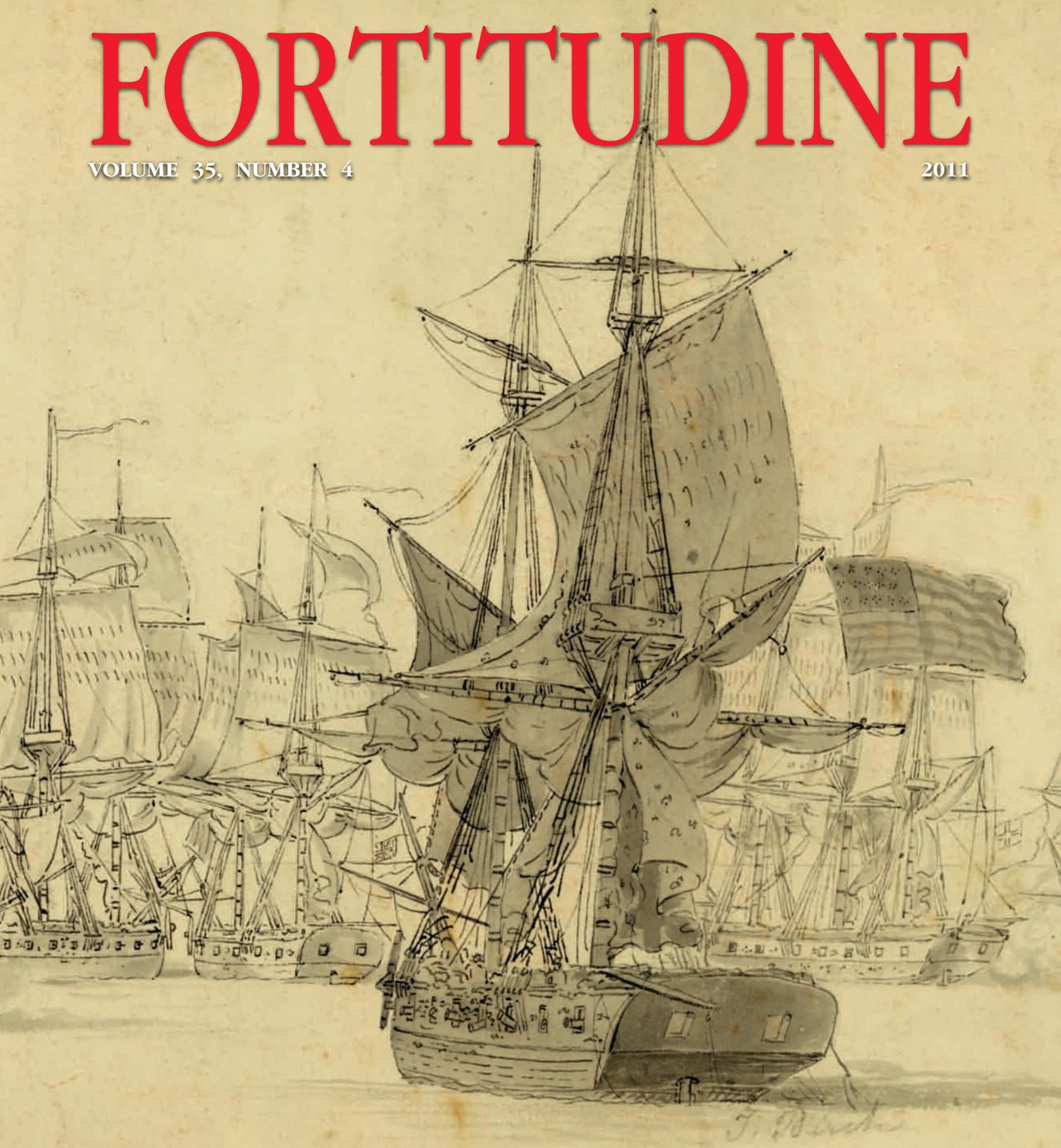


FORTITUDINE

VOLUME 35, NUMBER 4

2011



BULLETIN OF THE MARINE CORPS HISTORICAL PROGRAM



HISTORY DIVISION

PRESIDENT

MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY

BGen Thomas M. Murray

DIRECTOR

Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer

DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Paul J. Weber

CHIEF HISTORIAN

Charles D. Melson

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Cynthia M. Meyer

HISTORIES BRANCH

Charles D. Melson (Branch Head); Dr. Fred H. Allison; Dr. Thomas M. Baughn; Maj David W. Kummer; Dr. Nicholas J. Schlosser; Charles R. Smith; A. Rob Taglianetti; Paul W. Westermeyer

HISTORICAL REFERENCE BRANCH

Robert V. Aquilina (Branch Head); Annette D. Amerman; Beth L. Crumley; Kara R. Newcomer; Shelia Phillips;

FIELD HISTORY BRANCH

Col Stephen E. Motsco; LtCol David A. Benhoff; LtCol Gregory S. McCarthy; Maj Robert F. Williams; CWO-4 Timothy S. McWilliams; GySgt Bradford A. Wineman

EDITING AND DESIGN BRANCH

Kenneth H. Williams (Branch Head); James M. Caiella; Andrea L. Connell; Dr. Stephen E. Evans; W. Stephen Hill; Robert A. Kocher; Gregory A. Macheak; Vincent J. Martinez; Wanda J. Renfrow; Jeanette L. Riffe; Shawn H. Vreeland

Marine Corps History Division

3078 Upshur Avenue

Quantico, Virginia 22134

Telephone (703) 432-4877

<http://www.history.usmc.mil>

history.division@usmc.mil

FORTITUDINE

Motto of the United States Marine Corps in the 1812 era

Historical Bulletin Vol. 35, No. 4

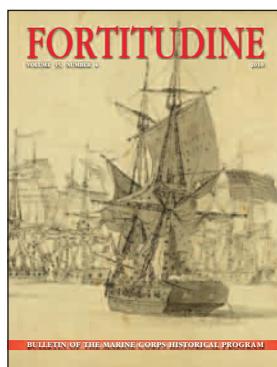
2011

“We can only know who we are by being certain of who we have been.”

Gen Leonard F. Chapman Jr.
24th Commandant of the Marine Corps

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>From the Director: A New Year Upon Us</i>	
<i>Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer</i>	3
<i>Core of the Corps: James Bird and the Battle of Lake Erie</i>	
<i>Charles R. Smith</i>	4
<i>Joe Foss' First Days with the Cactus Air Force</i>	
<i>2dLt Kyle J. Bare</i>	8
<i>National Museum of the Marine Corps: Battle of the Potomac</i>	
<i>John H. Haynes</i>	10
<i>Marine Navy Cross Recipients in Operation Desert Storm</i>	
<i>Borislav V. Chernev</i>	15
<i>First to Write: Destination Wolmi-do</i>	19
<i>Book Review: The Final Years of the Vietnam War</i>	
<i>Charles D. Melson</i>	21
<i>Book Review: Iraq and Counterinsurgency</i>	
<i>Nicholas J. Schlosser</i>	22



About the Cover: The cover depicts the battle in Lake Erie between the British naval force under Commander Robert H. Barclay and the United States naval force under the command of Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry. Sketch by Thomas Birch. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

This bulletin of the Marine Corps historical program is published for Marines, at the rate of one copy for every nine on active duty, to provide education and training in the uses of military and Marine Corps history. Other interested readers may purchase single copies or four-issue subscriptions from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. The appropriate order form appears in this issue.

A New Year Upon Us



Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer

It is another new year and the History Division continues to make great strides in the publication of historical material related to the operational performance of Marines in both combat and peacetime environments. This year bodes well for the publishing of publications and for our future location at Quantico, Virginia.

First, the year 2011 signifies the beginning of the centennial anniversary of naval aviation. Festivities and scheduled events commemorating this significant landmark will begin with the Navy kicking things off in May at the home of naval aviation in Pensacola, Florida. After about six months of celebrating Navy aviation, it will be time to remember the unique contributions of Marine Corps aviators to the history of naval aviation. The celebration of the naval aviation centennial is scheduled to conclude by May 2012.

Prior to January 2012, the Division plans to produce a number of publications that will be distributed throughout the Marine Corps and the public. First, the History Division will publish an *Illustrated History of Marine Corps Aviation, 1912–2012*. Through the extensive use of many “never seen before” photographs and other pertinent illustrations, Ms. Roxanne Ibinson of the Kratos Corporation has produced a book that will impact the naval aviation community. The book will be accompanied by a compact disc that contains the oral history of key Marine Corps aviators gleaned from the History Division’s extensive oral history collection. The compact disc also includes a battle study on the use of Marine Corps aviation in Nicaragua, 1927–1933. Nicaragua has long been considered a watershed event for the development of what we know today as the Marine Air Ground Task Force

concept, and I anticipate this particular study will be highly sought after.

However, an illustrated history is not, by definition, one that is designed to be a fully developed, scholarly history. For that mission, I assigned two of History Division’s most qualified aviation historians, Dr. Fred Allison and Dr. Thomas Baughn. Drs. Allison and Baughn have woven together a very thorough, scholarly history of the development of Marine Corps aviation from its inception in 1912 up to the present day. Starting with the father of Marine Corps aviation, Major Alfred A. Cunningham and continuing up to the present day Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James F. Amos, Drs. Allison and Baughn have written an engaging, institutional history of the aircraft developed, and of the men and women who flew the aircraft. The aviation history shows how technology, innovation, and even key personalities were able to take aviation from an “interesting experiment” to one that became an integral part of the Marine Corps—so fundamental that it is hard to imagine a Marine Corps without its aviation component today.

While the publishing of publications continues to be an important task of the Division, an equally important component is where that publishing takes place. During 2011, the Marine Corps University hopes to begin breaking ground on the long anticipated project, known as the Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons history wing. This wing will be added onto the Gray Research Center here at Quantico, Virginia, and History Division will be collocated with the Archives and Special Collections Branch. As plans now stand, the History Division will be located on the third floor of the new wing and the Archives and Special Collections

Branch and other elements of the University will be located on the first and second floors. Once built, researchers will have a one-stop location for all their research needs, regarding any aspect of Marine Corps history. We also hope to use the collocation as an opportunity to achieve some economies of scale regarding our research collections.

In conclusion, we look forward to another bright and productive year in Marine Corps history. We plan to publish several extensive monographs that focus upon Operation Iraqi Freedom; Operation Enduring Freedom; a battle study of the first year of Marine Corps engagement in Afghanistan; a definitive history of Marine Corps activities during Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm; a history of the Marines in the frigate navy; and even a short monograph on the history of the Mountain Warfare Training Center, authored by retired Lieutenant General O.K. Steele. This year we will also begin our commemorative historical series on the Vietnam War, starting with Colonel George Hofmann’s (Ret) excellent study about Marine Corps Operations in Southeast Asia, 1961–1965. These Vietnam War commemorative books will be similar in nature as were the books that the History Division published for the 50th anniversaries of World War II and the Korea War. We plan, after Colonel Hofmann’s book, to publish more books about the Vietnam War; ultimately, the History Division plans on publishing a complete set of Vietnam commemorative books, dedicated to those Marines who fought in one of America’s longest and most divisive conflicts. Again, it is an exciting time to be part of all these important initiatives.

□1775□

James Bird and the Battle of Lake Erie

by Charles R. Smith
Historian

On 11 November 1814, Marines James Bird and James Rankin, and Seaman Henry Davidson, met their deaths on board the brig *Niagara* lying at anchor outside the harbor at Erie, Pennsylvania. They did not die in battle. They were executed—the two Marines shot and the seaman hanged.

This is the story of James Bird, the victim who received the most sympathy—for within a short time of his death a ballad was written about him that is sung or recited at folk gatherings throughout the country to the present day.

Born in Morris County, New Jersey, about 1785, Bird was the eldest of 10 children of John and Rebecca Bird, who later resided in Exeter (now known as Kingston or Forty Forts)

across the Susquehanna River from Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Following General William Hull's abortive attack into Canada and his subsequent surrender of Fort Detroit during the summer of 1812, large numbers of reinforcements were wanted to defend America's northwestern frontier. Among the troops that "unanimously resolved to tender their services to the Governor of Pennsylvania, as part of the quota of the Pennsylvania militia," were the Kingston Volunteers, a company of artillery under the command of Captain Samuel Thomas. Numbered with the volunteers was James Bird.

With the American Army under Major General William Henry Harrison contemplating an invasion of Canada in 1813, naval control of Lake Erie was

essential to Harrison's ability to securely move troops and supplies north. At the outbreak of the War of 1812, Great Britain maintained one 17-gun ship and several small gunboats on the lake, while the United States had only one armed brig which subsequently was captured when Detroit fell. To achieve the all-important naval advantage, America had to start from scratch. Initial oversight of the construction of the Lake Erie fleet fell to Captain Isaac Chauncey, based at Sackett's Harbor, New York, and Presque Isle Bay at Erie, Pennsylvania, was selected as the site where the new fleet would be built. By early January 1813 construction of several brigs, schooners, and gunboats was well underway, and Captain Chauncey felt it was time to

Viewed from behind the disabled and abandoned American brig Lawrence on which James Bird served, the entire battle for Lake Erie is portrayed by English-born American painter Thomas Birch. Not one to commemorate the role of individual naval officers, Birch depicts the American victory from afar rather than concentrating on the triumphant brig Niagara led by Oliver Hazard Perry.

Courtesy of Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia. Gift of Mrs. C.H.A. Esling



appoint an experienced officer to supervise the completion of the vessels and to command the Erie fleet. His choice was 27-year-old Master Commandant Oliver Hazard Perry.

Perry would not only be responsible for the numerous details in completing the fleet's construction, but also for the infant fleet's protection. Although several of the gunboats had been launched which provided some security, no more than 100 men could be called upon to guard the fleet and man the defenses at Presque Isle, which was vulnerable to both a naval and land attack. Perry needed infantry and Captain Chauncey asked the War Office for a regiment of Pennsylvania Militia.

Pennsylvania Governor Simon Snyder, as a result of a requisition from the Secretary of War, issued a general order in late March 1813 calling for a 1,000-man militia detachment for the "protection of our naval armament at the town of Erie." Among the units drafted was Captain Thomas' Kingston Volunteer artillery company, which was incorporated into Colonel Rees Hill's 147th Regiment of the Pennsylvania Militia and ordered to rendezvous at Erie on or before 20 April. Although the raw militiamen could hardly be considered an effective fighting force, by early May their presence alone would discourage any British force from launching an assault. When not manning the defenses the militiamen were employed in building several of the smaller gunboats.

A detachment of Marines arrived in mid-May to reinforce the militiamen. Under Lieutenant John Brooks, the seven-man party left Washington in April, and after recruiting stops at Hagerstown, Maryland, where James Rankin enlisted, and Pittsburgh and Waterford, Pennsylvania, arrived at Erie with a total of 14 Marines. Canvassing the Pennsylvania Militia units at Erie over the next two months, Brooks managed to enlist 20 more men for his detachment. Among them were William McGinnis and James Bird from Thomas' artillery company.

It was reported that prior to his enlistment in Brooks' detachment, Bird had charge of one of the fleet's store-

houses near the mouth of Cascade Creek, where Perry was building the larger vessels of the fleet. Some of the men, with Bird's knowledge, it was alleged, pilfered some of the stores, and when confronted he and his men resisted arrest and had to be subdued by force. Bird was told that his offenses would be overlooked if he joined the Marines. On 8 June, the 26-year-old, five-foot, eleven-inch, sandy-haired, former weaver and his compatriot William McGinnis, after passing inspection by the fleet's surgeon, receiving a bounty, and being read the naval regulations against mutiny and desertion, were enlisted for five years in the Marine Corps. Bird subsequently would join Lieutenant Brooks on board the 20-gun brig *Lawrence*. Of the six artillerymen of Thomas' company who enlisted for service with the fleet, only Bird and McGinnis signed up for five years, the remainder incurred a three- or four-month obligation.

By mid-July, Perry's Erie fleet was almost complete, although not yet fully manned. The British squadron, which had maintained a blockade of Presque Isle and at times skirmished with the defending batteries, withdrew in late July because of a shortage of supplies and bad weather. Perry immediately began to move his 11-vessel fleet across the sandbar at the mouth of Presque Isle Bay, where he awaited additional sailors and Marines. During the move Private McGinnis was taken ill, "occasioned by cold and exposure," and taken to the hospital at Erie where he remained for several months until being discharged. When the British squadron returned in early August, Perry's gunboats and smaller schooners were arrayed in such a confident line that the out-gunned British withdrew to await the completion of their 19-gun ship *Detroit*.

After receiving 130 extra sailors, 50 of whom had been drafted from the *Constitution*, then undergoing a refit in Boston, Perry proceeded to Sandusky, Ohio, where he received further contingents of volunteers from Major General William Henry Harrison's Army of the Northwest. Perry then appeared off the naval yard at Amherstburg, Ontario, in an attempt to

coax the British out, finally establishing an anchorage at Put-in-Bay, Ohio. From this position, he was able to prevent supplies from reaching Amherstburg, effectively blockading the British squadron for the next five weeks. Running out of supplies in early September, the British commander, Robert H. Barclay, had no choice but to put out again and seek battle with Perry.

Sailing from his base, Barclay flew his flag from the recently completed *Detroit* and was joined by the *Queen Charlotte* (13 guns), *Lady Prevost* (13), *Hunter* (10), *Little Belt* (3), and *Chippawa* (1). Perry countered with the *Lawrence* (20), *Niagara* (20), *Ariel* (4), *Caledonia* (3), *Scorpion* (2), *Somers* (2), *Porcupine* (1), *Tigress* (1), and *Trippe* (1). Commanding from *Lawrence*, Perry's ships sailed under a blue battle flag emblazoned with Captain James Lawrence's immortal command, "Don't Give Up the Ship." On the morning of 10 September, the Americans saw Barclay's vessels heading for them and got underway from their anchorage at Put-in-Bay. Perry placed *Ariel* and *Scorpion* at the head of his battle line, followed by the *Lawrence*, *Caledonia*, and *Niagara*. The remaining gunboats trailed to the rear.

Both squadrons were in line of battle with their heaviest vessels near the center of the line. Perry hoped to get his two brigs, the *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, into carronade range quickly, but in light winds his ships made little headway, and the *Lawrence* was battered by the *Detroit's* assortment of long guns for at least 30 minutes before being able to reply effectively. As his guns began pummeling the British ships, he was surprised to see the *Niagara* slowing rather than moving to engage the *Queen Charlotte*. The delay in bringing the *Niagara* into battle allowed the British to focus their fire on the *Lawrence*. Although Perry's gun crews inflicted heavy damage on the British, the *Lawrence's* gun crews were soon overwhelmed, and the *Lawrence* was reduced by the two British ships to a wreck. More than three quarters of the *Lawrence's* crew were killed or wounded, among them

Lieutenant John Brooks, killed, and Marine James Bird, severely wounded. When the last gun on the *Lawrence* became unusable, Perry decided to transfer his flag. He was rowed through heavy gunfire to the *Niagara* while the *Lawrence* was surrendered. "When her flag was struck," wrote an observer, "she had but nine men fit for duty remaining on deck. Her sides were completely riddled by the shot from the long guns of the British ships. Her deck, the morning after the conflict, when I first went on board, exhibited a scene that defies description—for it was literally covered with blood which still adhered to the plank in clots—brains, hair and fragments of bones were still sticking to the rigging and sides . . . Enough! horror appalled my senses."

During the brief lull in firing following the surrender, the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, being almost unmanageable due to damaged rigging and severe losses among the crews, collided and became entangled. Helped by a strengthening wind, Perry steered the *Niagara* at Barclay's damaged ships instead of leading the American vessels away in retreat. His flagship broke through the British line ahead of the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, raking both with devastating broadsides while the American gunboats fired from astern. Although the crews of the two British ships managed to untangle the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, they could no longer offer any effective resistance. Both ships surrendered in mid-afternoon. When the smoke of battle had cleared, Perry had captured the entire British squadron and secured American control of Lake Erie. Writing to General Harrison, he reported: "We have met the enemy and they are ours." Following the victory, Perry ferried Harrison's Army of the Northwest to Detroit where it began its advance into Canada. This campaign culminated in the October 1813 American victory at the Battle of the Thames.

In November, the greater part of Captain Thomas' artillery company returned to the Wilkes-Barre area. With Perry's triumph still fresh in the minds of his countrymen, the compa-

ny's quartermaster sergeant, John Carkhuff, gave an account of conduct of a former member of the company during the engagement:

James Bird, son of Mr. J. Bird, of Exeter, was on board the *Lawrence* with the gallant Perry, on the glorious tenth of September. The battle raged—many a poor fellow fell around him—Bird did his duty like a hero. Towards the close of the engagement, a canister shot struck him on the shoulder as he was stooping to his gun. He was instantly covered with blood, and his officer ordered him below. He ventured to disobey, preferring to do duty while he had life, to abandoning his post. But the blood flowed so fast that another order was issued to go below. He ran down, got a hasty bandage on the wound, came again on deck, and although his left arm was useless—yet he handed cartridges and performed the utmost service in his power with his right, until the stars and stripes waved gloriously victorious over his foe.

Bird not only became a hometown hero, but also shared in Perry's adulation as accounts of Bird's conduct were widely circulated throughout the United States.

Following the second American victory at the Thames, Perry asked to be relieved and returned to the East Coast where he eventually was given command of the frigate *Java*, then under construction at Baltimore, Maryland. Master Commandant Jesse Elliott, his second in command on the lakes, was given command of the Lake Erie squadron. With cold weather approaching the fleet was ordered dismantled, except for its armament, and moored at Erie, Put-in-Bay, and Black Rock (Buffalo), New York, in suitable defensive positions. Here they spent a quiet winter. Spring found the vessels of the squadron safe except for three gunboats which were destroyed when the British took possession and burned Buffalo in December 1813.

Information was received in March that the garrison at Mackinac,

Michigan, which had fallen to the British in 1812, was short of provisions and ill-defended. Elliott was ordered to fit out the squadron and retake the garrison. At about the same time, the Navy Department decided to make a separate command of the upper lakes; Captain Elliott therefore was relieved and ordered to report to Sackett's Harbor, and Captain Arthur Sinclair was appointed in his place.

James Bird had spent the winter at Erie, Pennsylvania, recuperating from his wounds and in the spring as the squadron prepared for the Mackinac expedition, Bird again was charged with securing the squadron's storehouse. On 4 June, "his wayward nature reasserted itself," as one author put it, and with fellow Marine James Rankin, who had been granted a few hours shore leave, Bird deserted. Reasons offered for his desertion have been many: some have suggested that due to his admiration for Perry he wished to join his former commander; others proposed that he was attempting to make his way south to join Andrew Jackson's forces in repelling the British below New Orleans. While the latter lacks credibility since the British plan to capture New Orleans was unknown in early June, there may be some merit to former.

Both Bird and Rankin were apprehended and arrested six days later near Butler, Pennsylvania, by Sailing-Master William Caldwell, who was on his way to Erie with a draft of seamen for the fleet. On 22 June, the eve of the fleet's departure for Mackinac, Captain Sinclair reported the capture of Bird and Rankin and requested the Secretary of the Navy grant a court martial for their trial on the charge of desertion, recommended by their commanding officer, Marine Lieutenant Benjamin Hyde, who had replaced Lieutenant Brooks. The court martial was held on board the *Lawrence*, off of Buffalo, New York, on 12 September 1814. On the charge of desertion, both Bird and Rankin, making no defense, pleaded guilty and threw themselves "upon the mercy of the Court." After the court was cleared and the complete proceedings read by the judge advocate, the following sen-

tences were pronounced: “the prisoner, Corporal James Bird having plead guilty the court after mature consideration, [by unanimous vote] do sentence him to suffer Death.” Private James Rankin, likewise, was sentenced to death, although there was one vote for corporal punishment. The proceedings were forwarded to Washington and returned approved by President James Madison on 22 October. Relying on the papers of his father, Captain Daniel Dobbins, who was in charge of the building of the ships at Erie and later commanded the *Obio*, Captain William W. Dobbins later asserted that executive clemency was recommended but President Madison claimed that “desertion from off post in time of war could not be overlooked, therefore, an example must be made.” With the sentences approved by the President, the Secretary of the Navy ordered that “Corporal James Bird and Private James Rankin be forthwith shot to death upon the deck of the U.S. Brig Niagara with all the solemnity due to the occasion.” Of the 19 known men who deserted from the Marine detachment stationed at Erie, Pennsylvania, between June 1813 and November 1814, seven were returned and of those seven, only two were punished by being sentenced to death.

While awaiting his execution, Bird wrote a last letter to his parents, family and friends in Exeter:

Dear Parents, I take my pen in hand to write a few words to you which will bring bad news; but do not lament, nor make sad moans for the loss of your first beloved and dearest son James.

Dear Parents, brothers and sister, relations and friends, I do write to you a most sad and dismal letter, such as never before came from any [of] your beloved children. I have often sat down and wrote a few lines to you with pleasure; but I am sorry at present to let you know my sad and deplorable situation. I am the most miserable and desolate child of the family,—Dear Parents, let my brothers and sisters read this letter, for it is the last they can ever receive from my hand, for by the laws of our country I am

The Ballad of James Bird

[According to one authority, the tune to which the ballad was sung is “The Dour Black Watch,” an old Scottish dirge.]

Sons of freedom, listen to me,
And ye daughters, too, give ear;
You a sad and mournful story
As was ever told, shall hear.

Hull, you know, his troops surrendered,
And defenseless left the West,
Then our forces quick assembled,
The invaders to resist.

Among the troops that marched to war,
Were the Kingston volunteers;
Captain Thomas them commanded,
To protect our west frontiers.

Tender were the scenes of parting,
Mothers wrung their hands and cried;
Maidens wept their swains in secret,
Fathers strove their tears to hide.

There is one among the number,
Tall and graceful is his mien,
Firm his step, his look undaunted,
Scarce a nobler youth was seen.

One sweet kiss he snatched from Mary,
Craved his mother’s prayer, and more,
Pressed his father’s hand, and left them
For Lake Erie’s distant shore.

Mary tried to say “Farewell, James,”
Waved her hand, but nothing spoke,
“Good-bye, Bird, may Heaven preserve you,”
From the rest at parting broke.

Soon they came where noble Perry
Had assembled all his fleet;
Then the gallant Bird enlisted,
Hoping soon the foe to meet.

Where is Bird? The battle rages;
Is he in the strife or no?
Now the cannon roars tremendous;
Dare he meet the hostile foe?

Aye! Behold him! See him, Perry!
In the selfsame ship they fight;
Though his messmates fall around him
Nothing can his soul affright.

But behold! A ball has struck him;
See the crimson current flow;
“Leave the deck!” exclaimed brave Perry;
“No!” cried Bird, “I will not go.”

“Here on deck I took my station,
Here will Bird his cutlass ply;
I’ll stand by you, gallant captain,
Till we conquer or we die.”

Still he fought, though faint and bleeding,
Till our stars and stripes waved o’er us,
Victory having crowned our efforts,
All triumphant o’er our foes.

And did Bird receive a pension?
Was he to his friends restored?
No; nor never to his bosom
Clasped the main his heart adored.

But there came most dismal tidings
From Lake Erie’s distant shore;
Better far if Bird had perished
Midst the battle’s awful roar.

“Dearest parents,” said the letter,
This will bring sad news to you;
Do not mourn your first beloved,
Though this brings his last adieu.

“I Must suffer for deserting
From the brig Niagara;
Read this letter, brother, sisters,
‘Tis the last you’ll hear from me.”

Sad and gloomy was the morning
Bird was ordered out to die;
Where’s the breast not dead to pity
But for him would heave a sigh?

Lo! He fought so brave at Erie,
Freely bled and nobly dared;
Let his courage plead for mercy,
Let his precious life be spared.

See him march and bear his fetters;
Hark! They clank upon the ear;
But his step his firm and manly,
For his heart ne’er harbored fear.

See him kneel upon his coffin,
Sure his death can do no good;
Spare him! spare! O God, they shoot him!
Oh! His bosom streams with blood.

Farewell, Bird; farewell forever;
Friends and home he’ll see no more;
But his mangled corpse lies buried
On Lake Erie’s distant shore.

doomed and sentenced to death, for deserting from the marines at Lake Erie, and am now confined on board the United States brig Niagara.

And O! loving Parents, my time is but short here on earth. I have but a few moments to make my peace with my maker,—I leave you only for a short time here on earth, I leave you only for a short time here in this most troublesome world; but I hope that by constant prayer, we shall meet in the world above, to part no more.

On the rainy morning of 11 November, Marines Bird and Rankin, and seaman Henry Davidson, whose crimes were multiple desertions, including to the enemy, were brought upon deck. The two Marines were placed in front of one of the gun ports, where they were required to kneel upon their coffins. Marine Lieutenant Hyde, who had been appointed to execute them, asked to be relieved of the duty, but Captain Sinclair refused. Bird and Rankin were then shot by a file of Marines from the opposite side of the quarter deck. (So haunted by having to execute two of his men, Lieutenant Hyde took his own life early the fol-

lowing year.) Seaman Davidson was hung from the yardarm. Their bodies were then lowered into a small boat, rowed ashore, and buried on the sandy beach of Presque Isle.

Three months after the execution, the attorney of James Bird's father drew his son's share of prize money that fell to the victors of the Battle of Lake Erie; Bird and Rankin were entitled to \$214.89 of the more than \$240,000 appropriated.

Many people were saddened by Bird's execution, mainly because of his service on board the *Lawrence* on 10 September 1813, and his perseverance in remaining at his post when severely wounded. Many also thought that while he was guilty of the offenses he was charged with, the severity of his punishment was undeserved. Others were guilty of equal or graver offenses, they said, yet they received lesser or no punishment at all. Charles Miner, newspaper editor, publisher, and Wyoming Valley, Pennsylvania, historian, was among the latter. Shortly after the Marine's death, Miner composed and published the Ballad of James Bird in his Wilkes-Barre newspaper, *The Gleaner*. The following year, he gave

the reasons behind his composition: "I do not mean to complain of any officer, or of any man, but I could not help thinking that the bravery and good conduct of Bird in the battle, might have plead for his pardon. [General William] Hull gave up a whole army, yet he was pardoned. [Army Sergeant] Brack murdered poor [Robert] Dixon, but Brack was not sentenced to die. Bird had performed more services than either, and his crime was much less injurious or malignant, but there was no pardon for him. It was the fortune of war. Indeed war is a cruel monster, at least I thought so when I reflected on the death of the brave Bird."

Editor's Comment: After talking with the author about this story, I did some research to see if I could find the ballad of James Bird being sung. I eventually tracked down one version, residing at The Library of Congress. Use the following link to hear the ballad. <<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/afcnycbib:@field%28DOCID+@lit%28afcnyc000005%29%29>>

Joe Foss' First Days with the Cactus Air Force

by 2dLt Kyle J. Bare

Marine air power on Guadalcanal was a critical component of the first American offensive in the Pacific. Based on the code name for the island, the American aviators operating from Guadalcanal were nicknamed the "Cactus Air Force." In the fall of 1942, superior Japanese numbers and equipment nearly defeated the Cactus Air Force as the number of operational American planes on the island dwindled to near zero. Additional aviators and aircraft were rushed to Guadalcanal. They immediately faced overwhelming odds and a steep learning curve against the Japanese.

Joseph J. Foss flew to Guadalcanal on 9 October 1942 with Marine Fighting Squadron 121 as the executive officer. He flew his first combat flight the next day when he led eight

Grumman F4F, Wildcat aircraft on a bomber escort mission. His first kill came three days later on 13 October. Focused on an approaching formation of enemy bombers, he did not notice a group of Mitsubishi A6M2, Zero aircraft above and behind him. One of the Zeros dove for his plane and scored several hits. Fortunately, the Zero overshot him and flew right into his sights. Foss pulled the trigger and the Zero tumbled out of the sky. He had little time to celebrate as three more Zeros were shooting at him from behind. Rounds hit his oil pump and the engine soon died, forcing Foss to dive for Henderson Field. Slowing down would allow the Zeros to catch him and finish him off so he came in extremely fast. Foss stated that "they rolled out an ambulance to pick up

the pieces, but I was lucky enough to stop before I hit the stumps at the end of the runway."

Foss was back in the air on the 14th. His plane had engine trouble, but he could not land because the airfield was under attack so he took his plane into a cloud to wait it out. As he popped out of the cloud, a Wildcat flashed past with a Zero on its tail. Foss kicked the rudder pedal and aligned his F4F on the Zero's tail. One short burst from his .50-caliber machine guns sawed the enemy's wing off, sending it plummeting into a mountain.

Foss had a close call the next day. Flying a patrol 25,000 feet over Guadalcanal, he passed out because his oxygen mask was too loose. When he woke up, he was less than 1,000



Dept. of Defense Photo
Foss, admiring a Wildcat, visited the Grumman factory in Bethpage, New York, in April 1943.

feet from hitting the ground and barely managed to pull up in time.

On the 18th, Foss was assigned to lead an eight plane strafing mission against Japanese supply areas west of Henderson Field. Foss took off and waited for the others to get airborne, but the sixth plane crashed on takeoff, killing the pilot. This delayed the last two planes from taking off so

Foss circled the field. As the two planes finally became airborne, Foss noticed three Zeros closing in on the two planes from behind. He led his wingmen down on the Zeros and destroyed one while the rest of his pilots quickly dispatched the other two. Before the Marines could form up, more Zeros attacked. Foss hit one of them but before he could finish it off he saw another Zero bearing in head-on. Closing with each other rapidly, the Zero pulled up first to avoid colliding. Foss fired a short burst that ripped into the Zero's belly, and it burst into flames. Then Foss spotted a formation of Mitsubishi G4M, Betty twin-engine bombers. He maneuvered to get above them and then dove straight down. Foss had a Betty in his sights when it suddenly exploded. Another American pilot shot it from below before Foss had it in range. Foss had just enough time to put a short burst into a different bomber before he passed below the formation. Putting his Wildcat into a steep climb, he brought another bomber into his sights. With his plane near vertical and almost stalled, Foss fired into the Betty's underside and hit the left engine. The Japanese plane

went into a rapid 45-degree dive and crashed, bringing Foss' kill count to five, making him an ace.

Two days later, on 20 October, Foss and eight other Marine fighters intercepted 18 Zeros. One Zero closed on Foss head-on, firing a long burst just below Foss' plane. As they closed the distance, the enemy turned his plane with Foss hard on his tail. Foss fired a long burst into the enemy's wing, and the plane exploded. Foss engaged another Zero, firing .50-caliber bullets into the cockpit, killing the pilot. The Zero plunged into the sea, but another Zero had Foss in its sights. Enemy machine gun rounds and cannon fire ripped through Foss' engine, which sputtered and died. Foss glided back to Henderson Field and made his second deadstick landing in little over a week.

For his actions between 13 and 20 October 1942, Admiral William F. Halsey awarded Foss with the Distinguished Flying Cross. Foss would remain in the Solomon Islands until early 1943, leaving with 26 confirmed kills. He was awarded the Medal of Honor when he returned to the United States. □1775□

Major Joseph J. Foss in a Corsair over San Diego.

Dept. of Defense Photo



Battle of the Potomac

by John H. Haynes

Base Archaeologist, Marine Corps Base Quantico

Marine Corps Base Quantico has always been considered the 'cross roads of the Marine Corps,' but a little known fact is that it has also served as a cross road of Civil War history under its former name of Evansport, Virginia. While the establishment of the Marine Barracks at Quantico in 1917 had nothing to do with the prior military use of the location, the terrain did. Proximity of the shipping channel to the shore and access to seagoing transportation led to the establishment of the Marine Barracks at Quantico, and 56 years earlier, this same feature held a similar advantage for Confederate forces. Although the Confederate guns at Evansport inflicted relatively minor damage to U.S. ships traveling the Potomac, the potential threat to any passing ship gave the Confederates tactical advantage over this section of the lower Potomac and created a successful blockade of Washington DC for several months in the winter of 1861–1862.

Upon Virginia's secession from the Union in April 1861, President Lincoln

ordered a naval blockade of all Virginia ports. This included the Potomac river, which served as a kind of 'Main Street' in the region. The Union Navy established the Potomac Flotilla to enforce the blockade against Virginia, and the secessionists soon countered by erecting batteries just south of Evansport at Aquia Creek to defend a railroad depot and a steamer that had been seized from the U.S. Army. The steamer, *CSS George Page*, had strategic importance for the war because she was capable of quickly moving hundreds of troops across the river.

Union naval commanders recognized the threat of this combination of a railhead and steamer, and gathered a force of gunboats to attack the positions at Aquia Creek. Two days of thunderous artillery exchange between the Union ships and the batteries began on 1 June 1861 and resulted in damages to the Union ships and Confederate batteries but no serious casualties. Anticipating a third day of fighting, the Virginians prepared new gun positions for an enfilade against

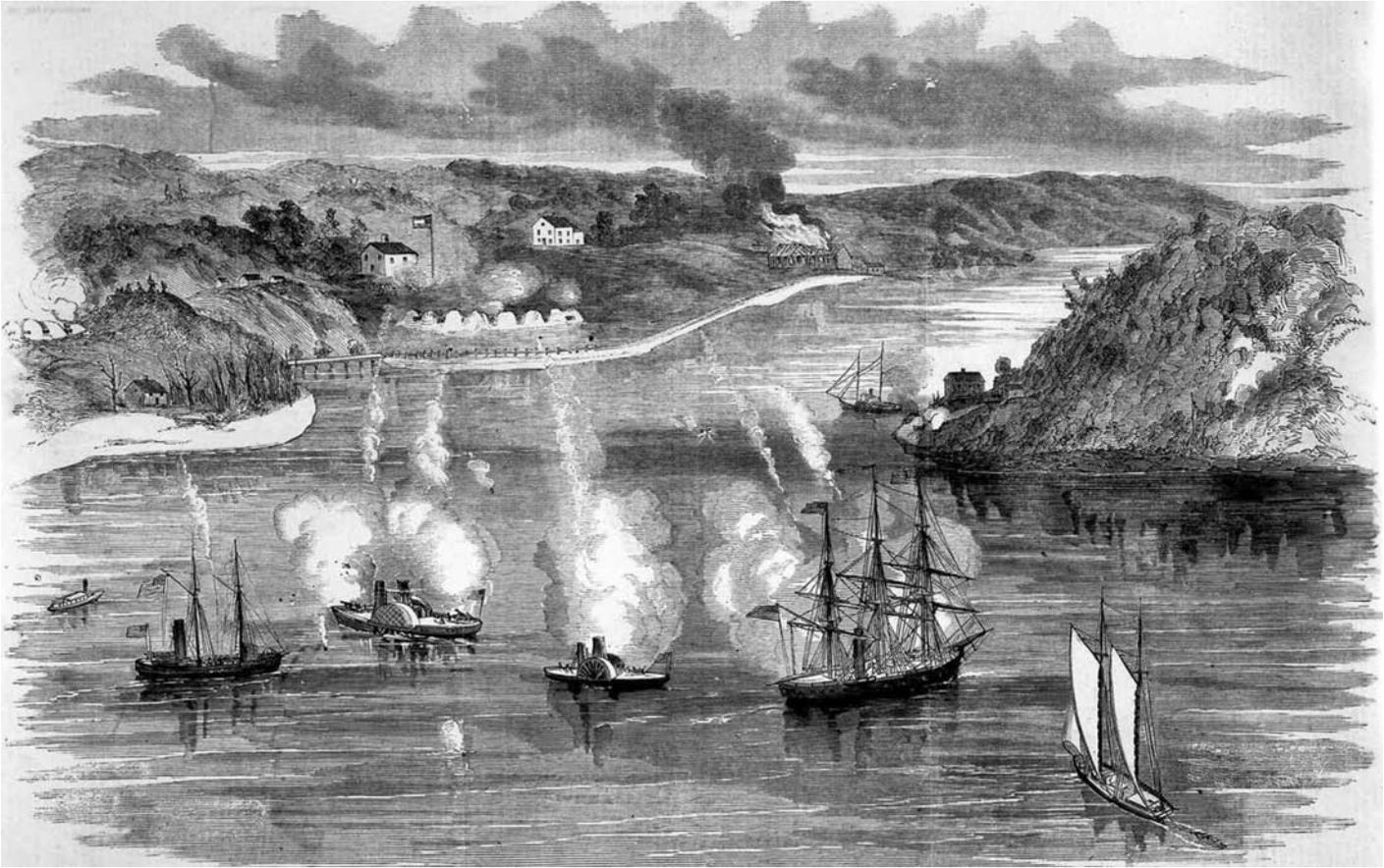
the gunboats, but the flotilla withdrew to the Washington Navy Yard for repairs.

Encouraged by their success, the Confederates began to consider more powerful batteries at a location where they would be effective enough to blockade shipping to and from Washington DC. Their first choice was at Mathias Point where the river makes a broad bend, and a battery could keep ships under fire for the longest duration. Construction began on earthworks there, but the activity did not escape the notice of Commander James Ward, commodore of the Potomac Flotilla. Ward gathered a landing force of sailors from the Flotilla and attacked on 27 June 1861. The sailors were repulsed in a hail of musket fire, wounding several and killing Commander Ward as he stood at the deck gun of his flagship, the *USS Thomas Freeborn*. Although they failed to establish a beachhead, the attack produced the Civil War's first recipient of the Medal of Honor to a U.S. naval officer, Captain of the

Shipping Point batteries

Harper's Weekly 1861





Harper's Weekly 1861

Confederate batteries defending Aquia Creek, where the captured steamer CSS George Page lay at anchor near a railroad depot, exchanged fire over two days with the USS Pawnee, USS Thomas Freeborn, USS Anacostia, and USS Yankee.

Maintop of the USS *Pawnee*, John Williams. Unknown to the U.S. commanders at the time, this attack dissuaded the Confederates from continuing to erect a battery at Mathias Point.

Even before Ward's raid proved the vulnerability of Mathias Point, Confederate planners had been looking for other locations where more effective fields of fire could be realized. Soon after, Captain C. H. Kennedy of the Confederate States Navy surveyed likely sites for offensive batteries along the Potomac and settled on Evansport. He identified Shipping Point at the mouth of Quantico Creek (modern day Hospital Point) as the best site for effective fire on enemy ships as they traversed the Potomac. He reported to General Robert E. Lee that he would use "... 9-inch guns to command the channel with the aid of one rifled 12-pounder close to the river in the day time." General Lee had already made plans to send 9-inch guns for a battery on the Potomac, and the effort to arm

Shipping Point would soon benefit from the spoils of war. Confederate Inspector General Samuel Cooper made five cannons captured at Manassas available for the Evansport batteries. Two of these cannons still reside in Quantico, including the one that sits near the location of a rear battery on Rising Hill (now known as Waller Hill) and one in storage with the National Museum of the Marine Corps. Other heavy cannon were obtained from the vast inventory of guns seized at Gosport Navy Yard in Portsmouth, new rifled models in production at the Tredegar Iron Works in Richmond, and an advanced English-made rifled cannon. The latter, a 7.5-inch Blakely gun, remains at the Washington Navy Yard where it was taken after its capture for testing.

By September of 1861 the Confederates secret construction of batteries at Evansport was in full swing. Shipping Point, jutting like a spear up the Potomac River channel from the mouth of Quantico Creek, would be the site of the two largest in

a string of 15 batteries between Freestone Point and Mathias Point. The Confederates tried their best to conceal this work and divert attention to other locations.

The Confederate batteries at Aquia Creek, Potomac Creek, and Freestone Point engaged Union ships during the summer of 1861, but these skirmishes did little damage to Union ships or the Confederate batteries. It was not until 11 October 1861 that sailors from the gunboats USS *Union*, USS *Rescue*, and USS *Resolute* staged a daring raid up Quantico Creek and set fire to a schooner anchored there. Though this raid had been risky, the Union unknowingly took a greater risk just four days later as the USS *Pocahontas* steamed by the area on her way to South Carolina.

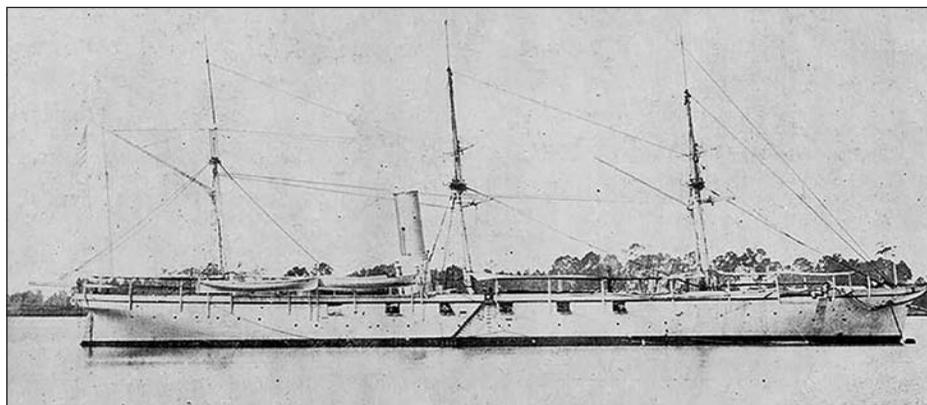
Not knowing about the newly constructed battery at Shipping Point, but acting on the rumor that the Confederates might be at work on something there, the USS *Pocahontas* lobbed shells at Shipping Point on its

way down the Potomac River. The defenders rapidly chopped down trees that had hidden the earthworks, but the Confederates were not fast enough to return fire on the USS *Pocahontas*, which continued on her way down the river. However, by the time the USS *Seminole*, the sister ship of the USS *Pocahontas*, sailed by Shipping Point, the Confederate batteries were ready to fire. The USS *Seminole* and the Confederate batteries exchanged about 20 shots each with the sloop taking the most damage; the USS *Seminole* sustained five hits that tore away most of her auxiliary sail rigging and splintered sections of her hull.

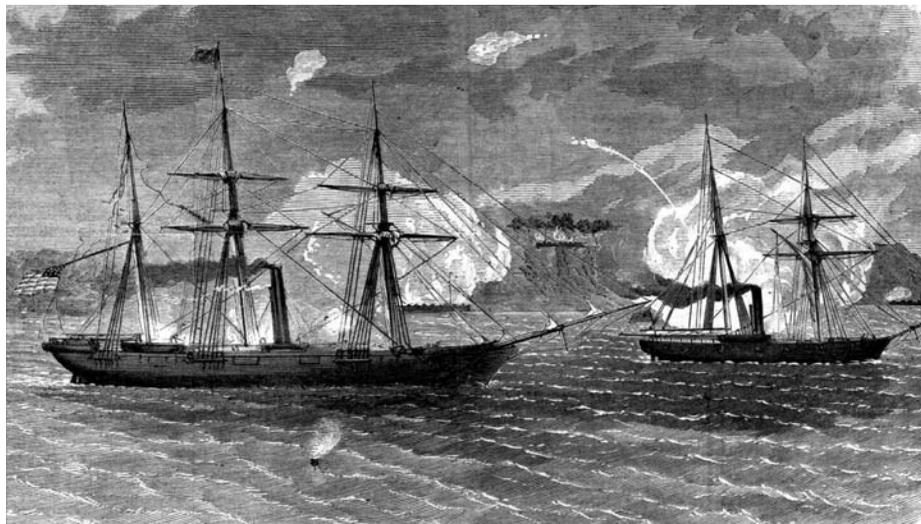
News of the engagement reached the Washington Navy Yard where two more warships were preparing to embark on the campaign to take Port Royal, South Carolina. The USS *Pawnee* and USS *Mount Vernon*, crowded with Marines bound for action in South Carolina, steamed past the batteries at Evansport. Although the USS *Mount Vernon* was successful in slipping past, the USS *Pawnee* was struck six times or more, including a hit on her Number 2 gun, which would have killed several of her crew had they been manning it. The decision not to engage the batteries spared the USS *Pawnee*'s passengers and crew of any injury, and the ship continued on its voyage to South Carolina after repairs down river.

Throughout the months that the Confederates maintained their batter-

The USS Pawnee had been the most powerful warship on the Potomac, but when ordered south from Washington DC in October 1861, she steamed past the Shipping Point batteries without engaging. Although she was hit over six times, she was repaired downriver in time to participate in the capture of Port Royal, South Carolina.



Naval Historical Center



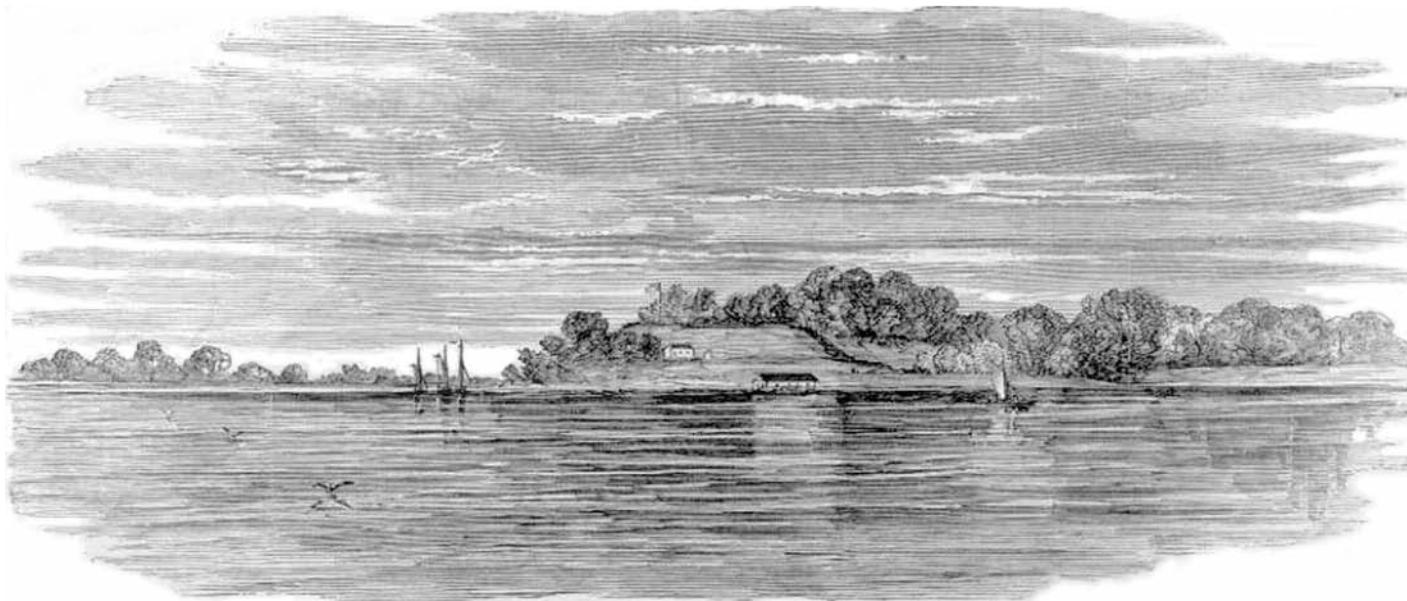
Harper's Weekly 1861

On 15 October 1861, the USS Pocahontas fired at Shipping Point on the rumor that the Confederates were preparing batteries there. Although her fire was unanswered, the Confederates cut down the trees that were concealing the batteries in time to inflict damage on the USS Seminole, trailing behind the USS Pocahontas.

ies on the Potomac, the CSS *George Page* conducted many sorties from Aquia Creek alarming the Union forces. One report warned that she had 500 troops on board, and Union forces in Maryland withdrew inland throwing up earthworks on the roads leading to Washington. On 18 October 1861, Confederate forces made use of this advantage by capturing two schooners laden with hay, which was a critical supply for maintaining the many thousands of horses serving the Union Army in the Washington area. This seizure of hay and the continued presence of the Confederate batteries on the Potomac created concerns about obtaining sufficient supplies for

the Union Army to get through the winter months. By the end of October, the Potomac Flotilla was effectively bottled up between Evansport's batteries and even stronger batteries believed to be at Mathias Point. Because the Potomac Flotilla had been rendered useless by the presence of the Confederate shore batteries, it was suggested to Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells that the guns from the ships be put ashore and mounted in counterbatteries opposite Evansport. By the end of November 1861, a counterbattery was in place at Budd's Ferry across the river from Quantico Creek.

Soon after the building of the Budd's Ferry battery by the Union, offensive actions were taken against the batteries at Mathias Point. The 47th New York infantry regiment was ferried across the Potomac from the Maryland side. Upon landing the Union soldiers found only a small mounted patrol, and some abandoned and uncompleted earthworks instead of the 18-gun battery reported to Flotilla officers by "a reliable source." Due to the nature of the bogus information, General Joseph Hooker requested the services of Professor Lowe's observation balloon. Lowe used a specially designed barge with all the equipment needed for a launch. In the first deployment of the world's first aircraft carrier, the USS *Coeur de Lion* towed the barge to



Harper's Weekly 1861

Budd's Ferry battery

Mattawoman Creek across the river from Evansport in Maryland. There Professor Lowe ascended to look at the Confederate camps and batteries around Evansport and Cockpit Point; while airborne, Lowe made his famous sketch of the Confederate positions.

The sight of this balloon prompted Confederate commanders to reinforce their defenses. General Pierre Gustave Toutant de Beauregard fumed at General Isaac Trimble's lack of land defense at Evansport and in December replaced him with General Samuel French. Several regiments settled into winter camps behind the batteries as the winter wore on and a Union assault failed to materialize. Besides dull and chilly picket duty along the river, the troops suffered from communicable diseases common in camps of both sides. Those units from thinly populated areas, such as the deep south and the west, had the worst rates of attrition. Though producing far fewer casualties than disease, Union gunners had some of the camps in range and shelled them frequently, adding to the troubles of the Confederate soldiers.

The Confederate soldiers manned, besides the two large batteries at Shipping Point, four between Shipping Point and the mouth of Chopawamsic Creek, two at Cockpit Point, two at Possum Point, two at the mouths of

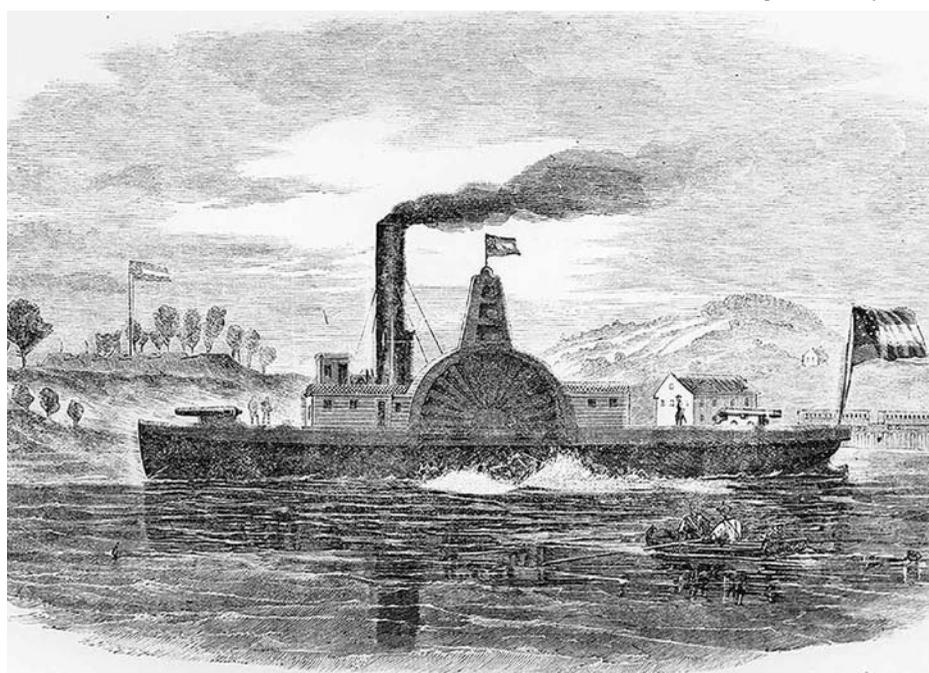
both the Potomac Creek and Aquia Creek, and one at Boyd's Hole across the river from Maryland Point. The battery at Freestone Point was abandoned after it had served its diversionary role while the other positions were secretly prepared. The chain of batteries in the Evansport area could fire on ships for up to seven miles along the shipping lane.

Caught behind this formidable gauntlet was the formidable 17-gun USS *Pensacola*; she ran the gauntlet of

batteries on the moonless night of 12 January 1862, holding her fire and steaming at top speed. If the USS *Pensacola* had fallen into Confederate hands, they would have had the most powerful warship in those waters. As the USS *Pensacola* made her way south in that dark winter night a few signal lanterns flashed along the Virginia shore but not the muzzles of the many cannons. Confederate gun crews came to quarters when she drew past Evansport but were too late

Confederate steamer, CSS George Page

Harper's Weekly 1861





Map by W. Stephen Hill

Vicinity map showing the locations of the Confederate and U.S. batteries on the Potomac River (Confederate batteries are in red)

to muster an effective fire. The USS *Pensacola* steamed south without a scratch and on to the Gulf of Mexico where she would play a leading role in the capture of New Orleans.

Union forces gained strength around Washington as did the public pressure for an offensive campaign. The North would strike and the question was where and when. McClellan outlined three alternatives to Lincoln: (1) Attack in northern Virginia where the Confederates had delivered a crushing defeat at Manassas the previous summer; (2) Land at the Rappahannock River port of Urbana, which offered the shortest land dis-

tance to Richmond or (3) Campaign up Virginia's lower peninsula from established positions around Fortress Monroe. McClellan favored an attack through Urbana, while Lincoln favored attacking in Northern Virginia. Lincoln shrewdly left the decision up to his commanding general, but with stipulations—that 50,000 troops be retained for the defense of Washington and that the Confederate batteries at Evansport be eliminated.

However, before McClellan could act on the President's stipulation to eliminate the threat of the Evansport gun batteries, Confederate General Johnston acted first. Because of the perceived threat from General Joseph

Hooker's 8,000 troops and 18 guns on the Maryland side of the Potomac, across from Evansport, and the uncertainty of where and when General McClellan would attack, General Johnston ordered all Confederate troops to evacuate the gun battery positions along the Potomac. Since it had rained for days in February 1862, making the roads a quagmire, the Confederate soldiers were unable to take much of anything with them. As such, they left the guns, supplies, ammunitions, and even personal items behind. It was not until the early part of March that Union sailors of the Potomac Flotilla realized that something was amiss with the gun batteries; the Union ships had received no reply from the gun batteries after shelling Shipping Point for an hour. Landing parties from the Potomac Flotilla discovered that the Confederate troops had abandoned Shipping Point and left large guns behind, one of which weighed five tons. The construction of the gun emplacements was substantial and complex. Colonel Charles Wainwright, Hooker's Chief of Artillery, stated the following about the gun emplacements:

"They were at least half sunk in the bank and from 15 to 50 feet thick making it impossible for the gunboats to injure them. The magazines were cut into the solid bank. The gunners were screened by bombproofs, and their sleeping compartments sunk several feet in the ground. There was a good supply of cannonballs, canister and grapeshot, and shells. Rifle pits and breastworks covered the areas adjacent to the batteries."

Though the gun batteries were no longer a threat to the Union's supply lifeline, for five months in late 1861 to early 1862, they had served to harass and blockade river traffic. The fate of the Potomac gun batteries finally resided in the hands of a Confederate general and the uncertainties of war, eliminating any chance the Confederacy might have had of stopping river traffic on the Potomac and constricting the ability of the Union to wage war on the South. □1775□

Marine Navy Cross Recipients in Operation Desert Storm

by *Borislav V. Cbernev*
History Division Intern

Captain Eddie S. Ray, Commanding Officer of Company B, 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion, 1st Marine Division, and Lieutenant Colonel Michael M. Kurth, Commanding Officer of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, 3d Marine Aircraft Wing, earned Navy Crosses for their actions on 25 and 26 February 1991 that "reflected great credit upon [themselves] and upheld the highest traditions of the Marine Corps and the United States Naval Service."

After the massive buildup of coalition forces in Saudi Arabia during November–December 1990, January 1991 saw the transition from defensive planning and operations to offensive planning and operations for the 1st Marine Division as it cooperated closely with the 2d Marine Division. These preparations intensified during the month of February as Ground-Day, 24 February, drew near with the division command putting the final touches to a plan for a two-division breach of the two main Iraqi obstacle belts in Kuwait. The division also conducted a series of artillery/combined arms raids against Iraqi forces in the area in preparation for the major offensive. The Iraqi *III Corps, 5th Mechanized Division*, was located near the al-Burqan Oil Fields. The *III Corps, 3d Armored Division*, was stationed approximately 20 kilometers north of al-Jaber airfield.

After participating in the battle of al-Khafji at the end of January, Lieutenant Colonel Kurth's Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 was preparing for the impending ground offensive in February. The squadron was composed of 5 Huey and 17 Cobra helicopters. On 1 February the squadron relocated to Tanjib. Over the following three weeks, different sections of the squadron conducted various missions including but not limited to support flights for the 1st

and 2d Light Armored Infantry Battalions.

Initially, it seemed as if Company B of the 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion would miss out on much of the action. In the weeks prior to the ground offensive, Company B was busy rehearsing its attack plans. However, two days prior to the attack, Brigadier General Thomas V. Draude, Assistant Division Commander of the 1st Marine Division, and Major General James M. Myatt, 1st Marine Division Commander, decided to designate Company B as reserve. Captain Ray, who considered his company to be the most capable and best trained due to rigorous drills, was "a little disappointed" by the decision.

General Draude also decided to set up a forward command post for the 1st Marine Division in a wooded region near the al-Burqan Oil Fields known as the Emir's Forest. Based on his earlier experience at Fort Leavenworth and on his extensive reading of the works of General Erwin Rommel, the General Draude believed that a small, mobile, forward command post situated close to the actual battleground would serve the purposes of the 1st Marine Division better than one located further away. Retreating Iraqi forces had set the al-Burqan Oil Fields on fire on 24 February, making them appear all but impassable. This seemed to make the Emir's Forest, the only wooded area in this part of southeastern Kuwait, the perfect location for the division's forward command post. General Draude then assigned Company B of the 1st Light Armored Battalion to serve as cover for the command post, rejecting Captain Ray's request that his company be reassigned to a more active position.

During the late hours of 24 February, an intelligence officer reported to General Draude; the intelligence officer believed that two unaccounted for Iraqi tank brigades could only be located in the burning al-Burqan Oil Fields. Though the division command had pre-

viously considered the burning oil fields utterly inhospitable and although he was skeptical of the possibility of enemy troops surviving for long in what he termed "Dante's inferno," General Draude stated to the intelligence officer, "OK, I'll endorse it. I think you're wrong, but OK." Meanwhile, a thorough examination of captured Iraqi maps and prisoner interview reports convinced General Myatt that an Iraqi counterattack in the area was imminent.

Now aware of the impending Iraqi counterattack and the threat this attack posed for the exposed forward command post, General Draude decided to prepare the available units, Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, for time on target procedure. Developed by the U.S. Army during World War II, this artillery technique involves the calculation of the time of flight from each firing unit to the target area. In this way, all units coordinate their firing rounds in order to hit the designated target at the same time, with

Marines had to wear goggles to protect their eyes from the oily smoke, caused by the burning oil wells.

Photo by LtCol Charles H. Cureton





Photo by Col Jeffrey A. Powers
Capt Eddie S. Ray, Commanding Officer of Company B, 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion, in Manifa Bay after the return to Saudi Arabia

devastating effect on both enemy materiel and morale. General Draude was initially frustrated by the slow pace of preparations, recalling later that “it seemed to take forever to get all of the artillery units in position so that they could do this [time on target].” The delay was caused in part by the adverse conditions generated by the burning oil fields.

25 February 1991

Captain Ray described the environment in the early hours of 25 February as “absolutely pitch black” with black oily smoke emanating from the wells and reducing visibility to the minimum. Encountering the already deployed humvees of Company C upon his arrival at Emir’s Forest, Captain Ray conferred with the commander of Company C. He then decided to align his 10 light armored vehicles in an arc, which pointed in a different direction from the arc covered by Company C at the edge of Emir’s Forest. After setting up his defenses, Captain Ray inspected

the area and briefed his Marines. By 0645, everything was ready to meet the enemy attack.

Around 0700 one of Captain Ray’s light armored vehicles fired into the fog. Captain Ray immediately went to the command and control vehicle, and contacted fire support control with a request to investigate the incident. Just minutes later, he heard 50-caliber shots and moved his vehicle, and the command and control vehicle in the direction of the shots. He soon encountered a Marine humvee moving toward him from the apparent direction of the enemy forces. The Marines were shouting, “They’re coming, they’re coming!” In the meantime, the shots had prompted about 100 demoralized Iraqi troops to surrender.

The first of three Iraqi attacks against the 1st Division forward command post came promptly at 0930; the Iraqi force consisted of 5 T-55 tanks, 33 armored personnel carriers, and dismounted infantry that emerged from the black fog enveloping Emir’s Forest. Captain Ray’s vehicle immediately found itself in the midst of a full-scale battle, engaging several Iraqi armored personnel carriers. Maneuvering his vehicle skill-

fully between the trees, used as partial cover, Captain Ray continued to engage the enemy armor, signaling for the rest of his platoon to reinforce his position. As the other vehicles arrived, they aligned themselves on either side of Captain Ray’s vehicle. Captain Ray and Company B counterattacked the Iraqi force, a mechanized brigade from the 3d Corps, with 25mm fire. The battlefield was soon covered with burning Iraqi armored personnel carriers. Unable to withstand the intensity and precision of Marine fire, Iraqi troops began dismounting and fleeing toward a nearby ditch in panic. The remaining vehicles retreated into the safety of the black smoke, thereby bringing the first Iraqi attack to an end.

During the temporary lull in the time between the first and the second Iraqi attacks, the Division inquired through the command and control vehicle whether Company B was in need of any reinforcement. Without hesitation, Captain Ray replied, “Cobras. Get us some Cobras.” This request brought in Cobra helicopters from Lieutenant Colonel Kurth’s Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369





Marine Corps History Division

Two light armored vehicles from 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion drive across the Saudi desert. These vehicles provided the heavy fire power of the battalion with antitank missiles.

into the battle just in time for the second Iraqi attack at 1015.

Much like Captain Ray's Company B of the 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Kurth's Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 struggled with the adverse conditions created by the oily black smoke emanating from the burning oil fields. On 23 February, the day before the beginning of the ground offensive, the squadron estimated its designation efforts as difficult to impossible. On 24 February, the squadron provided close air support for the 1st Marine Division with Lieutenant Colonel Kurth's command and control helicopter monitoring the progress of the ground units.

Upon receiving the Division's request for air support on the morning of 25 February, Lieutenant Colonel Kurth dispatched his helicopter squadron, led by the Administrative Officer, Major Michael L. Steele, northeast toward the edge of Emir's Forest. Arriving for the second Iraqi assault, the helicopters fired 3 antitank-guided missiles, 20 2.75-inch rockets, and 20mm cannon, destroying three Iraqi armored personnel carriers and four other Iraqi vehicles. The sudden appearance of the Cobras also caused the surrender of about 35 Iraqi soldiers stationed in a nearby bunker in the trees.

Captain Ray helped orient the Cobras upon arrival, which greatly enhanced their effectiveness. It was

only after Major Steele's helicopters had flown back to refuel and rearm that Captain Ray began to realize that the Iraqi forces opposing him outnumbered the Marines. At first, he had thought that his company was facing fewer than a dozen Iraqi armored personnel carriers. "I just didn't think they could get close without us knowing," he recalled later. Now more fully aware of the Iraqi forces in the area, Captain Ray decided to wait for the return of the Cobras before taking the offensive. The company's forward air controller helped direct the movement of Major Steele's helicopters, which were now reinforced by a section of helicopters

A Huey from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 is secured on the flight line prior to a mission during Operation Desert Shield in Saudi Arabia.

SDAN: DD-ST-91-06378, VIRIN: D0301



led by Operations Officer, Major Sidney E. Mills.

The Iraqis launched their third and final assault on the forward command post at 1100. Iraqi vehicles got within 200 yards of the forward command post. At this point, General Draude decided to raise the sides of the tent in order for the headquarters personnel to get a panoramic view of the battlefield. His decision was spurred by the belief that the Marines would be less distracted if they were able to hear and see the fight rather than just hear the noise of the battle. Whether or not this unorthodox move had any effect on the Marines remains unclear, but they continued to perform their duties as command post personnel. The general recalled later that "the Marines all came through in great shape . . . I never saw anybody who hesitated . . . [T]he focus, the concentration was just amazing."

With the headquarters personnel closely following their actions and the Cobras positioned on their shoulder, Company B counterattacked the enemy. The Marines pierced the Iraqi formation just as the Iraqis were trying to deploy, engaging and destroying several Iraqi vehicles. Unable to withstand the Marine pressure, the Iraqi line fell in disarray and collapsed. Acting under the directions of the company's forward air controller, the



Marine Corps History Division Field History

During exercises prior to the beginning of the war, Marines rushed to load anti-tank missiles onto a Cobra helicopter. The Cobras provided extensive close air support for Company B, 1st Light Armored Infantry Battalion during the battle of the al-Burqan Oil Fields.

Cobras fired 4 air-to-ground missiles, 2 antitank-guided missiles, and 14 2.75-inch rockets, destroying five armored personnel carriers, one multiple rocket launch system, one truck, and one infantry fighting position. After refueling and rearming, the Cobras reconnoitered the area and continued supporting B Company's pursuit of the retreating Iraqi forces through the southern portion of the oil fields before returning to their base at 1755.

Defending the division's headquarters with the aid of Cobra helicopters over a 10 hour period, Captain Ray's company defeated a superior Iraqi force, destroying over 30 armored personnel carriers and two tanks. The Marines captured more than 300 Iraqi prisoners of war and killed 100 Iraqis. Asked about the reasons behind the Marines' victory, General Draude opined the following about the employment of time on target.

When you're attacking enemy that can bring that kind of precision, not only by location, but by time, and we're all at the same time on target. I mean, we're all on the same instant, same second, all this hitting, it has got to be mind numbing. So I think it took a lot of out of it. And then whatever they had left was expended and was turned back.

Textbook use of time on target could not have been possible without the superb training of the Marines, which

General Draude was quick to highlight.

Besides the excellent training that his Marines received, Captain Ray contributed to the success of Company B's engagement with the Iraqis due to his leadership abilities; his fortitude and command presence led his Marines to conquer a numerically superior force of mechanized components of the Iraqi army. Captain Ray's Navy Cross citation read in part: "[o]perating perilously close to the attacking enemy, Captain Ray's courage, composure under fire, and aggressive warfighting spirit were instrumental in the defeat of a major enemy effort and the successful defense of the division forward command post."

26 February 1991

On the morning of 26 February 1991, Lieutenant Colonel Michael M. Kurth described the conditions of the burning oil fields as "absolutely unbelievable" and "[t]he visibility that day and the weather was really gross." The dense smoke extended as far as the nearby al-Jaber airfield, reducing visibility to between 100 and 300 feet. This made the task of Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, providing close air support to the 1st Marine Division in its advance into Kuwait not only difficult but hazardous as well.

At 0600 on the 26th, Colonel Kurth took off from the squadron's base and proceeded north through the thick smoke in the direction of al-Jaber airfield in search of Task Force Ripper. After being initially frustrated by the

adverse environment, he successfully located the task force several kilometers northeast of al-Jaber airfield, managing to surprise and capture several Iraqi soldiers and direct them to friendly ground units en route. Lieutenant Colonel Kurth then planned and led several sections of his squadron in support of various Marine ground units. Earlier in February, his helicopter had been fitted with the prototype of an experimental forward looking infrared radar and laser designator, which proved invaluable under the conditions of reduced visibility and Iraqi small arms fire.

For the next few hours, he acted as airborne tactical air coordinator for Task Force Ripper, providing close air support. An emergency occurred when ground units reported an Iraqi gas attack at 1345, and the chemical detection tape on his helicopter also indicated a possible chemical presence as well. Although this turned out to be a false alarm (oily smoke from the burning wells was later found to have caused the alert), all helicopters temporarily withdrew to the south. Lieutenant Colonel Kurth's helicopter, however, remained operational in the area, the crew wearing chemical protective masks until the area was declared clear. Following the chemical attack scare, Lieutenant Colonel Kurth flew to the 1st Marine Division headquarters, collected the plan for attack from General Myatt, and delivered it to the Division's forward troops. For the rest of the day, Lieutenant Colonel Kurth coordinated air support for the 1st Marine Division during its assault on Kuwait International Airport.

For a period of over 10 hours on 26 February, Lieutenant Colonel Kurth overcame the adverse weather conditions and the resistance of the enemy, directing and leading various sections of his squadron through thick smoke and intermittent Iraqi fire and in dangerous proximity to high voltage power lines in support of Marines on the ground. As acknowledged in the Navy Cross citation, his "courage and fearless dedication rallied fellow Marines and resulted in the destruction of as many as 70 Iraqi armored vehicles destroyed that day." □1775□

Destination Wolmi-do

North Korea invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950, sparking one of the bloodiest 'hot' conflicts of the Cold War. On 2 August 1950 the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade landed at Pusan, quickly becoming the 'fire brigade' of the Pusan perimeter. But the Marines had not been requested merely to shore-up the defense of the tip of the Korean peninsula. Instead, they were required to again demonstrate the value of amphibious warfare by forcing their way ashore against determined defenses.

On 15 September 1950 the 1st Marine Division landed at Inchon in one of the most heralded amphibious assaults in history. Inchon was a notoriously difficult landing site; success required that the island of Wolmi-do be secured first, in the early morning hours of d-day. This important job was given to 3d Battalion, 5th Marines.

This excerpt is from Charles R. Smith, ed., *U.S. Marines in the Korean War* (History Division, Quantico, VA, 2007 pp. 98–101). This work contains all of History Division's 50th Anniversary Commemoratives on the Korean War, including Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons' *Over the Sea Wall: U.S. Marines at Inchon from which this selection is taken*. U.S. Marines in the Korean War can be downloaded in a pdf version

Some North Korean defenders of Wolmi-do stubbornly remained in their cave-like positions and had to be burned out by flamethrowers. Marines were readily distinguishable at this stage of the war by their camouflage helmet covers and leggings.



Department of Defense Photo (USMC)

The M-26 Pershing tanks, new to the Marines, began to land in the third wave at Wolmi-do and were soon put to use against North Korean fortified positions. A tank-infantry patrol assaulted and took So Wolmi-do, an islet dangling at the end of a causeway from the main island.

from the History Division website (<http://www.history.usmc.mil>) under Publications.

Destination Wolmi-do

L-hour was to be 0630. At 0545, the pre-landing shore bombardment began. Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. "Tap" Taplett's 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, was boated by 0600. The carrier-based Marine Corsairs completed their last sweep of the beach 15 minutes later.

"G Company was to land to the right of Green Beach in the assault, wheel right, and seize the dominant hill mass on the island, Radio Hill," remembered

Robert D. "Dewey" Bohn (then a first lieutenant; he would retire a major general). His company was embarked on the fast destroyer transport *Diachenko* (APD 123). She stopped her engines at about 0300, the troop compartment lights came on, and reveille sounded over the public address system.

Most of the Marines were already awake. They hoped for the traditional "steak and eggs" prelanding breakfast of World War II; instead they got scrambled powdered eggs, dry toast, and canned apricots. At about first light, Company G went over the side and down the cargo nets into the bobbing LCVPs, which then cleared the ship and began to circle.

Three LSMRs—medium landing ships converted to rocket ships—sent their loads of thousands of 5-inch rockets screeching shoreward toward Wolmi-do. The island seemed to explode under the impact. Then the landing craft began the run to Green Beach. MacArthur, Shepherd, Almond, Smith, Whitney, and Doyle all watched from the flag bridge of the *Mount McKinley*.

Seven LCVPs brought in the first wave, one platoon of Company G on the right and three platoons of Company H on the left. The landing craft converged on the narrow beach—scarcely 50 yards wide—and grounded at 0633, three minutes behind schedule.

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A2798



The remainder of the two assault companies came in as the second wave two minutes later. Resistance was limited to a few scattered shots.

Captain Patrick E. Wildman, commanding Company H, left a small detachment to clear North Point and then plunged across the island toward his objectives—the northern nose of Radio Hill and the shoreline of the burning industrial area facing Inchon. After a short pause to reorganize, Bohn took Company G towards the southern half of Radio Hill, 105 meters high. Resistance was halfhearted. At 0655, Sergeant Alvin E. Smith, guide of the 3d Platoon, secured an American flag to the trunk of a shattered tree. MacArthur, watching the action ashore from his swivel chair on the bridge of the *Mount McKinley*, saw the flag go up and said, “That’s it. Let’s get a cup of coffee.”

Ten tanks—six M-26 Pershings and four modified M-4A3 Shermans, all under Second Lieutenant Granville G. Sweet—landed in the third wave at 0646 from three utility landing ships (LSUs). They crunched their way inland, poised to help the infantry.

Lieutenant Colonel Taplett landed from his free boat a few minutes later. At almost the same time, Captain Robert A. McMullen brought in the fourth wave bearing

Company I, the battalion reserve. His company, following behind Company H, encountered an angry nest of about a platoon of bypassed North Koreans. A flurry of hand grenades was exchanged.

Marines from the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, escorted a steady stream of prisoners back to Green Beach on the seaward side of Wolmi-do. Landing ships and craft could beach as long as the tide was high, but once the tide receded they would be left high and dry on the mud flats.

McMullen signaled Sweet’s tanks to come forward. A Sherman with a dozer blade sealed the die-hard North Koreans in their holes.

Moving on to the near end of the causeway that stretched to Inchon itself, McMullen found more North Korean defenders hiding in a cave. One of Sweet’s tanks fired a 90mm round into the mouth of the cave. There was a muffled explosion and 30 dazed and deafened North Koreans came staggering out with their hands above their heads. “Captured forty-five prisoners. . . meeting light resistance,” radioed Taplett at 0745 to the *Mount McKinley*.

Wildman’s Marines were finding it slow going in the ruins of the industrial area. Taplett ordered Bohn to take the rest of Radio Hill and by 0800 the high ground was Marine Corps property.

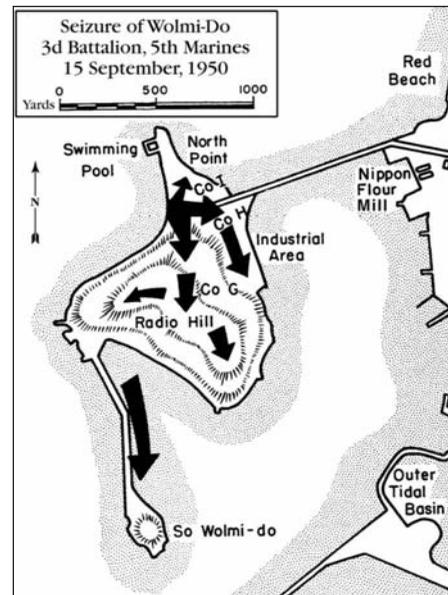
‘Wolmi-do Secured’

Once again Taplett radioed the *Mount McKinley*, this time: “Wolmi-do secured.”

With the success of the Marine landing blaring over the loudspeakers, MacArthur left the bridge to pen a message to Admiral Struble in his flagship *Rochester*: “The Navy and Marines have never shone more brightly than this morning.”

Ashore, Taplett consolidated his gains. His three rifle companies, by pre-arranged plan, took up defensive positions facing Inchon. The empty swimming pool at the tip of North Point became a stockade for prisoners.

At about 10 o’clock Taplett ordered



Bohn to take Sowolmi-do, an islet dangling to the south of Wolmi-do with a lighthouse at the end of the causeway. Bohn sent

Second Lieutenant John D. Counselman, leader of his 3d Platoon, with a rifle squad and a section of tanks. As a prelude to the assault, a flight of Corsairs drenched Sowolmi-do with napalm. Covered by the two tanks and a curtain of 81mm mortar fire, Counselman’s riflemen crossed the narrow causeway, taking fire from a hill honey-combed with emplacements. Flamethrowers and 3.5-inch rocket launchers burned and blasted the dug-in enemy. Seventeen were killed, 19 surrendered, and eight or more managed to hide out. The lighthouse was taken and the job completed in less than two hours. Three Marines were wounded, bringing Taplett’s casualties for the day to none killed, 17 wounded.

Word was passed that some of the North Koreans who had escaped were trying to swim for Inchon. A number of Bohn’s Marines lined up rifle-range fashion and shot at what they saw as heads bobbing in the water. Others dismissed the targets as imaginary. Mopping up of the island was completed by noon.

Taplett, growing restless and seeing no sign of enemy activity, proposed to division that he make an assault on the city from his present position or at least a reconnaissance in force. Smith responded to his proposal with a firm negative. □1775□

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) A2723



The Final Years of the Vietnam War

by Charles D. Melson
Chief Historian

Willard J. Webb and Walter S. Poole, *The Joint Chiefs of Staff and the War in Vietnam, 1971–1973* (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 2007)

Stephen P. Randolph, *Powerful and Brutal Weapons: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Easter Offensive* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007)

Robert E. Stoffey, *Fighting to Leave: The Final Years of America's War in Vietnam, 1972–1973* (Minneapolis: Zenith Press, 2008)

As to be expected, once a history narrative is completed new information will come forward to complement or contradict the earlier work. In fact, this is the historical process of a continued dialogue by various historians or groups of historians. In the Marine Corps case in regards to the Vietnam War, the History and Museum Division published its history of the 1971 to 1973 period in 1991, some 18 years ago. I know, as I was one of the writers involved. Now there are three recent books about the Vietnam War during the last years of the conflict that deserve consideration. They range from official history at the high-

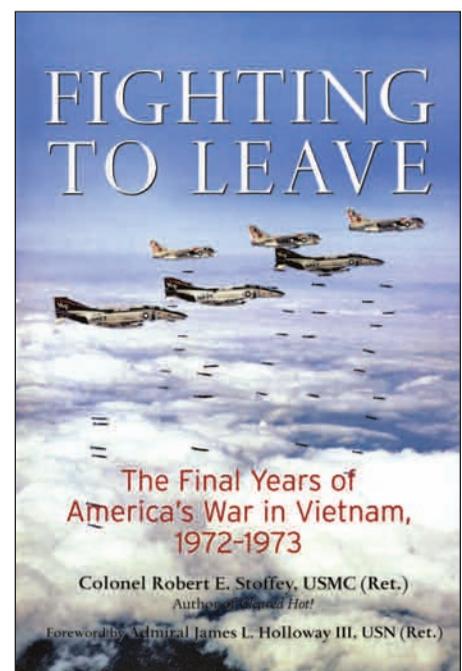
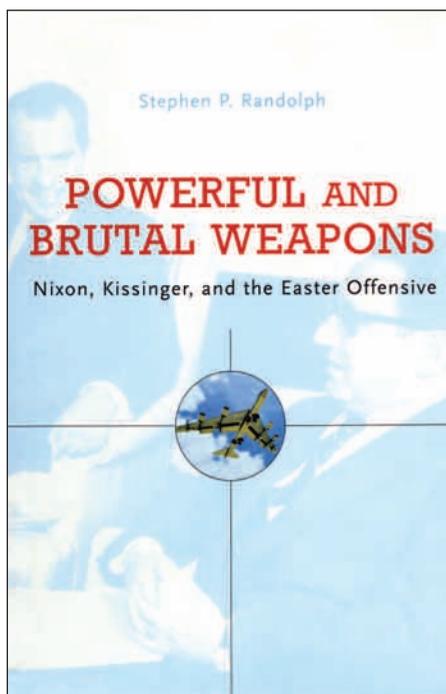
est level, through academic accounts, to a personal narrative.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff work covers the period from 1971 and the invasion of Laos by South Vietnam with Operation Lam Son 719. It ends with the mine-clearing of Operation End Sweep and the release of American prisoners of war in 1973. This is some 521 pages of material including notes and an index. For those who need to be reminded, this included Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, USN, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs; Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr., USN, Chief of Naval Operations; General William C. Westmoreland, Chief of Staff of the Army; General John D. Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and General Leonard F. Chapman Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps. The authors depict an orderly and inevitable withdrawal from the war as a matter of planned policy and strategy. Director of Joint History, David A. Armstrong, notes that this is the final volume of a series that documents America's role in Vietnam from 1945 through 1973. Both authors were respected career government historians of the Vietnam conflict.

Written as a classified study in the 1970s, new material was added, including a chapter on "Why Vietnamization Failed" written some 34 years after the event. While it has been argued that the 1968–1969 American strategy reached a successful conclusion in 1972 by showing South Vietnam could stand on its own, the subsequent documentation in the Joint Chiefs of Staff records does not support this argument. The May 1972 loss of Quang Tri City showed that, without American support, the Saigon government could not survive. With that, the U.S. government sought a "decent interval" in order to withdraw from the conflict. This is a detailed and well documented "official" history that is required for any narrative of the subject and would have helped U.S.

Marine Corps efforts with the story of this period some time ago.

Next is a detailed narrative, during the same period, about the use of tactical airpower during the 1972 so-called Spring or Easter Offensive. It covers the subject from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's decision to invade the Republic of Vietnam through the Paris Peace Accords that saw the American withdrawal from the conflict. The author, a retired U.S. Air Force colonel at the National Defense University, deals with the topic of the use of military power (in this case, tactical air power) by the national command authority (at the time, President Richard M. Nixon and National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger). Working against the deadline of a presidential election year, both Nixon and Kissinger hoped gains on the battlefield would strengthen their position at the negotiating table. In retaliation for a major North Vietnamese offensive breaking over the Easter holidays, the president launched the all-out air campaign known as Operation Linebacker—overriding his Secretary of Defense Melvin



R. Laird and clashing with the theater commander General Creighton Abrams in whom he had lost confidence.

The use of strategic bombing by B52s in North and South Vietnam is not discussed, as the narrative focuses on the use of tactical air attacks by the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Navy as a means to make the Vietnamese communists go to the table and work out an agreed upon withdrawal plan. The conflicting approaches depicted show that there is no single service response to the demands on the battlefield. In the end, both Air Force and Navy air does not win the war but only facilitates a political decision desired by Washington DC. Combat power really came from a mix of air, naval gunfire, and ground-based supporting arms with American advisors and the South

Vietnamese armed forces holding their positions and then carrying out a successful counteroffensive.

For Marine and Navy veterans, the story was best told by one of their own, retired Colonel Robert E. Stoffey. Based upon research after the event, this is a personal narrative of his time with Admiral James L. Holloway's Seventh Fleet as the Fleet Marine Air Officer in 1971–1972. Stoffey had flown helicopters and observation aircraft in two previous tours in Vietnam. He wrote about his experiences in *Cleared Hot*. By the time of the Easter Offensive in 1972, he was the senior Marine with Seventh Fleet on the flagship USS *Oklahoma City*. With the ongoing American withdrawal from Vietnam, the naval forces offshore assumed a more significant role in protecting this effort. Never before in the

conflict had naval power been as important. When combat power was required from the Gulf of Tonkin, Seventh Fleet and its integrated Fleet Marine Forces were there. This support ranged from direct combat by air, naval gunfire, mine laying, and amphibious and special warfare forces. For Marines this included amphibious brigades and air-ground task units as well as two groups of fighter and attack aircraft. His personal perspective made this a compelling narrative.

All in all, these three books show that at least in terms of research and writing something new can happen in history. They are recommended for those interested in the ignored story of military operations in the latter part of the Vietnam War from the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

□1775□

Book Review

Iraq and Counterinsurgency

by Nicholas J. Schlosser
Historian

Ahmed S. Hashim, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006)

Official and scholarly descriptions of the insurgency that erupted in Iraq in 2003 have often been vague and imprecise. Terms used to characterize it have ranged from the bureaucratic (“Anti-Iraqi Forces”) to the inexact (“former regime elements”) to the excessively broad (“the enemy”). Much of this is due to the nature of the insurgency’s tactics. Improvised explosives and other booby traps were the insurgents’ weapons of choice, and consequently, it was difficult to link the “enemy” with a particular ideology or organization.

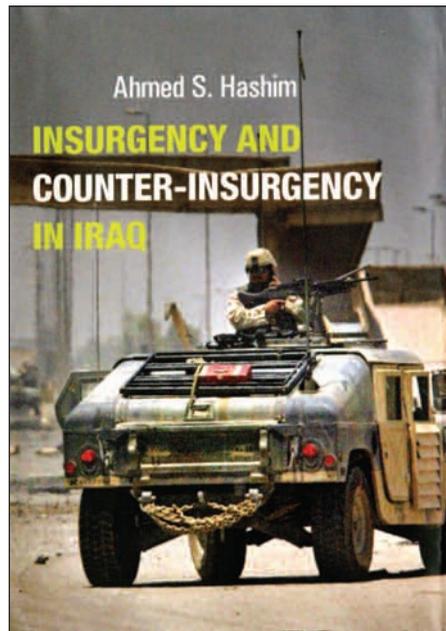
Ahmed S. Hashim’s book, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq*, presents a welcome remedy to many commentators’ aversion to specifics when it comes to examining the Iraq insurgency. In this detailed examination of the insurgency, Hashim explores the movement by asking a number of fundamental questions: Who are the insurgents, why are they fighting, and how have they gained support? As he demonstrates, the answers to

these questions are neither simple nor clear cut. Far from being a monolithic organization, the insurgency was a vast, complex, multifaceted movement of diverse, often antagonistic organizations driven by a common goal: the removal of the United States from Iraq. This singular purpose, Hashim notes, brought together a loose, tenuous partnership

between competing organizations that included secular nationalists and religious fundamentalists.

Their motivation, Hashim contends, lay in the common belief that Iraq’s Sunni population was the primary target of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. As the author notes, such a perception was not entirely unfounded: of all of Iraq’s ethnic and religious groups, the Sunnis had the most to lose from the overthrow of the Ba’ath regime. Iraq’s Sunnis had been the dominant ethnic and religious group in the country since its creation by the British in 1921. Consequently, many Sunnis felt a sense of ownership over the state itself and believed that the Coalition’s principle goal was to marginalize their status and place them under Shi’a control. The open favoritism given to Iraq’s Shi’a and Kurdish populations by U.S. authorities and policy-makers only reinforced this impression and exacerbated Sunni anxieties.

Thus, Hashim argues, the insurgency was driven by a fundamental crisis of national identity on the part of Iraq’s Sunnis. Weakened and divided by



decades of authoritarian government, and consequently, lacking the organization and means for expressing their grievances and anxieties in the new Iraq, many Sunnis turned to militancy. Policies of the Bush administration and occupation officials, most notably the disbanding of the Iraqi Army and de-Ba'athification, further fanned resentments and motivated Sunnis to embrace armed resistance. Former soldiers, Ba'athists, Salafists, and other radical groups were thus drawn together by a general anxiety about the new Iraq and opposition to the occupation.

This opposition was intensified and exacerbated by three major factors: the assumption by Coalition authorities that the Sunnis would accept their loss of status, the Sunni's unwillingness to accept this loss, and the frequently "muscular" and heavy handed response of U.S. forces against insurgent activity. Furthermore, the open favoritism on the part of American neoconservative policymakers toward Iraq's Kurds and Shi'a populations, linked with a general desire of neoconservatives to weaken the Arab character of Iraq, only reinforced the Sunni's belief that the war was launched against them.

Of particular interest is Hashim's careful analysis and description of specific insurgent organizations. Hashim lays out three broad types of groups: secular nationalists, radical religious organizations, and groups shaped by a mixture of the two. As he stresses, many of these organizations' goals and memberships were fluid. Group names frequently changed and larger groups often absorbed smaller ones. The insurgency was comprised of a mixture of old-regime supporters such as the General Command of the Armed Forces, Resistance, and Liberation of Iraq; radical nationalist groups such as Iraq's Revolutionaries—Al-Anbar Armed Brigades; fundamentalist Islamist organizations such as the Jaish Ansar al-Sunnah; and cells mixing nationalist and religious elements such as the Higher Command of the Mujahideen in Iraq. What becomes clear from Hashim's analysis is that the insurgency was neither a motley collection of "regime dead-enders" nor a collection of "anti-Iraqi" foreign fighters. Instead, while

Ba'athists and foreign groups were certainly amongst its ranks, the insurgency was larger, enjoyed more local support, and included far more native Iraqis than the Bush administration and Coalition officials often realized. The insurgency, in short, was primarily an Iraqi Sunni movement motivated by Sunni aspirations and Sunni fears.

If the book has a weakness, it is one that is beyond the author's control. Published in 2006, most of the work focuses on the period between 2003 and 2005. As a result, the book cannot consider the critical events of 2006–07, a period that saw both a further intensification and ultimately a reduction in violence. Most importantly, the work does not consider the critical period following the 2006 destruction of the al-Askari mosque in Samara, an event that sparked violent sectarian strife between Sunni and Shi'a militias. By 2006, the war in Iraq had evolved and transformed to such an extent that in many places the United States was just one of several participants in a conflict that was escalating in both intensity and complexity. In some cases, notably in al-Anbar Province, one time insurgent groups, affiliated with the region's tribal confederations, aligned themselves with the United States against more radical, fundamentalist insurgent forces. It would have been interesting to see Hashim examine such events. Related to this, the author is limited in the sources he can use. Most of the study is based on newspaper reports from the

western and Arab press, web sites of insurgent groups, and interviews between the author and Iraqis. As a result, many of Hashim's conclusions are provisional and conditional, though the author himself is ready to admit when evidence and information are inadequate and definite conclusions cannot be made.

Overall however, this is a valuable book that will be of use to Marines, soldiers, and analysts alike. It provides an excellent analysis of the motivations that drove the Iraq insurgency and of the myriad of groups and individuals that chose to engage in insurgent operations. Even though the violence in Iraq has recently subsided from the levels it was at when Hashim wrote the work, his argument that the U.S. military and government must be aware of how its actions are understood is critical to the implementation of counterinsurgency operations in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The invasion of Iraq and toppling of Saddam Hussein's regime may have made a Sunni backlash inevitable. The collapse of the Ba'ath regime also meant the collapse of Sunni dominance in Iraq. But U.S. and occupation administration decisions and actions during the spring of 2003 played a large role in militarizing, radicalizing, and inflaming that backlash. An understanding of how this happened is critical to anyone responsible for planning and implementing counterinsurgency operations today. □1775□



**National Museum
of the Marine Corps**

**18900 Jefferson Davis Hwy
Triangle, Virginia
Open 9am to 5pm
Every day except
Christmas**

www.usmcmuseum.org

