

1-1-1994

Book Review: Fields of Armor

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Recommended Citation

Bunker, Robert J. "Fields of Armor." Peter McKelvy, prd. *Armor*. July-August 1994, Vol. 53. No. 4: 53.

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Professor Cooke's book provides an excellent description of *Daguet's* preparations for the start of the ground war, or "G-Day." *Daguet*, assigned possibly the toughest mission of Schwarzkopf's "End Run," was to open up Main Supply Route (MSR) TEXAS, as well as to move into Iraq and seize As-Salman's critical road juncture and airfield. Selected by XVIII Airborne Corps, the Legionnaires, 3d Marines (French), and paratroopers of the 82d Airborne were to seize As-Salman, and establish a "blocking position" in order to prevent an Iraqi counterattack.

The 4th Dragoons, part of *Daguet* and also part of the French Rapid Deployment Force, trained to fight in a European scenario and was not accustomed to employing a large number of tanks (except perhaps in training exercises) in an operation the size of DESERT STORM. *Daguet*, like its American counterparts, took the opportunity prior to the commencement of the ground war to work on desert maintenance, desert tank gunnery, and maneuver techniques. When the war commenced, the 4th Dragoons, armed with AMX 30 medium tanks and Panhard armored cars, was to support the French 3d Marine Regiment, acting as *Daguet's* main maneuver element. Joining in the assault on As-Salman, through MSR ROCHAMBEAU, were elements of the 1st Spahi Regiment, the 2d Foreign Legion Infantry, and the 1st Foreign Legion Cavalry, all venerable units of France's colonial past and heirs of the French legacy in Indochina and Algeria. Accompanying the French were the 2d Brigade of the 82d Airborne Division, as well as the 18th Field Artillery Battery, equipped with newly-acquired multiple rocket launchers (MLRS). *Daguet*, comprising 12,000 officers and men, supported by French and American artillery and Gazelle and Puma helicopters, began the ground war moving into Iraq and securing the vital crossroads leading to As-Salman. It is at this point, however, that this book's major fault becomes apparent. That is, of course, the lack of pertinent chronological information, such as times and dates for the commencement of the war. While Cooke provides some chronological information, the reader is left guessing when and where the events he is describing took place.

Cooke's chapter on 'Fighting the Iraqis' is perhaps the single best chapter in the book. The author provides an excellent overview of the French drive to As-Salman and the lackluster Iraqi response to *Daguet's* presence on Iraqi soil. He provides a blow-by-blow account of the French drive toward the Euphrates River, and of beginnings of the so-called *Enemy-Prisoner-of-War Express* (EPW). *Daguet*, up against the Iraqi 45th Division, expected the Iraqis to make a fight for As-Salman. As *Daguet* advanced beyond As-Salman, however, the opposite occurred, with French and American units taking large numbers of Iraqi pris-

oners. Brigadier General Bernard Janvier, the French commander, instructed that they be immediately turned over to the Saudis, so as to avoid what both Cooke and Kelly call institutional atrocities by the victorious allies.

100 Miles From Baghdad, written by a trained historian and an active participant in the war, represents one of the best personal accounts of DESERT STORM and is one of the first personal accounts of the ground war from a non-American perspective. Professor Cooke's book, in addition to British historian Nigel Pearce's *The Shield and the Sabre* (1991), and Charles Allen's masterful account of the Royal Air Force in *Desert Storm, Thunder and Lightning* (1991), will remain as one of the best individual histories of a division at war for the foreseeable future.

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Fields of Armor, produced by Peter McKelvy. Discovery Communications, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind., 1993. Approx. 5 Hours, \$59.95.

Fields of Armor is a four-cassette, 11-episode video series that chronicles the development of the tank from its humble origins on the battlefields of the First World War to the Allied triumph in the Gulf War. Individual episodes, each about 25 minutes long, cover the First World War, the interwar period and the 1940 Battle of France, El Alamein, Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge, Kursk, Korea, Vietnam, the October War, Afghanistan, and the Gulf War.

Many of the great tank battles of the 20th Century come alive from the perspective of the tank crew members themselves. These experiences range from the sheer terror of a Sherman crew facing a Tiger in the Ardennes to the adrenaline rush of an Abrams crew knocking out multiple T-72s in the Gulf. The Soviet experience in Afghanistan and the American experience in Vietnam, in turn, provide examples of the tank's limitations when opposed by guerrilla forces in unforgiving terrain.

The series draws upon rare and contemporary footage, still photos, diary accounts, and interviews with battle survivors and key officers. It also relies upon the insights of renowned historians such as John Keegan (*The Face of Battle*), Kenneth Macksey (Guderian), and Max Hastings (*Das Reich*). Because of its historical and technical accuracy and state-of-the-art production techniques, each episode is informative and captivating.

Fields of Armor would be an excellent audio-visual resource for an armor unit li-

brary or for an ROTC course focusing on 20th Century military history. Though expensive, the series would also be a welcome addition to the professional library of an armor/cavalry soldier.

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U.S. Military Tracked Vehicles by Fred W. Crismon. Motorbooks International, Osceola, Wis. 1992, \$39.95.

Over the years a great many books have been published on the history of tanks or tracked vehicles. Many of the armor-related books scanned in a book store or library turn out to be a disappointment to a potential buyer. *U.S. Military Tracked Vehicles* by Fred W. Crismon is not one of those disappointing books. The book is one of the finest compendiums of information on tracked vehicles in U.S. service ever written.

The book opens with a quick survey on tracked vehicle development from before World War I through the M1A2. It also includes some very useful definitions of various tracked vehicle technical terms. The book is divided into sections that cover tanks, recovery vehicles, landing vehicles, and many more categories. Within each section, a complete description and photograph of each type of vehicle is arranged in chronological order. Sadly, the thickness of armor on armored vehicles is not given and neither is the armor penetration capability of the tank main gun. These are about the only shortcomings in the book, and it can be argued that such information lies beyond the scope that the author intended.

This book is a must-have for any one interested in the evolution of armor and is a should-have for most armor personnel who have to answer questions about U.S. armor. Some may complain about the cost but, compared to other books that attempt to cover as broad an area, it is a bargain. A current issue of *Jane's Armor and Artillery* costs well over \$200. Other readers should find this book of use as well.

Anyone watching television news is familiar with the standard television shot during a coup or military deployment in an urban setting, where a tracked vehicle goes by and the correspondent calls an APC a tank. If CNN, ABC, NBC, and CBS would issue *U.S. Military Tracked Vehicles* to their correspondents, they would not only be able to do a better job of reporting, but they would enhance their credibility by properly identifying vehicles.

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