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## Desert Storm at Sea: What the Navy Really Did

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Clausewitzian view of the role of war as an extension of politics. This fact alone, coupled with the continued prominence of Holbrooke in the U.S. diplomatic scene, both today and likely in the future, makes this a must-read book for military professionals.

PATRICK C. SWEENEY  
Colonel, U.S. Army



Pokrant, Marvin. *Desert Storm at Sea: What the Navy Really Did*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999. 303pp. \$60

This is the second of a set of two works that provides a concise, detailed history of the actions of U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command (USNavCent) during operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. (The first volume, *Desert Shield at Sea: What the Navy Really Did*, also published in 1999, contains three parts: “Erecting the Shield, 2 August–17 September 1990”; “Preparations for Defensive War, 18 September–8 November”; and “Preparations for Offensive, 9 November–16 January.”)

*Desert Storm at Sea* contains two parts. The first, “Storm at Sea,” begins on the evening of 16 January 1991 and concludes with a chapter on postwar operations into 1999. The second part contains analytical observations on key aspects of U.S. naval force activities during both operations, as well as a conclusion that takes up the question, “What Could the Navy Do to Be More Joint?” Thus, although this review concerns specifically *Desert Storm at Sea*, it is most useful to think of the two volumes as a single work, addressing four distinct historical phases, with an analysis thereafter.

Marvin Pokrant’s first purpose is to provide an objective and comprehensive history of USNavCent actions during DESERT STORM from the operational-level perspective (commander and staff), but with necessary recourse to the tactical level. This is accomplished in twelve chapters that address strike; air control; sea control; amphibious warfare; mine countermeasures, including planning and preparation for the ultimately unexecuted amphibious assault (DESERT SABER); naval actions during the ground war; prisoners of war; and postwar activity. The author’s second purpose is to stir debate by offering reasoned opinions on command and control, amphibious, mine countermeasures, strike, air defense, maritime intercept, the joint force air component commander (JFACC), and “jointness” aspects of U.S. naval force participation in both operations. Both purposes have been achieved with significant success, in this reviewer’s opinion, and they contribute to Pokrant’s overarching objectives: to promote a better understanding of U.S. naval contributions in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, and to suggest how such contributions might be increased in future operations.

With these volumes Pokrant has made a superior contribution to the professional literature of the Gulf War. As a military-operations research analyst, he was the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) field representative on the flagship of USNavCent from August 1990 to April 1991. In that capacity he had direct access to internal briefings, meetings, memoranda, key personnel, official messages, correspondence, and logs, as well as the CNA library. His personal notes of each day’s activities, buttressed by many documents and interviews, serve as the core of both books. After DESERT STORM,

Pokrant coordinated the CNA reconstruction of both operations with the Seventh Fleet staff. From 1992 to 1994 he served as CNA's director of the Fleet Tactics and Capabilities Program, wherein he managed a variety of analyses concerning issues raised during the conflict. He is now retired.

*Desert Storm at Sea* is written in an easily understandable narrative style. Pokrant minimizes the use of acronyms, providing at the beginning of the book a list of the abbreviations he does use. Maps, drawings, diagrams, tables, and photographs measurably assist the reader, particularly with regard to organizational details and positioning of forces. The index is robust and also helpful. Of interest, one of the author's original goals was to "cite a source for every statement that was not summary or clearly the author's opinion." This was determined ultimately to be impractical for publication purposes. Thus the end of each chapter contains a short summary of sources and limited endnotes. The bibliography is extensive and includes books, multisource reports, articles, CNA reconstruction reports and other publications, and interviews. A manuscript copy of the book with complete sources is at the Center for Naval Analyses.

The Army/Air Force-centric nature of both operations has ensured that the vast majority of books and articles concern the contributions of these two services, as well as of the Marine Corps units ashore, to the overall effort. In that context, *Desert Storm at Sea* and its companion volume are very welcome additions to the literature. They provide a comprehensive, detailed Gulf War history of U.S. naval activities where none before existed. Further, and in contrast to topically related writings that rely heavily on secondary and tertiary sources, the

foundation for this history is the primary source— Pokrant himself, aboard the NavCent flagship. These factors bestow a solid foundation of authority and accuracy upon his work.

Two limitations are worth mentioning. First, as the author points out, certain "interesting and important activities, such as intelligence," could not be discussed because of security. Second, in U.S. Navy culture, logistics and sustainment "ain't sexy." This is again borne out by the limited treatment (a few pages in the first volume) afforded these critical operational functions; that is unfortunate, given the truly remarkable magic woven by the naval and Military Sealift Command elements of the combat logistics force that sustained U.S. and coalition naval forces.

In the foreword to *Desert Storm at Sea*, Admiral Stanley Arthur, Commander USNavCent from 1 December 1990 through the end of the Gulf War, credits Pokrant and CNA with "seizing the relevant data and wringing the truth from it." This reviewer agrees.

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Mott, William H., IV. *Military Assistance: An Operational Perspective*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999. 360pp. \$65

William Mott draws some useful conclusions from eight disparate cases of military assistance: French support for the American colonies (from 1776); British support for the anti-French coalition (from 1793); British support to the Iberian campaign (from 1808); U.S. support for wartime China (from 1941); U.S. support for postwar China (from 1945); U.S. support for the French in Indochina