

Reviews

A Parable with Valuable COIN Lessons

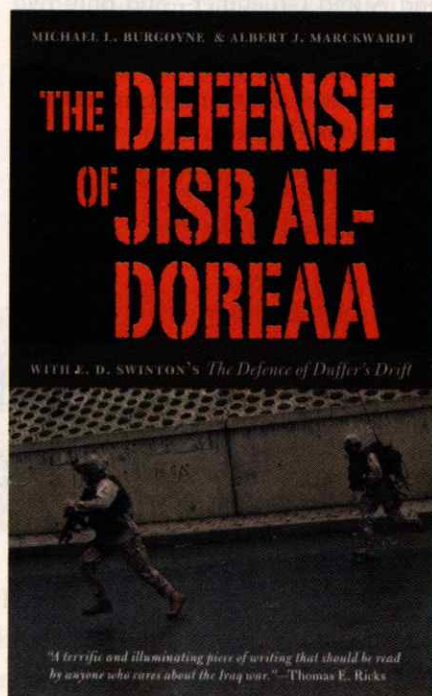
The Defense of Jisr al-Doreaa With E.D. Swinton's *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*. Michael L. Burgoyne and Albert J. Marckwardt. The University of Chicago Press. 178 pages; maps; black-and-white photographs; \$14.

By LTC Jon Scott Logel

In light of the literature published following the troop surge of 2007–08 in Iraq, *The Defense of Jisr al-Doreaa* is a timely, necessary tactical guide for junior officers today. While books such as Tom Ricks' *The Gamble* and Bob Woodward's *The War Within* focus on the political and strategic leaders who shepherded the surge and the change in American strategy towards a counterinsurgency (COIN) in 2007–08, this novella is a prescriptive narrative of counterinsurgency lessons aimed at the youngest leaders deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. The authors, Majors Michael L. Burgoyne and Albert J. Marckwardt, have written, arguably, the most practical book to come out of Iraq yet. As John Nagl notes in the foreword, *Jisr al-Doreaa* is "a guide to the tactical challenges of [the Iraq] conflict that is sure to become a modern classic." By combining this new small-unit story with E.D. Swinton's classic *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*, the authors have produced a short must-read for every lieutenant preparing to lead soldiers in COIN operations.

Burgoyne and Marckwardt follow the chapter format and literary devices that Swinton used in *Duffer's Drift*. Swinton used the six dreams of 2LT Backsight Forethought to illustrate 22 fundamental lessons of small-unit tactics learned during the Boer War of 1899–1902. In *Jisr al-Doreaa*, the authors use the six dreams of 2LT Phil Connors, an armor platoon leader en route to Iraq, whose zone of responsibility is a combat outpost at a bridge in the town of Jisr al-Doreaa. Like LT

Backsight Forethought, 2LT Connors learns from each dream and applies the new lessons in each successive dream. Where Backsight Foresight surrenders to the Boers at the end of each failed dream, young Connors' failures lead to his relief by his commanding officer. By the fifth dream of each story, the young leader keeps his post, but not without one more painful lesson to apply to the sixth and final dream. This literary device works and is well suited for small-unit leader development.



In *Jisr al-Doreaa*, dreams one through three read almost like a morality play, but dreams four through six are excellent in creating the context for lessons in the tactics of COIN. At the end of each dream, Burgoyne and Marckwardt add to a cumulative list of steps for small-unit leaders to follow in the COIN environment. Culled from sources that include articles by GEN David Petraeus and David Kilcullen, and the authors' own experiences, the list of lessons learned forms an effective checklist for a platoon leader to use in planning and

executing small-unit COIN missions.

Perhaps the most useful aspect of *Jisr al-Doreaa* is the illustration of how junior leaders should focus on the population as the center of gravity. In each dream, the success or failure of 2LT Connors depends on how positive his interaction is with the civilians in his zone. When he focuses too much on force protection, his platoon overreacts to a sniper attack by returning fire indiscriminately into a local farmhouse. In the brief but visceral description of the aftermath of screaming family members and dead civilians, the dream becomes a nightmare and cannot end fast enough for Connors. In the midst of his confusion, a media team arrives to record the carnage and put the young lieutenant on the spot just before his commanding officer relieves him of his platoon. Clearly, 2LT Connors and his platoon do not know how to address the local population in the conduct of their mission in this early dream. Conversely, by 2LT Connors' last dream, Burgoyne and Marckwardt have painted a scenario in which the platoon has increased the security of the people in al-Doreaa through thoughtful engagement with local leaders, the conduct of joint patrols with American and Iraqi security forces, and the integration of the Iraqi Health Ministry into the town's medical-care support. Just prior to waking from his last dream, 2LT Connors notes that "getting into firefights and raiding buildings is exciting, but creating a lasting stability is real victory."

While not the complete manual for teaching young officers how to lead soldiers in fighting insurgents among the people, *Jisr al-Doreaa* is an important tool for developing our military's young combat leaders. Burgoyne and Marckwardt have provided a great resource for the Army to use as it faces future operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond. In addition, they have created a companion web site with

maps, illustrations, learning exercises and discussion boards. All authors' royalties from *Jisr al-Doreaa* benefit the Fisher House Foundation, the private-public partnership that supports families of injured American servicemembers. In crafting this book and online resource, Burgoyne and Marckwardt

have made a significant contribution to soldiers, present and future.

LTC Jon Scott Logel is a military professor of strategy and policy at the U.S. Naval War College. He served on the Task Force Lightning staff in Multi-National Division-North from 2006–07.

Introducing 'Lightning Joe'

Taking Command: General J. Lawton Collins from Guadalcanal to Utah Beach and Victory in Europe. H. Paul Jeffers. NAL CALIBER. 325 pages; black-and-white photographs; index; \$25.95.

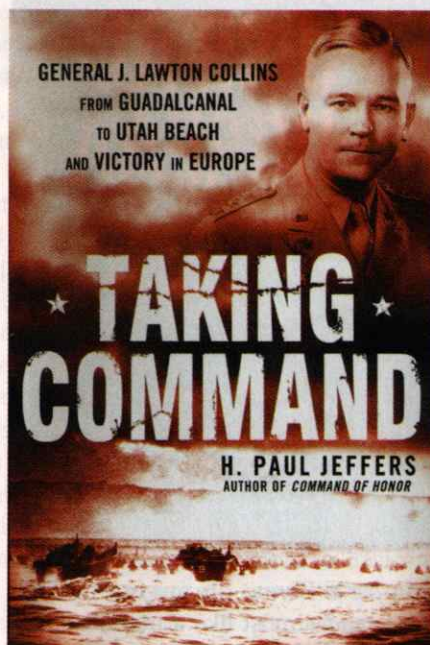
By COL Stanley L. Falk
AUS retired

GEN J. Lawton Collins was one of this country's most impressive generals in World War II, with successful combat commands in both the Pacific and Europe. His 1979 autobiography, *Lightning Joe*, describes his wartime experiences, but he has been denied a solid biography by a qualified historian. H. Paul Jeffers' effort, *Taking Command*, while a good try, unfortunately falls somewhat short of this mark.

Jeffers, an experienced journalist and author of a number of other biographies, presents a well written, faithful account of Collins' professional career, but offers little on his personal life. *Taking Command* is based largely on published sources and particularly on *Lightning Joe*. In addition, the narrative is plagued by numerous small errors, misstatements and oversimplifications, as well as considerable extraneous detail not directly related to the general. Many of the low-level combat descriptions lack a clear explanation of Collins' specific involvement in and effect on the fighting, and the complete absence of maps makes them difficult to follow. The reader comes away with a good impression of Collins' accomplishments but a feeling that there is still something missing.

GEN Joseph Lawton Collins was a bright, aggressive, ambitious and suc-

cessful commander—an effective and popular leader with a strong sense of his duty to both the nation and its sons he commanded. The future Chief of Staff of the Army graduated from West Point in 1917 along with three other eventual World War II generals—Mark Clark, Matthew Ridgeway and Alfred Gruenther—and only two years behind Dwight D. Eisenhower and Omar Bradley. By 1919, at the age of 23, he was commanding an infantry battalion in France.



For the next 20 years, Collins had an increasingly important range of assignments in staff and command positions, interspersed with tours in the Army school system as both student and instructor. In December 1941, just a few days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he was appointed chief of staff of the Hawaiian Department, responsible, among other things, for coordinating the islands' defenses. He

was then a colonel but was quickly promoted to the rank of brigadier general and, shortly thereafter, given command of the 25th Infantry Division as a major general. In late 1942, he took the division to Guadalcanal where, in mid-December, it relieved the weary and casualty-ridden 1st Marine Division, which had been in punishing action since early August.

The struggle for Guadalcanal was still far from over, and the 25th Division plunged immediately into fierce combat on difficult terrain. Collins' sound tactical judgment and aggressive, personal involvement in the fight soon earned him the nickname "Lightnin' Joe," after the "Tropic Lightning" designation of the 25th Division and the lightning bolt on its colorful shoulder patch. As ADM William F. Halsey, the South Pacific theater commander, put it, Collins was "quick on his feet and even quicker in his brain," and he pushed his troops forcefully in their sustained drive to defeat the Japanese.

A few months after Guadalcanal was secured, Collins and the 25th Division moved north to New Georgia and once again saw heavy fighting. Jeffers covers this combat only briefly, but it is clear that the division was a significant element in destroying enemy forces on the island.

A brief Christmas leave to visit his family at the end of 1943 found Collins in Washington, D.C., where he briefed Army Chief of Staff GEN George C. Marshall on the fight for Guadalcanal. In concluding, he added that, since he had successfully led a division for over a year, he now felt that he could command a corps. Marshall replied that GEN Douglas MacArthur had said that Collins was "too young" for such a command, and then ended the conversation. But Collins, who was actually almost 48, would get his wish and was soon on his way to London to assume an important role in Operation Overlord, the planned invasion of France.

Collins was one of three Army generals who had led combat forces in amphibious operations in the Pacific who were shifted to Europe to take part in the coming assault. The other