

# Book Reviews



***God Willing: My Wild Ride with the New Iraqi Army.* By CPT Eric Navarro, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2008, 296 pages, \$27.50.** Reviewed by Eric Mailman, *Infantry Magazine* editorial intern.

*God Willing: My Wild Ride with the New Iraqi Army* can teach Soldiers about some of the challenges they may face while deployed to Iraq. It details the time in which CPT Eric Navarro, a U.S. Marine Corps Reservist, and nine other men were attached to a battalion of the Iraqi Army as advisors.

The main focus of the novel focuses on the psychological boundaries that Navarro had to cross during the deployment. The most poignant of these deals with the phrase “Insha Allah.” These two words translate to “God willing” or “If God wills it.” This basically means that, no matter what a person does, an outside factor (God, Allah, etc.) always has the final say on what happens. If a Soldier misses a target, it is because it was God’s will for the Soldier to miss. It doesn’t matter that the Soldier had never received marksmanship training.

Two other concepts unique to the Iraqi people are their perception of time and their reliance on the context of a given situation. Time is not as important to an Iraqi as it is to an American. What is important to an Iraqi is who is doing the talking and the context of what is being said.

The lessons learned in one location don’t necessarily carry over to another. One example of this was the question of where the Iraqis use the restroom. If they were not told where they could go, they would go wherever they pleased. When Navarro and his fellow advisors had to move the battalion from its original headquarters in Fallujah to a new base in Habbaniyah, much of the progress made in showing the Iraqis where they could relieve themselves had been made moot. One anecdote had an Iraqi relieve himself behind a line of port-o-johns. The port-o-johns were originally designed with the American mindset in which you sit down. Iraqis do not sit as much as squat over a hole and use water splashed from

their right hand to clean themselves. This was solved when port-o-johns were put in place that were used in the fashion that the Iraqis were used to.

Problems with the native population were the tip of the iceberg. The job given to them was important but Navarro’s group, “The Drifters,” often lacked aid from the military. The only cultural information they received was given to them shortly after arriving in Kuwait. CPT Navarro had the foresight to study some of the language, but his group lacked a translator for a very long time. When they were around other U.S. forces, they were seen with disdain. To the minds of some Soldiers, any Iraqi in the Iraqi Army could be an insurgent in disguise. Navarro and his fellow Marines were guilty by association. One of the biggest problems was that sometimes it was difficult to find out just where or who was giving orders. All these outside forces affecting their operations in Iraq often made the drifters adopt the “Insha Allah” mindset, sometimes in jest, sometimes as the way to explain some of the more bizarre happenings they were involved in.

Navarro often uses vulgar language, but it doesn’t hurt the novel. I would recommend this book to any member of the armed forces who will be working closely with the Iraqi Army. Reading the anecdotes from the book in tandem with knowing about the Iraqi mindset may help to make the transition of life among Iraqi soldiers a little easier.

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***The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I.* By Mark Ethan Grotelueschen. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 387 pages, \$88.** Reviewed by LTC (Retired) Albert N. Garland.

Although he is an active duty U.S. Air Force officer and an assistant professor at the U.S. Air Force Academy, Mark Ethan Grotelueschen demonstrates considerable knowledge of the U.S. Army and its methods of operation in World War I, particularly its

field artillery, about which he has written in a previously published book.

(I must now admit that as an Infantry rifle company commander in World War II in Europe, I counted greatly on our supporting artillery and on our battalion fire support officer. But he could never claim to have on hand or nearby the amounts of artillery ammunition available to our World War I divisions. The thoughts on the latter’s barrages simply amazed me when reading this book.)

Here, the author’s aim, the target of which he clearly hits, is to cast a new, brightened light on the writings that have appeared on our AEF. He also writes that “few operational histories of the AEF’s major campaigns have been written.”

After going through the operational actions of a number of our divisions in different actions, he believes, quite strongly, “the American Army in France was not the powerful and smooth running machine” General Pershing and others claimed. He does give those units some credit by concluding his book with “there could be little doubt that its reliance of firepower has been one of the Great War’s fundamental legacies on American combat doctrine.”

(An interesting note: The Field Service Regulations of 1923 changed the meaning of the word “Infantry” to “the arm of close combat” and would no longer be restricted to just the “rifle and bayonet.”)

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***George Marshall and Dwight Eisenhower in War and Peace: Partners in Command.* By Mark Perry. New York: Penguin Press, 2007, 473 pages, \$29.95.** Reviewed by BG (Retired) Curtis H. O’Sullivan.

A large number of books have been written about this duo of five-star Generals of the Army, many by excellent authors, some of which are included in this book’s bibliography. Mark Perry attempts to capitalize on a different approach by concentrating on the relationship between

the two. Unfortunately, he uses the wrong word to identify that connection. "Partner" has a number of meanings. In business and matrimony, the terms and conditions are spelled out by law. In dancing and certain sports, the cooperative effort has accepted practices. "Friend" doesn't do it either. That implies a certain equality and a relaxed enjoyment of each other's company that didn't exist here. They were never buddies or boon companions or even social associates to any extent. The necessary deference and respect led to formality in their dealings.

"Mentor" covers part of what Marshall did with Eisenhower but not enough to warrant using it as part of the title. It pertains to teaching, guiding and advising a disciple and perhaps acting as a supporter and advocate, and even using influence on his behalf.

It was suggested that there was somewhat of a father-son relationship between the two and here we dip into Stygian and Freudian waters. Ike's dad wasn't much of one and he may have been looking for a father figure. Certainly his numerous unofficial communications to Marshall could be seen as a plea for parental approval. Marshall had no children of his own but did his best as paterfamilias to his stepchildren and was deeply affected when one was KIA in Italy. His concern for Eisenhower's welfare seemed fatherly at times. Certainly he wasn't worried if MacArthur, Stilwell or other theater commanders got enough sleep.

The connection was a military one. The close link started when Ike joined the War Plans Division ([WPD] — later Operations Division [OPD]) as an assistant in December 1941 and became division chief in February 1942. Marshall was Chief of Staff and WPD/OPD was the most important of the five General Staff sections so they worked closely together in the way they both learned at Leavenworth and

practiced thereafter. They both had General Staff experience at several levels.

In June 1942, Eisenhower went overseas as commanding general of the European Theater of Operations (ETO) and then became Allied Commander for the planning and conduct of the invasion of North Africa. This created two lines of connection to Marshall. As theater commander, he reported to the C/S of the Army and received instructions through him. It should be emphasized that the Chief of Staff is not a commander and is not in the chain of command. The title of this book is incorrect in this respect, too. This is not a semantic hairsplitting but part of the reaffirmation of the Constitutional principle of civilian control of the armed forces. As an Allied commander, Ike received his strategic directives from the combined Chiefs of Staff and reported to them on operations. Marshall was but a member of that collective body — though he had a very strong voice.

The book does a good job of showing how the relationship develops during the war as Eisenhower feels more independent and gains self-assurance. There is no original research involved, but Perry makes good use of the sources he lists, perhaps with some conjecture and hearsay evidence. The work is beset by many minor mistakes on such things as facts and figures, dates, titles and grades held at a particular time. The maps are clear and help in understanding the operations. I have only two complaints here. I served in the Thunderbird Division from 1942-45 and think it should be identified as "Okla" rather than "British." For Overlord, the British Airborne Division was the 6th, rather than 3th (sic). Among the photographs, three are of German leaders. In addition to these, or in place of one, there might have been one of Fox Conner who, rightly, is mentioned frequently. Overall, this is an entertaining and readable effort.

## TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

- In WWII, a German officer referred to this group of American Soldiers as "Devils in Baggy Pants." These Soldiers were members of:
  - The 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment
  - The 505th PIR
  - The 187th PIR
  - The 325th Glider Infantry Regiment
- The most numerous awards of the Victoria Cross (the British Empire's equivalent of the Medal of Honor) occurred during this battle:
  - First Battle of the Marne (WWI)
  - Rorke's Drift (Boer War)
  - Second Battle of the Somme (WWI)
  - D-Day, Normandy (WWII)
- A legion in the army of ancient Rome comprised approximately how many men:
  - 10,000
  - 6,000
  - 16,000
  - 8,000
- The Soldier from the 82nd Division who was credited with killing 33 German soldiers and capturing another 132 (and was subsequently awarded the Medal of Honor) was:
  - Alvin York
  - Audie Murphy
  - Charles DeGlopper
- Admiral John Rushworth Jellicoe's flagship at the Battle of Jutland was the HMS:
  - Redoubtable
  - Invincible
  - Repulse
  - Iron Duke
- The Allied airborne operation in Holland in September of 1944, which was designed to cut off enemy forces from Germany and shorten the war, was Operation:
  - Market Garden
  - Overlord
  - Varsity
  - Bayonet
- The poison gas phosgene was first used in WWI at the battle of:
  - Ypres
  - Verdun
  - First Marne
  - Paschendale
- This 10-month WWI battle was launched by the German general Von Falkenhayn to "bleed the French Army white." We know it as:
  - Second Marne
  - Belleauwood
  - Meuse Argonne
  - Verdun
- We were Soldiers Once, and Young* is the eyewitness account of LTG (Retired) Harold Moore's combat experience in Vietnam in the area known as:
  - Dien Ben Phu
  - la Drang Valley
  - Cu Chi
  - Saigon
- The Battle of the Chosin Reservoir took place during the:
  - Korean War
  - Vietnam
  - WWII – South Pacific
  - WWII – South China theatre

(Answers on next page)

Courtesy of Chris Timmers



SPC Mary Gonzalez

*Chinook helicopters fly in to take Soldiers with the 101st Airborne Division back to Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, following a mission November 4.*

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