



From My Bookshelf

BG John C. "Doc" Bahnsen, US Army, Retired

“A fundamental responsibility for professional officers is to continually increase their fighting competence. If we do this, we better prepare ourselves to lead and take care of soldiers. Preparation for war is our first duty in peacetime. At lower levels, officers must be technically and tactically proficient and should gauge their readings and studies accordingly. At increasingly high levels, horizons must be continually broadened toward operational perspectives. Having said all that, the military history program at West Point got me hooked on reading about the profession of arms and I have never stopped. To become a better fighter, one must come to grips with the lessons of the past.

I encourage you to read books that give you a feel for what it takes to push to the edge and take calculated risks to win in combat. Field Marshal Viscount William Slim's quotation in FM 100-5, *Operations*, does a great job of articulating this warrior spirit: 'Hit the other fellow as quick as you can, as hard as you can, where it hurts him the most, when he isn't looking.' ”

Attacks by Erwin Rommel

This superb book relates the author's personal combat experiences at the unit level during World War I. It outlines that essential combat quality of personal example and "follow me" leadership. Rommel's account of reconnaissance and aggressive attacks, often on a very small front, is a primer for light infantry today. His use of machineguns as his base of fire and his personal leadership of small infantry units using breakthrough tactics marked the beginning of his later brilliant generalship in World War II. All maneuver arms officers should study this book while keeping in mind that in World War II, Rommel got mixed reviews at the operational level.

The Rommel Papers by Erwin Rommel.

Introduction by B. H. Liddell-Hart

The "Desert Fox" writes about World War II armored warfare beginning in Europe and later in North Africa. Personal reconnaissance by light aircraft and personal leadership at the key point on the battlefield form the essence of these memoirs. Fighting outnumbered and winning is possible when you have the edge in personal leadership. We now know that the Allies "read Rommel's mail," which makes his battlefield successes even more incredible.

Rommel as Military Commander by Ronald Lewin

This balanced assessment of Rommel's career gives us a picture of a military genius but exposes his "warts" as well. Logisticians are, by nature, conservative and generally Rommel ignored their caution.

His defeat in the desert because of his lack of logistical support is fully documented in this book.

Once an Eagle by Anton Myrer.

This novel tells the story of Sam Damon, a fighting soldier who earned a battlefield commission during World War I, survived the peacetime Army of the 1920s and 1930s and was ready to lead in World War II as a general. It also tells the story of Courtney Massengale—careerist, ticket puncher, smoothie—a man who avoided the front lines in World War I yet always outranked Damon. Massengale's combat failure in World War II is predictable. Professional soldiers should read this superbly written novel to sustain themselves in a peacetime Army where the "Massengales" of the day seem to be everywhere. Damon provides a role model that all good soldiers should emulate.

Defeat Into Victory by Field Marshal Viscount Slim

This outstanding book is filled with personal leadership techniques used by a senior officer to restore confidence and will to win in a defeated army. He teaches that senior commanders should go forward rather than calling subordinates to the rear. He also writes about how to use tanks in the jungle, how to get along with the Chinese and other oriental allies, and a hundred other solid lessons. Practical, common sense stuff is the bill of fare as he translates tactical success into operational victory in this human story told by one of World War II's great soldiers and superbly clear writers.

(Brigadier General John C. "Doc" Bahnsen, US Army, Retired, lives in Yorktown, Virginia, where he is a private consultant. During his 30 years of active duty, he served in a variety of command and staff positions in Korea, Europe, Vietnam and the Continental United States. His article, "A Mobile Division for Future War," appeared in the June 1989 Military Review. — Editor)

This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness
by T. R. Fehrenbach.

The US Army was not ready to fight in June 1950. This book is about the lack of readiness of our Army at the beginning of and during the Korean War. It pulls no punches. This is a sad story that all soldiers should read to be able to recognize the signs of units unprepared for a "no-warning" war.

Memoirs of an Infantry Officer
by Siegfried Lorraine Sassoon.

World War I trench warfare was grimy, brutal and personal. Leadership in this type combat took guts and a lot of personal example. You can compare this British officer's leadership style with that found in Rommel's *Attacks*. War at the unit level is not romantic or pretty and this book gives it to you up front and personal.

Silent Victory: The U.S. Submarine War Against Japan by Clay Blair.

World War II submarine warfare in the Pacific during the first two years was one failure after another. Torpedoes did not work right and some of the commanders would not close with the enemy. Turning these "war stoppers" around provides some good leadership lessons learned. This book, which recounts the combat patrols of the Pacific submarine fleet, is one of many good books about naval combat leadership.

Lost Victories by Erich von Manstein.

An excellent personal account by perhaps one of the best, if not the best, World War II operational thinkers. He describes the problems faced by a competent military commander at the operational/strategic level of war who must function without clearly defined criteria for success. A soldier's soldier, von Manstein cared deeply for his troops and his country. We can learn much from his example.

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used in the planning stages. To achieve success, the participants must know what is expected of them. The first principle of war, *objective*, has been violated, subsequently causing a violation of the other principles. Interdiction and eradication are not objectives in the sense of a formal strategy—they are merely tactics that can be employed to achieve an objective.

Once the strategy is determined, it must be articulated clearly, enforcing the principle of *simplicity*. A single commander then is given a mission statement. There definitely is not one commander in the drug war—the concept of *unity of command* is non-existent. Currently, the option exists for a myriad of separate, uncoordinated actions (local police,

The Forgotten Soldier by Guy Sajer

As clearly stated in our doctrine manuals, leaders must understand not only the physical effects of combat but also the moral effects and how both relate to the physical environment within which engagements and battles are fought. This is a thought-provoking book that addresses the moral force of war from the perspective of a World War II German soldier during Eastern Front campaigns. If you have already read it, read it again!

Small Unit Leadership: A Commonsense

Approach by Dandridge M. Malone

A gut-level primer concerning how to lead and motivate, this book is must reading. It still should serve as a tool for daily use by small unit leaders and should be reread by us "Field Marshals" so we do not forget what motivates troops in the trenches.

George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1889—1939 by Forrest C. Pogue

Although not well known to the American public at large, Marshall had a tremendous impact not only upon our Army as an institution but virtually upon the entire world. Pogue superbly describes the myriad of challenges that faced Marshall throughout his career. Marshall cared deeply for soldiers and his profession, and through constant study he was able to prepare himself intellectually. This is a great book for all of us, but especially for young officers who may be disenchanted with how they "fit" into the system.

Additionally, the most recent good reading I have found includes *Killer Angels* by Michael Shaara, *Platoon* by Dale A. Dye, *Defense of Hill 781*, by James R. McDonough, *Team Yankee* by Harold Coyle, and *Pleiku: The Dawn of Helicopter Warfare in Vietnam* by J. D. Coleman. The important point is to continually prepare for the awesome responsibility of leading soldiers in combat.

county sheriffs, state police, US Border Patrol, state marine patrol, customs/immigration, federal drug enforcement agents) Each agency is separately funded and receives its own guidance and operational instructions. Parochial pride can cause a lack of cooperation among these agencies. Without *unity of command*, there is no way to achieve *mass* or have *economy of force*.

Even though the level of war envisioned in FM 100—5 is much different than that in which we are, currently engaged, the principles still apply. The military must not abrogate its responsibility to execute its missions in accordance with doctrinally proven principles.

LTC Lee S. Fields Jr., MEARNG, Augusta, Maine