

Reviews

A Parable with Valuable COIN Lessons

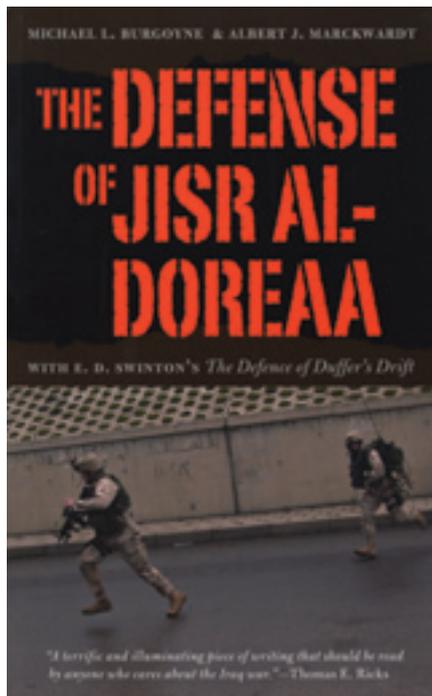
The Defense of Jisr al-Doreaa With E.D. Swinton's *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*. Michael L. Burgoyne and Albert J. Marckwardt. *The University of Chicago Press*. 178 pages; maps; black-and-white photographs; \$14.

By LTC Jon Scott Logel

In light of the literature published following the troop surge of 2007–08 in Iraq, *The Defense of Jisr al-Doreaa* is a timely, necessary tactical guide for junior officers today. While books such as Tom Ricks' *The Gamble* and Bob Woodward's *The War Within* focus on the political and strategic leaders who shepherded the surge and the change in American strategy towards a counterinsurgency (COIN) in 2007–08, this novella is a prescriptive narrative of counterinsurgency lessons aimed at the youngest leaders deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. The authors, Majors Michael L. Burgoyne and Albert J. Marckwardt, have written, arguably, the most practical book to come out of Iraq yet. As John Nagl notes in the foreword, *Jisr al-Doreaa* is "a guide to the tactical challenges of [the Iraq] conflict that is sure to become a modern classic." By combining this new small-unit story with E.D. Swinton's classic *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*, the authors have produced a short must-read for every lieutenant preparing to lead soldiers in COIN operations.

Burgoyne and Marckwardt follow the chapter format and literary devices that Swinton used in *Duffer's Drift*. Swinton used the six dreams of LT Backsight Forethought to illustrate 22 fundamental lessons of small-unit tactics learned during the Boer War of 1899–1902. In *Jisr al-Doreaa*, the authors use the six dreams of 2LT Phil Connors, an armor platoon leader en route to Iraq, whose zone of responsibility is a combat outpost at a bridge in the town of Jisr al-Doreaa. Like LT

Backsight Forethought, 2LT Connors learns from each dream and applies the new lessons in each successive dream. Where Backsight Foresight surrenders to the Boers at the end of each failed dream, young Connors' failures lead to his relief by his commanding officer. By the fifth dream of each story, the young leader keeps his post, but not without one more painful lesson to apply to the sixth and final dream. This literary device works and is well suited for small-unit leader development.



In *Jisr al-Doreaa*, dreams one through three read almost like a morality play, but dreams four through six are excellent in creating the context for lessons in the tactics of COIN. At the end of each dream, Burgoyne and Marckwardt add to a cumulative list of steps for small-unit leaders to follow in the COIN environment. Culled from sources that include articles by GEN David Petraeus and David Kilcullen, and the authors' own experiences, the list of lessons learned forms an effective checklist for a platoon leader to use in planning and

executing small-unit COIN missions.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of *Jisr al-Doreaa* is the illustration of how junior leaders should focus on the population as the center of gravity. In each dream, the success or failure of 2LT Connors depends on how positive his interaction is with the civilians in his zone. When he focuses too much on force protection, his platoon overreacts to a sniper attack by returning fire indiscriminately into a local farmhouse. In the brief but visceral description of the aftermath of screaming family members and dead civilians, the dream becomes a nightmare and cannot end fast enough for Connors. In the midst of his confusion, a media team arrives to record the carnage and put the young lieutenant on the spot just before his commanding officer relieves him of his platoon. Clearly, 2LT Connors and his platoon do not know how to address the local population in the conduct of their mission in this early dream. Conversely, by 2LT Connors' last dream, Burgoyne and Marckwardt have painted a scenario in which the platoon has increased the security of the people in al-Doreaa through thoughtful engagement with local leaders, the conduct of joint patrols with American and Iraqi security forces, and the integration of the Iraqi Health Ministry into the town's medical-care support. Just prior to waking from his last dream, 2LT Connors notes that "getting into firefights and raiding buildings is exciting, but creating a lasting stability is real victory."

While not the complete manual for teaching young officers how to lead soldiers in fighting insurgents among the people, *Jisr al-Doreaa* is an important tool for developing our military's young combat leaders. Burgoyne and Marckwardt have provided a great resource for the Army to use as it faces future operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond. In addition, they have created a companion web site with

maps, illustrations, learning exercises and discussion boards. All authors' royalties from *Jisr al-Doreaa* benefit the Fisher House Foundation, the private-public partnership that supports families of injured American servicemembers. In crafting this book and online resource, Burgoyne and Marckwardt

have made a significant contribution to soldiers, present and future.

LTC Jon Scott Logel is a military professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. He served on the Task Force Lightning staff in Multi-National Division-North from 2006–07.

Introducing 'Lightning Joe'

Taking Command: General J. Lawton Collins from Guadalcanal to Utah Beach and Victory in Europe. H. Paul Jeffers. NAL CALIBER. 325 pages; black-and-white photographs; index; \$25.95.

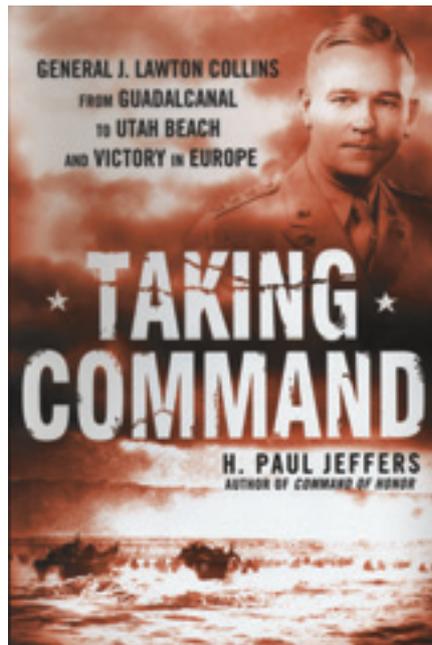
By **COL Stanley L. Falk**
AUS retired

GEN J. Lawton Collins was one of this country's most impressive generals in World War II, with successful combat commands in both the Pacific and Europe. His 1979 autobiography, *Lightning Joe*, describes his wartime experiences, but he has been denied a solid biography by a qualified historian. H. Paul Jeffers' effort, *Taking Command*, while a good try, unfortunately falls somewhat short of this mark.

Jeffers, an experienced journalist and author of a number of other biographies, presents a well written, faithful account of Collins' professional career, but offers little on his personal life. *Taking Command* is based largely on published sources and particularly on *Lightning Joe*. In addition, the narrative is plagued by numerous small errors, misstatements and oversimplifications, as well as considerable extraneous detail not directly related to the general. Many of the low-level combat descriptions lack a clear explanation of Collins' specific involvement in and effect on the fighting, and the complete absence of maps makes them difficult to follow. The reader comes away with a good impression of Collins' accomplishments but a feeling that there is still something missing.

GEN Joseph Lawton Collins was a bright, aggressive, ambitious and suc-

cessful commander—an effective and popular leader with a strong sense of his duty to both the nation and its sons he commanded. The future Chief of Staff of the Army graduated from West Point in 1917 along with three other eventual World War II generals—Mark Clark, Matthew Ridgeway and Alfred Gruenther—and only two years behind Dwight D. Eisenhower and Omar Bradley. By 1919, at the age of 23, he was commanding an infantry battalion in France.



For the next 20 years, Collins had an increasingly important range of assignments in staff and command positions, interspersed with tours in the Army school system as both student and instructor. In December 1941, just a few days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he was appointed chief of staff of the Hawaiian Department, responsible, among other things, for coordinating the islands' defenses. He

was then a colonel but was quickly promoted to the rank of brigadier general and, shortly thereafter, given command of the 25th Infantry Division as a major general. In late 1942, he took the division to Guadalcanal where, in mid-December, it relieved the weary and casualty-ridden 1st Marine Division, which had been in punishing action since early August.

The struggle for Guadalcanal was still far from over, and the 25th Division plunged immediately into fierce combat on difficult terrain. Collins' sound tactical judgment and aggressive, personal involvement in the fight soon earned him the nickname "Lightnin' Joe," after the "Tropic Lightning" designation of the 25th Division and the lightning bolt on its colorful shoulder patch. As ADM William F. Halsey, the South Pacific theater commander, put it, Collins was "quick on his feet and even quicker in his brain," and he pushed his troops forcefully in their sustained drive to defeat the Japanese.

A few months after Guadalcanal was secured, Collins and the 25th Division moved north to New Georgia and once again saw heavy fighting. Jeffers covers this combat only briefly, but it is clear that the division was a significant element in destroying enemy forces on the island.

A brief Christmas leave to visit his family at the end of 1943 found Collins in Washington, D.C., where he briefed Army Chief of Staff GEN George C. Marshall on the fight for Guadalcanal. In concluding, he added that, since he had successfully led a division for over a year, he now felt that he could command a corps. Marshall replied that GEN Douglas MacArthur had said that Collins was "too young" for such a command, and then ended the conversation. But Collins, who was actually almost 48, would get his wish and was soon on his way to London to assume an important role in Operation Overlord, the planned invasion of France.

Collins was one of three Army generals who had led combat forces in amphibious operations in the Pacific who were shifted to Europe to take part in the coming assault. The other

two were LTG Alexander Patch, who had held overall command on Guadalcanal and who would lead the invasion of southern France, and MG Charles Corlett, who had commanded the 7th Infantry Division on Kwajalein in the central Pacific and who would command the XIX Corps in a follow-up role in Normandy. Collins would command VII Corps, which would land on Utah Beach on D-Day as part of LTG Bradley's First Army.

Early on the morning of June 6, 1944, VII Corps stormed ashore on schedule along the east coast of the Cherbourg peninsula. In response to Collins' order that the assault "be pushed at all costs," his troops struck rapidly inland to cut off the peninsula while simultaneously pushing north in a drive to capture the key port of Cherbourg. They achieved both objectives in less than three weeks, with Collins closely supervising and coordinating their actions.

Come July, with American forces safely ashore on both Utah and Omaha beaches, the First Army was still un-

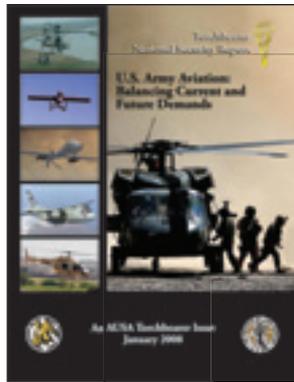
able to break out of its initial lodgment. By the end of the month, Bradley had devised a new plan to end the stalemate, with Collins to spearhead the effort. He did so, he wrote later, because he believed the VII Corps commander was "nervy and ambitious" and had good tactical judgment. Collins did not disappoint him. On the heels of a heavy saturation bombing attack on German defenses, VII Corps pushed firmly through heavy enemy resistance, captured the key town of Saint-Lô, and broke the way open for First Army to begin its drive across northern France.

After halting a German counteroffensive at Mortain, Collins' troops helped seal the Falaise Gap and swept across northern France. In late October, they captured Aachen, the first major German city to fall to the Allies. They then found themselves enmeshed in the bloody fight for the Huertgen Forest. Hardly had this struggle ended when VII Corps was called upon to halt and then crush the northern wing

of the German Ardennes offensive. After the German defeat in the Battle of the Bulge, Collins led VII Corps across Germany, capturing Cologne, helping clear the Ruhr pocket, and then driving eastward to meet Russian forces at Torgau on the Elbe River. This was only two weeks before the final German surrender and almost simultaneous with Collins' promotion to the rank of lieutenant general.

Taking Command covers these battles, strategic developments and the leadership demonstrated by Collins in a smoothly written narrative. Sometimes we see only the big picture, sometimes we are buried in a mass of details about small-unit actions, occasionally down to the battalion and company levels.

Jeffers then goes on to briefly describe Collins' postwar career as deputy commander and then chief of staff, Army Ground Forces; then Army director of information/chief of public information; deputy and later Vice Chief of Staff of the Army (during which assignment he was promoted to the rank of



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full general); and finally, from 1949 to 1953, Army Chief of Staff. It was in the latter position, in 1951, that he joined other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in a unanimous recommendation to relieve GEN MacArthur. As Jeffers points out, this was not an easy action for Collins to take, but the general believed that MacArthur's public disagreement with President Truman's

policies and his failure to comply with specific directives from Washington, D.C., fully justified his relief.

Collins subsequently was the American member of the Military Committee of the NATO Standing Group and from 1954–55 was President Eisenhower's special representative, with ambassadorial rank, to Vietnam. In

1956, he retired from active duty after a full, exciting and distinguished career. For anyone not familiar with Collins' impressive accomplishments, *Taking Command* is a useful and readable account.

COL Stanley L. Falk, AUS Ret., Ph.D., is a military historian and author specializing in World War II.

Briefly Noted...

Postcards from Checkpoint Charlie.

Bodleian Library. Distributed in the U.S. by University of Chicago Press. 112 pages; four-color illustrations; \$20.

Postcards of Political Icons. *Bodleian Library. Distributed in the U.S. by University of Chicago Press. 112 pages; four-color illustrations; \$20.*

Presenting new selections from British collector John Fraser's extensive accumulation of postcards, the two latest volumes in Bodleian's postcards series are packed with details of historical and human interest.

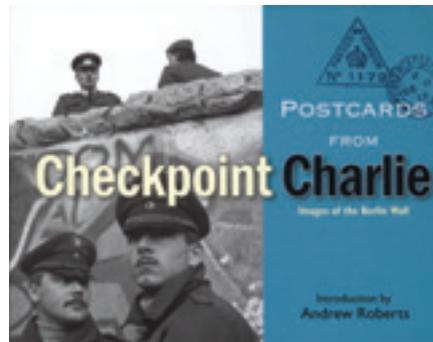
Postcards from Checkpoint Charlie documents the rise and fall of the Berlin Wall, focusing on the eponymous border crossing made infamous by Cold War movies and spy novels. Barbed wire was all that originally demarcated East and West Berlin; images of a soldier letting a child pass through it and another soldier hurdling across to the West embody the repression of the era.

Over time, the postcards show the barbed wire being replaced with a low wall and then a higher wall, an ever more formidable backdrop for the small wooden shed on Friedrichstrasse that composed Checkpoint Charlie—so-called because it was the third of the Allied border crossings.

The progression of the Wall is sobering, as are images of defectors escaping through a tunnel and East Berliners on ladders trying to glimpse their loved ones on the other side. More uplifting are the views of the Wall coming down in 1989, leading to the long-awaited reuniting of Berlin.

Postcards of Political Icons opens with

portraits of Kaiser Wilhelm II and David Lloyd George, continuing through the 20th century with the major players in World War II, the Cold War and more recent events. Of special interest

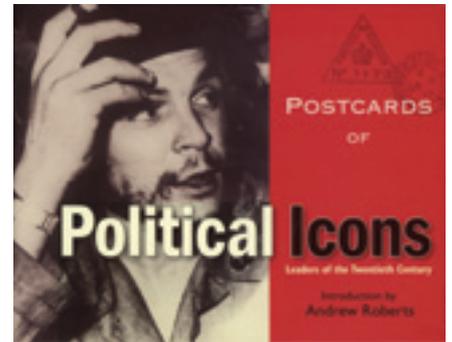


are images of Hitler, Haile Selassie and Emperor Hirohito.

Also of note is a view of a hand holding back a curtain to reveal a photograph of Burmese protester Aung

San Suu Kyi, who is currently under house arrest for the seventh successive year.

With significant background information provided for each postcard



and introductions by Andrew Roberts, these collections will be useful both to those who remember the history depicted within and to those first introduced to it by these pictures.

