

# Book Reviews



***Not a Good Day to Die, The Untold Story of Operation Anaconda.* By Sean Naylor. The Berkley Publishing Group, New York, 377 pages, \$25.95.** Reviewed by Major Keith Everett, U.S. Army Reserve.

Sean Naylor was a senior writer for the *Army Times* when he worked as one of only eight embedded journalists for Operation Anaconda on March 2, 2002, in Afghanistan. The author, with no direct military experience, has a solid base of journalistic deployments to Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Croatia covering military operations, and his writing experience for the *Times* since 1990 prepared him for covering Afghanistan operations. Naylor uses his close observations of the planning, preparation and execution of the Shahikot Valley mission, coupled with personal interviews, sometimes painfully candid, of many of the key personnel directly involved in Anaconda.

Operation Anaconda mistakes start with the decision in Washington to limit troop levels to prevent political fallout. This decision is viewed as a mistake by many of the Soldiers interviewed, as it artificially limits the number of troops for the mission instead of first asking the field commanders what the requirements are for the mission. The first question politicians must ask is what are the field operational requirements to accomplish the desired mission objectives. The troop-level decision resulted in a follow-on mistake of relying on aircraft to provide almost all of the heavy firepower for infantry support. Cutting field artillery and reduced mortar support were some of the effects of the troop-level limit. General Tommy Franks is given full credit for approving the decision not to take artillery into the fight. The reason given for not taking field artillery is the idea of not wanting to appear as the Soviets in leveling towns with field artillery. Instead of putting the burden of prudent use of force on the field commander, the valuable tool of artillery support was taken out of his hands. The

lack of artillery and sufficient mortars was compensated by usually unnecessary heroics as infantrymen tried to fill the gaps in firepower with what they had available. As usual with operational decisions made at the strategic level, reality is not fully considered, and the ground-level troops take the brunt of the mistakes in killed and wounded.

The idea that technology can work against you is amply illustrated as General Franks was the approving authority for the Apaches to strike any target in the villages. Since Franks was in Florida, this is incredible micromanagement unheard of since Johnson made troop deployment decisions from the White House. Again, the hands of Major General Franklin Hagenbeck, the 10th Mountain Division commander in charge of all U.S. forces in Anaconda, and his planners are tied. Video teleconference technology made micromanaging by long distance possible.

Throwing in Navy SEAL units into land warfare was a baffling decision to add a little more jointness to an already unwieldy cross attachment of companies and battalions to form the task organization for Operation Anaconda. A highlight of the operation, the successes of the classified Advance Force Operations unit, a select Special Operations group of 13 elite Soldiers from the Army's Delta Force and the Navy's Seal Team Six are retold in detail. This Advance Force Operations unit saves the operation from catastrophic failure before the missions even start by capturing key Al Qaida positions in the Shahikot Valley. The critical successes of the Advance Force Operations unit gives one the idea more of these types of units would help strengthen the Special Forces community. The U.S. Central Command also failed to create a clear chain of command in this joint operation, resulting in the fumbling of the disseminating of intelligence to the units needing it most in a timely manner and in communicating combat developments so better decisions are made.

Major General Warren Edwards, the deputy commanding general for operations at the Coalition Forces Land Component Command was quoted as saying, "We are not going to repeat the mistakes of the Soviets. We are not going to go in with large conventional forces." The decision not to send in adequate forces to seal the border passes allowing untold numbers of the enemy an escape route to Pakistan will be second-guessed as long as the Operation Anaconda results are debated. MG Edwards is also quoted as saying, "There was a constant disconnect between mission and assets allowed to be available to do the mission."

Intelligence indicated a high level enemy official was in the Shahikot Valley. Since the indications were not specific, one can only guess if it was Osama Bin Ladin in the valley. In retrospect, a combination of Special Forces and conventional forces would have more effectively sealed off escape routes for the most notorious terrorist killer of our time, if the indicators were correct. In late January 2002, General Franks had relied on Afghan forces backed up by Special Forces without conventional forces to block the escape routes from Tora Bora. Although Tora Bora was taken, and it is believed Osama Bin Laden and hundreds of Al Qaida forces escaped, most likely to hiding places in Pakistan.

Other issues include the failure of the Afghan forces to complete their mission, the use of inadequate maps and the cutting of the Air Force air planner staff should receive more study. Why were 1:100,000 maps used instead of 1:50,000 maps, as requested by many of the ground troops? As Lieutenant Colonel Louis Bochain points out in his interview with the author, why was an Air Defense company included in the troop count against an enemy with no air force? Including LTC Bochain's nine-man air planner staff could have easily added an increased air capability. The Special Forces-led Afghan forces had no chance against a well-prepared, dug-in enemy.

The lack of air strike support for the main effort of the operation pushed the Afghan forces out of the operation before they were even able to get into position.

Naylor does a great service to future joint operations with his candid telling of the Anaconda story. The author collected fresh interviews and edited little of the harsh assessments needed to improve operations. The operation plan was a product of negotiation and compromise on many issues, which the command should not have allowed. *Not a Good Day to Die* should be required reading for any operational planner. Planning for joint operations is hard enough without the continuing turf wars between the services. Operation Anaconda is additional proof of the pressing need for continued refinement of how we operate jointly. Perhaps only by merging many of the service capabilities will the U.S. develop true jointness. The hodgepodge approach to put units together for specific operations works only because of our technological edge. Future joint operations are better served by merging capabilities in peacetime, so operations work smoother in wartime. Naylor brings a focus on this issue throughout his exciting account. At times, it is hard not to get angry with some of the decisions made. This account should be required reading for politicians on how their decisions can directly affect military operations. If nothing else is learned, a politician could take away the idea that mission requirements dictate the number of troops needed for an operation, not a politically desired end-state. Regardless of the troop makeup of future joint operations, Sean Naylor should be a requirement to get the most out of the story by both documenting the situation and creating the best learning opportunity for U.S. forces.

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***Franco: Soldier, Commander and Dictator.* By Geoffrey Jensen. Potomac Books: Dulles, Virginia. Online at [www.potomacbooksinc.com](http://www.potomacbooksinc.com). 135 pages, 2005.** Reviewed by Lieutenant Commander Youssef Aboul-Enein, U.S. Navy.

Potomac Books, which was previously

Brassey's Books, is a premier publisher of military titles. Their exquisite military profile series has more than two dozen biographies of the world's most influential military leaders from ancient times to the present. Every year, expect three to four new and fresh biographies that offer both the novice and specialists a quick understanding of the major military leaders of all time. This year the biography of Francisco Franco, Spain's Generalissimo is featured, written by a leading authority on the Spanish military — Geoffrey Jensen.

Like many dictators, Franco is controversial, and there is a tendency to ignore his military thinking and focus on his repressive rule of Spain that lasted over four decades. Jensen was masterful in showing readers how Franco's experiences fighting insurgencies in Morocco shaped his strategic thinking and compelled him to gain insight and experience on the operational arts of war. By the time Franco arrived in Morocco in 1912, the Spanish had attempted to dominate the country for 50 years. He was a young infantry lieutenant who was surrounded by Spanish officers mired in an insurgency that the Spanish military academies hardly prepared them for. The state of Spanish arms in Morocco was reduced to a force demoralized by officers inattentive and outright neglectful to the needs of their troops. The Moroccans knew they were outgunned by modern Spanish weapons and used hit and run tactics. Franco was among the first officers to realize that conventional warfare tactics were useless and developed new techniques including long-range heavy mortar attacks on mountain strongholds. He would evolve an appreciation for the deliberate planning of combined arms, logistical planning and use of airpower. However, Franco never appreciated *blitzkrieg* tactics or the maximizing the use of armor.

Franco was an *africanista*, a label applied to Spanish officers who believed in their divine imperial mission in Morocco. He engaged Riffian tribesmen along the Melilla coast, and despite making gains, civil authority in Madrid cut the ability of the Spanish colonial forces to press the attack. As a first lieutenant, he refined his skills of careful planning, logistics and lines of fortification. To say

he won many battles would be understatement, but he did appreciate the sweeping tactics of his adversary and the use of country and urban warfare tactics to undermine a standing force. He would put these skills to use in the bloody Spanish Civil War that preceded World War II. He left Morocco a major and returned in 1920 as second in command of a new force *Tercio de Extranjeros* referred simply as *La Legion* there he would see ferocious guerillas fighting in Morocco. What is fascinating is the use of the hamlet philosophy made famous in Vietnam in this war. By the mid-1920s, the Spanish adopted a new policy of garrisoning forces in major Moroccan towns like Ceuta, Larache and Tetuan; it is also during this time that Franco opposed his superiors, particularly those who did not maintain a full commitment to the Moroccan war.

The book details his rise with Spain's conservative politicians and his reluctance to become embroiled in military coups until finally being enticed by the fear of a leftist takeover. Franco would be dispatched to Morocco in 1934 to protect him from political intrigue and violence that included the sacking of churches and the symbols of power in Spain. He would return with his army of Africa and use his guerillas tactics in the service what would become known as the Nationalists against the Republicans. Franco would rise to become Spain's absolute dictator with ties to Hitler and Mussolini and would remain standing until his death in 1975. The book details how Franco used the church, fascists and the army to maintain power. This is an excellent book for those with an interest in Spain, insurgency tactics, and North African (Moroccan) military history. In 1956, when Morocco attained independence its first order of business was to end Spanish rule over the Western Sahara. The aftermath of the withdrawal of the Spanish from the Western Sahara persists today. The book does contain one slight error in the photo section, it shows Franco with an unidentified Arab shaking hands of officers lined up in the airport; the unidentified Arab leader with the sunglasses is Saudi Arabia's second King Saud Bin Abdul-Aziz Al-Saud (1953-1964).



Tech Sergeant Andy Dunaway, USAF

*Sergeant Jose Rivera (right), Private First Class Richard Robinson (center) and Specialist Diego Cruz wait for the signal to enter a house during a patrol in Bayji, Iraq. The Soldiers are assigned to the 1st Battalion, 187th Infantry Regiment, 101st Airborne Division.*

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