

and in an environment that did not fully embrace either special operations or joint warfare.

The struggles and problems Dillard and his compatriots experienced serve as a reminder of the applicability and timelessness of the Special Operations Forces Truths developed long after the end of the Korean War. Dillard's history consistently reminds the reader that competent special operations forces cannot be created after emergencies occur. South Korean partisans, many of whom were refugees, were given minimal training, unclear mission orders, and were then dropped behind North Korean lines in an attempt to obtain intelligence and conduct partisan operations as early as August 1950. These partisans, understandably, suffered large losses and led to the reorganization of special operations in Korea and its slow professionalization. Despite the reorganization and expansion of training cadres, assisted by the disbanding of the Ranger companies at the division level in 1951, the partisan and line-crossing operations Dillard describes were still fraught with dangers.

Dillard divides his work into two sections. The first, which deals with airborne insertion of partisans, forms the bulk of the book. This section is largely based on Dillard's recollections of his time in the 8240th's AVIARY program, buttressed by historical research. The second section concerns line-crossing and tactical intelligence-gathering operations in support of division-level intelligence objectives. At the end of the second section, Dillard presents abbreviated recollections of the Korean and Chinese agents conducting both partisan and line-crossing operations in Korea.

Tiger Hunters helps fill gaps in the special operations picture of the Korean Conflict. As such, it has a place on special operations reading lists or in detailed studies of the war in Korea. Readers familiar with special operations and partisan efforts during the Vietnam War, such as those presented by Kenneth Conboy and Dale Andrade in *Spies and Commandos: How America Lost the Secret War in North Vietnam*, will find striking similarities to the problems that plagued partisan operations in Korea and Vietnam. In both, agents were doubled, teams were dropped to waiting enemy forces, and overall the operations saw limited success.

body of knowledge. Still others seek to pay to tribute to an event, an individual, or a group. Of course, seeking an objective and accomplishing an objective are clearly two different things. One recent volume which unquestionably achieves multiple objectives is *The Strong Gray Line*. It is a book which educates, ensures the service of our Soldiers and the sacrifices of the family are remembered, and pays tribute to the Soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice.

The focus of *The Strong Gray Line* is the West Point Class of 2004 — more specifically, the roles and experiences of the class during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. To address these roles and experiences, readers will find a book unique in organization, content, and its contributors. These factors combine to make this a volume which will have a dramatic impact on all who read it.

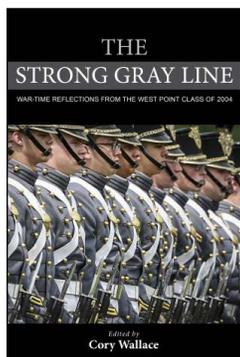
As highlighted earlier, this is a book which superbly honors Soldiers who died in service of their country. During the period of 2005-2012, 14 members of the class of 2004 were killed. Thirteen of these Soldiers died in combat and one in a training accident. To honor their memory, the first section of the book, entitled "The Fallen," contains an essay written on each Soldier. Fittingly, each essay is crafted by a fellow member of the class. Some of the essays are written in a solemn tone while others are a bit more subdued. They are fitting tributes to the Soldiers and undoubtedly humanize them to the public.

The majority of the remainder of the book keys on the service of these Soldiers during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. It additionally highlights the significance of the family members left behind. In addressing this, the book utilizes 13 personal essays written again by members of the class of 2004 in a section entitled, "The War." These chapters truly touch on the myriad of emotions that are a part of war. In combination, they highlight the human dimension of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as any book I've read.

In between these two major portions of the book, there are two small sections which fit perfectly in the scope of the volume. The first is placed between the two chief sections and is appropriately called "Interlude." In developing this section, the editor wanted to provide readers with a bridge between the essays in tribute of the fallen Soldiers and class members discussing their Iraq and Afghanistan experiences. To achieve this, he placed two pieces (one a small story and the other a poem) which I believe clearly make this an effective transition for the reader.

The concluding chapter utilizes the reflections of a recent West Point graduate taken from his senior year. In it, he highlights the bond he passionately feels he shares with past graduates of the U.S. Military Academy. It is a chapter which not only interconnects the past and present as it pertains to West Point graduates but makes the connection between all who have served. It is a powerful conclusion.

After reading this review, you may conclude that *The Strong Gray Line* will only appeal or benefit those with a West Point connection. That could not be farther from the truth. It is a book which pays tribute to all who have served or currently serve their country. It provides the public perspectives and shares



The Strong Gray Line: War-Time Experiences from the West Point Class of 2004

**Edited by Cory Wallace
Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015, 268 pages**

Reviewed by LTC (Retired)
Rick Baillergeon

Most books are crafted with the goal of achieving an objective or multiple objectives. Some seek to entertain their readers while others may be written to educate readers or add to their

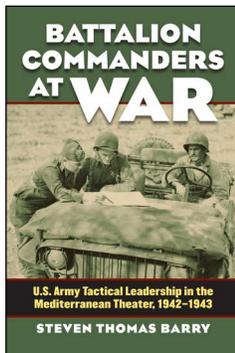
emotions that seem to be a bit more infrequent today in society.

In the book's introduction, a passage will surely stand out for readers. It states, "While many of us have left active duty for other pursuits, others continue to wear a uniform. We all carry a burden of living a life worthy of the sacrifices of our classmates and so many others. To those who bore the ultimate cost and who now grip our hands from the shadows, we dedicate this book." *The Strong Gray Line* unquestionably provides a dedication worthy of all who bore the ultimate cost.

***Battalion Commanders
at War: U.S. Army Tactical
Leadership in the Mediterranean
Theater, 1942-1943***

**By Steven Thomas Barry
Lawrence, KS: University of
Kansas Press, 2013,
272 pages**

Reviewed by Maj Timothy Heck,
U.S. Marine Corps Reserve



Since the publication of Trevor Dupuy's *Numbers, Predictions, and War* in 1979, the standard perception of American combat efficiency was that it was significantly less than that of their German opponents, especially at the beginning of World War II. In *Battalion Commanders at War*, Steven Barry attempts to challenge that perception, using North Africa and Sicily as his proving grounds. The book, which won an Army Historical Foundation Distinguished Book Award in 2014, argues that in spite "the deficiencies in equipment, organization, and mobilization and the inadequate operational leadership," American battalion commanders, particularly those educated at West Point in the 1930s, were the glue that held the Army together and spearheaded success in the Mediterranean.

Barry's book is divided into an introduction, seven chapters, a conclusion, and a historiographical essay. He seeks to answer the question of "how and why did the regular army battalion leadership exercise combat command without any prior combat experience?" Crucial to this combat command, Barry argues, was the shaping of these field grade officers at both West Point and the pre-war Army. The officer pool focused in his study are the field grade Armor and Infantry officers, though the majority of the case studies presented focus on the armored experience.

His first chapter focuses on the evolution of West Point from the 1920s to the mid-1930s as the source for America's professional Soldiers. West Point, he argues, professionalized as an educational institution and as a military one, as a result of leadership and vision set forth by GEN Douglas MacArthur and his successors. Using statistical analysis, Barry concludes that the value of military education, especially by the Department of Tactics and Civil and Military Engineering, was essential in preparing them for "the changes in modern warfare."

Following commissioning, the lieutenants went out in to the Army worldwide to lead platoons or serve on staffs. Unlike in today's Army, the lieutenants of the 1930s went forward without the benefit of a branch school. Instead, they completed one or two tours before returning for what would today be called the Captains Career Course at the appropriate branch school. Those tours included service overseas with the Army in Panama or the Philippines, participation in large-scale maneuvers and exercises, and with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Additionally, young officers were mentored by their seniors to varying degrees of success. Interestingly, Barry credits "the dogged mentorship of senior officers" with shaping the "quality judgment" of the future Mediterranean Theater of Operations battalion commanders though many of these same senior officers are often portrayed as unprepared for the demands of modern warfare after 1941.

Chapters three through six, which cover combat in North Africa, are the book's strongest and best laid out. Here, Barry follows battalion commanders through a variety of engagements, both offensive and defensive against French, Italian, and German forces. Barry writes about the successful ones (like Louis Hightower and Hamilton Howze) and the unsuccessful ones with an eye to what made the difference.

Unsurprisingly given his own background as an Armor officer, the sections on armored units are particularly well written. His analysis in these chapters is based on after action reports, oral history interviews, memoirs, and several official postwar analyses of combat. Barry credits the battalion commanders with "consistently displaying a penchant for incorporating lessons learned, leading from the front, and displaying a calmness under fire." Furthermore, these commanders served as mentors and leaders to the company-grade officers coming from the civilian world via Officer Candidates School.

Barry's thesis is expansive if not always successfully executed or supported. Some of the commanders he cites, men like Howze and Hightower, are presented as exceptional, making their inclusion or presentation as being indicative of their peer grouping problematic. His inclusion of elite units like the Rangers or airborne forces dilutes his argument's strength. Furthermore, the inclusion of the Sicily campaign, for example, is cursory in comparison to combat in North Africa, and those pages could have been better spent looking at other actions, commanders, and units in Tunisia.

Battalion Commanders at War is a bold attempt at repositioning the American tactical commander in historiography. He has written a "history from the middle" about the men who "provided the organizational solution to achieve tactical victories in the United States' first campaigns." It serves as a useful counterpoint to works like Dupuy's or S.L.A. Marshall's that have dominated the narrative of the American Army at the outset of World War II. Furthermore, the book has a place on the shelves of battalion commanders, future battalion commanders, and the leadership and staffs of professional military institutions. Barry reminds his readers that the preparation before combat — be it in a classroom or in the field — reaps rewards, saves lives, and helps produce victory.