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# Death Knell of the Panama Canal?

Raymond A. Komoroski

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may view America's place in the world. Also, his extensive bibliography is a wonderful resource. Not only an original analysis, *Promised Land, Crusader State* is fine historical writing.

As we reach the millennium, the debate over foreign policy rages on a wide range of issues, from Bosnia to Nato and NAFTA to China. McDougal provides a historical framework from which readers, rather than the author, must draw their own conclusions.

JEFFREY J. SCHUELER  
Gaithersburg, Maryland

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Evans, G. Russell. *Death Knell of the Panama Canal?* Fairfax, Va.: National Security Center, 1997. 237pp. \$4.95 (paperback)

On 31 December 1999 the Panama Canal and all its installations are scheduled to revert to the Republic of Panama, in accordance with the 1977 treaty between the United States and Panama. This book, published by the National Security Center, was written by G. Russell Evans, a retired United States Coast Guard captain who is a student of the U.S.-Panama interplay on the canal. Evans argues for a treaty revision and a partnership of mutual benefit for both countries to take the place of what he calls the present "illegal" treaty. That the introduction was written by the greatly respected Admiral Thomas H. Moorer, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, requires that Evans's arguments be heard and considered.

The book undeniably raises an alarm about a strategic issue of vital security

to the United States—the canal's future. Unfortunately, the author's presentation of the events leading to the approval of the canal treaty and of its subsequent governmental examinations is offered in parochial, passionate, and inflammatory language that mars the often laudable critiques offered.

The canal's completion in 1914 was in the interest of every seagoing nation, providing easy passage between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. The canal was also smack in the middle of every military logistician's calculations on strategy. There it has remained, although with the passage of time and the concurrent changes in military technology, estimates of the canal's utility to the United States and its vulnerability to terrorism have waxed and waned. Regrettably, these issues have been assessed in a cavalier and erroneous manner by many U.S. strategists, whose thinking has been befuddled by the issues of aircraft carriers too wide to make passage, the threat of long-range offensive missiles, and the possibility that locks could be disabled by explosives.

The reality is that the canal could be defended against missiles by U.S. Army Patriot missiles or the impending Navy theater missile defense system. Surveillance techniques, now well practiced, could counter the transportable explosives threat. Regarding the canal's military utility, slim-hulled naval combatants now have great offensive lethality and accuracy in their missile systems, such as the Tomahawk missile. Meanwhile, the role of supporting military actions with beans, bullets, and oil is undiminished. Thus the book could be more effective if it offered a

## 140 Naval War College Review

substantial defense of the canal's strategic use by the United States, measured against present-day military scenarios. It would be an examination worthy of a naval war college. The canal represents an obvious, incontestable, and enduring fact: the saving of fifteen to twenty days' sailing time between the Atlantic and the Pacific. No thinking politician or military strategist can deny the vital importance of *time* as a factor in any crisis, large or small.

It is probably safe to say that neither military utility nor the canal's so-called vulnerability are dominant considerations in a peacetime environment where the United States is seen as the superpower. International relations and even domestic political issues weigh more heavily today in considering what the United States should do in the short time before the treaty is enacted. Unfortunately, the Evans book fails to consider what impact, if any, a reconsideration of the canal treaty might have on the U.S. position in Latin America or elsewhere. Recent interest by China and Japan in the canal is, however, noted and commented on.

As it now stands, the book offers only an accusation against the many who negotiated and approved an "illegal" treaty in 1977. The plea for a U.S. review that would salvage a position of partnership for the United States is buttressed only by complaints concerning the prospects of inadequate maintenance, and loss of drug-monitoring sites and physical property. A measure of partnership based on sound military interest is a good cause. Unfortunately, the game is already in play, and the voice of diplomacy seems to be muttering "going . . . going . . ." Can this

book's impact thwart the last word? Gone?

RAYMOND A. KOMOROWSKI  
Captain, U.S. Navy, Retired  
Falls Church, Virginia

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Lowry, Robert. *The Armed Forces of Indonesia*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin, 1996. 282pp. \$29.95

Robert Lowry is an Australian graduate of Indonesia's Army Staff and Command College, and his book is one of a series produced by the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University. The Centre has a distinguished array of volumes on the region and its problems. Although published in 1996, this book is still relevant to the present situation in Indonesia, even after the transfer of power from the hands of Suharto to his protégé Dr. B. J. Habibie. Many of the players, institutions, and philosophical, political, and cultural beliefs are still in place. Lowry's views are endorsed in the book's foreword by General L. B. ("Bernie") Murdani, who, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, is the former head of Kopkamtib (an intelligence and coordinating arm) and the officer in charge of the invasion of East Timor. Presently, Murdani is director of a Jakarta international relations "think tank."

Basically, Indonesia sees threats from several sources. First, it views many areas as potential internal threats—that is, areas that may seek possible separation, at the extreme, or readjustment of terms between the central government and local control, at the minimum. The