

## DESERT STORM WARNINGS

A Book Review by

GRANT T. HAMMOND

### Certain Victory: The U.S. Army in the Gulf War

by Robert H. Scales, Jr., et al.  
Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993.  
435 pp. \$115.00

### The Generals' War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf

by Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor  
Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995.  
551 pp. \$27.95  
[ISBN 0-316-32172-9]

These two books on the Persian Gulf War are radically different. One is the official Army history while the second is a journalistic post-mortem written in the same genre as *Commanders* by Bob Woodward. Although both promise *ground truth*, we are left with very different impressions of what happened and why. They reinforce the maxim that in war, truth is the first casualty. One ignores many questions and failures raised in a host of other works; the other is a more engaging account, the more informative as well as the more useful and important of the two books.

*Certain Victory* is an odd work. The effort to produce it began shortly after the Gulf War and at least one version, far more critical, was abandoned. General Scales and his team of officers put together a work that is basically operational in focus with far more tactical detail than strategic perspective. Massaged for one year by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, it was pasted together in distinct pieces for various purposes. The senior leader-

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ship of the Army got what it wanted, but less than it deserved. The book was not published by the U.S. Army Center of Military History, but under the auspices of the Office of the Chief of Staff, U.S. Army. In the first chapter and conclusions, the text wallows in effusive prose and shameless self-promotion of Army doctrine and prowess. Elsewhere, it combines aspects of a *Festschrift* in honor of Generals Vuono and Sullivan with vignettes by Bradley drivers, tank gunners, and infantrymen.

*Certain Victory* purports to describe how revised doctrine as practiced in the Gulf War and the success that training and reequipping after Vietnam brought about. We are treated to reviews of AirLand Battle, the expanded role of realistic training, the "big five" systems (namely, the Abrams, Bradley, Apache, Blackhawk, and Patriot). The Army was radically transformed in the wake of Vietnam. But it would never have undergone that change under the inspiration of books like this.

A host of questions are raised by this book. Some are mentioned, but others are not. Few are assessed in detail. Among those cited are communications problems with older model short-range radios and dependence on satellite communications, difficulties in resupply on the move, and a disinvestment in UAVs. Other issues—such as how we might have supplied the requisite water and POL if had not been in theater already, sustained a longer ground campaign, and dealt with a 28 percent friendly fire rate, or why VI Corps stopped its advance at night if time was critical and the inability to adapt rapidly to changing battlefield conditions—are not. The chapter describing the attack on the Iraqis is entitled "The Great Wheel." Both the name and the reality strongly question doctrinal commitment to agility and initiative. Phase lines and synchronization rule all along with lousy weather, an enormous appetite for fuel and ammunition, and poor communications.



Victors.

U.S. Air Force (Dean W. Wagner)

The general tone of *Certain Victory* is more like cheerleading than careful analysis. Sadly, demonstrative success by the destruction of weapons (a variation on the body count as a measure of merit) cannot camouflage the fact that we won a battle, not a war. Iraq was expelled and the government of Kuwait restored. But neither the Republican Guard nor Saddam's WMD capability was destroyed. Despite the changes showcased by the Gulf War in *Certain Victory*, one is struck by the verities of continuity. Time, terrain, and weather were greater obstacles than the Iraqis.

The complete destruction of the Republican Guard was identified by General Schwarzkopf as the "main operational objective." One gets the impression that if destruction of the Republican Guard is repeated often enough, the reader will ignore the reality that it was not destroyed. Despite Schwarzkopf's assurance to the media in the briefing at the end of the war that "the gate is closed" and the Republican Guard could not escape, that was not true and at least half of it did. VII Corps did not occupy Safwan, the site selected for cease fire negotiations, much to the embarrassment of all concerned. The somewhat disingenuous epigraph to *Certain Victory* is a quote from Sun Tzu's *Art of War*: "In war, then, let our great object be victory, not lengthy campaigns." We had a short campaign, but we did not get a usable victory—no better peace but rather a *status quo ante bellum*.

*The Generals' War* is written by the military correspondent for *The New York Times* and a retired Marine three-star general. It pulls few punches and draws sweeping conclusions worthy of further assessment. The authors tell us that jointness is largely a myth—that each service planned and fought its own war in its own way. While the services developed their own plans, a lack of careful monitoring, according to Gordon and Trainor, caused problems later in the war. During the planning process, we overestimated our enemy, likely casualties, needs, and effectiveness right to the end of the war. Perhaps this is a legacy of the Cold War—the inflation of threats, budgets, and capabilities is a hard habit of mind to break.

A good deal of the book is based on interviews and privileged, even classified information. The authors give vivid insights into the personalities of Powell, Schwarzkopf, Horner, Glosson, Waller, Franks, McCaffrey, Yeosock, and others, and also vignettes on debates, temper tantrums, disputes, and briefings that occurred during Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm. Powell seems more the politician and even pacifist than one might expect. They also document that as good as the air campaign was, it had many flaws. Discriminate warfare through airpower worked better in theory than in practice.

On the significance of the Battle of Khafji, a key element of the book, the authors stretch the evidence to make their point. They claim that the two-day series of border engagements at the end of January was the “defining moment in the Persian Gulf War.” They argue that this was both tactical and strategic and designed to cause American casualties in large numbers, that Schwarzkopf failed to grasp what it signified about Iraqi capabilities, and that in failing to revise his plans, Khafji set the stage for the escape of the Republican Guard one month later. This has appeal but to infer that an accurate assessment of the Iraqi army and its fighting skills could have been drawn at the time seems to rely more on hindsight than

logic. It certainly was not, as they entitle the chapter, “The Mother of All Battles.”

The threatened Marine amphibious attack on Kuwait is rightly characterized as “deception by default.” But the change in plans for an attack from the south—which required reconstituting a huge logistics base in a new position, planning of a new axis of advance, etc.—showed skill and ingenuity. The attack, once launched, proceeded faster and more effectively than anticipated. The success of the Marines was one of the reasons for the discontinuity and mistiming of the left hook. What failed in a basic sense was the very concept of synchronization so cherished by the Army. The coordination of the ground war and the difficulties encountered fall at the feet of Schwarzkopf who was dual hatted as CINC and the ground component commander—and who was positioned 300 miles to the rear of the initial FEBA.

The plan developed to trap and destroy the Republican Guard, the major military objective, was flawed from the outset. The distances, fuel and ammunition consumption rates, and such were known well in advance. The pace of the advance to various phase lines was carefully calculated. Gordon and Trainor go further. The Army plan to destroy the Republican Guard was designed to take seven to ten days but got less than five. Even then the pace could have been faster. VII Corps synchronized the advance to its slowest unit and stopped at night. Still worse, General Franks, the major ground force combat commander in contact, spoke directly with Schwarzkopf only once during the ground war. Though the hundred hour war was in many ways a public relations gambit (shorter than Israel's Six Day War, Schwarzkopf quipped), the general retreat of Iraqi forces began only 39 hours after the main attack. Phase line “Victory” was 27 miles from Basra and the main highway north, but it was to be the limit of advance. VII Corps turned east too quickly and then stopped too soon.

As Schwarzkopf presented his famous “Mother of All Briefings” assuring the press and the world that “the gate is closed,” it was apparent to field commanders that the bulk of the Republican Guard was being allowed to escape. Instead of peace, we gained a truce of indeterminate duration. Although General Waller, deputy CINC, told Schwarzkopf “You have got to be bullshitting me” when informed of the decision, no one seriously questioned, let alone challenged it. Deployments on the ground were unknown, the site selected for negotiations was not in coalition hands, and no serious discussion of war termination criteria had occurred. We just stopped and declared victory.

What Gordon and Trainor show is that many flag officers are hidebound, risk averse, and unable to give or accept constructive criticism. They command by virtue of rank and temperament. Schwarzkopf's tirades were so well known that most felt lucky to survive briefings in his presence unscathed, rather than saying what perhaps should have been said. Work-arounds were devised for personalities as well as problems and each deferred to those of higher rank without a full brief for opposing opinions. Everyone burnished his own record. In that sense, the book is perfectly titled for it shows much of the infighting, attitudes, tirades, and problems of a generals' war.

The book takes the services to task for not candidly assessing their respective performances and for publicly ignoring many problems which they encountered. All sought to take advantage of the war to showcase their prowess and get favorable publicity. They also ducked major problems in their self-assessments. Such criticisms is needed in order to avoid a “Gulf War Syndrome” of undeserved praise and success that could be every bit as destructive as the “Vietnam Syndrome” of defeat and demoralization.

Unfounded, at times unbounded, puffery and self-promotion bespeak a tendency that is a tragic flaw in much of the American military. That flaw is the general re-

luctance to accept criticism and, more importantly, the inability to make objective self-assessments. This is highlighted by a comment Schwarzkopf made to a meeting of the Marine high command after the war.

*Watch out what you say. Why do I say that? Because we have people interviewing everyone they can get their hands on. They are out writing their books. Just think of the reputation of the United States military, what it is today, compared to what it was six months ago. I think we ought to be very proud of what we did here, and don't allow those bastards to rob us of that.*

Such an attitude does a disservice to the Nation. So too does a presumption that patriots come only in uniforms.

Writing military history is not a stale academic enterprise, nor should it be a public relations ploy. Accounts of what happened—both how and why—depend on the context of the times, the perspectives taken, the evidence available, and the skill of the authors. No one work contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. But the effort to distill as much as possible from an examination of the past is vitally important to our present understanding and future capabilities. As General Sir William Butler reminded us, “The nation that will insist on drawing a broad line of demarcation between the fighting man and the thinking man is liable to find its fighting done by fools and its thinking done by cowards.” We can ill afford either. **JFQ**

INTERNET users who want to respond to this review should forward their comments to:  
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## SQUARING THE PENTAGON

A Book Review by  
WILLIAM H. GREGORY

### Reinventing the Pentagon: How the New Public Management Can Bring Institutional Renewal

by Fred Thompson and L.R. Jones  
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers,  
1994.

298 pp. \$29.95  
[ISBN 1-55542-710-3]

The title *Reinventing the Pentagon* seizes on a current all-purpose buzz word epitomized by Vice President Gore's report on reengineering the Federal bureaucracy and a movement sweeping local and state government to improve efficiency. Yet the authors, both academics, do not attempt to reinvent the Pentagon in the synoptic sense, starting with force structure or roles and missions. Rather their summons to restructure, not simply deregulate, focuses on narrower, specific areas: the reinvention of defense budgeting, the relationship between DOD and Congress, the acquisition process, and defense accounting. Nonetheless, their approach is valuable. They raise prickly issues about the effectiveness of DOD administration. Is the defense establishment overstuffed now that the Cold War is over? They think that it is—and was long before the demise of the Soviet Union.

A proxy for the book's thesis comes in its story of Germany and France after World War I. Under of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany was forced to cut military spending, reduce its officer corps to one-fifteenth of its pre-war size, and scrap its weapons and equipment. Although France outspent Germany on defense in the next two decades, Germany was more selective in its

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military leadership, more versatile, imaginative, and rigorous in training, and more dependent on research, development, and new weapons because it lacked old ones. The bloated French military structure collapsed in mere months in 1940 under the onslaught of a leaner and better trained German force.

Is there a parallel between France and Germany after World War I and the United States at the end of the Cold War? The authors say there is and have a point. Acquisition, a perennial source of horror stories, is dissected once more in their answer.

The systems command of every service is huge. And, according to Thompson and Jones, their personnel are chronically underemployed. Micromanaged by Congress, organizational bloat leads them to more controls and paperwork for industry—at greater cost. Myriad factions in these organizations are able to participate at each point in the government where a project can be vetoed. To keep everyone on board a given project, all potential participants are given a piece of the action. Requirements proliferate, driven by diverse doctrines and interests. The net result is the spinning out of extravagant operational requirements, gold-plated designs, and unnecessary elaboration of subsystems by the functions responsible for them.

Acquisition is only one splinter in a larger plank. Going back to the origin of the problem, the authors charge that DOD has never clarified administrative boundaries and has not resolved the issue of centralization versus decentralization. Instead, the Pentagon alternated between delegating authority to the military departments and centralizing it in the hands of the Secretary of Defense.

Unlike the success of the Strategic Air Command which had a sharply defined mission and resources, DOD got off on the wrong foot. Unification initially was ill-defined and management policy swung back and forth like a pendulum. Then Robert S. McNamara super-centralized the military. While

the authors credit him with considerable accomplishment, as in tough decisions on force structure, his five-year planning, programming, and budgeting system (PPBS) degenerated into the triumph of process over purpose. The DOD structure bloated and lost its way.

Centralizing authority in McNamara's hands left commanders without authority to carry out their missions. Inevitable administrative failures spawned more detailed procedures to avoid their recurrence. The latter applied especially to weapons acquisition. More regulations led to extended development cycles. As the authors argue, over-staffing and make-work drove costs inexorably higher for equipment that often faced obsolescence when it was fielded. That Congress, which had deferred to the executive branch on defense policy from 1930 to 1960, should go deeper and deeper into micromanagement was understandable as mutual trust vanished in an ever thickening gumbo. Legislation proliferated, eventually measured by the foot rather than the page and further constraining discretion and initiative. Management grew layer upon layer and the system clogged up.

Congress and budgets bulk large in *Reinventing the Pentagon*. Granting that restructuring the budgeting process collides with the trend in Congress over the last two decades toward more detailed line-item control over defense spending, the authors urge that Capitol Hill opt for more permissive budgeting. The Pentagon should emulate private-sector capital budgeting.

This would upset settled congressional practices such as dabbling in cash-flow scheduling by emphasizing outlays rather than broad program approval through new obligational authority. Theoretically this idea has strong points, because it makes Congress a board of directors instead of line managers. Yet outlays are the basis for calculating the deficit, now accepted as a fact of life; and they reflect checks for local contractors. Congress would not deemphasize outlays casually.

A second, more radical step would throw out the President's budget, which the authors say Congress now treats as little more than a policy statement. Instead, projects should be approved once and reconsidered only as events dictate. Obligational authority should be granted throughout the life of a project, a giant step toward funding and industrial stability but also a strong dose for a Congress grown accustomed to annual detailed approvals.

A third equally drastic change would adopt mission budgeting. "Congressional budgeting should focus on significant changes in operations, activities, and equipment," the authors contend. "It makes no sense for Congress to look at every purchase contemplated by the entire Federal Government every year." In defense mission budgeting, combatant commands and some defense agencies might operate under permanent authority. Force structure or combat supplies would need congressional authority, as would major hardware investments. Obligational authority would be permissive, not mandatory, implicitly favoring management decentralization and greater discretion at the operating level.

Radical as these ideas sound, they are not new. "Congressional budgeting has traditionally been permissive, continuous, and selective rather than comprehensive and repetitive," the authors say. "In essence, these changes would restore the congressional budget process that existed prior to the Budget Act in 1921, which established a comprehensive annual executive budget for the entire Federal Government, created what has become the Office of Management and Budget, and at the same time reduced congressional power."

There are excellent insights as well as historical perspectives in *Reinventing the Pentagon*, particularly in acquisition and the plethora of financial management systems the DOD controller is currently attempting to consolidate and improve. The book's greatest values are twofold. One is the comprehensive survey of the literature on defense manage-

ment and its failings reaching back to World War I. There is a wonderful Navy memo complaining about congressional overprescription of detail which sounds contemporary but is dated 1915. For anyone seeking solutions to what the authors identify as longstanding problems, past analyses and proposed solutions are there. It also raises in forthright terms the unpleasant realities that the military must face in the stand-down from a virtual wartime structure to a much less pervasive threat environment. The questions are simple but admittedly difficult to deal with.

Private companies have been cutting their work forces and cleaning up outdated systems. Their employees have suffered and cynicism has eclipsed the company man. Thompson and Jones argue that the government must face the same painful process, and in today's climate excuses about the difficulty of the job will not be accepted. The November 1994 election, which took place after this book was published, reflected the distress over the inability of government to downsize.

McNamara brought the kind of top-down strategy found in policy books to the Pentagon, the quest for an Olympian view, a master plan, one final convincing solution. His elegant ideas had to march into the real world and be carried out by real people. Olympian fiats are chronically misunderstood or overtly opposed by those who must do the work. As the authors of *Reinventing the Pentagon* point out, fiat did not work for McNamara any more than legislative edicts were able to fix acquisition. Thus the best insight of *Reinventing the Pentagon* is into overcentralization and overcontrol in removing discretion from, and not demanding good judgment by, the working level. The book cites Gore's report with approval which has a message. Enfranchise workers who can deal with a solution one brick at a time. If the top-down approach has failed, try the bottom-up.

Comprehensive research can be a drawback when it diffuses one's experience to consensus by citation. Frederick Thompson teaches public management in the Atkinson Graduate School of Management at Willamette University and L.R. Jones teaches financial management at the Naval Postgraduate School. They draw some tales from the trenches although they have moved beyond academe and authorities. One is their story of a small firm building low-technology trailers for the Army. Smallness notwithstanding, the company had separate production lines for its military and commercial business because it was the easiest way to deal with Federal accounting standards and reporting. Commercial manufacturing time, drawing down bare-bones just-in-time inventory, was less than 36 hours with immediate delivery. Military inventories were 25 times higher at one point, which pushed up overhead costs. Army inspection at each stage of manufacture and insistence on delivery in batches lengthened cycle time and added to overhead. Direct labor costs were about the same for military and commercial work, but military overhead costs were double. The story had a happy ending. With the help of an Army contracting officer, the firm was designated an exemplary facility, exempt from direct oversight under DOD policy. The company was able to adapt many of its commercial practices to military work, a concrete case of the kind of crossfeed that Secretary of Defense William J. Perry is trying to introduce to acquisition on a grander scale.

Not that the authors expect a totally happy ending to restructuring the Pentagon. Progress in acquisition? They quote a senior Navy official: "Everybody is still falling over everybody else. I just don't see any real changes." Even more abstruse is the relationship between Congress and DOD. In a hopeful sign, Congress has been more receptive to the Gore report, at least before the 1994 election, than it was to those of either the Grace or the Packard Commissions. In the coming era of retrenchment, furthermore, Congress has political self-preserva-

tion as a reason to distance itself from responsibility for unpleasant Pentagon force structure and equipment decisions.

To counter those who say the gulf between Congress and the executive branch is too deep to span, Thompson and Jones cite the fifty-year period of military micromanagement by the British Parliament in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It ended when a

militarily competent monarch relaxed his suspicion of the House of Commons and renewed permissiveness in lawmaking. While the authors reached back into history for a parallel, they end on an optimistic note: what happened before can happen again. Difficult as the challenge may be, this reader hopes that history does repeat itself. **JFQ**

## 1995 CJCS ESSAY COMPETITION

The 14<sup>th</sup> Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) Strategy Essay Competition was conducted on May 24–25, 1995 at the National Defense University. This competition challenges students from both intermediate and senior colleges to write on an aspect of international security, defense policy, or military affairs, with special emphasis on joint matters.

### WINNING ESSAY

Commander Frank C. Borik, USN (Air War College)  
"Sub Tzu and the Art of Submarine Warfare"

### DISTINGUISHED ESSAYS

Commander Lawrence G. Downs, Jr., USN (Air War College)  
"Digital Data Warfare: Using Malicious Computer Codes as a Weapon"

Hon K. Lee, Department of State (National War College)  
"China in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: America's Greatest Strategic Challenge"

James F. Lindner, Naval Criminal Investigative Service (Naval War College)  
"Pax Americana Part II: Theoretical and Practical Considerations for a Future American Grand Strategy"

Timothy M. Savage, Department of State (Industrial College of the Armed Forces)  
"One Hand Clapping: Systemic Change and U.S. Policy Toward Europe After the Cold War"

Lieutenant Colonel Jon Moilanen, USA (Army War College)  
"Engagement and Disarmament: A U.S. National Security Strategy for Biological Weapons of Mass Destruction"

Lieutenant Colonel James C. Pearson, USAF (Air War College)  
"Mid-Course Corrections for the National Security Adviser"

Lieutenant Colonel Jeannette K. Edmunds, USA (Army War College)  
"Organizing Logistics for Peace and War: The Essentiality of a Trained Joint Logistics Support Command Headquarters"

Lieutenant Colonel Joseph H. Daves, USA (Army War College)  
"American Global Logistics and Peace Operations"

Lieutenant Colonel James W. Dowis, USAF (Air War College)  
"Maintaining U.S. Nuclear Infrastructure in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Different Challenge"

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