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Where Fate Calls: The HMAS Voyager Tragedy

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the JFACC should control all aircraft in a theater regardless of their mission or purpose. Some would see the evolution of Army aviation since the end of World War II, particularly its reliance on helicopters, as a response to inadequate air support from the Army Air Force and the United States Air Force, whose warfighting priorities were, and often continue to be, different from the ground commander's.

The imperfections of *Joint Air Operations* reflect the complexities and contradictions of its subject. This book will not settle the question of the need for centralized control of all air operations, but it is an outstanding collection of cases and methodologies for studying the subject. *Joint Air Operations* should be a core textbook at every war college and required reading for all military officers and defense civilians. The resulting, and often heated, discussions will be instructive to all participants.

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Frame, Tom. *Where Fate Calls: The HMAS Voyager Tragedy*. Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992. 447pp. \$A 14.95

During naval exercises off the coast of New South Wales on the night of 10 February 1964, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne* sliced in two the destroyer HMAS *Voyager*. Moments before the collision, *Voyager*

had inexplicably cut across the bows of the carrier in the process of taking up planeguard station. Within minutes, *Voyager* had sunk, taking with it eighty-two crew members and all present on the bridge, including the captain. In view of the magnitude of the disaster and a series of accidents that had recently occurred in the RAN, the Australian government broke with all legal precedent and instituted a Royal Commission to investigate the tragedy. So controversial was the finding of the First Royal Commission in 1964 that a second had to be conducted in 1967.

It would be a mistake to conclude that Tom Frame is concerned only with this terrible naval tragedy and judicial morass. He has presented not only an excellent chronicle of the events but, more importantly, a social history of the RAN, its practices, and its growing isolation from Australian society. Moreover, the author has written an exhaustive analysis and interpretation of what happened the night of the collision.

This is fine history of a rather difficult time in the proud history of the RAN. While the work does suffer from the charge that it is probably a better Ph.D. dissertation than book (it is heavy reading at times), it is still a superb analysis and narrative. The absence of an index is, however, incomprehensible for a work of this magnitude. As the *Voyager* tragedy continues to this day to loom large in the collective minds and spirit of the RAN and Australia (personal legal claims against the government are still being filed), anyone wishing to

136 Naval War College Review

understand the RAN would be well advised to read this work carefully.

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Yerxa, Donald A. *Admirals and Empire: The United States Navy and the Caribbean, 1898–1945*. Columbia: Univ. of South Carolina Press, 1991. 202pp. \$34.95

A century ago, Alfred T. Mahan repeatedly reminded Americans that the Caribbean was a vital area for the United States. He envisioned it as an "American Lake." While not rejecting Mahan's view overtly, Donald Yerxa uses another maritime concept as the basis for his investigation. Interpreting American interests in the region as imperial ones, he focuses on two of them: protection of the area from external threats, and the removal of threats within the area to imperial stability.

Yerxa has dug deeply into archival sources to describe fifty years of U.S. naval activity that ranges from gunboat diplomacy and support of armed intervention to goodwill visits and wartime operations against German threats in the region during 1917–1918 and 1941–1945. His conceptual structure provides a strong focus and an explicit argument around which he skillfully organizes his narrative. In doing this, he has written a valuable narrative that will be useful for all who work in the history of American naval strategy. Nevertheless, Yerxa does not answer every question regarding the U.S. Navy's activities in the region. Because of the structure of

his thesis, the author was forced to omit a range of naval activities in the Caribbean that do not fall into his dual categories. Notwithstanding, and although the volume makes no pretense of being definitive, it is the closest yet to such a work. With that in mind, and with no other sources to which one can readily turn, it would have been convenient to have had a list of the various commanders of the naval forces in that region along with their dates of command, as well as lists or graphs showing the forces' changing strengths and character. A deeper understanding of the administrative structures of the naval commands is needed.

Readers of the *Naval War College Review* will readily recognize one of the chapters of this book, which appeared earlier as an article in these pages (Autumn 1986, pp. 60–72).

This is an important book. Although not a full history of the U.S. Navy's activities in the Caribbean, it is a strong work in its focus at the level of broad grand strategy and foreign policy.

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Grover, David H. *American Merchant Ships on the Yangtze, 1920–1941*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1992. 234pp. \$47.95

This book focuses on American mariners in China between the two world wars. It illuminates the lives of individual crew members, the organizations of which they were a part, and the turbulent environment in which they