

# Book Reviews



***The Secrets of Inchon: The Untold Story of the Most Daring Covert Mission of the Korean War.* By Commander Eugene Franklin Clark, USN. New York: Berkley, 2002, 326 pages, \$14.95. Reviewed by Colonel Mike Davino.**

Although the Korean War is often referred to as “the forgotten war,” even those readers with a casual knowledge of military history are familiar with the amphibious assault at Inchon. General of the Army Douglas MacArthur famously remarked the daring operation was “a 5,000-to-1 gamble.” To reduce those daunting odds, obtaining detailed knowledge of the enemy and terrain in the target area was essential to set the United Nations up for success. How that information was gained, and the men and women who collected it, is the subject of this book.

On the surface, then-Lieutenant Eugene Clark at 39 years old seemed to be an unlikely choice to lead a reconnaissance mission deep behind enemy lines. A yeoman who sought a commission in World War II to escape a desk job, Clark was attached to MacArthur’s Far East Command staff in Tokyo at the outbreak of the Korean War. Complicating matters, Clark was tasked to assemble his team and complete his mission less than three weeks before the September 15, 1950, invasion date. However, this exceptionally resourceful and intrepid officer had extensive experience with both combat and amphibious operations in WWII as well with covert operations in post-war China.

Transported to the objective area by a British warship and supported by a Korean Navy patrol craft, Clark’s pick-up team of Korean commandos was soon compromised. In what sometimes reads like an action novel, Clark vividly describes fighting for the information the Navy and Marines needed to accomplish their mission. Adventure follows adventure in a dramatic series of gun battles, air strikes, hand-to-hand combat, interrogations, raids, and a sea battle between junks. In spite of

the enemy opposition, Clark gathered the critical elements of information required and relayed them to headquarters in Tokyo.

Not surprisingly, Clark’s success in providing information to his superiors in Tokyo is rewarded with even more tasks. Yet Clark and his men press on, using Benzedrine to help get by on just a couple hours sleep each day. In an almost incredible finish, before they departed for home, Clark led his band of raiders on an audacious mission to turn on the light in the Wolmi-do lighthouse to guide the invasion fleet on its approach to the Inchon channel.

The book is not without its flaws — the main one being the lack of maps. Only two are included and unlike the incredibly comprehensive text, neither map has any useful details to help the reader understand the distances and locations that make Clark’s mission even more difficult. Also, an index would have been handy to help readers keep track of the numerous people and places Clark depicts.

Despite these problems, *The Secrets of Inchon* merits reading. It provides great insight into the challenges of operating with indigenous forces. More significantly, it is a classic firsthand account of how an ingenious and persistent leader can accomplish his mission even when faced with almost inconceivable impediments.

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***Contract Warriors, How Mercenaries Changed History and the War on Terrorism.* By Fred Rosen. New York: Alpha Books, 256 pages, \$16.95. Reviewed by Major Keith Everett.**

The first three chapters make a promising start in introducing the reader to the world of private military companies, with exciting accounts of successes and failures of modern day mercenaries in various parts of the world. Then the author makes a perplexing leap into a patchwork collection of historical anecdotes of mercenaries through the ages. Although

interesting, the collection of mercenary stories in the middle three chapters leaves a doubt as to the author’s purpose alluded to in the title. We come back to the modern world quite suddenly in chapter seven and are seemingly back on track; then the author attempts to forge a hodgepodge collection of information from the internet into the end of his book.

Rosen explains how organizations like Executive Outcome changed the mercenary business. Executive Outcome received mineral rights and a percentage of the oil and diamond trade of Angola and Sierra Leone. The author zeros in on the exploits of retired British Colonel Tim Spicer in Papua New Guinea. Spicer developed a new concept of a private military company by calling his outfit a military contracting company. Although Spicer’s efforts in Sierra Leone and Papua New Guinea were notable fixtures, his efforts were reborn in Iraq. Rosen quotes figures on the amount of money spent by the Bush administration on government contractors without a single note on where these figures came from. “It is estimated...” does not cut it. The lack of credible sources is a shame, as the military contracting method of getting various dirty jobs done in a combat zone is here to stay. Primary sources appear to be self-serving Web sites of the private military companies.

The jumping around from modern to ancient back to modern anecdotes makes for a lot of head scratching trying to relate it to how mercenaries changed the world. The ancient history as used, is more of a distraction than supporting Rosen’s thesis of mercenaries changing the world. For example, Hannibal, Spartacus and El Cid are explored, but the way they changed history is only suggested. The ancient history seems to be added as filler and recent anecdotes would have been more effective within the parameters of modern mercenaries affecting the world. The author at times jumps from Italy to India, then Japan outlining mercenary activity around the globe. Some stories did not need

to be told at all, such as that of Dutch mercenary William Hessing or the Ronins. The stories are interesting, but the transition along the way makes you blink at the confusing chain of thought.

Chapter six was a somewhat rambling chapter with anecdotes of mercenaries serving in the Spanish-American War, Egypt fighting Ethiopia, the Irish Battalion fighting in the Mexican War, and mercenaries fighting for Britain at Gallipoli during WWI. A quick gloss over of the modern age turned into a chapter that is not effective at all in explaining the use of mercenaries today. The work could have used an editor cutting out chapters four, five, and six to bring the work more in line with the author's thesis.

The strength of the book rests with the description of the activities, problems, accomplishments, and failures of Blackwater, Control Risks Group, and other private military contractors mentioned. The thesis' focus of how the use of mercenaries changed history is not clear. Adding Richard Marcinko's advertisement for mercenary training Marcinko-style and calling it an afterword appeared as an attempt to gain credibility. W. Thomas Smith's portion of the afterword was tacked on in apparently the same lively spirit. You need to look elsewhere for either a history of mercenaries or an account of how mercenaries changed history.

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***Commanding the Army of the Potomac.* By Stephen R. Taaffe. University Press of Kansas, 2006. 284 Pages, \$34.95.** Reviewed by Command Sergeant Major (Retired) James Clifford.

Continuing the "Modern War Studies" series by the University Press of Kansas, *Commanding the Army of the Potomac* by Stephen R. Taaffe offers a better understanding of one of America's least successful but best known armies. As states seceded after the election of Abraham Lincoln, the United States Army consisted of just 16,000 men stationed in far flung constabularies on our frontiers. Of the small professional officer corps, only two leaders had any experience leading large formations in combat. One of those would surrender his forces in Texas and throw in

with the Confederacy. The other was a sedentary bureaucrat whose old age and infirmities prevented active leadership on the field of battle. About one half of the rest would resign to join the rebellion leaving just a few loyal stalwarts to lead a rapidly expanding army.

The premise of this book is that the successes and failures of the Army of the Potomac rested heavily on the skills of the 36 officers who served as either permanent or long-term temporary corps commanders during the life of this organization. This is a survey of those officers. Taaffe places each in one of four overlapping categories: McClellanites, Lincolnites, opportunists, and a small but important cadre of those that merited promotion. Each of these categories is fully explored to determine their effect on the Army of the Potomac.

The author tells the story in a generally chronological pattern, presenting each category within chapters on four Army commanders: McClellan, Burnside, Hooker, and Meade. The final and longest chapter covers the period in which Ulysses S. Grant served as general-in-chief of all the Union armies but was most influential in the daily operations of the Army of the Potomac. As such the reader learns as much about the Army commanders as about the corps commanders serving under them. This is a fine comprehensive story of the Army of the Potomac, especially for those not so well-read on the topic.

Knowledgeable students of the eastern theater may find this book to be too general for their purposes. The drawbacks include the superficial analysis of each corps commander; too much emphasis on the army commanders, President Lincoln and politicians; and a distracting discussion of the Army of the James and its commander, Benjamin Butler, that covers nearly one quarter of the book. Additionally, the lack of any recognition that these corps commanders were either civilians or low-ranking officers at the outset of the Civil War leaves a gap in the understanding of the leadership challenges inherent in a rapidly expanding army at war.

Also missing was any context between the 36 officers who served as corps commanders. The author's point is that

most of these men ultimately failed in many respects while in command. A chart would have enabled the reader to better evaluate these conclusions. Considering that each commander left his position for different reasons — some positive, some negative — a chart would have enhanced the reader's understanding. This visual device comparing these men would have been useful in understanding and evaluating the premise of the book.

Despite these observations this is a very good book for the casual Civil War student. It brings forth topics worthy of consideration and presents them in a highly readable format that will enhance the reader's understanding of the Army of the Potomac and whets one's thirst for further, more in-depth study.

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***Norway 1940: The Forgotten Fiasco - A Firsthand Account of the Disastrous British Attempt to Block the German Invasion of Norway in April 1940.* By Joseph Kynoch. Shrewsbury, England: Airlife Publishing, 2002, 174 pages, \$26.95.** Reviewed by Brigadier General (Retired) Curtis Hooper O'Sullivan.

To those who followed the news in 1940, Norway is hardly forgotten. It was the only show on the road at the time and was a first in many respects, though World War II had been going on since the incident at the Marco Polo Bridge on July 7, 1937. It had come closer to home to Europeans with the invasion of Albania by Mussolini on April 7, 1939, and there was no doubt after Hitler attacked Poland September 1 of that year. That blitz was followed by what was called the "phony" war on the western front. During that time, Der Fuehrer became alarmed at the non-neutral acts of the British in Norwegian waters and were concerned it might be the prelude to their occupation of that nation. As early as February 1940, Hitler decided on a preemptive invasion of Norway, which was launched April 9, 1940 — precipitating a quick counterinvasion by the Allies.

The Germans made the first airborne operation in history and the first amphibious landing since Gallipoli, which succeeded despite the alleged superiority of the Royal Navy. The latter did a poor job of

improvising their own landings, with consequent problems for the troops ashore. The author was among these. He was a private in a territorial battalion who had been called up only seven months before. The book is largely his personal odyssey that is intermingled with accounts by comrades and such. He attempts to give enough background to show how his experiences fit into a slightly larger picture. This is his story and is not intended to be a history of the campaign. The maps and sketches are useful for his purpose. The pictures are a cut above most in such works in giving a graphic portrayal of conditions.

The verdict is still out whether this was truly a “fiasco.” That’s defined as “a ludicrous or humiliating failure or breakdown.” There’s no question that the operation was a failure or that there was confusion in its conduct, but it was waged gallantly. On the bright side, the Nazis didn’t achieve all they’d hoped. They had hoped for a major contribution to their economic new order. That didn’t materialize, and Norway actually became a liability. Considerable forces were tied down there. They may have been aware that Churchill seriously advocated a return appearance and obviously were aware of the deception threats there before Operation Overlord (along with Pas de Calais). Overall, it is a good choice for anyone who wants a boots-on-the-ground look at Norway in 1940.

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*A Soldier leads his squad during a cordon and search operation in Iraq April 2. The Soldiers were with the 5th Battalion, 20th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division.*

### CORRECTION

In the January-February 2007 issue of *INFANTRY*, we failed to identify that the article “Dealing with the Iraqi Populace: An Arab-American Soldier’s Perspective” written by Sergeant Mounir Elkhamri had previously run in *Military Review’s* January-February 2007 issue. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Staff Sergeant Stacy L. Pearsall, USAF