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Brown Waters of Africa: Portuguese Riverine Warfare, 1961–1974

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lose the body of tradition and law that defines our homeland.

The editors cover an ambitious amount of ground for such a slim volume, and the space available does not permit a variety of perspectives on each topic. An examination into the U.S. government's reactions to racial and political unrest at home after the McCarthy era, for instance, would have been welcome. However, the book's essays seem selected to provoke the reader to explore their subjects more deeply, and the contributions are uniformly well supported. The citations provide ample direction for readers wishing to explore on their own the issues presented.

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Cann, John P. *Brown Waters of Africa: Portuguese Riverine Warfare, 1961–1974*. St. Petersburg, Fla.: Hailer, 2007. 248pp. \$29.99

Counterinsurgency warfare is what used to be called “colonial warfare.” Although the association might make some people uncomfortable—Americans perhaps more than most, given their aversion to colonialism—much of the strategic intent and many of the tactics, techniques, and procedures of modern counterinsurgency derive directly from the colonial wars and police actions of the past.

In some respects riverine warfare suffers from the taint of colonialism more than do other aspects of counterinsurgency, a prejudice that is currently reinforced by the apparent trend for insurgents who worry the West to center their operations in urban rather

than rural environments and to seek sanctuary in the anonymity of cities rather than remote countrysides. In many parts of the world, however, rivers remain the principal transport routes, and their control remains of fundamental importance to the success or failure of insurgent movements.

The last great colonial empire in Africa was Portuguese, and a history of the riverine campaigns fought in its defense between 1961 and 1974 is long overdue. John P. Cann, a retired Marine Corps University professor with a doctorate in African counterinsurgency from King's College London, shows that the Portuguese took what they could from British and, particularly, French experiences and adapted it to suit their particular circumstances and the often limited resources at their disposal.

After placing the total effort in the strategic context of the Cold War, the historical context of twentieth-century Portuguese history, and the contemporaneous political context of the regime of António de Oliveira Salazar, Cann demonstrates how the Portuguese navy and naval infantry, the *fuzileiros*, fought an effective campaign in three diverse theaters: on the rivers of Angola; on the Rovuma River and Lake Niassa in Mozambique; and among the estuaries, deltas, and swamp forests of the West African enclave of Bissau.

Cann recounts with balance and clarity the lessons the Portuguese drew from the experience. Insurgency is political war where the center of gravity is the population. Consequently, the naval role differs very little from that of the army. The essence is to develop and maintain contact with the civilian population so close and regular that it often amounts to “armed social work.”

Presence—achieved by living, and conducting river and foot patrols, among local people to gain their trust and to build sound knowledge about the enemy—is equally important, as is, at the same time, keeping the insurgents off balance through the use of deception and irregular patrol patterns, a combination the Portuguese were able to achieve because units were deployed in two-year cycles.

The Portuguese also learned the importance of joint effort. Wherever the navy and army disagreed and failed to operate together, which happened in Bissau particularly, results were affected. Also, that no campaign could be isolated from the wider political context was a lesson that became painfully apparent following a militarily successful but politically damaging raid on Conakry, the capital of Guinea, to free hostages and destroy insurgent sanctuaries.

In short, all practitioners and students of riverine warfare will be grateful that John P. Cann has written such an excellent account.

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Smith, Perry M., and Daniel M. Gerstein. *Assignment Pentagon: How to Excel in a Bureaucracy*. 4th ed. Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2007. 273pp. \$22.95

For this, the fourth edition of his well received book, Major General Perry M. Smith, U.S. Air Force (Ret.), has added a coauthor, Colonel Daniel M. Gerstein, U.S. Army (Ret.). Colonel Gerstein served for twenty-six years in combat, peace, and humanitarian operations.

He also served in the Pentagon for almost ten years in senior advisory and leadership roles.

This edition has been expanded into sixteen chapters, each adding considerable value to the publication. One of the more interesting and vital chapters for properly grasping the workings of “the building” is devoted to “understanding the process.” This chapter succinctly describes the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS), the Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS), and the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC). These entities are extremely complex by their very natures, but it is vital to understand how they all fit together for our nation’s defense. The authors do a superb job of simplifying these systems, giving additional references for in-depth understanding.

Smith and Gerstein also briefly address military ethics, touching upon military interaction with Congress and ethics within the executive branch. Problems are identified and solutions are suggested, but it is beyond the scope and intention of this book to address these issues other than superficially. The reader should already be educated regarding ethics and ethical behavior; this chapter serves simply to remind us that doing the “right thing” continues to be difficult at times.

As with the earlier editions, the present one addresses many day-to-day business elements related to serving at the Pentagon. The book allows the reader, whether a newly assigned military member or civilian, to obtain a preliminary understanding of the complex nature of this intense mixture of military and civilian bureaucracies.