

To restore unity within his company, Spencer reverted to his proven strategy: facing challenges together, maintaining standards, fostering communication during downtime, and instilling the company's identity and self-esteem in the soldiers. As he puts it: "Similar to a parent or coach who imposes rules and discipline and are loved more by their children or athletes for that strictness, a military leader who enforces military standards is followed more readily by soldiers who are accustomed to such standards" (134). Soldiers were directed to focus on their teams, despite having the internet readily available to them. He writes: "Soldiers need to talk to other soldiers to process what they have seen, hear how others perceived it, understand why it bothered them, and to grasp that they are not alone in struggling to cope" (161).

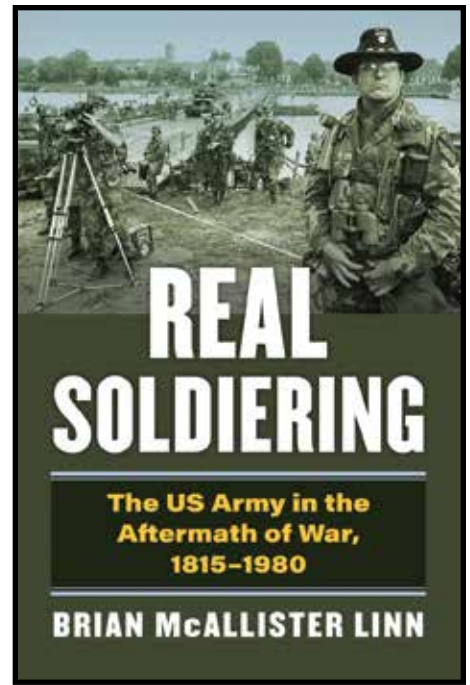
Spencer's journey with his company concludes on a high note. His company earned the highest respect within the battalion, achieving a significant milestone by capturing Abu Omar al-Baghdadi, an Iraqi militant and high-value target (185). This could have been the end of his story, but he does return to his discussion about the use of the internet in soldiers' lives. He acknowledges that the internet has both advantages and disadvantages in connecting soldiers with the outside world during deployment (189). It can be a distraction, but it also provides significant benefits by helping soldiers stay in touch with family and prepares them for their postdeployment life with social media and supportive networks across the country.

The final chapter reflects Spencer's reassessment of the internet, prompted by his wife Emily's military deployment to Kuwait. He maintains that no amount of technology can replace the physical presence and the feeling of someone being there (208). However, he also acknowledges that modern technology enabled his wife to be part of their daily lives despite their physical distance (212). These dual perspectives highlight technology's limitations and its potential as a double-edged sword. However, the book concludes without offering specific solutions for enhancing unit cohesion through technology. It leaves the challenge of balancing soldiers' online and social lives for future research.

As an Army Reserve chaplain for fourteen years, I concur with Spencer that cohesion is most effective at the company level, which is around 150 soldiers (182). However, after reading this book, one might question the role senior personnel play in building cohesion in the Army. Spencer does not delve deeply into this topic and, in fact, highlights instances where senior personnel have had counterproductive effects. For example, a two-star general made a false promise to soldiers of a quick end to the war (36); a battalion command sergeant major immediately left the combat zone when attacked (47); and a colonel prioritized internet connectivity over the safety of soldiers (131).

Although Spencer's book does not discuss the role of senior leaders in building cohesion, it still offers valuable insights. His concerns about the impact of the internet and social media on team cohesion are well-founded. Excessive internet use during downtime in an operational environment is likely a symptom of poor leadership, if not the primary cause. Addressing the role of technology in soldiers' lives is crucial for building a cohesive unit. The key takeaway from the book is that good leadership is more critical than ever, as today's soldiers face greater distractions.

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REAL SOLDIERING: THE US ARMY IN THE AFTERMATH OF WAR, 1815–1980

BY BRIAN McALLISTER LINN

University Press of Kansas, 2023

Pp. xx, 300. \$49.95

REVIEW BY CHARLES R. BOWERY JR.

Since the publication of his first book on the United States Army in the Pacific before World War II, Brian McAllister Linn has established himself as one of the foremost scholars of modern American military history, with a prolific list of publications that remain staples of both professional military education and university reading lists. His 2007 *The Echo of Battle: The Army's Way of War* (Harvard University Press), a concise meditation on American debates over the nature of war and national defense, is consulted frequently and remains a favorite of instructors and senior military leaders. Much of Linn's scholarship focuses on the Army, and *Real Soldiering* reflects Linn's continuing fascination with how the Army as an institution reacts to the changing landscape in which it operates.

In this spirit, *Real Soldiering* focuses not on interwar periods, an intellectual framework that considers peacetime bookended by conflict, but on the so-called "aftermath armies" that followed each of America's conflicts from the War of 1812 to Vietnam. Linn argues that rather than changing over time, America's postwar

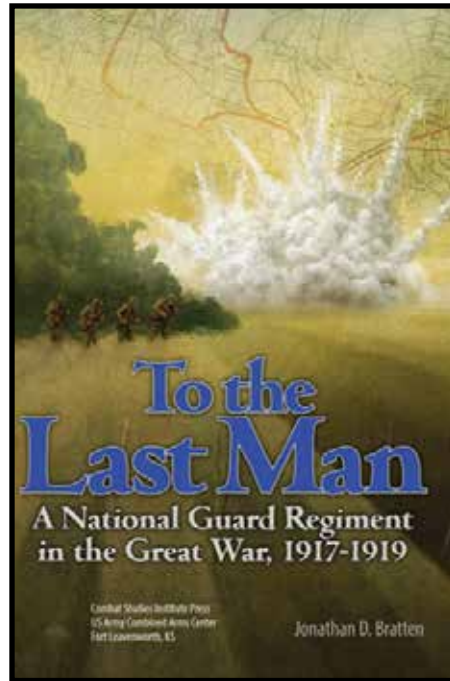
armies have been remarkably similar in their reactions to conflict. In each postwar decade, the Army has spent approximately five years making deliberate reactions to the just-ended conflict, followed by another five years of implementing those changes with an eye toward the future. “Real soldiering,” in Linn’s thinking, happens in these times of peace—when the Army reckons with what it thinks just happened, and what might happen the next time.

Although historians generally prefer to eschew such rigid categorizations of the past, Linn makes a persuasive case for these continuities. What makes *Real Soldiering* truly effective is the author’s incisive, often contrarian, view of the past, and his grounding of the book’s argument in the lived experience of both officers and enlisted men (and women) through time—the people who had to implement plans and policies. Although the institutional army draws lessons, develops plans, and proceeds with those plans, the “real soldiering” happening in units usually takes place in an environment of scarce resources, national fatigue, and amnesia following conflict, and the demands of balancing a large bureaucracy with the needs of the people who inhabit it. How these postwar professionals sought to carry out the Army’s strategies has frequently led to victory or defeat in the next conflict.

Real Soldiering is a crowning achievement for a historian renowned for more than four decades of scholarship. It manages to be at once both immensely authoritative, a demonstration of Linn’s absolute mastery of modern U.S. government records and personal histories, and deeply entertaining, owing to Linn’s acerbic wit and distinctive writing style. Serving soldiers and Army veterans will encounter their own experiences repeatedly in this book, scholars of modern American history will benefit from it, and serving senior leaders should make it mandatory reading. It is recommended most highly.

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TO THE LAST MAN: A NATIONAL GUARD REGIMENT IN THE GREAT WAR, 1917–1919

BY JONATHAN D. BRATTEN

Army University Press, 2020

Pp. vii, 271. Free Download

REVIEW BY CARY COLLINS

Military service touches every aspect of the human experience, particularly in the extreme conditions of wartime. Combat, by its very nature, is a ceaseless struggle for survival, where the specter of injury or death looms at every turn. In this crucible, the American soldiers of World War I—known as “doughboys”—demonstrated unparalleled commitment and courage. These soldiers risked everything, not for personal glory, but to serve a cause they believed was far greater than themselves. Few warriors have surpassed their dedication to the mission. Their contributions on the Western Front were instrumental in securing victory, yet today, their sacrifices—overshadowed by the scale and immediacy of other conflicts—are slipping from collective memory and often underappreciated in the broader narrative of American history.

The citizen-soldiers who answered the nation’s call and filled the ranks of state National Guard units remain among

the most overlooked participants of the First World War. These volunteer forces played key roles in Allied operations, often shouldering the burden of decisive victories. A striking example is the 26th Division, the Yankee Division of New England, which became the first full American Army division to deploy to France. Composed of recruits from states such as Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont, the division distinguished itself through its unshakable esprit de corps and notable accomplishments in the field. Within the Yankee Division, Maine’s 103d Infantry Regiment takes center stage, its compelling story brought to life in *To the Last Man: A National Guard Regiment in the Great War, 1917–1919*.¹ This powerful book offers fresh insights into the United States military during the Great War. It also serves as a poignant reminder that the legacy of World War I is essential to understanding the rise of modern America and its role in global military affairs.

Maj. Jonathan D. Bratten, an engineering officer with the Maine Army National Guard, has crafted a comprehensive and meticulously researched chronicle of the Yankee Division’s formation and history. Through rigorous investigation, he explores its mobilization, training, and battlefield service, offering a perspective shaped by both academic rigor and firsthand military experience. A skilled storyteller, Bratten masterfully weaves historical detail with personal insight, critically assessing the decisions that shaped the division’s actions and outcomes. He honors the soldiers who, when called into the fray, executed their orders with unmatched determination, often achieving feats that seemed beyond human capability. *To the Last Man* delves into the harsh realities of warfare, exposing the physical and emotional suffering of both enlisted men and officers. It brings to light the immense struggles faced by those on the frontlines of one of the most brutal conflicts in history.

Arriving in Great Britain in late October 1917, the 26th Division swiftly advanced to southeastern France by November. There, its soldiers underwent a rigorous two-month training program, sharpening critical skills in trench warfare, bayonet combat, grenade tactics, and gas mask usage. By February 1918, the Yankee Division was battle-ready, prepared to join the American Expeditionary Forces on the front lines.