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In My View

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IN MY VIEW . . .

Arleigh Burke and the Naval Command College

Sir,

Commander Jan van Tol has very capably reviewed (*Winter 1992 Review*) Professor E.B. Potter's latest historical book, *Admiral Arleigh Burke*. As one who served under Admiral Burke in the Pentagon and in the destroyer force in the 1950s, I heartily concur with van Tol's opinion that Admiral Burke's greatest contributions to the Navy were after World War II and that many of these were not comprehensively examined by the author.

One important contribution of Admiral Burke's which Professor Potter omitted was the establishment of today's Naval Command College, as the "Naval Command Course," at the Naval War College in the 1956-1957 academic year.

In 1951 Rear Admiral Burke was Director of Strategic Plans in Naval Operations (Op-30). In a nearby Pentagon office, Rear Admiral Bernard Austin was taking over as Director of Politico-Military Affairs (Op-35). In Austin's division, Commander Richard Colbert was an action officer on Joint Chiefs of Staff matters. As an office shipmate of Colbert in Op-35, I recall that he was working as time permitted on developing a course of study for foreign senior naval officers that could prepare them for combined naval operations with United States forces. A Nato Defense College was just getting started in Paris, but naval operations and thinking would be only a small part of the six-month sessions at that school. It is of interest that in this period, although Colbert worked for Admiral Austin, he often went to sessions of the Joint Strategic Planning Group as a backup assistant ("sword carrier" in Pentagon parlance) for Admiral Burke, who was the Navy representative.

Vice Admiral Lynde McCormick, the first Supreme Allied Commander Atlantic (SacLant), was president of the Naval War College in August 1955 when

Admiral Burke took over as Chief of Naval Operations (CNO). Captain Colbert was assigned as a student in Naval Warfare I (the senior course) at the College. Very shortly, the planning that Colbert had done four years earlier was brought into focus in Naval Operations and at the War College. Admiral Burke established good liaison with many of his opposite numbers in Allied and other friendly navies in the first few months of his tour. In April 1960 the Naval Command Course (now the Naval Command College) was approved by CNO. Colbert, already under orders by the Bureau of Personnel to attend a second year at the College, Naval Warfare II, was ordered to the War College staff to head the new international course.

Today the thirty-seventh class of international senior student officers is in session. Over one thousand graduates from the Naval Command College have returned to their own navies and duties afloat and ashore. Admiral Burke's sponsorship and support of this expansion of the War College was a major step in high-level military education, and a significant contribution to friendly international relations in the Cold War period.

John R. Wadleigh
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy, Ret.

"Roots of Conflict in the Middle East"

Sir,

Although Major Seal covered many bases in his article "The Roots of Conflict: The First World War and the Political Fragmentation of the Middle East" (Spring 1992), he neglected a factor of immense importance whose origin lay in the immediate pre-1914 era: OIL! After the first dreadnoughts entered the fleet, the British Admiralty realized that the use and logistics of coal greatly restricted operations of the battle force. As a result, the *Queen Elizabeth* class, designed in 1912, was constructed from the keel up to burn oil.

To quote the late Arthur Marder (*From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, Vol. I) regarding the views of Admiral Sir John ("Jackie") Fisher, who was the impetus behind the construction of HMS *Dreadnought*, "To Fisher the Navy owed the beginning of the substitution of oil fuel for coal, and the introduction and improvement of the submarine. As far back as 1886 Fisher had a reputation in naval and government circles as the 'Oil Maniac.' As the First Sea Lord he did everything possible to ensure the supply of oil for the Navy, and to develop new sources of supply. . . ." If oil were indeed to replace coal, a reliable new source of the former was essential.

As it happened, oil had been discovered in Persia (Iran). Provided the Mediterranean could be kept open to shipping during wartime, that source

would be adequate for fleet requirements. The upshot was the purchase in August 1914 of a controlling share in the Anglo-Persian (later the Anglo-Iranian) Oil Company, a forerunner of present-day British Petroleum. The British now had two overriding interests in the Middle East, both based on the needs of sea power: the Suez Canal and Persian oil. That these interests colored the British planning for and approach to the Peace in 1919 needs no further discussion.

The British stake in the Middle East in the early twentieth century brings to mind the old saw, "What is the function of the British Navy? Answer: To defend the Empire. And what is the purpose of the Empire? Answer: To support the Fleet!"

Robert C. Whitten
Commander, U.S. Naval Reserve, Ret.

Sir,

I enjoyed the article "Roots of Conflict" by Major Seal in the Spring 1992 issue. His analysis of the roots of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is generally accurate. There were however, other factors in Iraq's decision to invade Kuwait that were not linked to the post-World War I period. One of the major factors was the ongoing dispute between those two countries over two important issues: the unpaid Iraqi debt from the Iran-Iraq war, and Kuwaiti efforts to undercut the world price of oil by overproduction of OPEC quotas.

At the end of the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, Iraq owed billions in debts to various Arab countries, including Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Following the war, a dispute arose between Iraq and Kuwait over both the amount of this debt and, even, whether it was indeed at debt at all. Iraq contended that it had protected Kuwait and the rest of the Arabian Peninsula from the Persian hordes. From the Iraqi viewpoint, Kuwait actually owed Iraq about \$15 billion as sort of an insurance policy.

In late 1989, Iraq began a running dispute with Kuwait on the latter's continual overproduction of its OPEC quota. Kuwait's oil overproduction was driving down the world price of crude and damaging Iraq's earning power. Iraq was then producing as much oil as its war-damaged facilities would allow. It needed every dollar it could gain from oil, and actually was campaigning for efforts to raise the price of oil on the world market. Experts at the time indicated that for every drop of one dollar in the price of a barrel of oil, Iraq would lose about \$1 billion dollars per year in oil revenues. Kuwait's overproduction, as well as that of some other OPEC members, was costing Iraq millions.

Although not specifically mentioned by Major Seal, two other factors contributing to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait were related to post-World War I history. One of these was a long-standing dispute between the two countries over their borders.

As pointed out in the article, Iraq gained formal independence in 1932. Ever since

that time, they have disputed the borders that were drawn between Kuwait and southern Iraq by the British colonialists. As fate would have it, oil was later discovered in the area where northern Kuwait and southern Iraq meet, near Rumaylah. The ownership of the oil in these fields was frequently challenged, culminating in the most recent dispute, in 1990, when Iraq accused Kuwait of drilling oil from the Iraqi side of the field. As I mentioned before, this was a serious conflict, since Iraq was at that time attempting to maximize its oil revenues.

The other factor was an Iraqi claim to the islands of Warbah and Bubiyan off the Kuwaiti coast in the northern Persian Gulf. Iraq claimed that these islands were historically its own, having been given to Kuwait when the British redrew the boundaries in the 1930s. After the Iran-Iraq war, Iraq was desperate to find a port on the Persian Gulf from which it could safely export its oil and import the goods it needed. The traditional Iraqi ports of Umm Qasr and Basra had been either destroyed or rendered useless by the war. Any attempts to rebuild or reclaim them would cost billions, and their geographic locations would only leave them vulnerable again should the conflict with Iran be renewed. Iraq needed newer and safer access to the Gulf and saw Warbah and Bubiyan islands its salvation.

Major Seal covered a lot of history in a short space, but he should have mentioned the United States' part in the early history of the Middle East. He omitted the efforts of the King-Crane Commission of 1919, which was, in fact, the only firsthand, on-the-ground effort to look at the area. Because of British and French wrangling, the Commission traveled alone to interview people in only Syria and Palestine. It was relatively easy for the British to control the Commission's access in the area and manipulate the witnesses and their testimony. According to David Fromkin, author of *A Peace to End All Peace*, the King-Crane Commission's report, which was never considered in any of the final agreements, raised such expectations among the Arabs that it was later denounced as a criminal deception.

Major Seal's conclusion is correct: we will continue to reap the harvest of those post-World War I efforts to create the Middle East. The legacies of the Sykes-Picot Treaty and the Balfour Declaration will continue to plague the modern Middle East. Perhaps the current peace process can begin to change some of that. If so, it will take generations. The physical boundaries and their resulting religious and psychological legacies have existed in the region for over seventy-five years now. We should not expect them to be replaced overnight by some "new world order" magic formula.

Ronald A. Perron
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Eastern Studies
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Our Spring 1992 Cover

Sir,

I would like to call your attention to something in the Spring 1992 issue that I believe to be at least misleading and likely erroneous.

I am referring to the cover painting by Mr. Bob Hobbs of the Naval War College Graphic Arts Department. The painting is intended to depict action of "the evening of September 7th, 1940." It shows a night attack on London with Spitfire and Hurricane single-seat fighters engaging a formation of German bombers. The misleading aspect is related to the depiction of Spitfire and Hurricane fighters in the air at night.

Information available to me concerning events of the evening in question indicates that attacking forces arriving over London at about 4:30 P.M. (up to 150 aircraft) and at about 5:20 P.M. (up to 300 aircraft) were opposed by Spitfires and Hurricanes. After these first two formations attacked, the skies over London were relatively clear until about 8:20 P.M., when, as dusk began to fall, a third wave of attackers approached. This group of attackers operated relatively free from Fighter Command intervention. This was because single-seat fighters were notoriously ineffective as night fighters unless visibility was exceptionally good, and because the Spitfires and Hurricanes, which had been the focus of the German attacks since August 13, 1940, were being saved to defend against expected future daylight raids.

There were two squadrons of Blenheims available for the night defense of London. The one at Hornchurch could not operate because the smoke from the fires in London was so thick that they could not take off. Thus, the only airborne defense available on the night of September 7th, 1940, was one squadron of Blenheims.

A number of good accounts of the Battle of Britain exist. The account of the events of September 7th, 1940, that I based my comments on is from *Summer, 1940 - The Battle of Britain*, by Roger Parkinson, David McKay Company, Inc., New York, 1977.

Edgar P. Bruce
State College, Pennsylvania

The editor replies:

Mr. Bruce is quite correct as to the chronology of attacks that afternoon and evening, according to our own understanding of the events. In fact, Mr. Hobbs had in mind a point at about 6:00 P.M. in the second raid, at which time, our sources tell us, Spitfires were still active and a "towering pall of black smoke and

dust" from burning warehouses, ships, and oil tanks obscured the twilight sun (which would set at about 6:30). The operation of searchlights was an inference, and the apparently complete darkness an artistic license approved by the editor during the planning process.

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Conference Announcement

The United States Air Force Academy will hold its Fifteenth Military Symposium, "A Revolutionary War: Korea and the Transformation of the Postwar World," on 14-16 October 1992.

For further information contact Major Tim Castle, USAF, HQ USAFA/DFH, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colo., 80840-5701, or telephone (719) 472-3230.

Naval War College Press Catalog

A catalog of all current Naval War College Press offerings and backlist items has been prepared and is available from the *Review* editorial office by request. The listing encompasses all categories of Press issuances: the Fundamentals of Force Planning series, the International Law "Blue Books," other books (including the Historical Monograph series), registers of papers available in the Historical Collection, products of the Advanced Research Program, and a complete volume-and-number publishing history of the *Naval War College Review*.