

1990

## General Maxwell Taylor: The Sword and the Pen

Mark Edmond Clark

John M. Taylor

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Clark, Mark Edmond and Taylor, John M. (1990) "General Maxwell Taylor: The Sword and the Pen," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 43 : No. 4 , Article 16.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol43/iss4/16>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

operations of the 1st and 3rd Marine divisions. Quite often the operations are discussed at the rifle company level. That is as it should be; that is where much of this war was fought.

In general, the 1st and 3rd Marine divisions were fighting different kinds of war. This becomes clear in the text, where the author and his assistants have done a very good job at the tactical level without overwhelming the reader with too much detail at the very small unit level. The contrast between the two divisions is very important. As many observers of war have said, "No two wars are alike." "Within a war," one could probably add, "no two campaigns are alike and no two battles are alike." The lesson is that there are no panaceas; successful techniques in Quang Nam province (1st Marine Division) probably would not have fit Quang Tri Province (3rd Marine Division) and vice versa.

The author does not avoid controversial subjects such as single manager control of air assets, disagreements between Marine air and ground commanders about the employment of helicopters, and changes in operational concepts after General Abrams replaced General Westmoreland. Similarly, drug abuse, racial conflict in the Marine Corps, and "fragging" are not ignored. Rather, Smith cites examples and discusses the attempted solutions.

Air, artillery and logistics are covered in separate chapters that highlight their contributions. It

would have been very easy to weave them into the ground-war story, but I think their importance would have been lost.

I cannot testify to the accuracy of the entire volume, but I will go on record by saying that the operations in which I participated or had knowledge of are accurately and correctly described. Furthermore, comments I submitted on the "draft" edition have been incorporated, including an uncomplimentary remark I made about our Korean allies.

*The U.S. Marines in Vietnam, 1969* should prove valuable as an accurate and detailed history, a compendium of lessons (good and bad), and a reminder that war can be more dirty and dangerous and less exciting than the novelists would have their readers believe.

WENDELL P.C. MORGENTHAUER, JR.  
Naval War College

---

Taylor, John M. *General Maxwell Taylor: The Sword and the Pen*. New York: Doubleday, 1989. 457pp. \$22.50

When John M. Taylor initiated this biography of his father, he stated that he wanted to strike a balance between portraying the General Taylor that he knew, and the soldier-statesman whose life merits close examination. Clearly, he achieved that goal. Even so, *General Maxwell Taylor: The Sword and the Pen* certainly is not the definitive biography of the general.

John Taylor is an award-winning author who has written extensively on U.S. and Asian affairs. During his research for the book *General Maxwell Taylor*, he relied heavily on the general's personal letters and contacts with many friends of the general. Taylor's writing experience, research, and knowledge of his subject allows for many interesting anecdotes. Yet the book fails to provide much in-depth analysis of, or insight into, the general's activities.

An example is Taylor's discussion of the general's pre-war years. He describes an officer who is concerned with his career development after having spent most of his time away from conventional military duties. The reader is given a good look into the general's decision-making process, but as the discussion progresses it lapses into a mere presentation of facts, and the analysis fades away. Moreover, discussions of critical stages of the general's career are very limited. For example, little is mentioned of General Taylor's successful reorganization of the Army in order to expand its war-fighting capability to meet contingencies across the spectrum of warfare. Only brief coverage is given to the rift between General Taylor while he served as Army Chief of Staff and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Arthur Radford. Further, Taylor could have devoted more space to the general's stand against the policy of massive retaliation and how his alternative, which was flexible response, was accepted by the Kennedy adminis-

tration and changed the complexion of the U.S. defense.

The book does have its bright spots. Among those of special note is the discussion of the general's command of the 101st Airborne Division. Taylor devotes attention to staff activities during the Normandy Invasion, the tragedy of Arnhem, and the heroic stand of the division at Bastogne. The discussion of the general's activities from the period of his assignment in Berlin to his assignment with the U.S. Far East Command is interesting. It provides a clear demonstration of how his knowledge of languages and foreign affairs and his diplomatic skills played a vital role in his success, and how such abilities have become invaluable to the professional soldier in post-war command assignments.

In spite of its deficiencies, *General Maxwell Taylor* does manage to illustrate the accomplishments of an extraordinary military officer. The book should serve as an excellent illustration of the important role of military leadership in U.S. national security and foreign affairs.

MARK EDMOND CLARK  
New York, New York

---

Palmer, Bruce, Jr. *Intervention in the Caribbean: The Dominican Crisis of 1965*. Lexington: The Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1989. 226pp. \$23

Any book on U.S. intervention anywhere in the Caribbean Basin has a special timeliness these days. As in the case of Panama in 1989, the 1965