

2019

## The 1st Infantry Division and the US Army Transformed: Road to Victory in Desert Storm, 1970–1991

Neal H. Bralley

Gregory Fontenot

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

---

### Recommended Citation

Bralley, Neal H. and Fontenot, Gregory (2019) "The 1st Infantry Division and the US Army Transformed: Road to Victory in Desert Storm, 1970–1991," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 72 : No. 2 , Article 19.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol72/iss2/19>

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).

and Iraq wars deserve their own books on how religion and the chaplaincy shaped servicemembers who served in those conflicts. Also, as noted earlier, this is a scholarly work—it is detailed, includes extensive bibliographic notes, and, thankfully, has a fine index. Stahl's work is a great addition to any military chaplain's library and valuable to the military historian interested in understanding how sometimes the society that military members serve affects them in the most basic of human spheres—the spiritual and religious ones.

Ironically, Stahl's book shows that for religion, the military, and the men and women who are bound by a creed and worship something greater than themselves, the relationship among them is one that is always changing and evolving—sometimes contentiously. To paraphrase Stahl, the chaplaincy—a point of tension between church and state—will be a battleground in the future, as it has been in the past.

CHRISTOPHER NELSON



*The 1st Infantry Division and the US Army Transformed: Road to Victory in Desert Storm, 1970–1991*, by Gregory Fontenot. Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 2017. 526 pages. \$36.95.

Retired U.S. Army colonel Gregory Fontenot's excellent book details the transformation of the Army's famous 1st Infantry Division—"the Big Red One"—following the end of the Vietnam War and culminating in its combat success in the First Gulf War. Fontenot, a retired U.S. Army armor officer, is well qualified to write this book, having served in the division, including command of the 2nd Battalion, 34th Armor

before and during DESERT STORM. As the former commander of the Army's Battle Command Training Program (now called the Mission Command Training Program), he is an expert on collective military training. He is also a coauthor of the Army's initial history of the more recent Gulf War, *On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom* (Naval Institute Press, 2005).

Fontenot's latest book, *The 1st Infantry Division and the US Army Transformed*, begins with an Army racked with training and disciplinary problems at the end of the Vietnam War. Fontenot describes how senior Army leaders responded with a strategy designed to reestablish military standards by improving training programs and professional military education for officers and noncommissioned officers (NCOs) alike. Central to this was the development of the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California. Located on a site larger than the state of Rhode Island, the NTC is a world-class training center with a robust opposing force, instrumented ranges, sufficient equipment, and a professional cadre of observer-controllers who watch every action throughout the training rotations. The adoption of and adherence to a rigorous and thorough after-action review process enables those participating in the training to improve on every aspect of their performance. Functioning not only as a training center that duplicates near-combat conditions for brigade-sized Army units, the NTC also integrates other service elements into its training rotations.

Fontenot then focuses his book on detailing the planning and preparation that enabled the 1st Infantry Division—as well as other combat units—to deploy successfully from the United States to

Saudi Arabia during the DESERT SHIELD buildup of 1990. He does not shy away from discussing the matériel shortcomings and the significant logistical challenges encountered in achieving this unprecedented deployment of soldiers, vehicles, equipment, and supplies into the theater of operations.

As DESERT SHIELD prepared to become DESERT STORM, the book explores how senior military leaders wrestled with operational planning for the attack on and defeat of the Iraqi military. With the commencement of military operations, Fontenot discusses DESERT STORM from the operational and tactical-level perspectives of the VII Corps commander, Lieutenant General Fred Franks; the 1st Infantry Division commander, Major General Thomas G. Rhame; and numerous brigade, battalion, and company commanders. Fontenot especially is attentive to identifying by name the NCOs and soldiers of the division, and highlights their many individual contributions to the unit's collective success as he follows the 1st Infantry Division through the course of the war.

Fontenot provides similar detail in his consideration of the very real problems faced at the operational-strategic and

strategic leadership levels—where the most senior decision makers were hundreds, even thousands, of miles from the action on the battlefield's frontages. Some of these commanders' expectations were frustrated by the battlefield's ever-present "friction," famously described in Carl von Clausewitz's classic study *On War*. Indeed, lessons drawn from Clausewitz and other military philosophers are peppered throughout the book. Fontenot uses these historical touchstones to validate the study of military history and its continued operational relevance.

I heartily endorse this well-written and well-researched analytical study of the experiences of the 1st Infantry Division. It is a success story that provides invaluable insight into the training renaissance the U.S. Army experienced following the Vietnam War—a transformation that led directly to the successes of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. This insight speaks to ongoing questions about military education and training as the nation continues to wage a war on terror.

NEAL H. BRALLEY

---

#### OUR REVIEWERS

*Jeff A. Bovarnick*, Judge Advocate, USA, serves as executive officer and special counsel in the Office of the Army General Counsel. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army War College (MMS, 2015); U.S. Army Command and General Staff College (2006); U.S. Army Judge Advocate General's School (LLM, 2002); New England School of Law, Boston (JD, 1992); and the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (BBA, 1988).

*Neal H. Bralley* served on active duty in the United States Army from 1974 to 2000. From 2000 to 2016, he served as an assistant professor and teaching team leader at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College. In addition to his numerous assignments in South Korea, Germany, and