry.

What on Earth went wrong?

Ok, the British had one thing going for them. Their archers. The British archers at the time were the best in the world.

Whereas the British had their archers, the French pride and joy rested with their knights. The elite French mounted knights were the best in hand-to-hand combat and their heavy armor made them hard to kill.

The French managed to chase the British up a hill in what was about to turn into the Battle of Agincourt. The French waited at the bottom of the hill and, when they saw the British had no plans of coming down, they started marching up. And that's when the French snatched defeat out of the hands of victory.

Charging up the hill was much harder on the horses than the French had thought, especially because the downpour had left the ground sodden with mud. That, plus the weight of their heavy armor, made it extremely difficult to advance. The first wave of French knights was decimated. More waves charged and the somewhat rejuvenated British troops mowed them down as well. The entire battle lasted only a few hours and almost the entire French army was obliterated.

The official French records claim the

British out-killed the French by a ratio of at least ten-to-one. The British records claim the ratio to be more like a-hundred-to-one!

Other than a few hundred dead (and part of King Henry V's crown getting axed), the British left the battlefield with one of the most remarkable upsets in military history.

What might have worked instead?

It's hard to say. While the French hungered for revenge, the British hungered for food and shelter. Were the French too overconfident? Did they underestimate the devastating accuracy of the British longbows? Should they have waited for weather to improve? Did they forget that they were, after all, French? I was going to put these questions to a French soldier who



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"King Henry V at the Battle of Agincourt, 1415," by Sir John Gilbert.