

Book Reviews



***Between Memory and Desire: The Middle East in a Troubled Age.* By R. Stephen Humphreys. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005 (reprint), \$19.95, 292 pages.** Reviewed by CDR Youssef Aboul-Enein, USN.

R. Stephen Humphreys is a History professor at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Finding condensed volumes on the complexities of the Middle East is challenging, and this book is tailor made for those wanting a quick primer on the region from an economic, social, military, and religious perspective. Humphreys wrote the book as a series of interlocking essays designed to stand on its own. The book opens with the dual problems of population growth and economic stagnation. Readers learn that the city of Cairo had six million people in 1973 and by 1997 it had grown to 15 million. This increase led to a complete collapse of the socio-economic infrastructure, which brought ever-increasing challenges to feed, educate, and employ Egyptians. Humphreys lays out the modern histories of Egypt, Iran, and Syria as well as a quick orientation into the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. You get into the mechanics of how in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Council of Guardians and Parliamentarians cannot agree on what an Islamic social order looks like. Add to this, there was a disagreement between clergy on how intrusive their role should be in the Iranian polity.

One chapter delves into the rise and fall of Pan-Arabism, which had its heyday with the rise of Nasser, and his 1958 union with Syria called the United Arab Republic (UAR), which only survived until 1961. The UAR would be mismanaged by Egyptian leaders, who treated Syria as a secondary province. Nasser would also usher in the one-man rule, that survives today as one-party rule in Egypt. Pan-Arabism would be discredited by the 1967 Six-Day War, and thus add to the sense of disappointment leading to a segment of the population seeking refuge in Islamist radicalism.

The chapters entitled, "Islam as a

Political System," and "Jihad and the Politics of Salvation," introduce readers to the complexity and debate of what constitutes an Islamic state. It also discusses the success Islamist militants have in seizing the podium of public discourse, but in essence offers no tangible remedy to the stagnation of the region. Debates that have been going on in Islam's 1,400 year history include the basic question, "Is there a distinction between religion and politics in Islam?" On a general and broad level the author says no, but on the level of concrete goals and political institutions that execute policy, the answer is ambiguous. This then opens the question, "whose Islam?," as this faith of one billion is not monolithic or homogenous. This book is recommended for those deploying to the Middle East.

***More Than Courage, The Combat History of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment in World War II.* By Phil Nordyke. Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2008, \$28, 472 pages.** Reviewed by Chris Timmers.

"American paratroopers — devils in baggy pants — are less than one hundred meters from my outpost line. I can't sleep at night. They pop up from nowhere, and we never know when or how they will strike next. Seems like the black-hearted devils are everywhere."

— **Diary extract from a slain German officer in the vicinity of the Carroceto, Italy, February, 1944.**

Phil Nordyke has done it again. If you read *Four Stars of Valor*, detailing the exploits and heroism of the 82nd Airborne Division's 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment in World War II, you would be justified in thinking that no sequel, no tale matching the 505th PIR's combat record, could be possible. With no disrespect intended for members of the 505th PIR, I must say that you would be wrong.

But what more could be written about this colorful, valorous unit? Didn't Ross

Carter cover the subject in his book *Those Devils in Baggy Pants* more than 20 years ago? And what about Jim Magellas's book *All the Way to Berlin*? And let us not forget T. Moffatt Burriss's remembrance of the same unit in his personal history *Strike and Hold*. Well, the answer is: plenty. Although Nordyke covers much of the same ground as the authors above (and he uses, liberally, quotes from Carter, Magellas, and Burriss), he does so with expanded quotes from dozens of 504th PIR veterans which lend not just legitimacy to his narrative, but, at points, turns historic narrative into something almost resembling fiction. The excruciating detail in his book can at times be overpowering. This is a Soldier's tale told by (numerous) Soldiers. The other books cited above are excellent sources if one seeks to explore one man's experience with war; Nordyke tells his story from dozens of perspectives and his accounting makes the 504th live today in a way that makes history accessible to all.

In picking up a book such as this, one expects to read of the tales of extraordinary heroism. The book does not disappoint. But the reader finds eye-opening mishaps in Allied planning and execution, typified by the 504th's jump into Sicily on 11 July 1943. The previous day, the 505th PIR had jumped into designated drop zones and were actively engaging German forces. The 504th PIR was rushed to reinforce them. As they took off from Africa and crossed the Sicilian coast line, they encountered heavy anti-aircraft fire; fire from ships anchored off the coast of Sicily as well as batteries on land. But this fire came not from German ships or AA units, but from American ones. Somehow the word did not filter down to Naval and land forces on Sicily that additional American forces were to be dropped to reinforce the 505th PIR. American ships and shore batteries assumed that the planes carrying the 504th PIR were *German* paratroopers being dropped to reinforce the Axis garrisons on Sicily. This incident of friendly fire cost U.S. forces 81 paratroopers and 60 air crewmen killed.

But far more costly were the regiment's subsequent engagements in Italy, Holland, and Germany. This review's length does not permit a recounting of all the heroic actions fought (and won) by the 504th. The slogging through the Siegfried Line, the bloody action in the Huertgen Forest, and other challenges are dealt with both compassion and precision. The crossing of the Waal River in Nijmegen during Operation Market Garden is treated with strategically precise and gory anatomical detail. How these troopers endured and continued to bring the fight against the Germans is the stuff of legends. And, always, the story is told by the narratives of individual Soldiers, not detached academicians.

Names one will remember when the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment and its exploits are recalled will include not just Carter, Magellas, and Burriss, but others like MAJ Julian Cook, and, especially, the regiment's commander, COL Ruben Tucker.

Do not think the history of this regiment has finally been written and that no further study is necessary. The bravery of the men assigned to the "Devils in Baggy Pants" is almost limitless in its extent. Nordyke's book is the best comprehensive study of the 504th PIR to date, but given the valor of its individual Soldiers and leaders, its endurance in the face of hardship, its enthusiasm and embodiment of the Airborne spirit, plenty of material exists for further studies yet.

MacArthur. By Richard B. Frank. New York: MacMillan, \$21.95, 198 pages. Reviewed by BG (Retired) Curtis H. O'Sullivan.

Not since Alexander the Great has there been such a wide divergence in the evaluation of a famous general as in the case of Douglas MacArthur. Much has been written about him, largely favorable but a fair amount critical or revisionist. This effort is wrapped in the cloak of objectivity but comes across as sensationalist iconoclasm, laced with loaded words. There is, however, some mix of praise

and criticism, and the book is easily readable as it is intended for popular consumption.

The book is part of Palgrave's Great General Series, which is intended to provide concise but comprehensive biographies of eminent U.S. military leaders. Because of the constraints imposed by the design of this series, there had to be selective coverage of a long and rich career. The choices are well balanced for the general reader and even include events often neglected in other accounts. There are no startling revelations, but some conclusions may differ from those in other histories. A new work on a subject may be useful because it fills a particular niche, exploits fresh sources, or has a new or different perspective and viewpoint. New to me (and I've read a good amount of what has come out about the War in the Pacific in the past 66 years) is his version of the adoption of the "Bypass" strategy and his naming two of the key SWP staff officers involved — the G3, MG Stephen Chamberlin (which he misspells twice), and the assistant G3 for plans, BG Bonner Fellers. He also has an interesting take on the Dual-Axis approach which makes more sense than some I've read. He gives more attention to the proposed and actual Aussie operations in the Netherlands East Indies. His story continues after V-J in the Occupation, and there is good coverage of that, which gives equal and appropriate credit (and blame) to those involved. There is no bibliography but the notes give a clue as to the limited number of sources used. As this is an introductory work, it's too bad that suggested works for further reading weren't given. There are some careless mistakes in the book. The most egregious is the too frequent use of "Ultra" where "Magic" is correct.

For anyone knowing nothing about MacArthur, this is a good start and should be read with caution. The author has strong opinions and convictions, and some of his conclusions are not only not universally accepted but may be in the realm of speculation. Nevertheless, there is much good, factual material.

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

THE ROMAN ARMY

- In ancient Rome, the size of a Legion would vary but most often approximated:

a. 10,000 men	c. 4,500 men
b. 6,000 men	d. 3,000 men
- Career enlistments in the Roman army typically lasted for:

a. 10 years	c. 25 years
b. 20 years	d. 30 years
- Scipio Africanus defeated this Carthaginian general in 202 BC at Zama:

a. Hannibal	c. Hengist
b. Hazdrubel	d. Horsa
- Despite its numerous successes, Roman infantry did suffer some defeats. One of its worse came in 9 AD in the Teutoburger Wald when the Roman General Varus was defeated by German tribes lead by:

a. Arminius (German: Herman)
b. Flavius
c. Heinrich the Younger
d. Johann of the Elbe
- The short sword used by Roman infantry for close in fighting was the:

a. Pilum	c. Lorca Hamata
b. Hasta	d. Gladius
- Founded by Augustus in 27 BC as an elite guard for Roman emperors, this formation was disbanded by Constantine in 312:

- Rank these Roman formations in size from smallest to largest:

a) Cohort	c) Maniple
b) Legion	d) Century
- His death at the battle of Carrhae led to civil wars between Caesar and Pompey.

a. Mark Antony	c. Cassius
b. Crassus	d. Almovadar
- He was a friend of Caesar, and opponent of Cicero. His legacy is the history of the war against Jugurtha, King of Numidia.

a. Sallust
b. Propertius
c. Cassius
d. Cato the Younger
- The second of the "Five Good Emperors," this Caesar oversaw the greatest geographical expansion of the Roman Empire (ca 117 AD).

a. Justinian	c. Trajan
b. Julius Caesar	d. Hadrian

(Answers on next page)

Quiz courtesy of Chris Timmers



SGT Matthew Moeller

Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment keep watch during an early morning battle in the Korengal Valley of Afghanistan 13 August.

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ANSWERS TO QUIZ: 1) b) 2) c) 3) a) 4) a) 5) d) 6) the Praetorian Guard 7) d) c) a) b) 8) c) 9) a) 10) d