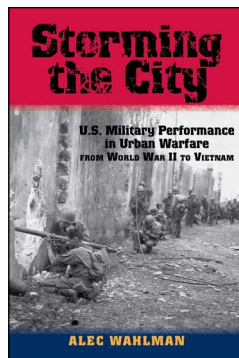


with terrorism and counter-terrorism into powerful but accessible stories. In the best traditions of journalism, he educates without sermonizing or advocating policies. This allows the reader to empathize with the subjects on both sides while simultaneously maintaining a moral perspective on the evils of al-Qaeda and ISIS.

In the epilogue, Wright ponders the future of ISIS, how terrorist organizations end, and the costs of the age of terror. He predicts with chilling realism that “the conflict that the Islamic State has provoked will ultimately bring about its destruction, but not without much more havoc and heartache.” Wright predicts that “this age of terror will end one day.” “Terrorism as a strategy,” Wright notes, “rarely succeeds, except in one respect: it creates repression on the part of the state or occupying power.” While Wright acknowledges the necessity of the “security state” created since 9/11, he ponders whether America, at the inevitable conclusion of this era, will even remember “the feeling of freedom that once was our birthright... if we fail to keep in mind the country we were before 9/11, we may never steer in that direction again. In that case, the terrorists really will have won.”

Storming the City: U.S. Military Performance in Urban Warfare from World War II to Vietnam
By Alec Wahlman
Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 2015,
368 pages

Reviewed by LTC (Retired)
Rick Baillergeon



Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the interest level in urban warfare has clearly escalated. This in turn has spurred a large increase in the publication of books tied to the subject. In my experience, these volumes have generally fallen into two categories in terms of content and focus. First, there are the volumes in which the author has focused on a particular battle or an aspect of urban warfare. The second are those books which are more general and may address numerous urban warfare battles in the past or provide more wide-ranging discussions. Both types of volumes can have much utility to readers depending on their quality.

Alec Wahlman is one author who has crafted a sort of hybrid of these groups. Within his outstanding volume *Storming the City: U.S. Military Performance in Urban Warfare from World War II to Vietnam*, Wahlman states in his introduction that, “The gap this study seeks to fill is between the detailed accounts of single battles and the broad pattern analysis across many battles that lacks tactical detail.” I

believe Wahlman has clearly achieved what he sought to accomplish.

Within his pages, the author has focused on four particular battles between World War II and Vietnam. These are Aachen (1944), Manila (1945), Seoul (1950), and Hue (1968). Within each, he employs the same four-part organization to address the battle. These complementary sections are:

- 1) The operational context in which the battle took place;
- 2) The opponent U.S. forces fought against;
- 3) A concise synopsis of the battle; and
- 4) An analysis of the tactical performance of the U.S. forces in the battle.

Although each section is extremely well written, two clearly stand out in terms of quality. First, Wahlman’s ability to concisely provide readers with a synopsis of each battle is very impressive. In complying with his intent, the author does not produce a comprehensive account of each battle. However, he does deliver sufficient detail of the battle itself so readers have a good understanding of the fight. His ability to attain this truly sets the conditions for the author to focus on the clear strength of the volume — the analysis of U.S. performance within each battle.

In this section, Wahlman utilizes the same organization to conduct his analysis of each battle. He has selected six areas (basically battlefield operating systems or warfighting functions) to dissect U.S. performance: Command, control, and communications; intelligence and reconnaissance; firepower and survivability; mobility and counter-mobility; logistics; and importantly, dealing with the population. I found Wahlman’s analysis authoritative and sound. Importantly, he offers solid examples to reinforce his statements and opinions.

Wahlman takes his analysis one step further in his concluding paragraph. Within it, he compares performance between the battles. He offers areas in which there were significant differences within the battles. Just as critically, he suggests ways in which they were extremely similar. Wahlman summarizes each of the above when he states, “And yet, despite the variations in conditions, resources available, and foes, U.S. forces successfully executed their mission to capture the city in every case.” He details his rationale on why this success occurred — transferable competence and battlefield adaptation.

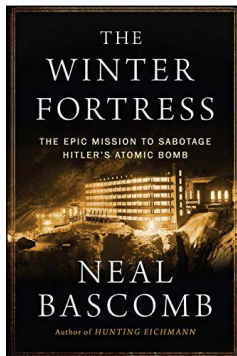
Before my summary, I would be remiss in not highlighting two chapters within the volume which Wahlman has inserted. These two focus on U.S. military thought (doctrine, professional publications, etc...) as they pertain to urban warfare before and after World War II. As you would expect, he has placed them appropriately within the organization of his book. I feel readers will find these extremely informative, and they provide excellent background as readers move into the battle discussion.

In his conclusion, Wahlman states, “The central three-part question this study sought to answer was: When the

need arose to fight in urban terrain in the mid-20th century, how effective were U.S. forces, why, and how did their performance change from World War II to Vietnam?" I believe Wahlman has unquestionably answered each more than adequately. In doing so, he has provided readers with a volume which is highly informative and thought provoking. He has also provided readers with a context and background to examine urban warfare in the present and the future.

The Winter Fortress: The Epic Mission to Sabotage Hitler's Atomic Bomb
By Neil Bascomb
NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcour, 2016, 400 pages

Reviewed by
CPT Jeremy M. Phillips



It is sometimes the case that non-fiction is more thrilling and unbelievable than the fiction it inspires. This is certainly the case for the new book *The Winter Fortress: The Epic Mission to Sabotage Hitler's Atomic Bomb*. Neil Bascomb, author of several historical narratives including *Hunting Eichmann* and *The Perfect Mile*, conducted unprecedented research into the joint Norwegian and British commando offensive against German atomic research during World War II.

Movies like "The Dirty Dozen" or "Inglorious Basterds" involved suicide missions against the Nazi war machine, but the ragtag unit at the center of this book undertook many missions where escape seemed impossible from the outset; their exploits would be unbelievable if they were not well documented. The story Bascomb explores is undeniably cinematic, so much so that a film has already been made about it — the (highly adapted) 1965 Kirk Douglas film "The Heroes of Telemark." About 150 Norwegian expatriates, former soldiers, backwoodsmen, and scientists trained in the mountains of Scotland for weeks learning commando assassination, demolition, and radio techniques. Known as the Norwegian Independent Company No. 1 (or Kompani Linge by its members), these Scandinavian warriors conducted raids, attacks, and covert operations all over Norway, but one specific campaign is the focus of *The Winter Fortress*.

In 1942, Germany and the United States were briefly at the same point in developing the atomic bomb. The source of "heavy water," an essential part of Nazi nuclear

experimentation, was the cutting-edge Vemork dam in rural Rjukan, Norway. Luckily for the Allies, two Norwegian physicists, Leif Tronstad and Jomar Brun, who were essential to the design and construction of the power plant built deep into the dam, contacted British operatives once the Nazis took over production. With Tronstad guiding the Norwegian commando unit training in Scotland and the undercover assistance of Brun actively managing the Nazi-controlled heavy water facility, a mission was mounted to destroy the plant.

The Winter Fortress breathtakingly chronicles the preparation and hardship of the men involved. Bascomb manages to capture in propulsive detail men like Jens-Anton Poulsson, a 23-year-old Norwegian soldier who was driven from Norway by the Nazi invasion and traveled almost around the world in order to join Kompani Linge, or Einar Skinnarland, a Rjukan local with valuable knowledge of the Vemork power plant who refused anesthetic for excruciating knee surgery because it would delay the ship hijacking that took him to England and his calling as a commando and spy. These men, plus two more trained commandos and a local resistance operative, became the pathfinder element known as Operation Grouse, parachuting into the remorseless, broken terrain around the factory during a harsh Norwegian winter to collect intelligence and guide a glider assault onto target. Their struggle began immediately as they fought to survive in the barren snowscape around Rjukan. The Norwegian team bore setbacks with equipment, months-long delays, a disastrous failed infiltration attempt by British sappers, and ruthless German commanders. Eventually the Operation Grouse team received reinforcements from Kompani Linge and mounted a mission to destroy the plant with explosives from within.

Their final attack, against a heavily armed German garrison which knew Vemork was a target, began with the ascent of an ice-strewn cliff and ended with the Norwegian operators splitting up to variously escape the country by rail, trek to Sweden on skis, or return to the mountains to enable further resistance in the country. The author could have stopped here with a riveting narrative and a spellbinding conclusion, but thankfully he continues the story of the Norwegian Independent Company. The Nazi ordnance corps was determined to harness the atomic energy that the Vemork dam could unlock, and it fell to the British-trained Norwegian commandos to continuously thwart Nazi efforts to rebuild the facility. This book is a must-read for WWII history buffs, students of special forces or commando tactics, and a captivating option for anyone who might not usually enjoy military history or non-fiction.

Have you read a book lately that you think would be of interest to the Infantry community and want to submit a review? Or are you interested in being a book reviewer for *INFANTRY*? Send us an email at: usarmy.benning.tradoc.mbx.infantry-magazine@mail.mil or call (706) 545-2350.