

Did Lincoln make a mistake in ordering the Army of the Potomac to retreat from near Richmond in 1862? Quora.com 2021

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While McClellan was not a good offensive general, and he missed many opportunities during his 1862 Peninsula Campaign, he nevertheless got his army to within sight of the Confederate capital at Richmond. After Robert E. Lee challenged him in the Seven Days battles, Lincoln ordered McClellan to withdraw his entire army. Lincoln's reasoning was that he needed the army to protect Washington D.C. In my opinion, this was a severe mistake. Washington was already heavily defended by a ring of forts. McClellan strongly protested retreating from his positions. Lincoln should have removed McClellan from command of the Army of the Potomac, and replaced him with someone else. Instead, Lincoln could have transferred McClellan to be in charge of defending Washington. McClellan was great at quickly organizing an army, and he had the devotion of his troops. Then if Lincoln had appointed US Grant to head the Army of the Potomac (Grant had already made his reputation in capturing the Confederate Forts Henry and Donalson in Tennessee, by that time), Grant would have been able to do in 1862 what he later did in 1864 in pinning Lee down in trench warfare in front of Richmond and Petersburg. The US forces would not have had to fight over repeatedly retaking the same ground in northern Virginia, if they had kept their position just outside of Richmond. Few want to criticize Lincoln, but why should any army give up ground already taken?