

Book Reviews

Long Night of the Tankers: Hitler's War Against Caribbean Oil, by David J. Bercuson and Holger H. Herwig, Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2014, 344 pages, \$34.95 (soft cover), ISBN 978-1-55238-759-7

Reviewed by Colonel P.J. Williams

Ah, yes, as a former boss of mine would often opine, the Caribbean ... sun, sand surf – and submarines? Yes, indeed there were German U-boats in the Caribbean during WW II, and this little known campaign within the broader Battle of the Atlantic is the subject of this excellent book by two noted Canadian military historians.

In order to understand the context of the book, readers must disabuse themselves of any preconceived notions of who held the 'oil card' during this period. The United States was the world's largest oil producer at the start of the war, and as strange as it may seem today, the Caribbean basin was one of the fastest growing oil-producing regions on the planet. Indeed Aruba, Curaçao and Trinidad were, between them, home to the largest refining complex in the world. At the same time, the United Kingdom, having no strategic oil reserves of its own was greatly reliant upon Caribbean oil. All of this taken together made oil infrastructure and related shipping in the region a particularly welcome target for Germany's U-boat fleet.

However, as long as the United States remained neutral, and indeed its Standard Oil Company owned much of the oil-related Caribbean infrastructure, Hitler was reluctant to conduct his oil wars there. With the entry of the United States into the war in late 1941, such restrictions were removed, and approval was given for the conduct of *Operation Neuland* (New Land), the attacks on tankers and oil refineries in the Caribbean. Operations were commenced in February 1942 with attacks on Aruba.

Initial results were impressive and in just 28 days German submarines accounted for 41 ships, of which 18 were tankers, a total of some 222,657 tons. Buoyed by this success, a second wave of U-boats was launched against the Caribbean and in May 1942, sunk a further 78 ships, accounting for more tonnage than was being produced in US shipyards. This was a highly worrying trend for the Allies – including Canada as many Canadian-owned vessels also fell victim to the Neuland boats – who quickly responded to this growing threat.

The authors go into detail as to how the United States in particular began a comprehensive program of fortifying the islands, an initiative that was not without its diplomatic

challenges as many of the islands were British possessions. The arrival of US troops in particular also resulted in challenges for the local populations who did not always appreciate the American presence. In some respects this Caribbean oil war is as much a study of civil-military relations as it is about anti-submarine warfare.

In the end, Allied countermeasures, which included the deployment of several RCN vessels – notably HMCS *Oakville* which sank U-94 – proved decisive and by August 1942 Admiral Dönitz, commanding the German U-boats, was forced to admit that *Operation Neuland* had run its course. Thereafter, U-boat operations against Caribbean targets were smaller, and achieved few decisive results in the face of overwhelming Allied air superiority. Indeed the very swift construction of pipelines in the continental United States contributed greatly to dislocating the U-boats which hitherto had been able to target shipping running from the Caribbean along the eastern seaboard of the United States.

In preparing this work, the authors relied greatly on primary sources, including German and Canadian archives, and the Notes run to 21 pages. The book is well illustrated with photos, but though a U-boat chart of the Caribbean is included, maps of operations conducted against specific island targets would have been useful.

While we are unlikely to see another conflict along the lines of the Battle of the Atlantic or operations described in this book, 'energy wars,' whether over the Keystone XL pipeline in North America, or natural gas pipelines from Russia to Europe, figure prominently in international affairs even today. Therefore, books such as this give the opportunity to see how such challenges were handled in the past, in the hope that any future disputes will be addressed in a much less violent fashion. Very highly recommended. 🍷

South Pacific Cauldron: World War II's Forgotten Battlegrounds, by Alan Rems, Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2014, 284 pages, photos and maps, ISBN 978-1-61251-470-3

Reviewed by Major Chris Buckham

The public's knowledge of the Pacific Campaign during World War II is very limited. Battles such as Pearl Harbor, Singapore, Midway and Iwo Jima may come to mind, but these represent just a few of the many battles fought in the shadows of the European conflict and the Battle of the Atlantic. The intention of the author with this book is to shed light, in one comprehensive work, upon those battles fought with no less violence, intensity and anguish

in extremely difficult environments, that have faded from the collective conscience of the world. Further marginalizing the history of this conflict was the fact that the South Pacific Campaign served as both a prelude to and to secure the southern flank for the much higher profile Central Pacific Offensive launched in late 1943.

The book incorporates all of the major combatants (United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand) by doing this Rems has ensured a balanced and studied approach to the successes and failures of the parties involved and thus an excellent study of lessons for the present.

The book starts with the Battle of Guadalcanal, and Rems focuses his attention on the operations in the South Pacific chain of islands (primarily the Solomon Islands, New Britain and New Guinea). It is surprising how effective and aggressive the Japanese remained despite an inexorable turning of the tide both in terms of resources and technology. For example, of the 12 naval battles of the Solomon Island campaign, the Japanese won or drew even in 10 of them. Noteworthy technological advantages remained with the Japanese in terms of torpedos and torpedo bombers well into 1944. Additionally, superior tactical control of surface assets in combat also remained with the Japanese commanders until early 1944.

Rems undertakes a detailed analysis of the various combatant forces and it is striking the patterns that emerge. For example, it is clear that on the Japanese side, intelligence was woefully inaccurate, repeatedly underestimating Allied forces and intentions. Also, the Japanese were superb jungle fighters able to take advantage of terrain to develop formidable defensive works. They were extremely resilient, tough fighters consistently taking horrible casualties compared to the Allies. Additionally, they were often operating under conditions of malnutrition bordering on starvation as well as rampant illness. Logistically, it was evident that the Japanese were operating under extremely adverse conditions and yet, somehow, they were able to maintain operational capability. Unfortunately, the author does not provide much insight into this aspect of the operations limiting his Japanese analysis to the actions of senior officers. A discussion of this would have been very enlightening and helpful as a counterpoint to the Allied undertakings.

On the Allied side, the sections are equally fascinating. One is struck early on by the interservice and international rivalries within and between the Allied forces. Resistance to joint operational command was very ingrained and was the cause of a series of losses that could have been avoided. Additionally, the Allies had broken the Japanese codes and were therefore in a good position to engage

proactively. Allied soldiers were as tough as their counterparts and a healthy respect for both the climate and the adversaries was a hallmark of journals and recollections.

What was also interesting, especially within the Australian forces, was the employment of divisions in diametrically opposite environments. Thus the Australian 7th Division, famous for its stand at Tobruk in North Africa was transferred to New Guinea and had to learn from scratch how to become effective jungle fighters. Again, the logistics of the offensives are given scant attention by the author despite the fact that many operations were undertaken with the sole purpose of providing operating bases.

In terms of straight numbers, it is easy to understand why these campaigns did not capture attention. They generally involved small numbers of troops when compared with European or Central Pacific operations and were long drawn-out affairs. Geography and infrastructure ensured that these actions were not quick or dramatic. The environment was as dangerous and unforgiving as the enemy and was under-appreciated at extreme peril.

Rems provides excellent maps and photographs that reinforce his narrative. Despite areas that could have been given greater attention, his writing is strong, his analysis balanced and his style engaging. The book illustrates the horrible conditions under which these operations took place: determined, unforgiving adversaries; and geography that was easily among the most difficult in the world in which to operate. And these efforts were generally ignored in the world press. A solid bibliography rounds out Rems' work. *South Pacific Cauldron* serves as a fitting testament to those fighting in a horrific yet important sideline and the challenges that they faced. 🍷

Through a Canadian Periscope: The Story of the Canadian Submarine Service, by Julie H. Ferguson, Toronto: Dundurn, 2nd edition, 2014, 419 pages, \$26.99 paperback, ISBN 978-1-4597-1055-9

Reviewed by Colonel (Ret'd) Brian K. Wentzell

Julie H. Ferguson, a former Canadian Armed Forces officer, has written an updated edition of her 1995 book of the same title. The book records the history of the Canadian Submarine Service from its inception in 1914 to its demise in 1927, and from its resurrection in 1954 until 2013. The second edition of the book was written in time to honour the centenary of the service in 2014. The author traces the origin and development of the service by referring to such official records as can be found in the public domain, personal interviews with participants or their survivors,

and media reports. This book has copious endnotes and an extensive bibliography and list of interviewees.

The strength of both editions of the book is the recitation of personal remembrances of the RCN officers who served in Canadian and British submarines during WW I and in British boats and X-craft during WW II. As such, both editions are personal histories of events in each conflict, which in totality, constructs a history of training and operations for the officers concerned. The weakness of both editions is the lack of analysis of the naval strategy of the Canadian governments during each war, the inter-war period, and the period since.

With the decision to dedicate the RCN to anti-submarine warfare as a key part of the Canadian contribution to NATO, it became apparent to naval officers that submarines were required for the effective training of the crews of anti-submarine ships and aircraft. Ad hoc use of British and American submarines proved insufficient and thus the rental of a squadron of British submarines was negotiated in 1954. The Royal Navy's Sixth Submarine Squadron was based in Halifax from April 1955 until 1966 and usually consisted of three A-class submarines. While this provided much-needed 'clockwork mice' targets for training, the rental arrangement required 200 Canadian officers and men to be assigned to the Royal Navy for training and employment as submariners.

This was a factor in the rebirth of the Canadian Submarine Service from late November 1954. While many were employed in the Sixth Submarine Squadron, the first Canadian submarine, HMCS *Grilse*, a former US Navy *Balao*-class boat, was not commissioned until 11 May 1961. She was based at Esquimalt to provide training services to the Pacific Fleet and maritime air forces.

The author discusses the unsuccessful efforts to procure nuclear-powered submarines in the 1960-62 and 1985-89 time periods. She also discusses the acquisition of the *Oberon*-class boats between 1963 and 1968 and the *Upholder/Victoria*-class in 1998. This part of the book is hampered by official secrecy as many details concerning strategy and policy justifying the need for submarines, as well as the acquisition of each class, their employment and modernizations remain classified or mired in politics.

The second edition, while updated and corrected where necessary, is not so much an advance of our knowledge of events as it is a timely reminder that Canadians have dutifully served in Canadian and British submarines since 1914 despite the continuing doubts of the public, politicians, civil servants and naval leaders that such a service is either necessary or affordable. 🍷

Saltwater Leadership: A Primer on Leadership for the Junior Sea-Service Officer, by Rear-Admiral Robert O. Wray, Jr., USN, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press. 2013, 204 pages, index, ISBN 978-1-61251-212-9

Reviewed by Joseph De Sapio

Saltwater Leadership is Rear-Admiral Wray's attempt to provide the freshly-minted naval or merchant marine officer with exposure to a variety of leadership models and philosophies. While the book is written primarily from the perspective of a US naval officer, the lessons can be applied to any sea service and, indeed, to a number of corporate and business environments.

Broken up into discussions on topics such as leadership, self-discipline, mentoring and continual learning, *Saltwater Leadership* deftly provides the fundamental building blocks for not only a successful career at sea but, more importantly, for crafting an energetic, mission-oriented environment aboard ship. The vicissitudes of naval life are on full display here: how to deal with adverse conditions at sea, with a lack of professional knowledge, with bad news, cranky commanders, and even routine and rack inspections. Each of these situations calls for its own unique perspective and Wray's group of officers is ready with advice gained – often painfully – from experience.

Perhaps most importantly, *Saltwater Leadership* contains not only the lessons and morals noted above, but also a practical, self-reflective element. The final section of the book is devoted to personnel developing an honest critique of who they are currently, and who they want to become. Leadership, as Wray demonstrates, is nothing without awareness of personnel, mission and oneself, and junior officers are given the chance to place their own attributes into this framework with a helpful chart.

Wray's credentials in writing the book are solid. With a naval career spanning more than 30 years, he saw active service in a variety of roles and environments. In addition to serving aboard ship, he served as head of Military Sealift Command at the Pentagon and of the first Operations Coordinating Centre in Iraq liaising between civilian contractors and military operators. Throughout this varied career, Wray found himself in new situations which required quick thinking and improvisation – skills which he now seeks to encourage in young officers.

If one criticism may be leveled at the book, it is that the accounts and examples do not include many junior officers. The input from senior officers is valuable in its 'been-there-done-that' spirit, but often reflects a naval environment 10 or even 20 years in the past. Greater

inclusions from junior officers would illustrate not only how conditions in the navy evolve for those at the start of their careers, but would lend more weight to the idea that leadership development is a fluid and ongoing process.

Nevertheless, *Saltwater Leadership* is a useful tool in the naval kit. The post-Cold War global environment has meant naval priorities have changed from active combat against the Soviet threat, to a multitude of small-scale, regional conflicts involving a variety of players and interests. This means simply being a sailor is no longer enough; often, officers are called upon to be politically-savvy and culturally-sensitive operators, sometimes in the media spotlight. Such operational conditions can seem overwhelming.

This is the main strength of *Saltwater Leadership*: it offers stability by whittling away all of the elements an officer cannot control, and focusing on those he/she can – one's own behaviour. For naval officers, and others within a hierarchical environment, the lessons of honesty, integrity, mission and men/women before self provide a timeless recipe for success both at sea and ashore. 🍷

Confronting the Chaos: A Rogue Military Historian Returns to Afghanistan, by Sean Maloney, Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009, 256 pages, index, photographs, ISBN 978-1-59114-508-0

Reviewed by Emma Reid

Afghanistan in 2003 provides more than enough material for analysis in Sean Maloney's *Confronting the Chaos*. Maloney tackles the levels of institutional conflict in the second book of three, a fast-paced travelogue that is as detailed as it is gripping. The book is both personal memoir and detailed analysis, with Maloney describing his experiences and observations, as well as the interactions among the major players from 2004-2005. His knowledge of the region is vast, and having traveled there several times, he is able to bear witness to the important changes occurring over time.

While Maloney covers the importance of Strategic Advisory Teams and Provincial Reconstruction Teams in detail, he also makes room for wider context, including a basic history and summary of the major military operations in Afghanistan. In terms of research, he divides the book into four sections of study: NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); the German Provincial Reconstruction Team; the Strategic Advisory Team; and the Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team.

The emergent theme is certainly chaos. From *Operation Enduring Freedom* to the major players in ISAF, to the changing political landscape in Afghanistan, local police and security, warlords and the Taliban as well as the looming presence of Pakistan, there is no player that can be ignored. There is also no actor that operates without overlap. Afghanistan, as Maloney describes it, was an international mission in the truest sense, affected by wide-ranging and diverse political actors.

Maloney takes a critical tone towards the 'directed' operations which he covers in the first half of the book, illustrating the problems with the web of authority that had to be navigated for decisions to be made. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), he explains, focused broadly on security sector reform, with PRT commanders resisting attempts to standardize their structure across the country. But, as Maloney emphasizes throughout the book, there is no place for standardization in a country with such varied needs.

The detail in *Confronting the Chaos* is both its strength and its weakness. Maloney jumps from individual experience to international conflict with such speed that it is sometimes difficult to keep all of the actors straight. His descriptions of complex webs of authority and multi-level institutions could have benefitted from clarifying charts, and without a glossary the unending number of institutions and missions can overwhelm. Nonetheless, his eye for detail makes for a layered view of all of his subjects.

Maloney's anecdotes about his own interactions provide helpful indications of where successful relationships are being built in Afghanistan, and where diplomatic ties are fraying. They also help to make the book more accessible, often illustrating his observations about the region through the lens of exciting and fast-paced experiences.

Maloney attempts to find clarity in the conflict, separating the institutions that he believes can make important changes from those that are contributing to the chaos, and stressing that the people in Afghanistan must be used for planning and development. Maloney's book is an important critical lens that examines not just Afghanistan, but the template used in many international missions. Ultimately, it is impossible to understand the chaos without being immersed; no part of the conflict can be viewed independently. In a nuanced yet readable format, Maloney finds balance between history and memoir, helping to untangle the web of allies and enemies that make up the political landscape of Afghanistan. 🍷