

# MARINE CORPS HISTORY

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SUMMER 2024



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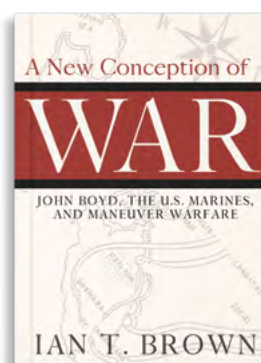
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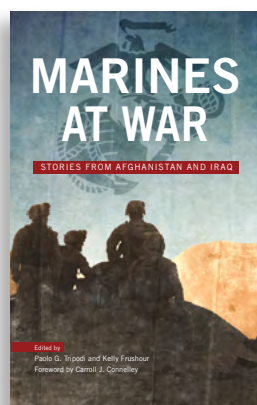
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*A New Conception of War: John Boyd,  
the U.S. Marines, and Maneuver Warfare*  
by Ian T. Brown



*Marines at War:  
Stories from Afghanistan and Iraq*  
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# FROM THE EDITORS

Celebrating significant anniversaries calls for big plans, and big plans require time to implement. So, while the current year is not a major anniversary year, 2025 is the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Marine Corps' founding in 1775. Even the U.S. government at large has begun preparing for this special event, with the 118th Congress passing the 250th Anniversary of the United States Marine Corps Commemorative Coin Act, which became Public Law 118-10 in 2023. The act directs the secretary of the treasury to mint coins commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Corps. The proceeds will be used to support the Marine Corps Heritage Center and the National Museum of the Marine Corps. In addition, Homecoming 250—a 501(c)(3) group organizing celebrations in the Delaware Valley region—will host a variety of festivities and exhibitions in the fall in the birthplaces of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps. Planning for these celebrations started several years ago.

*Marine Corps History* intends to celebrate the Corps' 250th birthday year, as well. While scholarship in this journal always plumbs the Corps' history, articles often concentrate on narrow time spans, discrete events within larger conflicts, and individuals or units. For 2025's Summer and Winter issues, the editors seek scholarly work that focuses more on whole-of-Service history that analyze the history of the Corps more broadly or comprehensively, such as research on the founding and birth of the Corps or on its overall developmental history. To propose a piece for the 2025 issues, please contact the managing editor. The sub-

mission deadline for Summer 2025 is 1 December 2024; the deadline for Winter 2025/26 is 1 June 2025.

Meanwhile, we are pleased to present the current issue that begins with a piece by retired Marine Corps Reserve colonel Dwight Sullivan about the U.S. acquisition of Guam during the Spanish-American War. In light of the Corps' currently impending expansion of its Guam presence, which entails an influx of several thousand Marines from Okinawa, Japan, Sullivan reviews the Corps' history in Guam, which began in 1898, when Marines played a supporting, yet significant, role in teasing the island away from Spanish rule by combining elements of the Corps' previous mission (landing parties) with an emerging one (advanced base operations).

Next, Australian Army major Matthew Scott seeks to offer contemporary lessons from the World War II battles for the Gilbert Islands about the importance of Joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities in seizing fortified islands. Scott posits that losses during Operation Galvanic would likely have been far worse if not for the U.S. Navy Fifth Amphibious Force's successful efforts to mitigate obstacles to a shore landing by exploiting effective intelligence to take calculated risks. Operation Galvanic by no means completely resolved the littoral obstacle problem, which remains a tremendous challenge today. However, if beaches protected by complex obstacles must be seized, Operation Galvanic's employment of Joint ISR, cross-domain mobility, and combined arms teams suggests a model for success.

This is followed by a piece authored by retired Marine Corps History Division (MCHD) oral historian Dr. Fred H. Allison examining the inherent capability of the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) in military operations other than war (MOOTW) through a recounting of 1990s-era humanitarian and noncombat evacuation operations around the world. Dr. Allison's piece analyzes MAGTF employment in Operation Sharp Edge (Liberia, 1990), Operation Sea Angel (Bangladesh, 1991), Operation Fiery Vigil (Luzon, Philippines, 1991), Operations Distant Runner and Support Hope (Somalia, 1994), Operations Assured Response and Quick Response (Liberia and Central African Republic, 1996), Operations Silver Wake and Guardian Retrieval (Albania and Zaire, 1997), Operation Noble Obelisk (Sierra Leone, 1997), Operation Avid Response (Turkey, 1999), and Operation Stabilise (East Timor, 1999). The article highlights the essentiality of helicopters in MOOTW, particularly humanitarian and noncombat evacuation operations.

Finally, 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps General Alfred M. Gray Jr., who died in March this year at the age of 95, is memorialized by two pieces in this issue, one by Dr. Charles Niemeyer, a past director of MCHD, and another by Dr. Allan R. Millett, retired Marine Corps Reserve colonel and prolific

military historian, both of whom served with Gray during their careers. We also include an In Memoriam piece by MCHD historian Paul Westermeyer about Charles R. "Rich" Smith, who served as an MCHD historian for 40 years, retiring in 2011, and who died in January.

The remainder of the journal rounds out with a broad selection of book reviews related to American military history. The editors invite readers to contribute to the discussion and submit an article for consideration. We are also accepting submissions of historiographical essays examining the extant sources on the Marine Corps' history and the shape of scholarly debate on specific events or actions or on broader general history topics. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on these topics and to your future participation as an author, reviewer, or reader. Junior faculty and advanced graduate students are encouraged to submit articles and book reviews, as well. Join the conversation and find us online on our LinkedIn page (<https://tinyurl.com/y38oxnp5>), at MC UPress on Facebook, MC\_UPress on Twitter, and MCUPress on Instagram, or contact us via email at [MCU\\_Press@usmcu.edu](mailto:MCU_Press@usmcu.edu) for article submission requirements and issue deadlines.

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# Pacific Conquest

## THE MARINE CORPS' ROLE IN THE U.S. ACQUISITION OF GUAM

By Dwight Sullivan

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**Abstract:** The Marine Corps is poised to vastly expand its presence in Guam. Under a 2012 bilateral agreement with Japan, the United States is preparing to transfer approximately 5,000 in Marine Corps force strength from Okinawa to Guam. The relationship between Guam and the Corps has endured since 1898, when the Marine Corps played a supporting, yet significant, role in the United States' acquisition of Guam. By early 1899, the United States had finally established effective control over Guam, which would continue until a Japanese invasion force seized the island on 10 December 1941.

**Keywords:** Guam, USS *Charleston*, Spanish-American War, Lieutenant John T. Myers, Fort Santa Cruz, San Luis d'Apra, USS *Bennington*, Treaty of Paris

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The U.S. Marine Corps is poised to vastly expand its presence in Guam. Under a 2012 bilateral agreement with Japan, the United States is preparing to transfer approximately 5,000 in Marine Corps force strength from Okinawa to Guam.<sup>1</sup> That process began with the October 2020 administrative activation of Camp Blaz at Dededo in northwest Guam.<sup>2</sup> The first newly established Marine Corps base since 1952, Camp Blaz is the site of more than \$1 billion in construction projects during fiscal year 2024.<sup>3</sup> The installation's website explains that the "base is named in honor of Brigadier General Vicente To-

mas 'Ben' Garrido Blaz, the first [Chamorro] Marine to attain the rank of general officer and honors the Blaz family and the significant relationship between the island of Guam and the U.S. Marine Corps, which has endured since before the campaigns of World War II."<sup>4</sup> That relationship began in 1898, when the Marine Corps played a supporting, yet significant, role in the United States' acquisition of Guam.

Launched a decade before the Spanish-American War, USS *Charleston* (C 2) was a 320-foot protected cruiser with a top speed of 18.7 knots.<sup>5</sup> It was armed with two pivoting 8-inch breach-loading rifles capable of firing 250-pound projectiles, six 6-inch breach-loading rifles, and 12 secondary guns.<sup>6</sup> When *Charleston* set sail from San Francisco in May 1898, most of the crew members were raw recruits making their first

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Dwight Sullivan is a retired colonel of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and is a senior associate deputy general counsel in the DOD Office of General Counsel. He serves as an adjunct faculty member at George Washington University Law School and recently received a master's in military history from Norwich University. The views expressed in this article are his alone and do not necessarily represent the views of DOD. <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1565-195X>. <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2024100101>

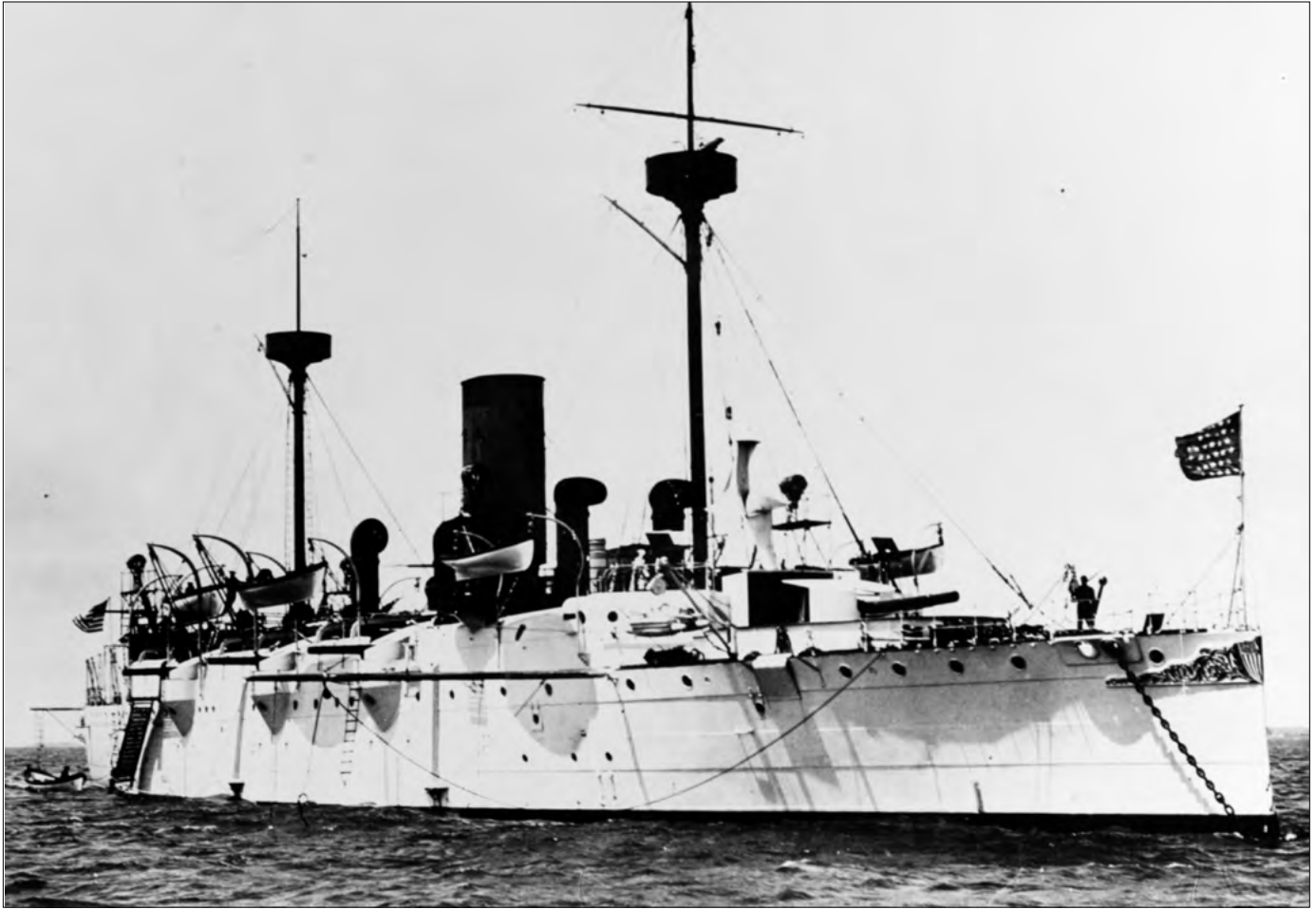
<sup>1</sup> Irene Loewenson, "New in 2024: Marines Start Moving from Japan to New Base on Guam," *Marine Corps Times*, 29 December 2023; and U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee," press release, 26 April 2012.

<sup>2</sup> "History," Reactivation and Naming, Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz, U.S. Marine Corps, accessed 11 June 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Loewenson, "New in 2024."

<sup>4</sup> "History," Reactivation and Naming, Marine Corps Base Camp Blaz.  
<sup>5</sup> *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), 82; and "A Possible Race to Manila," *Sun* (Baltimore), 12 May 1898, 1.

<sup>6</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 5 May 1898–15 November 1898, entry 118, Record Group (RG) 14, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, (NARA I), "Armament" page.



Naval History and Heritage Command, catalog no. NH 88407

USS *Charleston* (C 2) was escorting troop transports from Hawaii to the Philippines when it was diverted to take possession of Guam. Little more than 16 months after Guam's capture, *Charleston* sank after striking an uncharted coral reef off Luzon's northern coast.

voyage.<sup>7</sup> Of the 233 sailors recorded on the ship's 5 May 1898 muster roll, 161 enlisted after an explosion sank USS *Maine* (second-class battleship) in Havana's harbor 79 days earlier.<sup>8</sup> Joining them were three embedded reporters who generated a trove of contemporary narratives of *Charleston's* voyage.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Douglas White, *On to Manila* (San Francisco, CA: Geo. Spaulding, 1899), 2; and Robert E. Coontz, *From Mississippi to the Sea* (Philadelphia, PA: Dorrance, 1930), 200.

<sup>8</sup> Muster rolls, USS *Charleston*, 5 May 1898–30 June 1899, entry 134, RG24, NARA I.

<sup>9</sup> The reporters embedded aboard *Charleston* were Sol N. Sheridan of the *San Francisco Call*, Douglas White of the *Examiner* (San Francisco), and E. Langley Jones of the Associated Press. *Charleston* logbook, 18 May 1898. Oscar King Davis of the *Sun* (New York) and Pierre N. Boeringer, an artist working for the *San Francisco Call* and *New York Herald*, were embedded on board the troop transport *Australia*. "The Boys in Blue," *Hawaiian Star*, 1 June 1898, 1.

Also on board *Charleston* was a guard consisting of 30 enlisted Marines under the command of Second Lieutenant John T. Myers. The detachment included 1 first sergeant, 2 sergeants, 3 corporals, 2 fifiers, and 22 privates. The Marines were somewhat more seasoned than their Navy counterparts. Only two had joined the Marine Corps after *Maine's* sinking.<sup>10</sup>

Myers's path to a Marine Corps commission was unusually circuitous. His father was Abraham Myers, an 1833 West Point graduate for whom Fort My-

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Marine Corps muster roll, USS *Charleston*, 2d Rate, 5 May–18 May 1898, T977, roll 12, NARA I.





John Twiggs Myers *Personal Papers*  
(Coll/3016), Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division  
2dLt John Twiggs Myers in 1897, the year before he participated in the capture of Guam.

ers, Florida, was named when it was an actual fort.<sup>11</sup> Abraham Myers served as the Confederate Army's quartermaster general until President Jefferson Davis

removed him in August 1863. Explanations vary.<sup>12</sup> After the Civil War, Myers exiled himself to Wiesbaden, Germany, where his son John was born in 1871.<sup>13</sup> The Myers family returned to the United States in 1876.<sup>14</sup>

Sixteen-year-old Myers was appointed to the Naval Academy from Georgia's Ninth Congressional District, enrolling in autumn 1887 as part of the class of 1891.<sup>15</sup> However, he spent so much time on the sick list during his second year that he was turned back to the next class.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, he persevered. In June 1892, Myers was 1 of 40 naval cadets (as midshipmen were then known) to receive a diploma from Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy.<sup>17</sup> Two years later, at the conclusion of his follow-on cruise on board the protected cruiser USS *Boston* (1884) and final examination, his class standing was 29th of 31 in the line division—too low to obtain a commission.<sup>18</sup> After being honorably discharged, Myers was rescued by an 1894 law allowing Naval Academy graduates who did not receive a commission to become Navy assistant engineers.<sup>19</sup> The Senate confirmed Myers's nomina-

<sup>12</sup> In a letter to the Confederate States Senate, Jefferson Davis explained that he replaced Myers as quartermaster general because "the public interest required an officer of greater ability and one better qualified to meet the pressing emergencies of the service during the war." Jefferson Davis to the Senate, 27 January 1864, reprinted in *Journal of the Congress of the Confederate States of America, 1861–1865* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1904), 3:627. On the other hand, rumors attributed Davis's decision to remove Myers as quartermaster general "to Myers's wife calling the dark-complexioned Mrs. Davis a 'squaw'." Bruce S. Allardice, *Confederate Colonels: A Biographical Register* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 287.

<sup>13</sup> Jack Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880–1898* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 135.

<sup>14</sup> Glenn M. Harned, *Marine Corps Generals, 1899–1936: A Biographical Encyclopedia* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2015), 120.

<sup>15</sup> U.S. Naval Academy Academic and Conduct Records of Cadets, 1881–1908, vol. 11, 290½, Special Collections and Archives, Nimitz Library, U.S. Naval Academy; and *Annual Register of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., Thirty-Eighth Academic Year, 1887–'88* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1887), 33.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Naval Academy Academic and Conduct Records of Cadets, 1881–1908, vol. 11, 290½.

<sup>17</sup> "Naval Academy Graduates," *Evening Capital* (Annapolis), 3 June 1892, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission*, 135; and *Annual Register of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., Fiftieth Academic Year, 1894–'95* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894), 46–47, 49–50.

<sup>19</sup> "Reorganization of the Navy," *Sun* (Baltimore), 20 August 1894, 2; and Naval Appropriation Act of July 28, 1894, ch. 165, 28 Stat. 123, 124 (1894).

<sup>11</sup> Bvt MajGen George W. Cullum, *Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. from Its Establishment in 1802, to 1890*, 3d ed., vol. 1 (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1891), 562; and Robert Rosen, *Jewish Confederates* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), 119.



tion in August 1894.<sup>20</sup> He did not remain an assistant engineer long. Worried that he did “not know high pressure from low pressure” and fearing assignment to engineer duty on a warship, Myers arranged a transfer.<sup>21</sup> Learning that his Naval Academy classmate Second Lieutenant Walter Ball was unhappy as a Marine Corps officer, Myers proposed that they swap career fields. Both Ball and the Navy Department agreed.<sup>22</sup> The Senate formally approved the transfers on 25 February 1895.<sup>23</sup>

Training consumed much of Myers's early Marine Corps service. In spring and summer 1895, he received his initial indoctrination as a Marine Corps officer at the School of Application at Marine Barracks Washington, DC, a precursor to The Basic School. In May 1896, he studied ordnance at the Washington Navy Yard. That summer, he attended the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island. Following a month-long assignment at Marine Barracks Boston, Myers was transferred across the country to Marine Barracks Mare Island, California. After almost 18 months there, on 9 May 1898, he reported to USS *Charleston* as commanding officer of the ship's Marine guard.<sup>24</sup> The cruiser was then moored at the Mare Island Naval Yard.<sup>25</sup> While assigned to *Charleston*, Myers wore a stylish pointed beard topped by a handlebar mustache (see figure on p. 9). The 27-year-old Marine officer was a newlywed. Less than a month before *Charleston* left

San Francisco, he married Alice Cutts, a great-granddaughter of Francis Scott Key.<sup>26</sup>

To great fanfare, USS *Charleston* cast off and headed toward sea at 1022 on 18 May 1898.<sup>27</sup> It was a false start. At 0450 the next morning, the cruiser returned to the Mare Island Naval Yard for repairs.<sup>28</sup> While engineers plugged leaks in *Charleston*'s condenser tubes, Secretary of the Navy John D. Long sent a telegram to Rear Admiral George Dewey, commander of the Asiatic Squadron, on 20 May: “[USS *City of*] *Pekin* [1898, steamer] and *Charleston* proceed at once to Manila, touching at Guam, Ladrone Islands, where will capture fort, Spanish officials, and garrison and act at discretion regarding coal that may be found.”<sup>29</sup> In fact, the Navy Department had already issued an order dated 10 May 1898 to be delivered to Captain Glass in Honolulu providing more detailed directions for his operations “at the Spanish Island of Guam.”<sup>30</sup> Yet, *Charleston*'s captain, officers, and crew apparently remained unaware of that mission when they restarted their westward voyage on the morning of 21 May. At 1115, as recorded in the logbook, *Charleston* “stood down Mare Island Strait, the Captain and Navigator on the bridge.”<sup>31</sup> After a slow start in foggy conditions that delayed making necessary adjustments to the ship's compasses, *Charleston* passed through the Gold-

<sup>20</sup> *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America*, vol. 29, pt. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 782.

<sup>21</sup> “Capt. Myers's Leap to Fame,” *Evening Post* (New York), 25 August 1900, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Shulimson, *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission*, 135.

<sup>23</sup> Grover Cleveland to Senate of the United States, 12 February 1895, in *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America*, vol. 29, pt. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909), 927, nominating Myers and Ball for appointment to their new positions by transfer; and *Journal of the Executive Proceedings of the Senate of the United States of America*, vol. 29, pt. 2, 949, Senate confirmation.

<sup>24</sup> Record of Myers, John Twiggs, sheet no. 1, John Twiggs Myers Official Military Personnel File, Service No. 703, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO; and USS *Charleston* logbook, 9 May 1898.

<sup>25</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 9 May 1898.

<sup>26</sup> “War-Time Wedding,” *Examiner* (San Francisco), 29 April 1898, 7. Myers would later receive a brevet promotion to major “for distinguished conduct in the presence of the enemy at the defense of the legations” while in Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900. When he retired from the Marine Corps in 1935, he was a major general. “China Heroes Rewarded,” *Boston Sunday Globe*, 10 March 1901, 4; and Record of Myers, John Twiggs, unnumbered sheet following sheet no. 9. He was later elevated to lieutenant general on the retired list. “Two Retired Officers of Marines Named Lieutenant Generals,” *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), 16 April 1942, B-1.

<sup>27</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 18 May 1898; and “Charleston Off for Manila,” *San Francisco Call*, 19 May 1898, 5.

<sup>28</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 19 May 1898.

<sup>29</sup> Douglas White, “Charleston's Trip Delayed,” *Examiner* (San Francisco), 20 May 1898, 2; Long to Dewey, 20 May 1898, in *Appendix to the Report of the Chief of the Bureau of Navigation, 1898* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898), 99, hereafter 1898 Appendix. The Mariana Islands were also called the Ladrone, the Spanish word for thieves. The islands acquired that pejorative appellation during Ferdinand Magellan's 1521 stop in the islands. Lt Frederick J. Nelson, USN, “Why Guam Alone Is American,” *U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings* 62, no. 8 (August 1936): 1131.

<sup>30</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Commanding Officer, U.S.S. *Charleston*, 10 May 1898, 1898 Appendix, 151.

<sup>31</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 21 May 1898.



Photo by Douglas White, Naval History and Heritage Command, catalog no. WHI.2014.48

2dLt Myers strides in front of the Marine guard aboard USS Charleston.

en Gate on the morning of 22 May.<sup>32</sup> Troops from the Presidio awaiting transportation to the Philippines cheered from the shore.<sup>33</sup> A member of the signal corps used a flag to send a message to the departing vessel by wigwag: "Be sure to remember the *Maine*." The warship signaled back, "Good bye. Don't fear, we will remember."<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 22 May 1898.

<sup>33</sup> White, *On to Manila*, 2.

<sup>34</sup> White, *On to Manila*, 2.

A week after departing Mare Island, *Charleston* arrived in Honolulu, the capital of what was then the independent Republic of Hawaii.<sup>35</sup> There the cruiser rendezvoused with three troop transports: *City of Peking*, *SS Australia*, and *SS City of Sydney*.<sup>36</sup> Embarked

<sup>35</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 29 May 1898; and "U.S.S. Charleston," *Honolulu Advertiser*, 30 May 1898, 1.

<sup>36</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 1 June 1898; and Sol N. Sheridan, "Target Practice Previous to the Taking of Guam," *San Francisco Call*, 3 August 1898, 1.

on those vessels were the 1st California Volunteer Infantry Regiment, 2d Oregon Volunteer Infantry Regiment, five companies of the 14th United States Infantry, and a detachment of the 1st California Field Artillery. Those units' combined strength was 115 officers and 2,386 enlisted soldiers.<sup>37</sup> The Army component was under the command of Brigadier General Thomas McArthur Anderson, a Civil War veteran who was a nephew of Major Robert Anderson, the commander of Fort Sumter at that war's outset.<sup>38</sup> *City of Peking*, a merchant vessel the Navy rented for \$1,000 per day, also carried Marines who would be assigned to ships in the Asiatic Squadron.<sup>39</sup> *Charleston's* mission was to escort the three lumbering transports from Hawaii to Manila Bay, where the convoy's passengers would augment a U.S. force assembling to capture the Philippines' capital from its Spanish defenders. While in Honolulu, *Charleston's* crew and the transports' Manila-bound soldiers were feted at a giant luau on Iolani Palace's grounds.<sup>40</sup> Five of *Charleston's* Marines enjoyed Honolulu too much. Three privates, a corporal, and a sergeant had their liberty status downgraded for returning late by one to three hours. Fifty-eight sailors were also punished for returning to *Charleston* late, drunk, or both.<sup>41</sup>

*Charleston's* captain was Henry Glass. He finished first in what was supposed to be the Naval Academy's class of 1864; the class's graduation was accelerated by

a year to supply the fleet with sorely needed junior officers.<sup>42</sup> Assigned to the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron, Glass saw considerable action during the Civil War.<sup>43</sup> His career survived a censure from the secretary of the Navy for grounding USS *Cincinnati* (C 7) on Long Island Sound's Execution Rock in 1894, the same year he had been promoted to captain.<sup>44</sup> He took command of *Charleston* when the cruiser was recommissioned on 5 May 1898, 10 days after the United States declared war against Spain.<sup>45</sup> A future chief of naval operations who served under Glass on board *Charleston* described him as "a hard driver."<sup>46</sup>

While in Honolulu, Glass received sealed orders he was not to open until underway.<sup>47</sup> Once at sea, *Charleston's* captain read this directive from Secretary Long:

Sir: Upon the receipt of this order, which is forwarded by the steamship *City of Peking* to you at Honolulu, you will proceed, with the *Charleston* and *City of Peking* in company, to Manila, Philippine Islands.

On your way, you are directed to stop at the Spanish Island of Guam. You will use such force as may be necessary to capture the port of Guam, making prisoners of the governor and other officials and any armed force that may be there. You will also destroy any fortifications on said island and any Spanish naval vessels that may be there, or in the immediate vicinity. These operations at the Island of Guam should be very brief, and should

<sup>37</sup> "Charleston at Honolulu," *Sun* (New York), 8 June 1898, 2; "Transports Depart," *Hawaii Herald*, 9 June 1898, 4; and Leslie W. Walker, "Guam's Seizure by the United States in 1898," *Pacific Historical Review* 14, no. 1 (March 1945): 1.

<sup>38</sup> "Gen. T. McA. Anderson Dies," *New York Times*, 10 May 1917, 13; "After Long Service," *Courier-Journal* (Louisville), 21 December 1899, 2; and "Gen. Anderson Dies as He Prepares to Preside at Banquet," *Oregon Journal*, 9 May 1917, 1.

<sup>39</sup> Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 15 November 1898, in *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1898), 21; and Oscar King Davis, *Our Conquests in the Pacific* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1899), 57. An Army communication sent the day before *City of Peking* sailed from San Francisco stated that the "Navy contingent" aboard the vessel numbered "11 officers and 76 enlisted men." MajGen Elwell Otis, U.S. Volunteers, to AdjGen, U.S. Army, 24 May 1898, *Correspondence Relating to the War with Spain*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1902), 671–72. It is unclear how many of the 76 enlisted men were Marines.

<sup>40</sup> Douglas White, "Hawaii Honors Our Soldiers," *Sunday Examiner* (San Francisco), 19 June 1898, 15; and Pandia Ralli, "Campaigning in the Philippines," *Overland Monthly* 33, no. 194 (February 1899): 157–58.

<sup>41</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 8 June 1898.

<sup>42</sup> *Official Register of the Officers and Midshipmen of the United States Naval Academy, Newport, Rhode Island, December 31, 1863* (Newport, RI: Frederick A. Pratt, 1864), 11; and Park Benjamin, *The United States Naval Academy* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), 253–57.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis Randolph Hamersly, *Records of Living Officers of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps*, 5th ed. (Philadelphia, PA: L. R. Hamersly, 1894), 107–8.

<sup>44</sup> "Hole in the *Cincinnati*," *New York Times*, 17 November 1894, 1; and Secretary of the Navy H. A. Herbert, Action on Court of Inquiry no. 4868, box 56, entry 30, RG 125, NARA I.

<sup>45</sup> "Charleston Is Commissioned," *Examiner* (San Francisco), 6 May 1898, 3; and 31 Cong. Rec. 4244, 4252 (1898).

<sup>46</sup> Coontz, *From Mississippi to the Sea*, 200.

<sup>47</sup> Sheridan, "Target Practice," 1.



Photo by Douglas White, Naval History and Heritage Command, catalog no. WHI.2014.42

Capt Henry Glass on the deck of USS *Charleston*. A future Chief of Naval Operations who served under Glass on board *Charleston* characterized him as “a hard driver.”

not occupy more than one or two days. Should you find any coal at the Island of Guam, you will make such use of it as you consider desirable. It is left to your discretion whether or not you destroy it.

From the Island of Guam, proceed to Manila and report to Rear-Admiral George Dewey, U. S. N., for duty in the squadron under his command.<sup>48</sup>

Secretary Long’s order to Glass, as well as follow-on communications with Rear Admiral Dewey, suggests that the Navy Department’s primary goal for *Charleston*’s mission was to acquire a port facility between Honolulu and the Philippines.<sup>49</sup> In executing his orders, however, Captain Glass would exceed that limited objective.

At 0900 on 5 June, the day after leaving Hawaii, Captain Glass mustered his officers on the quarter-deck and informed them of the convoy’s revised mission.<sup>50</sup> Wigwag messages soon passed the news to the troop transports.<sup>51</sup> It would take the four vessels 15 more days to sail the roughly 3,300 nautical miles to Guam.

Nine days into the voyage, *City of Peking* steamed ahead of *Charleston* and dropped boxes into the ocean.<sup>52</sup> *Charleston*’s gun crews were soon engaged in target practice, aiming at the bobbing crates. At least one of *Charleston*’s four 6-pounder rapid-fire guns was manned by Marines (see figure, p. 12). During the late nineteenth century, the Marine Corps was in danger of being disestablished.<sup>53</sup> To increase Marines’ usefulness, Colonel Commandant Charles Heywood launched a campaign for Marine guard detachments to man their ships’ rapid-fire and secondary batteries.<sup>54</sup> *Charleston*’s Marines working as a gun crew exemplified that self-preservation strategy in action.

More target practice followed on 15 June.<sup>55</sup> Two days later, the convoy stopped to allow *Charleston*’s captain’s gig to transport Glass to *Australia*. There, he, Brigadier General Anderson, and the three transports’ captains held a council of war. While Glass was on board *Australia*, he was treated to the spectacle of

<sup>49</sup> For example, Long to Dewey, 25 June 1898, 1898 Appendix, 108 (referring to the Second Army Division’s expected arrival at Guam on 10 July to meet convoying vessel); and Long to Dewey, 29 June 1898, 1898 Appendix, 109 (referring to USS *Monterey* [BM 6] sailing from San Diego via Honolulu and Guam).

<sup>50</sup> E. Langley Jones, “How Guam Was Taken,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 3 August 1898, 2.

<sup>51</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 31–32.

<sup>52</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 13 June 1898; and Sheridan, “Target Practice Previous to the Taking of Guam,” 1.

<sup>53</sup> Shulimson, *The Marine Corps’ Search for a Mission*, 130–32, 147, 164–65.

<sup>54</sup> Shulimson, *The Marine Corps’ Search for a Mission*, 166–67, 195; and Report of the Commandant of United States Marine Corps, 24 September 1898, in *Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Year 1898*, 830–31.

<sup>55</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 15 June 1898.

<sup>48</sup> Secretary of the Navy to Commanding Officer, U.S.S. *Charleston*, 10 May 1898, 1898 Appendix, 151.





Photo by Douglas White, Naval History and Heritage Command, catalog no. WHI.2014.49

Marines manned at least one of USS *Charleston*'s four 6-pounder rapid-fire guns. The Marines were not called on to fire during the conquest of Guam.

*Charleston*'s main battery firing with remarkable precision at a white canvas pyramid target rising six feet above the waterline a kilometer away.<sup>56</sup>

Throughout 18 June, *Charleston*'s crew gradually cleared the ship for action.<sup>57</sup> An Associated Press reporter embedded on the vessel observed that "by nightfall the boats had been wrapped in canvas, all the portable wood and iron work stowed below, the

splinter netting spread above the main deck, and the *Charleston* was ready for any emergency."<sup>58</sup>

On Sunday, 19 June, less than a day's sail from Guam, the convoy stopped again. *Australia*'s third officer, Thomas A. Hallett, who had previously visited Guam as captain of a whaler, transferred onto *Charleston* to act as the ship's pilot.<sup>59</sup> Father William D. McKinnon, the 1st California Volunteers' Roman Catholic chaplain, reported on board *Charleston* from

<sup>56</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 17 June 1898; Sheridan, "Target Practice Previous to the Taking of Guam," 1; Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 42–43.

<sup>57</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 18 June 1898; and Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>58</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>59</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 19 June 1898; and Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

*City of Peking* in anticipation of battle the next day.<sup>60</sup> *Charleston's* logbook records that at 1850 that evening, "rang church bell, and held Divine Service on board. Father McKinnon officiating."<sup>61</sup> McKinnon heard confessions until 0130 that night. Several days later, he wrote that "[b]efore the expected engagement, I gave a general absolution. It was quite a solemn sight as all (even non-Catholics) seemed very much in earnest."<sup>62</sup>

At 0450 on 20 June, just as dawn broke, Guam's northern tip was sighted off *Charleston's* port bow.<sup>63</sup> Fifteen minutes later, *City of Peking* fired a rocket and flashed a blue light, signaling that its crew had also sighted land.<sup>64</sup> *Charleston* went to general quarters at 0530.<sup>65</sup> Half an hour later, its crewmembers ate breakfast before returning to their battle stations, the ship's guns already shotted in preparation.<sup>66</sup>

The original plan called for *Charleston* to hoist a Japanese flag while approaching Guam.<sup>67</sup> But that ruse was ultimately rejected, and the American warship made the run flying the Stars and Stripes.<sup>68</sup> After steaming halfway down the island's west coast, the convoy approached Agaña Bay at 0730.<sup>69</sup> The transports fell back as *Charleston* sailed close to shore, looking for a Spanish gunboat believed to be in the vicinity. After the cruiser's lookout reported "nothing there," the convoy proceeded approximately 10 kilometers south to the harbor of San Luis d'Apra.<sup>70</sup> Third Officer Hallett was perched on the warship's forward fighting top, allowing him to better see transitions in

the water color that signified changes in the bottom's depth or the presence of dangerous coral reefs.<sup>71</sup>

As *Charleston* entered the mist-enshrouded harbor, an anchored vessel came into view.<sup>72</sup> Someone on *Charleston's* bridge exclaimed, "By George, it's a gunboat!"<sup>73</sup> The resulting excitement dissipated when the vessel hoisted a white pennant adorned with a red circle, signifying it was a Japanese merchantman.<sup>74</sup> Spanish fortifications then renewed the tension on *Charleston's* bridge. The ship's charts showed a fort atop a cliff on the starboard side.<sup>75</sup> In a letter to his brother, Myers recalled the "ticklish moment when we got under the fort and found we could not train our guns on it, as it was too high."<sup>76</sup> Fortunately for the vulnerable Americans, the clifftop citadel was long-abandoned.<sup>77</sup> As *Charleston* sailed past that fort, another loomed ahead.<sup>78</sup> Constructed in 1808, Fort Santa Cruz was, as described by *Charleston's* assistant surgeon, "a small, square, stone, box-like affair built on a low coral reef in about the center of the harbor."<sup>79</sup> *Charleston* dropped its speed to 4 knots in the twisting channel, a coral reef off the port side and high bluffs to starboard.<sup>80</sup> After signaling the transport ships to remain outside the harbor, Captain Glass had his forward 3-pound gun crews lob a dozen shells toward the fort.<sup>81</sup> Following a 10-minute wait with no reply, *Charleston* dropped its port anchor.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>60</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 19 June 1898.

<sup>61</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 19 June 1898.

<sup>62</sup> Letter from Father William D. McKinnon, June 26, 1898, in *Monitor* (San Francisco), 20 August 1898, 405.

<sup>63</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>64</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>65</sup> Douglas White, "Capture of Guam and Hoisting of Stars and Stripes in the Ladrões," *Examiner* (San Francisco), 3 August 1898, 1.

<sup>66</sup> White, "Capture of Guam and Hoisting of Stars and Stripes in the Ladrões," 1.

<sup>67</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 45; and Capt A. Farenholt (MC), USN, "Incidents on the Voyage of U.S.S. 'Charleston' to Manila in 1898," U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 50, no. 255 (May 1924): 756.

<sup>68</sup> Farenholt, "Incidents," 756; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 49.

<sup>69</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 22 June 1898; Sheridan, "Target Practice," 1; Davis, *Our Conquests*, 87–88; and Oscar King Davis, "The Taking of Guam," *Harper's Weekly*, 20 August 1898, 830.

<sup>70</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 1; USS *Charleston* logbook, 20 June 1898; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 44–46.

<sup>71</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 47.

<sup>72</sup> White, "Capture of Guam and Hoisting of Stars and Stripes in the Ladrões," 1.

<sup>73</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>74</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 48–50.

<sup>75</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 50.

<sup>76</sup> 2dLt John T. Myers to Heyward Myers, 27 August 1898, 1, box 1, folder 2, John Twigg Myers Personal Papers (Coll/3016), Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

<sup>77</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 50–51.

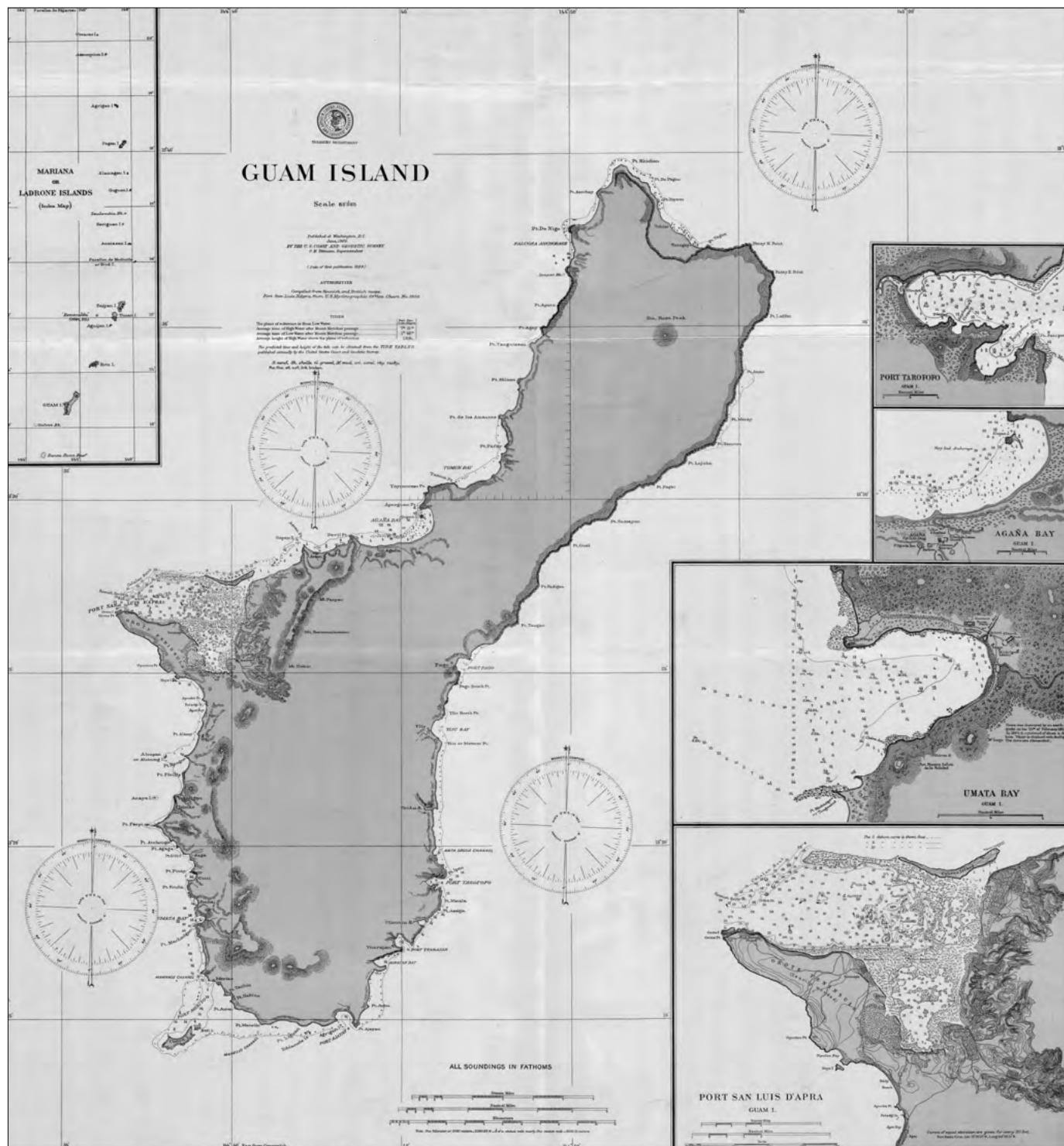
<sup>78</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>79</sup> Farenholt, "Incidents," 756; and Sol N. Sheridan, "Cruiser Charleston Fires Her Maiden Hostile Shells," *San Francisco Call*, 3 August 1898, 1.

<sup>80</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.

<sup>81</sup> Capt Henry Glass's Report to Secretary of the Navy, 24 June 1898, 1898 Appendix, hereafter Glass's Report, 152; USS *Charleston* logbook, 20 June 1898; and J. T. Myers, "Extract from Journal Kept on Board U.S.S. Charleston, 1898," *Guam Recorder* 9, no. 11 (February 1933): 187.

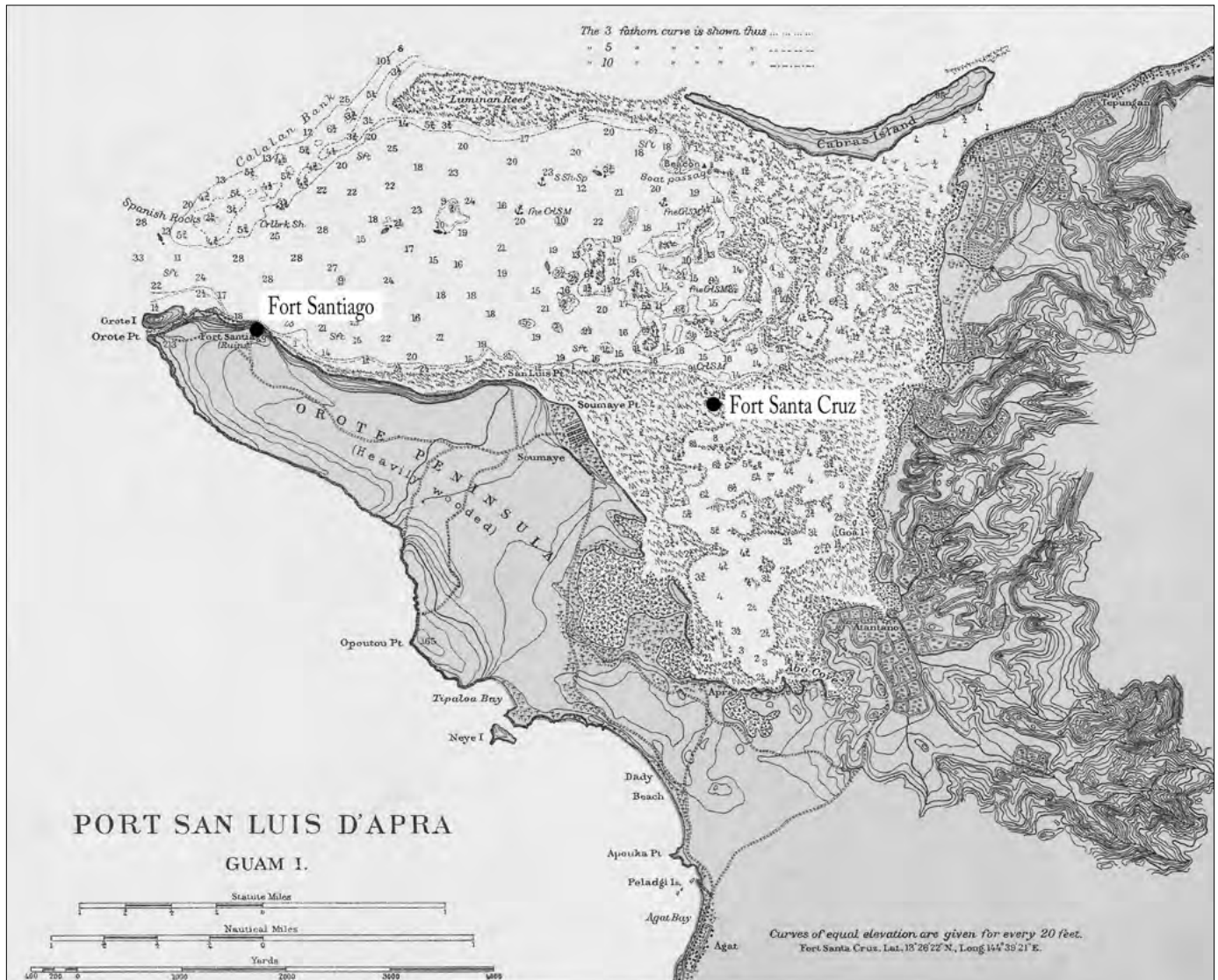
<sup>82</sup> Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2.



Map by U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division

A map of Guam from 1902. The 48-kilometer-long island has a total area of 550 square kilometers. USS *Charleston* arrived from the northwest before steaming down the island's west coast, first entering Agaña Bay and then Apra's harbor 10 kilometers to the south.





Map by U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Library of Congress Geography and Map Division

A map of Port San Luis d'Apra from 1902. The channel into Apra's harbor brought *Charleston* close to Fort Santiago, situated atop a cliff near Orote Peninsula's point. Fortunately for the Americans, the island's Spanish garrison had abandoned the fort. After sailing past Fort Santiago, *Charleston* faced Fort Santa Cruz, a low-lying structure built on a reef in the middle of the harbor.

A pair of boats soon rowed out to the cruiser, one flying a Spanish flag.<sup>83</sup> Two Spanish officers and an interpreter boarded the warship and were escorted to Captain Glass's cabin. History offers conflicting accounts of what occurred there. According to one

version, Lieutenant Francisco García Gutiérrez of the Spanish Navy apologized for failing to return *Charleston's* salute. He explained that the port had no guns but promised to return the salute as soon as possible. Captain Glass was puzzled for a moment before realizing his visitors mistook *Charleston's* shelling of Fort Santa Cruz for a salute to the Spanish flag. The United States had declared war against Spain almost two months earlier, and 50 days had passed since Commodore George Dewey's squadron sank the Spanish

<sup>83</sup> Sheridan, "Cruiser *Charleston*," 1; Jones, "How Guam Was Taken," 2; White, "Capture of Guam," 2; Davis, *Our Conquests*, 52–53; and Frank Portusach, "History of the Capture of Guam by the United States Man-of-War *Charleston* and Its Transport," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 43, no. 170 (April 1917): 707–18.



fleet in Manila Bay. Yet, the Spanish forces stationed at Guam had no idea their country was at war with the United States. Captain Glass informed his astounded guests that they were prisoners of war. He directed them to go ashore, proceed to the Mariana Islands' capital of Agaña (now Hagåtña), and summon the governor, Lieutenant Colonel Juan Marina Vega (more commonly known as Juan Marina), to the ship.<sup>84</sup>

Douglas White, a San Francisco *Examiner* correspondent embarked on board *Charleston*, disputed that the Spanish officers believed the shelling was a salute. Describing himself as an eyewitness to the events in Captain Glass's cabin, White insisted that when the two Spanish officers arrived on board *Charleston*, "there was absolutely no apology on account of their supposing that the shots which had been fired at Fort Santa Cruz were in the nature of a salute."<sup>85</sup> White explained that "the only mention of the word 'salute' came from Lieutenant-Commander Gutierrez, who said: 'Why, Captain, we are without defenses at this port, as all of our forts have been dismantled. If it were only that you were entitled to a salute from us, we could not have fired it except from Agaña, as we have not even a field-piece on this bay.'"<sup>86</sup> White concluded:

These Spaniards knew that the *Charleston* had "swatted" their ancient fort with solid shot, and they never for a moment considered these shots a salute. They never attempted to define it as such; and one or two of the chroniclers who have given out the salute theory as part of their versions of the capture of Guam were at least well enough informed to have made no such mistakes.<sup>87</sup>



Drawing by Pierre N. Boeringer,

as reproduced in Douglas White, *On to Manila* (1899)

Pierre N. Boeringer, an artist for the *San Francisco Call* who was on the transport *Australia* when *Charleston* shelled Fort Santa Cruz, drew this illustration of the incident.

Perhaps one of the journalists White had in mind was Sol Sheridan of the *San Francisco Call*. White noted that, like himself, Sheridan witnessed the day's events.<sup>88</sup> In a dispatch dated 22 June on board *Charleston* in San Luis d'Apra's harbor, Sheridan reported, "It was 10:30 when the Spanish officials came on board, ignorant of the fact that war was waging between Spain and the United States and profuse in their apologies that, their saluting battery being at Agana, they had been unable to return the *Charleston's* salute."<sup>89</sup>

Years later, Myers and another U.S. officer involved in the incident endorsed the account that the Spanish officers believed *Charleston's* barrage of Fort Santa Cruz was a salute.<sup>90</sup> Another witness who corroborated that interpretation was Frank Portusach, a naturalized American citizen then living in Guam.<sup>91</sup> Portusach recounted that when *Charleston* shelled Fort Santa Cruz, a Spanish officer on shore thought the ship was firing a salute, resulting in a message be-

<sup>84</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 53–55.

<sup>85</sup> Douglas White, "The Capture of the Island of Guam," *Overland Monthly* 35, no. 207 (March 1900): 229.

<sup>86</sup> White's account, as well as some others, referred to Lt García as LtCdr Gutierrez. White, "The Capture of the Island of Guam," 229.

<sup>87</sup> White, "The Capture of the Island of Guam," 229–30.

<sup>88</sup> White, "The Capture of the Island of Guam," 230.

<sup>89</sup> Sheridan, "Cruiser *Charleston*," 1.

<sup>90</sup> "Marine General Recalls Capture of Guam in Musical Comedy Style," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 10 June 1931, 3; and "Behind the Scenes at the Nation's Capital," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 February 1931, 8.

<sup>91</sup> Portusach, "History of the Capture of Guam," 708; and Naturalization of Francisco P. Portusach, 12 October 1888, no. 18–369, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County Archives, Chicago, IL.

ing dispatched to Agaña to send artillery to return the salute.<sup>92</sup>

An account by Lieutenant García definitively resolves the historical dispute. In this instance, the more colorful account is correct. Four months after the events, Lieutenant García wrote to a Spanish official that on 20 June, a squadron of four large American ships arrived at the San Luis d'Apra port's entrance.<sup>93</sup> One of the ships, a cruiser, entered the harbor flying a "beautiful Spanish flag" from its stern as it fired its guns.<sup>94</sup> Lieutenant García explained to his Spanish superiors that the "great distance from which the ship was firing, which did not allow the shots to be heard, and the fact that the Spanish flag was hoisted, led the officer who has the honor of subscribing to be certain that the foreign ship was saluting the Spanish flag."<sup>95</sup> When recounting the meeting in Captain Glass's cabin, Lieutenant García noted that he expressed his "surprise at the firing, which from the shore appeared to be entirely a salute to the flag."<sup>96</sup> Glass replied that "the firing had been intended to find out whether or not the squadron would be harassed."<sup>97</sup> White was mistaken when he declared that the Spanish officers "never for a moment considered these shots a salute." His haughty rebuke of "one or two" well-informed journalists for publishing accounts of the Spaniards' mistaken interpretation of the shelling of Fort Santa Cruz did his colleagues an injustice.

At 1700 on the day of *Charleston's* arrival at Guam, Captain Pedro Duarte—a Spanish Army officer who served as Governor Marina's secretary—ac-

companied by the governor's interpreter arrived on board the warship.<sup>98</sup> They delivered a communiqué from Marina stating that Spanish law prohibited him from boarding a foreign vessel but offering to host Captain Glass ashore. The missive concluded with a promise: "I guarantee your safe return to your ship."<sup>99</sup> Both amused and chagrined by the response, Glass directed the Spaniards to tell Governor Marina that he would dispatch an officer with a message for the governor early the next morning.<sup>100</sup>

That evening, Captain Glass met with General Anderson aboard the troop transport *Australia*. Fearing that Governor Marina's invitation to meet ashore might be part of some ruse de guerre, they agreed that the American landing party would be augmented by *Charleston's* Marine guard, 2 companies of the 2d Oregon Volunteer Infantry Regiment, and 10 of the Marines aboard *City of Pekin*.<sup>101</sup> As another security measure, a boarding party from *Charleston* inspected the Japanese merchant vessel, which turned out to be harmless.<sup>102</sup> With *Charleston's* officers and crew no doubt remembering *Maine's* explosion in Havana's harbor, the ship's guard was doubled that night as its searchlights skimmed across the water.<sup>103</sup>

The officer Captain Glass sent to meet with Governor Marina the next morning was Lieutenant William Braunersreuther, *Charleston's* navigator and anchorman of the Naval Academy's class of 1876.<sup>104</sup> Early on 21 June—accompanied by Ensign Waldo Evans, five sailors, and two newspaper correspondents—Braunersreuther set off for shore.<sup>105</sup> The group climbed

<sup>92</sup> Portusach, "History of the Capture of Guam," 708.

<sup>93</sup> Teniente de Navío D. Francisco García Gutiérrez to Leopoldo Boada, de la Comandancia General del Apostadero y Escuadra de Filipinas, 24 October 1898, rin Referente a la evacuación de las Islas Marianas, 1 December 1898, España, Ministerio de Defensa, Archivo Histórico de la Armada Juan Sebastián de Elcano 525, Ms. 1532/0014 (Legajo 1532, 57–62), trans. by Beatriz Muñoz Santero, hereafter García's Report. In a letter dated 24 October 1898, Lt García sent a description of the U.S. operations in Guam to Spain's general command of the Philippine Station and Squadron. A communiqué from Leopoldo Boada of the general staff to the Minister of the Navy dated 1 December 1898 included a transcription of García's 24 October 1898 report. Boada's letter, with a stamp showing it was received by the Ministry of the Navy on 21 January 1900, is located at the Archivo del Museo Naval de Madrid.

<sup>94</sup> García's Report, 58.

<sup>95</sup> García's Report, 58.

<sup>96</sup> García's Report, 59.

<sup>97</sup> García's Report, 59.

<sup>98</sup> Sheridan, "Cruiser Charleston," 1.

<sup>99</sup> Juan Marina Vega to Henry Glass, 20 June 1898, Addendum A to Glass's Report, 154.

<sup>100</sup> Glass's Report, 152; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 57.

<sup>101</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 2; Lt W. Braunersreuther to Capt Henry Glass, 21 June 1898, hereafter Braunersreuther's Report, Addendum E to Glass's Report, 154; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 57.

<sup>102</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 20 June 1898; and White, *On to Manila*, 12.

<sup>103</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 2; and White, *On to Manila*, 12.

<sup>104</sup> *Annual Register of the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., Twenty-Seventh Academic Year, 1876–77* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1876), 12–13.

<sup>105</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 2. Evans, who would rise to the grade of Navy captain and serve as the naval governor of the U.S. Virgin Islands and American Samoa, was a Naval Academy classmate of Myers's before Myers was set back to the class of 1892. "Naval Cadets Graduate," *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), 6 June 1891, 15; and "Captain Evans, 66, Navy Officer, Dead," *New York Times*, 16 April 1936, 25.

on board one of *Charleston's* whaleboats, which the cruiser's steam launch towed toward land.<sup>106</sup> Governor Marina's interpreter, who had boarded *Charleston* earlier that morning to deliver a message, served as their pilot. Armed with a holstered pistol, Braunersreuther sternly warned him, "We are prepared for anything that may happen, and at the least sign of treachery you die first."<sup>107</sup> Once the water became too shallow for the steam launch to proceed, the whaleboat was detached and rowed the rest of the way, a white flag fluttering from its bow.<sup>108</sup>

When Braunersreuther and his party reached shore, the landing force that Glass and Anderson had planned the previous evening was still assembling. Lieutenant Myers commanded the Joint force of Marines and soldiers.<sup>109</sup> A stiff wind was blowing, making the water choppy. It was 0900 by the time Lieutenant Myers and *Charleston's* Marine guard reached *Australia* to rendezvous with two 85-man companies from the 2d Oregon Volunteer Infantry Regiment.<sup>110</sup> A journalist embedded on board *Australia* described the Marines as "a fine-looking lot of men, well set up and soldierly in appearance."<sup>111</sup> They were armed with M1895 Lee Navy straight-pull rifles.<sup>112</sup> Soon after *Charleston's* Marines reached *Australia*, the Joint force's final contingent—10 Marines from *City of Peking*—arrived.<sup>113</sup> Because of developments on shore, however, Myers's landing force never landed.

When Braunersreuther reached shore at Piti—a port on the north side of Apra's harbor—Governor Marina, Lieutenant García, and two other Spanish



Photo by Douglas White, *Overland Monthly* 35, no. 207 (March 1900): 230  
Lt William Braunersreuther, USS *Charleston's* navigator, demanded and received Governor Juan Marina Vega's surrender and then, supported by *Charleston's* Marine guard, oversaw the disarming of Guam's Spanish garrison.

officers were awaiting him.<sup>114</sup> After a formal introduction, Braunersreuther handed the governor an envelope containing a demand from Captain Glass for "the immediate surrender of the defenses of the island of Guam, with arms of all kinds, all officials and persons in the military service of Spain now in this island."<sup>115</sup> Braunersreuther noted that the time was 1015 and, as he later summarized the dialogue, "called attention to the fact that but one half hour would be given for a reply." He also "casually informed the governor that he had better take into consideration the fact that we had in the harbor three transports loaded with troops and one war vessel of a very formidable nature."<sup>116</sup> Even while Myers's Joint landing force re-

<sup>106</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 59.

<sup>107</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 2.

<sup>108</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 59.

<sup>109</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 57; and 1st Lt and Adj Henry P. McCain, 14th Infantry, to Commanding Officer, 2d Oregon Infantry, 20 June 1898, in 1898 Appendix, 156.

<sup>110</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 57.

<sup>111</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 57–58.

<sup>112</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 58; and "Of the 198 Cal. 6m/m Rifles (30) Are for Marine Guard," "Armament," in USS *Charleston* logbook.

<sup>113</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 59.

<sup>114</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 62–63; and García's Report, 60. The two additional officers accompanying Governor Marina were his secretary, Capt Pedro Duarte of the Spanish Army, and the port's health officer, Dr. José Romero, surgeon, Spanish Army. Davis, "The Taking of Guam," 830; and Prisoners and Property Captured at San Luis d'Apra, Guam, 21 June 1898, Addendum F to Glass's Report, 157.

<sup>115</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155; and Capt Henry Glass to Governor Juan Marina Vega, 20 June 1898, Addendum B to Glass's Report, 154.

<sup>116</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155.

mained offshore, it had a psychological impact. Lieutenant García's report stated that within five minutes of the beach, the Americans had positioned "two squadrons with 18 large gunboats, each of them carrying 40 to 50 landing troops."<sup>117</sup> Although that assessment almost doubled the size of Myers's Joint force while greatly underestimating how long it would have taken it to reach shore, Lieutenant García's report suggests that the landing party constituted an effective show of force.

After receiving Lieutenant Braunersreuther's instructions, the Spanish governor and his retinue withdrew to a nearby building. Twenty-five minutes later, a steam launch chugged toward shore, towing six boats filled with half of Myers's Joint landing force.<sup>118</sup> At 1044, with only a minute to spare before the deadline, Governor Marina emerged from the building where he and his aides had been sequestered.<sup>119</sup> He handed Braunersreuther a sealed envelope addressed to Captain Glass.<sup>120</sup> When the American officer proceeded to break the seal, Marina exclaimed, "Ah! but it is for the commandante." Braunersreuther curtly replied, "I represent him here."<sup>121</sup> Even though an interpreter was present, Braunersreuther later recounted, "I forgot all about using him." Instead, the "whole affair was transacted in Spanish." Braunersreuther explained, "I did not want them to get a chance to think even before it was too late."<sup>122</sup>

Handwritten in Spanish, Governor Marina's letter stated:

Being without defenses of any kind and without means for meeting the present situation, I am under the sad necessity of being unable to resist such superior forces and regretfully to accede to your demands, at the same time protesting against this act of vio-

lence, when I have received no information from my Government to the effect that Spain is in war with your nation.

God be with you!<sup>123</sup>

After reading the letter, Braunersreuther informed Governor Marina and the other Spanish officers, "Gentlemen, you are now my prisoners; you will have to repair on board the *Charleston* with me."<sup>124</sup> Alarmed by that announcement, the Spaniards objected that they lacked necessities, such as a change of clothes.<sup>125</sup> Braunersreuther's official report summarized his reply:

I assured them that they could send messages to their families to send clothes and anything else they might desire, and that I would have a boat ashore at 4 p.m. ready to take off for them anything sent down. I would even secure passage for each of their families as they might desire and give them a safe return to Petey.<sup>126</sup>

Governor Marina was not appeased. He complained, "You came on shore to talk over matters, and you make us prisoners instead."<sup>127</sup> Parrying the implicit attack on his honor, Braunersreuther responded, "I came on shore to hand you a letter and to get your reply. In this reply, now in my hands, you agree to surrender all under your jurisdiction. If this means anything at all it means that you will accede to any demand I may deem proper to make."<sup>128</sup> After delivering that rebuke, Braunersreuther directed the Spanish governor to write an order summoning two companies of soldiers stationed at Agaña, instructing their commanding officer to arrive at the Piti landing

<sup>117</sup> García's Report, 60.

<sup>118</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 63.

<sup>119</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155.

<sup>120</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155; and Lt William Braunersreuther to Augustus Pollack, 24 June 1898, in "How Spain Lost Guam," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 8 August 1898, 3.

<sup>121</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155.

<sup>122</sup> Braunersreuther to Pollack, 3.

<sup>123</sup> Governor Juan Marina Vega to Capt of the North American Cruiser *Charleston*, 21 June 1898, Addendum D to Glass's Report, 155; and "VI 1898 GUAM—AFFAIRS WITH" folder, box 665, RG 45, NARA I (original).

<sup>124</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155.

<sup>125</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155; and Sheridan, "Capture of Guam," 2.

<sup>126</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 155.

<sup>127</sup> Braunersreuther to Pollack, 3.

<sup>128</sup> Braunersreuther to Pollack, 3.



by 1600 with all arms, ammunition, and Spanish flags on the island.<sup>129</sup> As Braunersreuther later recounted, when the Spanish officers “protested and demurred,” he replied, “Senors, it must be done.”<sup>130</sup> After Governor Marina complied and a messenger was dispatched to deliver the order to Agaña, Braunersreuther told the dejected Spaniards that they could write to their families. Half an hour later, Governor Marina handed three sheets of paper to Braunersreuther. The American officer declined to take them, explaining that it was a private letter that the governor was free to have delivered without review.<sup>131</sup> At that, the overwhelmed Spanish governor crossed his arms on his desk, lowered his head, and sobbed.<sup>132</sup>

Governor Marina and his three staff officers were loaded into the waiting whaleboat.<sup>133</sup> Just as they set off, a tropical deluge drenched both captives and captors.<sup>134</sup> The brooding Spanish officers managed to smoke cigarettes amid the downpour.<sup>135</sup> As the rain slackened, Braunersreuther signaled to Lieutenant Myers and his Joint landing force—also drenched—to return to their ships.<sup>136</sup> Braunersreuther then delivered his four prisoners to *Charleston*.<sup>137</sup>

At 1445 that afternoon, *Charleston*’s guns once again boomed.<sup>138</sup> This time, they were firing a salute—to the American flag as it was raised above the dilapidated Fort Santa Cruz in Apra’s harbor.<sup>139</sup> Captain Glass intended the ceremony as an assertion of U.S. control of the island. His official report on his operations at Guam, dated 24 June 1898, stated, “Having received the surrender of the Island of Guam, I took formal possession at 2.45 p.m., hoisting the American flag on Fort Santa Cruz and saluting it with 21 guns

from the *Charleston*.”<sup>140</sup> Rear Admiral Dewey expanded Glass’s claim. In his 19 September 1898 report on U.S. naval operations in Asia, Dewey referred to *Charleston* having “taken possession, in the name of the United States, of Guam and the Ladrone Islands.”<sup>141</sup>

Glass’s visit to Fort Santa Cruz for the flag-raising ceremony convinced him that, despite his orders to “destroy any fortifications” on Guam, it was unnecessary to do so. The dilapidated fort was already “in a partly ruinous condition,” rendering it unnecessary “to expend any mines in blowing it up.” The other forts on the island, he continued, “are of no value.”<sup>142</sup>

An hour after the flag-raising ceremony, Lieutenant Braunersreuther returned ashore. Ensign Evans once again accompanied him, along with 16 sailors and *Charleston*’s Marine guard.<sup>143</sup> The water near shore was shallow, compelling the Americans to climb out of their boats and haul them over a reef.<sup>144</sup> Arriving a bit after the appointed hour of 1600, they found two Spanish naval infantry lieutenants with two companies of soldiers—one Spanish, the other Guamanian—standing in formation.<sup>145</sup> Offshore, *Charleston*’s guns were shotted, ready to fire on Braunersreuther’s signal if the enemy troops offered resistance.<sup>146</sup> The senior Spanish officer saluted Braunersreuther, who informed the assembly he was there to accept their surrender, as ordered by Governor Marina.<sup>147</sup> While Braunersreuther spoke, *Charleston*’s Marine guard, augmented by eight sailors, fanned out in front of the two enemy companies.<sup>148</sup> With this show of force in place, Braunersreuther ordered the senior Spanish officer to command his men to surrender their weapons.<sup>149</sup> Each Spanish soldier then approached Ensign Evans, saluted, opened the breech block of his Mauser rifle to show that the weapon was unloaded, and

<sup>129</sup> Braunersreuther to Pollack, 3.

<sup>130</sup> Braunersreuther to Pollack, 3.

<sup>131</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 67; and Braunersreuther’s Report, 155.

<sup>132</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 67.

<sup>133</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 68.

<sup>134</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 68; and White, “Capture of Guam,” 2.

<sup>135</sup> White, “Capture of Guam,” 2.

<sup>136</sup> Braunersreuther’s Report, 155; Davis, *Our Conquests*, 61, 68; and White, “Capture of Guam,” 2.

<sup>137</sup> Braunersreuther’s Report, 156; and USS *Charleston* logbook, 21 June 1898.

<sup>138</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 21 June 1898; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 71.

<sup>139</sup> USS *Charleston* logbook, 21 June 1898; and Davis, *Our Conquests*, 44, 71.

<sup>140</sup> Glass’s Report, 153.

<sup>141</sup> RAdm George Dewey to Secretary of the Navy, 19 September 1898, in 1898 Appendix, 128.

<sup>142</sup> Glass’s Report, 153.

<sup>143</sup> Braunersreuther’s Report, 156.

<sup>144</sup> Myers, “Extract from Journal,” 187; and White, “Capture of Guam,” 2.

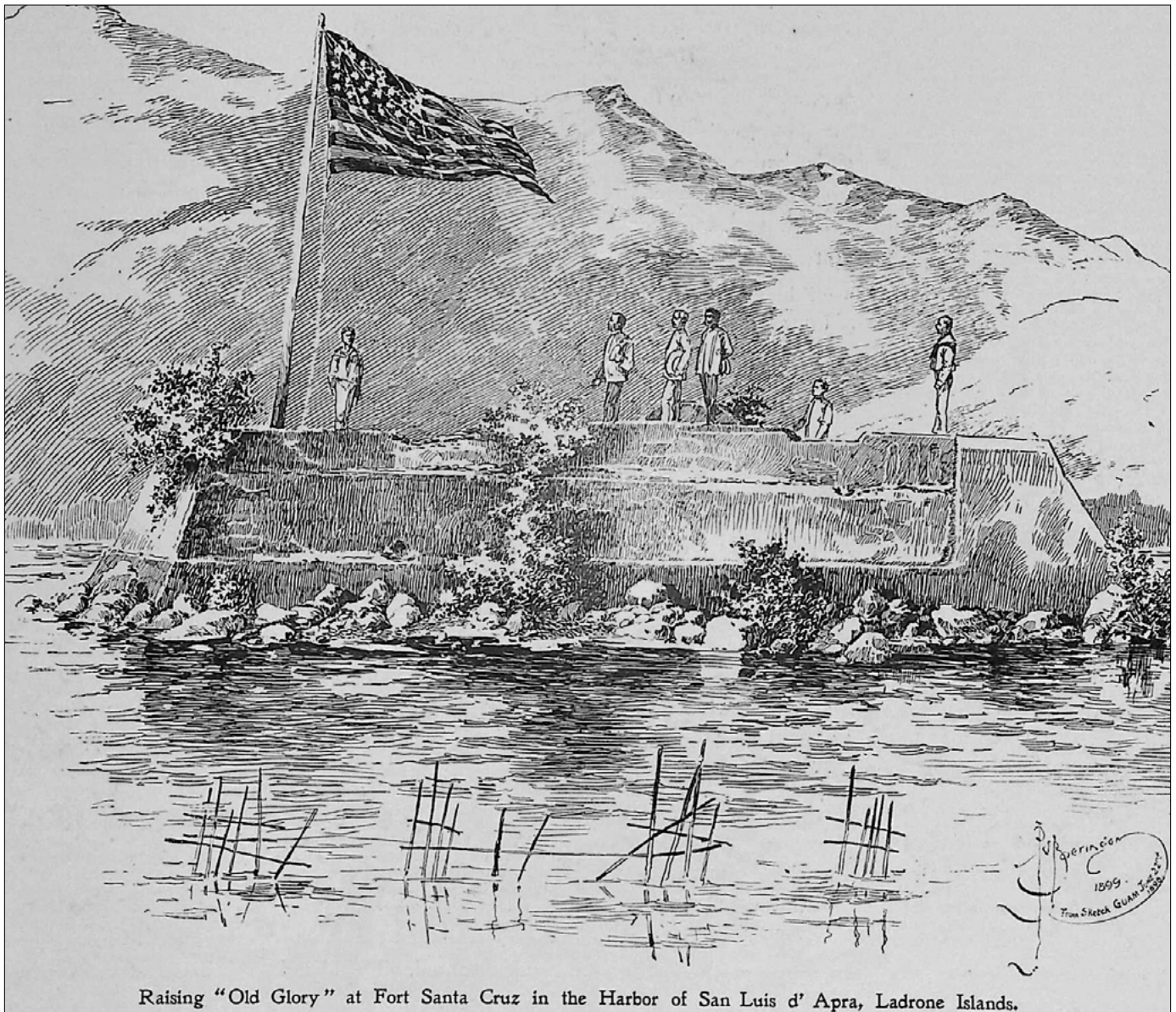
<sup>145</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 72–75.

<sup>146</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 72.

<sup>147</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 72–73.

<sup>148</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 73.

<sup>149</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 73.



Raising "Old Glory" at Fort Santa Cruz in the Harbor of San Luis d' Apra, Ladrone Islands.

*Drawing by Pierre N. Boeringer, as reproduced in Douglas White, On to Manila (1899)*

After Governor Juan Marina Vega surrendered Guam, Capt Henry Glass led a small party to Fort Santa Cruz, where they raised an American flag as *Charleston* rendered a 21-gun salute.

handed the rifle to the American officer. Ensign Evans then closed the block and handed the rifle to an American sailor, who passed it along a line of his shipmates to one of the waiting boats. Each Spanish soldier also removed his belt, which held a cartridge box and bayonet, as well as his haversack and handed them to Ensign Evans, who gave the equipment to a sailor to pass along for stowage. The soldier then saluted Evans again and returned to formation. That process was

repeated for each of the 54 Spanish enlisted men.<sup>150</sup> A reporter described the Spanish soldiers as "little more than boys."<sup>151</sup> The company of Guamanian soldiers then underwent the same process, though they were

<sup>150</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 73–74.

<sup>151</sup> Sheridan, "Cruiser *Charleston*," 1.

armed with Remington rifles rather than Mausers.<sup>152</sup> After the last of the enlisted troops relinquished their rifles and gear, Braunersreuther drew the two Spanish officers aside and told them, "Gentlemen, it is my unpleasant duty to be obliged to disarm you also. I am compelled to ask for your swords and revolvers."<sup>153</sup> As the Spanish officers handed over their weapons, the U.S. Marines saluted them by presenting arms.<sup>154</sup> Braunersreuther directed the Spanish lieutenants to tell their men they may say goodbye to their Guamanian comrades.<sup>155</sup> Realizing the Americans were about to take them away as prisoners of war, the Spanish soldiers erupted in lamentations.<sup>156</sup> The Guamanians, on the other hand, greeted the news with quiet satisfaction.<sup>157</sup> When Braunersreuther formally released them, the Guamanians soldiers ripped the brass buttons and collar insignias from their uniforms, handing some to the American Marines and sailors as souvenirs.<sup>158</sup>

The Americans commandeered a sampan anchored nearby and the Marines, with fixed bayonets, loaded the 54 Spanish enlisted men onto it.<sup>159</sup> The two Spanish officers boarded another boat with Braunersreuther, along with four surrendered Spanish flags.

<sup>152</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 74. No source has been located specifying the models of the Mauser and Remington rifles seized from the Spanish garrison on Guam. By the time of the Spanish-American War, most Spanish forces were armed with 7mm M1893 Mausers, which held five rounds of smokeless ammunition in a magazine and could be reloaded with stripper clips. The Guamanian soldiers' rifles were likely the single-shot Remington "rolling-block" model, which fired black powder cartridges. Alejandro de Quesada, *The Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection, 1898–1902* (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2007), 36–37.

<sup>153</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 74.

<sup>154</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 74.

<sup>155</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 74.

<sup>156</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 75.

<sup>157</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 75.

<sup>158</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 156; Davis, "The Taking of Guam," 830; and Walker, "Guam's Seizure by the United States in 1898," 11. The portion of Walker's article discussing the disarming of the Spanish garrison was based on John T. Myers's journal entries, which Myers made available to Walker. Walker, "Guam's Seizure by the United States in 1898," 1123. Oscar King Davis's accounts of the sailors in the landing party receiving the Guamanian soldiers' buttons and insignia while the Marines remained in formation is inconsistent with other accounts, including his own article in *Harper's Weekly*. Compare Davis, "The Taking of Guam," 830, with Davis, *Our Conquests*, 75; O. K. D., "Our Flag at Guam," *Sun* (New York), 8 August 1898, 1, 3. His *Harper's Weekly* account, which is consistent with Walker's account based on Myers's journal, is more credible.

<sup>159</sup> Myers, "Extract from Journal Kept on Board U.S.S. *Charleston*, 1898," 187; and Sheridan, "Cruiser *Charleston*," 1.

As the flotilla set off, the Guamanian soldiers cheered from the landing.<sup>160</sup>

The Spanish prisoners reached *Charleston* just as the sun was setting.<sup>161</sup> After being marched up the cruiser's gangway, they—along with the prisoners seized earlier that day—were transferred to the more spacious *City of Sydney*.<sup>162</sup>

In a report to Captain Glass detailing the execution of his mission ashore, Braunersreuther noted the operation's danger while praising the officers, Marines, and sailors who conducted it:

In closing my report I desire to call attention to the absolute obedience and splendid discipline of all the force (30 marines and 16 sailors) I had with me, particularly to the efficient aid received from Lieut. J. T. Myers, U. S. M. C., and Ensign Waldo Evans, U. S. N.

Both of these gentlemen were fully alive to the dangers and necessities of the occasion and rendered most valuable assistance.

A casual glance at the class and number of the rifles captured, together with the quantity of the ammunition, will demonstrate the care that had to be exercised in disarming and making prisoners of a force of men more than double the number I had with me, and will also call attention to the fact that the entire undertaking was neither devoid of danger nor risk.<sup>163</sup>

The next day, *Charleston* received 125 tons of coal from *City of Peking* and the four American ships steamed off to the Philippines.<sup>164</sup> The process of asserting U.S. sovereignty over Guam lurched forward. During the coaling operation, according to a contemporaneous newspaper account, "Captain Glass sent

<sup>160</sup> Davis, *Our Conquests*, 75–76.

<sup>161</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 2.

<sup>162</sup> White, "Capture of Guam," 2; and Glass's Report, 153.

<sup>163</sup> Braunersreuther's Report, 156.

<sup>164</sup> *Charleston* Logbook, 22 June 1898; Davis, *Our Conquests*, 87–88; and Davis, "The Taking of Guam," 830.



for Francis Portusach, who is the single American citizen residing on the Ladrões, and into his hands placed the duty of keeping a lookout over affairs there until he can be relieved by either a civil or military Governor.”<sup>165</sup> Glass departed without leaving any naval or Army personnel on Guam.

Once the American vessels left, the senior Spanish official who remained on the island reasserted Spanish sovereignty over Guam. On 30 June 1898, Treasury Administrator José Sixto wrote a letter to Spain’s minister of overseas territories recounting the American operation while disclaiming continued U.S. legal possession of Guam:

In view of the fact that the North American squadron limited themselves to hoisting a flag and taking the garrison on the island as prisoners, in view of the fact that they did not leave a single garrison soldier, representative, authority or flag on the island to prove that they had taken possession of the territory, I considered the act of sovereignty that had been carried out to be perfectly null and void.<sup>166</sup>

Sixto disparaged “the enemy squadron[s]” assertion of sovereignty “as nothing more than a moral act.” He, therefore, felt obliged, “as a Spaniard and as a public official on the island, to continue to consider the island Spanish, which in fact I carried out from the very moment the enemy left, restoring and taking charge of the government of the Mariana islands in the name of Spain.” Sixto also assured the minister of

overseas territories that “the natives have continued to pay their contributions and tributes and to show their affection and attachment to the fatherland.”<sup>167</sup>

Control over Guam proceeded on two tracks. Spanish officials and prelates exercised de facto control over the populace while the United States asserted de jure possession of the island and used San Luis d’Apra’s port to facilitate its naval operations in Asia. Amid that dissonance, Spanish and U.S. negotiators signed the Treaty of Paris on 10 December 1898. Among that treaty’s provisions was Spain’s agreement to cede Guam to the United States.<sup>168</sup> The United States did not receive possession of any other island in the Mariana chain. Spain sold the rest of the archipelago—along with the Caroline Islands, the Marshall Islands, and the Palau Islands—to Germany.<sup>169</sup>

Before either party ratified the Treaty of Paris, President William McKinley issued an executive order on 23 December 1898 providing that the “Island of Guam in the Ladrões is hereby placed under the control of the Department of the Navy. The Secretary of the Navy will take such steps as may be necessary to establish the authority of the United States and give it necessary protection and government.”<sup>170</sup> The following month, the U.S. Navy took steps to carry out that presidential mandate.

USS *Bennington* (PG 4), captained by Commander Edward D. Taussig, arrived at San Luis d’Apra’s harbor on 23 January 1899.<sup>171</sup> A week later, Commander Taussig announced that “the United States Department of the Navy” was seizing all public lands bordering the port that had previously been owned by Spain.<sup>172</sup> *Bennington*’s logbook entry for the 0400 to 0800 watch on 1 February includes the notation: “7.00 landed the battalion to take possession of the Island

<sup>165</sup> Douglas White, “Capture of Guam,” 2. Portusach later wrote that Capt Glass “asked me if I could take care of the island until some other officers or man-of-war might reach Guam, I being the only United States citizen at that time; I promised Captain Glass that I would do my best; he asked me if I was in need of aid, meaning soldiers for the island. I answered, ‘No,’ as the people are very good here.” Portusach, “History of the Capture of Guam,” 710–11. Robert F. Rogers seemed skeptical of Portusach’s claim. He observed that Capt Glass’s “casual request was not put in writing, if it was actually made; the U.S. Navy never confirmed it.” Robert F. Rogers, *Destiny’s Landfall: A History of Guam*, rev. ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2011), 106. Portusach’s account is corroborated by White’s 1898 article.

<sup>166</sup> José Sixto to Minister of Overseas Territories, 30 June 1898, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Spain (Filipinas Legajo 5359, no. 28), trans. by Beatriz Muñoz Santero.

<sup>167</sup> José Sixto to Minister of Overseas Territories, 30 June 1898.

<sup>168</sup> Treaty of Peace between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Spain, art. II, 30 Stat. 1754, 1755 (1899).

<sup>169</sup> Nelson, “Why Guam Alone Is American,” 1133.

<sup>170</sup> William McKinley, Executive Order, 23 December 1898, in Senate Document No. 111, 57th Cong., 2d Sess. (1903), 2.

<sup>171</sup> *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1959), 117–18; and USS *Bennington* logbook, 23 January 1899, entry 118, RG 14, NARA I.

<sup>172</sup> Order No. 2, E. D. Taussig, Commander U.S.N., Commanding U.S.S. *Bennington* and Senior Officer Present, 30 January 1899, entry 19, RG80, no. 9351, NARA I.



of Guam.”<sup>173</sup> At 1030 that same morning, Commander Taussig directed the simultaneous hoisting of American flags over Fort Santa Cruz and on a flag staff facing the governor’s palace in Agaña.<sup>174</sup> *Bennington*’s 16-member Marine guard probably participated in at least one of those flag raisings.<sup>175</sup> When Commander Taussig took those actions, the Treaty of Paris still had not been ratified by either party, suggesting that the United States relied on *Charleston*’s operation in June 1898 to establish its acquisition of Guam from Spain. When *Bennington* weighed anchor to depart for Manila on 15 February 1899, like Captain Glass before him, Commander Taussig left no U.S. naval or Army personnel on the island.<sup>176</sup>

Yet another assertion of U.S. sovereignty over Guam occurred on 10 August 1899, three days after USS *Yosemite* (1892) arrived at San Luis d’Apra’s harbor.<sup>177</sup> By then, both parties had ratified the Treaty of Paris, which entered into force on 11 April 1899.<sup>178</sup> On board *Yosemite* were Navy captain Richard P. Leary, the newly assigned governor of Guam, and two companies of Marines under the command of Major Allen C. Kelton who would establish the island’s Marine barracks.<sup>179</sup> Captain Leary issued a “Proclamation to the Inhabitants of Guam.” After referring to the Treaty of Paris’s ceding of Guam to the United States,

Leary announced his “actual occupation and administration of this Island, in the fulfillment of the Rights of Sovereignty thus acquired.”<sup>180</sup> The United States had finally established effective control over Guam, which would continue until a Japanese invasion force seized the island on 10 December 1941.<sup>181</sup>

One of Captain Leary’s first official acts as Guam’s governor was to request more Marines. Near the end of his first month, he reported to the secretary of the Navy that “too much cannot be said in praise of the Officers and men of the Guam Battalion of Marines during the passage and since their arrival here, as their conduct has been excellent and on all occasions they have evinced an enthusiastic willingness and untiring energy in all work and duties that have been assigned to them.”<sup>182</sup> Leary requested “that another Battalion of Marines and Officers be sent here at the earliest convenience, especially additional Officers, as there is much necessary work in the island that will keep them all continuously employed.”<sup>183</sup> One and a quarter centuries after Captain Leary made that request, Guam will once again experience an influx of Marines. As Theodor Reik wrote, “It has been said that history repeats itself. This is perhaps not quite correct; it merely rhymes.”<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> USS *Bennington* logbook, 1 February 1899. That logbook entry was made by Lt Charles Brainard Taylor Moore, who went on to become governor of American Samoa and, later, a rear admiral. “Admiral Moore Dead,” *New York Times*, 5 April 1923, 19.

<sup>174</sup> Cdr Taussig Report to Secretary of the Navy, 1 February 1899, para. 1, entry 19, RG 80, no. 9351, NARA I.

<sup>175</sup> USS *Bennington* logbook, “Complement of Petty Officers, Seamen, Ordinary Seamen, Landsmen, Boys, and Marines on board of the U. S. S. *Bennington*, January 31st 1899.”

<sup>176</sup> USS *Bennington* logbook, 15 February 1899; and Rogers, *Destiny’s Landfall*, 109–10.

<sup>177</sup> Capt Leary Report to Secretary of the Navy, 28 August 1899, para. 1, entry 19, RG 80, no. 9351, NARA I, hereafter Leary’s Report.

<sup>178</sup> *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America 1776–1949*, vol. 11 (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1974), 614.

<sup>179</sup> William Edwin Safford, *A Year on the Island of Guam* (Washington, DC: H. L. McQueen, [1910?]), 1, 17, 38, 48; and U.S. Marine Corps muster roll, U.S.S. *Yosemite* at Guam, L.I., 1–31 August 1899, T977, roll 17, NARA I.

<sup>180</sup> Leary’s Report, para. 3; and Proclamation to the Inhabitants of Guam and to Whom It May Concern, 10 August 1899, entry 19, RG 80, no. 9351, NARA I.

<sup>181</sup> Thomas Wilds, “The Japanese Seizure of Guam,” *Marine Corps Gazette* 39, no. 7 (July 1955): 20–23.

<sup>182</sup> Leary’s Report, para. 17.

<sup>183</sup> Leary’s Report, para. 19.

<sup>184</sup> Theodor Reik, *Curiosities of the Self* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), 133.

# Finding the Gaps

## LITTORAL OBSTACLES DURING OPERATION GALVANIC

*By Major Matthew Scott, Australian Army*

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**Abstract:** The scale of U.S. casualties during Operation Galvanic has made the operation controversial, yet losses would likely have been far worse if not for the U.S. Fifth Amphibious Force's successful efforts to mitigate littoral obstacles. The seizure of the Gilbert Islands demonstrated that by exploiting effective intelligence to take calculated risks, even the most complex and well-developed littoral defenses could be defeated. Unable to select a different objective or to secure additional forces, Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner instead exploited Joint force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) to find the weakest parts of the Japanese defenses.

**Keywords:** Operation Galvanic, Gilbert Islands, World War II, V Amphibious Corps, Fifth Amphibious Force, Tarawa Atoll, Betio Island

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### Introduction

In the aftermath of the battle for Tarawa, the commander of the V Amphibious Corps remarked that "it looks beyond the realm of a human being that this place could have been taken. These Japanese were masters of defensive construction."<sup>1</sup> The Japanese defenses on Betio, Tarawa's largest island, have been described as "a more sophisticated series of defensive positions [than] on any subsequent island until [U.S. forces] reached Iwo Jima in 1945" and as "yard for yard . . . the toughest fortified position the Marines would ever face."<sup>2</sup> Despite the scale of the Japanese defensive preparations, in 1943 U.S. forces not only selected Be-

tio as an objective but succeeded in seizing it alongside other objectives in the Gilbert Islands chain. Eighty years later, seizing a defended beach protected by obstacles offshore, at the waterline, and inland appears so difficult that commanders would be unlikely to select such objectives. Modern commanders and planners, just like those in 1943, may have no other choice. The Gilbert Islands were not the preferred objective in 1943; however, strategic aims and competing operational needs made their capture a requirement.<sup>3</sup>

The scale of U.S. casualties during Operation Galvanic has made the operation controversial, yet losses would likely have been far worse if not for the U.S. Navy's Fifth Amphibious Force's successful efforts to mitigate littoral obstacles. Contrary to claims

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Sherrod, *Tarawa: The Incredible Story of One of World War II's Bloodiest Battles* (New York: Skyhorse, 2013), 70.

<sup>2</sup> Col Joseph H. Alexander, *Utmost Savagery: The Three Days of Tarawa* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 37.

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<sup>3</sup> *Landing Operations Doctrine*, Fleet Training Publication (FTP) 167 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938), 5. This doctrine, which was employed during the planning for Operation Galvanic, stated that "it is a sound principle in the conduct of landing operations to avoid landing against strongly organized positions unless such action is the only means of carrying out the assigned task within the time available. In general, such organized positions can be located only by adequate and thorough reconnaissance."



Unknown Japanese officer, "Photographs (Believed to Have Been Taken From Japanese Officer, KIA), 1943," 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 5  
 Gilberts: Tarawa, 1943–1944, folder 2, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, 29  
 Japanese antitank and antilanding obstacles at Tarawa demonstrate the complexity of the defensive preparations.

that the "intelligence must have been faulty," the seizure of the Gilbert Islands demonstrated that by exploiting effective intelligence to take calculated risks, even the most complex and well-developed littoral defenses could be defeated (albeit still at high cost).<sup>4</sup> Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's use of the call sign "ANZAC," a reference to the failed amphibious assault at Gallipoli in 1915, suggests that he was well aware of the risks he was accepting.<sup>5</sup> Unable to select a different objective or to secure additional forces, he instead exploited Joint force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) to find the weakest parts of the Japanese defenses.

The well-resourced defenses at Tarawa and the less-prepared positions at Makin Island are representative of the challenging littoral obstacles that commanders may again face today. As the selection of

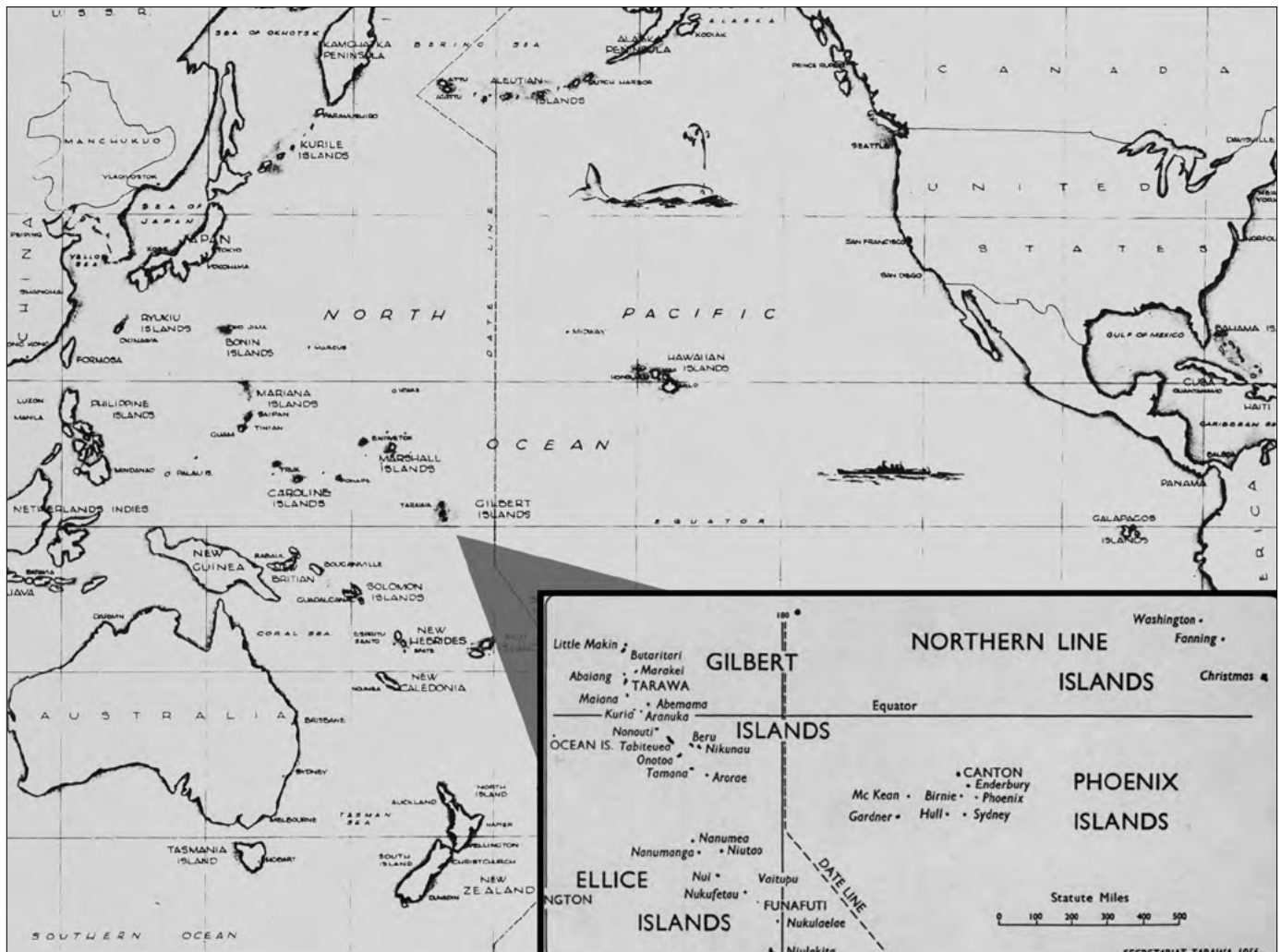
the Gilbert Islands as an objective highlights, simply choosing to avoid prepared defenses may not always be a viable option. While ISR is unlikely to entirely mitigate the risks posed by littoral obstacles, it can make these risks tolerable. If littoral forces must seize beaches protected by complex obstacles again in the future, Operation Galvanic suggests that the employment of Joint ISR to find gaps that combined arms teams can exploit is a model for success.

### An Unavoidable Objective

Considered in isolation, the remote Gilbert Islands appear an unlikely operational objective during a global war. While the tiny atolls offered military advantages, these were hardly decisive. Operation Galvanic was less about the value of the Gilbert Islands than about the need to maintain pressure on Japan while constrained by competing interests in other theaters. The United States and Great Britain held differing strategic views regarding the Pacific. U.S. leaders argued that "having seized the initiative from Japan the previous August at Guadalcanal, it would be

<sup>4</sup> Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 74.

<sup>5</sup> 2d Marine Division, "Operation Order No. 14 Gilbert Islands–Tarawa," 25 October 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 2 Gilberts: Tarawa, 1943, folder 3, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division (MCHD), Quantico, VA, E2-5.



Larry E. Klatt, "Drawing 18," Larry Klatt Papers, COLL 2173, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA); and inset, "Kiribati, The Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, 1956," Secretariat of the Pacific Community and Government of Kiribati, Tarawa, 1956

Map showing the location of the Gilbert Islands. The base map was drawn by CM1 Larry E. Klatt, a Navy Seabee who landed at Tarawa as part of the 18th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division.

unwise to relinquish it and allow the Japanese to dig in too strongly or to mount a counteroffensive.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the British cautioned against the diversion of resources from the agreed "Germany first" strategy.<sup>7</sup> In January 1943, Admiral Ernest J. King, the U.S. Chief of Naval Operations, convinced the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff that an additional campaign in the Pa-

cific was required "to push the war against Japan by maintaining unrelenting pressure against her from every direction."<sup>8</sup> To reach a compromise, King suggested that operations in the Central Pacific would only be conducted "with the resources available in the theater."<sup>9</sup> While this concession enabled the American staff to secure British support, it would impose significant time and resource constraints on Operation Galvanic.

<sup>6</sup> Philip A. Crowl and Edmund G. Love, *The War in the Pacific: Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1955), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 26.

<sup>8</sup> Craig L. Symonds, *Nimitz at War: Command Leadership from Pearl Harbor to Tokyo Bay* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 187.

<sup>9</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 28.



The U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff directed Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, commander of the Pacific Ocean Areas theater, to develop a Central Pacific offensive. As the concept took shape, planning remained heavily influenced by War Plan Orange, which “though it had been officially discarded, survived like a ghostly shadow in the thinking of most senior Navy officers, including King and Nimitz.”<sup>10</sup> Given that War Plan Orange had focused on the Marshall and Caroline Islands, the early guidance issued by the Joint Staff “ignored the Gilberts and identified the Marshalls as the initial target.”<sup>11</sup> As planning continued, it became increasingly clear that these initial objectives were beyond Nimitz’s available means. British concerns prevented the reallocation of resources from Europe, while internal U.S. competition prevented access to resources allocated to General Douglas MacArthur’s South West Pacific Area (SWPA). Despite the Central Pacific campaign being designated as the main effort in the Pacific, tension over the allocation of amphibious forces and equipment continued.<sup>12</sup> The Joint Staff continued to resource MacArthur’s operations against Rabaul. This decision, combined with the existing prioritization of Europe, left an initial seizure of the Marshall Islands beyond Nimitz’s means. Instead, the objective for Operation Galvanic became the seizure of the Gilbert Islands, securing an advanced base for subsequent operations and maintaining pressure on Japan.<sup>13</sup>

## Defending the Gilbert Islands

In 1943, the Imperial Japanese Navy faced a significant challenge in the Pacific—defending a vast number of widely dispersed islands without air or naval superiority.<sup>14</sup> The Imperial Japanese Army, “preoccupied with the more strategic commitments in Manchuria, China, and Burma,” remained hesitant to assist.<sup>15</sup> In recognition of this weakness, the Japanese concept of operations for the Gilbert and Marshall Islands

sought to “repeat the way the Japanese Fleet fought in the Russo-Japanese War,” employing island garrisons that could resist attack for up to one week in order to enable “counterattacking forces to destroy the enemy in pieces.”<sup>16</sup> Japanese ships, submarines, and naval aircraft would form the core of these counterattacks.<sup>17</sup> Vice Admiral Masami Kobayashi, commander of the Imperial Japanese Navy’s *Fourth Fleet*, held the responsibility for executing this concept.

Located in eastern Micronesia, the Gilbert Islands chain consists of 16 atolls, of which “Tarawa, Makin, and Apamama—held military significance in the 1940s due to their potential use as airfield sites.”<sup>18</sup> Japan seized the islands from their British administrators on 8 December 1941, one day after the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>19</sup> Shortly after seizing the Gilberts, Japanese forces began establishing an airfield on Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll, and a seaplane base at Butaritari Atoll, Gilbert Islands.<sup>20</sup> From these positions Japan could threaten the “fundamental line of communications from Hawaii to Australia,” including reporting “the movements of convoys and task forces” and directing “submarines and bombers to points of interception.”<sup>21</sup> Japan could also employ these positions to strike “advanced staging positions, such as Canton Island and Funafuti in the Ellice Islands.”<sup>22</sup> While positions in the Gilbert Islands were initially a low priority for Japanese defensive resources, U.S. operations in 1942 prompted a change of plans.

When Rear Admiral Keiji Shibasaki of the Imperial Japanese Navy took command at Tarawa on 20 July 1943; the defense of the Gilberts had become

<sup>16</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 29.

<sup>17</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 28–29, 63. Throughout the planning and execution of Operation Galvanic, Adm Raymond A. Spruance remained concerned about the prospect of a Japanese naval counterattack, recognizing that “the Japanese fleet was about as strong as ours . . . it was free to operate against us on interior lines . . . [and] the Japanese air was still strong and aggressive.” In response, RAdm Turner positioned his flagship, the USS *Pennsylvania* (BB 38), on the most likely naval avenue of approach near Makin Island rather than remaining near Tarawa.

<sup>18</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 26.

<sup>21</sup> *The Capture of MAKIN: 20 November–24 November 1943*, American Forces in Action Series (Washington DC: Historical Division, War Department, 1946), 3; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 26–28.

<sup>22</sup> *The Capture of MAKIN*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Symonds, *Nimitz at War*, 189.

<sup>11</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 33.

<sup>13</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 41.

<sup>14</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 29.

<sup>15</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 29.



Official U.S. Navy photo, accession no. 80-G-204730, Naval History and Heritage Command

Aerial reconnaissance photograph of an antitank ditch and coconut log barrier at Butaritari Atoll, Gilbert Islands.

a Japanese priority.<sup>23</sup> A U.S. carrier raid through the Gilbert and Marshall Islands in February 1942 and a 2d Marine Raider Battalion raid on Makin Island in August 1942 prompted Japan to reinforce the atolls.<sup>24</sup> In response to these raids, Japanese forces defending the islands were provided “generous amounts of troops, weapons, fortification materials, engineering

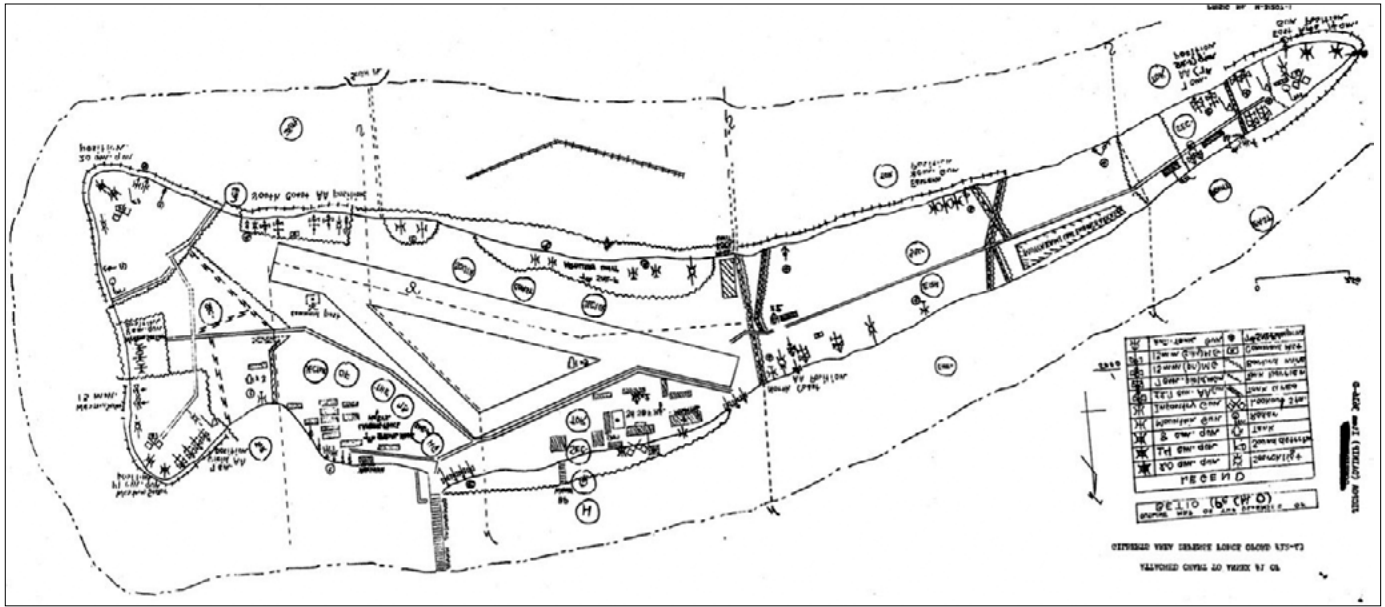
expertise, and labor.”<sup>25</sup> Japan deployed experts, including the director general of the Army Fortification Department and the head of the Naval Mine School, forward to the Gilberts to support the enhancement of the coastal defenses.<sup>26</sup> With Tarawa as a main effort, Shibasaki worked to build the Gilbert Islands into an anvil that could hold a U.S. assault long enough to enable the *Fourth Fleet* to counterattack.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 42.

<sup>24</sup> Intelligence Center Pacific Ocean Areas, “Enemy Positions: The Marshall–Gilberts Area,” 1 June 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 2 Gilberts: Tarawa, 1943, folder 1–2, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, 212; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 58.



Pacific Ocean Areas Joint Intelligence Center, "Tarawa Organization Tables and Map as included in Gilbert Area Defence Opord #12-43," 8 December 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 5 Gilberts: Tarawa, 1943-1944, folder 1, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, Annex no. 1  
Translated defensive plan for Betio Island from RAdm Keiji Shibasaki's orders.

Rear Admiral Shibasaki established his defensive priorities based on the assumption that any U.S. assault would land on the southern or western beaches of Tarawa just as the Japanese had done.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the four 8-inch naval guns forming the core coastal defense fires were oriented on these approaches while positions facing the lagoon to the north of Betio remained a lower priority for defensive works.<sup>28</sup> Orders issued in October 1942 directed the Japanese forces to "knock out the landing boats with mountain gun fire, tank guns and infantry guns, then concentrate all fires on the enemy's landing point and destroy him at the water's edge."<sup>29</sup> In contrast to the extensive defenses at Tarawa, the Japanese preparations at Makin were limited, with positions concentrated around Butaritari village on the atoll's largest island.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, these positions were more than capable of contesting an amphibious landing. By weighting his positions against the anticipated U.S. avenues of approach, Shi-

basaki believed that he could defend the Gilbert Islands until a decisive naval counterattack could arrive.

## Obstructing the Littorals

The Japanese defensive plan for the Gilbert Islands built on the significant natural barrier presented by fringing coral reefs. The V Amphibious Corps G-2 identified that on the ocean side reefs were normally "shallower, sharper, and narrower."<sup>31</sup> The lagoons presented lesser obstacles but were still "generally shallow, and are filled with sand bars, submerged reefs, rocks, and coral patches."<sup>32</sup> At Tarawa in particular, neap tides could prevent even small boats from crossing the reef crests.<sup>33</sup> On the day of the assault, a neap tide left less than 2.5 feet of water above the reef at

<sup>27</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 21.

<sup>28</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 37-40.

<sup>29</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 39.

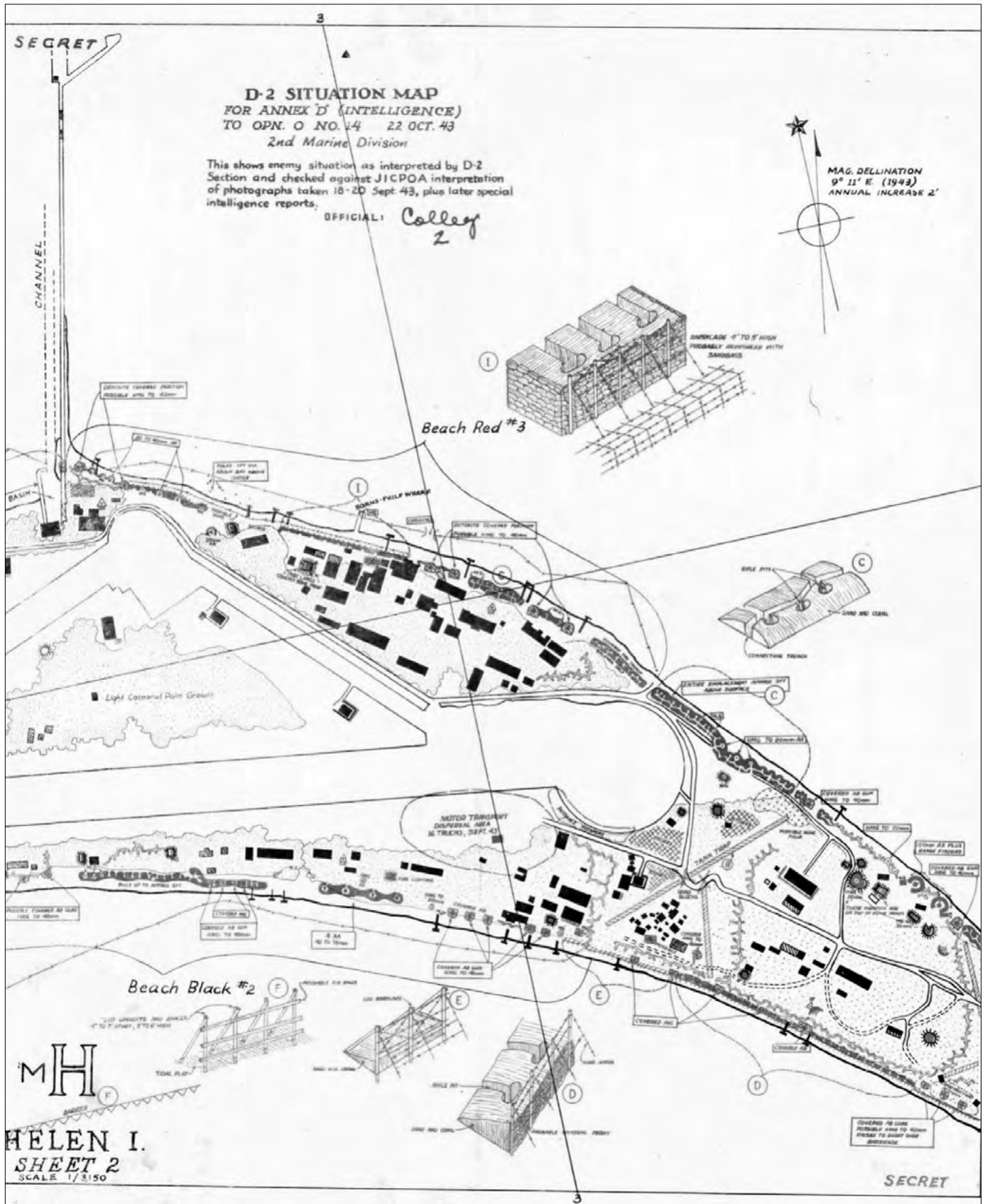
<sup>30</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 53, 99.

<sup>31</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "G-2 Study of the Theatre of Operations: Gilbert Islands, Nauru and Ocean," 20 September 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 2 Gilberts: Tarawa, 1943, folder 6-7, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, 2.

<sup>32</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "G-2 Study of the Theatre of Operations: Gilbert Islands, Nauru and Ocean," 4.

<sup>33</sup> Neap tides occur when the tidal effects of the Sun and Moon cancel each other, resulting in high tides that are lower than average.





2d Marine Division D-2, "Helen Island Intelligence Map, 2 of 3," Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA  
2d Marine Division D-2 map sheet 2 of 3 highlighting obstacles emplaced at Tarawa.



high tide.<sup>34</sup> While coral reefs presented an imposing barrier to an amphibious assault, Shibasaki's defensive force worked to enhance these obstacles further.

At Tarawa, Japanese forces emplaced extensive obstacles offshore, in shallow water, across the beaches, and inland. Shibasaki focused on "enhancing the southern, western, and northeastern beaches by priority, where he expected the Americans to land."<sup>35</sup> Anti-shiping mines were fixed to coral on the reefs while antipersonnel mines were emplaced on the beaches.<sup>36</sup> In addition to mines, "AT ditches, beach barricades, log fences and concrete tetrahedrons on the fringing reef, double apron high-wire fence in the water near the beach, and double apron low-wire on the sand beach itself" were integrated with direct-fire weapons.<sup>37</sup> Further, a four-foot tall coconut log seawall was established at the high watermark to impede inland vehicle movement.<sup>38</sup> By canalizing assault watercraft as they approached the beaches, Shibasaki sought to maximize the effectiveness of his direct-fire weapons before any assault force could get to shore.<sup>39</sup> The complexity and scale of Tarawa's littoral obstacles gave Shibasaki justifiable confidence.

At Makin Island, resource shortfalls prevented Shibasaki from mirroring the extensive man-made obstacles emplaced at Tarawa. These shortfalls resulted in part from the successful disruption of Japanese merchant shipping by U.S. submarines.<sup>40</sup> Natural obstacles were also more subdued at Butaritari, although fringing coral reefs were still present. Japanese forces



"Japanese Type JE Anti-Boat Mine," *Tarawa1943.com*, accessed 9 March 2024

Japanese Type 96 mines consolidated for destruction at Tarawa.

defending Makin Island prioritized obstacles near their primary position at Butaritari village, establishing antitank ditches to the east and west "running generally in a zigzag path from lagoon to ocean shore."<sup>41</sup> These ditches were reinforced with coconut log barricades and long barbed-wire obstacles.<sup>42</sup> Japanese forces missed the opportunity to emplace minefields at Makin; instead, the detachment made the most of locally available resources.<sup>43</sup> While the obstacle development at Makin was significantly less progressed than at Tarawa, it was nevertheless sufficient to pose significant concerns for the U.S. Army's 27th Infantry Division.

At both Tarawa and Makin, nonexplosive obstacles formed the core of Shibasaki's obstacle plan. Major Dempachi Kondo, a member of the Imperial General Headquarters staff, led the upgrade program in the Gilbert Islands while the *11th Construction*

<sup>34</sup> Symonds, *Nimitz at War*, 210; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 88. The impact of the tide at Tarawa was "not entirely a surprise; the operational plan had cautioned that during a neap tide there might be only 'one to two feet of water' over the coral shelf." No boats would successfully pass over the reef crest during the first 30 hours of the battle; only landing vehicles, tracked (LVTs) could support the assault during that time.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 58.

<sup>36</sup> 2d Marine Division (2d MarDiv) Intelligence Section and Pacific Ocean Areas (POA) Joint Intelligence Center, "Study of Japanese Defenses of Betio Island (Tarawa Atoll)," 20 December 1943, Julian C. Smith Collection, COLL 202, 1892-1976, box 8, folder 10, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, 6; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 123.

<sup>37</sup> 2d MarDiv Intelligence Section and POA Joint Intelligence Center, "Study of Japanese Defenses of Betio Island (Tarawa Atoll)," 6; and Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 45, 67.

<sup>38</sup> Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 37, 60; Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 38, 60.

<sup>39</sup> 2d MarDiv Intelligence Section and POA Joint Intelligence Center, "Study of Japanese Defenses of Betio Island (Tarawa Atoll)," 6.

<sup>40</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 72.

<sup>41</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 53-67. Having assessed that "the first main obstacle to a quick capture of the island would be the West Tank Barrier," the 27th Infantry Division staff developed a plan to quickly envelop the western antitank ditch and dislocate the Japanese defenses.

<sup>42</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "G-2 Study of the Theatre of Operations: Gilbert Islands, Nauru and Ocean," 70.

<sup>43</sup> *The Capture of MAKIN*, 61.

*Battalion*, led by Lieutenant Isao Murakami, delivered the required works.<sup>44</sup> Had the supplies Shibasaki was expecting arrived, he intended to establish at least “forty-five hundred obstacles.”<sup>45</sup> At Betio, the Japanese emplaced an “abundance of horned scullies, steel-tipped tetrahedrons, and coral rock cairns dotting the offshore approaches” as well as “double-apron barbed wire and steel cable” obstructing the beaches.<sup>46</sup> At the high water mark, Lieutenant Murakami established a four-foot tall seawall around almost all of Betio’s perimeter by driving coconut logs into the ground.<sup>47</sup> Trees were sourced from the outer islands to avoid disrupting camouflage and concealment on the occupied islands.<sup>48</sup> At Makin, nonexplosive obstacles included 500-foot-long log barricades, 15-foot-wide triangular barricades, as well as long barbed-wire obstacles.<sup>49</sup> Two days prior to the U.S. D-Day, Japanese forces were still establishing new obstacles. Seventh Air Force imagery collected that day identified new horned scullies and tetrahedrons emplaced across half of the reef in front of Red Beach Three.<sup>50</sup> While simple to construct, Japanese nonexplosive obstacles created effective engagement areas ready for the arrival of any U.S. assault.

To reinforce his main effort at Tarawa, Shibasaki emplaced almost 3,000 mines.<sup>51</sup> Shibasaki had intended to reinforce the northern defenses with further mines, however, the additional resources necessary to complete these preparations had not yet arrived.<sup>52</sup> Antishipping mines were employed on the reef “moored to coral heads beneath the surface,” as well as

in shallow water.<sup>53</sup> Model 96 mines were used for this purpose; these mines employed “two lead alloy horns. . . . pressure on either of these horns . . . activates the chemical electric fuze thus detonating the mine.”<sup>54</sup> Each Model 96 mine contained nearly 21 kilograms of explosive, more than enough to destroy assault watercraft.<sup>55</sup> On land, Model 99 armor-piercing mines were employed to target vehicles while Model 93 pressure mines were employed to target personnel.<sup>56</sup> At Makin Island, “several hundred mines we found in a warehouse, but none had been laid.”<sup>57</sup> Fortunately for the 2d Marine Division at Tawara and the 27th Infantry Division at Makin, the planned amphibious assaults landed where the majority of the Japanese mines were not emplaced.

## Finding the Gaps

Prior to the selection of the Gilbert Islands as an objective, U.S. planners had minimal information about the disposition of the Japanese defenses and no information about the nature of the Japanese obstacles. Rear Admiral Turner reported that these shortfalls were overcome through the combination of “large numbers of vertical and oblique photographs” taken by aircraft, “horizontal panoramic photographs” taken by the submarine USS *Nautilus* (SS 168), and through discussions with former residents of the Gilbert Islands.<sup>58</sup> Ultra intelligence intercepts also provided insights into Japanese troop movements and logistical requests, however, they could not provide a detailed understanding of natural and manmade

<sup>44</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 36–37.

<sup>45</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 60. Horned scullies were concrete blocks with metal spikes protruding from the top to pierce the hulls of landing craft. Tetrahedrons were concrete pyramids designed to block or expose the underside of landing craft or armored vehicles. Cairns were piles of rock or coral that used their mass to block landing craft and vehicles.

<sup>47</sup> Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 37; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 40.

<sup>49</sup> V Amphibious Corps, “G-2 Study of the Theatre of Operations: Gilbert Islands, Nauru and Ocean,” 70.

<sup>50</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 59.

<sup>51</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 58.

<sup>52</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 21.

<sup>53</sup> 2d MarDiv Intelligence Section and POA Joint Intelligence Center, “Study of Japanese Defenses of Betio Island (Tarawa Atoll),” 6; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 123.

<sup>54</sup> *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, TM-E 30-480 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), 215–16; and “Japanese Type JE Anti-Boat Mine,” Tarawa1943.com, accessed 9 March 2024.

<sup>55</sup> *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, TM-E 30-480, 215–16.

<sup>56</sup> *Intelligence Bulletin March 1944*, vol. 2, no. 7 (Washington, DC: War Department, 1944), 9; and *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, TM-E 30-480, 214–15.

<sup>57</sup> *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces*, TM-E 30-480, 138.

<sup>58</sup> Commander, Fifth Amphibious Force, “Report of Amphibious Operations for the Capture of the GILBERT ISLANDS,” 4 December 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 4 Gilberts: Tarawa: Operation Reports, 1943–1944, folder 1, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, 9.



2d MarDiv Intelligence Section and POA Joint Intelligence Center, "Study of Japanese Defenses of Betio Island (Tarawa Atoll)," 171  
Japanese tetrahedron molds at Tarawa.

obstacles.<sup>59</sup> Ground reconnaissance prior to the assault was considered impracticable because of "the small land areas involved" and the "isolated position of the objectives."<sup>60</sup> Based on the gathered intelligence "it soon became apparent that, at least at TARAUA, landing boats could not pass through the protective wire and log barricades which had been erected seaward on the reefs and beaches" and that an alternative avenue of approach was required.<sup>61</sup>

For the V Amphibious Corps, the nature and location of Japanese defenses on the objective islands and the locations of suitable landing sites for "assault forces with landing boats, or amphibian tractors" were "essential elements of information."<sup>62</sup> Reports submitted by the *Nautilus* included "hazards to landings; condition of surf, reefs and beaches; characteristics of lagoon entrances; current data; sound conditions; activities on shore; general tidal data; photographs of radar [plan position indicator] PPI screen and pho-

<sup>59</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 59.

<sup>60</sup> Fifth Amphibious Force, "Report of Amphibious Operations for the Capture of the GILBERT ISLANDS," C-2.

<sup>61</sup> Fifth Amphibious Force, "Report of Amphibious Operations for the Capture of the GILBERT ISLANDS," 9-10.

<sup>62</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "Corps Operation Plan No. 1-43 Gilbert Islands," 13 October 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 1 Gilberts: Tarawa: 5th Amphibious Corps Operation Plan, 1943, folder 1, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, H-1-H-2.



Consolidated B-24 Liberator Crew, "Map Image 6664," 1943, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA.  
Aerial reconnaissance photograph of Betio Island, Tarawa Atoll.

tographs of shore line."<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the periscope photos captured in September and October 1943 "were too small a scale to show the details and were taken too low to show the location of obstacles with reference to the shoreline."<sup>64</sup> Submarine reconnaissance did, however, "report much of the missing data on hydrographic and beach conditions on both of the main islands."<sup>65</sup> While submarine reconnaissance made an important contribution to the selection of avenues of approach, in isolation it was insufficient to find the gaps in the Japanese obstacle plan.

By supplementing intelligence staffs with former Gilbert Islands residents, the Fifth Amphibious Force gained further crucial information about the Operation Galvanic objectives. Personnel attached to planning teams "included Australian, New Zealand, and Fiji naval reserve officers, officials of the Western Pacific High Commission, Australian Army reserve officers and enlisted men, and civilians."<sup>66</sup> These former residents "provided information not readily available

from other sources, on tides, local conditions, sailing directions, reef and beach conditions, surf, weather, and a wide variety of other subjects."<sup>67</sup> While they could not offer any information about the man-made obstacles that had been established since the Japanese occupation began, the hydrographic information they provided was critical to understanding the impact of natural obstacles. Like the information provided by the Nautilus, the information provided by former residents was insufficient on its own to find the gaps in the Japanese obstacle plan but made a key contribution to the overall picture.

While submarine reconnaissance and the insights from former Gilbert Islands residents were invaluable, the most effective source of intelligence during planning was aerial photographs taken by the Consolidated B-24 Liberators of the Seventh Air Force and Admiral John H. Hoover's Task Force 57.<sup>68</sup> Photoreconnaissance of Tarawa conducted during the periods 18–19 September and on 20 October 1943 delivered "excellent verticals and obliques" that proved "most helpful in studying beaches and locating weapons and installations."<sup>69</sup> Based on the available intel-

<sup>63</sup> Fifth Amphibious Force, "Report of Amphibious Operations for the Capture of the GILBERT ISLANDS," C-2.

<sup>64</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," 11 January 1944, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 3 Gilberts: 5th Amphibious Corps, Report on Operations, 1944, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, C-2.

<sup>65</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 48.

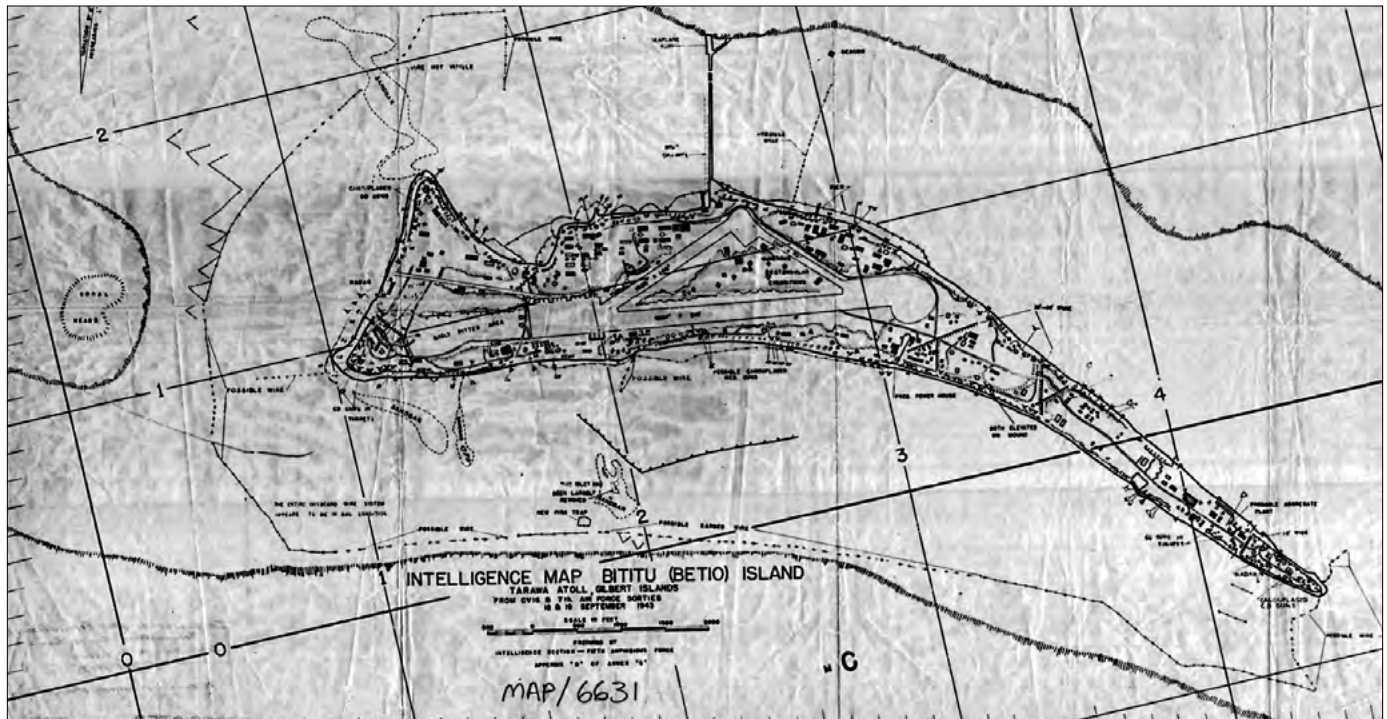
<sup>66</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 50.

<sup>67</sup> Fifth Amphibious Force, "Report of Amphibious Operations for the Capture of the GILBERT ISLANDS," C-3–C-4.

<sup>68</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 59.

<sup>69</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," C-2.





Fifth Amphibious Force, G2 Section, "Intelligence Map Bititu (Betio) Island," September 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, map image 6631, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA

Intelligence map of Betio Island incorporating updated information gained through aerial reconnaissance flown on 18 and 19 September 1943.

ligence, the 2d Marine Division assessed that it was "extremely doubtful" that it could breach the obstacle barriers on the southern and western approaches to Betio.<sup>70</sup> The eastern end of the island also appeared well-defended.<sup>71</sup> In contrast, there were "some underwater wire entanglements on the north (lagoon) side of BETIO, but no indications of the heavier obstacles."<sup>72</sup> Aerial reconnaissance of Makin Island was less successful; however, it still allowed the 27th Infantry Division to identify the western end of Butaritari as the weak point.<sup>73</sup> By successfully identifying the gaps in the Japanese obstacle plan, Joint ISR enabled the Fifth Amphibious Force to select avenues of approach where the residual obstacle effects could be mitigated.

<sup>70</sup> 2d Marine Division, "Estimate of the Situation—Gilberts," 5 October 1943, Gilbert Islands Collection, COLL 3653, box 2 Gilberts: Tarawa, 1943, folder 5, Archives Branch, MCHD, Quantico, VA, 4, 22.

<sup>71</sup> 2d Marine Division, "Estimate of the Situation—Gilberts," 22.

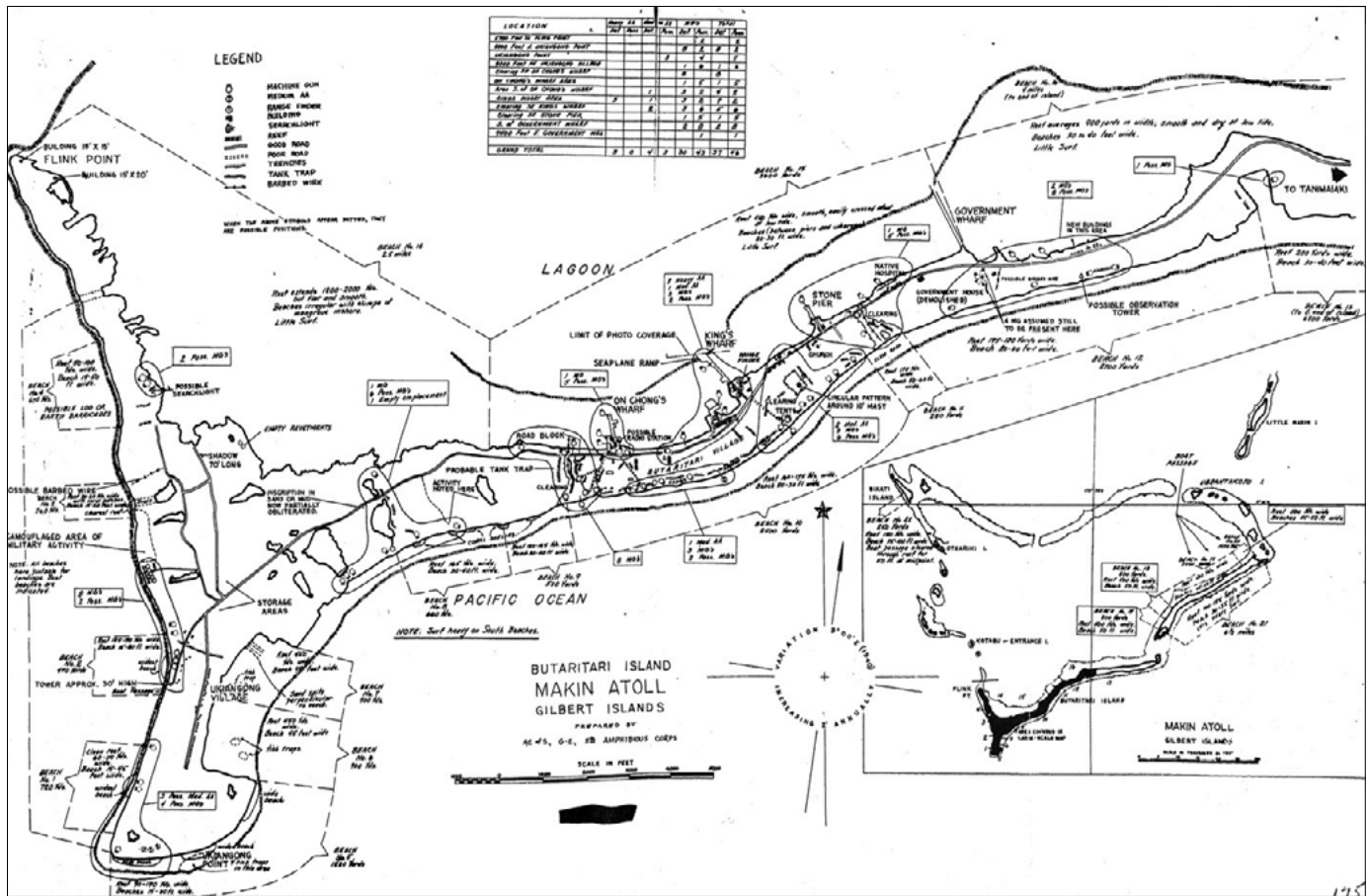
<sup>72</sup> 2d Marine Division, "Estimate of the Situation—Gilberts," 4.

<sup>73</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," C-2.

## Mitigating the Residual Risk

Knowing where the Gilbert Islands' defenses were weakest did not make exploiting their vulnerabilities easy. First Lieutenant Wallace E. Nygren described the shaping effects of the offshore obstacles on his landing vehicle, tracked (LVT) 2 as he approached Red Beach Two: "Ahead of us in the water loomed a barrier of concrete tetrahedron blocks with iron rails projecting outward. . . . The gaps [between obstacles] were closed by rows of barbed wire strung on posts . . . the tractors had been forced together as we were funneled into the wire by the concrete blocks."<sup>74</sup> Nor were assessments of the expected obstacle without fault, despite warnings about the impact of neap tides contained in the Fifth Amphibious Force Operation Plan, 27th Infantry Division's planners incorrectly assessed that tidal or hydrographic conditions would not restrict

<sup>74</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 87.



V Amphibious Corps, "G-2 Study of the Theatre of Operations: Gilbert Islands, Nauru and Ocean," 175

V Amphibious Corps G-2 map of Japanese defenses at Butaritari Atoll showing the detail revealed by Joint Force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance efforts.

landings at Makin.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, the Fifth Amphibious Force exploited the gaps in the Japanese defense, particularly at Tarawa where "the invaders entered the lagoon and attacked from the north, the one sector where Japanese defenses were yet incomplete, the place Shibasaki intended to sow last with antiboat mines."<sup>76</sup> By selecting the approaches that presented the least Japanese obstruction, the Fifth Amphibious Force enabled its combined arms teams to mitigate the residual risks.

Despite choosing avenues of approach that avoided most Japanese obstacles, the assaulting forces still needed to mitigate Japanese direct and indirect fires.

Extensive naval and air fires were employed to disrupt the Japanese positions prior to the assault. Four days of preparatory naval and air fires targeted Tarawa and Makin, while land- and carrier-based aircraft struck the Japanese airfields at Nauru, Jaluit, and Mili to deny Japanese air support to the defense.<sup>77</sup> A further four hours of air and naval bombardment immediately preceded the landings to suppress and obscure Japanese coastal defense fires.<sup>78</sup> The bombardment of Tarawa succeeded in degrading Japanese command and control: "Shibasaki had no idea whether his other forces in Makin, Nauru, and Ocean were also under attack."<sup>79</sup> As the battle progressed, Shibasaki and his

<sup>75</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 52.

<sup>76</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 21.

<sup>77</sup> Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 23.

<sup>78</sup> Sherrod, *Tarawa*, 23.

<sup>79</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 21.



The confirmed locations of Japanese obstacles emplaced at Betio Island. The strong correlation between these locations and those assessed by the Fifth Amphibious Force G-2 in figure 9 demonstrates the effectiveness of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance efforts during the planning for Operation Galvanic.

staff were killed by naval fires, likely disrupting Japanese intentions to conduct a ground counterattack against the beachhead.<sup>80</sup> While the fire support during Operation Galvanic failed to destroy the Japanese defenses, it nevertheless reduced the risks faced by the assaulting forces.

Exploiting the gaps that Joint ISR had found would not have been possible without amphibious craft (the LVTs) that could cross the fringing reefs and bypass the primary Japanese engagement areas. The 2d Marine Division chief of staff wrote that “without LVTs, I doubt if we could ever have reached the beach” and that “every beach except the one we landed on was heavily mined, and also more heavily defended. I am absolutely sure that we could not have gotten ashore any place else initially.”<sup>81</sup> The V Amphibious Corps report on the operation echoed this view:

<sup>80</sup> The 2d Marine Division chief of staff suggested that “a strong Jap counterattack that night would probably have been disastrous.” Merritt Edson, “Letter to Colonel G. C. Thomas,” 13 December 1943, Merritt Austin Edson Papers, MSS38133, box 5, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 4; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 109.

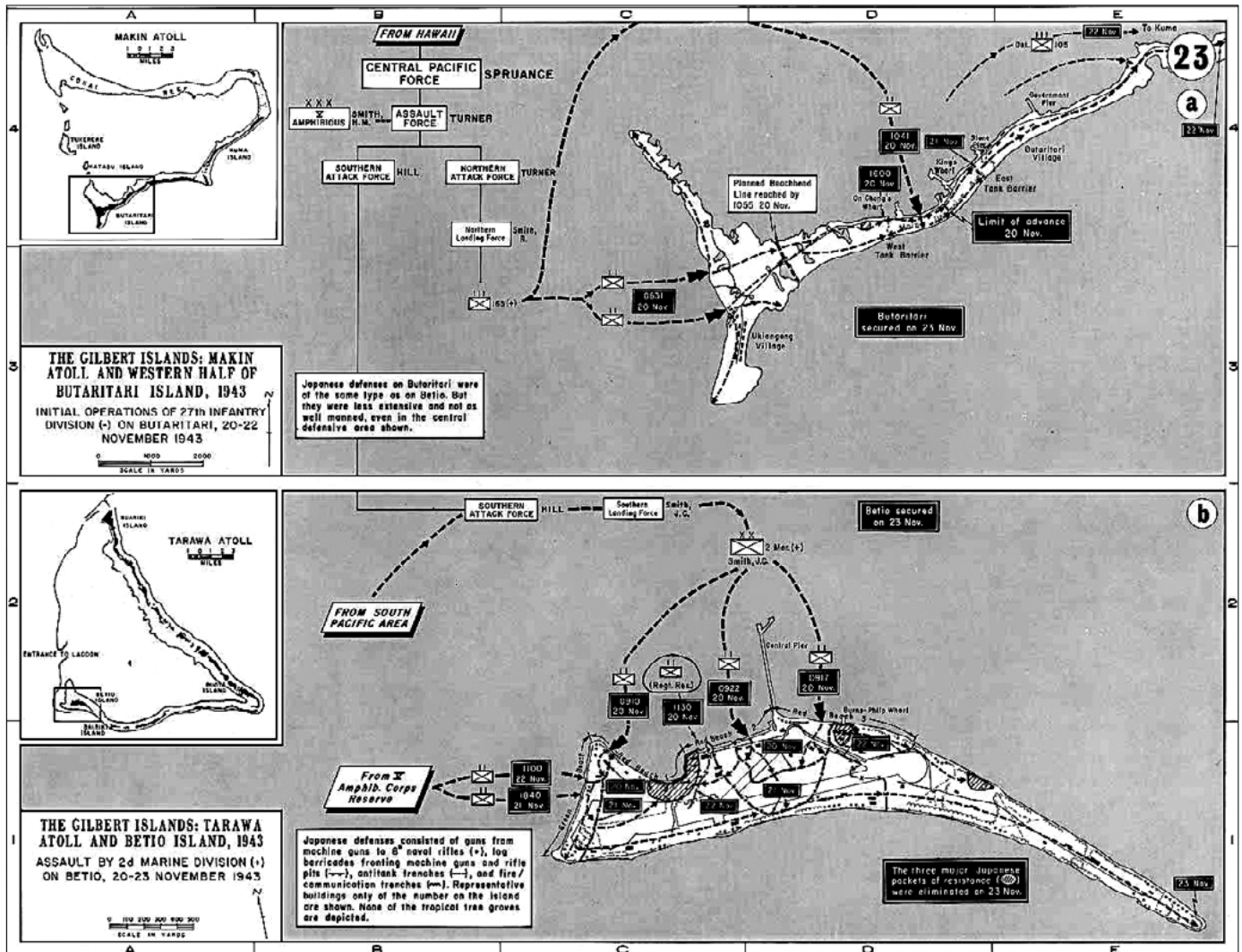
“Without the amphibian tractor, it is believed that the landing at TARAUA would have failed.”<sup>82</sup> At Makin, the 27th Infantry Division had expected small boats to be capable of reaching the beaches, however, “they were held off shore by the very extensive reefs which surround this island.”<sup>83</sup> Again, LVTs proved to be the key to maintaining momentum: “Troops were actually landed by transfer from the landing craft to the LVTs.”<sup>84</sup> By providing cross-domain mobility, LVTs enabled the assaults at Tarawa and Makin to dislocate the Japanese obstacle plans.

<sup>82</sup> V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," 12; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 54. While many authors have highlighted an argument between RAdm Richmond Turner and MajGen Holland M. Smith about the necessity for additional LVTs, including Smith's often-quoted ultimatum "no LVTs, no operation," Turner held legitimate naval concerns about whether additional LVT-2s should be bought forward. Turner worried that the landing ship, tank, platforms needed to collect the LVT-2s would be exposed to Japanese submarine or air interdiction, further depleting scarce amphibious shipping. Nevertheless, the land-based risks were ultimately deemed higher, and the LVT-2s were provided.

<sup>83</sup>V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," B-7.

<sup>84</sup>V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," B-7.





"The Gilbert Islands, Initial Operations of the 27th Infantry and Assault by 2nd Marine Division, November 1943" atlases, U.S. Military Academy, West Point, Digital History Center

Schemes of maneuver at Makin (top) and Tarawa (bottom) Atolls during Operation Galvanic.

LVTs enabled the Fifth Amphibious Force to bypass the worst of the Japanese defenses; the residual obstacles nevertheless needed to be addressed. Following Landing Operations Doctrine, obstacles offshore were the responsibility of the naval "mine group" while the "demolition of enemy obstacles onshore" and "the removal of underwater obstructions at the beach" fell to engineers within the landing force.<sup>85</sup> Despite fire from Japanese coastal defenses, the minesweepers USS Pursuit (AM 108) and USS Requisite

(AM 109) marked the route into the Tarawa lagoon having "swept a channel three hundred yards wide and twenty feet deep."<sup>86</sup> In the shallower waters, LVTs employed "grapnels for destroying wire and thus opening boat routes."<sup>87</sup> As the assault reached the beaches, combat engineers from the 18th Regiment and the 102d Engineer Battalion moved with the initial assault wave to "clear a passage through any barbed wire or other underwater obstacles that might impede the suc-

<sup>85</sup> Landing Operations Doctrine, FTP 167, 33, 227.

<sup>86</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 77.

<sup>87</sup> Crowl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 64.



2d MarDiv Intelligence Section and POA Joint Intelligence Center, "Study of Japanese Defenses of Betio Island (Tarawa Atoll)," 170 Japanese obstacles on the western beach at Betio including tetrahedrons, wire, and a coconut log sea wall.

ceeding landing craft" and to "clear beach . . . obstacles with Bangalore torpedoes."<sup>88</sup> With the shallow water obstacles reduced, only those on shore remained.

Combat engineers continued to provide support as the attacks progressed. While LVTs had enabled many of the obstacles at Betio and Butaritari to be bypassed, "very few of the LVTs could negotiate the vertical seawall" or readily cross the Japanese anti-tank ditches.<sup>89</sup> Dismounted engineers conducted assault breaching using Bangalore torpedoes and satchel charges to support the Marine and Army infantry as they advanced.<sup>90</sup> Bulldozers landed during the early stages of the assaults to further enable the reduction of Japanese obstacles and fortifications.<sup>91</sup> Two combat engineers, First Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman Jr.

and Staff Sergeant William J. Bordelon, were awarded posthumous Medals of Honor for their actions.<sup>92</sup> With the final obstacles overcome, the Fifth Amphibious Force declared Betio and Butaritari secure on 23 November 1943.

## Conclusion

By exploiting Joint ISR capabilities, the Fifth Amphibious Force found the gaps in the Japanese defense of the Gilbert Islands. Intelligence gained from aircraft, submarines, signals interceptions, and human sources contributed to successfully identifying the northern approach to Tawara and the western side of Makin as the weak points in the Japanese obstacle plan. The Japanese plan was sophisticated, employing a wide range of different obstacles to channel and restrict assaulting forces offshore, in shallow water, on the beaches, and further inland. Nevertheless, the Fifth Amphibious Force overcame the defenses. Both the land and naval components suffered heavy casual-

<sup>88</sup> Crawl and Love, *Seizure of the Gilberts and Marshalls*, 66, 135.

<sup>89</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 87.

<sup>90</sup> Karl C. Dod, *The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Japan*, United States Army in World War II (Washington, DC: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1987), 382–83; V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," F3-1; and Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 127.

<sup>91</sup> *The Capture of MAKIN*, 12; Sherrod, Tarawa, 36; and V Amphibious Corps, "Report of Gilbert Islands Operation," F3-2. Thirty-eight bulldozers were landed at Makin Island alone.

<sup>92</sup> Alexander, *Utmost Savagery*, 50.

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ties; however, the high cost of the operation reflects the scale of the challenge rather than a failure of planning, preparation, or execution.

While it may appear unlikely that a contemporary littoral force would choose to assault a defended beach, the compounding strategic considerations and compromises that led to the selection of the Gilbert Islands as an objective suggests otherwise. Mitigating littoral obstacles remains a significant challenge long after the conclusion of Operation Galvanic. While avoiding these areas is desirable, military forces may have no choice but to find a way through. Joint ISR enabled the Fifth Amphibious Force to find gaps, however other combined arms capabilities were also essential to exploiting the opportunities. Japanese obstacles could not have been bypassed without the cross-domain mobility provided by LVT-1 Alligators and LVT-2 Water Buffaloes. The residual risks presented by obstacles that remained in the path of the assaults could not have been mitigated without mine-sweepers and combat engineers. As the seizure of the Gilbert Islands demonstrates, the combination of these capabilities enables amphibious forces to overcome even complex obstacles.

Operation Galvanic by no means completely resolved the littoral obstacle problem. After the attack, Colonel Merritt A. Edson wrote to Headquarters Marine Corps that “some solution has got to be found to eliminate underwater mines, which I think is the most dangerous thing we have to combat at the moment.”<sup>93</sup> Contemporary technologies further complicate the risks, enabling the rapid emplacement of obstacles on avenues of approach that strategic ISR has previously indicated are clear. Nevertheless, if beaches protected by complex obstacles must be seized, Operation Galvanic’s employment of Joint ISR, cross-domain mobility, and combined arms teams suggests a model for success.

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<sup>93</sup> Edson, “Letter to Colonel G. C. Thomas,” 8.



# Marine Air-Ground Task Forces in Military Operations Other than War, 1990s

*By Major Fred H. Allison, USMCR (Ret)*

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**Abstract:** The marriage of the helicopter and U.S. Navy amphibious ships with a battalion of Marines and supporting elements on board created one of the nation's most potent and capable weapons systems. The Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF) not only represents the means to influence events by the projection of military power, it also has the inherent capability to undertake a number of missions beyond direct combat action, otherwise known as military operations other than war (MOOTW). This article examines the inherent capability of MAGTFs in MOOTW, highlighting the essentiality of helicopters for such operations, particularly humanitarian and noncombat evacuation operations, by recounting a few of these operations.

**Keywords:** military operations other than war, MOOTW, Marine air-ground task force, MAGTF, airpower, Marine Aviation, ship-to-shore

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The marriage of the helicopter and U.S. Navy amphibious ships with a battalion of Marines and supporting elements on board created one of the nation's most potent and capable weapons systems. Like combat aircraft on board an aircraft carrier, or nuclear missiles contained within a submarine, the task force represents the means to influence events by the projection of military power. Unlike an aircraft carrier or a nuclear submarine, however, this combination ground-sea-air team, known as a Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF), has the inherent capability to undertake a number of missions beyond

direct combat action, otherwise known as military operations other than war (MOOTW). Included in MOOTW are humanitarian assistance, noncombat evacuations, and disaster relief. The organic aviation element was the key connector between land and sea, the conduit that brought the MAGTF's power to bear and therefore essential for MOOTW.

Marines pioneered helicopter combat operations in the Korean War in the form of vertical assault (or envelopment) tactics but did not perform this task from ships. As helicopter technology advanced, ship-to-shore tactics developed, and the U.S. Navy moved forward to acquire dedicated amphibians, the Marine Corps/Navy created the first MAGTF. The amphibious component was the USS *Thetis Bay* (CVE 90), which had been converted to a landing platform helicopter (LPH 6). In 1962, the MAGTF became official Marine doctrine, codified in Marine Corps Or-

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der 3120.3.<sup>1</sup> New and specifically built amphibious ships followed. Regular Marine expeditionary units (MEUs), the smallest of the MAGTFs, composed of a battalion of Marines, a command element, a composite helicopter squadron, and a logistics element, deployed like clockwork to the Navy's Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Fleets' zones of operation.<sup>2</sup> MEUs stood ready to conduct a number of operations, direct combat or MOOTW, on behalf of national interests. In 1985, Commandant General Paul X. Kelley ordered that MEUs undergo special operations training to gain additional capabilities to meet existing threats. MEUs became MEU(SOC)s—special operations capable.

With the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States remained as the world's only superpower. This called for an entirely new national security strategy, of which MOOTW was an essential aspect. The George H. W. Bush administration held that "the United States had to take on a large role as a world leader to guard against human rights abuses, defend democratic regimes, and lead humanitarian efforts."<sup>3</sup> The William J. "Bill" Clinton administration followed in 1994 and issued a national security strategy called "Engagement and Enlargement." Key military tasks included "noncombat operations, and humanitarian and disaster relief operations, etc."<sup>4</sup>

Navy policy shifted from blue-water control-of-the-seas and freedom-of-navigation operations to the littorals. New Navy-Marine Corps doctrine followed, disseminated in the white paper "Forward . . . From the Sea." The MAGTF was particularly suit-

ed to execute the new doctrine.<sup>5</sup> It was flexible and could undertake a variety of tasks as the situation demanded and could even be divided to meet needs in different locations. It was unobtrusive and it did not need a base on shore and was therefore nonthreatening to less-than-friendly governments. It had staying power, and was self-sustaining. It could stay on-station almost indefinitely, being resupplied by other ships and aircraft that did not need nations' overflight approval.<sup>6</sup> In the 1990s, MEUs executing humanitarian operations and noncombat evacuations occurred frequently, resulting in many more lives saved by the Navy and Marine team than were taken through combat action.<sup>7</sup>

This article highlights the inherent capability of MAGTFs in MOOTW operations, emphasizing the essentiality of helicopters for such operations, particularly humanitarian and noncombat evacuation operations (NEOs), by recounting a few of these operations. The operations are recounted chronologically to show the inherent flexibility of MAGTFs in dealing with a variety of situations and missions.

## Operation Sharp Edge

As the decade of the 1990s dawned, political instability in the West African region led to violence as rebel groups sought to seize power in the wake of failed government.<sup>8</sup> Particularly in Liberia, violence and social chaos placed civilians at risk. On 25 May 1990, Special

<sup>1</sup> Douglas E. Nash, "The Afloat-Ready Battalion, *Marine Corps History* 3, no. 1 (Summer 2017): 75–77, 81; and *Marine Corps Order 3120.3, The Organization of Marine Air-Ground Task Forces* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 27 December 1962).

<sup>2</sup> The Fifth Fleet is basically the naval component command of Central Command, which is in the Middle East and includes the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, Red Sea, and part of the Indian Ocean. The Sixth Fleet is responsible for the Mediterranean Sea and Black Sea; and the Seventh Fleet is responsible for the Western Pacific and east to the Pakistan/India border, and from the Kuril Islands to Antarctica.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Knott, "George H. W. Bush: Foreign Affairs," University of Virginia Miller Center, accessed 4 January 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Francis G. Hoffman, "Stepping Forward Smartly: 'Forward . . . from the Sea,' The Emerging Expanded Naval Strategy," *Marine Corps Gazette* 79, no. 3 (March 1995): 30–31.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas F. Qualls Jr., "MAGTFs and Adaptive Naval Expeditionary Force Packages: Operational Masterpieces or Failures?" (diss., Naval War College, 1994), 3–4.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony C. Zinni, "Forward Presence and Stability Missions: The Marine Corps Perspective," *Marine Corp Gazette* 77, no. 3 (March 1993): 57–58; and Sean C. O'Keefe, Frank B. Kelso, Carl E. Mundy Jr., ". . . From the Sea: A New Direction for the Naval Services," *Marine Corps Gazette* 76, no. 11 (November 1992): 19–20.

<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the largest of the humanitarian operations of the decade, Operations Provide Comfort (Northern Iraq) and Restore Hope (Somalia) will not be covered as they have already received considerable public and academic attention. Eighteen major humanitarian operations occurred in the 1990s, only three of which were in the United States. "Selected Marine Corps Humanitarian Operations: 1970 to 2007," Marine Corps Humanitarian Operations, Marine Corps History Division, accessed 25 January 2024. The noncombatant operations that occurred in the 1990s are not listed.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Edi, "Pan West Africanism and Political Instability in West Africa: Perspectives and Reflections," *Journal of Pan African Studies* 1, no. 3 (March 2006): 7, 14.

Operations Capable 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (22d MEU(SOC)), commanded by Colonel Granville R. Amos, then training in France, was ordered by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to proceed to the coastal waters of Liberia. The 22d MEU(SOC) was to provide security for the American embassy and, if required, conduct a NEO, a special operations task for which it had trained. Amos's aviation combat element (ACE) was composite Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 (HMM-261, Reinforced), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Emerson N. Gardner.<sup>9</sup> To get a force to Liberia as quickly as possible, one Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter and 75 Marines were cross-decked to a destroyer and pushed ahead of the rest of the amphibious ready group (ARG).<sup>10</sup>

In the scramble to plan and prepare to sail for Liberia, HMM-261 mechanics replaced all the transmissions in its 12 CH-46s, because a defective transmission quill shaft had been identified as being at fault in the crash of a CH-46 in another squadron. The supply system gave the squadron top priority for new transmissions. Mechanics worked around the clock to replace the transmissions in all their aircraft. On arrival off the coast of Liberia, all HMM-261's Sea Knights were ready for action.<sup>11</sup>

The destroyer with the advance force arrived 2 June and the rest of the ARG arrived the next day. Colonel Amos leveraged his on-call Lockheed KC-130 Hercules detachment from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 252 (VMGR-252), supplemented by U.S. Navy C-130s and C-9 Skytrains (military version of a McDonnell-Douglas DC-9), to shuttle supplies into a forward logistics site at Freetown, Sierra Leone, which abuts Liberia to the north. From here, HMM-261 helicopters flew personnel, mail, and cargo

to the ARG daily.<sup>12</sup> This allowed the Marine sea-based expeditionary unit to remain on station indefinitely.

Despite the initial urgency, the 22d MEU waited off the coast of West Africa in Mamba Station's sweltering heat for two months. Gardner drilled his aircrews incessantly, practicing contingency missions. Helicopters were essential for any evacuation because the beaches off Monrovia were not suitable for landing craft, plus travel on land was risky because fighters of rival factions prowled the area.<sup>13</sup> The ARG remained out of sight over the horizon, ready if the ambassador needed it, but hidden to avoid giving alarm and precipitating a crisis.

Bloody factional fighting closed in on Monrovia and the embassy; helicopter crews saw the carnage of the fighting, butchered bodies afloat in the surf. As the violence grew ever closer to the embassy, on 4 August American ambassador Peter Jon de Vos called for a drawdown of the embassy staff and evacuation of designated American citizens and third-party nationals. Evacuations began the next day.<sup>14</sup>

Throughout their time on Mamba Station, bright and sunny skies had prevailed. Now that the evacuation was on, weather turned to low clouds with rain and fog that obscured visibility. Marines boarded the HMM-261's helicopters organized to conduct simultaneous evacuation at Voice of America radio receiving and transmitting sites and the embassy. The poor weather forced the pilots to take off individually instead of in the planned formations. They punched through the clouds and joined in the clear on the other side.<sup>15</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Gardner was mission commander, flying the lead CH-46 headed for the first evacuation site, the Voice of America sites. Bell AH-1

<sup>9</sup> Gardner's squadron, as was common with MEU ACEs, was a composite squadron. Added to the basic squadron's 12 CH-46s were 4 Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions, 2 Bell UH-1N Hueys, 4 Bell AH-1W Super Cobras, and 6 McDonnell Douglas AV-8B Harriers.

<sup>10</sup> 22d MEU Command Chronology (ComdC), 1 July–31 December 1991 (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps History Division), pt. 2, 5–6, and enclosure 1, 1. An ARG was composed of Navy amphibious ships, usually three or four, which held the MEU.

<sup>11</sup> SSgt John Lavaile, "NCOs Keep Workhorses Flying MEU," *Wind Sock*, 9 August 1990.

<sup>12</sup> Maj James G. Antal and Maj R. John Vanden Berghe, *On Mamba Station: U.S. Marines in West Africa, 1990–2003* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 2004), 17–18.

<sup>13</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> LtCol Stephen J. Labadie, interview with Benis M. Frank, 1990, transcript (Oral History Collection, Marine Corps History Division [MCHD], Quantico, VA), 17, hereafter Labadie interview; LtCol Warren T. Parker interview with Benis M. Frank, 1990, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 9; and Antal and Vanden Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 25–27.



Photo by JO1 Kip Burke, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA A Sikorsky CH-53D Sea Stallion of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 (HMM-261) lifts off from the flight deck of the USS Saipan (LHA 2) during Operation Sharp Edge.

Cobra and UH-1 Iroquois (Huey) gunships escorted the transports and bomb-carrying McDonnell-Douglas AV-8B Harrier IIs orbited above the helicopters.<sup>16</sup> The first helicopters into the zones carried Marines who clambered out and established safe perimeters. Then empty CH-46s or Sikorsky CH-53 Sea Stallions

descended. The evacuees were fitted with life vests and head protection and then boarded. Within the hour, these helicopters carrying evacuees from both radio sites were back on board the USS Saipan (LHA 2).<sup>17</sup>

While these evacuations were carried out, CH-53s loaded with Marines also roared low over the water toward the embassy. Approaching the shore, the helicopters popped up into the embassy's landing zone.<sup>18</sup> The Marines established security, quickly allowing the evacuations to begin and continue through the day with little opposition.

The next week, the Saipan moved south ready to evacuate foreign nationals near Buchanan, Liberia. People had spent the preceding few terrifying days laying on the floors of their houses to avoid gunfire from rampaging factions. The dominant faction belonged to rebel leader Charles Taylor. Marines negotiated with Taylor's lieutenants, who agreed to the evacuation of about 100 foreign nationals by Marine air, including the Spanish ambassador, a Swiss chargé d'affaires, and the Papal Nuncio.<sup>19</sup>

In subsequent weeks, the evacuations continued from Monrovia and logistics flights were added. Supplying the embassy with food, water, and generator fuel became an important aspect of the HMM-261 missions. By 21 August, when the 22d MEU was to be relieved by the 26th MEU(SOC), they had evacuated 1,648 persons from Liberia, 132 American citizens, and 1,516 foreign nationals.<sup>20</sup>

Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, occurring on 2 August, overshadowed events in Liberia. This put a demand on resources, and dispatching the 26th MEU to western Africa with Hussein rampaging through Kuwait hardly made sense. However, leaving Americans at the mercy of brutal factions in Liberia hardly made sense either. To deal with both contingencies, the 26th MEU was split, resulting in the creation of

<sup>17</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 27–30.

<sup>18</sup> Labadie interview, 16. A climb was required because the embassy was built on a peninsula high above the water. This made for a nice change from the normal tension-wrought approach to a possibly hostile landing zone in which helicopters descended into the zone, slow, predictable, and vulnerable. The embassy approach was protected until the last seconds when the pilots popped their birds up and settled in the zone.

<sup>19</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 38–40.

<sup>20</sup> 22d MEU ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1991, enclosure 1, 7–8.

<sup>16</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 25–31; and Capt Michael T. Carillo, interview with Benis M. Frank, 1990, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 6.



Photo by JO1 Kip Burke, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA  
Marines of the 22d Marine Expeditionary Unit (22d MEU) stand by to board a helicopter on board USS Saipan (LHA 2) during Operation Sharp Edge. The Marines were flown to the U.S. embassy in Monrovia, Liberia, to augment security and evacuate U.S. and foreign nationals from the fighting between government and rebel forces.

Contingency Marine Air-Ground Task Force 3-90 (CMAGTF 3-90), nicknamed the Monrovia MAGTF. It was commanded by Major George S. Hartley and consisted of two ships that served as a miniature sea base for a reinforced rifle company, an abbreviated logistics detachment, and a small ACE. This miniature ACE, carved out of the 26th MEU's ACE, HMM-162, the Golden Eagles, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Darrell A. Browning, consisted of 3 CH-46s, 6 pilots, and 22 maintenance troops. Browning assigned Major Daniel P. Johnson to command the detachment

during the first half of the contingency, and Lieutenant Colonel Tommy L. Patton to the second half.<sup>21</sup> Although conducted in the shadow of the war in Kuwait, it was still a high-visibility operation—especially should something go wrong.<sup>22</sup>

The ACE was based on the USS *Whidbey Island* (LSD 41), an amphibious ship that was not built to

<sup>21</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 44–45.

<sup>22</sup> BGen Edwin H. Simmons, “Getting Marines to the Gulf,” U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings* 117, no. 5 (May 1991): 59; and Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 54.



accommodate an aircraft component of any size, but with the help of the crew, suitable adaptations were made. Space was provided for the three CH-46s, ensuring that two could be deck-spotted at all times. The ship's surface radar was used to provide navigational assistance. An enlisted sailor performed well as an ad hoc air controller, albeit with cursory, on-the-job training.

With only three aircraft available to support the embassy and conduct evacuations, Johnson and Patton knew that success depended on careful stewardship of the Sea Knights. Aircraft maintenance was the critical factor. Maintenance facilities were limited on the *Whidbey Island*. Because it was not built as an aircraft platform, its deck was lower than a landing helicopter assault (LHA) or LPH's and as such exposed the CH-46s to corrosive saltwater spray. The other ship of the CMAGTF, the USS *Barnstable County* (LST 1197), on which the aviation detachment also operated, had an even lower deck. Johnson and Patton understood that every flight hour brought their aircraft closer to a maintenance inspection that would take it temporarily out of flight status. They therefore minimized flights and consolidated missions, trying to fly only one aircraft at a time. They lobbied the Navy ships' captains to position the *Whidbey Island* as close as possible to shore to shorten the flight to land and minimize flight time, but the captains refused, citing regulations that ships in this case should operate no closer than 25 miles from shore. The State Department interceded and gave the Navy permission to operate within 15 miles of shore.<sup>23</sup>

The CMAGTF was at the end of a long resupply line. Aircraft parts had to be flown from the United States to Sigonella, Sicily, then to Freetown, Liberia, and then out to the *Whidbey Island* or the embassy in Monrovia. The third CH-46 was in effect a parts supply bin; in dire circumstances, parts could be borrowed.<sup>24</sup> Sometimes creative maintenance was required. A CH-46 busted a hydraulic line while landing on the *Barn-*

*stable County*. It had to be repaired immediately, as the deck space was going to be needed the next day to lift replenishment stocks on board. There was no replacement part near Mamba Station, therefore a desperate search commenced for a piece of aluminum tubing that would temporarily suffice. In the ship's galley, the deep fat fryer was found to have a piece of tubing the right diameter. It was cut off and installed on the helicopter, which completed the mission.<sup>25</sup>

Flight operations focused on maintaining the 80–90 Marines on shore and keeping the embassy staff supplied. Pallets of food, water, and other supplies were flown in daily, including some luxury goods for the State Department staff, to include pallets of beer and liquor, ice cream, and pet food. The Marines providing security on shore subsisted for the most part on meals-ready-to-eat. Fuel to operate the embassy's generators was constantly required, flown in 500-gallon bladders suspended under the CH-46s. They also hauled passengers, ferrying people between the ships and Monrovia or Freetown. Evacuations continued too.<sup>26</sup>

Fighting was sporadic in and around Monrovia, and the Liberian president, Samuel K. Doe, was captured by a splinter organization of Charles Taylor's group, led by Prince Yormie Johnson, who tortured and executed Doe on video. The fighting did not cease, however. Taylor's faction was divided, with the splinter faction led by Johnson and warring against Taylor's faction. Therefore, people still wanted out and another 800 people were evacuated.

On 9 January 1991, Operation Sharp Edge ended.<sup>27</sup> A MAGTF had been on Mamba Station seven months and tons of supplies had been delivered. The Navy-Marine team were a life support for the American embassy, a positive instrument of American diplomacy, and a life saver. A total of 2,439 persons had

<sup>23</sup> Johnson interview, 13–14.

<sup>24</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 60–63.

<sup>25</sup> Gen Carl E. Mundy Jr., interview with BGen Edwin H. Simmons, 2000, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 237, hereafter Mundy interview. Simmons and Mundy called this operation one that would not end.

<sup>23</sup> Maj Daniel P. Johnson, interview with Meredith P. Hartley, 1991, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 4–7, hereafter Johnson interview.

<sup>24</sup> Johnson interview, 1; and Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 60.

been evacuated; fewer than one-tenth were Americans.<sup>28</sup>

## Operation Sea Angel

Out of the dark of night on 29 April 1991, a cyclone's killer winds and a monstrous tidal wave smashed into Bangladesh, the most densely populated nation on earth. Death and destruction rolled over the southern and eastern coastal region, trees were denuded, livestock perished by the millions, and nearly 140,000 people died. It was one of the most devastating natural disasters of recent times. A massive relief effort began; governments and nongovernmental relief organizations geared up and relief poured in.

As often occurs during natural disasters, the transportation system of Bangladesh was devastated, a severe challenge for delivering relief. People who lived in low-lying coastal regions and off-shore islands were isolated, without food and water, and subject to disease. Relief supplies were available, but there was no way to get them to the people who needed them most. The storm destroyed 60 percent of the Bangladesh Air Force's helicopters. The U.S. ambassador, William B. Milam, asked whether Marine Corps or Navy assets "might be diverted to assist relief operations?"<sup>29</sup>

The 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (5th MEB), minus its 11th MEU, and Amphibious Group Three were standing by in the Persian Gulf. In anticipation of assisting with Bangladesh relief efforts, 5th MEB and Amphibious Group 3, led by the USS *Tarawa* (LHA 1), were ordered homeward on 7 May by way of the Indian Ocean. That would put them off the coast of Bangladesh in seven days, a week after the cyclone struck.<sup>30</sup>

The State Department and the U.S. military considered an amphibious task force an effective means to help the most people in the quickest way. The devastated area was close to shore and accessible to the MEB's landing craft and helicopters. An amphibious task force was nonintrusive; military personnel for the most part could remain on board ship and required little support from the host nation. It would not ruffle Bangladeshis' sensitivities regarding their newly elected, first-ever democratic government.<sup>31</sup> Providing discreet humanitarian relief to Bangladesh met President Bush's and President Clinton's national security strategies that the military be engaged in spreading goodwill and democracy in an unobtrusive manner.

The critical need for distributing life-saving relief made the 5th MEB's transport helicopters a key factor. On 9 May, the State Department formally requested the military to provide relief assistance in the form of heavy-lift helicopters, specifically those attached to the 5th MEB. President Bush approved the request on 11 May, and 5th MEB arrived in the Bay of Bengal four days later.<sup>32</sup>

Marine major general Henry C. Stackpole III commanded the relief effort, called Sea Angel. The new Navy-Marine doctrine, *Forward from the Sea*, demanded that MAGTFs be joint. Sea Angel demonstrated this capability. The Air Force and Army contingents arrived first and began humanitarian operations. The arrival of 5th MEB's eight amphibious ships represented the biggest U.S. component of Sea Angel. The 5th MEB, containing 4,000 Marines and sailors, was commanded by Marine Brigadier General Peter J. Rowe. Its ACE, Marine Aircraft Group 50 (MAG 50), was commanded by Colonel Randall L. West and included 26 transport (CH-46s and CH-53s) helicopters.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 63.

<sup>29</sup> Charles R. Smith, *Angels from the Sea: Relief Operations in Bangladesh, 1991* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1995), 14, 20–21.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Angels from the Sea*, 15–18, 45–47. Although ordered home on the 7th, the MEB did not actually exit the Persian Gulf until 10 May. Operation Desert Storm was over and U.S. forces were retrograding; 5th MEB was supporting the retrograde and was on stand-by to conduct a possible NEO in Ethiopia. In early May, this contingency seemed less likely, so the 11th MEU and associated amphibious ships were detached from 5th MEB and left to cover the Ethiopian contingency and support the retrograde.

<sup>31</sup> Smith, *Angels from the Sea*, 18.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *Angels from the Sea*, 22–24, 45, 61.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Angels from the Sea*, 36. The Air Force flew Lockheed C-141 Starlifters and C-130s into Bangladesh, bringing in earliest contingents of soldiers and support staff. MAG-50 also had Harrier jets from VMA-513. The transport helicopters in MAG-50 came from HMM-265 (CH-46Es), HMLA-169 (UH-1Ns), and HMMH-772 (Detachment A) (CH-53Ds) a Reserve squadron. Additionally, there were two Navy Sikorsky SH-3H Sea King helicopters as part of Amphibious Group 3.



*Photo by SSgt Val Gempis, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*

MajGen Henry C. Stackpole III (facing), 3d Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force (III MEF), led the U.S. humanitarian efforts for Operation Sea Angel. Stackpole retired as a lieutenant general.

The 5th MEB began operations the day after arrival off Bangladesh. General Stackpole hoped for a quick in-and-out operation of no longer than two weeks. He compensated for the new Bangladeshi government's sensitivities by ensuring that no more than 500 American Service personnel were ashore during daylight hours. Amphibious Group 3's ships had been cargo loaded to operate as a sea base instead of building a supply base on shore. This enhanced efficiency in moving cargo from ship to shore and reduced the American footprint. Many of the relief supplies were flown into Chittagong, a port city/distribution point,

by Air Force and Special Operations Command C-130s. Throughout the operation, helicopters departed the *Tarawa* early and flew into Chittagong, where helicopter crews received their mission assignments. These had been shaped to fully utilize helicopter flight time and avoid loiter or hover time. The CH-46s and CH-53s principally flew bulk loads of foodstuffs—rice, potatoes, lentils, dry molasses, flour, and wheat, but also equipment, like water purification systems, and people, including very important persons (VIPs) such as Bangladeshi government officials, nongovernment workers, relief teams, and media.

To minimize loading and unloading time, supplies were sling-loaded (carried externally underneath the helicopters). UH-1Ns flew into the smaller zones, direct to those most in need; people were often stranded on rooftops and paddy dikes. Villagers shouted, “*Faresta, faresta*”—*angel* in Bengali, as helicopters hovered down with desperately needed supplies. Downtime associated with aircraft refueling and replenishment was minimized by stationing two amphibious ships, USS *Barbour County* (LST 1195) and USS *Frederick* (LST 1184), close to shore, indeed in only 10 meters of water. Both ships’ crews went all out, expediting aircraft servicing. Marine air crew dined on Navy box lunches while their aircraft were serviced.<sup>34</sup>

On 29 May, after two weeks, 5th MEB was relieved by the smaller CMAGTF 2-91. The 5th MEB had stabilized the situation and saved numerous lives. MAG-50 aircraft flew 1,167 sorties in 1,147 flight hours as they safely delivered 5,485 passengers to their destinations and 695 tons of relief supplies. It was another validation of the total force concept. Marine Reservists of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772 (HMH-772) flew the MEB’s CH-53s.

Operation Sea Angel was a cogent display of the Navy-Marine Corps team that featured flexibility and adaptability to accomplish pop-up missions of great size and consequence. It was an expansive and high-visibility operation. It demonstrated American goodwill through the efforts of its service personnel, who worked ardently and delayed their homecoming to save thousands in Bangladesh.

Operation Sea Angel, coming on the heels of a combat deployment, when the Marines could have resented a delay on the way home (indeed nongovernment organizations were concerned that combat Marines might cause trouble), found the experience truly rewarding and humbling. An estimated 30,000 people were saved. Colonel West reported that on one mission, as he flew a load of supplies to isolated villagers, the village chief expressed his gratitude by “clasp-



Photo by SSgt Val Gempis, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007. NARA Capt Wayne Miller, a Boeing Vertol CH-46 Sea Knight helicopter pilot, speaks with local residents after delivering humanitarian relief and supplies during Operation Sea Angel.

ing his hands together and nodding with tears.” Later, the chief passed a note to West that said that a baby born that day had been named *Faresta* as a perpetual reminder of the American angels that brought them aid in their time of need. The success of Sea Angel modeled successful humanitarian operations, a template followed in operations later in the decade. General Stackpole noted that when Joint Task Force Sea Angel left Bangladesh, “the crops were growing and the trees had sprouted leaves . . . and there was life in the area.”<sup>35</sup>

## Operations Fiery Vigil

On 7 June 1991, Mount Pinatubo, a long dormant volcano on the Philippine island of Luzon, blasted a shot of smoke and ash 6.4 kilometers high into the atmosphere. Rumbles and gaseous effusions occurred until 15 June, when a massive, earth-shaking eruption occurred. Coinciding with Pinatubo’s blast, Typhoon Yunya arrived and whipped Luzon with rain and wind. The double blows blacked out the sun and

<sup>34</sup> Smith, *Angels from the Sea*, 61–62; and LtGen Henry C. Stackpole III lecture at U.S. Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington, DC, 30 January 1992, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 11, hereafter Stackpole lecture.

<sup>35</sup> Stackpole lecture, 16–19; and Smith, *Angels from the Sea*, 38, 62, 76–77. CMAGTF 2-91 had about 240 Marines and sailors and one amphibious ship; surface craft from Amphibious Group 3 delivered another 1,450 tons of relief supplies.





Photo by SSgt Ron Alvey, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA HMM-364 CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters combat swirling ash as they attempt to land on base in the aftermath of Mount Pinatubo's eruption in the Philippines. The volcano, which had erupted for the first time in more than 600 years, forced the U.S. military to coordinate Operation Fiery Vigil evacuation efforts to remove more than 20,000 evacuees from the area.

dropped a blizzard of slimy ash on the island, which accumulated a foot deep in places. Aircraft approaching Luzon saw a massive slick miles from land of what appeared to be white paint on the ocean's surface. Mount Pinatubo's ash accumulated on buildings and aircraft hangars such that many of them collapsed under the weight.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of Pinatubo's eruption, the United States set up an expansive relief effort called Operation Fiery Vigil, a joint evacuation operation to rescue Americans and dependents on Luzon, especially at hard-hit Clark Air Base. Less than 16 kilometers from Pinatubo, the base was in danger of meeting Pompeii's fate. Eventually, about 21,000 American military personnel and their dependents were evacuated from Luzon in a massive exodus during which the Navy-Marine Corps team played a key role.

The 15th MEU(SOC), commanded by Colonel Terrence P. Murray, had just completed an amphibious exercise on Iwo Jima and was headed for liberty in Hong Kong when it was diverted for Operation Fiery Vigil. It established an air evacuation center on the Philippine island of Cebu. The Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163 (HMM-163), the 15th MEU's ACE, along with an air traffic control detachment, went ashore at Cebu. The USS *Peleliu* (LHA 5) sailed to Subic Bay to take on evacuees. After returning to Cebu, HMM-163 pilots ferried the more than 6,000 evacuees ashore.<sup>37</sup>

Marine Aircraft Group 36 (MAG-36), based on Okinawa, also responded to Pinatubo's hellish fury. Lockheed Martin KC-130s of VMGR-152 took station over the Philippine and South China Seas to aerially refuel tactical jets fleeing Luzon. Included in this exodus were Marine Fighter Attack Squad-

<sup>36</sup> Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 364 (HMM-364) ComdC, 1 June–30 June 1991 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 1; and HMM-364 ComdC, 1 July–15 December 1991, pt. 4, item 1. Pinatubo's eruption was the third natural disaster within a year that afflicted the Philippines; all drew Marine humanitarian assistance. The previous June, an earthquake shook the islands, and in September there were expansive mudslides. The 13th MEU(SOC) and MAGTF 4-90 provided assistance after the earthquake and MAGTF 4-90 assisted in the case of the mudslides.

<sup>37</sup> HMM-163 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1991 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 6; and 15th MEU(SOC) ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1991 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 2–4.

ron 122 (VMFA-122) flying McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornets, and Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 332 (VMA[AW]-332) flying Grumman A-6 Intruders. The KC-130s also flew Marines and supplies into Cubi Point to support the relief effort. Ash accumulation on Cubi Point's runways prevented any aircraft larger than KC-130s from operating there. The KC-130 pilots had to kill the engines immediately on landing to prevent ash inhalation and damage to the engines.<sup>38</sup> Marine Light Helicopter Squadron 776 (HML-776), flying UH-1s, distributed in excess of 90,000 pounds of food to Philippine citizens isolated by mudslides.

The carrier USS *Midway* (CV 41) served as a sea base for MAG-36 relief operations. This included a detachment from Reserve CH-53 squadron Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 772 (HMH-772), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ronald J. Fuhrmann. A detachment from Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 36 (MALS-36) and 114 Marines from the 9th MEB were also on the *Midway*. Fuhrmann's five Super Stallions flew tons of relief supplies to the *Midway* before it sailed for the Philippines. Once off the coast of Luzon, HMH-772's CH-53s shuttled people, goods, and supplies between the *Midway* and the USS *Abraham Lincoln* (CVN 72), also diverted to the Philippines. Thousands of evacuees boarded the carriers at Subic Bay, hot, dirty, thirsty, and hungry. They were fed and cared for—sailors and Marines even gave up their beds for the evacuees—and after two days sailing, they arrived off Cebu. The evacuees were moved to shore, many flown in HMH-772 helicopters, which flew non-stop for 13 hours.<sup>39</sup>

## Operations Distant Runner and Support Hope

The 11th MEU(SOC), on station in the Indian Ocean and conducting Operation Quick Draw, the extrac-

tion of U.S. forces from Somalia, received orders on 8 April 1994 to conduct an NEO in Rwanda. In April 1994, genocidal tribal warfare, Hutu against Tutsi, suddenly broke out. The slaughter was immense, if not unprecedented. By the end of the fighting in July 1994, the death toll approached 1 million. This was not large-scale industrialized warfare but neighbor-against-neighbor slaughter, often by machete. The U.S. government responded quickly, although minimally (Somalia-type mission creep was a great fear) to protect Americans and third-party nationals.

Leaving behind part of the expeditionary unit to support Somali operations, the main part of the 11th MEU rapidly sailed south. On 9 April, helicopters from the 11th MEU(SOC)'s ACE, the composite squadron, HMM-163 (Reinforced), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel William D. Catto, flew 330 Marines of Battalion Landing Team 2/5 from amphibious ships to Mombasa, Kenya. Here, they boarded three CH-53Es and KC-130s of VMGR-352 for the 636-mile flight into Bujumbura International Airport, Burundi.

The VMGR-352 detachment, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel J. Pete Donato, was already in Mombasa supporting Somali operations. The KC-130s and the CH-53Es gave the long-haul ability to get Marines in place to secure the evacuation site. Maintenance Marines in VMGR-352 worked feverishly to get their aircraft ready for this added mission, including replacing an aircraft engine and cracked turbine in only 4 hours instead of the standard 24. The KC-130s and CH-53Es flew the Marines to Burundi, where they established a safe site for the evacuation of what turned out to be more than 200 civilians. American and other third-party civilians had exited Rwanda, escaping what they described as the "most basic terror." They were convoyed to neighboring Burundi led by American Ambassador, David P. Rawson, who shut the doors on the embassy in Rwanda. The proximity of Marines deterred Hutus who might otherwise interfere with Rawson's convoy. As he said, Marines close by were "immensely significant . . . and made it possible to get the cooperation needed." This insertion of Marines into Burundi represented the most distant extension of a Marine sea-based unit inland at that

<sup>38</sup> MAG-36 ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1991 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 4, item 4; and "Volcano," *Leatherneck* 74, no. 9 (September 1991), 12.

<sup>39</sup> HMH-772 ComdC, 1 June–30 June 1991 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 2–3, and pt. 4, item 4; MAG-36 ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1991 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 4, item, 5; and C. R. Anderegg, *The Ash Warriors* (Hickam Air Force Base, HI: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2000), 69–73.



Photo by Cpl M. A. Butler, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA

Marine mechanics Sgt Becerra and LCpl Shute guide a crane driver as he positions a new propeller on a Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352 (VMGR-352) Lockheed Martin KC-130 aircraft as part of an engine replacement. Marine aircraft mechanics often had to perform complex and sophisticated aircraft maintenance operations in expeditionary and/or hostile conditions.

time. Ultimately, the civilians were flown out of Burundi by U.S. Air Force C-141s.<sup>40</sup>

## Operations Assured Response and Quick Response

Beginning in 1996, violence spurred by tribal and political factions roiled West Africa. At the behest of the National Command Authority, MAGTFs conducted

a series of contingency operations in the region to protect American citizens and interests. This included operations in Liberia, the Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Eritrea, Congo, and Kenya.

Fighting had wracked Liberia spasmodically since Marines had departed in 1991. In the spring of 1996, it flared into intense, sustained violence that threatened American citizens and engulfed the capital of Monrovia and the American embassy where Americans had fled to escape danger. The American ambassador recalled phone calls he received from endangered Americans: “I mean you would hear the Americans actually screaming over the phones, begging for help.

<sup>40</sup> 11th MEU(SOC) ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1994 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 1–3; “Two MEUs Off Somali Coast,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 1994): 4; “Marines Aid in Evacuations,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (May 1994): 7; and “Basic Terror,” in Donatella Lorch, “Strife in Rwanda: Evacuation,” *New York Times*, 11 April 1994.



You could hear over the phones of people breaking in, pulling back the steel bars that they had, using sledge hammers to smash down the doors.”<sup>41</sup>

Again, the request for help went out and the State Department authorized an evacuation: Operation Assured Response. The first forces to Liberia were from the Special Operations Command, Europe, which arrived in Monrovia on 9 April 1996. They began evacuations, often under fire, of American citizens and third-party nationals. Rebels persistently fired small arms or rocket-propelled grenades at the embassy. Evacuees were flown by special operations helicopters from Monrovia to Lungi International Airport in Sierra Leone. The commander-in-chief, European Command, wanted to ensure the safety of the special operations forces, therefore the 22d MEU(SOC), commanded by Colonel Melvin W. Forbush, in the Mediterranean, sailed at best speed for Monrovia. It not only served as backup for special operations forces, it also was tasked to ensure the embassy’s security and conduct NEOs as required.<sup>42</sup>

Ongoing Mediterranean commitments, however, did not go away, and the 22d MEU’s ARG was divided, or disaggregated. Three amphibious ships bearing most of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 2/2 and the MEU’s ACE, HMM-162 (Reinforced), were sent to Mamba Station, arriving on 18 April 1996. The 22d MEU’s standby detachment of KC-130s of VMGR-252 made logistics flights into neighboring Sierra Leone. Once the 22d MEU was on station, Joint Task Force Assured Response was turned over to Forbush.<sup>43</sup>

Two days after arrival, HMM-162 (Rein) helicopters flew Marines into the embassy, where they established security. The situation in Monrovia had grown noticeably worse since the 1990–91 NEOs. Now, fighters approached Marine positions at will. They were defiant and condescending, they “flipped the bird” at Marines and pointed their weapons threateningly.

There was more fighting. HMM-162 (Rein) aircraft flying from their sea base, like predecessor squadrons, flew logistics flights to support the embassy and Marines on shore. They also conducted evacuations, although since the arrival of the Marines, who were a stabilizing influence, the number of Americans seeking evacuation had declined. During the two months the 22d MEU was in Liberia, 49 Americans were evacuated. By June, the situation had been neutralized such that a force of Nigerians serving as peacekeepers assumed security duties.<sup>44</sup>

Even while conditions in Liberia intensified, civil war erupted unexpectedly in the neighboring Central African Republic. This put the security of the American embassy and the safety of American citizens in peril. Colonel Forbush, whose expeditionary unit had already been divided, was now directed by European Command on 20 May to peel off another segment of the MEU and send it to Bangui, the Central African Republic’s capital. It was to secure the embassy there (it had no permanent security guards on staff) and prepare to evacuate Americans. Forbush designated the 81mm platoon of BLT 2/2’s weapons company for the mission, supplemented with Marines from the MEU’s service support element. Bangui was 321.9 kilometers inland from the ARG. To get the 35 Marines to Bangui, Forbush relied on his detachment of KC-130s of VMGR-252.<sup>45</sup>

Every MEU(SOC) had a detachment of KC-130s assigned and on a 48-hour alert, ready to respond to contingencies as the unit commander saw fit. In the African operations in the mid-1990s, they proved essential for moving logistics long distances, such as from Rota, Spain, to Dakar, Senegal, and Sierra Leone. In the case of the Central African Republic, they were essential for moving Marines deep inland.

When the 22d MEU was alerted to the mission, Operation Quick Response, its KC-130 detachment, commanded by Major John T. Collins, was in Rota,

<sup>41</sup> John H. Frese interview with Maj James G. Antal, 3 September 1996, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 6. Frese was the regional security officer at the American embassy in Monrovia, Liberia, in 1996.

<sup>42</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 71–73.

<sup>43</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 74; and VMGR-252 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1996 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 3–4.

<sup>44</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 84. The 22d MEU(SOC) was relieved by a special mission MAGTF on 24 June 1996.

<sup>45</sup> LtCol Tony S. Barnes interview with Fred Allison, 16 October 2008, sound recording (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), hereafter Barnes interview.



*Photo by Cpl A. Olguin, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
Marines of the 22d MEU(SOC) are inserted at the U.S. embassy in Liberia by HMM-162 CH-46 Sea Knight helicopters during Operation Assured Response.

Spain, undergoing training and was alerted to the contingency. With little information other than to fly toward Sierra Leone, 4,828 kilometers away, on 20 May, pilots Captains David A. Krebs, Homer W. Ne-smith, and Robert A. Boyd and a crew of eight Marines took off from Rota. The flight crew had been augmented because the flight would extend past a normal crew day. Additional instructions would be provided as they flew toward Sierra Leone. Stopping at Freetown, Sierra Leone, the crew refueled and received a map and airfield approach information for Bangui—a strong clue of their destination.

In the meantime, the security team of BLT 2/2 had been flown by CH-53Es to Freetown, Sierra Leone's airport. Here, they waited for the arrival of Krebs's KC-130, which arrived at 2000. On the ground at Sierra Leone, a satellite communications system was

installed in the KC-130 and, after refueling, it took off with Marines of BLT 2/2 aboard. Overflight restrictions of some West African nations forced them to fly additional miles along the coast.

They received clearance to fly inland over Cameroon and into the Central African Republic. Approaching to land in predawn darkness over Bangui, the KC-130 crew watched tracers from small arms lace over the city. As they rolled out on the runway, they saw fighting positions, manned by French troops and civilians awaiting evacuation. Immediately, the Marine mortar-men went to the embassy and secured it. Others began processing evacuees while KC-130 crew unloaded pallets of much-needed bottled water. The evacuees, mostly missionaries and Peace Corps volunteers, 13 in all, were processed and loaded aboard the KC-130. They were extremely pleased to see Ma-

rines. Once loaded, the KC-130 took off, heading to Cameroon. By the time they landed and shut down at Yaounde, Krebs and crew had been operating for 36 hours, which included 18.3 hours in flight.<sup>46</sup>

The KC-130s of VMGR-252 that followed in subsequent days were the main means of escape for Americans out of the Central African Republic during Operation Quick Response, which lasted until 1 August. More than 400 civilians, including 190 Americans, were flown out on the Marine Hercules aircraft.<sup>47</sup>

Almost as soon as the 22d MEU began supporting Operation Assured Response, high-level command wanted it back in the Mediterranean because of the ongoing ethnic tensions in southeastern Europe. With no extra MEUs available (the other two East Coast-based MEUs of the 2d Marine Expeditionary Force had standard rotation dates that could not be adjusted), commanders authorized a special-purpose Marine air-ground task force (SPMAGTF) to assume the West African contingency. Ground troops to form the battalion landing team came from the 8th Marine Regiment. The 8th Marines' commander, Colonel Tony L. Corwin, was given command of the SPMAGTF. The task force's aviation combat element was comprised of two CH-53Es and two UH-1Ns, from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 (HMH-461) and Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 167 (HMLA-167), respectively. Personnel from Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 26, Marine Wing Support Squadron 272, and Marine Air Control Squadron 2 were added.<sup>48</sup>

The aviation combat element was assigned to the USS *Ponce* (LPD 15), even though it was not built to handle a contingent of aircraft and associated equipment. The *Ponce* also lacked precision-approach control and weather forecasting equipment. Also, once



Photo courtesy of Capt David Krebs, USMC

Capt David Krebs stands with his KC-130 crew after a marathon 36-hour flight from Rota, Spain, to Bangui, Central African Republic, where they rescued Americans from a threatening situation. Crewmen (left to right): Capt Homer Nesmith, Krebs, Cpl Heeringa, Cpl Biery, Sgt Nave, CWO-5 Larry Ross, SSgt Matt Davis, Capt Rob Boyd, Sgt Janzen, Cpl Hansen, and GySgt Reid Henderson.

the maintenance vans were loaded aboard, it only had room for a single helicopter at a time to operate on its deck. Nevertheless, loading the Marine detachment was planned to begin on 12 June.<sup>49</sup>

This plan, however, was short-stopped by the grounding of all CH-53s due to a suspected defective duplex bearing in the main rotor swash plates. Therefore, on 11 June, the day before loading was to commence, HMM-264, only recently returned from a six-month deployment, were directed to send four of their CH-46s with pilots and support personnel as replacements for the CH-53s. Lieutenant Colonel Eugene A. Conti, HMM-264's commander, became the ACE commander. The pilots and crews of HMM-264 had little time for planning or preparing—indeed the *Ponce* sailed in less than three days.<sup>50</sup>

Briefings, training, and meetings were conducted on the trans-Atlantic voyage. The transport aircraft of VMGR-252 flew the advance party of the task force to Sierra Leone for meetings with the 22d MEU's staff. On 27 June, the SPMAGTF relieved the 22d MEU

<sup>46</sup> VMGR-252 ComdC, 1 January 1996–30 June 1996 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 3–4; Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 89–91; 22d MEU(SOC) ComdC, 1–30 April 1996 (Quantico, VA: Gray Research Center), pt. 2, 4–5; and LtCol David A. Krebs, phone conversation with Fred Allison, 29 April 2010, notes in author's files (Quantico, VA: MCHD).

<sup>47</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 93–94.

<sup>48</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 95–96.

<sup>49</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 96–97.

<sup>50</sup> HMM-264 ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1996 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 1–2, pt. 4, item 1; and 2d MAW ComdC 1 January–30 June 1994 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 4.



*Photo by Cpl A. Olguin, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*

Col Tony L. Corwin, commanding officer of Special Marine Air-Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) Liberia, addresses troops two days prior to landing in Liberia.

on Mamba Station. HMM-264 took up the logistics flights into the embassy in Monrovia. These proved challenging due to summertime tropical weather hazards and lack of radar on the ship or on shore. HMM-264 crews often had to transport external loads that nearly maxed out their load capacity, into a landing zone built out of a basketball court surrounded by a high fence next to a cliff. Additionally, they flew into Freetown, Sierra Leone, which was a central transportation/logistics hub as it was the closest airfield from which C-130s could operate. The helicopters were the link between Freetown and the *Ponce*. On 1 August, after Monrovia was calm and stable for a sufficient period, the State Department recommended that evacuation status be lifted from Liberia. On 3 August 1996,

Joint Task Force Assured Response ended, and the next day, the SPMAGTF departed Mamba Station. During the contingency, the six aircraft of HMM-264 transported 1,800 passengers and 500,000 pounds of cargo without incident.<sup>51</sup>

## Operations Silver Wake and Guardian Retrieval

The calls on MEUs to rescue Americans and innocents from political turmoil in Africa and Europe did not decrease in the later years of the 1990s; MEUs now sailed from North Carolina fully expecting a real-world con-

<sup>51</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 100–2; and HMM-264 ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1996 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 1–2.



tingency to occur. Colonel Emerson N. Gardner, commanding the 26th MEU(SOC), certainly did and he was not disappointed. The 26th MEU(SOC) headed for the Mediterranean in November 1996.

Early in 1997, events in Albania captured Gardner and his staff's attention. Formerly Communist, Albanians, unfamiliar with capitalism, risked all in a financial pyramid scheme and subsequently lost it. They blamed their pro-capitalist government for the meltdown and social turmoil followed. Gardner's expeditionary unit prepared for action.<sup>52</sup>

Predictably, a warning order from the National Command Authority came on 7 March 1997 to Gardner: standby for an Albanian contingency. With scheduled and mandatory port calls in the offing that would displace the MEU uncomfortably far from Albania, Gardner took action that would allow a quick response if an Albania contingency became required.<sup>53</sup>

A detachment of helicopters (four CH-46Es and two AH-1Ws) from the 26th MEU's ACE, HMM-365 (Reinforced), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Jon T. Hardwick, was cross-decked to the USS *Nashville* (LPD 13), along with 72 Marines. This detachment was placed under the command of the MEU's executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel F. Tarpey Jr. Instead of going into Malta with the rest of the expeditionary unit, the *Nashville* went into port at Zakynthos, Greece, only 193 kilometers from Albania. The USS *Nassau* (LHA 4), with the bulk of Gardner's 26th MEU aboard, commenced its port call in Malta.

On 13 March 1997, Gardner received word from the National Command Authority: execute an evacuation of Americans and third-party nationals from Albania. With the *Nashville* stationed close to Albania, HMM-365 (Rein) helicopters were able to launch immediately, at night, to get Marines into the American embassy in Tirana, where they established security, began processing evacuees, and stood up a forward command element.<sup>54</sup>

Darkness gave a measure of security but increased the flight hazards, as Tirana had mountains on three sides and trees uncomfortably close to the landing zone. Most startling to the pilots, though, was the volume of small-arms tracers that streaked through the night sky. It was not necessarily directed at their aircraft; social order had simply broken down and Albanians who had looted well-stocked armories fired away. Indeed, Albanians were at considerable peril simply from the falling bullets. The Marines were amazed at how quickly the veneer of civilization came down.<sup>55</sup>

Four CH-46Es with Lieutenant Colonel Daniel E. Cushing flying the lead aircraft carried the forward command element and a security team to Tirana escorted by two AH-1W Super Cobras, led by Lieutenant Colonel Richard L. Crush. The sense of peril that existed in Tirana motivated the ambassador to prepare 51 Americans, mostly women and children, for immediate evacuation. Marines loaded them onto the CH-46s and whisked them that night to the *Nashville*. High above, American strike-fighters patrolled, ready to deliver air support if needed. Marine All-Weather Fighter Attack Squadron 224 (VMFA(AW)-224), flying McDonnell Douglas F/A-18D Hornets from their Aviano, Italy, base, were likely the first tactical jets overhead. Also coming from Aviano with tactical electronic support were Northrop Grumman EA-6B Prowlers of Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 3 (VMAQ-3), which continued to provide electronic warfare support to Silver Wake operations through 24 March.<sup>56</sup>

The next day, the *Nassau* arrived carrying the rest of the 26th MEU. Evacuations began in earnest with an early launch of eight CH-46s and three CH-53s, with Lieutenant Colonel Hardwick as mission commander. The transports roared into the landing zone at the Re-

<sup>52</sup> Col Emerson N. Gardner Jr. interview with David Crist, 11 June 1997, transcript (Quantico, VA: MCHD), 6, hereafter Gardner interview with Crist.

<sup>53</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 103.

<sup>54</sup> Gardner interview with Crist.

<sup>55</sup> LtCol Daniel E. Cushing interview with David B. Crist, 12 June 1997, transcript (Quantico, VA: MCHD), 14–16, hereafter Cushing interview; and HMM-365 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), encl. 1, 8–9.

<sup>56</sup> HMM-365 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997, encl. 1, 8–9; Gardner interview with Crist, 11–12, 16–19; VMAQ-3 ComdC 1 January–30 June 1997 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 7–8; and VMFA(AW)-224 ComdC 1 January–30 June 1997 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 4–5.



*Photo by Sgt Mark D. Oliva, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*

American citizens are escorted to a CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter by a 26th MEU(SOC) Marine during Operation Silver Wake. The 26th MEU(SOC) was called on to perform a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) of U.S. citizens that desired to leave Albania due to civil strife.

lindja Ridge housing complex near the embassy and began loading civilians. Hardwick employed a “spider web” routing, multiple routes in and out of the landing zone for the helicopters. This facilitated a rapid build-up of combat power and made the flight paths less predictable and thereby less vulnerable to ground fire.<sup>57</sup> The countryside was dotted with gun positions, little concrete emplacements. While Harriers patrolled high overhead, Cobras and UH-1Ns equipped with .50-caliber machine guns, escorted the transport

helicopters. The UH-1N crews paid close attention to the igloo gun sites.

As Cobra pilot Captain Ron L. Pace passed over a gun position, he watched a man shoulder what appeared to be an SA-7 (man portable antiaircraft missile) and point it at his Cobra. Responding immediately, Pace fired a burst from his 20-mm cannon at the gunner.

In another incident, a Cobra gunship took fire from a machine gun; one round struck the Cobra. The pilot, Captain Jon M. Hackett, responded by firing 2.75-inch rockets at the gun position. That stopped the fire. After this, the men on the ridge waved white flags when the Cobras flew by. Lieutenant Colonel Cush-

<sup>57</sup> LtCol Jon T. Hardwick interview with David Crist, 12 June 1997, transcript (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), 10–11.

ing noted the importance of gunships for contingency missions:

We don't come in as policemen. We come in as war fighters. Throughout the world that is our reputation. That is the reputation we presented in Albania, and no one messed with us, and the one person that did, regretted it. The Cobra is again, a powerful platform for escort capability. We went back to the old business of using UH-1s as gunships, and they were very successful in what they did. They carried a 7-shot rocket pod and .50 cal. We were able to use them at escort the entire time, and they were intimidating. We had no problems after the first few days. People realized we were serious about our business.<sup>58</sup>

In the middle of the Albanian evacuation, the 26th MEU was alerted to another possible evacuation requirement—Operation Guardian Retrieval—in civil war-ravaged Zaire. American lives were once again threatened. The U.S. European Command's Southern Task Force deployed a special operations contingent to Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, which sat across the Congo River from Kinshasa, Zaire, to prepare for an evacuation. This force was at the end of a long and tenuous supply line. The European Command needed Gardner's 26th MEU to relieve the special operations force and provide sustained security. It would also be available to execute an evacuation if needed. Because the Albanian evacuation continued, the ARG that supported Gardner's 26th MEU was split. Leaving the *Nashville* behind with four CH-46s, two UH-1Ns, and a contingent of Marines to continue the Albanian operations, the bulk of the expeditionary unit sailed on



Photo by Sgt Mark D. Oliva, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA American citizens buckle into a CH-46E Sea Knight helicopter from 26th MEU(SOC) for transport out of Tirana, Albania, during Operation Silver Wake.

23 March 1997 for the Congolese coast, about 5,200 miles away.<sup>59</sup>

Gardner mobilized the VMGR-252 KC-130s to fly into Brazzaville well ahead of the expeditionary unit's arrival. Staging out of Libreville, Gabon, this re-

<sup>58</sup> Cushing interview, 5–7, 14–16; Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 103; HMM-365 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), encl. 1, 8–9; and Gardner interview with Crist, 11–12, 16–19.

<sup>59</sup> LtCol Curtis E. Haberbosch, "Operation Guardian Retrieval: Operational Maneuver from the Sea and Ship-to-Objective Maneuver in 1997," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 8 (August 1999): 32–33; and Gardner interview with Crist, 30–35. Eventually the 26th MEU evacuated about 800 people, more than 700 of these on the first three days before the ARG was split.



duced the Marine response time to a matter of days. The KC-130 detachment stood ready to fly in equipment, supplies, and personnel. In this case, and in many contingencies in Africa in these years, Marine KC-130s spearheaded American responses to crisis situations. They often arrived to an unknown and tense situation in which law and order was tenuous at best and the only force protection was their own crew.<sup>60</sup>

As the *Nassau* plowed toward Simba Station off Congo's coast, passing Sicily, two Sikorsky MH-53E Sea Dragons from Navy Helicopter Combat Support Squadron 4 (HC-4) joined the ACE to bolster its long-range heavy-lift capability. Kinshasa was 321.9 kilometers deep into Congo. This distance made Guardian Retrieval especially dependent on the 26th MEU's aviation assets. Again, as in Eastern Exit and Distant Runner, it was the KC-130s and CH-53s that offered the potential to reach deep inland to provide a quick build-up of combat power and commence security operations or evacuations of vulnerable civilians.<sup>61</sup>

An intermediate staging base/logistics hub was established at Pointe-Noire on the Congo coast, in easy range for helicopters operating from the MEU's ships and its runway useable by KC-130s. Marines of the 26th MEU also established a forward area arming and refueling point at the Brazzaville airport that would be of critical importance in the instance that a NEO was required.

Colonel Gardner chose to keep only a minimal contingent of troops and aircraft in Brazzaville largely because of the malaria danger as well the embassy's request to minimize the military presence. There was already a sizeable contingent of troops present in Brazzaville, including troops from Belgium, Britain, and the United States. Nevertheless, now Gardner's MEU had been divided three ways with the force in Albania, a contingent off the coast of Congo, and a small contingent in Brazzaville, which included Gardner and his command element. To maintain communications,

an early use of the Joint Task Force Enabler provided a communications suite that greatly enhanced the ability to communicate globally. II MEF had received Joint Task Force Enabler communications gear immediately prior to the 26th MEU's deployment, and it was pressed into use for these contingencies.<sup>62</sup>

Anticipating conducting a NEO, 26th MEU planned, practiced, and trained with a number of variables. One requirement bound them: the evacuation had to occur within four hours once it was ordered. The favored plan was for HMM-365 helicopters to carry troops to Pointe-Noire and KC-130s to fly them to Brazzaville. The helicopters would fly empty at the same time toward Brazzaville. This included CH-46s that had been modified to give them additional range by removing about 700 pounds of unneeded equipment and replacing it with internal fuel. At Brazzaville, the helicopters would then refuel and begin troop insertions into Kinshasa and carry out evacuees to Brazzaville. The evacuated civilians would be turned over to State Department personnel for evacuation out of the country.<sup>63</sup>

The 26th MEU arrived off Congo on 2 April and established the sea-air-land bridge into Brazzaville. The situation in Zaire, however, never developed to the point that an evacuation was required before the 26th MEU was relieved a month later by Colonel Samuel T. Helland's 22d MEU(SOC) on board the new USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 1). Helland's ACE was HMM-261, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Timothy C. Hanifen. Helland's MEU had sailed two weeks early so it could relieve Gardner's 26th MEU. Helland received permission to forward deploy two CH-46s, two CH-53s, and two AH-1Ws to Brazzaville for the contingency while the rest of HMM-261 remained on

<sup>60</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 103.

<sup>61</sup> LtCol Jon T. Hardwick, "Commentary on Operation Guardian Retrieval," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83 no. 11 (November 1999): 90. Simba station was a point off the coast of west central Africa where the amphibious group posted.

<sup>62</sup> Haberbosch, "Operation Guardian Retrieval," 32–33; HMM-365 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), encl. 1, 10–14; Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 103–4; Barnes interview; Hardwick, "Commentary on Operation Guardian Retrieval," 90; Maj William R. Costantini, "Operation Guardian Retrieval," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 8 (August 1999): 35–36; and LtGen Emerson N. Gardner Jr., interview with Fred Allison, 6 October 2009, recording (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), hereafter Gardner interview with Allison.

<sup>63</sup> Haberbosch, 32–33; HMM-365 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997, encl. 1, 10–14; Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 103–4; Barnes interview; Hardwick, "Commentary on Operation Guardian Retrieval," 90; and Costantini, "Operation Guardian Retrieval," 35–36.



Official Department of Defense photo, VIRIN: 869836-R-EFN00-744

Evacuees from Freetown, Sierra Leone, are escorted across the flight deck of the USS *Kearsarge* (LHD 3), on 30 May 1997, during Operation Noble Obelisk. More than 900 people from 40 different countries were evacuated.

board the *Kearsarge* on a 60-minute daytime alert and 120-minute night alert.

Marines from Marine Air Control Group 28 assisted with the air control requirement at both Brazzaville and Pointe-Noire airports; others augmented the Joint air operations staff. The desired peaceful resolution (or soft landing) of the Zaire civil war did occur. The president departed the country, and this opened the way for rebel forces to set up a new government and rename the country the Democratic Republic of Congo. Neither the 26th or 22d MEUs evacuated anyone from Congo.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, they were ready to conduct evacuations despite the remote location and

even while conducting another evacuation in a far distant locale.

## Operation Noble Obelisk

Before the 22d MEU made it to a liberty port, however, the National Command Authority notified Helland of a coup in Sierra Leone, West Africa—formerly an oasis of calm in a sea of turmoil—that had sparked widespread violence. The situation in Sierra Leone had broken like a tropical thunderstorm, and rebels swarmed the capital city with a quick ferocity. The American embassy was threatened, endangering Americans and third-party nationals. The 22d MEU was to spearhead Operation Noble Obelisk, which turned out to be the largest NEO since the fall of Saigon. The ARG turned north and three days later, 29

<sup>64</sup> HMM-261 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 3–8; and Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 104.

May 1997, was poised 25 miles off the Sierra Leone coast. The 22d MEU's forward command element was inserted immediately on shore to make ready for the evacuation and to provide situational awareness for fleet commanders.<sup>65</sup>

Early the next day, HMM-261 Cobras swept over the Freetown, Sierra Leone, area, looking for threats along the ingress routes and at the pick-up site, the Mammy Yoko Hotel where most of the Americans were congregated. Then the CH-46s and CH-53s roared toward the beach, flying fast and low over the water carrying Marines from BLT 1/2, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Thomas C. Greenwood, to support the evacuation. After landing, Marines established a security perimeter and Marine Air Control Group 28 provided landing zone control, while Marines from the service support group processed evacuees. Harrier jets, armed and ready, stood a 30-minute alert on board ship. Frightened men, women, and about 200 children clambered aboard HMM-261's helicopters, all fitted with life jackets and head protection. On the *Kearsarge*, the evacuees were processed then again loaded onto HMM-261 CH-46s, which flew them to nearby Guinea.<sup>66</sup> HMM-261 flew 85 sorties the first day and evacuated 900 civilians. A second evacuation on 1 June brought an additional 350 civilians, including 18 orphans from the Americans for African Adoption agency. Two days later, after fighting intensified, at least partly because of the arrival of Nigerian ships that opposed the coup and bombarded rebel positions, another evacuation was required. No longer was the hotel tenable for evacuations, and another site was selected at a beach-front restaurant 4.8 kilometers south. Two Cobras launched the evening before to reconnoiter the new objective; they saw small arms fire and mortar rounds hit the water around them as they flew over the beach.<sup>67</sup>

The evacuation commenced the next morning at 1000. A division of CH-53s led the insertion mission

into the beach, followed by six CH-46s; air-cushioned landing craft delivered an armored security force of the battalion landing team's combined antiarmor platoon and light armored-reconnaissance vehicles. Overhead, Cobras and Harriers patrolled, ready with close-air support, while KC-130s from VMGR-252 orbited higher with gas to refuel the Harriers. Two light aircraft of unknown origin approached the landing zone and were intercepted by the Harriers, but they proved to be no threat. Another 1,200 people were evacuated in this third and final evacuation out of Sierra Leone. Resistance had been defused through negotiations led by British diplomats working through the night to secure a cease-fire. About 2,500 people had been evacuated.<sup>68</sup> Mamba Station did not see another Marine force until the new millennium.

## Operation Avid Response

A powerful earthquake centered on Izmit, Turkey, cut short the well-deserved port visit to Spain of the 26th MEU(SOC), commanded by Colonel K. J. Glueck, when the Sixth Fleet commander ordered it to conduct humanitarian operations there. Glueck's MEU had just conducted peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. The lead ship of the ARG, the *Kearsarge*, set course immediately for Turkey. It arrived on 23 August 1999, four days later. As with most humanitarian missions to disaster zones, the helicopters were key enablers, providing the transport capability to move people and freight rapidly, including in the most devastated regions that otherwise would be unreachable.

The ACE was HMM-365 (Reinforced), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Cushing. The squadron supported the MEU's earthquake relief effort by flying in equipment, personnel, and tools to build a refugee tent city at Topel, Turkey. HMM-365 also transported a large number of scientists and interested parties, including dignitaries, one of whom was

<sup>65</sup> HMM-261 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997, pt. 2, p. 4; and Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 104–6.

<sup>66</sup> Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 105.

<sup>67</sup> HMM-261 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997, pt. 2, 4–5; and Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 106.

<sup>68</sup> HMM-261 ComdC, 1 January–30 June 1997, pt. 2, 5; and Antal and Berghe, *On Mamba Station*, 106–7.



Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who came to Turkey to view the damage and offer assistance.<sup>69</sup>

## Operation Stabilise

In a United Nations referendum in August 1999, East Timor, predominately Roman Catholic, voted overwhelmingly for independence from Muslim Indonesia. Indonesia had seized the formerly Portuguese colony in 1975, only nine days after it had declared its independence from Portugal. What followed was a bloody, if not genocidal, dominance over East Timor in the subsequent 24 years by Indonesia. When the East Timorese voted for independence in 1999, Indonesian soldiers and loyalist militia rampaged through East Timor. About 400,000 East Timorese fled to West Timor. In East Timor, homes, schools and businesses were burned, plumbing destroyed by stuffing toilets with cement and tar, and cities stripped of water and electricity. A call for assistance, to provide relief and protection, went out.

Uncharacteristically, the United States offered a less-than-robust response. Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen asserted that the United States cannot be the “world’s policeman.” Within the military, there was a concern about military resources being “frittered away” in seemingly unending humanitarian assistance operations. Timor’s neighbor to the south, Australia, felt otherwise. Australians remembered that in World War II, the East Timorese had remained loyal allies. Australia did not intend to ignore that act of good will and stepped forward to lead an international relief effort called Operation Stabilise.<sup>70</sup>

Leading the U.S. forces under this operation was Brigadier General John G. Castellaw, a CH-46 pilot who was the deputy commander of III Marine



Photo by LCpl Bryan Nealy, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA MajGen John G. Castellaw speaks to a crowd shortly after assuming command of 2d Marine Aircraft Wing (2d MAW), later in his career.

Expeditionary Force. The Western Pacific-based 31st MEU(SOC), commanded by Colonel David D. Fulton, which had just returned from an exercise in Australia, was alerted on 30 September to prepare to go to East Timor.

The commander of Marine Forces Pacific, Lieutenant General Frank Libutti, ordered the creation of a SPMAGTF to sail on the USS *Belleau Wood* (LHA 3) and support Operation Stabilise. This task force was organized from elements of the 31st MEU, which included an infantry company, combat service support personnel, and the entire aviation combat element, HMM-265 (Reinforced), commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Andrew W. O'Donnell Jr. The SPMAGTF and U.S. Air Force and Army contingents comprised the U.S. contribution to the coalition of international

<sup>69</sup> HMM-365 ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1999 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2; and 26th MEU(SOC) ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1999 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2.

<sup>70</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams, and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004), 225; “History of East Timor,” Wikipedia, accessed 17 May 2024; LtGen John G. Castellaw, interview with Fred Allison, 10 October 2009, recording (Oral History Collection, MCHD, Quantico, VA), hereafter Castellaw interview; 11th MEU(SOC) ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1999 (Quantico, VA: MCHD) pt. 4, “11th MEU(SOC) News Release,” 32–99; and “Operation Stabilise: Timor Crisis—American Forces,” GlobalSecurity.org, accessed 17 May 2024.



Photo by Sgt Bryce Piper, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA  
A displaced mother and her daughters are returned home to East Timor, courtesy of HMM-265. HMM-265 was the aviation combat element of SPMAGTF East Timor and provided three CH-46E Sea Knight helicopters that provided 44 East Timorese, like the family shown, a ride home.

forces (International Forces, East Timor, or InterFET), commanded by Major General Peter Cosgrove of Australia.<sup>71</sup>

Prior to arrival of the *Belleau Wood*, which occurred in early October 1999, the initial flight to insert coalition security troops into East Timor's capital, Dili, occurred on 20 September 1999. The only Marine presence in this fly-in was a KC-130 aircraft from VMGR-152, which just happened to be in Darwin as part of a training exercise. Its crew believed that something more interesting than training was in the works and sought to get in on the action. When an Air Force C-130 crew declined to fly the Dili-insert mis-

sion because they lacked personal weapons and body armor, the Marine crew volunteered. The Marines got the go-ahead to fly as part of the mission.<sup>72</sup>

The United States, ever wary of mission creep and ensnarement in a foreign commitment, carefully limited the scope of its participation to carrying relief supplies into East Timor, and this could only be done by the SPMAGTF's four CH-53s (more CH-53s arrived later with the 11th MEU). Other ACE helicopters were not allowed to participate so as to limit American participation. Their presence on the flight deck of the mighty *Belleau Wood* parked 3.2 kilometers off the coast near Dili represented U.S. power and prestige. This had an intimidating effect on Indone-

<sup>71</sup> Castellaw interview; and "Okinawa Marines Deploy to East Timor," *Marine Corps Gazette* 83, no. 11 (November 1999): 6.

<sup>72</sup> Castellaw interview.

sians who might desire to stymie security and stabilization operations.<sup>73</sup>

The work was done by the Super Stallions. Pallets of relief supplies, which included rice, seed, tools, kitchenware, fuel, and water, were loaded on the CH-53s either at Dili's airfield or off cargo ships and flown inland where needed. Beechcraft C-12 Hurons from Marine Corps Air Stations at Iwakuni and Futenma, Japan, also flew into Dili carrying gear and supplies. While the CH-53s did the heavy hauling, CH-46s and UH-1s of HMM-165, the ACE for the 11th MEU, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Guy M. Close, also transported some cargo (out of a total of 1,530,550 pounds of cargo, the CH-53s flew 1,423,800 pounds), but their greatest utility was carrying distinguished visitors. These included Richard Holbrooke, the American UN ambassador; Robert S. Gelbard, the American ambassador to Indonesia; and Bishop Carlos Belo, the bishop of Dili (and Nobel Peace Prize winner). AH-1 and UH-1 gunships were overhead as a deterrent to those who might want to interfere with the negotiations. HMM-165's helicopters were the first American aircraft used to transport displaced East Timorese from West Timor back to East Timor. Marines improved communications and intelligence for InterFET while others from the air control detachments augmented the central air control agency and provided landing zone control. Marines from the service and support detachments improved landing sites for helicopter operations. By February 2000, InterFET ceased operations and the UN took up the administration of East Timor. The 15th and 13th MEUs continued East Timor humanitarian operations into the following year. In September 2000, the 13th MEU(SOC) visited and executed humanitarian assistance operations in the Oecussi Enclave (in West Timor), an area that had been especially ravaged in the September uprising.<sup>74</sup>

During Operation Stabilise, relations with Australians remained superb. Operation Stabilise set East

Timor on the road to independence, which occurred in 2002. In the intervening years, Marine expeditionary units from Camp Pendleton, California, regularly conducted humanitarian operations in East Timor, highlighting their flexibility and utility delivering aid and providing security and stabilization, capabilities that would be of great utility in the next decade.<sup>75</sup>

## Conclusion

The decade of the 1990s began with Operation Sea Angel and ended with Operation Stabilise, both large-scale humanitarian operations conducted by MAGTFs. In between were several operations in which the Navy-Marine Corps team rescued Americans and many civilians of other nations from violence due to political upheavals or from natural disasters. The Navy-Marine Corps team provided aid and emergency services of all sorts and often on short notice. This accounting highlights only a select few that show the utility of the Navy-Marine Corps team for humanitarian operations in support of the national security strategy—largely carried out by aviation elements and primarily by helicopters. The MAGTF's aviation element, by swiftly and capably bridging the distance between land and sea and by providing both life-saving transport and defense against land-based weapons, was essential for the performance of MOOTW. Only rarely did Marines engage in direct combat during these operations, however, they always stood ready to do so. In many cases, the arrival of Marines prevented or deescalated conflict, which no doubt would have led to human-caused disasters. In the final analysis, it is ironically apparent that although the Navy and Marine Corps team was created and exists to fight, destroy, and kill, in the 1990s it saved many more lives than it had ever taken.

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<sup>73</sup> Castellaw interview; and "Okinawa Marines Deploy to East Timor," 6.

<sup>74</sup> 31st MEU ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1999 (Quantico, VA: MCHD) pt. 2, 1–2; 11th MEU ComdC, 1 July–31 December 1999 (Quantico, VA: MCHD) pt. 2, 1–4, pt. 4; and 13th MEU ComdC, 1 July–31 Dec 2000 (Quantico, VA: MCHD), pt. 2, 8–9, pt. 4, "13th MEU's Family Gram."

<sup>75</sup> Castellaw interview.



IN MEMORIAM

# General Alfred M. Gray Jr.

USMC (RET), 29TH COMMANDANT  
OF THE MARINE CORPS

22 JUNE 1928–20 MARCH 2024

*By Charles P. Neimeyer, PhD*

In what arguably is Shakespeare's most famous play, *Hamlet*, the bard has young Prince Hamlet lament the passing of his father, the late King of Denmark: "He was a man, take him for all in all, we shall not see his like again."<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare used this moment to point out that the old king was a man just like any other person, whose time on earth is finite. However, this particular person's life had been extraordinary and was one whose *like* (meaning *similarity*) was not going to be replicated by anyone. Indeed, it was one of the few positive comments Shakespeare wrote about any of the characters in the entire play. In a similar fashion, but unlike Hamlet's fictional father, the late General Alfred Mason Gray Jr. was an actual living person, about whom one can also safely say, "We shall not see his like again." And truth be told, General Gray was a force of nature and a highly unique Marine Corps officer. He was energy personified and a virtual whirlwind of activity from the moment he went on active duty down to his dying day at the age



RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service  
Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA

Retired CMC, Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr., in his green service uniform alpha, photographed in 1995.

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Dr. Charles P. Neimeyer retired as the 27th director of Marine Corps History Division in 2017, having led the division for 11 years. He has authored multiple works about various aspects of the U.S. armed forces, including the Marine Corps. Dr. Neimeyer served in the U.S. Marine Corps for 20 years and has taught at the U.S. Naval Academy, Naval War College, Valley Forge Military Academy and College, and the University of Central Oklahoma. He lives in Stafford, VA.

<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Shakespeare-Online.com, accessed 11 May 2024.

of 95. His impact on the development of the modern-day Marine Corps was as significant as that of the 13th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Lieutenant Gen-

eral John A. Lejeune, and—even more remarkable—he was able to pack several lifetimes of experience into a single term of service to his country and his Corps. Brigadier General Edwin H. Simmons, former director of Marine Corps History, once perfectly summed up Gray's character and noted that even before he became the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps, he was "imaginative, iconoclastic, articulate, charismatic, and compassionate. His Marines love him."<sup>2</sup> Gray was indeed one of a kind.

Although today we can imagine Gray champing at the bit to do so, during World War II, he was too young to join the military. Nevertheless, he always knew he would join the Service sooner or later. As a teenager rapidly coming of age in the 1940s, Gray was keenly aware of America's emerging role as the leader of the free world and one that would likely be confronted by the other remaining post-World War II superpower, the Soviet Union. Gray did, however, come from a long line of people who had served in the U.S. military during times of war. For example, Gray was very proud that his father "Al Sr. had joined the Navy as a seaman [during World War I] and [had] served aboard [the] troop ship *Edgar F. Luckenbach* [ID 4597], which made eight trips to France."<sup>3</sup> He had several uncles who also served during the Great War. Thus, it was no surprise that when Communist North Korea began to conduct a campaign of violent aggression against South Korea in 1950, Gray, who previous to the outbreak of the conflict had attended Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, and even dabbled a bit with semiprofessional baseball, joined the Marine Corps as an enlisted man. Coincidentally, Gray was sworn into service by the future 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps and Medal of Honor recipient, Major Louis H. Wilson Jr.<sup>4</sup> Wilson was the first of many "old breed" senior leaders who would make a great impression on the newly enlisted Marine from Rahway, New Jersey.

Soon finding himself in front of the legendary drill instructors at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina, Gray quickly passed through recruit training and was assigned a military occupational specialty (MOS) of communications—one of the many MOS associations Gray was to make during his storied military career. Gray soon reported to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton in California where he volunteered to serve in an amphibious reconnaissance platoon. This platoon was unique for its time and typically trained to deploy from submarines and required its members to be exceptionally fit. Gray quickly advanced in rank, and it was not long before he became the platoon's communications sergeant. It was due to his meritorious service with his platoon (and perhaps the fact that he was one of the few enlisted men at the time who already had three years of college education) that Gray was recommended for the enlisted commissioning program. Graduating from Officers Candidate School at Quantico, Virginia, in 1952, Gray was assigned yet another MOS of field artillery officer (as the need for forward observers in the then-stalemated Korean War was urgent). Arriving in Korea in April 1953, Gray was assigned to the 2d Battalion, 11th Marines, and later served as a forward observer for the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. After the Korean armistice was signed in July 1953, Gray volunteered to remain in Korea, received a promotion to first lieutenant, and ultimately became an infantry officer with 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, serving as a platoon leader, company executive officer, and briefly as an infantry company commander. His first infantry battalion commander was Lieutenant Colonel Michael P. Ryan, a Navy Cross recipient from the Battle of Tarawa. Ryan was impressed with Gray's emphasis on physical fitness and concern for the morale and welfare of his Marines. In a period of more than four years, Gray had risen in rank from private to first lieutenant and had served in three different MOSs.<sup>5</sup> In fact, it may have been this early exposure to a wide variety of military specialties and experiences that gave Gray his unique understanding of how the entire

<sup>2</sup> BGen Edwin H. Simmons, USMC (Ret), as quoted in Col Gerald H. Turley, USMCR (Ret), *The Journey of a Warrior: The 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps (1987–1991)*, General Alfred M. Gray (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse, 2010), 47.

<sup>3</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 41.

<sup>5</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 43–45.

Marine Corps came together as a unique Marine Air-Ground Task Force (MAGTF).

By early 1955, Gray returned to the United States and thanks to his infantry experience with 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, in Korea, he was assigned to the 8th Marine Regiment, 2d Marine Division, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Then began a series of assignments with the 2d Marine Division that eventually resulted in his command of this unit by the 1980s. However, at that time, command of the division was in the far distant future for Gray. Instead, he was placed in charge of the regiment's 4.2-inch mortar company—a hybrid assignment that combined both of Gray's military specialties of artillery and infantry. One of Gray's 2d Division commanders was the legendary five-time Navy Cross recipient, Major General Lewis Burwell "Chesty" Puller. When First Lieutenant Gray was asked to interview to potentially become Puller's aide de camp, he made it clear to the general that he really preferred to remain with the 8th Marines—a request that Puller magnanimously granted. This incident is illustrative of another of Gray's traits—that he desired above all things to be a direct leader of Marines and, if given the choice, would always opt to remain in the operating Fleet Marine Forces for as long as possible. Staff assignments were not and never would be Gray's cup of tea.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, and despite Gray's strong preference to remain with the infantry, he received orders to attend the Communications Officers Course at Quantico. Most likely assigned to this school due to his enlisted MOS experience, Gray was told by a senior mentor he knew from Korea, Colonel Gordon H. West, then serving as the Commandant's military secretary, that while he could likely get Gray's orders changed, he felt that "it is best for Marine officers to accept whatever assignment they are given and make the best of it."<sup>7</sup> As Scott Laidig, one of Gray's biographers noted, the future Commandant followed this sage advice for the rest of his Marine Corps career. And while this did not mean that Gray stopped mak-

ing his preference known for continued service with the Fleet Marine Forces, whenever he found himself assigned to other duties, he was determined to succeed there as well. And it was one of these chance noninfantry assignments that ultimately proved to become a transformational experience for the rapidly developing Marine officer. In fact, in the late 1950s, by pure happenstance, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Randolph McCall Pate, was asked by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Arleigh A. Burke, for help with manning Navy security groups (NSGs) then being established in detachments around the world. The role of the NSGs was to "provide cryptologic and special communications capabilities to both the Fleet and the National Security Administration (NSA)."<sup>8</sup> Since the U.S. Navy was charged with being a global force in readiness, so were its NSGs. With Gray fortuitously due to graduate from the Communications Officers course, he soon found himself at the forefront of this new Navy-Marine Corps effort at improving its signals intelligence capacity. Most likely because Gray was a bachelor (and would remain one until age 52), he drew an overseas assignment to Japan. In fact, throughout his career, Gray relished overseas assignments. Gray performed in his role as a newly minted signals intelligence (SIGINT) officer as superbly as he had as an infantry or artillery officer just a few years before. His pathbreaking performance in the field of tactical signals intelligence had been so noteworthy that in 2008, the NSA inducted him into its hall of honor noting that "his early work and establishment of two units, one assigned to Europe and the other to the Pacific, formed the nucleus of what is known today as the Marine Cryptologic Support Battalion."<sup>9</sup>

In fact, it was Gray's long and close association with the signals intelligence field and the rapidly deteriorating political stability in Southeast Asia that earned him the first of what became many assignments to the region. By 1962, Gray "commanded the first Ma-

<sup>6</sup> Scott Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine: The Early Years, 1950–1967*, vol. 1 (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute Press, 2012), 43–45.

<sup>7</sup> Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine*, vol. 1, 57.

<sup>8</sup> Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine*, vol. 1, 58.

<sup>9</sup> "General Alfred M. Gray, USMC: 2008 Hall of Honor Inductee," Cryptologic History, Historical Figures, National Security Agency, accessed 11 May 2024.

rine Corps ground SIGINT unit to deploy to South Vietnam. He implemented and refined doctrine and practice for direct support to combat units in the war in Southeast Asia.<sup>10</sup> The field of signals intelligence would be Gray's focus throughout the years leading up to active combat operations in the Republic of Vietnam in 1965. One of the most unbelievable things about all of Gray's work during this time was that he was flying blind. There was no prior doctrine or organizational structure before Gray created his composite radio and signal intelligence units. Gray, however, instinctively recognized that the United States needed to catch up with its potential adversaries (most notably the Russians and Chinese). Consequently, he urged his operators to become fluent in foreign languages and even pioneered the creation of "fly away" detachments for rapid deployment and worldwide service. Transferring from Hawaii in 1961, Gray was ordered to perform one of his few tours of duty (prior to becoming Commandant in 1987) at Headquarters Marine Corps. He also continued to champion the establishment of Marine security battalions—a distinctively Marine counterpart to the NSGs that Gray had been supporting just a few years before. At that time, and much to the ire of many Headquarters assignment officers, Gray found himself briefly in a bit of hot water over his predilection for sending more Marines (officer and enlisted) to foreign language school. But fortunately for Gray, Commandant and Tarawa Medal of Honor recipient General David M. Shoup, who remembered Gray when he had been commanding officer of The Basic School in 1952, approved of the initiative. In sum, it would be a mistake to underestimate the transformative role that Gray played in the early 1960s in getting the signals intelligence field established as a legitimate MOS within the Marine Corps—and just in time to put these newfound skills to the test as America prepared, in 1965, to conduct ground combat operations in South Vietnam. In fact, during the years 1962–64, Gray (now a major) was in and out of Southeast Asia establishing his cryptologic detachments in the region, especially around an area



*Photo by PH1 Joe Leo, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
BGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., commanding general, 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade, participating in a briefing aboard the amphibious command ship USS Mount Whitney (LCC 20), which served as flagship during allied Exercise Teamwork '76 on 8 September 1976.



*Photo by PH1 Joe Leo, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
BGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., commanding general, 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade, on the telephone, 11 September 1976, prior to allied Exercise Teamwork '76.

<sup>10</sup> "General Alfred M. Gray, USMC."



of northwest South Vietnam known as Dong Voi Mep (Tiger Tooth Mountain), where he saw significant and up-close combat with the Viet Cong.<sup>11</sup>

By late 1965, as larger scale ground combat operations in Vietnam commenced and after years of working in the field of signals intelligence, Gray found himself back with the artillery, where he served as the regimental communications officer and later as operations officer (S-3) for the 12th Marine (artillery) Regiment. The 12th Marines would eventually grow into one of the largest artillery units ever fielded by the Corps in its history. During this time, Gray pioneered the use of recently developed electronic sensors and was intensely interested in determining whether they could be used to interdict the vast North Vietnamese and Viet Cong supply line known as the Ho Chi Minh trail. Just like during his time with his cryptologic units, Gray was a whirlwind of activity with the Marine artillery and was instrumental in organizing and executing a massive ground movement of the entire regiment to the Dong Ha region of South Vietnam, and nearer to the demilitarized zone (DMZ). This was Gray's first tour with a line unit in Vietnam, although prior to 1965 he had more experience on the ground in Vietnam than just about any other officer in the Marine Corps. Gray even flew some missions as an aerial observer for the artillery, and unlike many who served in Vietnam, he unhesitatingly and repeatedly extended his tours of duty there. This decision consequently found him, in the spring of 1967, in the middle of the heavy fighting that took place between Marine Corps units and the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong around a region located along the DMZ known as Leatherneck Square. It was here that Gray was to see his most intense combat of the entire war and also the location where he would later be awarded the Silver Star for valor.<sup>12</sup>

During the month of March 1967, Gray requested and received command of the composite artillery base at Gio Linh. This Marine Corps-U.S. Army-Army of the Republic of Vietnam firebase was located toward

the northeast corner of South Vietnam and very close to the DMZ—so close that North Vietnamese gunners regularly plastered the combat base with rockets, heavy artillery, and mortars, inflicting significant casualties on Gray's gun crews. Moreover, Gio Linh was a well-known target for the North Vietnamese. Each night brought new terrors for Gray's troops (although people were amazed that it never seemed to personally affect him) as enemy ordnance rained down all around them. For example, on the night of 27 April 1967 alone, enemy gunners inflicted 80 casualties on Americans at Gio Linh—1 for about every 10 men Gray had on hand at that time. During the Battle of Con Thien (6–8 May 1967), Gray's batteries fired in support of the Marine Combat Base, but this in turn drew even more enemy artillery fire down on Gio Linh. Even after the U.S. Army brought in numbers of huge 175-mm self-propelled guns, this still did not stop the volume of enemy rounds hitting the firebase. Moreover, to mitigate effective U.S. counterbattery fire, Gray noted that the enemy's batteries frequently displaced to multiple locations in a single night. But this gave Gray an idea. If the enemy could maneuver at night, so could he. Consequently, he drew up plans to displace his batteries from their usual (and targeted) locations at Gio Linh, move during the night to alternate firing positions, hammer the enemy with U.S. ordnance, and then return at dawn and resume daytime operations when the enemy fire on Gio Linh (part of the McNamara Line) was usually reduced. Gray, along with his S-3, Captain Patrick Pate, planned this audacious move with meticulous care, although there was a risk that his artillerymen might be caught out in the open. Nevertheless, Gray and Pate's plan worked like a charm and his mobile force fired their rounds at pre-planned North Vietnamese Army (NVA) targets and, for once, his Marines did not have to endure another night of enemy incoming. Gray noted that the impact of just this one night of fooling the enemy caused morale to skyrocket. It also might have planted the seed in Gray's mind about a future concept he was to later champion known as *maneuver warfare*.<sup>13</sup> However, like

<sup>11</sup> Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine*, vol. 1, 197–207.

<sup>12</sup> Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine*, vol. 1, 284, 298–305.

<sup>13</sup> Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine*, vol. 1, 306–11.

Gray's experience with getting signals intelligence established within the Marine Corps, his time at Gio Linh was also a transformative moment in his development as an outstanding combat leader.

It was also during his time at Gio Linh that Gray would be awarded the Silver Star. On the night of 14 May 1967, during yet another heavy enemy artillery attack on the Gio Linh firebase, Gray was notified that a "three-man listening post patrol [had become] disoriented and inadvertently entered one of the base's [protective] minefields."<sup>14</sup> One of the three Marines had already detonated a mine and was killed, a second seriously wounded, and the third Marine frozen in place by fear and unwilling to move in any direction whatsoever. Gray immediately sprang into action and on his own volition, while enemy incoming was still dropping all over the area, he patiently and carefully worked his way through the minefield to the surviving Marines and brought them out of the field to safety and medical aid. It was an amazing act of heroism.

Incredibly, Gray was to repeat this performance in a second minefield incident about a month and a half later. In much the same circumstances, yet another listening post team had wandered into a minefield whose markers had been blown away by an incoming enemy artillery barrage. Some of these men had been wounded. This time, however, the wounded Marines were much deeper into the field and Gray and a U.S. Army medic were working their way on their bellies toward the stranded listening post team when the NVA decided to launch a full-on artillery and rocket attack against the base. Nevertheless, despite the shrapnel spraying all around, Gray continued to slowly and calmly work his way through the field with the stalwart medic right behind him and brought the stranded team to safety.<sup>15</sup>

The amazing thing about Gray's experience in Vietnam was that it did not seem to have an end. After having spent 22 months with the 12th Marines, by July 1967, Gray was hoping to gain an infantry command. However, Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman, the



RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service  
Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA  
BGen Alfred M. Gray, 1 September 1978.



RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service  
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BGen Alfred M. Gray, 1 September 1978.

<sup>14</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 58.

<sup>15</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 59; and Laidig, *Al Gray, Marine*, vol. 1, 318–20.

III Marine Amphibious Force (III MAF) commanding general (and future 25th Commandant of the Marine Corps) had other ideas and wanted Gray to utilize his signals intelligence experience and take command of the 1st Radio Battalion. Cushman knew Gray well and believed he was the perfect choice for this assignment. However, in January 1968, Gray's father passed away and he returned home on emergency leave. Much to his chagrin, the now thoroughly seasoned Vietnam War veteran was informed by Headquarters that it was time to stay home for a while, and Gray was eventually assigned to Marine Corps Base Quantico and was given the opportunity to attend the Command and Staff School (1970–71). If it had not been for the death of his father, Gray may well have continued to extend his Vietnam tours even further. Once graduated, Gray, now a lieutenant colonel, was able to wrangle another assignment to his beloved 2d Marine Division at Camp Lejeune and given command of the 1st Battalion, 2d Marines. It was here that Gray would face a different set of leadership challenges than what he experienced in Vietnam. As the most unpopular war in American history wound down to a close for America in 1973, the detritus of the social unrest evident in American society made itself manifest in the ranks of all the Armed Services, especially that of the Marine Corps. Rampant disciplinary problems, poor conduct, racial issues, and a generalized disaffection for military service by the population at large were new challenges that the Corps needed to confront and overcome. For example, when word was passed on to one of Gray's subordinate companies that they were going on deployment to the Mediterranean, the company commander noted that "this bit of news caused thirty Marines to go into unauthorized leave status by the following morning." The contagion soon spread to other units as well. As was his habit, Gray went after the line leadership (junior officers and noncommissioned officers) and got them to rise to the challenge. If they did not, he soon took steps to get rid of them, and he did not hesitate to relieve two company commanders prior to the battalion's Mediterranean deployment. While it took some time, it was not long before his Marines began to positively respond to

Gray's "take care of the troops" leadership style. He told every Marine he talked to that if they had a problem to come and see him—and he meant it.<sup>16</sup>

Gray's successful leadership experience with 1st Battalion, 2d Marines, during those difficult days must have been noticed since, while still a lieutenant colonel, he was selected to command the 2d Marine Regiment, normally a colonel's billet. Moreover, he got to stay with the Fleet Marine Forces (always his goal) at Camp Lejeune. During his time in regimental command, Gray constantly focused on improving warfighting skills and worked to deploy the 2d Marines to cold-weather exercises at Camp Drum, New York, since it was becoming apparent in this immediate post-Vietnam era that the 2d Division was likely going to be slated to support NATO's northern flank in Norway with operations taking place above the Arctic Circle. Gray favored regiments being used as maneuver elements. At the time, a regimental command was largely seen as more of an administrative post. But Gray pressed to deploy major elements of his regiment to the desert at Twentynine Palms, California, and successfully led it through an exercise called Alkali Canyon. The more difficult the weather and terrain, the more Gray seemed to like it. He believed that frequent, tough deployments cut down on the disciplinary problems running rampant (at that time) at Camp Lejeune. And to some degree, this proved to be true. Busy Marines seemed to be happy Marines. However, Gray's time in regimental command at Camp Lejeune ended when he was selected to attend the U.S. Army War College at Carlisle, Pennsylvania (1973–74). Nevertheless, Gray was given a second regiment to command—a rare event then as it is today—the renowned 4th Marines, then homebased at Camp Hansen, Okinawa, Japan. He was also now a colonel.

However, the racial and disciplinary problems experienced by Gray at Camp Lejeune were also evident on Okinawa, Japan, perhaps even more so than the Corps' stateside commands. Furthermore, not only was Gray in command of the 4th Marines, he was also named Camp Hansen commandant with control

<sup>16</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 64–66.

and responsibility for numerous other separate battalions then in residence. It was a major responsibility he took very seriously. Gray recognized the need for Marines to improve themselves both personally and professionally and started a special education program that proved to be very popular with nearly everyone assigned to duty on Okiinawa. It was during this time that the very last days of the Republic of Vietnam were playing out and Gray was called on yet again to return to Vietnam to help with Operation Frequent Wind (the evacuation of South Vietnam). Once again, his performance during this operation that featured numerous ad hoc solutions to complex problems—a Gray specialty—was superb. Following his Okinawa sojourn, Gray returned to the United States as the deputy commander, Training and Education Command at Quantico, and, to the surprise of no one, he was soon selected for brigadier general.<sup>17</sup>

Gray's meteoric rise from Marine private to brigadier general had been truly extraordinary. But it was as a general officer that Gray seemed to really hit his stride. Moreover, he continued his habit of seeking and successfully leading line commands. Gray headed back to Camp Lejeune for yet another pivotal command assignment. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, and largely due to the fallout over the Vietnam War, most military planners saw the NATO mission as possibly the only one to which the U.S. would commit. What this meant was that U.S. military forces, for the first time since World War II, might possibly face a true peer competitor in the Soviet Union. At the time, the Red Army was highly mechanized, tank- and artillery-heavy, and able to maneuver across vast swaths of territory with ease. Conversely, the Marine Corps was seen by NATO planners as predominately light infantry and not really able to militarily compete with Soviet mechanized brigades. Thus, Gray's assignment as the 4th Marine Amphibious Brigade (MAB) commander was fortuitous. It was not long before the 4th MAB was being referred to as the "Carolina MAGTF" due to its home base being Camp Lejeune. Gray was also known as a voracious consumer of military his-

tory and other professionally related works. One of his favorite books was Sun Tzu's *Art of War*. He possessed numerous versions of this book in his personal library and had perhaps one of the finest collections in the country. During this same timeframe, again largely due to the fallout over Vietnam, the United States was undergoing a period of military reform and the term *maneuver warfare* was increasingly being bandied about. One reason behind its popularity was the idea that to defeat a numerically superior mechanized opponent, as the Soviet Union surely was, the way to even the odds was to outmaneuver, move faster, and decide quicker than your larger and likely slower-moving (and thinking) opponent. It was around this time that Gray became aware of the ideas of an eccentric U.S. Air Force colonel named John R. Boyd—the originator of the famous OODA loop (observe, orient, decide, act) decision-making model. Out of this theory emerged Boyd's ideas on maneuver warfare. As a retired officer working at the Pentagon, Boyd was formally introduced to the Marine Corps in 1980 thanks to the prescient invitation of Colonel Michael D. Wyly, then director of the Tactics Department at the Amphibious Warfare School (AWS) at Quantico. Wyly asked Boyd to present his findings to his students. Prior to coming to Quantico, Boyd was also renowned for his lengthy and riveting lectures and, as Wyly predicted, the Marine captains of AWS could not get enough of his remarkable ideas or flair in telling them. Due to Gray's intense study of the works of Sun Tzu and his fascination with Boyd's theories, he became the Marines Corps' number one advocate of the maneuver warfare concept.

Even before this 1980 lecture, word of Boyd's theories had already found their way to Camp Lejeune, and they coalesced nicely with what Gray was trying to do with the Carolina MAGTF. Soon Gray was determined to make maneuver warfare the official operational doctrine of the 4th MAB and eventually, when Gray became the commanding general, of the entire 2d Marine Division as well. In fact, in 1978, in a major test of Marine Corps maneuverability across large expanses of European terrain, during NATO Exercises Bold Guard and Northern Wedding, Gray's 4th MAB,

<sup>17</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 88–90.





Photo by SSgt Benda, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA MajGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., new commanding general, 2d Marine Division, at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune receiving the division colors from outgoing commanding general MajGen David M. Twomey (right) on 5 June 1981. BGen Joseph E. Hopkins, assistant commanding general, 2d Marine Division, is in the background.



Photo by Cpl Kummerfeldt, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA MajGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., commanding general, 2d Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, welcoming 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, home to Marine Corps Air Station New River, NC, with a large cake on 8 March 1983. The battalion was part of the 24th Marine Amphibious Unit returning from Lebanon.



Photo by Sgt Potter, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA MajGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., commanding general, 2d Marine Division, Fleet Marine Force, being interviewed by a local news team as the 32d Marine Amphibious Unit returned home to Camp Geiger from Lebanon, 25 November 1982.



Photo by PH1 Jeff Hilton, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA LtGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., as commanding officer, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic (left), talks with GySgt Ronald Kirby of the Marine detachment on board the battleship USS Iowa (BB 61) during the International Naval Review, 4 July 1986.

with his ground combat element built around his former regiment, the 2d Marines (now commanded by his friend Colonel Gerry H. Turley) proved that a Marine expeditionary unit using its armored amphibious vehicles (AAVs) as mechanized transport and supported by a robust air and logistics element would likely be able to outmaneuver and defeat any similarly sized Soviet mechanized brigade in the difficult terrain of northern Europe. As Colonel Turley later wrote, Bold Guard/Northern Wedding was a “notable success” for the Corps in that “for the first time, NATO’s most senior leaders understood and witnessed the valuable role amphibious forces could play on both flanks of the European continent, should Russian divisions attempt to sweep across the steppes of Poland.”<sup>18</sup> They also thought Gray had been amazingly innovative by using his AAVs as armored personnel carriers. The Corps had the firepower and mechanization to keep up with any Soviet brigade. In reality, Bold Guard/Northern Wedding ’78 had been a major operational watershed moment for the entire Marine Corps.

Gray relinquished his command of the Carolina MAGTF and briefly moved to the Development Center at Quantico. He was now seen as the Corps’ leading advocate for mechanization of some of its force structure and was instrumental in the acquisition of the Canadian-built light armored vehicle (LAV), a weapons platform still in use by the Marine Corps. Gray was all over the maneuver warfare concept and due to his proximity to the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, he grew increasingly more aware of the advantages the concept gives to force commanders who know how to implement it. However, it should be noted that the concept was not universally accepted by others in the Corps, and it was going to take a nearly decade-long fight to get it thoroughly imbued within the cultural fabric of the Corps. It was while he was at Quantico that Gray surrounded himself with many other like-minded, forward-thinking Marine officers, many of whom had previously served with Gray as part of his 2d Marines “mafia.” But more than this, Gray engaged a wide variety of officers of

all ranks and encouraged them to debate the maneuver warfare concept in the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. It was exactly what John A. Lejeune had done when another controversial mission moment—the advanced base concept—was being discussed in the early 1920s. However, out of this vigorous 1980s debate emerged a roadmap for Gray, now a major general. It was also at this time that Gray married the love of his life, Jan Goss. When Gray was appointed to command the 2d Marine Division with his new wife Jan in tow in 1981, he instinctively knew it was time to implement the concept throughout what he considered was the Corps’ premier combat division and the one most likely to face Soviet mechanized brigades in Europe. Indeed, as soon as he arrived at Camp Lejeune, Gray ordered the appointment of a maneuver warfare board consisting of junior and senior officers to devise a way ahead for the 2d Marine Division to implement the concept. It was an exciting time.

Gray soon became known throughout the division by his informal callsign, “Papa Bear.” As usual, he focused on improving the warfighting ethos of the entire division. During his time in command, Gray became a teacher, mentor, instructor, father confessor, and maneuver warfare advocate, all at the same time. But events of the early 1980s meant the North Cape of Norway had to wait, as Gray’s subordinate Marine Amphibious Unit (MAU) commanders were tasked to become part of the Multinational Peacekeeping Force inside volatile Beirut, Lebanon, and situated in defensive positions around the international airport. Starting in 1982 and continuing through 1984, Gray’s 2d Marine Division formed the bulk of the U.S. forces in Lebanon. The situation for the Marines around the airport grew increasingly worse as the long, hot summer of 1983 wore on in civil war-torn Beirut. While the new Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Paul X. Kelley, and General Gray, among other senior military and civilian notables, visited the various MAUs doing tours of duty trying to keep the airport open, it was not long before the Marines took their first casualties since Vietnam. With the Corps slowly being dragged deeper into the conflict largely due to political decisions being made in Washington, the

<sup>18</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 113.

commander of the 24th MAU, Colonel Timothy J. Geraghty, a Vietnam veteran and longtime friend of General Gray, was growing more apprehensive about his situation in and around the airport. This was the opposite of maneuver warfare. This was Gio Linh all over again. Although several Marines had been killed and wounded by enemy artillery and sniper fire, Geraghty was informed that their role was solely a peacekeeping one, and therefore his response to attacks on his Marines was limited by fairly restrictive rules of engagement. He could do little to change their very vulnerable situation. However, at the same time, he was tasked with openly supporting the Christian-led Lebanese national government whenever he could in their rapidly devolving civil war against Muslim militias in and around Beirut. To the Muslim militia leaders it looked very much like the United States had taken sides in the conflict, instead of limiting its forces to peacekeeping. On 23 October 1983, a suicide truck-bomber drove his vehicle past a Marine checkpoint and plowed it directly into Geraghty's battalion landing team headquarters, collapsing the building and ultimately taking the lives of 247 Marines and sailors.<sup>19</sup> It was a calamity of catastrophic proportions.

The tragedy of the Marines in Beirut was an event that would affect Marine Corps leadership for years to come. For General Gray, however, it required his staff to create a massive casualty assistance plan to not only assist with identifying the killed and wounded but to deal with grief-stricken families desperately searching for information about their loved ones. Fortunately, Gray was an exceptionally empathetic person already, especially when it came to things that affected his Marines. He worked tirelessly to "establish a common disaster-control center and prepare for the difficult task of notifying local families on the status of their Marines."<sup>20</sup> Gray rounded up every chaplain that he could locate and essentially created a bereavement center for the families. He also "set up a program that ensured he or another senior officer represented the 2d Division at every funeral throughout the nation."

Gray personally "attended more than 140 funerals."<sup>21</sup> When the battered 24th MAU returned home to North Carolina not long after the bombing, Gray was there to shake the hand of each returning Marine. Gray also hosted the president of the United States, the First Lady, and other senior government officials at a 4 November 1983 memorial service held at Camp Lejeune in a driving rainstorm. However, from this moment forward, Gray was determined to never again allow his Marines to be victimized by terrorists. Gray was instrumental in starting a program for all deploying MAUs called Special Operations Capable (SOC) training that was eventually adopted Corps-wide. While such training was too late for the 24th MAU, it did improve the general awareness of every Marine to the growing threat of worldwide terrorist activity and allowed them to be better prepared to deal with it.<sup>22</sup>

By 1987, the office of Commandant of the Marine Corps was due to change and because of a rather remarkable series of coincidental events (most importantly that the new secretary of the Navy James H. Webb, a former Marine infantry officer who received the Navy Cross during Vietnam, strongly championed his case), Gray became the 29th Commandant of the Marine Corps on 1 July 1987. While some were concerned that his lack of Headquarters and Joint Staff experience might hamper his effectiveness in the highly politicized world that was and is Washington, DC, Gray hit the ground running. As the eminent Marine Corps historian Allan R. Millett noted about General Gray as Commandant, "He acted like a man possessed, a man who heard a ticking clock (or bomb) behind him and who could not do enough fast enough to suit himself."<sup>23</sup> That Gray was an action-oriented Commandant was a true understatement. Gray's commandancy also came along just as the Ronald W. Reagan-era defense buildup was coming to an end and (as no one predicted) so was the Soviet Union. Many U.S. political leaders saw the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact as an opportunity for the nation

<sup>19</sup> Benis M. Frank, *U.S. Marines in Lebanon, 1982–1984* (Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1987).

<sup>20</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 166.

<sup>21</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 168.

<sup>22</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 169.

<sup>23</sup> Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 632–33.



*Photo by Sgt Kissling, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
CMC Alfred M. Gray Jr. speaks to his troops prior to their departure for the Middle East in support of Operation Desert Shield, 7 December 1990, at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, NC.



*Photo by R. F. Ellano, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr., CMC, speaking to troops in the field at Las Flores, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, CA, 14 July 1987.



to reap a “peace dividend” and thereby cut defense costs and even force structure that was no longer necessary in the new world order. Gray, however, vigorously resisted the proposed cuts and instead saw these immediate post–Cold War years as an opportunity to reinforce professional military education (PME) so that the Corps would be ready for the next war—one that the widely read Gray knew would soon come. Moreover, he continued to emphasize maneuver warfare as being the most flexible and effective warfighting doctrine in an increasingly uncertain world. Gray created and organized the Marine Corps University, binding together within a common framework a wide variety of Marine Corps schools at Quantico. He also did something unique among the Joint Chiefs of Staff and that was to create a Commandant’s Professional Reading List that varied for all ranks from private to general. It was not long before all the other chiefs created reading lists for their own Services. But the most important thing that Gray did in his first years as Commandant was to publish *Warfighting*, Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 (FMFM-1). This book, shockingly concise in scope, nicely captured exactly what Gray thought about warfighting and his own personal philosophy on maneuver warfare. Furthermore, he was adamant that this information literally become part of wider Marine Corps culture and that every officer and senior staff noncommissioned officer know, understand, and apply its concepts. Gray extended recruit training at both Marine Corps recruit depots. He established the School of Infantry as follow-on training for newly minted Marines. Gray strongly believed that all enlisted Marines, regardless of their eventual MOS, should be “capable of effectively serving in a rifle squad.”<sup>24</sup> In sum, Gray was constantly working on ways for all his Marines to improve their warrior ethos.

Gray’s doctrinal changes, emphasis on PME, and imbuing every Marine with a warrior outlook came along just in time. In August 1990, after years of causing problems in the Persian Gulf region, Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi Army attacked and occupied the oil-rich

nation of Kuwait. In addition to the brutality with which Hussein and his forces conducted their occupation of Kuwait, his actions also threatened peaceful access to energy for nearly the entire world. Consequently, President George H. W. Bush ordered an immediate military response, and it was not long before nearly two-thirds of the Marine Corps was in northern Saudi Arabia or embarked on board nearby amphibious shipping in preparation for what became Operation Desert Storm—the mission of the allied Coalition forces to ultimately eject Hussein’s occupying forces from all of Kuwait. In fact, Desert Storm would be the “largest single combat operation in Marine Corps history,” involving more than 93,000 Marines in all. As things turned out, while the operation and mission ended rather quickly (only 100 hours of total ground combat operations), it was impossible for the action-oriented Gray to sit still in Washington, DC, for very long. Making frequent trips to the Gulf (some believed too frequent), Gray famously remarked that “we now have four kinds of Marines: those in the Gulf, those going to the Gulf, those who want to go to the Gulf, and those who don’t want to go to the Gulf but are going anyway.”<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the 1st and 2d Marine Divisions, along with their associated Marine Aircraft Wings and logistical support, had performed magnificently throughout Desert Shield/Desert Storm and this was in no small measure due to Gray’s emphasis on maneuver warfare throughout the 1980s.

On 30 June 1991, at the traditional Commandant’s change of command ceremony at Marine Barracks, Washington, DC, General Alfred M. Gray retired after nearly 41 years of continuous service in the Marine Corps. In retirement, Gray was frequently consulted by every Commandant who followed in his trace. Moreover, the “impact of his ideas and programs remain vibrant” to this day. Gray also remained dedicated to Marine Corps PME. The Corps named its Quantico-based research center after him while he was still alive—an honor that is rarely accorded to anyone. Gray never spoke about it with anyone, but just as he

<sup>24</sup> Al Gray, as quoted in Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 303.

<sup>25</sup> Colonel Joseph H. Alexander, USMC (Ret), *A Fellowship of Valor: The Battle History of the United States Marines* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 372.

did for the wounded returning from Beirut, Lebanon, in 1983, he continued to see “his” wounded Marines returning from combat in Iraq and Afghanistan at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland, in recent years, and he often extended a comforting hand to those who had lost loved ones in the service of their country. It was clear that true retirement never suited Gray. He continued his Marine Corps-related activities by serving on a number of Marine-focused nonprofit organizations and was “an early sponsor in the Wounded Warrior Project [and formerly] Chairman of the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund.” Ever interested in education, Gray sat on a number of university boards and remained connected with Marine Corps University and lectured to more than 450 Marines on his warfighting philosophy as late as 2017.<sup>26</sup> He was also a mainstay at the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, an Arlington, Virginia-based think tank focused on national security affairs.

In his prize-winning book, *The Right Stuff*, author Thomas Wolfe wrote about the extraordinary careers of those early test pilots who formed the nucleus of NASA’s Project Mercury astronaut program and who regularly risked their lives to prove the doctrinal concept that manned space flight was possible. Wolfe noted that these men had a

righteous quality. There was, instead, a seemingly infinite series of tests. A career in flying was like climbing one of those ancient Babylonian pyramids made up of a dizzy progression of steps and ledges, a ziggurat, a pyramid extraordinarily high and steep; and the idea was to prove at every foot of the way up that pyramid that you were one of the elected and anointed ones who had the right stuff and could move higher and higher and even—God willing, one day—that you might



Photo by Sgt C. R. Stout, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr., CMC, speaks to the troops at Marine Corps Air Station Futenma, Japan, 30 September 1987.

be able to join the special few at the very top, that elite who had the capacity to bring tears to men’s eyes, the very Brotherhood of the Right Stuff itself.<sup>27</sup>

In similar ways for the Marine Corps, General Gray was the epitome of a dynamic and unique Marine officer who possessed the “right stuff” too. He was dedicated to duty, intelligent, thoughtful, generous, cantankerous (when he needed to be), and always had a weather eye on the general welfare of his Marines in both peacetime and war. We shall not see his like again.

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<sup>26</sup> Turley, *The Journey of a Warrior*, 461–62.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas Wolfe, *The Right Stuff* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1979), 17–18.



*Photo by Cpl Jones, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
CMC Alfred M. Gray Jr. talks to a private during a visit to Parris Island, SC, 26 February 1988.



*Photo by Sgt C. R. Stout, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr., CMC, observes a live fire demonstration at Camp Hansen, Japan, 30 September 1987.



*Photo by SSgt R. L. Jaggard, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
CMC Alfred M. Gray speaks to a group of Marines during his visit to Camp Hansen, Japan, 11 February 1989.



*Photo by Cpl J. D. Gonzales, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
LtGen Alfred M. Gray Jr., commanding general, Fleet Marine Force, Atlantic, shown entering the Marine field compound accompanied by unidentified officers during Exercise Cold Winter '87 in Norway on 1 March 1987.



*Photo by MSgt Don Wetterman, RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
CMC Alfred M. Gray Jr. greets a Marine during the welcome home celebration in New York honoring the men and women who served in Desert Storm, 10 June 1991.



*Photo by Robert A. Kocher, MCU Press*  
Retired CMC Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr. photographed in his home office during an interview with Marine Corps History Division's then-director, Charles P. Neimeyer, in 2014.



# Remembrances of Commandant General Alfred M. Gray Jr.

*By Allan R. Millett, PhD*

In life or death, General Alfred Gray is unforgettable. I think I met him in the late 1970s when he had become a brigadier general and a public figure for his command of the air and ground Joint forces that evacuated Saigon and Phnom Penh. I do know that I knew him when I commanded 3d Battalion, 25th Marines (1980–81), and we went to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for annual training duty. As a major general, he had become commanding general of the 2d Marine Division, and he visited our command post during the week-long exercise to see how we were doing. He knew that my history of the Marine Corps, *Semper Fidelis*, had just been published (1981), and he had already read it. I had dined at his quarters the week before, so we had already talked about the book, which he liked. At our second meeting, he complimented our battalion on its operational competence and enthusiastic training. The spiritual lift helped since the 4th Division commander had just reamed me out for protesting the transfer of my best

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Dr. Allan R. Millett retired in 2005 after 37 years as a professor of history and faculty associate of the Mershon Center for International Security Studies at the Ohio State University. He then became the Ambrose Professor of History and director of the Eisenhower Center for American Studies at the University of New Orleans and senior military advisor at the National World War II Museum. He is the author or coauthor of 10 books. In 2008, Millett received the Pritzker Military Museum and Library Literature Award for Lifetime Achievement in Military Writing. An infantry officer in the Marine Corps, he retired as a colonel from the Marine Corps Reserve in 1990.



*RG 330 Records of the Secretary of Defense, Combined Military Service  
Digital Photographic Files, 1982–2007, NARA*  
Retired CMC Gen Alfred M. Gray Jr.'s official portrait in his camouflage utility uniform, 1 January 1995.

and largest rifle company, Lima of western Pennsylvania, to make up manning shortfalls in the 4th Service Support Group. The change had been made without

my consultation, but I was being blamed for allowing my battalion to fall short of its manning requirements. I was mad, and it showed. The commanding general had dressed me down in front of my staff for challenging his decision. Who was I, a mere lieutenant colonel, to challenge the wisdom of the 4th Marine Division commander and his staff? (I had already been selected for colonel, which the commanding general ignored.) General Gray reassured me that his evaluators, headed by Colonel Carl E. Mundy Jr., thought we were doing fine. My reputation did not rest solely on my writing.

Duly promoted, I returned to Quantico for a second tour on the Marine Corps Command and Staff College adjunct faculty and to write operational doctrine guidebooks. I worked on the first version of *Warfighting*, FMFM-1 (1988), and then fleeted up to be deputy director, Marine Corps History and Museums Division (Mobilization Designate), and officer in charge, Mobilization Training Unit DC-4, whose members did a brilliant job covering the Gulf War (1990–91). In 1987, General Gray, now Commandant, asked me to form a group of Reserve colonels to work with the Commandant's Special Study Group, a high-powered collection of Headquarters Marine Corps senior officers answerable only to the Commandant and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were Generals Louis H. Buehl and Thomas R. Morgan. As the senior officer of the Special Projects Reserve Component, I received tasking assignments for our group from the Commandant. My regular counterpart was then-colonel James L. Jones.

During those three years, I served General Gray as well as I could, and I learned nothing that diminished my respect for him. He soldiered on despite his reservations about the Joint Chiefs, the secretary of defense, Navy budgeting, and Washington politics. The fact that he thought out loud did not help with inter-Service politics. He missed the troops and traveled as much as he could. He never wavered in his love of Marines, and he looked constantly for ways to make the Marine Corps better for Marines. He despaired when Marines abused their families, cheated their troops, and quit trying to excel in their operational



*CMC Alfred M. Gray Jr. meets with troops following a live fire demonstration at Camp Hansen, Japan, 30 September 1987.*

CMC Alfred M. Gray Jr. meets with troops following a live fire demonstration at Camp Hansen, Japan, 30 September 1987.

assignments. He wanted the Marine Corps to be as good as it boasted it was to others. Washington service drains even the best officers, ambitious or not, and Gray did not fancy many of the duties that came with being Commandant, especially in taking congressional inquiries and demands seriously.

The Al Gray I knew never allowed his demanding tour as Commandant to diminish his desire to help Marines be more professional and dedicated and to be winners on the battlefield. He was never a poster Marine, and he knew that “good Marines” came in all shapes and sizes. He wanted performance and selflessness beyond human reality, but I know his leadership made many of us want to be better Marines. That is his enduring legacy.

## IN MEMORIAM

# Charles R. “Rich” Smith

2 OCTOBER 1943–6 JANUARY 2024

*By Paul Westermeyer*

Longtime Marine Corps historian Charles R. Smith passed away at his home on 6 January 2024. He was born and raised in Northern California to Gordon and Barbara Smith and was the oldest of three children. He is survived by his brother Russell, his sister Carolyn, and his ex-wife Barbara Rhenish.

Rich, as he preferred to be called, served honorably in Vietnam with the U.S. Army’s 101st Airborne Division (Air-mobile) in 1968 and 1969, first as an artilleryman and then as a historian. He earned bachelor of arts degrees in history and political science from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a master of arts degree in history from San Diego State University. He joined the Marine Corps’ History and Museums Division in July 1971 as a historian, retiring as senior historian and Histories Branch head in 2011 after 40 years of service. He wrote or edited 11 major works on Marine Corps history and published innumerable articles in various periodicals.

The first of his major works was the official history *Marines in the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution, 1775–1783*, published in 1975 in time for the U.S. Bicentennial celebrations. In addition to the research and writing of that manuscript, he provided historical research support and commentary for noted Marine Corps artist Lieutenant Colonel Charles H. Waterhouse’s series of



Charles R. “Rich” Smith.

*Photo courtesy of Barbara Rhenish*

paintings on Marines in the Revolution, the Frigate Navy, and the Mexican War.

Rich was particularly versed in the early history of the Corps but remained a font of knowledge on all Marine Corps history. He wrote *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown*, 1969, published in 1988, another major official history, and was part of the team of historians responsible for the monumental *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year*, 1968, published in 1997. He also wrote a monograph on Marine humanitarian operations, *Angels from the Sea: Relief*

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Paul Westermeyer is a historian at Marine Corps History Division.

*Operations in Bangladesh*, 1991, published in 1995, and edited the Korean War commemorative series into a single volume in 2007.

In 2005, as head of the Histories Branch, he was one of the senior leaders shepherding the transfer of History Division from its long-time headquarters at the Washington Navy Yard to its new parent command, Marine Corps University, Education Command, at Quantico, Virginia. In 2009, he completed rewriting *Marine Corps Order 5750.1H*, the foundation order for History Division and its mission, realigning the order with the realities of the division after its 2005 move and reorganization.

Rich was a quiet professional who was a tireless mentor to countless younger historians, Marines, and interns in his decades at History Division. He remained available to his interns as a mentor long after their service, promoting official history as a profession beyond the Marine Corps. His final work, a coauthored history of Marines in the Frigate Navy, 1798–1859, is still under production and will be a worthy capstone to his record after publication.

Rich was the epitome of the government historian, working diligently to preserve, record, and promulgate the history of the U.S. Marine Corps. He will be sorely missed. Rich's publications for History Division include the following.

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- Santelli, Gabrielle M. Neufeld. *Marines in the Mexican War*. Edited by Charles R. Smith. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1991. 59 pp.
- Shulimson, Jack, LtCol Leonard A. Blasiol, Charles R. Smith, and Capt David A. Dawson. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Defining Year, 1968*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1997. 805 pp.
- Smith, Charles R., ed. *U.S. Marines in the Korean War*. Washington, DC: Marine Corps History Division, 2007. 741 pp.
- , ed. *The Journals of Marine Second Lieutenant Henry Bulls Watson, 1845–1848*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1990. 420 pp.



Photo by Charles D. Melson, "History 101: A Tour of the Historical Branch," *Fortitudine* 29, no. 1 (2001): 12.

Historical Section head Charles R. Smith in the offices of Marine Corps History Division, where he supervised the efforts of a staff of four producing publications and oral histories.

- Smith, Charles R. *Securing the Surrender: Marines in the Occupation of Japan*. World War II Commemorative Series. Washington, DC: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1997. 45 pp.
- . *Angels from the Sea: Relief Operations in Bangladesh, 1991*. U.S. Marines in Humanitarian Operations. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1995. 116 pp.
- . *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: High Mobility and Standdown, 1969*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1988. 403 pp.
- . *Marines in the Revolution: A History of the Continental Marines in the American Revolution, 1775–1783*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1975. 491 pp.
- . *A Brief History of the 12th Marines*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1972. 84 pp.
- Waterhouse, Col Charles H., and Charles R. Smith. *Marines in the Frigate Navy, 1798–1835*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1985. 14 plates. 36 pp.
- . *Marines in the Revolution: A Pictorial History*. Washington, DC: History and Museums Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1975. 32 pp.



# BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Thomas Zakharis

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*Lincoln Takes Command: The Campaign to Seize Norfolk and the Destruction of the CSS Virginia.* By Steve Norder. (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2020. Pp. 336. \$29.95, hardcover.)

*Kill Jeff Davis: The Union Raid on Richmond, 1864.* By Bruce M. Venter. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2016. Pp. 384. \$32.95, hardcover; \$24.95, e-book.)

*Appomattox 1865: Lee's Last Campaign.* By Ron Field. (Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, 2015. Pp. 96. \$25.00, paperback; \$20.00, e-book.)

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Three books on the American Civil War offer fresh insights on distinct actions and campaigns and their ultimate effects.

On 12 May 1862, President Abraham Lincoln arrived at the Washington Navy Yard on USS *Baltimore* in triumph. Ten days earlier he had left Washington along with members of his Cabinet on USS *Miami* to order, schedule, and observe the federal reoccupation of Norfolk, Portsmouth, and the important Gosport Navy Yard in Virginia. The operation's importance was all the more vital because it led to the destruction of the formidable Confederate ironclad ram *Virginia*, whose captain, Josiah Tattnall, finding himself unable to escape across a sand bar, opted to blow up his vessel rather than let it fall into Northern hands.

On 17 May, the *Christian Recorder*, an African-American newspaper in Philadelphia, wrote, "Whole volumes would not record the events of the last week and one of the grandest themes of the future historians of our country will be . . . the terrible attack of our fleet on Sewall's Point under the eye of the President, the capture of Norfolk and the grand denouement of the destruction of *Merrimac*."

In *Lincoln Takes Command: The Campaign to Seize Norfolk and the Destruction of the CSS Virginia*, Steve Norder, genealogist, teacher, reporter, book editor,

and author on Civil War topics, describes in one volume the campaign that demonstrated Lincoln's inherent strategic mettle. The author draws on considerable source material, among it the correspondence of Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase—who accompanied the president—to his daughter. Enthusiasts of the American Civil War era will discover in this beautiful book a fresh insight into the multifaceted intellect of Abraham Lincoln.

In volume 51 in the University of Oklahoma Press's Campaigns and Commanders series, *Kill Jeff Davis: The Union Raid on Richmond, 1864*, independent historian Bruce M. Venter sheds new light on the Kilpatrick-Dahlgren raid on Richmond, the most difficult and confused operation ever attempted by the Union cavalry. Launched on 28 February 1864, the scheme's objectives were not only to occupy the Confederate capital and liberate Union prisoners held there, but also to assassinate President Jefferson Davis and his cabinet. In his 10-year effort to research the book, Venter used two new sources: a 98-page document written by Reuben Bartley, Colonel Ulric Dahlgren's signal officer, and a cryptic document written by scout James Wood to Dahlgren's brother that illuminates details of the colonel's activities.

Venter explains the reasons for the raid's ultimate failure, starting with the personality of the man who conceived it, Brigadier General H. Judson Kilpatrick ("Little Kill," as classmates in West Point called him). The season chosen for the raid, the number of men involved (only 4,000), and the obsessive assump-

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Maj Peter L. Belmonte, USAF (Ret), holds a master's degree in history from California State University, Stanislaus, and is the author of several books including *Days of Perfect Hell: The U.S. 26th Infantry Regiment in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, October–November 1918* (2015) and (with Alexander F. Barnes) *United States Army Depot Brigades in World War I* (2021).

tion that Major General Benjamin F. Butler's Army of the James would provide support with a pincer movement from the south all proved to be wrong. On the vital question as to whether papers the rebels found on Dahlgren's corpse truly called for the arrest and killing of Davis was true, the author's answer is affirmative. The book also analyzes Rear Admiral John A. B. Dahlgren's struggle to recover all the personal items of his son that were looted by the Confederates.

We will never know if participation by Major General George Armstrong Custer in the raid could have changed its outcome, but the author concludes that it was "a raid that never should have been undertaken . . . and no doubt changed the military career of the man who conceived it." Anyone who reads *Kill Jeff Davis* will likely be inclined to agree.

In his latest book, U.S. military history expert Ron Field investigates the period between 29 March to 10 April 1865 in the waning weeks of the war in *Appomattox 1865: Lee's Last Campaign*. During the morning hours of 3 April, Union troops began to enter Petersburg and Richmond, Virginia. What recourse was left to General Robert E. Lee, commander of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, but to retreat? As he led his depleted army westward, he hoped to link up with General Joseph E. Johnston's Army of Tennessee, heading northwest through North Carolina. Not only did Lee have the pursuing Union forces against him but the environment as well. While he counted on three available roads crossing the Appomattox River for the movement of his troops, artillery, and wagon trains, spring flooding rendered the approach to Bevels Bridge impassable. Of the two others still available, the Richmond and Danville railroad bridge at Mattox Station offered a difficult approach and crossing for wheeled vehicles.

In the Union camp, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant and Major General George G. Meade agreed

that the most likely retreat route for the Confederate commander was along the Richmond and Danville railroad into North Carolina in an attempt to link him up with Johnston's army of the Tennessee, exactly the strategy Lee was attempting. Therefore, Grant decided to march from Sutherland's Station along the Namozine road to Burkeville Junction, Virginia, the point at which the Southside and Richmond and Danville railroads crossed. That gave the Union Army of the Potomac a 32-kilometer-shorter distance to go as it sought to catch up with the Army of Northern Virginia.

In his account of this epic chase, the author describes the continuous engagements that occurred in the course of less than a week and focuses on the role played by Major General Custer, commander of the 3d Division, Army of the Shenandoah, in the final day at Appomattox Court House, as well as the Union victories at Five Forks, Namozine Church, Little Sailor's Creek, and the Appomattox River. He also notes the roles played by Confederate sub-units such as Black troops recently recruited in Richmond and Tucker's naval brigade.

The author concludes with a brief description of Lee's final surrender in the McLean house in Appomattox on 9 April. It is interesting that Grant generously accepted Lee's request for Confederate soldiers to keep their horses, but the next morning Lee announced his refusal to sign the surrender of the three remaining Confederate armies. The author avoids mentioning that after Grant's departure from the McLean house, the rest of the Union officers looted the furniture from the house. As a brief summary overview, this little book should satisfy the general reader interested in the last days of the Army of Northern Virginia.

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# BOOK REVIEWS

Robert S. Burrell, PhD

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*The U.S. and the War in the Pacific, 1941–45.* By Sandra Wilson, Michael Sturma, Arjun Subrahmanyam, Dean Aszkielowicz, J. Charles Schencking. (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2022. Pp. 172. \$128.00, hardcover; \$39.99, paperback.)

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*The U.S. and the War in the Pacific, 1941–45* encompasses a sizeable effort by five scholars from Murdoch University in Perth, Australia. Having such a wealth of talent on this topic at a single campus—which these five professors obviously put to good use—is quite impressive and commendable. This reviewer was pleasantly surprised that the title did not signify a myopic U.S. view of events. While the text does rely on Western sources for the most part, it offers a comprehensive account of the war and not just one focused on the actions of the United States. The authors provide perspective from each principal actor, including that of India, China, Russia, and even some resistance movements. In fact, the book provides a balanced narrative that incorporates a rational understanding of the actions taken by all the major participants, including that of Imperial Japan.

This book is exceptionally edited and, despite five authors, contains a surprisingly unified narrative. While it covers the typical military history matters of grand strategy, battles, and key leaders, it also highlights important social, racial, and gender issues that have long been excluded from such accounts on war. It also deftly integrates many diplomatic or key strategic decisions made during the war, providing added context to how and why those choices led to battles and campaigns. Within this context, the authors frequently investigate the possibilities of what might

have happened if alternative decisions had been made. These historical reflections, offered by such seasoned scholars, offer great value to students of this war. Additionally, the authors emphasize a considerable number of both definitive and groundbreaking secondary sources on World War II. This provides excellent balance and weight to their arguments. Unfortunately, the heavy reliance on secondary sources brings with it a degree of weakness when statistics or specific details are offered without primary evidence. Still, the book's command of authoritative sources on the Pacific War may be unequalled.

In their quest for a balanced narrative, the authors avoid many contentious issues. For instance, they fail to discuss how America's actions in the pre-war years aggravated war with Japan. Specifically, the many territories it acquired by force, from Hawaii to the Philippines. The strategic importance of the Philippines, in particular, does not receive enough attention, as these thousands of islands lay deep within Japanese interior lines. In fact, the three decades of wargames that America and Japan both conducted prior to the conflict each centered on control over the Philippines, which simultaneously stimulated the growth of the largest navies in history. The authors also sidestep some controversial moral aspects so prominently highlighted in John W. Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986). For instance, the Japanese massacre at Nanjing is shockingly provided only one sentence. America's firebombing and atomic bombing of Japanese cities is discussed in more detail, but the ethical implications are largely ignored.

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Dr. Robert S. Burrell is a senior research fellow with the University of South Florida's Global and National Security Institute and formerly taught at the Joint Special Operations University and U.S. Naval Academy. He is also an award-winning Pacific War historian. <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3920-0939>.

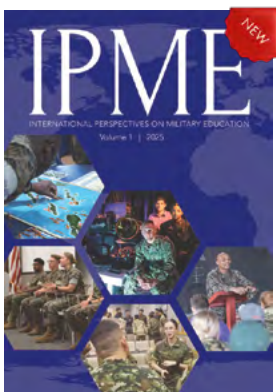
Despite these criticisms, this is a highly recommended authoritative work. It provides a thorough and comprehensive account offered in a consolidated product. For those seeking an updated narrative on the topic in a concise, balanced, and authoritative pack-

age, this book is a must, as such accomplishments are rare. *The U.S. and the War in the Pacific, 1941–45* would make an excellent textbook for any course offered on the Pacific War.

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## Bradley Cesario, PhD

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*Victory at Sea: Naval Power and the Transformation of the Global Order in World War II.* By Paul Kennedy. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2022. Pp. 644. \$37.50, hardcover and e-book; \$25.00, paperback.)

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Paul Kennedy has built a well-earned reputation with the study of grand strategy, exploring the ties between economic and military strength over centuries. He turns more closely toward the naval aspects of World War II with *Victory at Sea*, but remains characteristically broad in scope and theory: “This is a naval tale, to be sure, yet in addition it is an analysis of power shifts in the international system at the time of the greatest hegemonic war in history” (p. xv). As a result, there are two major through-lines in *Victory at Sea*: “The winning of the hegemonic World War II cannot be understood without knowledge of its maritime side, and . . . the vast surge in the achievements of the Allied navies cannot be comprehended without the reader’s recognizing the underlying seismic shifts of this time” (p. xviii). To Kennedy, naval power won World War II—but it was economic growth, particularly in the United States, that created that naval power in the first place. He points to 1943 as the turning point when U.S. economic might overtook all challengers.

*Victory at Sea* is divided into a blend of narrative and thematic chapters and is arranged in five broader sections covering the background to the war (chapters 1–3), naval developments 1939–42 (chapters 4–6), a special focus on the year 1943 (chapters 7–8), naval developments 1944–45 (chapters 9–10), and the aftermath of the naval war (chapter 11 and epilogue). There are also three appendices covering warship production statistics, an example of U-boat and convoy warfare, and a case study of a “causation chain” involving bauxite production (causation chains

being the subject of Kennedy’s 2013 work, *Engineers of Victory: The Problem Solvers Who Turned the Tide in the Second World War*). The descriptive chapters follow a familiar chronological path: chapter 4 covers the outbreak of hostilities through the fall of France, chapter 5 conflict in the Atlantic and Mediterranean through December 1941, and chapter 6 the worldwide maritime war of 1942. The seventh lengthy chapter covers the entirety of the critical year 1943. Chapters 9 and 10 take a triumphal turn as the naval war concludes during 1944 and 1945. Each chapter is divided into multiple subsections, making it simple to break out individual topics for classroom or research use. The narratives are fast-paced and rollicking, a pleasure to read and ably demonstrating Kennedy’s mastership of his craft. He is especially impressive when tying the broader themes into the individual stories of heroism and loss that made up the daily struggle of the maritime conflict. Yet, some major operations are quickly glossed over: D-Day merits four pages, and the Anzio landings are dismissed in a single page and a note that “there is little to say . . . that has not been said a hundred times before in the literature” (p. 367).

The thematic chapters put Kennedy’s previous research and methodological framework on display and are more suited to discussions or use in advanced coursework. Chapter 1 portrays 1939 as the last gasp of a world order that had lasted since the late 1700s. Chapter 3 examines geography and geopolitics as a basis for the conflict, as well as the economic underpinnings of the belligerent merchant marines. Chapter 8, as part of the section on 1943, covers the relationship between American economic production and the United States’ growing role as global hegemon. Chapter 11 is a recap of the entire conflict, packed with jumping-off points for questions such as: When was

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the war at sea won? How did it adhere to prevailing theoretical conceptions of maritime strategy? What type of warship proved best able to respond to the challenges of modern war? By the end of these points and the brief epilogue, Kennedy's overall conclusion is clear: "It was now the age of Pax Americana" (p. 429).

There are some issues in *Victory at Sea* that give the reader pause. Kennedy focuses entirely on the six nations of Britain, the United States, France, Japan, Germany, and Italy. While these were the majority of naval combatants, it would be helpful to see more detail on some of the smaller naval powers like the Soviet Union or the Dutch. Any intervention into the current historiography of the naval war is confined to the footnotes. This is understandable considering the broad scope and intended audience, but there are mentions of older historiographies throughout; is it helpful to include repeated references to Correlli Bar-

nett and Samuel Eliot Morison in a book published in 2022? The biggest concern is an alarming number of citations to Wikipedia, including an entire appendix.

Single-volume maritime histories of World War II appear regularly on the market. What sets *Victory at Sea* apart from other recent entries such as Evan Mawdsley's *The War for the Seas: A Maritime History of World War II* (2019) or Craig L. Symonds's *World War II at Sea: A Global History* (2018)? Kennedy has certainly earned the right to be read and engaged with over a career of scholarship. The emphasis on structural economics at a grand scale will appeal to specialists, and the thematic chapters are useful as a jumping-off point for debate. Most remarkable is the presentation and polish, with more than 50 spectacular paintings by the late maritime artist Ian Marshall adorning the pages. That alone makes *Victory at Sea* a worthy addition to any naval bookshelf.

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## Noah F. Crawford

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*Call Out the Cadets: The Battle of New Market, May 15, 1864.* By Sarah Kay Bierle. (El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2019. Pp. 192. \$16.95, paperback; free, audiobook.)

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Every year, millions of people drive the length of Virginia's Shenandoah Valley on Interstate 81, most of them unaware of the dozen American Civil War battlefields the highway bisects. As the bucolic village of New Market appears alongside the road, the historically inclined traveler might follow a brown roadway sign's suggestion to tune into an AM radio station for news about the May 1864 battle that was fought in the surrounding fields. A prerecorded narrative crackles through the car stereo telling a story well-known to Civil War buffs: how 257 teenage cadets from the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) left their classrooms in Lexington and conducted a forced march to reinforce an outnumbered Confederate Army, ultimately spearheading the charge that routed the Union Army. So familiar—hackneyed, even—is this story, that Civil War scholars are apt to sigh and grumble, “Another book on New Market?” But Sarah Kay Bierle’s *Call Out the Cadets: The Battle of New Market, May 15, 1864* breaks the mold by offering a more holistic approach that moves the reader’s eyes beyond the actions of the cadets to illuminate other units’ participation, reanalyze commanders’ decisions, and provide an invaluable accompaniment when visiting the battlefield.

The charge of the VMI cadets at New Market sunk deep into Civil War memory. For decades, the institute’s Corps of Cadets conducted a yearly pilgrimage to the battlefield, where first-year “rats” tramped across the same field where the cadets secured the battle. Until recently, the longest-running annual Civil War reenactment was held on the bat-

tlefield, regularly drawing thousands of participants and spectators. In 2014, the feature film *Field of Lost Shoes* (the cast of which included David Arquette, Jason Isaacs, and Keith David) brought the battle to the big screen. Of course, Lost Cause rhetoric that valorized Confederate soldiers also buoyed the cadets’ legacy. So ingratiated into local lore is the cadets’ charge, that the Commonwealth of Virginia’s Museum of the Civil War lies neither in the state (and former Confederate) capital of Richmond, nor in the more well-known battlefields around Manassas and Spotsylvania, but in the quiet town of New Market. But Bierle’s monograph—the latest in the Emerging Civil War Series—avoids the romanticism that generations of historians have heaped on the cadets’ charge. The author capably reinforces the dramatic, high-stakes nature of the campaign without tipping into hagiographic romanticism. The narrative’s flowing, focused prose is a refreshing addition to the historiography of a battle too often dripping with Lost Cause rhetoric.

The narrative follows a logical progression that begins by articulating Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant’s intention to hit Confederate forces on all fronts at once in the spring of 1864. Major General Franz Sigel’s Union Army was supposed to travel southward through the Shenandoah Valley and wreak havoc on Major General John C. Breckinridge’s small Confederate Army guarding the supplies and railroads in western Virginia. *Call Out the Cadets*, however, offers a more personal look at the campaign’s participants than other studies. The first three chapters provide insights into the local citizens who found themselves caught in the middle of the battle, as well as biographic synopses of major players in the armies’ officer corps and a number of enlisted men. These are not mere exposition, but part of Bierle’s reanaly-

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sis. For example, Bierle discusses how Breckinridge's 19-year-old son had been captured several months earlier and only just been exchanged, hinting that this personal event might have played a part in the general's reluctance to send teenage cadets into battle.

Bierle describes how Breckinridge ordered the VMI cadets to join his army near New Market, arriving shortly before the Union and Confederate armies made contact near New Market. A preliminary cavalry engagement during the two days preceding the battle earns an entire chapter's discussion—far more than other historians have allocated to the contributions from the mounted arm during the campaign. Bierle also offers analysis of commanders' decisions. According to Bierle, Breckinridge fights a sound battle. Not only did his tactical decisions result in a Union defeat, but Breckinridge never lost sight of the operational picture; Bierle observes how he assumed an offensive posture only when assured that a nearby Union Army force was withdrawing. Sigel's maneuvers also fall under Bierle's microscope. In recent years, numerous Civil War generals have received reevaluation and given more generous evaluations than historians have previously given them (including recent biographies like Earl J. Hess's 2021 *Braxton Bragg: The Most Hated Man in the Confederacy* and John G. Selby's 2018 *Meade: The Price of Command, 1863–1865*). But defendants of Sigel will have to look elsewhere if they want to see his dubious reputation overturned. Even before the battle opened, Sigel's "orders created a disjointed command structure" that hamstrung his subordinates (p. 54). Bierle does not let Sigel's lieutenants off the hook; division commander Brigadier General Jeremiah C. Sullivan demonstrated a "lack of initiative" and "seemed to lack enthusiasm" (p. 83). Although *Call Out the Cadets* does not fundamentally alter opinions on Sigel, it does add nuance to debates among armchair generals by demonstrating that there was plenty of blame to go around in the Union high command.

Bierle's description of the battle consumes eight chapters. The cadets receive their baptism of fire as the Confederate force slowly pushed the Union Army back during the morning and early afternoon. But the Confederate attack faltered and a unit in the center

broke for the rear; Breckinridge—who had not intended to put the cadets into heavy combat—gave the order to "put the boys in" (p. 108). The cadets filled the hole in the battle line then launched a desperate attack as a thunderstorm broke, churning the field they traversed into a quagmire so deep as to pull their footwear straight from their feet, christening the slope with the name it still holds today: the Field of Lost Shoes. The cadets seized a battery in the heart of the enemy position and the Union line crumbled. Though the cadets played a critical role in securing a Confederate victory at New Market, 57 of the 588 Confederate casualties during the battle were suffered by the cadets; Union losses totaled 744. But while the cadets' charge receives much attention, Bierle observes that "trouble begins when stories produce claims that a handful of school boys single-handedly won the battle or records fail to acknowledge the role of other units. . . . To give full credit to the cadets, the Union soldiers, and the Confederate troops, the entire battle must be understood" (p. 148).

The organization and utility of this book warrants mention. At the end of each chapter, Bierle provides a detailed description of how to tour the site of the events described in that chapter, complete with turn-by-turn directions and even GPS coordinates. The value of these segments to the battlefield visitor or officer planning a staff ride cannot be understated. Readers who cannot visit the battlefield will still benefit from the impressive collection of images (180 by this reviewer's count) and 10 maps. The book's four useful appendices include articles on firsthand accounts from the battle, another summarizing endeavors to preserve the battlefield, and a third considering the legacy of the battle for VMI, as well as an order of battle. There is one curious omission from the back matter—endnotes. Although the book mentions that notes can be found on the Emerging Civil War Series website, this decision will likely leave the more research-oriented reader feeling inconvenienced.

Whether a nonspecialist learning about New Market for the first time or a former "rat" who recreated the charge during their time at VMI, readers will find *Call Out the Cadets* a valuable source. Its nar-



rative provides a more personal and nuanced look at the battle's participants than previous studies without falling into iconoclasm. The driving tour instructions in each chapter make this volume a "must" for anyone

trapsing the battlefield. Bierle's book rightly deserves a spot on the bookshelf of anyone interested in the Battle of New Market.

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## Aaron D. Dilday, PhD

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*To Master the Boundless Sea: The U.S. Navy, the Marine Environment, and the Cartography of Empire.* By Jason W. Smith. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018. Pp. 280. \$29.95, paperback; \$19.99, e-book.)

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Jason W. Smith's first monograph, *To Master the Boundless Sea: The U.S. Navy, the Marine Environment, and the Cartography of Empire*, offers a clever and compelling work of history that defies easy categorization; it crosses the bounds of United States, military, naval, maritime, scientific, technological, cultural, and environmental fields of study. Smith, an assistant professor of history at Southern Connecticut State University, weaves together disparate research into a singular narrative that should be heralded as a shining example of how to find interesting stories in underutilized archival collections. Additionally, Smith aims to collect the disparate threads of existing scholarship to create a new synthesis while also providing "an analysis more tightly focused on the interplay among science, environment, and military power" (p. 5). To these ends, Smith argues that "the roots of America's oceanic empire lay in the maritime commercial expansion made possible in important ways by naval surveyors and hydrographers before the Civil War, and in a continuing faith among naval scientists that their work could further American national interests and maritime and naval power thereafter" (p. 6).

Taking on a life of its own, the sea becomes central to this story. Smith argues that "we cannot fully understand the growth of American commercial and military power at sea without acknowledging the agency of the natural world" (p. 10). Thus, much of the core narrative focuses on the human relationship to nature. In the first chapter, Smith details the perilous condition of mariners' lives during the age of sail often

as a battle with the forces of the natural world stating that "everything depended on the wind" and "even the most seasoned captain had but a vague idea of what he might encounter during the course of a voyage" (p. 16). Smith explains that by the early nineteenth century, the adoption of "shared folkloric knowledge" and the "tools of navigational science—the chart, the sextant, the nautical almanac, and various coast pilots and books of sailing directions" helped mariners navigate the hazardous sea environment in "a desire to make nature seem orderly and comprehensible" (p. 17).

Another core theme is the rise of a new nation. Smith contends that the mariners and scientists were actually vanguards of an American commercial empire, utilizing their hard-earned knowledge to pave the way for trade that was "central to the growth of the young nation and the construction of national identity" (p. 20). The cartographic work of the U.S. Navy's Depot of Charts and Instruments and the Naval Observatory and Hydrographical Office helped lay the groundwork for American overseas imperial ambitions, although "even by century's end, American hydrographic efforts never surpassed the British Admiralty, whose hydrographic office remained the standard and most comprehensive institution of its kind in the world" (pp. 30–31). Smith acknowledges that surpassing the British was not necessarily the goal, as much cartographic information was shared; but there was an aspect of national pride involved early on and, later, sea charts became a component of national security. Throughout the nineteenth century, the U.S. government took up the role of centralizing this type of information while also adopting scientific methodologies. The search for knowledge ultimately transformed the Navy into "one of the nation's most important scientific institutions" by 1840 (p. 35).

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In *To Master the Boundless Sea*, Smith evokes a theme familiar to many who have studied U.S. history—the concept of the frontier. Smith develops the concept of the wilderness in the American mind as both an environmental and cultural element. The study features discussions of the “mariner-frontiersman” (p. 22) and describes how expansion of the maritime empire is ultimately “manifest destiny gone to sea” (p. 49). Smith further argues that hydrographers viewed nature differently than mariners, instead adapting notions of the wilderness as it already existed in the American psyche as expressions of westward expansion and the frontier: “When hydrographers invoked ocean wilderness, they defined it as a chaotic and disorienting nature awaiting the sort of order that their hydrographic charts and texts could impose” (p. 37). Smith contends that these views reflect larger themes of Enlightenment rationalism and furthermore that the “wilderness linked science with literature” (p. 39).

Fantastic stories of these ships, sailors, and far-away places captivated the American public in the nineteenth century. References to authors such as James Fenimore Cooper, Henry David Thoreau, Herman Melville, John Steinbeck, and Edgar Allan Poe are featured prominently in *To Master the Boundless Sea* as these tales served as “literary cartographies or a kind of textual map that constructed environmental knowledge in the sailor’s imagination” that “might serve as a warning or a guide to fellow navigators” (p. 25). Ultimately, the evolution of maritime literature and navigational science aided mariners in replacing the “sea’s many mysteries with knowledge” (p. 30).

Another thread Smith weaves into this study is an institutional history of the U.S. Navy throughout

the nineteenth century. Smith analyzes the development of technology for scientific research, but also considers larger issues like the transition from sails to steel. Smith also details the growth of the Navy as an institution with some discussion of the rise and fall of various scientific departments peppered throughout the narrative. Yet, the heart of the discussion of the Navy focuses on how the institution grappled with the eventual need to embrace scientific study when it had disdained it for so long. For instance, U.S. naval education changed from an apprenticeship-style system of hands-on training on board ships to a more structured focus on math and science at the Annapolis, Maryland, naval school after its creation in 1845. But this failed to fully endear scientific study to the Navy. The Navy’s strained relationship with science plagued the institution well into the twentieth century, as demonstrated by the failure of science during the Spanish-American War. During that conflict, many of the charts around Cuba proved untrustworthy, which detrimentally affected naval operations.

Overall, *To Master the Boundless Sea* offers a wealth of information on naval and maritime history of the United States. It has already deservedly earned such accolades as the 2019 John Lyman Book Award in Naval and Maritime Science and Technology from the North American Society for Oceanic History and the 2019 John Gardner Maritime Research Award from the Fellows of the G. W. Blunt White Library, and it was a 2018 *Choice* Outstanding Academic Title. This is the type of book that becomes great fodder for graduate seminars and is a stimulating read for those looking for something new and unique.

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## William Edmund Fahey, PhD

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*The Sailor's Bookshelf: Fifty Books to Know the Sea.* By Admiral James Stavridis, USN (Ret). (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021. Pp. 232. \$26.95, hardcover and e-book.)

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A thrilling pulse beat high in me.  
My step was light on the deck in the  
crisp air, I felt there could be no turn-  
ing back, and that I was engaging in  
an adventure the meaning of which I  
thoroughly understood.<sup>1</sup>

The world divides into two: those who can read such a sentence about seafaring and remain unmoved, and those who hear some inner call that draws them to the sea. Those who have never felt the desire for the brisk salt waters, who have neither the curiosity nor the need to learn of such things as knots, tacks, charts, pirates, or leviathan should stay ashore and move into some earthen interior. Others will want a copy of *The Sailor's Bookshelf*. Admiral James Stavridis is a prolific writer; he has edited and authored many insightful and important books, ranging from revisions of essential naval manuals (the 15th edition of *The Watch Officer's Guide*, 12th edition of *The Division Officer's Guide*, and 6th edition of *Command at Sea*) to reflections on leadership (*Sailing True North: Ten Admirals and the Voyage of Character* [2019], *Destroyer Captain: Lessons of a First Command* [2014], and *To Risk All: Nine Conflicts and the Crucible of Decision* [2022]) to novels about potential conflict and international perils (*2034: A Novel of the Next World War* [2023], concerning a future war against an allied China and Iran; and the forthcoming *2054: A Novel*, a fictional meditation on how AI will change geopolitics—both written with Elliot Acker-

man), and, of course, history (*Sea Power: The History of Geopolitics in the World's Oceans* [2018]). These and other volumes emerge in the context of hundreds of articles and speeches, all the fruit of an incredible four-decade career in the U.S. Navy, a distinguished and generous period of service that saw deployments seasoned with academic work (a PhD from Tufts University, where he later served as dean of the Fletcher School of Diplomacy), and which culminated, in some respects, with his command of the NATO alliance from 2009 to 2013 (as Supreme Allied Commander). An entire website exists to narrate his remarkable career, and it puts on display only a sketch of this remarkable renaissance man. Since retirement from active service, Stavridis has only shown himself even more vigorous in writing and public speaking.

The admiral tells his readers that he has three great passions in life: his wife, reading, and the ocean. It is with the ongoing patience of the first that Stavridis wrote a book that attempts to reproduce the other two in the form of a virtual library, or bookshelf. His own library contains more than 5,000 books and reflects all those years of service, enlivened and leavened by constant reading. Walking among his stacks, Stavridis culled a collection of 50—a difficult election, he confesses. He does so to present a balanced body of works, fiction and nonfiction, attending to all periods of history and all oceans. His chief intent was to include “some of the most fundamental texts that help sailors learn and hone their craft. . . . my simple hope in this small volume is that I can introduce the maritime world, in all its splendor and diversity, to readers who do not know it well. And I hope as well that seasoned sailors will find some new treasures on the list” (pp. xv–xvi). As a man who went to sea in pursuit of imitating his father's career in the Marine

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<sup>1</sup> Joshua Slocum, *Sailing Along Around the World* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956), 11.



Corps, Stavridis is honest in offering this annotated catalog to all, from veteran mariners to landlubbers who simply want to learn more about the fascinating force of nature that covers nearly three-quarters of the planet and sustains it all.

The organizational structure is straightforward and apt. There are four major sections—The Oceans, Explorers, Sailors in Fiction, and Sailors in Nonfiction—and each section offers between 8 and 15 books. The major sections are not introduced, but each chapter about a book opens with a vivid quotation, a rationale for the book's inclusion, a sketch of Stavridis's personal experiences that related to the themes of the book and often his association with the author, a summary of the book's contents, and usually a final meditation. Quite often, the chapters end with a bonus box in which Stavridis includes related books or movies. When one counts all the references within each chapter and bonus section, one finds closer to 100 works than 50. Would that the admiral simply listed all that he thinks worthy of reading.

Since at least the seventh century BCE, when Assyrian king Ashurbanipal established a library of some 30,000 clay tablets in his palace at Nineveh, humans have been building libraries. Archives (dull documents that thrill scribes, accountants, and archaeologists) are even older. Mankind loves shoring up wisdom against the ravages of time and ignorance. The private library seems to be a practical Roman invention, perhaps as officers like the Roman general Sulla—while sacking towns and firming up the Roman empire—sent home small collections of books to read at leisure and share with friends. Although he was not the first, Aulus Gellius (CE 125–80) is one of our earliest discriminating creators of readings lists. From antiquity on, voracious readers have encouraged others by organizing their personal collections and articulating their discerning views. To this reader's knowledge, this book is the first of its kind. While many previous books on sailing and all serious manuals for officers included suggested readings, and while some institutions established very fine series of books under the title of "library" (the Mystic Seaport Museum's *American Maritime Library* and the British Mariner's Library

published by Rupert Hart-Davis come to mind), there appears to be no single volume dedicated to establishing a "sailor's library" such as this volume. It is impossible to imagine a thoughtful person not wanting this book—whether a young bluejacket or seasoned officer, a day sailor or a transatlantic yachtsman, a Merchant Marine, marine biologist, a deployed U.S. Marine assigned to what seems like too much time on or near the sea, or just armchair mariners who wants to enlarge their sensibilities and knowledge of the world.

Overall, effective and handsomely designed, the *Sailor's Bookshelf* delivers what it promises: a display of the admiral's passion, a balance between fiction and nonfiction, coverage of all the major oceans and seas, and a sweeping presentation of maritime history, science, and ongoing concerns that touch on the ocean (piracy, environmental issues, national security and strategy, etc.). Stavridis is a judicious, but generous, anthologist. He has taken his task seriously and is positive and clear about what makes a book he has selected worth reading (and he is honest, when he knows he is playing favorites). Stavridis's summaries tend to uncover too much—not really a problem with a work of history or a study of maritime life; there are no spoilers needed in these genera. But with literature and suspense, readers should be aware that Stavridis covers and exposes entire plots and removes much of what makes imaginative literature a delight to read—the unfolding of the plot and the way the mind is drawn into the unknown through anticipation. This is the work's single significant weakness: Stavridis has yet to find his sea legs for how to discuss literature, or even what its critical purpose is for the self-understanding of the human condition. Stavridis would have truly benefitted from reading something like the introduction to Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren's 1976 *Understanding Poetry* to express how literature contributes to a sailor's forehandedness by preparing them for human experiences and allowing them a deeper meditation of what they have passed through. Stavridis spends a good deal of time writing about himself, his life, or his first encounter with the book or the author under discussion. This may seem indulgent or tiresome, but it is not. Stavridis has had

a rich and interesting life, and the biographical sections are sometimes more interesting than the books discussed within the chapters. The book is efficient. Much is packed into this slender volume. Its format, its blend of popular and scholarly selections (as well as film), the short chapters, plus Stavridis's engaging and light style, makes this an obvious book for home and at sea, something that can act as a kind of program of studies for the engaged reader.

The book is an achievement. Many nautical volumes list titles for further study. Stavridis steps on deck, announces his credentials, pronounces the volumes to collect and read, and spells out their significance. Perhaps it is a sign of Stavridis's persuasive powers that before completing this review, this reader had purchased a dozen previously unknown volumes and has thus far found them all welcome recommendations. All readers will be inspired—to borrow words from Alfred, Lord Tennyson's, *Ulysses*—"to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" in their reading and library building. In his preface, Stavridis invites his readers to build and discern with him, to become shipmates, and even to argue about selections. He asked Commander J. D. Kristenson, a surface warfare officer, to write an afterword to the book, which Kristenson provided in the form of a course of studies. Kristenson notes the admiral's selection is an aid to navigating maritime matters and much more. Inspired by the ranks used by Merchant Marines, Kristenson presents a three-tiered approach to work through what he finds the most compelling of the books first as able seaman, then mate, and finally master. His reasoning is sound and not driven by some marketing ploy: such "selections are part of a much larger canon and . . . not meant to be comprehensive or even prescriptive. Books can only be placed in direct context with books that precede and follow them" (p. 197). This is sound teaching. Both Kristenson and Stavridis invite constructive criticism and augmentation. In fact, the admiral practically dares readers to do so, and this reviewer will not let him or readers down and does not wish to criticize the judgment of such an old salt in what he has included (though perhaps the admiral will agree that some of his works are personal indulgences and some

are bound to be fleeting in relevancy and merit as the years pass). There are a few surprising exclusions, other worthy titles that could have (should have?) been included. Perhaps Stavridis will produce an enlarged second edition. In literature, Stavridis's selections tilt to the tales of the modern age of steam, diesel, and nuclear power, rather than the age of sail. It is shocking that we have no reference to fundamental works of sea literature, especially anything by Frederick Marryat (such as *Midshipman Mr. Easy* [1836]), whose career as a naval officer stretches from the age of sail into the modern age. Rudyard Kipling's *Captains Courageous* (1896) might be forgiven, but this reader is at a complete loss at the absence of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (1883), a tale not merely for young readers, but for anyone who wishes to ponder the effect of the sea (and sin) on the human soul. While the poetic anthology of two Marines is included (George C. Solley and Eric Steinbaugh, *Moods of the Sea: Masterworks of Sea Poetry* [1981]), the music and singing of the sea passes with no mention. The next edition should add Stan Hugill, *Shanties and Sailor Songs* (1969). Given the inspirational nature of the work, *The Sailor's Bookshelf* should have had a thematic section with a name like "Midship to Master" that would guide and reinforce the efforts of aspiring mariners to the actual art of sailing. Within this section should be H. A. Calahan, *Learning to Sail* (1932); Jan Adkins, *The Craft of Sail: A Primer of Sailing* (1973); John Rousmaniere, *The Annapolis Book of Seamanship*, 4th ed. (2014); David Seidman, *The Complete Sailor: Learning the Art of Sailing* (1995); Richard Henderson, *Sea Sense* (1991); E. C. B. Lee and Kenneth Lee, *Safety and Survival at Sea* (1971); Bruce Bauer, *The Sextant Handbook: Adjustment, Repair, Use, and History* (1986); Charles F. Chapman, *Piloting: Seamanship and Small Boat Handling* (1961); and the early editions of the Boy Scouts of America's *The Sea Explorer Manual* (1954). Welcome, too would be a section on essential reference works, such as John G. Rogers, *Origins of Sea Terms* (1984); Admiral W. H. Smyth, *The Sailor's Word-Book: An Alphabetical Digest of Nautical Terms* (1867); A. Cecil Hampshire, *Just An Old Navy Custom* (1979); or Pete Jeans, *Ship to Shore: A Dictionary of Everyday Words and Phrases Derived from the Sea*

(1993). Finally, while the various historical works are found, there are some significant omissions: the various books of Sam Wills; the fictional nonfiction *The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower: A Biography of C. S. Forester's Famous Naval Hero* by C. Northcote Parkinson (1998; 2005); Jack Beeching, *The Galleys at Lepanto* (1982); and James M. Acheson, *The Lobster Gangs of Maine* (1988). But strangest of all, Stavridis does not include a single book by the master sailor and historian Samuel Eliot Morison. Finally, as the life of the sea is crowned with contemplation and wonder, the addition of anything by Hilaire Belloc would most power-

fully evoke the way the sea demands deep reflection and help the mariner become thoughtful. In a similar way, Frederick Wilhelmsen's *Under Full Sail* (1996) and the various essays collected by Patrick Goold in *Catching the Drift of Why We Sail* (2012) would prepare the soul of the mariner. So much for the theoretical second edition. If the measure of success for any book on building a library is the launching of readers to purchase, read, and dream of other books, then those who would go down to the sea must open Admiral Stavridis's *The Sailor's Bookshelf* with great caution. Its victories are decisive.

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## Sarah Jameson

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*At the Dawn of Airpower: The U.S. Army, Navy, and the Marine Corps' Approach to the Airplane, 1907–1917.* By Laurence M. Burke II. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2022. Pp. 384. \$49.95, hardcover.)

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Despite the many histories available on the creation and evolution of the American air Service, there are still gaps in the historiography. None of the previously published works provide a comparison between the military branches as they developed their individual air arms. Laurence M. Burke II seeks to fill this gap with his well-researched and engaging analysis of the birth of American airpower in the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps. The author concentrates on the progress of heavier-than-air technology (i.e., the airplane) from 1907 to 1917 and how its proponents developed doctrine and organizations to further their agendas, although not without several challenges.

Burke organizes his book chronologically with alternating chapters on each branch. The Navy and Marine Corps share chapters because, as Burke explains, the two are so closely linked in their operations, particularly during the early aviation era. Chapter 1 details the Army's first plane acquisition while chapter 2 covers the beginning of naval aviation a couple years behind the Army. Chapter 3 explains the recruitment of more pilots and expansion of the Army Air Service. Chapter 4 further discusses the development of a Navy plane, as naval operations necessitated more compact designs, and the first planes for the Marines. Chapter 5 dives into the first, though informal, inter-Service cooperation as different Services' airmen studied under manufacturer trainers. Chapter 6 returns to Army air development as it established its first school. Chapter 7 analyzes problems in Navy/Marine organization that led to disruptions in airpower development. Chapter 8 details the deployment of the Army

Air Corps into the First World War. Burke rounds out the discussion with a final chapter before the conclusion on the establishment of Joint boards furthering inter-Service cooperation into the future.

Burke does an admirable job tracing the successes and woes of American military aviation at its conception. Aviation had enthusiastic supporters in each of the military branches, but few in positions with enough power and influence to secure the necessary funding the new Service desperately needed to replace, let alone add to, the machines at the heart of the work. The early machines were prone to crashes from equipment failure, causing significant injuries and several deaths. This made the viability of an air Service questionable at best to any funding committee, but the aviators persisted with no small amount of ingenuity. American ideas for aviation's purpose were well ahead of the available technology and the aviators often failed to meet commanders' demands due to that limitation, as was the case in General John J. Pershing's Punitive Expedition in Mexico when the planes could not cross the mountains to complete reconnaissance. When aviators submitted reports detailing the need for more advanced models, some already in production, to address the problems, they were often ignored by the quartermaster and Congress.

Naval aviation was hampered by problems beyond funding and apathetic administrators. Army specifications could be met with aircraft already manufactured for civilian aviators, but naval operations required a completely different set of specifications. There was much less room for storage and take-off on ships and navigation proved problematic as landmarks were nonexistent in the open ocean and compasses were useless because of the vibrations from the engine. Given the problems the air Services faced, it is

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Sarah Jameson is a doctoral candidate at the University of North Texas. Her dissertation is on the American Army at the Battle of Saint-Mihiel in World War I.



nothing short of amazing that American military aviation progressed and proved effective in World War I.

The book possesses only two flaws, and both are minor when considering Burke's contribution to the field. While the subject matter is incredibly interesting, this book appears to be written for specialists. Casual readers may find it difficult to visualize some of the vehicles Burke discusses. For example, in his relatively brief mentions of lighter-than-air craft (the different types of balloons), the author mentions the difficulty the Services experienced securing funding for rigid, semirigid, and kite balloons. However, there are no descriptions of those or even a true analysis of their purpose and why the air Services sought them despite the focus on airplanes. Burke mentions several times that the European belligerents allocated more funding during World War I for different balloons,

but provides no real reasoning as to why, only that the Americans wished to emulate them. Additionally, though the combination of Navy and Marine aviation is logical, the analysis of purely Marine doctrine and progress can become muddled, overshadowed by the Navy's. Perhaps having a separate chapter focused solely on Marine aviation would have been beneficial and aided in clarifying its part in Burke's argument.

The author effectively demonstrates his argument: the success of American airpower relied on a good relationship between airpower advocates and their patrons who could provide funding. Only when the two worked in harmony, no matter the branch, was the air Service able to advance toward its goal of becoming an effective military arm. Burke's research is a necessary and welcome addition to the historiography of U.S. airpower.

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## Frank Kalesnik, PhD

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*Command: How the Allies Learned to Win the Second World War.* By Al Murray. (London: Headline Publishing Group, 2022. Pp. 367. \$29.46, hardcover; \$20.58, paperback.)

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British comedian Al Murray has a keen interest in military history, particularly the Second World War. His biweekly podcast *We Have Ways of Making You Talk* presented in collaboration with historian James Holland “roams down forgotten front lines, casts new villains and makes the case for unlikely heroes.”<sup>1</sup> This is certainly the case with *Command: How the Allies Learned to Win the Second World War*, a top-down look at World War II Allied leadership. Global in scope and biographical in approach, this who’s who includes personalities both famous and obscure, from grand strategists to frontline tacticians. Engaging and entertaining, this is an intimate look at people who waged and won wars.

The leaders selected are covered in individual chapters. All are soldiers, and all spoke English as their primary language. Two, Omar Bradley and George Patton, are Americans. The rest are from what Murray refers to with the acronym DUKE (Dominions, United Kingdom, and Empire). Some, like Field Marshals Bernard Law Montgomery and William Slim, are familiar to military historians. Others, such as Lieutenant Colonel Alistair S. Pearson and Lieutenant Peter R. R. White, are more obscure. Pearson commanded a battalion of the Parachute Regiment, and fought in North Africa, Sicily, and Normandy. White served as a subaltern in the King’s Own Scottish Borderers. His memoir, *With the Jocks: A Soldier’s Struggle for Europe, 1944–45*, was published decades after the war. When hostilities concluded, White studied art at the Royal Academy, from which he graduated in 1951. Pearson

became a Scottish farmer, though he remained active in the Territorial Army, retiring as a brigadier.

Murray examines his chosen subjects from unique angles, giving readers insight into less commonly known aspects of their personalities. While Bernard Montgomery is seen by Americans as being priggish and egotistical, he had a lighter side and sincerely cared for the welfare of his men. The author describes, at length, the future field marshal’s efforts to curb venereal disease in the division he commanded in France before the German onslaught of 1940. His precautions included not only making condoms and medical treatment readily available, but he also admonished his troops, in a published order, to act sensibly, advising them, “There are in Lille a number of brothels, which are properly inspected and where the risk of infection is practically nil. These are known to the military police, and any soldier who is in need of horizontal refreshment would be well advised to ask a policeman for a suitable address” (pp. 35–36). This outraged British Army chaplains and earned Montgomery a dressing-down from his corps commander, Alan Francis Brooke, but it ended there. Both subsequently became field marshals and chiefs of the Imperial General Staff, Montgomery following Brooke in 1946. And, as Murray notes, “The issue of VD didn’t go away; when he came to command Eighth Army in North Africa in 1942, Montgomery clamped down on the brothels in Egypt, and yet again the army prelates did what they could to preserve the men’s moral integrity. In general, the army struggled with VD as the war progressed” (p. 41).

Another interesting, if more obscure, character was Montgomery’s brother-in-law, Percy Hobart. An engineer officer, Hobart was mechanically inclined, becoming a pioneer of armored warfare. He also had

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<sup>1</sup> Show description, *WW2 Pod: We Have Ways of Making You Talk* (podcast).

an irascible personality that made him powerful enemies. Forced to retire in 1940, he volunteered for service in the Home Guard as a lance corporal. Winston S. Churchill ignored Hobart's detractors and had him returned to active duty, where his skills were put to use organizing, training, and equipping the 11th and 79th Armored Divisions. The latter became the largest tank division in the British Army, composed of specialist vehicles designed to spearhead the invasion of Europe. Amphibious, flame-throwing, and mine-clearing tanks proved very useful on D-Day. Hobart led the division despite his age (59 in 1944) and medical issues. It was essentially a supporting formation, detaching its subordinate elements for employment with other units based on mission requirements, but Hobart worked tirelessly to ensure it was efficiently utilized. Marine Corps readers will be interested to know that the LVTs (landing vehicle, tracked) that proved so crucial in the Pacific were employed by the British in Europe; Churchill rode one across the Rhine during Operation Varsity in 1945.

Murray's British perspectives on Generals Omar N. Bradley and George S. Patton are interesting. The author subscribes to the "G. I. General" image bestowed on Bradley by war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who Murray quotes: "There wasn't a correspondent over there, or soldier, or officer I ever heard of who hadn't complete and utter faith in general Bradley. If he felt we were ready for the push, that was good

enough for us" (p. 186). Unfortunately, there is no critical analysis of Bradley's shortcomings. The American D-Day landings on Omaha Beach came close to disaster, in part because Bradley failed to recognize the value of the specialized vehicles the British employed. He saw no need to incorporate the lessons learned by the Marine Corps (and the Army) in the Pacific into his own invasion plans. The author takes pains to contrast the modest Bradley with the flamboyant Patton, noting, "Of all the commanders in this book, he is the only one that got a movie all to himself: *Patton* (what else?)" (p. 189). Then again, the Oscar-winning screenplay for the movie was based on Bradley's *A Soldier's Story*. Bradley served as a technical advisor for the film, which is largely about him and told from his point of view. In Murray's words: "The irony of Bradley making money out of a film about a man who couldn't much stand him is pretty delicious" (p. 184).

*Command* is a welcome addition to the historiography of the Second World War. Written for a popular audience, it is nevertheless useful reading for military professionals, historians, and analysts. Wars do not just happen to provide scenarios for wargamers. There are human considerations that defy simulation. Personalities, with all their strengths and flaws, matter. Murray, with his comedian's sense of irony and nuance, understands this well, and conveys that understanding in this insightful book.

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## Lieutenant General Robert Kirchubel, USA (Ret), PhD

*On Wellington: A Critique of Waterloo.* By Carl von Clausewitz, edited and translated by Peter Hofshörner. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010, 2021. Pp. 260. \$32.95, hardcover; \$26.95, paperback.)

“Get there first with the most”: it turns out this is not just sensible tactical advice for the military leader, it also works for the commander striving to dominate the narrative after the battle.<sup>1</sup> The day after Napoléon Bonaparte’s last defeat, 19 June 1815, Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher spurred on Marshal August, Count Neidhardt von Gneisenau’s pursuit of the beaten Napoléon toward Paris. Meanwhile, the Duke of Wellington sat a couple of kilometers behind the battlefield in the village of Waterloo, penning his side of the story. The Prussians, evidently oblivious to the finer points of marketing and public relations, were naively more concerned with fighting the final stage of the battle than writing the memorandum that gave the encounter its name or putting their thumbs on the scale that judged its victor. Napoléon and Blücher foolishly died within six years of the battle, but Wellington wisely lived more than 35 years beyond it and used that time to cement his version of events. According to that story, the battle represented a duel between the duke and the emperor that was supposedly decided on the playing fields of Eton—in the former’s favor. Prussian contributions were, and often still are, figuratively relegated to an asterisk. Nineteenth-century English-speaking historians barely consulted German sources, and woe betide those who defied the accepted narrative, such as British captain William Siborne, “whom Wellington hounded to an early grave for his impudence in challenging crucial parts of the duke’s version” (p. 6).

Two successful challengers to this myth are Carl von Clausewitz and Peter Hofshörner, who paired up in *On Wellington: A Critique of Waterloo*. The first, the Prussian of world renown who needs no introduction on these pages, and the second, despite his name, is a London-born, Oxford-educated historian committed to upgrading Blücher’s asterisk status at Waterloo. He has written extensively on many aspects of the Napoleonic wars, but restoring the Prussians in 1815 seems to be a special passion.<sup>2</sup> Here, he translated and edited one of Clausewitz’s lesser-known works.

Clausewitz actually published very little during his lifetime, and like his best-known *On War*, the present volume was assembled and made available after his death by his widow, Marie, and several Prussian officers. Based on his teaching notes and originally published in 1835 in German as *The Campaign of 1815 in France*, it was volume 8 of Clausewitz’s *Posthumous Works*. We see Hofshörner’s (or the publisher’s) fingerprints all over the title, since the book is not necessarily about Wellington, but instead deals evenly with all three principal commanders. The duke knew of it, but described it as a “lying work,” although he could not read German. One of his associates, who did read German, declared it accurate, however. It was translated in the 1850s, but never published in English until now.

Readers of *On War*, who (like this reviewer) struggle with its theory, will enjoy the straightforward history and crisp analysis of *On Wellington*. Starting in 1793, Clausewitz fought in the wars of the French Revolution and Napoléon, and he witnessed the events of 1815 firsthand as chief of staff of Blücher’s III Corps under General Johann von Thielmann. His use of con-

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<sup>1</sup> This quote, in grammatically altered form, is usually attributed to Confederate general and Klu Klux Klan founding father Nathan Bedford Forrest.

<sup>2</sup> For example, note the subtitle of Hofshörner’s 1815, *the Waterloo Campaign: The German Victory* (Barnsley, UK: Greenhill, 1999).



temporary frames of reference, such as *lines of retreat* or “[X] days march” lend authenticity and help transport the reader to a nineteenth-century state of mind. Clausewitz’s intellect and powers of observation and investigation are clearly formidable and are put to good use here.

The book is organized into 58 sections that cover much more than the fighting. As we would expect from the man who declared “War is a continuation of politics by other means,” Clausewitz devotes much space to the French political scene in 1815 that Napoléon had to be sensitive to: republicans, royalists, restless provinces, the Paris mob, and other factors far beyond the reductionist “Ney’s cavalry heedlessly charged Wellington’s squares.” To a great extent, this reflects the wider Prussian point of view.

By *Prussian*, we mean both the king’s army and the man Clausewitz. Anglophone histories, and indeed thinking, seems to concentrate on the battle alone. This narrative is bookended by the tactical combat that occurred between Blücher and Wellington’s huddle at the Brye windmill midday on 16 June and lasted until 60 hours later when the beaten emperor left the La Belle Alliance battlefield in the evening of 18 June. Accordingly, the self-satisfied duke could sit comfortably in his headquarters on 19 June putting his spin on a tactical *fait accompli*. Conversely, with their proto-operational mindset, the Prussians took the long view of the entire campaign, starting with Napoléon’s decision to invade the Netherlands (i.e., to forego internally rebuilding France and externally choosing cold war) until his second and final abdication four days after the guns in Wallonia fell silent. While there are plenty of tactical details to satisfy most fans of “bayonet and bugle” military history, Clausewitz’s operational-level observations contribute a great deal and give *On Wellington* much added significance.

Clausewitz does not shy away from making professional judgments. Many modern historians, especially in the military field, mainly want to present facts so that their readers can reach their own conclusions. But Clausewitz applies his experiences, intellect, and wisdom to all three principal commanders as well as numerous of their subordinates. These insights

are welcome and irreplaceable. Seven of the 53 sections are entitled “Critique,” “Critical Commentary,” “Observations,” or “Reflections,” while he sprinkles countless other judgments throughout the book. These also add greatly to the book’s value. By the same token, as editor, Hofschröder is not afraid to call out Clausewitz for the occasional error. Otherwise, his footnotes consist mainly of biographical sketches of the dozens of personalities Clausewitz name drops throughout. Hofschröder’s translation makes for accessible and easy reading and comprehension. The volume’s most glaring limitation is its one sparse, large-scale map; having Google Maps on-hand is essential for following the narrative.

*On Wellington* is by no means a comprehensive military history of the Hundred Days but concentrates on that climactic June. Clausewitz begins with comparative orders of battle and thumbnail analyses of the strengths and weaknesses of the three armies involved. Here, he reverts to staff officer mode with detailed a correlation of forces plus calculations of march times for the various formations and their dispersed wings. Three main themes emerge. One is Napoléon’s habitual risk taking, even if calculated risks. Coupled with the twin pathologies of overestimating his own strengths while underestimating those of his enemies, this always makes for an exciting story. Another theme is the extreme flexibility of Napoléon’s corps system. Nearly a decade after its baptism of fire during the 1805 Bavarian campaign, it still introduces uncertainty in the minds of allied commanders and staffs. The third is Wellington’s lackadaisical attitude. Usually hidden behind a fig leaf of supreme self-confidence, his French-slaying reputation earned fighting the emperor’s proxies in Iberia make the duke a legend in his own mind. This argument is Hofschröder’s go-to standard operating procedure when discussing 1815, but here it is buttressed by none less than Clausewitz. If, out of fairness, we were to name a fourth theme centered on Blücher, it would be the old hussar’s boldness (verging on recklessness) and unstinting loyalty to his British comrade.

The first two themes conspire to put the allies on the horns of dilemma: Where to turn, where to con-

centrate? Blücher and Wellington are dispersed while the Austrian and Russian armies are too distant to lend prompt support. The most casual observer, both at the time and since, knows Napoléon will attempt to prevent Prussian and Anglo-Dutch-German armies from massing so he can defeat each in detail. Here the second pair of themes from above combine to give the emperor a fighting chance. As a harbinger of that other titan of British generalship, Montgomery, Wellington was both slow to move and prone to make promises to his allies that he either could not or would not keep. As mentioned above, by virtue of personality and longevity, the duke dominated the postwar narrative. But as asserted by Clausewitz and Hofschröer, Wellington showed no urgency moving and assembling his forces on the morning of 16 June, while his final words to Blücher that afternoon were that portions of his army would arrive in two or three hours. Neither Wellington nor any of his soldiers ever showed up. Therefore, at Ligny the Prussians faced the French alone with predictable, although indecisive, results.

That first day's actions highlight another effort by Clausewitz to set the record straight: to undo Napoléon's constant blame-shifting. The emperor deflected fault for the twin limitations of 16 June onto Marshal Michel Ney, failures to adequately deal with Wellington at Quatre Bras, or better yet, to swing south to render Blücher hors de combat at Ligny. The bottom line, according to Clausewitz: Ney's mission was to prevent a Prussian-British union, which he accomplished. Marshal Nicolas-Jean de Dieu Soult also came in for criticism for his sub-Berthier staff work, while Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy suffered the emperor's ill temper for his poor mind-reading skills while pursuing the withdrawing Prussians during 17–18 June. In all three cases, Clausewitz quotes appropriate dispatches and orders making it clear Napoléon's best decision-making days were behind him. Age and grandee status meant marshals and senior generals such as Ney, Soult, and other battlefield luminaries had lost a step or two since the glory days of 1805–9. In any event, admitting mistakes was something Napoléon would never do; scapegoats had to be found—if not subordinates, then circumstances.

Blücher's performance at Ligny is not immune from Clausewitz's judgments, in particular the twin handicaps of his initial deployment and subsequent use of reserves. However, the Prussian withdrawal from Ligny, outright escape from Napoléon's jaws, deception of their pursuers, and especially angling toward Wavre on 17 June to remain within supporting distance to Wellington are "most praiseworthy" (p. 119). On the climactic 18 June, combined with Napoléon's lethargy (again, caused by an act of God—rain—not by any personal failing, of course), the British defense in depth and Wellington's implicit knowledge that Blücher would arrive to tip the balance, guaranteed allied victory. The emperor's infamous confirmation bias led him to dismiss the possibility of a British-Prussian union until it was too late; after all, hadn't he subdued Blücher during the previous two days? The Frenchman's thinly disguised contempt for the Prussians was basically matched by his British nemesis. Hofschröer points out Wellington's repeated duplicity: in his Waterloo dispatch the next day he claimed that Blücher arrived after the Imperial Guard's failed attack, after 1800, when in reality General Friedrich Wilhelm Bülow's corps had smashed into the French right flank at Plancenoit at 1600 (causing Napoléon to dispatch the Young Guard there).

Clausewitz then gives his recommendations for a French victory: do not delay the start until noon, concentrate on the center, and, if Wellington managed to stand his ground, withdraw as soon as the Prussians appeared. In this way, Napoléon may not have won, but his army would still be intact with viable cavalry and a reserve (the uncommitted guard), a few hours of daylight for an orderly retreat, plus most critically, the emperor at its head (instead of executing a one-man *saute qui peut*, i.e., a rout). Sure, he still would be in political jeopardy with the people of France, but in a much stronger position than historically. As it was, one Prussian fusilier battalion (with its drummer pounding furiously) plus a dozen squadrons of cavalry spearheaded Gneisenau's pursuit, turning retreat to rout.<sup>3</sup> Napoléon abdicated in favor of his son on 22

<sup>3</sup> An ironic echo of a decade earlier when Napoléon broke Prussia at Jena-Auerstedt, not so much on the battlefield as during the punishing pursuit afterward.

June, while Marshal Louis-Nicolas Davout signed the Convention of Saint-Cloud on 3 July, surrendering to Blücher and Wellington, thus ending the Hundred Days.

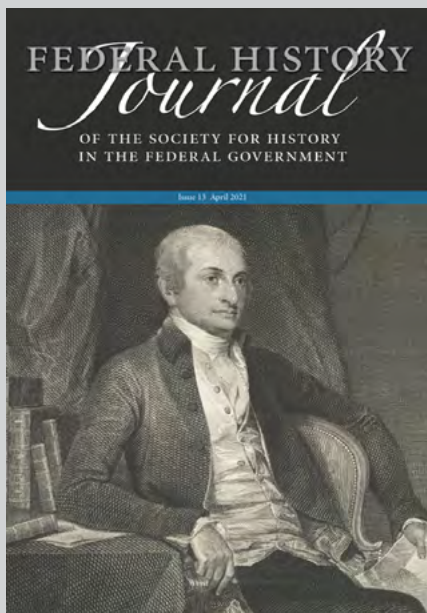
*On Wellington* is a short (208 pages of text), concise, well-written, expertly argued, and near-contemporary

historical account and piercing analysis of the Waterloo campaign. Students accustomed to the Wellington-centric version of events owe it to themselves to broaden their literary horizons. Seldom has reading Clausewitz been so pleasurable and rewarding.

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## Tamala Malerk, PhD

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*U.S. Go Home: The U.S. Military in France, 1945 to 1968.* By M. David Egan and Jean Egan. (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2022. Pp. 616. \$49.99, hardcover.)

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In *U.S. Go Home: The U.S. Military in France, 1945–1968*, M. David Egan and Jean Egan have attempted to create the “definitive work on the postwar American military deployment to France,” as the publisher’s information claims. This tome is more than 600 pages, measures 10 inches tall and 8 inches long, and reminds this reviewer of nothing so much as a high-school Algebra textbook in appearance and weight. It is filled with textual information, maps, charts, photographs, and diagrams, so “definitive work” is a quite plausible claim.

The Egans utilize information from a variety of sources: troop information newspapers, monographs, journal articles, biographies, memoirs, French documents, magazines, newspapers, personal papers, and interviews with servicemembers, schoolteachers, dependents, and French nationals. They scoured archives in the United States, Belgium, Canada, and France. M. David Egan also served in France with the U.S. Army from 1962 to 1964, therefore providing a personal as well as academic input to the text (p. iv).

*U.S. Go Home* opens with a preface containing a quick and concise summary of the historical context of the United States in France after World War II. With this, the reader can more easily follow the in-depth information that follows for the subsequent hundreds of pages. The preface is followed by 12 chapters, a two-page chronology chart, a reference/notes section, and an index. Chapters include a short introduction and are then divided up into miniature sections that are typically less than a page long (one-third to one-half pages). With such a long text, this helps

with deciphering the information into short, easily readable, and comprehensible chunks.

The information of the overall text is presented by the topic and/or geography of the chapter rather than chronologically. However, the information within each chapter is presented fairly chronologically. It can be a bit jarring to begin a chapter in the 1940s and end in the 1960s to then backtrack to 10–20 years prior at the beginning of each chapter. However, after a few chapters, one can become more accustomed to this style.

Chapters 1–11 include topics such as the context of the turmoil of a postwar world, NATO, SHAPE, construction, Army ports, and more. Within these chapters, readers learn about technical jargon, military vehicles, groups, buildings, and exercises. To support the textual information, the authors include what appear to be hand-drawn maps and diagrams along with tables and charts to better help convey the data. For example, on page 21, they include a map of “Occupied Berlin”; page 266 includes a diagram of the 1960 Croiz-Chapeau Medical Depot; and pages 409–10 include a table titled “New Offshore Discharge Exercises (NO-DEX), 1954–1963.”

The authors also include more personal and human-interest information, such as how cigarette companies sponsored U.S. military golf course scoring cards (p. 134), some of the anti-American graffiti that appeared in the 1950s was done by “homesick, young Americans” (p. 172), and how some GIs resented their roles as extras in Hollywood war movies (p. 358). These added tidbits of information allow the reader to connect better with the narrative by putting names, faces, and anecdotes to statistics, numbers, and charts.

In addition, readers are reminded throughout that, while the focus of the text is the United States in

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France, the global story is happening amid the backdrop of the Cold War, the Algerian War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The Egans relate how in 1965, the United States had to buy back bombs it had sold to West Germany in 1964 for \$1.70 each for the high price of \$21 per bomb “due to the escalation of fighting in Vietnam” (p. 505).

“On 07 March 1966, French President Charles de Gaulle wrote to US President Lyndon B. Johnson asking US military forces to leave France by 01 April 1967” (p. 489). The authors devote an entire chapter to that single statement (i.e., the official withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from France). They analyze the political reasonings behind the withdrawal as well as provide the repercussions of the withdrawal in France to the equipment, supplies, and buildings, and the personal effects it had on both Americans and the French. There were “more than 70,000 US mili-

tary, civilian personnel and dependents in France” when withdrawal began in 1966 (p. 493). The authors explore the dichotomy of the official French government stance for U.S. withdrawal and the examples of local French citizens throwing goodbye parties for departing Americans who apologized “for the policy” of their government, and singers, such as Michel Sardou, who wrote and recorded pro-American songs like “Les Ricains” (p. 516).

While anyone could pick up this text and read it, due to its large size and niche topic, the casual reader may be derailed from starting the text. Those with an interest in military history will be most drawn to this text. Nonetheless, with the book’s focus on both military history and more personal histories and stories, this book can attract a wider audience. Prior knowledge of World War II and postwar Europe would be beneficial for potential readers.

## Anthony Marcum, PhD

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*Autumn of Our Discontent: Fall 1949 and the Crises in American National Security.* By John M. Curatola. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2022. Pp. 368. \$34.95, hardcover and e-book.)

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After World War II, the United States put away its weapons and returned to commerce. By August 1949, the U.S. government had significantly curtailed its military budget. Then, the United States discovered that the Soviets had detonated an atomic weapon. By April 1950, the United States had reversed course to expand its own atomic weapons stockpile, pursue thermonuclear weapons, and increase its conventional forces. Indeed, in only a few short months, the United States abandoned its tradition of a small peacetime military after the end of World War II because, as John M. Curatola's *Autumn of Our Discontent* argues, a combination of international events and domestic issues influenced the creation of "US Objectives and Programs for National Security," National Security Council (NSC) Memorandum 68.

Curatola demonstrates that before the Soviets tested their bomb in August 1949, the Americans were becoming aware of the limits of their own atomic capabilities. While the military planned to use these weapons in the next war, the civilian administrators of atomic energy lacked the people and the supplies to fulfill those plans. This discrepancy sparked a discussion on how to enhance the American atomic arsenal. By October 1949, officials expanded the conversation to include whether the country needed to pursue thermonuclear weapons. The Atomic Energy Commission, Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, and the General Advisory Committee, among others, debated the importance of this new technology, coming to favor it by January 1950. As the book demonstrates, the officials' decisions in favor of atomic weapons and thermonu-

clear research rested as much on Soviet gains as it did on perceived American deficiencies.

Curatola also explains how efforts to return to a peacetime footing thrust the military into a struggle for resources. While the American public and Congress recognized the Communist threat, few supported increasing revenue to confront it. Facing a resource shortage, the armed forces disagreed on how to best approach the use of force for future wars. The U.S. Navy and Air Force disagreed about the efficacy of strategic bombing, and this led to a heated rivalry between the branches. Curatola demonstrates the lengths to which these two Services defended their roles in defending the nation. In debating whether aerial assaults alone could defeat the Soviets, the armed forces prompted the creation of Weapons Systems Evaluation Group Report No. 1. That report provided a large-scale assessment of the current strategy and capabilities, lending some credence to the limits of a purely air approach to war. Curatola demonstrates how officials realized that aerial bombing would be insufficient to defeat the Soviets, and that the United States needed a more expansive military force for future wars.

The book suggests the loss of China also influenced the reevaluation of American national security. Curatola covers the early realizations in 1945 that the Kuomintang needed to change, to the ideas of supporting the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) given its better relationships with the population, and the attempts by American officials to encourage unity between the two foes. Curatola demonstrates that the China lobby contributed to the American perceptions of Communism rising across the globe as well as McCarthyism at home. Yet, the rise of the CCP seems different from the Soviet atomic test in terms of expectations and capabilities. The Soviet detonation was

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unexpected by officials while the loss of China seemed a forgone conclusion by 1949. Furthermore, that loss did not correlate with a lack of capabilities, but rather the inability to influence the Kuomintang. Losing China to the CCP heightened the Red Scare in the United States, especially with various public figures looking to blame the Department of State and others for sympathizing with Communism. The Soviet entrance to the atomic club, however, was the driving international factor in American decision-making, and in Curatola's narrative.

Curatola's framework raises interesting questions for how other actors, including allies, may have influenced the creation of the NSC 68. For example, Matthew Perl has noted that the United States and the United Kingdom often agreed in their intelligence assessments of the Soviets. Perl contends that differences emerged in the assessments of Soviet intentions, with the Americans focused on ideology while the British considered it just another state in the power politics game.<sup>1</sup> While Perl focuses on the period after NSC 68 was published, the question would be whether the British shared their assessments with the United States and how those might have influenced officials leading up to January 1950. One could also explore the influence of the French assessments on American policymakers.

The arguments in the book do raise two concerns. First, in regarding Harry S. Truman, Curatola favors the fiscally conservative argument. There is some debate on how fiscally conservative Truman was leading into 1949. Thomas Christensen points out that, compared to the pre-World War II years, Truman maintained larger allocations of the budget to the military—at least four times the amount of resources than in years prior to 1939.<sup>2</sup> A further challenge to the fiscally conservative arguments emerges from the American public and Congress. After 1945, Truman confronted a public that, while open to the idea of

increased defense spending, had little enthusiasm for the corresponding taxes. Some members of the House of Representatives and Senate might have agreed with Truman's assessment of Soviet intentions. These same members, however, likely favored less-expensive and/or more short-term investments in national security. The president recognized the threat but had to acquiesce to the preferences of the public and Congress.<sup>3</sup> The shift in January 1950 might not have been as unexpected from Truman, with the events merely serving as an opportunity to pursue his more preferred strategies.

The second concern relates to what the Americans wanted to protect with the creation of NSC 68. Curatola focuses on the strategies that actors wanted to pursue, such as creation of thermonuclear weapons and reliance on air power. Yet, the book leaves out a more nuanced discussion of U.S. interests influencing these decisions. The work could explore the objectives that Truman and others wanted to achieve with their policies before and after these events. Luke Fletcher contends that the decision-making for NSC 68 included military as well as political and economic concerns to produce a policy directed toward hegemony. Americans like Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson wanted to prevent Germany from slipping away from the free world and instead to anchor it securely to the United States.<sup>4</sup> That understanding helps us understand why Americans made these shifts in national security, like making military commitments abroad.

Overall, Curatola provides a fascinating narrative of the various international and domestic factors that contributed to the creation of NSC 68. This reviewer would strongly recommend this work as a good, informative read for those interested in the origins of the modern national security state.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew Perl, "Comparing US and UK Intelligence Assessment in the Early Cold War: NSC-68, April 1950," *Intelligence and National Security* 18, no. 1 (2003): 119–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684520308559249>.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 44–45.

<sup>3</sup> Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, 45–47.

<sup>4</sup> Luke Fletcher, "The Collapse of the Western World: Acheson, Nitze, and the NSC 68/Rearmament Decision," *Diplomatic History* 40, no. 4 (2016): 750–77, <https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhw014>.

## Lawrence Provost

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*Mavericks of War: The Unconventional, Unorthodox Innovators and Thinkers, Scholars, and Outsiders Who Mastered the Art of War.* By Jason S. Ridler. (Guilford, CT: Stackpole Books, 2018. Pp. 344. \$34.95, hardcover.)

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*Mavericks of War* is an excellent, thoroughly researched history that should be read by all in the profession of arms and civil leaders having authority over the U.S. military. *Mavericks of War* contains medium-length chapters covering unconventional leaders in World War I, World War II, and the Vietnam War, as well as Afghanistan and Iraq. The premise of *Mavericks of War* is not surprising in that unconventional conflicts require the leadership and, even more, the expertise and drive of unique individuals from the military and civilian realms. The text is organized chronologically and is best analyzed in that fashion, through its characters.

British intelligence officer Thomas Edward Lawrence, widely known as Lawrence of Arabia, is seen as the deity for modern unconventional warfare and *Mavericks of War* appropriately begins by covering his career. Lawrence was the epitome of the maverick who practiced unconventional warfare through harassing tactics coupled with surprise attacks against the Ottomans. Further, Lawrence not only spoke the local language but lived primitively and among the local populace, which enabled him to be highly mobile. In many ways, Lawrence *went native*, a term that is unfortunately used pejoratively. However, he was also extremely successful in his undertakings.

German diplomat Wilhelm Wassmuss struggled to bring Persia into the First World War on the side of the Central Powers. While he was not successful in doing so, his mission was much more difficult than Lawrence's, earning him the nickname Lawrence of Persia. He, like Lawrence, died in the 1930s at an early

age. His life is a testament to the often prophetic, yet lonely, nature of the maverick.

World War II saw more interesting mavericks. C. M. Woodhouse was an English archeologist and aristocrat. He used his extensive knowledge of Greece to assist the resistance against the Axis Powers. Cora Du Bois was educated at Columbia University and University of California, Berkeley, later serving in the Office of Strategic Services running a regional intelligence network in the China-Burma-India theater, despite the prejudices against women. Du Bois was a trailblazer for future mavericks Sarah Chayes and Emma Sky.

Air Force officer Edward G. Lansdale is perhaps the most misunderstood character portrayed in *Mavericks of War*, as history often falsely portrayed him as the prototype for the "ugly American" (who has such a belief in American exceptionalism that it clouds judgement of other cultures). Lansdale later partnered with archaeologist Charles T. R. Bohannon to defeat insurgency in the Philippines.

The last of the biographical sections of *Mavericks of War* is the most revolutionary, even in the realms of unconventional warfare. Featured are prominent, peace-loving women who did what they could to help native populations while concurrently assisting U.S. military forces. This is also the only section of the book out of chronological order. It features Gertrude Bell, the female counterpart of Lawrence of Arabia—and Lawrence easily could be described as the male version of Bell. Also profiled are former Peace Corps volunteer Sarah Chayes and British pacifist Emma Sky. Each gave all they had to see success in Afghanistan and Iraq, respectively, and their perspectives turned out to be correct. These two individuals may be the epitome of a maverick. Women, especially non-

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military women, traditionally have been marginalized in military roles, as were Chayes and Sky. They were pacifist or near-pacifist, but each understood how the native populations lived and thought and employed that knowledge in such a way to bring success to the American military.

The most powerful section of *Mavericks of War* is the conclusion, which serves as a warning for those engaged in unconventional warfare. Two of the most important warnings are that there must be knowledge of global peoples before initiation of conflict and that the maverick must be backed by senior operators. Additionally, the warnings of empathy for foreign cultures and trust built by shared risk with the local populace are paramount. Knowledge of foreign peoples and empathy for their culture is not normally the purview of 18-year-old servicemembers. They fight to preserve American culture first, as they should. Fur-

ther, it is much easier for commanders and politicians to up-armor their vehicles and personnel to avoid immediate casualties and answering to the parents of the fallen than to share the risk with the local populace. This shortsighted approach sends a message to the very civilians our fighting heroes are trying to protect: that the population is not safe by seeing U.S. servicemembers living by a different standard than they do.

The military is not culturally friendly for mavericks. Two characteristics of nearly every individual chronicled in this work were their high level of earned education and fearlessness in speaking truth to superiors. *Mavericks of War* contains many tales of success, but also the consequences of defeat for the very conventional commanders who failed to heed the warnings of unconventional warriors and ended up having even greater casualties in the long term.

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## Phil W. Reynolds, PhD

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*Containing History: How Cold War History Explains US-Russia Relations.* By Stephen P. Friot. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2023. Pp. 432. \$34.95, hardcover; \$29.95, paperback.)

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Stephen Friot is a master storyteller with an archivist's grip on Cold War history. In a meticulously researched narrative that spans 1945 to 1991, the author touches on nearly every facet of the intricate statecraft practiced by both the West and the Soviet bloc. Along the way, Friot provides an interesting interpretation, an angle of view if you will, to the complex problems of Cold War history.

There have been many histories of the Cold War. Indeed, the breadth of the Cold War encompasses a virtual paradigm of human existence. One of the first problems a historian faces when undertaking such a study is determining a general approach to the subject: a U.S. history, a history of the Soviet Union, economic history, or a telling of historical materialism, just to name a few. We have all waded through those weighty tomes, creaky yellow with disuse, best for propping up the bedside lamp perhaps. In these other histories of the Cold War, the academic researcher replaces readability by smothering layer after layer of dross until perspective is like "butter scraped over too much bread": thin. In a refreshing return to simplicity, Friot adopts the dialectic method, in which he presents the Western and then the Soviet interpretations of the same event. That simplicity allows the reader to linger on subjects and explore in their own way the impacts of history.

Friot's thesis is that the Soviet actions during the World War II and in the conferences during and immediately after were meant to extend the borders of

Soviet control, if not the Soviet Union's physical borders. The upshot was that the states of the near abroad could be controlled and the threat of invasion drastically reduced by reducing the chances that a neighboring state would be taken over by an unfriendly regime. This was, after all, the Soviet Union, which believed capitalist countries were an inimitable threat, being marionettes of the international capitalist system. A basic tenet of Marxism was that capitalism was the basis of conflict, thus making coexistence impossible and conflict inevitable. The author makes an adequate case that Joseph Stalin believed that the Red Army had to extend as far west as possible to provide the needed security to install friendly, i.e., Communist, political regimes. If the West would invade from farther than France or West Germany, the cushion of the Warsaw Pact countries would absorb the destruction.

While there is the threat of being too reductionist in Friot's explanations, at least he does not fall into the trap of legitimizing the horror of the Soviet methods of control to shock and sell books. Still, the Cold War was an ideological project of the political and cultural elites in the West as much as in the Kremlin's Cominform. As Friot points out, after Nikita Khrushchev's drunken boast that "we will bury you" (p. 219), American defense contractors made billions of dollars from the Cold War. This becomes important to Friot later, as he recounts how history-made-historiography can be weaponized into power.

Where Friot shines is in his narrative of the early Cold War. Indeed, it may be the best bit of a book full of good bites. Going into the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, the author concludes that the Americans and British did not appease Stalin by giving him Eastern Europe. Stalin already had Eastern Europe (p. 54) with dozens of Red Army divisions sitting there. Sta-

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lin was not about to give up that land. Doing so would have seriously weakened his position in the Kremlin. It is in this explanation of the constraints facing Stalin that really establishes Friot's insistence that it was racial memory that drove Russian actions during the Cold War.

The reader would have been superbly served by Friot's dialectic approach if the author had provided more depth to the economic and technological prism of the two systems. This could have provided a useful jumping-off point to a survey of possible futures from Russia. While the author squarely locates his analysis in the ideological spectrum, he spends little time discussing how ideology used economics and technology to export itself to the then-Third World, which was where the real battle for supremacy was playing out. Internally, both countries attempted social engineering and massive exploitation of national resources, but it was, particularly toward the end, the harnessing of technology and the concomitant economic underpinnings that were seen as exemplars of socialism or freedom. What the author does capture is the explosion of oligarchical, explicit capitalism of the petro-state that emerged from the Soviet Union (p. 345). This dependence on the sale of oil and gas at high prices might well explain the courtship of Vladimir Putin's Kremlin to the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the creation of OPEC+ gang (created by an agreement between OPEC and 10 non-OPEC oil-producing countries) in 2016, and the new bipolar world that has emerged since. Certainly, the sale of the oil and gas gave the Kremlin a veneer of military sustainability that encouraged expansionism in the Caucasus and Ukraine. However, without a deep background in technological innovation, the Russian military appears no nimbler than its World War II predecessor and simply smashes everything in its path. To that end, it is easy to see how the Cold War is still shaping today.

*Containing History's* weakness is its abrupt end in 1991. Russian psychology is endlessly fascinating, and Friot has a substantial head of steam that could have paid dividends in a description of the events since Boris Yeltsin stood on a tank in 1991. Since then, Russia has been obsessed with rebuilding its near abroad as a cushion against invasion, however bizarre the idea may seem to Westerners. The author uncovers the connection between the purpose of the near abroad and Russian nationalism and jettisons the well-worn euphemisms about revanchist empire building. As early as 1992, observers had noted that championing the rights of Russian speakers in now-foreign states "had become a prerequisite for almost all shades of political opinion in Russia" (p. 329). This is important fodder for the propaganda mill that is the Kremlin, as much as it was for the Nazis in the 1930s. It is a solid plank in the effort to delegitimize Ukraine as a separate culture with its own language. The author would have done well to link the Holodomor (human-created famine) to the current Russian war in Ukraine. The collectivization of farms in eastern Ukraine starved millions of ethnic Ukrainians to death, a vacuum that was conveniently filled in by ethnic Russians moving in.<sup>1</sup> Another clear case of how the Cold War is still shaping today, as Russia declared that the ethnic Russians in the eastern oblasts of Ukraine were oppressed and desired union with the motherland.

The world is now 30 years beyond the end of the Soviet Union. This is a grand reference tool for those who desire introduction to the period and provides excellent sources for those inclined to further study. The dilettanti may not remember the burden of that ceaseless threat, the gray feeling, the drag on life that was the missile gap, Cuba, Korea, Vietnam, or the Soviet support of nasty little wars around the world, but Friot remembers. The reader can remember now too.

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<sup>1</sup> Olesia Rosovyk, "Resettlement Processes in the Ukrainian SSR during the Holodomor (1932–1934)," *Communist and Post Communist Studies* 53, no. 1 (2020): 80–99, <https://doi.org/10.1525/cpcs.2020.53.1.80>.

## Chad E. Shelley, PhD

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*Keeping the Peace: Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251 during the Cold War 1946–1991.* By Steven K. Dixon. (Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 2023. Pp. 288. \$37.95, hardcover; \$22.95, e-book.)

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Since its beginning, the Cold War has been a fascinating topic among historians and scholars. It influenced diplomacy, commerce, and the evolution of technology. Most Cold War histories approach military involvement from a broad perspective. Unlike those broad military histories of the era, Steven K. Dixon focuses on the participation of one Marine Fighter Attack Squadron and how it changed with each decade of the Cold War. Many served in Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 251 and trained for the possibility of fighting the Soviet Union.

Created in December 1941, fixed wing Marine Observation Squadron 251 (VMO-251) was responsible for serving in a photoreconnaissance role, but this role quickly changed to air defense in the Pacific. VMO-251 not only participated in the war but was also used in filming *Wake Island* in 1942. Dixon writes, “The picture was released near the end of the year, but squadron personnel were not able to catch the premier” (p. 2). By the time the movie premiered, the observation squadron was busy fighting in the Solomon Islands. VMO-251 continued serving until its deactivation in 1945. It was reactivated in July 1946 and renamed Marine Fighting Squadron 251 (VMF-251). The squadron received its final designation of Marine Fighter Attack Squadron (VMFA-251) in 1964. The revived fighter squadron never faced combat against the Soviet Union, but it served in military exercises, aided in missions, and was deployed to several parts of the world.

Dixon organizes his chapters based on stages of the squadron’s history. Dixon describes the book as

the squadron’s “operational history” (p. viii). The first half of the book discusses the activation, reactivation, and building of VMFA-251, while the second half examines the squadron’s daily experiences in training for military exercises and the introduction of new aircraft. Some of the chapters are based on the model aircraft used by the squadron. During its decades of service, VMFA-251 trained for the operation of various aircraft including the Douglas A-1 Skyraider, Vought F-8 Crusader, McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom II, and the McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet. The squadron experienced some tragic accidents, such as the loss of First Lieutenants William C. Rogers and Robert W. Jacobs to a landing accident in September 1973; complications while attempting to land at Naval Air Facility (NAF) Naples led to their fatal crash. Other mishaps and incidents are recorded in the appendices. Out of all those who served as commanding officers of VMFA-251, Dixon credits Lieutenant Colonel Josephus L. Mavretic with not only rebuilding the fighting squadron but also with its better preparation for combat readiness. According to Dixon, Mavretic adopted the idea of having a training playbook from the then-named Washington Redskins football team and the use of videos for safety meetings. Dixon emphasizes, “Its use was intended as a personal notebook where each officer could keep personalized notes during training lectures and all officer meetings” (p. 125). Under his command, VMFA-251 became a “top-notch Marine fighting unit” (p. 132). This reputation continued long after Mavretic handed over command of the squadron in January 1975. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, VMFA-251 transitioned into training for possible U.S. involvement. However, the squadron was never deployed to the Middle East. Although the Cold War came to an end in December 1991, VMFA-

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251 continued training and was ready for action. Dixon concludes the last chapter with the end of the Cold War, but he resumes the fighter squadron's history by explaining the period of 1992–2020 in the epilogue. VMFA-251 was deployed to support Operation Deny Flight (1993) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Operation Enduring Freedom (2001), Operation Iraqi Freedom (2003), and it was deactivated in 2020.

Overall, Dixon's book is informative when it comes to not only a fighter attack squadron's role in military operations, but also how the pilots served in protecting the United States during the Cold War. Dixon served in VMFA-251 during the years of 1976 to 1979. Dixon includes the personal experiences of those who served, including First Lieutenant Robert Foley. Although veterans like Foley are referenced in the book, it would have been interesting to find out

more about Dixon's personal experiences in VMFA-251. One main issue Dixon identified was the rebuilding campaigns the squadron conducted throughout the Cold War. Dixon argues that "manpower was an ongoing issue—there was never enough" (p. viii). Despite the shortage of personnel, VMFA-251 acquired a long record of achievements. Dixon does a great job of explaining the limitations of his sources. Dixon's history of the squadron is based on archival documents, interviews, and command diaries kept by the squadron. Few records existed about some events, such as when the squadron was reactivated in 1946. The dates of events and training exercises can get confusing, but Dixon's organization makes it easy to reference previous pages of a chapter and find the year. Dixon's book would interest not only veterans but also military and diplomatic historians.

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## H. Allen Skinner Jr.

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*New Principles of War: Enduring Truths with Timeless Examples.* By Marvin Pokrant. (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2021. Pp. 376. \$27.95, paperback and e-book.)

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Since the early modern era, military theorists like Antoine-Henri Jomini have developed principles of war as a framework for analyzing and deriving lessons from historical examples. In *New Principles of War: Enduring Truths with Timeless Examples*, author Marvin Pokrant notes the potential risks associated with such an approach: “However, can we learn from history? Perhaps warfare changes too much over time or is too complex for any historic lessons to be valid” (p. x). Unlike the technology of war, human “software”—emotional, intellectual, and psychological factors—and principles of logic have remained consistent over time. From that premise, Pokrant asserts that only principles based on logic and human behaviors will “remain valid across a variety of times, places and circumstances,” and will be of use in forming an analytical framework for studying history (p. xii).

The author, a career military analyst with the U.S. Navy, appears well-qualified to write on the topic. Pokrant’s book is structured topically and begins with a survey of historical principles of war before surveying current principles used by the U.S. armed forces and selected world powers. Chapter 4 introduces Pokrant’s proposed analytical framework using four objective criteria: enduring, practical, broadly applicable, and meaningful when employed or violat-

ed. Chapters 5–13 then analyze each principle through historical case studies. For example, Pokrant finds the contemporary principle of *objective* too imprecise; instead, Pokrant advocates for a principle of *prioritized objective*. By prioritizing, the senior commander avoids diverting precious resources toward secondary objectives. “If a commander does assign multiple objectives to a subordinate . . . the commander should give guidance on how to prioritize those objectives,” thereby “nesting” subordinate actions within the overall scheme of maneuver (p. 82). To his credit, the author is careful to not simply reject principles of war that fail to meet his objective criteria. Instead, Pokrant developed a second, “near-principle” category for principles which fall short in one criterion, yet still provide good value when used with caution (p. 252).

Chapters 14–16 present the author’s list of recommended new principles. First, “know yourself.” Pokrant argues a commander must fully understand the capabilities and limitations of the force before focusing on unity of effort and objectives. Second, the author argues “knowing the enemy” is essential: “How can a commander expect to defeat what he does not understand?” (p. 263). Last, the author argues that a full understanding of environmental variables is necessary not only to reduce friction but to gain a relative advantage over the enemy. Pokrant’s book ends with a neat summary of his proposed principles and near-principles of war, which he employs in an illuminating case study of Pickett’s Charge.

Pokrant’s premises and narrative are clear and easy to follow, and the flow of the book lends itself to quick reading. Each of the author’s principles are supported with appropriate case studies from military history, and the narrative is supported with 18 pages of endnotes and a bibliography containing more than

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250 secondary works—a depth of references that reinforces an impression of thorough research, synthesis, and mastery of the topic. Although Pokrant’s book is targeted toward contemporary military strategists

and doctrine writers, the reviewer also recommends the use of Pokrant’s principles of war and criteria to perform case study analysis of military history topics in the classroom.

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