

numerous and very useful photos, particularly in the Model Products section, results in a breaking up of the text in a way that is sometimes mildly difficult to follow.

Not necessarily a shortcoming, but possibly bias from a reviewer who prefers wooden builds over plastics, metal, or resin: the Model Products section represents plastic kits, metal kits, and kits for tabletop gaming in abundance, with only limited discussion of wooden kits. Jang provides a short description of a few of the strengths and weakness of Caldercraft's offering, and a paragraph on Amati's not-yet-released (as of the date of Series 29's printing) *Victory* model but little else beyond tabular information: 16 wooden kits manufactured by 11 companies are represented by scale, the type of build (solid hull, plank on bulkhead, etc.), with one to four sentences commenting on content, accuracy, materials, and general quality. The emphasis on plastics and metals would be expected in a book covering the ShipCraft series' typical fare of both World Wars or later craft, but it is mildly curious for a period ship. In his introduction to the wooden model segment, the author even comments that one might expect a wooden ship to be modeled in wood. He then cautions the reader that most wooden kits are decorative before discussing ways that various shortcomings can be overcome.

Victory: 100-Gun First Rate 1765 is a trove of information invaluable to anyone interested in creating a model of this famous vessel that is true to her built history and correct to the time during which the ship is being represented. Both the Model Products section and the Appearance section offer plenty of guidance to the modeler seeking a high level of accuracy. Whether commenting on the accurateness of the signal flags provided in certain kits meant to depict Nelson's orders, discussing changes to the size of *Victory's* name on her stern over time, or teasing out in exactly which period it boasted a squared beakhead bulkhead or a rounded bow, this book provides a wealth of details that sticklers for accuracy are sure to appreciate.

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Rear Admiral John Kingwell, CBE. *Maritime Strike: The Untold Story of the Royal Navy Task Group off Libya in 2011*. Warwick, UK: Casemate, www.casematepublishing.com, viii+184 pp., illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. UK £20.00, US \$37.95, cloth; ISBN 978-1-63624-113-5.

Maritime Strike: The Untold Story of the Royal Navy Task Group of Libya in 2011 is a must read for all naval officers and operational planning staff. Rear Admiral John Kingwell commanded the Royal Navy Task Group that

operated off the Libyan Coast during the latter half of 2011 in support of the anti-Gaddafi forces that eventually succeeded in toppling that regime as part of the Arab Spring.

Kingwell starts the narrative by describing his journey from midshipman, in 1984, to task group commander in 2011. The son of a dustman (garbage collector) his rise to this position is extraordinary, noting the British class system that lurks just below the surface of the Royal Navy's officer corps. His early career was unremarkable, with service in the Atlantic and command of HMS *Pursuer* (a small coastal patrol vessel) in 1992. This was followed by Principal Warfare Officer (PWO) training in 1994, service in the frigate HMS *Monmouth* and then, early promotion to commander and assuming command of the frigate HMS *Argyll* in 2001.

Argyll deployed to the Arabian Gulf in mid-2002 and Kingwell learned some valuable lessons regarding operating in a coalition force where legal issues regarding rules of engagement created some temporary tension between the British and US forces. Following this command, he undertook service in the Admiralty, in the Directorate of Naval Resources and Plans, which introduced him to the machinations of defence funding that drives capability acquisitions (or not) depending on the money available. In 2004 he was promoted to captain and served as senior naval advisor to the Iraqi Navy for six months. Again, this tasking enabled him to see coalition operations at close hand and the political injects that drive military decisions.

On his return to the United Kingdom, he was appointed to Fleet Headquarters at Portsmouth, and dealt with difficult issues such as the deployment of Royal Marines to Afghanistan, due to the over-stretching of army units in that theatre. Kingwell also became embroiled in the future of fixed-wing aviation in the Royal Navy which saw the Sea Harriers retired from service in 2006. The RAF Harriers were to be deployed to the British aircraft carriers for ongoing training but, again, the commitment of these aircraft to the Afghanistan campaign curtailed much of this activity – it later saw much disharmony between the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

In 2006, Kingwell was appointed to the Ministry of Defence as the military assistant to the Vice Chief of Defence and the Second Permanent Under Secretary. This enabled him to observe, at close quarters, the higher management of Defence and the competing priorities for resources (time, people and money). Here again he observed the friction between the navy and air force, particularly regarding fixed-wing aviation assets operating from the British aircraft carriers.

After nearly two years in this high-pressure role, Kingwell was appointed to command the assault ship HMS *Albion* in April 2009. *Albion*, and her sister ship, *Bulwark*, were key command and power projection platforms for the

Royal Navy, with the ability to put up to 600 Royal Marines ashore by landing craft or helicopter. His time in command was short as he was promoted to commodore in late 2010. His next role was as Commander United Kingdom Task Group – but with funding short, some ships and capabilities had to go. The aircraft carrier HMS *Ark Royal* was paid off, one of the assault ships was placed in reserve and four Bay-class landing ship docks were sold (which was good for the Royal Australian Navy who purchased RFA *Largs Bay* at a bargain basement price and renamed it HMAS *Choules* – still in service in 2023). Four Type 22 frigates also got the chop as there was now only one RN task group to protect!

With a strong a command background and experience in the higher levels of defence planning and capability, Kingwell prepared his task group for NATO exercises in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf. In February 2011, however, the Arab Spring arrived. Preparations were then made to deploy to the Mediterranean for what would become Operation Cougar and finally, on 7 April, the Royal Navy task group (HMS *Ocean*, Landing Platform Helicopter, HMS *Albion*, Amphibious Transport Dock, and the frigate HMS *Sutherland*) sailed. They were to be supported by Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels and the submarine HMS *Triumph* which had already been deployed to the region. Kingwell and his staff were embarked in *Ocean*. The bulk of the book then deals with the 170 days of the task group's operations in the Mediterranean, where his aircraft conducted offensive operations against pro- Gaddafi forces. Much of this was undertaken by British Army Apache helicopters flying from HMS *Ocean*.

Kingwell describes clearly the planning requirements, battle rhythm, Go-No Go requirements to launch attacks and his own personal thoughts on his command of the task group. He recalls one young officer in the Go-No Go briefs waffling on about risks and issues and unable to make a decision. Kingwell reminded his team that he needed competent advice and not yes-men and if a staff officer said No-Go, it was Kingwell, on the basis of their advice, who would make the ultimate decision. The C2 structure involving NATO Headquarters and the United Kingdom Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood is well described, as are the many relationships fostered with senior officers in various NATO nations to get things done. This again proves you cannot surge trust and strong relationships between senior officers in allied nations need to be created and maintained to ensure better understanding and smoother operations. Equally important to Kingwell was keeping the men and women in his task group informed about the mission. He conducted regular visits to his ships and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels to keep them up to date on the operation and their part in it.

At one point in the operation, however, the bitterness of the removal of

fixed-wing aviation from the aircraft carriers reared its ugly head following a misconstrued comment by Kingwell during a media interview. RAF staff at Northward called for his immediate removal from command of the task group and a signal was sent to Kingwell directing him to return to the United Kingdom. Pragmatically Kingwell remained with his task group waiting for his replacement to arrive; but as none did, he continued on in command!

Kingwell's narrative remains polite throughout the book and those who caused him angst are not identified by name. Those considered as capable personnel or mentors are readily identified and praised – perhaps a later version will be more candid. Additionally, the publication seems to have been rushed out as there are a number of spelling mistakes, incorrect usage of words, and overuse of acronyms without explanations – these are minor, but do detract from the overall high quality of the book's content.

I highly recommend this book to all – especially operational planners and those naval officers seeking higher command. If you happen to be commanding a naval task group, either for training or operations, then this is a must read.

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CDR R.W. Kirtley, USN (Ret.). *The US Naval Advisory Effort in Vietnam, An Inside Perspective*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland Publishing, www.mcfarlandbooks.com, 2022. 210 pp., illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. US \$35.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4766-8695-0. (E-book available.)

Every war has its scholars and its protagonists. Sometimes, however, the best scholars of each battle are the people who lived, fought, and survived it. Their perspective is often one of the most valuable tools scholarship can have, especially when these authors delve into the nuts and bolts of their war experience, mixing military analysis and memoir. Commodore Kirtley's book perfectly represents this tradition and provides an incredible new addition to the literature on naval operations during the Vietnam War.

Despite the relative brevity of his volume, Kirtley manages to exceed the brightest expectations with an intimate portrayal of a war that still looms over American hearts and minds. The book follows an intriguing pattern. Throughout the chapters, Kirtley reconstructs the evolution of the Vietnam War and intersects it with his progressive involvement in the conflict, from midshipman at the US Naval Academy to ensign, and finally, senior advisor to the Vietnamese forces with the brown water navy. Kirtley employs an intimate, at times ironic, and thoroughly genuine style to convey the intertwining themes of the war and his career. His writing is sometimes informal and confidential,