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William Stuart Nance. *Sabers through the Reich: World War II Corps Cavalry from Normandy to the Elbe.* Battles and Campaigns Series. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017. Illustrations, maps. 366 pp. $50.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8131-6960-6.

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William Stuart Nance's *Sabers through the Reich* is an excellent resource for historians and professional soldiers to understand the significance of cavalry units on the modern battlefield. Current US Cavalry units are trained and equipped with advanced technology to conduct the traditional reconnaissance and security missions previously assigned to horse cavalry units. As a professional soldier, Nance draws on the current terminology found in the US Army's *Field Manual 3-98 Reconnaissance and Security*; lay readers may wish to consult chapters 4 through 6 to deepen their understanding of cavalry missions as they closely resemble those Nance describes.

After some discussion of doctrine, Nance details several earlier works on US Cavalry formations in the European theater of the Second World War and notes that there was no campaign-wide history and analysis of the cavalry units. His assertation that without the corps cavalry formations the American campaign in northwest Europe would have been vastly more difficult is the basis for this study and is continuously illustrated through his analysis of actions from Normandy to VE day.

Nance begins with a brief history of US Cavalry in previous wars. In his studies, *Lee's Cavalrymen: A History of the Mounted Forces of the Army of Northern Virginia* (2002) and Edward G. Longacre describes how the Confederates and Union employed their cavalry in a similar way that Nance describes in *Sabers through the Reich*. Nance reminds us that outside of the American Civil War, there was little use of cavalry in the traditional reconnaissance and security roles, and these units often fought as infantry, including Teddy Roosevelt's famous Rough Riders. Although the First World War saw the invention of the tank, the nature of the battlefield relegated the cavalry to inactivity, and the absence of a dedicated reconnaissance and security formations in US units can be studied by reading *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (2006) by Mark Grotelueshen. In addition to describing the earlier employment of US Cavalry units, Nance also introduces the reader to the initial cavalry doctrinal publications that cavalry leaders and corps commanders ignored, relying instead on their previous training.

Although reminiscent of the quip that the American army is unpredictable because leaders do not read their own doctrine, Nance shows how corps commanders employed their cavalry in traditional and effective ways that could only have been a result of decades of field training, map exercises, and case studies of previous actions. Al-

though a classmate of mine remarked at the end of the Cavalry Leaders Course that the term "economy of force" was strangely absent from the curriculum, Nance describes that was how the cavalry were most useful to American commanders.

Nance describes the cavalry's operations in the First, Third, Seventh, and Ninth Armies throughout the war. Each corps was typically assigned a Mechanized Cavalry Group (MCG), which was faster than infantry units, and with much more firepower, but lacked the fighting abilities of armor. This small, agile, middleweight unit was often used to accomplish river crossings before the main body, conducted flank guards during breakthroughs, and took responsibility for the battle space of much larger units. In the defense, MCGs guarded exposed flanks, or screened in front of the main body, giving commanders a "crumple zone" that traded space for time. These actions allowed corps commanders to respond to unexpected German attacks on favorable terms. Several failures are described as well, including how the Fifteenth Cavalry traveled into a deadly German ambush at forty miles per hour, and the poor employment of the Fourteenth Cavalry in the Losheim Gap during the German Ardennes offensive. The best measure of the worth of the cavalry is the repeated instances when 1,500-man MCGs took responsibility for ten–twenty miles of frontage, well in excess of the three–five miles an infantry division could cover and allowed the US Corps to mass combat power at the decisive point.

These excellent descriptions of tactics in ***Sabers through the Reich*** illuminate further need for understanding beyond tactics. Nance begins with excellent descriptions of the Modified Tables of Equipment and the major combat platforms used by the MCGs, and his examples of logistics show a difficult problem the cavalry solved. The 117th Cavalry Squadron brought its mess trucks ashore against orders during the Dragoon landings, showing how that unit solved the problem of field feeding when operating far in advance of the main body. General George S. Patton's use of the cavalry to establish a second radio reporting net increased his ability to communicate and rapidly receive reports. The cavalry units, far from the main body, were in constant need of bulk fuel, food, and ammunition and were plagued by communications problems. Belton Y. Cooper's ***Death Traps: The Survival of an American Armored Division in World War II*** (1998) is an excellent memoir of sustainment problems in the 3rd Armored Division. A further study into the cavalry's sustainment fight would provide valuable insights; their part in the war would have been impossible without support.

Nance describes to readers what American cavalry units have been responsible for in World War II and provides excellent descriptions of how tactical use of cavalry units led to operational successes. ***Saber's through the Reich*** is an excellent post Cavalry Leaders Course resource and should be read by commanders at echelon. It is also an excellent resource for historians to understand the American tactical employment of the corps in Europe and explains how the Americans were able to successfully confront the Germans with such a small army relative to the Soviet Union.

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