

Book Reviews



Brutal War: Jungle Fighting in Papua New Guinea, 1942

By James Jay Carafano

Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 283 pages, 2021

Reviewed by
MAJ James Villanueva



Discussions of ground combat in World War II often highlight the fighting in North Africa, the Western Allies' liberation of France, or the titanic struggle on the Eastern Front. When ground combat in the Pacific Theater is discussed, the focus is typically on the Marine Corps' epic assaults on islands like Tarawa and Iwo Jima or the liberation of the Philippines under the towering, although controversial, General Douglas MacArthur. Although some books about early struggles of the U.S. Army in the Pacific exist, like Eric Bergerud's *Touched with Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific*, the topic still has not been explored as thoroughly as the aforementioned campaigns. With his recent book *Brutal War: Jungle Fighting in Papua New Guinea, 1942*, author James Jay Carafano brings the 1942 campaign in Papua New Guinea front and center. Carafano, a national security expert and former U.S. Army officer who earned a Ph.D. and master's degree from Georgetown University, brings together the American, Australian, indigenous, and Japanese viewpoints in this interesting and well-written book.

Carafano begins with a chapter outlining the strategic setting for the Papuan Campaign, starting with the Allied agreement on a strategy of defeating Germany "first" while also resourcing campaigns to repel Japanese advances and then proceed through the Pacific against Japan itself. He considers the competing goals of the Australians, British, Japanese, and Americans at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war and concludes that none of the warring powers were prepared for the combat they would face on Papua. None of the armies sufficiently trained their forces for the rough topographic and extreme environmental conditions found there, nor did they plan how to effectively sustain their forces under those conditions. The forces of each nation would have to try to fight in the midst of solving these problems.

At the strategic and operational levels, Carafano gives a good summary of the goals and issues facing each side. The Japanese viewed control of Papua, especially the seizure of Port Moresby on the island's southern shore, as crucial to maintaining pressure on Allied lines of communication with Australia. The island was also a key position for a perimeter defense of Japanese gains made thus far in the war. Meanwhile, the Allies sought to retake Papua to reduce

the threat to Australia, lay the ground for future offensives, and gain crucial positions to isolate and/or reduce the large Japanese base at Rabaul.

After setting the strategic stage for the fighting on Papua, Carafano discusses the specific conditions which made the fighting there so brutal. While the jungle flora, steep topography, and wet conditions created problems in merely moving troops and supplies, the numerous diseases present — from scrub typhus to malaria — served to rapidly reduce the fighting strength of the Australian, American, and Japanese armies alike. The need for manual labor to move supplies, equipment, and casualties in places where there were no roads brought many of the indigenous peoples into the story of the campaign as porters and stretcher bearers. With potential great power conflict in tropical regions, current Soldiers would do well to understand the challenges of operating in severely restrictive jungle terrain as outlined in *Brutal War*.

The next five chapters delineate the struggles of the fighting forces on both sides to maintain their fighting strength at the end of overstretched lines of communication on jungle paths with numerous non-battle injuries. Commanders faced dilemmas when deciding whether to attack to achieve their objectives while running the risk that further advances risked culmination due to lack of supplies. While the Australians found themselves conducting a fighting retreat at the beginning of the campaign, the Japanese, woefully short on supplies, were forced to abandon the advance towards Port Moresby. The direct leadership of officers such as Australia's William T. Owen and Arthur Key and U.S. I Corps Commander LTG Robert Eichelberger inspired their men to overcome numerous hardships in turning the tide of the campaign in the Allies' favor. Carafano does an excellent job explaining the decisions facing commanders at the time and offering balanced assessments of their, and their units', performance. Crucially, he argues against traditional narratives that the Japanese were suffering from "victory disease," instead noting that Japanese commanders in several instances took honest appraisals of their limitations but often had little choice other than to keep fighting under suboptimal conditions.

Carafano's book would be useful to military professionals because it highlights the importance of understanding specific aspects of the terrain on which one is going to fight while also pointing out the pivotal role logistics has in driving the nature and even success or failure of a campaign. The lack of preparation for the campaign by all belligerents — whether it be in training, terrain analysis, logistics, or command and control — provides a cautionary tale to leaders at all levels of command. Additionally, the different perspectives of the belligerents and civilians in the war are also important. Besides a few typos, the book could benefit from a few more maps with the narratives on the actual fighting. But these are minor

critiques. Ultimately, *Brutal War* offers a concise account that reflects good scholarship and brings greater attention to a campaign that is too often forgotten in the United States.

Home Guard Manual of Camouflage

By Roland Penrose

East Sussex, England: Lee Miller Archives Publishing, 102 pages, 2022

Reviewed by SFC (Retired)

John C. Simpson

"I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. 'When I hear you give your reasons,' I remarked, 'the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours.'

"Quite so,' he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. 'You see, but you do not observe.'"

— **"A Scandal in Bohemia," *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Arthur Conan Doyle**

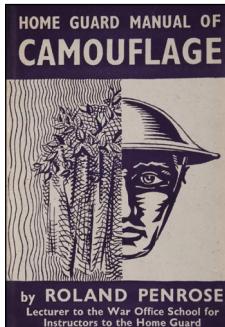
Thanks to Lee Miller Archives Publishing, *The Home Guard Manual of Camouflage* by Roland Penrose (one of the best camouflage manuals ever written) is now back in print — and that's good news!

Yeah, I know... who is this Roland Penrose person and why do I care what he has to say about camouflage? Penrose (1900-1984) was an artist associated with the Surrealist Movement. He was also a photographer as well as a friend and biographer of Pablo Picasso. What concerns us, however, is the impact he had on camouflage training in England during World War 2.

During World Wars I and II, numerous artists working in paint, sculpture, and the like were recruited into military service with an eye towards using their insights into vision, color, and texture to develop means and methods to conceal men, buildings, and equipment.

Although a Quaker and a pacifist, British artist Penrose contributed to the war effort by training the British Home Guard in camouflage techniques. The Home Guard was a volunteer uniformed defense militia eventually consisting of 1.5 million volunteers who were unavailable for military service due to being too young or old. Membership also included men in protected occupations who were ineligible to serve in the military.

It's important to understand in the context of this manual that the Home Guard was mainly intended to serve as an anti-



invasion force, so they were trained in tactics, small arms, demolitions, hand-to-hand combat, and of course, camouflage. They also did this on basically no budget, being last in priority for military weapons, equipment, and other resources.

This also leads into why this book is relevant today: Once upon a time, people and things had to be camouflaged from overhead observation. Training exercises were conducted where Army engineers in training would camouflage a building, an artillery battery, or vehicles and then an airplane would fly overhead to provide feedback. More on this later.

Penrose became a lecturer at the War Office School for Instructors, and fortunately, those lectures are what have been captured in this book. What I found fascinating was his approach of the subject. Similar to how a doctor may not look for an individual germ but rather the symptoms being displayed to diagnose a disease, someone looking for you with ill intent isn't necessarily hoping to see you but rather the symptoms of your presence.

The book has two chapters that I consider timeless: "Nature As A Guide" and "Applications of Lessons Learned From Nature." The budding camouflage expert is encouraged to note not only the color but the texture of surrounding objects, among other things. Or, as I would present it to a modern audience: Step outside, put away the phone, and see what nature looks like for yourself!

He provides a thorough and enjoyable section on his general principles related to how things are seen (I loved how this artist pointed out that most green paint has too much blue in it to blend into nature). From general principles, he moves into specific applications and then concludes with individual camouflage. And as I suspected, although instructions for preparing various sniper suits are included with diagrams, there's no mention whatsoever of ghillie suits.

The text is amplified by numerous black-and-white graphics that range from rough sketches to detailed drawings to crisp aerial photographs. I emphasize the aerial photos because I've been a firm believer that in order to be a good "hider" in this life you have to strive to be a good "finder" and vice versa. This is why I chose to start this review by quoting the great Sherlock Holmes. No doubt you'll come across something in the text concerning shadow and think to yourself, "Well, that's obvious!" In my experience though, it only becomes obvious once someone else has pointed things out you.

Like a lot of wartime texts, there are references made to other British Army training manuals that are themselves now collector's items, specifically Military Training Pamphlets 46 Parts 1 and 2 as well as "Training Posters" Penrose disseminated at the Camouflage School. The good news for the serious student is that both of these manuals are available as hi-res scans at the Internet Archive and made available through the Vickers Machine Gun Collector's Society. I'm still trying to get a handle on the posters as I write this, however.

Also, since this was written in 1941, there's no consideration given to either near infra-red (reflectance) or far infra-

red (thermal), nor to image intensifiers at night.

Regardless of those two caveats, this is a very useful book to keep handy in that section of your library devoted to camouflage. If nothing else (and that's a big "if" given the current existence of drones for sale on the civilian market), this book gets your head back in the game regarding camouflage against overhead observation. So, I say keep it handy because it bears re-reading numerous times while you either underline, highlight, or otherwise call out passages that you particularly need to practice. And I'll finish by repeating my earlier suggestion: Go outside, put away the phone, and start noticing things. You'll be glad that you did.

Rangers, Scouts, and Raiders: Origin, Organization, and Operations of Selected Special Operations Forces

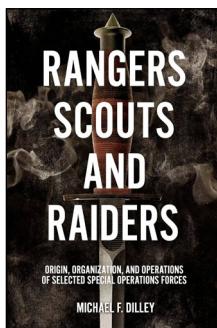
By Michael F. Dilley
Havertown, PA: Casemate Publishers, 188 pages, 2023

Reviewed by LTC (Retired)
Jesse McIntyre III

Special operations forces and their missions have long captured the imagination. These units until recently were ad hoc formations created for an intended purpose and disbanded after the conflict or mission. Military historian and author Michael Dilley examines the rich and extensive history of American special operations forces from the French and Indian War to Vietnam in *Rangers, Scouts, and Raiders: Origin, Organization, and Operations of Selected Special Operations Forces*.

Dilley opens with the return of Rogers' Rangers. Most remember the military exploits of Major Robert Rogers and his Rangers during the French and Indian War and his storied association with today's Army Rangers. Few know that Rogers offered his services to both sides during the American Revolution. Even fewer know of Rogers' role in capturing American spy Captain Nathan Hale.

Dilley informs us that General Billy Mitchell's vision for air power went beyond strategic bombing. Mitchell envisioned a concept where Infantrymen could be dropped by parachute into an enemy's rear to disrupt operations. He describes Mitchell's plans to drop the Army's 1st Infantry Division behind German lines in the spring of 1919 when there would be a sufficient number of parachutes and bombers for the operation. Mitchell's interest in developing airborne capabilities did not end with World War I; he conducted two demonstrations in 1928 utilizing parachuting Soldiers. While Army observers did not take the demonstrations seriously, observers from Germany and Russia were impressed which led to both



countries developing their own airborne capabilities.

Readers will find Chapter 6 "The Alamo Scouts – LRRPs of World War II" especially interesting. LTG Walter Krueger, commander of the U.S. Sixth Army, created a special reconnaissance unit to be at his disposal for scouting and raiding missions. Alamo Scouts operated behind Japanese lines during the two years they existed. Their missions included capturing Japanese prisoners, liberating Allied prisoners, recovering down crewmen and/or equipment, conducting reconnaissance, and gathering intelligence. During more than 110 missions conducted by Alamo Scouts, not one was killed or captured. The scouts would serve as a model for long-range reconnaissance patrols of Vietnam and for 75th Ranger companies.

Dilley excels in describing the Son Tay Raid along with its positive consequences despite failing in its intent to rescue American prisoners of war. A disappointment is the fact that Desert One was not included in this work. It would have been interesting to learn Dilley's perspective on the mission, lessons learned, and consequences following the rescue attempt.

The strength of *Rangers, Scouts, and Raiders: Origin, Organization, and Operations of Selected Special Operations Forces* is its exceptional prose and style; it is simply hard to put down. Each chapter contains a list of sources for further research. The work is highly readable and would be an excellent addition to the library of any historian or student with an interest on the subject.

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