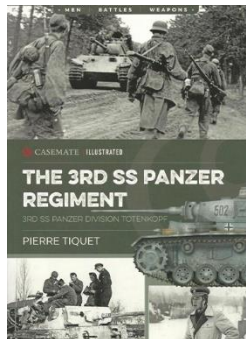


Book Reviews

The 3rd SS Panzer Regiment by Pierre Tiquet; Oxford, United Kingdom: Casemate Publishers; 2020; 128 pages; \$24.95 (soft cover).



The 3rd SS Panzer Division, better known as the Totenkopf or “Death’s Head,” was a Nazi armored formation that fought across Europe throughout World War II. Beginning with the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940 to the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, the division was in almost continual combat operations until the surrender of Nazi Germany. During its brief existence, the division earned a reputation for committing brutal war crimes against soldiers and civilians alike. *The 3rd SS Panzer Regiment* examines the role this subordinate unit played on the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union.

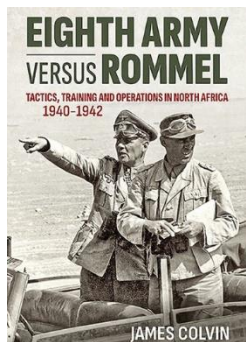
Regiment opens with a brief summary of 3rd SS Panzer Division’s formation and first combat in France before focusing upon 3rd SS Panzer Regiment’s initial formation and deployment to Russia. The book is not so much a coherent unit story as a series of individual accounts Tiquet recorded over a 30-year period of research, including attendance at multiple veteran reunions. Readers searching for a “big picture” understanding of the unit’s combat history would be better served elsewhere; the book works best at providing a soldier’s perspective or as a reference for World War II militaria.

Indeed, like most Casemate publications, *Regiment* is replete with period photographs of the men, equipment and awards useful to the researcher, reenactor or modeler.

For all the information contained within its pages, there is a dangerous omission inexplicably absent from this book. Apart from one brief mention in the front-cover overleaf, *Regiment* fails to address 3rd SS Panzer Division’s documented history of wartime atrocities on both the Western and Eastern European fronts. This a glaring oversight given the growing threat posed by neo-Nazi organizations, paralleled by an equally disturbing rise in Holocaust denial. It is hardly surprising that veterans would be loath to discuss war crimes, but that does not alleviate the publishing team’s obligation to ensure this part of 3rd SS Panzer Regiment’s history is not forgotten by future generations.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLY

Eighth Army Versus Rommel: Tactics, Training and Operations in North Africa, 1940-1942 by James Colvin; Warwick, England: Helion & Company Limited; 2020; 262 pages including maps, photographs, appendix and bibliography; \$38.41.



Author James Colvin examines the British Army’s development of combined-arms doctrine during the early days of World War II as it searches for tactics and techniques to counter German and Italian forces in North Africa. Why did the British forces initially fare so poorly against their enemies? Colvin believes the answer lies in the “inherent deficiencies in organization, training and command derived less from individuals than from the army and the culture in which leaders worked.”

Before the start of World War II, the basic organization of the British army was based on a collection of regiments. Colvin notes that the British educational system influenced the formation of the officer corps in which family tradition reinforced the tendency to form regiments based on social standing and private means. Social divisions permeated the regimental system, which allowed privileged individuals to be given influential assignments and positions. The regimental system perpetuated a club attitude based on traditions.

The battlefield development and employment of tanks during World War I created a threat to the cherished regimental tradition by taking on missions such as reconnaissance and flank protection that were habitually associated with cavalry forces. In the post-war era, the British army reverted to its traditional role of safeguarding the British Empire. Members of the British tank corps were thought to be social inferiors and viewed as nothing

more than “garage mechanics.” Infantry, artillery and cavalry officers had no compelling reason to combine their efforts.

The German desire to regain their pre-World War I prominence caused them to study how best to combine their tactical resources. The result was to create a formula for the guidance of officers at every level of combat. It emphasized that the “correct place of commanders ... was to be sufficiently close to the front to enable them to assess the situation on the ground and make instant decisions.” Aided by the use of tactical radios, German commanders trained to make battlefield decisions more quickly than their enemies. The effects of their training were evident and led to successes in Poland and France. Colvin also points out that the German after-action processes provided a basis for restructuring and refining their tactics and techniques.

Returning to his theme on the ill effects of the regimental system, the author presents detailed reviews on the leadership and personalities of a host of British commanders. Their effect on battlefield tactics in the battles conducted in Egypt and Libya by the combatants is thoroughly explained and enhanced by a series of excellent maps. The author places particular emphasis on the location of the commanders during a given battle. The German commanders, under the command of Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, were always forward, where they could see and adjust the employment of forces based on observations.

Seldom forward, the British commanders tended to rely on battlefield reports delivered to their headquarters as the basis for decision-making. The time lag between a given action and the commander’s reaction often spelled doom for the British forces. Given the German radio-intercept methods, British plans were often available to Rommel before employment by the British. The search for a doctrine to employ the firepower of infantry, artillery, close-air-support and armor forces effectively initially escaped the grasp of the British.

Political pressure mounted as the British public sought a victory over the Germans. Prime Minister Winston Churchill appointed GEN Bernard Montgomery to command 8th British Army in late 1942. Montgomery was a superb selection in the author’s view. Soldiers “were gratified by the presence of a commander who took the trouble to meet them on, almost, a conversational level.”

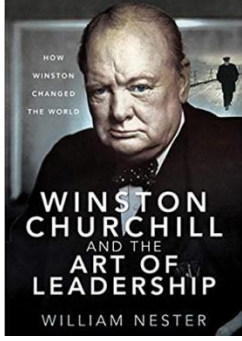
Montgomery imbued 8th Army with the will to win. He espoused a forward-leadership doctrine that embraced a presence available to assist a tactical commander without undue interference in battlefield management. He broke the hold that the previous regimental system held on tactical operations by emphasizing the importance of combining the strength of infantry, armor, artillery and close-air-support to achieve battlefield success. The author’s descriptions of the Battles of Alam Halfa and El Alamein demonstrated Montgomery’s flair for training, development and use of intelligence, control of forces and effective decision-making.

Colvin produced a well-researched, balanced account of the consequences of failing to adjust to battlefield conditions. His work contains detailed maps that enhance understanding. His explanations on the importance of doctrine to successfully train and employ forces are superb. The author’s comments on maneuver, firepower and massing of forces by both sides is worthy of review and study. As such, this is a book that will appeal to maneuver commanders.

COL (R) D.J. JUDGE

Winston Churchill and the Art of Leadership by William Nester; United Kingdom: Frontline Books; 2020; 258 pages; \$34.95 (hard cover).

The name Winston Churchill evokes as many images as it does viewpoints: Churchill the politician, Churchill the party leader, Churchill the adventurer, journalist, soldier, painter and even humorist. Today, Churchill remains both admired and controversial as evidenced by his sculpture regularly appearing and disappearing from the White House between successive U.S. presidential administrations. Dr. William Nester, a professor at St. John’s University in New York and the author of nearly 40 books, examines the statesman in his latest book titled, ***Winston Churchill and the Art of Leadership***. Although this biography covers Churchill’s entire life, Dr. Nester focuses heavily on his tenure as prime minister during World War II.



Despite the book's title, Nester does not conclude each chapter or lesson with a "now you know, G.I. Joe" leadership lesson, leaving readers to determine the impact of Churchill's actions for themselves. While the book portrays Churchill in a positive light, Nester does not shy away from a thorough review of his successes, failures and occasionally myopic approach to world events. Readers will find that Churchill was a brilliant politician but less gifted in understanding and devising viable military strategy to bring either World War I or World War II to an end, to say nothing of understanding Britain's attempts to retain its colonial empire as forlorn relics of the past. The author's views on many other historic figures – including Neville Chamberlain, Clement Atlee, Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery and GENs Dwight Eisenhower and George S. Patton Jr. are made equally clear throughout the work.

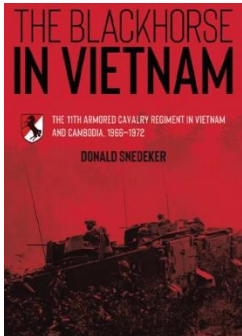
Winston Churchill serves best as an introduction to readers less familiar with the subject matter and, perhaps, as a springboard to more detailed study of particular facets of Churchill's amazing life. While the book is an entertaining read, the story does not offer any significant insight into Churchill's views, leadership style or personal struggles. It also suffers from numerous spelling errors, leaving an overall impression of a rushed production.

LTC CHRIS HEATHERLEY

The Blackhorse in Vietnam: The 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment in Vietnam and Cambodia, 1966-1972 by Donald Snedeker; Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers; 2020; 336 pages, including glossary, appendices, footnotes and bibliography; \$34.95 (hardcover).

Donald Snedeker's *The Blackhorse in Vietnam* is an in-depth examination of 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment's 5½ years of combat in the Vietnam War. Throughout the book, Snedeker strives to demonstrate that 11th ACR's impressive combat record shows that Armor can play an essential role in counterinsurgency operations.

Over the course of the book, Snedeker chronicles the train-up, deployment, adaption and impact of 11th ACR in Vietnam. Snedeker opens the book by discussing the challenges of training a force without a clear mission or the doctrine to support unit training. As 11th ACR arrived in Vietnam, it was initially employed in a supporting role, mostly route and convoy-security operations, based on a limited understanding of its capabilities at senior levels.



According to the author, senior officers still saw Vietnam as an infantryman's war. However, over time, 11th ACR was able to play a greater role in the war, as the regiment demonstrated success through its mobility, firepower and combined-arms maneuver. The 11th ACR demonstrated that mechanized forces could fight and win in the severely restrictive terrain that dominated their operational environment.

A critical portion of the book is dedicated to detailing the pivotal role that 11th ACR played in stopping the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) during the Tet Offensive of 1968. Ultimately, this transition culminates with 11th ACR's rapid advance to the important crossroads town of Snoul during operations in Cambodia.

The Blackhorse in Vietnam is a well-researched work that draws on historical sources, unit after-action reports and first-person accounts. Snedeker conducted personal interviews with more than 500 veterans of the regiment. Throughout the book, he recounts 11th ACR's actions through the eyes of the lowest-level cavalryman, the regimental commander and multiple viewpoints in between.

Snedeker also includes reports from the NVA perspective that demonstrates the impact that 11th ACR's operations had on the NVA at the tactical level. This technique provides the reader with a realism that is often missing from many other works of military history that struggle to capture the broader unit history without losing the on-the-ground point of view that is so critical for junior leaders who may read the book.

Snedeker serves as the historian for the 11th Armored Cavalry Veterans of Vietnam and Cambodia. Therefore, *The Blackhorse in Vietnam* reads more as a unit history that focuses on capturing the exploits of one unit's contributions to a much larger war. The drawback to this approach is that the book paints all the unit's actions in an overly positive light. The book lacks any real introspective criticism or reflection. Snedeker details the events of

multiple engagements that surely resulted in critical growth for the 11th ACR's leaders, but he fails to really capture those hard lessons-learned. A greater emphasis on lessons-learned, and even perhaps critiques of actions or decisions made within the unit would have provided a much needed counterbalance to the exceedingly optimistic take on 11th ACR's actions in Vietnam.

Another consideration for potential readers is that since the book is written as a unit history, ***The Blackhorse in Vietnam*** is primarily focused on the tactical level. While undoubtedly 11th ACR had a significant impact on the NVA's ability to conduct operations within Vietnam, it is important for readers to keep in mind that tactical success of ground units does not necessarily correlate to progress in the operational or strategic outcomes of a conflict. Although Snedeker attempts to intertwine the strategic failures of the Vietnam War with 11th ACR's tactical success, the connections he makes are generally brief and provide little value to the book as a whole.

Overall, ***The Blackhorse in Vietnam*** is a worthwhile read for any Armor or Cavalry leader. It captures the essence of what it means to be in the Cavalry and the qualities expected of all Armor leaders. Snedeker demonstrates the need for adaptable leaders at all echelons to find creative ways to modify equipment to fit the mission at hand and train a force that doctrine does not necessarily address. Also, 11th ACR's operations show the effects that can be achieved when multiple combat platforms are under the operational control of a single commander.

CPT BRYCE W. EAST