

Book Reviews

Scouts in Contact: Tactical Vignettes for Cavalry Leaders, LTC J. Frederick Dente and LTC Bradley S. Nelson, Center for Army Lessons Learned, 2016, 135 pages, free download at <http://usacac.army.mil/organizations/mccoe/call/publications>.

At the Maneuver Warfighter's Conference held at Fort Benning, GA, this summer, GEN Robert Abrams, Forces Command's commanding general, spoke on the use of reconnaissance-and-security formations in the U.S. Army and said that reconnaissance and security are beyond broken – these are in crisis because our leaders do not understand our own doctrine. He reinforced this message in his command training guidance for Fiscal Year 2017 through his requirement that troop commanders attend the Cavalry Leader's Course and that platoon leaders attend the Army Reconnaissance Course. GEN Abrams went beyond just functional training, though – he directly challenged units to emphasize their leader-certification mechanisms to ensure the right individuals were in leadership positions.

Scouts in Contact: Tactical Vignettes for Cavalry Leaders is an excellent tool for squadron commanders and command sergeants major to use in their leader-certification programs. ***Scouts in Contact*** is a series of tactical-decision exercises built from experiences observed during Cobra Team's many rotations at the National Training Center. The book affords squadron commanders a low-cost option for repetitive, effective training that affords scout-platoon leaders and platoon sergeants the opportunity to develop their ability of "how to think" and "how to apply principles" in rapidly evolving, ambiguous situations.

Included are 12 vignettes, complete with a situation paragraph, base graphics, indicators of success, indicators of failure and instructions for the exercise controller. Units are able to take the book to their local Training Audiovisual Support Center and have the graphics printed to enable larger, tabletop exercises. This allows multiple platoon leaders to be engaged and offer a variety of opinions on how and why they would accomplish the mission in a certain way.

For leaders who are unfamiliar with employing tactical-decision exercises, the Cobra Team has also developed a chapter solely dedicated to explaining facilitation of the exercises and another chapter on conducting after-action reviews.

The deliberate thought and detail put into this book has made it a unique, ready-to-go-out-of-the-box tool that can be employed as part of unit's leader-development or leader-certification programs.

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Ramadi Declassified: A Roadmap to Peace in the Most Dangerous City in Iraq, retired COL Anthony E. Deane, Praetorian Books, 2016, 367 pages, \$28.99 (hard cover).

Many books aspire to reveal the true nature of war. ***Ramadi Declassified*** accomplishes that goal. I deployed three times to combat in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and I find that, short of actually joining a unit in theater, this story is as close as a reader can get to deploying to a warzone. Author COL Anthony Deane, a retired U.S. Army armor officer, commanded 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment, and was charged to free the city of Ramadi from al-Qaeda during the "surge" in Operation Iraqi Freedom. Part historical account, part leadership study, ***Ramadi*** fills a long-neglected void in military writing – namely the unexplored area between the squad on the battlefield and the generals commanding the theater.

Ramadi, however, is more than a book about combat. With just the right amount of background material to place the Battle of Ramadi into the larger Anbar Awakening, readers will learn of the challenges found in commanding, training, deploying, fighting and redeploying a battalion task force.

Deane's writing mirrors the same style of leadership he employed as a commander – direct and occasionally reinforced by salty language. The campaign to liberate Ramadi from the horrors of fundamentalist Islamic terrorism is not for the faint-hearted. Deane does not shy away from revealing al-Qaeda's vile inhumanity or the cost of warfare in U.S. and Iraqi blood. Although clearly not what my wife would describe as a "feel-good book," **Ramadi** does have a surprising element of humor. More than once I found myself laughing out loud at the author's dry wit in even the darkest moments of battle.

Ramadi's greatest value may be found in its author's analysis on leadership, including his own as a battalion commander. Deane is a reflective and honest writer unafraid of examining his own successes, failures and growth. His insights on leadership alone make **Ramadi** a must-read for the professional soldier. However, past, present and future military leaders will learn many other valuable lessons within **Ramadi's** pages. This book is what the Army field manual on counterinsurgency, Field Manual 3-24, attempted to achieve – i.e., a "how to" for military leaders to conduct successful counterinsurgency operations.

Be warned, reading **Ramadi** is a bit like watching the blockbuster movie **Titanic**. We know how this story ends. The soldiers of 1-35 Armor achieved their mission to "take back Ramadi ... but don't make it another Fallujah," but peace in Anbar was short-lived. Deane makes a strong argument that Shia political hegemony in Baghdad, combined with short-sighted U.S. foreign policy, doomed the success of the Anbar Awakening. U.S. forces withdrew from Iraq, leaving an Iraqi security apparatus unprepared to defeat al-Qaeda and its successor ISIS. As of this writing, Ramadi is again in Iraqi government hands but is more than 80 percent destroyed. ISIS remains a viable, if diminished, threat. American Soldiers returned to Iraq. And the war continues.

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