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Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle

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loss of ships and lives. However, his statements that “King would not fight” and that U.S. defenses were caught off guard and asleep are misleading. This reviewer is not convinced of the case against Admiral King.

Gannon’s account of the friction between operations and intelligence has a current counterpart in Operation Desert Storm. Vice Admiral Andrew’s World War II Eastern Sea Frontier Command resembles the recent coalition efforts to interrupt the merchant trade with Iraq. Setting priorities among missions and functions is a continuing requirement. However, Admiral King’s priorities and choices have not been fully developed in this work. As Gannon suggests, additional effort is required to further explore some of the conflicting details of this period. Does an adequate paper trail still exist?

Operation Drumbeat is recommended reading. Whether we agree or not with the author’s assertions, it is important to keep an open mind to the issues he has raised.

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Frank, Richard B. *Guadalcanal: The Definitive Account of the Landmark Battle*. New York: Random House, 1990. 800pp. \$34.95

This work is a result of thirteen years of research. Richard Frank has produced the most definitive account to date of the Guadalcanal Campaign,

providing detailed coverage of the land, sea, and air battles. Frank has managed to juxtapose the Japanese and American command decisions, which offers the reader a marvelous study in combat leadership.

From August 1942 to February 1943 the United States Navy fought seven major battles (most of them at night), which resulted in 5,000 killed or drowned. The Japanese navy sank eighteen U.S. destroyers, eight cruisers, two aircraft carriers, and several other ships. Not until the successful Japanese evacuation of their army’s survivors in February 1943 did the U.S. Navy gain control of the night waters.

Marine, navy, and army air force pilots lived under appalling conditions ashore, and they rose daily, and often nightly, to contend with the Japanese. The losses to aircraft evened out to about five hundred planes on each side (including both operational and combat losses), but the Japanese found it difficult to replace pilots and as a result suffered serious long-term consequences. The author gives praise to the marine command ashore: “The conduct of [Major General Archer] Vandergrift and his staff gathered ample praise at the time and in the initial postwar assessments and this account thoroughly validates that verdict.” However, the author has no praise for the United States Navy leadership at Guadalcanal. He presents a litany of failure of which this is only one instance: “With striking regularity almost each month of the struggle produced a relief [of a flag officer] or a painful exhibit of ineptitude.”

The author tempers his criticism in his explanation of how the assault on Gaudalcanal by the American navy and marines achieved local tactical surprise as well as strategic surprise of the first magnitude. However, this plan, pushed by Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief U.S. Fleet, launched a strategic offensive with the Allies in an inferior material position, which left a potentially fatal imbalance in one leg of the tripod of forces. The U.S. Navy, outnumbered and outgunned, fought bravely as always.

In addition the author pays his respect to the suffering, starving, and defeated enemy survivors: "We cannot leave the subject of the Japanese soldiers on Gaudalcanal without honoring them for their one supreme virtue—a determination and a courage—far above that of any of the other combatants in World War II."

This work confirms this reviewer's long held opinion that the United States Navy—the Naval War College in particular—should devote time to the study of this important campaign. Though our weapons are more sophisticated and require tactical changes, the fundamental decisions of leadership are the same. The author offers a work that will provide grain for the gristmill. Every military professional is encouraged to read it.

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Marder, Arthur J., Jacobsen, Mark,
and Horsfield, John. *Old Friends*

New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy. Volume II: The Pacific War, 1942-1945. New York: Clarendon Press, 1990. 651pp. \$69

Gray, Edwyn. *Operation Pacific: The Royal Navy's War against Japan, 1941-1945.* Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1991. 288pp. \$23.95

Britain's collapse as a world power is a topic that continues to fascinate. One element responsible for the breakdown of British power was the inability of Britain's Royal Navy to offer effective naval protection to the empire east of Suez when faced with the outbreak of war with Japan in December 1941. During the opening campaigns of the war against Japan, Britain's Royal Navy was hunted down, forced to run, and dispatched in short order when it stood to fight.

The litany of early disasters that overtook the Royal Navy in the Pacific War is familiar. On 10 December 1941, Japanese land-based aircraft destroyed the capital ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* that made up Force Z based at Singapore. In April of 1942, when Japan's force of fast carriers raided into the Indian Ocean, Britain's battle fleet of aging battleships under Admiral Sir James Somerville had to avoid harm's way lest it be annihilated. The Royal Navy, which had once served as tutor and model to the Japanese navy, was now having its ears boxed by its former pupil. It was indeed fortunate for Britain that while Japan carried out its advance toward Southeast Asia it also attacked the