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# By Sea, Air, and Land: An Illustrated History of the U.S Navy and the War in Southeast Asia

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## 146 Naval War College Review

Normandy would be a very tempting target for an atomic bomb.

However, Bradley's statement was overtaken by too many trends of the Cold War. First, no major Cold War amphibious operation was undertaken against an opponent armed with weapons of mass destruction, and second, amphibious planners strove to develop systems and tactics to reduce vulnerability to such weapons. The search for an "over the horizon" capability began even before Inchon. Operation theory and execution experienced incremental but continuous changes, so that the amphibious operation of 1991 had small resemblance to those of 1945. On the other hand, since the governing joint doctrinal publication on amphibious operations (Joint Publication 3-02) is mostly based on experiences of World War II, the impression persists that little is new since then.

There are some minor errors which detract from the overall value of the book. For instance, between 1945 and 1950 the World War II amphibious fleet was not gutted by sales of surplus ships to "Third World allies"—Third World allies did not exist at that time. Also, the LCVP is not a "Peter" but a "Papa" boat; the *Paul Revere*-class LPAs were converted *Mariner*-class breakbulk ships, not converted container ships; a helicopter is described as having a design speed of "one hundred knots per hour"; and there were not two U.S. divisions in the Korean battle line by the end of June 1950—Task Force Smith, an understrength 24th Infantry Division battalion with some artillery, did not enter combat until 5 July 1950. Further, it is stated that Major General Ned

Almond and the Army planners of "Chromite" (the Inchon invasion) casually dismissed the Marines' protests for the bridge equipment they would need to cross the Han to take Seoul; since the Marines did cross the Han and take Seoul, the reader is left wondering how they did it. Also, one reads that Chief of Naval Operations Forrest Sherman "shifted his support against the [Inchon] operation to the argument in favor of MacArthur's bold stroke." Better editing would have Sherman "shifting his opposition to support of" Chromite.

WALTER J. JOHANSON  
Yonkers, New York

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Marolda, Edward, J. *By Sea, Air, and Land: An Illustrated History of the U.S. Navy and the War in Southeast Asia.* Washington, D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1994. 416pp. \$43

In recent years, the Naval Historical Center has made a conscientious effort to produce historical volumes with greater popular appeal than the specialized monographs and document collections that have always been its forte. *By Sea, Air, and Land* is the epitome of this approach and, by all standards of evaluation, a great success. Combining a richly illustrated, "keep on top of the coffee table" look with solid, well written history, this book is a proud and worthy tribute to the Navy veterans of the Vietnam conflict.

Armed with over five hundred black-and-white and color photographs and useful maps and charts, this work follows the Navy involvement in

Southeast Asia both chronologically and by activity. In fact, every naval community involved is discussed or depicted—from Seabees to chaplains, from harbor pilots to pig breeders (civic action personnel). The photographs selected are both historically illustrative and representative, and as a collection they are of prize-winning quality. Likewise, the marriage between word and image is a fruitful one.

Unlike other attempts to explain the naval operations in Vietnam, the author's approach is not piecemeal. The carrier air bombing campaign, the surface gun line, the amphibious, logistics and sealift efforts, and the river war are all placed in context as a cohesive and mutually supporting whole. Quite frankly, the book is more understandable than the actual Vietnam strategy itself, and it benefits from the fact that Marolda has previously written more scholarly works on the subject. No footnotes here, but there is an excellent selected bibliography for the reader who is interested in acquiring more depth in the subject.

While much of the history presented is as upbeat as any interpretation of a lost war could possibly be, controversy is not altogether avoided. For example, the author has included mention of Vice Admiral James Stockdale's interpretation of the incident that prompted the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, i.e., that the attack did not really happen. Marolda, basing his views on ship's logs and tracking data, has long held that the reported North Vietnamese attack probably did occur.

Those of us who have heard the running Stockdale-Marolda debate

(usually conducted by proxy) at historical conferences have an appreciation for the author's intellectual honesty, shown by his inclusion of the alternative interpretation. I hope that does not mean future conferences will be boring! As a side note, the Stockdale version, based on his pilot's-eye view, has frequently been backed by the former editor of the *Naval War College Review*, Bob Laske, who was an intelligence officer near the scene.

However that may be, the book's best attribute is that it is not geared to the professional historian; it is more "user friendly" than that. As the "cruise book" they never got, *By Sea, Air, and Land* would appeal to every Navy Vietnam veteran, and it is also an excellent introduction to recent naval history for their children and grandchildren. The pictures will retain anyone's interest, and the text is a great source for student term papers.

If you served as a sailor in Southeast Asia or know someone who did, *By Sea, Air, and Land* is definitely the book you want.

SAM J. TANGREDI  
Commander, U.S. Navy

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Hemingway, Al. *Our War Was Different: Marine Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1994. 189pp. \$25

One could dismiss this book as a series of unrelated vignettes about the Marine Corps Combined Action Program in Vietnam, but that would be a mistake. It is a unique book: a bit of a collage, but with structure, it provides first-hand