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Dispatches

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along the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). These were not high-tech solutions but rather a series of barriers along the southern part of the zone, including observation guard posts, a reinforced chain-link barrier fence, a raked sand area with electronic sensor belt, a defoliated field of fire, minefields, and platoon defensive positions backed up by quick-reaction forces. Gradually, problems of troop alertness and morale were addressed to make these improvements effective, in spite of budget restrictions imposed by the allocation of most resources to Vietnam.

Many incidents resulting in casualties along the DMZ are discussed. Incidents treated in depth include the ill-fated raid by forces of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on the presidential Blue House in early 1968, and the similarly ill-fated attempted sea invasion of Ulchin-Samchok in the south in late 1968. The Blue House raid nearly succeeded; the infiltrators came within eight hundred meters of the presidential residence before they were detected. Only the willingness of the South Korean military to believe the report of some woodcutters who met the commandos en route produced the increased security measures that culminated in the discovery and eradication of the would-be assassins. Within six months after this incident, President Park established the Homeland Defense Reserve Force (HDRF), which had two million volunteers. Bolger calls this development the "single most

crucial step in the Second Korean Conflict." On 30 October 1968 the HDRF was decisive in aborting the mission of 120 North Korean guerrillas who landed on the east coast of South Korea between the villages of Samchok and Ulchin. Once reported, the infiltrators had no chance to hide from the thousands of HDRF personnel. One hundred and ten North Koreans were killed and captured.

Major Bolger served as a battalion operations officer in the Republic of Korea. He earned a history doctorate at the University of Chicago, taught Soviet history at West Point, and has written three earlier books. In this work, he presents data and offers analysis in monographic form that help us understand the ongoing nature of the tension and clashes on the Korean peninsula. He has documented measures developed to counteract insurgency, measures which succeeded despite severe budget limitations.

Korea was the first great test of the Cold War, and though that war may have ended, it may yet be Korea where the final battle is fought. Bolger's book helps us to understand the need for vigilance in the Korean case, what to look for, and how to respond.

GRANT F. RHODE
Brookline, Massachusetts

Herr, Michael. *Dispatches*. New York: Vintage, 1991. 260pp. \$10

This reprint from 1975 is a success as a sensationalist work, as was the film

Apocalypse Now, which Michael Herr coauthored. The vivid, disjointed, almost strident prose that is used in this personal journal attempts to capture the same emotional horror of the Vietnam War as did Hollywood using actors and special effects. The reader is simultaneously revolted, outraged, insulted, and sympathetic with those who experienced Vietnam. If one has not been exposed to this side of the Vietnam War, *Dispatches* will serve as an excellent wake-up call.

Michael Herr was twenty-eight years old, a correspondent for *Esquire*, and in a theater of war for the first time. His credentials were simply that he was there. Like other members of the press he moved from unit to unit, contact to contact, from the Demilitarized Zone to the Gulf of Thailand, always looking for the story that would set him on the front page. He quotes from all with whom he came in contact, especially those he is so fond of calling grunts. He went to some tough places and talked to the veterans and survivors of some hard-fought battles. But when it was all over Herr retired to the rear, and over alcohol and drugs (about which he writes freely) he rehashed the experiences with other correspondents, of whom his favorites were Sean Flynn, son of Errol Flynn, and Dana Stone. Perhaps it is for this reason that this work lacks continuity. There will be those who will recognize the work for what it is: random, like its comments, which are largely negative quotes from tired and disgruntled

people who had no idea that their words would wind up in print.

Herr has provided a sound commentary about the enlisted men who served in combat during 1967-68: their reactions to the issues of drugs, prejudice, death, as well as the interaction between themselves and an itinerant reporter who was seeking the story that would propel him to fame. (Indeed, Herr's articles made a splash when published in *Esquire* and other magazines.)

However, Herr tends to critique many aspects of the war too harshly: all Marines were grunts, all service members used drugs, the commands were incompetent and uncaring, and there were very few people (aside from the correspondents) who were worth a damn.

Antiwar activists who read Herr's stuff loved the defeatism and the constant references to the ease of purchasing drugs and their availability to the troops. Certainly the language and the references made about politicians are believable, but the author commits a miscarriage of interpretation when he implies that one doper in one unit means that the entire unit used drugs, and that one Black Panther in one unit invalidates the lifelong bond built between service members of all races in every unit that fought in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War will live on in history as one of the most divisive and costly of wars, and because of its painful legacy we should make every effort to study it to avoid similar mistakes. After reading this book, it was obvious to this reviewer that lessons have been

learned, as was evident during Desert Storm.

However, its credibility will be best judged by those who served in Vietnam.

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Dunham, George Ross and Quinlan, David A. *U.S. Marines in Vietnam: The Bitter End, 1973-1975*. Washington: Marine Corps History and Museum Division, 1991. 315pp. \$25 (Available from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Govt. Print. Off., Washington, D.C. 20402)

This is the seventh publication in the series by the Marine Corps History and Museums Division about the U.S. Marines in the Vietnam War. It is a well written and well illustrated work, but a sad story.

When the governments of South Vietnam and Cambodia collapsed in the wake of the communist offensive of 1974 and 1975, U.S. Marine amphibious forces from Okinawa—in particular, the 9th Marine Amphibious Brigade—evacuated thousands of allied and private citizens (including Americans) from the two devastated capitals of Phnom Penh and Saigon. The Marines provided for the well-being of the refugees at Subic Bay and on Guam; at the resettlement center at Camp Pendleton, California the Marines helped them to begin their new lives in the United States.

When the last evacuation helicopter

ship *Okinawa* on 30 April 1975, the Marine Corps' decade-long involvement appeared to have ended. However, a bizarre episode the following month found the Marines with fourteen men killed in action during the recovery of the U.S. container ship *Mayaguez*, that had been captured by Cambodian communists.

It is stated in the preface that "the South Vietnamese armed forces in the spring of 1975 were rendered useless as a fighting force by fear. No level of training or skill, no program of Vietnamization, no amount of money could have reversed the rampant spread of fear that engulfed all of South Vietnam in March and April of 1975. Incredible acts of courage temporarily checked the nation's slide into oblivion at places like Xuan Loc and Bien Hoa, but fear ruled the day. Its only antidote, courageous leadership at the highest levels, rapidly disappeared as the North Vietnamese gained momentum. As one senior leader after another opted to use his helicopter to evacuate rather than to direct and control the defensive battle, strategic retreats turned into routs and armies turned into mobs of armed deserters. Amidst all this chaos, the U.S. Marine Corps aided its country in the final chapter of the Vietnam War, the evacuation of American citizens, third-country nationals and as many South Vietnamese as conditions permitted."

The authors add in their epilogue, "Would a strategy of pacification as Marine commanders advocated early on, rather than a strategy of attrition