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# Military Assistance: An Operational Perspective

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Pokrant coordinated the CNA reconstruction of both operations with the Seventh Fleet staff. From 1992 to 1994 he served as CNA's director of the Fleet Tactics and Capabilities Program, wherein he managed a variety of analyses concerning issues raised during the conflict. He is now retired.

*Desert Storm at Sea* is written in an easily understandable narrative style. Pokrant minimizes the use of acronyms, providing at the beginning of the book a list of the abbreviations he does use. Maps, drawings, diagrams, tables, and photographs measurably assist the reader, particularly with regard to organizational details and positioning of forces. The index is robust and also helpful. Of interest, one of the author's original goals was to "cite a source for every statement that was not summary or clearly the author's opinion." This was determined ultimately to be impractical for publication purposes. Thus the end of each chapter contains a short summary of sources and limited endnotes. The bibliography is extensive and includes books, multisource reports, articles, CNA reconstruction reports and other publications, and interviews. A manuscript copy of the book with complete sources is at the Center for Naval Analyses.

The Army/Air Force-centric nature of both operations has ensured that the vast majority of books and articles concern the contributions of these two services, as well as of the Marine Corps units ashore, to the overall effort. In that context, *Desert Storm at Sea* and its companion volume are very welcome additions to the literature. They provide a comprehensive, detailed Gulf War history of U.S. naval activities where none before existed. Further, and in contrast to topically related writings that rely heavily on secondary and tertiary sources, the

foundation for this history is the primary source— Pokrant himself, aboard the NavCent flagship. These factors bestow a solid foundation of authority and accuracy upon his work.

Two limitations are worth mentioning. First, as the author points out, certain "interesting and important activities, such as intelligence," could not be discussed because of security. Second, in U.S. Navy culture, logistics and sustainment "ain't sexy." This is again borne out by the limited treatment (a few pages in the first volume) afforded these critical operational functions; that is unfortunate, given the truly remarkable magic woven by the naval and Military Sealift Command elements of the combat logistics force that sustained U.S. and coalition naval forces.

In the foreword to *Desert Storm at Sea*, Admiral Stanley Arthur, Commander USNavCent from 1 December 1990 through the end of the Gulf War, credits Pokrant and CNA with "seizing the relevant data and wringing the truth from it." This reviewer agrees.

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Mott, William H., IV. *Military Assistance: An Operational Perspective*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1999. 360pp. \$65

William Mott draws some useful conclusions from eight disparate cases of military assistance: French support for the American colonies (from 1776); British support for the anti-French coalition (from 1793); British support to the Iberian campaign (from 1808); U.S. support for wartime China (from 1941); U.S. support for postwar China (from 1945); U.S. support for the French in Indochina

(from 1949); U.S. support for the Republic of Vietnam during the “interwar period” (from 1955); and U.S. support during the Second Indochina War (1965). Mott superimposes a profile of four “uniformities” as a means to assess donor nation success: convergence of national aims and interests; donor control of the relationship; committing donor defense forces; and cohesion of donor policies and strategies.

There are, however, several issues regarding the study’s approach and the universality of the conclusions. Mott’s study uses the term “wartime,” which has a broad array of meanings. For example, Americans think of war as an anomaly in international relations. Despite the fact that there have been only five formally declared wars, Americans have seen nearly 225 years of unbroken warfare. Nevertheless, they still insist on making a distinction between war, peace, and all that unpleasantness in between. Assessing the success of U.S. support for China during World War II and U.S. support in Indochina requires, therefore, different approaches. Military assistance in the former was an economy-of-force operation that presented the Japanese with an additional front in a multifront theater, analogous to U.S. support to the Soviets (1941–1945) against the Germans. The cost-benefit ratio for these cases worked. However, equating the three post–World War II Indochina cases with keeping China in the war (and tying up dozens of Japanese divisions) is a stretch. Unlike 1917 and 1941, undeclared low-intensity conflicts, or small wars—or the *nom de jour*, military operations other than war—have a decidedly different résumé of cohesion, convergence, and success.

Mott raises a number of issues that caused this reader some difficulty. In the first French case, he posits several war aims and then selects the most ambitious one by which to measure success. There is no doubt that revenge for the loss of North American colonies (1763) and the total destruction of Great Britain loomed large on Versailles’s wish list. There is also little doubt that the French did not reject a lesser but included goal of embarrassing and weakening their adversary, which they achieved with money and a minor commitment of forces to the Americans.

Problems with war-termination goals resurface in the book’s appendix, with respect to the Reagan Doctrine; Mott compares French support to the Americans to American support for the Contras in Nicaragua. After noting the similarities, he calls both attempts failures and dismisses the Reagan attempt to “roll back” the Soviets. While certainly not solely as the result of military assistance, the Soviets were in fact rolled back. This was the product of a combination of initiatives including military assistance to anticommunist insurgencies in Asia, Africa, and Central America, as well as the main show—the big-power arms race. We will probably have to wait for the declassification of sources to determine what discrete and cumulative weights should be given to the five insurgencies the United States supported.

The issues of convergence of interests and commitment of the donor are particularly interesting aspects of this study. In the majority of the cases, Mott’s analysis is valid. While he is solid in describing the confusion and ad-hocism of U.S. foreign policy formulation in Vietnam, however, his definition here does not quite fit. He refers to all eight cases as

“military assistance in wartime.” The three Indochina cases do not match the U.S. definition of “wartime,” at least not until 1965, and even then it was not the kind of “war” the United States thought it was fighting. Additionally, the commitment of U.S. prestige, blood, and treasure to the Republic of Vietnam made the donor a hostage to the recipient. This aspect of Mott’s analysis of the Second Indochina War needs work. Also, coupling the commitment of donor forces to the success of the war aim is flawed, at least in the Vietnam case. The problem, never really understood then and still not completely understood now, is that in post–World War II counterinsurgency warfare the larger the U.S. forces committed, the less were the chances of success. Put another way, if U.S. combat forces are needed, there is already a high probability of failure—salvaging someone else’s war is nearly impossible. If U.S. forces are committed, the warring nation has even less incentive to make the kinds of reforms necessary to win. Mott refers to his companion work, *Military Assistance: An Empirical Perspective*, in which he deals with military assistance during the Cold War. One can hope that it will provide a more comprehensive look at the success/failure rate in counterinsurgency wars.

From a historical perspective, *Military Assistance* has much to offer. Taken separately, the cases and their uniformities provide a useful look at military assistance as an instrument of national policy. Mott’s research is thorough, and by examining a little-understood facet of policy he does us a valuable service. For today’s “dabbler in the occult” of military assistance, foreign military sales, foreign internal defense, etc., the study provides some trenchant questions and sobering

lessons. The flaws are few, the scholarship is of high quality, and the measures of effectiveness it suggests are useful. This book deserves attention as a valuable contribution to the sparse offerings that deal with military assistance.

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Hirschfeld, Thomas J., and Peter Hore, eds. *Maritime Aviation: Light and Medium Aircraft Carriers into the Twenty-first Century*. Hull, U.K.: Univ. of Hull Press, 1999. 263pp. (no price given)

Hirschfeld and Hore have artfully edited the proceedings of an international conference on small and medium-sized aircraft carriers held in Southampton, England, in December 1997. Over ninety academic, industry, military, and media delegates from fourteen nations that have, or have had, or might procure small or medium carriers met to hear and discuss the presentations addressing carrier acquisition. Four main issues emerged: (1) the geo-strategic environment in which carriers might operate, (2) the infrastructure needed to support carriers, (3) choices of embarked aircraft and alternatives, and (4) regional effects of carrier acquisition.

There was a general agreement that the Cold War’s strategic symmetry has been replaced by a lesser threat of general war but a greater one of regional or limited war, sparked by minor crises that had previously been held in check by the superpowers. Forces optimized for “blue water” are now turning their attention to littoral operations. Meanwhile, the limits of littoral warfare are expanding, by virtue of the capability and range of new-technology weapons. This new technology has made the majority of