



John Gordon. *Fighting for MacArthur: The Navy and Marine Corps' Desperate Defense of the Philippines.* Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2011. 416 pp. \$32.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-61251-062-0.

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Fighting for MacArthur extends a recent trend in World War II historiography consisting of heightened interest in the early years of the Pacific war.[1] Gordon argues that the U.S. Navy (USN) and U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) played an underappreciated role in the defense of the Philippines against invading Japanese forces from December 1941 through May 1942. Navy and Marine units supported the Army's defense of the Bataan peninsula and provided the bulk of the personnel for the final defense of the fortress islands guarding the entrance to Manila Bay. Gordon notes that the surrender in the Philippines involved the largest surrender of USN and USMC prisoners entering enemy hands in World War II. Gordon notes that the defense of the island bastion of Corregidor saw one of the few instances of the USMC performing the advance base defense role for which the corps trained during the interwar period. *Fighting for MacArthur* seeks to rehabilitate the image of Admiral Thomas Hart, commander of the Asiatic Fleet, tasked with the defense of the Philippines. Instead of the feeble leader that General Douglas MacArthur, the overall American commander in the Philippines, blamed for the fall of the Philippines, Gordon's Hart provided realistic leadership for the Asiatic Fleet, especially with regard to food supplies. This work is primarily an operational level survey of the Philippine campaign from the per-

spective of the USN and USMC with frequent dives into the experiences of front-line sailors and Marines. Gordon relies on American archival sources and secondary sources, with a few Japanese sources also cited.

The work begins by discussing American preparations for war in 1941. Gordon highlights the Asiatic Fleet's readiness in comparison to MacArthur's forces, a theme that runs throughout the book. He argues that Japanese success against American aircraft on the ground in the Philippines on December 8, 1941 led MacArthur into a pattern of blaming the USN for Army failures.[2] The subsequent destruction of the Cavite Navy Yard by Japanese aircraft and the loss of American air superiority over the largest island of Luzon led Admiral Hart to withdraw the Asiatic Fleet from Manila Bay, which was no longer a tenable base. Gordon compares the light damage suffered by the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard on December 7 with the total destruction at Cavite, largely due to uncontrollable fires.

Throughout mid-December the Navy began stockpiling food in locations in the Manila area, while Army quartermasters shipped supplies north to support the failed efforts to defend Luzon's beaches against Japanese invasion forces. As a result, sailors and Marines in the Manila area were better supplied than the Army throughout the

Philippine campaign due to the Navy's proactive leadership. As evidence of further disconnects between the Army and Navy, the SS *Corregidor* sank in an Army-controlled minefield, resulting in the deaths of 900-1200 evacuating Filipino civilians and the loss of valuable artillery. MacArthur's ire at the Navy only grew when a convoy carrying aircraft and ground troops was rerouted from the Philippines to Australia. At sea, defective torpedoes limited the success of American submarine operations against Japanese invasion convoys. In an ironic reversal of the still to come situation on Guadalcanal, USN aerial patrols and offensive raids took place at night because of Japanese air superiority.

By the end of December, rapid Japanese success on Luzon led Imperial Army commanders to conclude that the final American positions on the Bataan peninsula would fall quickly. This underestimation of the size of the defending American forces served to prolong the campaign and meant the Japanese army was unprepared for the large numbers of prisoners that surrendered on Bataan. During the defense of Bataan, Japanese commanders tried several times to land small units behind American lines. Gordon provides detailed small-unit accounts of the confused, yet successful American defense against these Japanese landings. Gradually dwindling fuel stocks in southern Bataan curtailed patrols by small Navy gunboats and minesweepers based on Bataan and Corregidor, giving the Japanese greater freedom of movement in Manila Bay.

After MacArthur's departure on March 12, 1942, relations between the Army and Navy improved dramatically. Several Navy signals intelligence personnel were also evacuated to Australia from Station C, which provided important traffic analysis and signals intelligence for much of the campaign. The book also provides a detailed description of the island defenses and artillery positioned on Corregidor and the surrounding fortress islands. Although well fortified and equipped with

sophisticated weapons, American artillery on the fortress islands suffered from limited high-explosive ammunition, a shortage of weapons suited for engaging ground targets, and an outdated philosophy of artillery espoused by the artillery commander. As a result, American artillery came off second best during the ensuing artillery duel with the Japanese leading up to the final attack on Corregidor. Despite inflicting heavy casualties on the initial Japanese landing waves, the Marine and Navy forces on Corregidor were gradually pushed back. The Americans surrendered the remaining forces in the Philippines in early May 1942.

Fighting for MacArthur provides clear, readable coverage of a previously understudied aspect of the Philippines campaign. Gordon draws from an impressive set of interviews and makes extensive use of personal papers and official American archives. His conclusion that the poor relations between the Navy and MacArthur that were established during the defense of the Philippines played a central role in the Navy's refusal to accept a unified command in the Pacific is both interesting and original. This book would serve a general audience or an undergraduate survey equally well.

Notes

[1]. Franco David Macri, *Clash of Empires in South China: The Allied Nations' Proxy War With Japan, 1935-1941*, Modern Wars (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2012); Gregory Urwin, *Victory in Defeat: The Wake Island Defenders in Captivity, 1941-1945* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010); John Prados, *Islands of Destiny: The Solomons Campaign and the Eclipse of the Rising Sun* (New York: New American Library, 2012); Joel Holwitt, "Execute Against Japan": *The U.S. Decision to Conduct Unrestricted Submarine Warfare*, Williams-Ford Military History (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2009); Ian Toll, *Pacific Crucible: War at Sea in the Pacific, 1941-1942* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2012); James Hornfischer, *Neptune's Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal* (New York: Bantam

Books, 2011); Glen M. Williford, *Racing the Sunrise: Reinforcing America's Pacific Outposts, 1941-1942* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2010); Nathan Prefer, *The Battle for Tinian: Vital Stepping Stone in America's War Against Japan* (Haverton, PA: Casemate, 2012); William Bartsch, *Every Day a Nightmare: American Pursuit Pilots in the Defense of Java, 1941-1942*, Williams-Ford Military History (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2010); Bruce Gamble, *Fortress Rabaul: The Battle for the Southwest Pacific, January 1942-April 1943* (Minneapolis, MN: Zenith Press, 2010); Roger Letourneau and Dennis Letourneau, *Operation KE: The Cactus Air Force and the Japanese Withdrawal from Guadalcanal* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2012); William Bartsch, *December 8, 1941: MacArthur's Pearl Harbor*, Williams-Ford Military History (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2012).

[2]. Bartsch in *MacArthur's Pearl Harbor* takes a different perspective, arguing that errors in Washington resulted in an offensive heavy air force in the Philippines with insufficient defensive capabilities.

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