

**Paul W. Westermeyer.** *U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990-1991: Liberating Kuwait.* Quantico: History Division United States Marine Corps, 2014. Illustrations, maps. x + 321 pp. \$39.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-78266-699-8.

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*U.S. Marines in the Gulf War, 1990-1991: Liberating Kuwait* provides a detailed examination of the US Marine Corps' preparation for and undertaking of combat operations during Operation Desert Storm. This work is the most recent contribution to the History Division of the Marine Corps' series of eleven books, which is titled *US Marines in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991*. Of the eleven, this is the second that Paul W. Westermeyer has written. Westermeyer, who received his MA in military history from Ohio State University, has worked for the History Division for many years.

As an official history of the Marine Corps, the work largely confirms the worth of the corps' tactical, operational, and strategic ideas, particularly the Maritime Prepositioning Force. As a modern approach to official history, it blends more traditional descriptions of military operations with larger geopolitical concerns and social realities. These range from the tensions between marines working side by side with Saudi allies to humorous anecdotes common to military memoirs that help animate the text.

The work begins by providing a broad political, social, and religious context going back to Islam's establishment. The work also discusses the increasing US need to project power in the Middle

East during the Cold War and the various ideas developed to do so while lacking significant footholds in the region, such as the Maritime Prepositioning Ships program and the Rapid Deployment Force (which subsequently transformed into US Central Command by 1983). Despite participation in these efforts, the Marine Corps struggled to maintain its traditional claim of being first to fight because other US troops had acquired this ability. Now, the corps would seek to bring the most power to the fight first. When it arrived in Saudi Arabia, it used the afore-mentioned Maritime Prepositioning concept that enabled it to be the first combined arms force in the region. Marines had the ground power, fixed and rotary wing air power, and logistics to be self-sustaining for a month.

While the corps embraced the Maritime Prepositioning concept envisioned by one-time secretary of the navy Harold Brown, it was more reticent about some military developments initiated by other services. This was particularly true for the air force's vision of centralized control of air power that dominated the use of air assets during Operation Desert Storm. In this section, Westermeyer reveals tension among marine officers about exactly how much organic airpower the Marine Corps should seek to control. General

Walter E. Boomer, for example, believed that some marines overreacted in response to the ceding of some air assets to the air force. A similar source of tension was the detailed planning of the air force for a strategic bombing campaign against targets in Iraq (as epitomized by a seven-hundred-page air tasking order) when the Marine Corps preferred a more flexible and tactical approach to soften Iraqi forces within Kuwait.

The text is punctuated by numerous maps and other photographs, many in color. A few images suffer from poor resolution. Helpful appendices complement the work; they include a timeline, general organization of marine units, award citations, and the transcription of a briefing Lieutenant General Bernard Trainor made to senior marine leaders about the quality of the Iraqi troops prior to combat. The work draws on the work of marine field historians during the conflict as well as oral histories conducted during or soon after the war, with more recent follow-up interviews and some Iraqi sources. Numerous marine participants as well as a number of military historians, including an army historian, commented on the work while in progress. While the work does not provide a comprehensive history of Operation Desert Storm, its detailed insights into one service's perspective provide an invaluable contribution to the general body of work on Operation Desert Storm, a conflict that has garnered so much global attention.

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