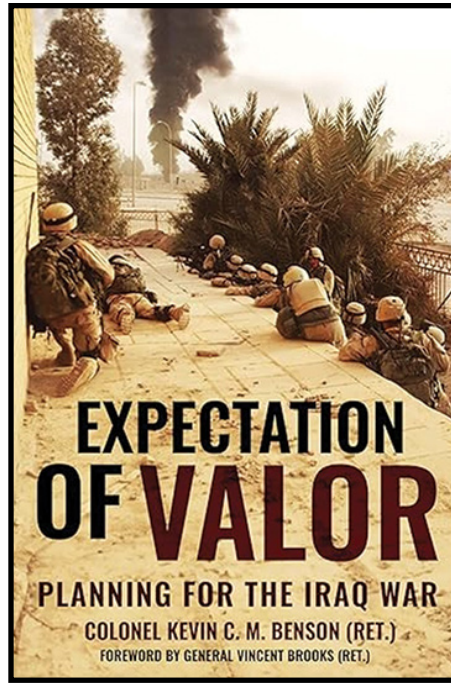


orientation in the military. Placing these latter chapters at the end of the book and consolidating the few that are less than five pages long would have allowed for better delineation between Smith's retelling of events and his thoughts on military life in general.

Given how introspective Smith is throughout much of the book, the lack of a final chapter discussing the legacy and impact of his long career is surprising. As it stands, he devotes just three pages to his decision to retire and his last day in uniform. In all fairness, Smith notes that on the day he relinquished command in 2014, he purposely avoided thinking too much about what was transpiring, finding it slightly overwhelming. Because this book was published ten years later, however, it would have been nice to know his thoughts after a decade of hindsight and reflection.

These issues notwithstanding, *Confessions of a Weekend Warrior* provides a unique and honest perspective on change and continuity within the National Guard across five decades and it will be of interest to a wide audience. As a primary source, it holds value for any scholar studying the guard's long-term transformation and its role in supporting civilian authorities. As a collection of war stories, Smith's often humorous account of the challenges, rewards, and eccentricities that come with being a citizen-soldier will appeal to anyone who has served time in the reserve components.

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EXPECTATION OF VALOR: PLANNING FOR THE IRAQ WAR

BY KEVIN C. M. BENSON

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REVIEW BY NICHOLAS J. SCHLOSSER

Upon assuming duties as the director of plans, J-5, for the Third United States Army, in June 2003, Col. Kevin C. M. Benson found his staff working on a request for information from Deputy Defense Secretary Paul D. Wolfowitz. In the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, U.S. national security personnel had been preparing diligently for a possible campaign against Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The Third Army, as U.S. Central Command's Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), would be responsible for any major land war against that country. Wolfowitz wanted to know why the United States could not invade Iraq; reach its capital, Baghdad; and depose Saddam using just one brigade. Benson assumed the question was a prank being pulled by his staff on their new commanding officer.

As Benson relates in *Expectation of Valor: Planning for the Iraq War*, his sobering and revelatory account of his tenure as the chief of plans at Third Army from June 2002 until July 2003, it was no joke. "It was an amazing question and was answered only after we did the math on the amount of fuel,

ammunition, water, and goods it would take to move one M1A1 Abrams tank and its four-man crew from Kuwait to Baghdad, and the support structure required to move that much fuel, ammunition, water, and food" (4). Ominously, Benson notes this would not be the last such query from his superiors in the Defense Department regarding Iraq.

Colonel Benson's task at Third Army was formidable. Arguing that Saddam Hussein's regime constituted an unacceptable threat to regional stability, President George W. Bush's administration concluded that the United States would need to remove the leader from power using military force. It fell primarily to Benson and his staff to create plans for how to do this. Yet, critically, senior leaders at the Defense Department—such as Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz—were convinced that the United States did not need to commit as many troops to the operation as Central Command's existing plans recommended. Benson thus had to plan a major campaign using far fewer forces than prescribed by accepted doctrine and then reconcile these plans with imprecise and contradictory guidance. As he notes, "In Washington, people were constantly talking about 'off-ramps' even though many of our units were not even on the highway" (71).

A 1977 graduate of the United States Military Academy, Benson's career included critical assignments as a planner at the XVIII Airborne Corps and Third Army. Altogether, Benson's experiences provided ample preparation for designing the deployment of hundreds of thousands of troops in a large-scale offensive. Although Benson references his schooling, especially at the School for Advanced Military Studies, throughout his account, he does so not to preen but to lay out a seeming contradiction. The military invested considerable time and resources into training Benson to become a professional planner, yet that same military leadership often dismissed his expertise and experience. Repeatedly pressed to "Think outside the damned box, Benson," the author lamented that "my particular 'box' remained bounded by Newtonian physics, wherein it took time to move mass over distance" (108).

Nowhere did Benson encounter more frustration than when he tried to prepare Third Army for operations after Saddam Hussein's fall, a period known as Phase IV of the operation. The author's account of this process dominates much of the book's latter half. Benson makes several attempts to

disabuse readers of the idea that the Army did not plan for the posthostilities phase of the conflict. “This is truly a myth: we did plan for what to do after we completed the decisive maneuver, which delivered two corps formations to Baghdad and isolated Saddam Hussein’s regime from the country” (87). As the author notes, CFLCC planners commenced these efforts in early 2003. Benson’s staff recommended using the Iraqi Army and police force to maintain order following Saddam’s fall. His team also hoped to rely on the existing Iraqi bureaucracy to govern the country. Additionally, he warned his superiors that persistent resistance from irregular Iraqi groups such as the Fedayeen Saddam portended a possible postwar insurgency. Importantly, Benson believed the coalition would need to push back against the Defense Department’s impulse to withdraw forces and instead commit more soldiers to the occupation.

Yet for all his assertions that the Army planned for Phase IV, Benson’s account features many examples of Army and Defense Department officials showing little interest in the matter. When Benson asked Third Army’s commander, Lt. Gen. David D. McKiernan, to review Phase IV plans in March 2003, the CFLCC commander rebuffed him, stating, “Kevin, I cannot think about Phase IV until we get through

Phase III. . . . Men are going to die in Phase III” (84). The next month, when CFLCC’s deputy commander, Maj. Gen. William G. Webster, asked Benson how long he believed Phase IV would last, the author said three to five years. Webster replied, “Oh, bullshit” (170). Benson also found opposition from senior Defense Department officials such as Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas J. Feith, who disagreed with the CFLCC plans to use the Iraqi military and police for security purposes. Thus, while individuals and teams may have planned for Phase IV, the constant struggles the author faced in getting his superiors to appreciate the challenges of Phase IV demonstrate that the Army and Defense Department did not pay adequate attention to what would happen after the fall of Saddam’s Ba’thist regime. Third Army’s planners may have prepared for Phase IV; CENTCOM and the Defense Department did not.

Benson’s insider viewpoint, clear analysis, and approachable prose make his account essential for historians of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. It serves as a reminder that preparations alone are inadequate when policymakers and commanders executing those plans choose to overlook or outright ignore warnings that contradict their aspirational thinking. Benson regularly had to reconcile contradictory guidance and

fashion incongruous directions into plans that were achievable and sustained by the necessary resources. His years of experience gave him valuable insight into what would happen to Iraq once Saddam’s regime fell—yet his calls for caution went unheeded or outright ignored. His account is vital reading for anyone seeking to understand how the United States prepared for war in Iraq and why the initial lightning-quick campaign of 2003 devolved into an eight-year insurgency.

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